

REMARKS

MADE BY

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH,

*At the Weber Stake Conference, Ogden,
Sunday afternoon, July 19, 1893.*

(REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.)

I feel pleased to have the privilege of meeting with the Saints in Ogden once again, as I believe this is only the second or third time that I have had the pleasure since I returned home after an absence of six or seven years.

I want to speak of one or two little things that have been brought to my mind here and at other places, which may be profitable to some of us. I would like to call the attention of the congregation, especially the Bishops, to the mode of administering the sacrament. The book of Doctrine and Covenants teaches us that the Elder or Priest who administers the sacrament "shall kneel with the Church." Of course, it is quite difficult, and probably inappropriate, for a whole congregation to kneel while the blessing is being asked upon the bread and upon the water. The confusion and noise incident to kneeling and rising again would be inappropriate. Besides, the construction of our meeting houses and the size of the congregations generally would be rather impracticable with that practiced. But there is nothing that I know of that would make it inappropriate for the Elder who asks the blessing to kneel, as the word of the Lord requires. I have noticed in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, where probably the example should be set, that the Bishops who ask the blessings on the bread and the water do so standing upon their feet, and I see that the same rule applies here. I have spoken to Brother Shurtliff in relation to the matter, and he assures me that in the future an example will be set in this regard, and those who administer the sacrament will kneel when asking the blessing. It is not that this form is absolutely essential to the acceptance of this ordinance by the Lord; but it is in accordance with the word of the Lord which was given for our guidance; and where it is possible to follow the written word, in the spirit in which it is given, it is always better to do so. Indeed, by doing so we will avoid a serious wrong that might eventually grow out of a disregard for the rules that the Lord has established, for it might lead to a changing, to some extent, of the ordinances of the house of God. It is necessary that we should pay proper attention and care to carrying out the purposes of the Lord in the manner which He has revealed. And this may be extended to other matters of our religion. One of the charges brought against the children of Israel, and mentioned by the prophets in the latter times, was that "they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." That is really the complaint against the world today, and it is not meet that we should indulge in any such things.

Another matter which has attracted my attention considerably of late, and on which I have reflected some, is the apparent disregard by our people

generally of all species of piety. In the world the people as a rule show forth their religion by their forms of piety; and many of the Latter-day Saints who have been gathered from the world had become so sickened with these forms of piety that it looks to me now as though they had laid the foundation for the other extreme. While I do not believe it necessary for persons who love the Lord, and who have received the testimony of the Spirit of God in their hearts, to go about with a heavy countenance, I do think that we should hold sacred that which God has pronounced sacred. The Latter-day Saints cannot be truthfully accused of the crimes that are prevalent in the world. Of course, they are wrongfully accused of a great many things; but when it comes to accusing Latter-day Saints of being dishonest, indolent, lazy and unthrifty, they are charges that cannot be sustained. They are not thriftless, they are not indolent; but they are industrious, frugal, sober, hardworking, honest and honorable. They certainly cannot accuse us of being guilty of the grosser crimes which exist in the world. We cannot be called a people who patronize saloons, or places of gaming, or any other disreputable places, because we abhor these things. We are comparatively free from these crimes and abominations which exist to such an alarming extent in the world. There are true fruits of genuine religion. When you see a people that are industrious, sober, honest and virtuous, and this is their general character, then you see a people in whom the fruits of true religion abound.

Although we are not guilty of these grosser offenses, it is painfully apparent in many places that the Latter-day Saints have leaned so far the other way from the forms of piety, now existing in the world that they have almost descended into a disregard for many things that are sacred and holy in the sight of God. This should not be. Partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a very solemn thing, and one that we should observe with the greatest possible care. We should do it in a manner that will be acceptable to the Lord and not bring upon ourselves condemnation. It was said by Paul that many of the Saints in olden times were weak and sickly, and many slept, because of their disregard of this sacred principle. We are familiar, I presume, with the requirements the Lord has made of us in relation to this matter and the object He had in view in establishing this principle amongst us. It was that we might partake of it in remembrance of Him, and by so doing witness unto him that we do remember Him, and that we are willing to keep the commandments which He has given unto us, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. It seems a very simple thing indeed to partake of a morsel of bread and drink a little water; very different from the offering of bullocks, of lambs and goats, etc., as the children of Israel had to do; for this law of sacrifice was established in ancient times in order that he people might bear in mind the great sacrifice that was to be made for the redemption of the world. But Jesus fulfilled the law in His death and

resurrection, and in lieu of the ancient sacrifice He has established this simple ordinance of partaking of bread and wine (or water) in memory of Him. The trouble is, we often partake of the sacrament without any particular regard to the object thereof, and it appears to be necessary from time to time to call the attention of the Latter-day Saints to this matter. While the Lord does not ask that we shall go about with a sorrowful countenance, to mourn and lament that we are most miserable sinners, and that there is no good in us, etc., as some of the world do, yet He does require that we shall observe this ordinance which He has established, and that we do it with clean hands and pure hearts.

What should we do before partaking of this sacrament? We should look into our souls and see whether we have any unforgiveness there toward any of our fellow creatures, especially toward any of the household of faith. Have you any bitterness in your heart toward your brother or your sister, or any of mankind? If you have remove that bitterness and repent of the weakness by which that bitterness has found a resting-place within you, and remove it from your heart. Harbor it not in your spirit; for it is evil. It corrupts us to allow the spirit of hatred or animosity to find a resting-place in our souls. Therefore we should not partake of this sacrament with such feelings in our souls. We should forgive those who trespass against us. We should make peace with our brother and with our sister, and with all mankind, and establish peace in our hearts, so that when we come to the house of God to partake of the sacrament we may do it with clean hands and pure hearts before the Lord. In ancient times the Saints partook of the sacrament as a matter of feasting, and gluttoned themselves, thus changing the ordinance of the house of God. They assembled with bitterness in their hearts one toward another, and partook of the sacrament without remembering the true object of their doings. The result was, as Paul told them, many did it to their condemnation and brought upon themselves sickness and, in some cases, death.

Now, I do not desire to pander to any kind of superstitious feeling. We are not a superstitious people. Above all the people on the earth we ought to be the most free from superstition. I do not refer to the words of Paul with the expectation of awakening in the minds of any a feeling of superstition in relation to this matter. All I desire is that we should understand the truth as it is. If God has instituted this, and has commanded us to do it in remembrance of Him, then there is an object in it that is of importance to the children of men; and God will not hold intelligent men and women guiltless who will trifle with even a matter that appears so insignificant as this. We should be careful about this. And this same care should follow us throughout all our doings in the Church. Why is this important? It is that we may be instrumental in bringing to pass His purposes. He gave special commandments through Moses to the children of Israel, in order that He might raise up a peculiar, a chosen people, upon whom He might name His name, and who would obey