

## ELDER A. O. WOODRUFF.

Advantages of fasting and bearing testimony to the truth—Obedience to rightful authority—Necessity of diligence on the part of the Priesthood.

My brethren and sisters, I feel blessed in being numbered with the Latter-day Saints, and am happy to share in the blessings which the Saints enjoy. I feel extremely weak in standing before you here, and I earnestly pray that the Lord may sustain me, and that I may enjoy your faith and good will while I occupy this position. I feel that the Latter-day Saints today have more reason to be encouraged than they have ever had. The Stakes of Zion are more numerous and stronger today than they have ever been, and I believe that the people as a rule are living their religion a little better than they have done heretofore. In traveling among the Saints of God in the different Stakes of Zion I have been led to feel that there is as great union among them as there ever has been, and that the outlook for the people is most encouraging. We get excellent reports, too, from the Elders who are preaching the Gospel in the nations of the earth. I doubt, however, whether we fully appreciate many of the blessings which we enjoy. I know that some of the Saints do not appreciate all the privileges within their reach.

The Lord has placed in Zion different institutions, every one of which has some end to accomplish. As every creature which the Lord has placed upon the earth has been created for some purpose, so every quorum and organization in the Church has been created for some great and grand purpose. We as a people have the privilege of fasting once a month, and donating that which we otherwise would consume for the benefit of the poor and the needy among us. This is pretty generally observed by the Latter-day Saints. But in our fast meetings I have felt sometimes as though we did not always appreciate the blessings that we enjoy. I have attended fast meetings where the Bishops have felt very ill at ease on account of the people not responding to the invitation to bear their testimony. There seems to be too much backwardness on the

part of the Saints in taking advantage of this blessing when it is placed within their reach; and some of those who do arise to testify of the goodness of God are looked upon as putting themselves forward a little too much. Jesus said that those who would do the will of the Father should know of the doctrine, and according to my view there is not one who has accepted the Gospel of Christ and received this knowledge but could arise to his feet on the fast day and tell of some intervention of Providence in his behalf, of some manifestation of the gifts of the Gospel, or of some blessing received by him from the Father. I feel that it is a mistake for us to go to fast meetings, and allow the time to pass without utilizing it in the manner designated of the Lord; and I know that in failing to do our duty in this regard we are not obedient to the promptings of the Spirit of God. The Saints should heed the promptings of the spirit at all times; for if they do not the voice of the Spirit becomes less distinct within them and they do not experience it in such power as it comes to them when they are obedient to its teachings. The Apostles and Elders in the Church of Christ, in this day as in former days, have had as their especial guide the whisperings of the "still small voice" within them. Why, therefore, should we not be obedient to this Spirit when it prompts us in our fast meetings to bear testimony of the goodness of God to us? I say, there is not one in the Church who cannot bear testimony to the presence of the gifts of the Gospel in the Church, or to having received some of the blessings of the Gospel. It is this knowledge, which is so general throughout the Church, that brings about the union that there is among the people of God. We believe in revelation. We believe in having the dictates of the Spirit of God individually, so that we do not always have to go to someone else to know what our duty is. We are oftentimes prompted by the Spirit of God to do many good things. But the trouble is, we too frequently quench the Spirit, and afterwards we feel condemned on account of our disobedience to it. In this way we drive the Spirit from us, and do not enjoy

it in that degree which we would if we would always be obedient unto it.

There can be no order in the things of God or the things of man unless there is obedience. We all have to be obedient to someone. It is necessary for us to be obedient to the laws and regulations of the state government of which we form a part, else harmony cannot exist between us and the state. It is just so in the Church of Christ. We must be obedient to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the man whom God has called to be His mouthpiece in the Church. Had it not been for the dictates of this Spirit—this personal revelation—how many are there in the Church today who would have been missed by the Elders in their searches abroad for the honest in heart? for many Elders have been prompted to enter certain houses, where they have met people whose hearts were prepared for the seed of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I feel that the Lord is not pleased with the Saints when they meet together in fast meeting and fail to make use of the opportunity which is given them to bear testimony to the goodness of God. This is not done for show. We fast not to please men. We do not believe in that kind of fasting which some people indulge in—going around with disfigured faces, and looking sorrowful, in order that men may know we are fasting. We believe that we should go about with cheerful countenances, and rejoice exceedingly before the Lord, because He has given us the privilege of abstaining from food one day in a month and contributing of our substance for the benefit of our fellows who are less fortunate. If the Latter-day Saints would sense this as I do, our fast meetings would be exceedingly interesting. Not that we should give way to any great demonstration; that is not the proper thing; but we should enjoy the peaceful influence of the Spirit of God, and there should never be one, two or five minutes wasted in our fast meetings. You, no doubt, have all experienced a difference in attending fast meetings. Sometimes the people will respond readily; there is a rich outpouring of

