

**ELDER MARRINER W. MERRILL.**

The Divine Origin of the Church,—Officers not Self-appointed,—Profanity Condemned,—Obedience Brings Harmony,—Each May Have a Witness of the Truth,—A Prediction Fulfilled,—Safety in Counsel.

I have an evidence of the truth of this work. I have a testimony from the Lord. I know that this work is true. I know that Joseph the Prophet was chosen as an instrument in the hands of the Lord to establish the Gospel in the earth in this dispensation. I had evidence of this a great many years ago. It has been over forty-four years since I became associated with the Saints in these mountains, and I have been like the rest of you, I have had my trials, my dark times, and periods of affliction and sorrow. I believe that all Saints have their trials, if they are trying to do right and serve the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord has not always been with me. I have been left to myself many times. But in these times of trial, the testimony that I had from the Lord of the truth, of the divinity of this work has been a great consolation to me. I have not lost it yet. I hope I may never lose it. I believe it is possible for people to lose the testimony and evidence they have had in regard to this work, and to get into the dark, and become dissatisfied, and complain and find fault with the brethren. I have always looked upon it as a very dangerous thing for a member of the Church to find fault with the servants of God, to criticise the actions of the Priesthood, because in my experience here with the people I have witnessed many, apparently good men and good women, turn away from the Church through indulging in this spirit of fault-finding and criticising the actions of the Priesthood.

Now, we must remember that there is not a single officer in the Church who has selected himself. There is not one of the Presidency, nor one of the Apostles, that has sought the position he occupies today. These men have not desired the position, and have not asked for it. But the Lord, in the dispensations of His providence, has placed them in office in the Church. And when we complain, and find fault, and criticise, we must surely know that we are criticising the ac-

tions of the Lord, because He is the one that has brought these things to pass and placed these men in their positions, for the reason, I suppose, that they were the ones He wanted to carry on His work. The officers of this Church have been called to these positions, and we ought to remember this. We ought to sustain this work, sustain the organization of the Church, and sustain the Priesthood. Let all other things be a secondary consideration. The Savior said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." That is the first thing for us to do; then other things will be added unto us as we may need them. As I said before, I know this work is true; and if I deny the work of the Lord, it will be because I get into the dark and lose the spirit of it. We are liable to do this. Hence it is not safe for a Latter-day Saint to forget his prayers, and to forget the Lord. We should make it the practice of our lives to entreat the Lord in the morning, and in the evening, and at mid-day, and have within our hearts the spirit of prayer.

I am aware that there are families in the Church that neglect their prayers. Heads of households neglect to call their families around them and entreat the Lord for His protecting care over them during the day or during the night. Is there anybody under the sound of my voice that neglects to do these things? If you do, you fail that much in living up to the requirements of the Gospel. There are in some parts of the Church people who profane the name of Deity. Now, they ought to know that this is wrong. Yet this spirit of profanity is too prevalent in some parts of the country. As officers and as members of the Church, we ought to rebuke such conduct in our brethren, and tell them kindly that it is not a proper thing to do. It is a bad example. It brings the displeasure of the Lord. It drives away the Holy Spirit, and we are not in a position to have the heavens opened to us, and to have our prayers reach into the ears of the Lord. If there are any Latter-day Saints here that indulge in profanity, I want to exhort you to cease from this time forth, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart.

When we are living in the light of the Gospel, our feelings will harmonize with the Presidency and with the Apostles and with the Elders that are trying to carry on this work. I say our spirits will harmonize with theirs, because I want to bear record and testimony to you that they are doing the very best they can for the people and for the advancement of the work of God, and the Lord is with them and He will bring them off victorious. Hence the importance, my brethren and sisters, of trying to cultivate the spirit of humility, of meekness, and of kindness, and attending to the labors that pertain to us in the Gospel. There is something for everybody to do. We have all we can possibly do if we live the religion of Jesus Christ. We cannot afford to neglect our duties in the Gospel. Life is too short for us to think of such a thing. We are liable to be called to an account any time. Scores of people that were here at the last Conference are not here now perhaps, because of circumstances and conditions which they have passed through. This may be the case with some of us who are here. We may never come to another Conference; we may never hear the voice of President Woodruff or the servants of God again. We do not know that we will, unless God has revealed it to us. No man knoweth the things of tomorrow, unless God reveals them to him. We know the things of yesterday, if we have not forgotten them; but we do not know of the things of tomorrow. Hence the importance of all Latter-day Saints living according to the light that has been revealed to them.

Every man and woman has the right to have a testimony of this work. We may have the evidence for ourselves. The hands of the Elders of the Church have been placed upon our heads, and it has been said unto us, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and we have a right, if we have sincerely repented of our sins and turned unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, to a witness. My conviction is that no man need be without a testimony of this work, whether he be young or old. The Lord is no respecter of persons, and we may know for ourselves, for our private use and good. Not

that we may have revelation or a testimony for somebody else, only for ourselves. The heavens have been opened, and they are open to the faithful people of God today. Our prayers may be heard and answered, if they are right and inspired by the Holy Ghost. This is the privilege of the Latter-day Saints. The world do not have these things, because the Lord has not revealed the Gospel to them, only as He has done it through His ministering servants. He has organized His Church in the earth, and the Gospel is being preached as a witness to the world.

How literally the words of President Woodruff have been fulfilled that he uttered when the Temple was dedicated! He said that the scale would turn, and the people of the world would be more kind to us than formerly. We have seen this verified wherever our Elders have gone. They find people raised up to comfort and to bless them and to listen to them. It is so in these United States, more so, I presume, than it ever has been; it is so in all the world. The words of the servant of God have been verified in regard to these things. We have many testimonies before our eyes daily with regard to this work, and woe be to the men and the people that fight against God and against Zion! Woe be to us who have had the truth and have once known the light, if we turn away from the work of God! Our condition will be far worse than that of those who have never heard the Gospel.

Hence, my brethren and sisters, the importance of our listening to the counsel of the servants of God. We have a perfect organization existing throughout the Church, so that no man or woman need be left in doubt with regard to the counsels of the Priesthood. We can listen to them if we are so disposed; and we ought to do it as much now as we ever have done. I can remember in my experience here when we thought it not wise or safe to enter into enterprises or do things without counseling with our brethren. We thought in the midst of counsel there was safety, and in former years we sought the counsel of our brethren more than we do now. Not that every man shall run to the

Presidency of the Church or to the Apostles to get advice, because, as I said before, the organization is complete, and you need not go far from your own wards to get the mind of the servants of God. If the Bishop is not able to give the necessary counsel, the President of the Stake may be. If he is not able to give it, he may apply to the Presidency of the Church for it. If this organization was considered and respected by the Saints, everything would work harmoniously and smoothly, and every man and every woman would get the proper counsel for their guidance.

I feel, my brethren and sisters, the importance of our being humble and consistent in our lives, in shunning evil and the appearance of evil, and to teach our children in a proper manner. Do you not know that it is a very bad example for any family of Saints to neglect their prayers before their children? The children will grow up and they will not know what it means to have family prayers. The Lord has said He will be sought after, and He said to ancient Israel that if they would draw near unto Him, He would draw near unto them. We need to draw near to the Lord, that He may draw near unto us. We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are not able to stand alone. We need the counsel and encouragement of our brethren; we need the advice and encouragement of each other. We may think we can stand alone; we may think we can go on our own responsibility; but we will fail in the end, because the Lord has designed that the counsel of His Priesthood shall be respected among the Latter-day Saints. We ought to sustain our Bishops, and not speak evil against them, or against the Counselors, or the Teachers, or the officers of the ward. Let not our tongues be found speaking evil against our brethren. It tends to darkness and to sin, and will lead whoever indulges in it out of the Church, unless he or she repents speedily. It is a dangerous thing to be found criticising the authorities of the Church—not that they are perfect men, because no man is perfect. It is possible that ~ may do wrong—that I

may give some wrong counsel; but that can easily be corrected, because here are the living oracles of God, and they are worth more to the Latter-day Saints than all the Bibles, all the Books of Mormon and all the Books of Doctrine and Covenants that are written. The Bible is a good thing, the Book of Mormon is a good thing, and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants is a good thing. They are the words of the Lord. But I say that the living oracles of the Church are worth more than all of them. If we could have but one of them, give me the living oracles of the Priesthood for my guidance. Of course, it is proper and a good thing to have it all, because the living oracles of the Church work in harmony with what is written, and their counsel will not come in conflict with the words of the Lord in former ages. But the conditions of mankind change. The counsel that was suitable for the Saints forty years ago may not be so suitable today. Hence the importance of having in our midst the living oracles of God to guide us day by day in the performance of our labors.

I feel that it is a good time to be Saints. It is a good time to turn unto the Lord and live, and not turn away from the Lord and die. I tell you that God has revealed himself in our day and time. He has raised up our Presidency and the Apostles for the guidance of the Church, for the establishing of His work and the building up of Zion on the earth; and we cannot do without them. We would be scattered to the four winds if we did not have the living oracles of God in our midst for our guidance. I feel happy in this work. I hope I will continue to the end. I have not only had one testimony from the Lord of its truth, but many have been added from time to time. I have seen the marvelous workings of God visible in my behalf, and I feel this morning to praise the Father because of His goodness and mercy, and because of His sparing my life to bear record of His name and to bear testimony to my brethren and sisters and friends of the truth and divinity of this great work. God bless you. Amen.