the Spirit of God; our faith is increased, and we feel to thank the Lord for the privilege of being present. At other times the people show reluctance in responding and telling what God has done for them; then we go home feeling that we have not taken advantage of our opportunities and have not listened to the promptings of the Spirit. It rests with the people to make these meetings interesting. The measure of the Spirit enjoyed depends more or less upon the faithfulness of the people in performing their duties, in paying their fast offerings, and in preparing their hearts. The Lord has given this day to be a blessing to the people, wherein we can enjoy His Spirit and the gifts of the Gospel. The people of God do enjoy the gift of prophecy the gift of healing, the gift of tongues; and probably the latter gift has been taken advantage of by the evil one more than any other gift in the Church. The Saints should be guided by the Spirit of God, and subject to those who preside in the meetings. If the Bishop, who is a common judge in Israel, tells a person to restrain this gift, or any other gift, it is the duty of that person to do it. The Bishop has a right to the gift of discernment, whereby he may tell whether these spirits are of God or not, and if they are not they should not have place in the congregations of the Saints. No man or woman has a right to find fault with the Bishop for restraining him or her in any of these matters. The Bishop is the responsible party, and it is his privilege to say what shall be done under his presidency. I desired to make these remarks in connection with our observance of the fast day.

Brethren and sisters, we ought to be obedient to our Bishops. We are amenable to them in the wards, no matter what priesthood we hold. We owe respect to them; for any man who has not enough of the Spirit of humility to be governed is not fit to govern. A man who cannot be led is not fit to lead. We ought to be humble, and submissive to the Spirit of God. We exercise our free agency as to whether we shall be members of this Church or not; but if we become

members of the Church we must be obedient to the dictates of the Spirit and to him who holds the keys of this dispensation at the present time. It is expected that we will sustain him and stand by him. I cannot think of anything that is more valuable to me than to enjoy the confidence of the Prophet of God. I prize this more than anything else in this world. To me it is the richest blessing that men and women can enjoy, to have the favor of God's servants who are called to preside over the Church and over the different Stakes and wards in the Church. There is an order in the Church of Christ. It is not possible for the Presidency and the Apostles to go into every ward and into every house; therefore there are Stake and ward organizations. Three High Priests are called to preside over a Stake, just as three High Priests are called of God to preside over the whole Church. Then we have a High Council in the Stake, after the pattern of the Twelve Apostles. These men labor in the Stakes and wards, and they ought to be respected wherever they visit, as the Presidency and the Apostles are respected in the different Stakes when they visit them. They are the leading men of the stake, and they are responsible for the affairs in that Stake. If there is an unsatisfactory condition existing in the Stake, we do not first go to the lay members to enquire concerning it, but we go to the men who bear the responsibility, and demand of them to know why there is an unsatisfactory condition there. And I wish, my brethren and sisters, that every Stake Presidency and High Council would be as zealous and as faithful in trying to keep the people in the line of duty as the First Presidency and Twelve Apostles strive to be. I wish they would be as united, and sense the responsibility which rests upon them as much as these men do. If they would do this, the matter of the payment of our tithes would not be a reformation started only to die out in a little while, but the interest would be kept up all the time; and this cannot be done unless the Presidents and High Councils of the different Stakes sense the respon-

sibility which rests upon them. This is not a spasmodic movement. It was not begun to last one or two years. It was intended to last for all time; and that after the labor was begun by the Presidency of the Church and the Apostles, every Stake presidency, every High Council and every Bishopric throughout the Church would continue the work and labor as long as there was one non-tithepayer left in the Church. Have they done this? If they have, then there are not many non-tithe-payers in the Church today. But I fear that some of the brethren have thought that this was a temporary movement; that it was needed just at that particular time, but that after the one effort had been made there was no need of carrying it on. There is still, I am sorry to say, a great list of non-tithepayers in the Church; and it is evident in some instances that the presidency of the Stake and the High Council and the Bishoprics have not labored quite as hard as they might have done. We could not expect that they would convert all these non-tithe-payers in one year, or two years, or three years; but more of them might have been converted if every man in the Church who is a tithepayer sensed the responsibility of this as keenly as President Snow does. I feel that this is a matter that ought to receive the attention of Stake and ward officers, and they ought to realize that our Eternal Father will hold them responsible for the use of their influence and talents, just as much in their positions as He will the President of the Church in his position. President Snow believes, his counselors believe, and these Apostles believe that it is possible for these Stake and ward officers to convert the big majority of the non-tithe-payers, as well as those who are negligent in other respects. We believe that most of the people prize their standing in the Church sufficiently to induce them to repent and do better, provided they are labored with and their condition placed before them in its true light. The trouble has been in some cases, that officers have not regarded this as an important move-

ment, or that it was not essential to continue it; and, of course, wherever this spirit is manifested by a Bishop or a Stake officer, what can be expected of the people? We expect that every officer in this Church will set a good example, and say to the people, Follow me; that he will not require anything of his people that he is not willing to do himself. We expect this to be the case in every organization of the Church, among the sisters as well as the brethren.

My brethren and sisters, I rejoice in the work in which we are engaged. I thank God that I am permitted to live in this day and time, and to do my small and humble part in connection with the upbuilding of His kingdom. I rejoice that my labor becomes sweeter and dearer to me every day that I live. Instead of it becoming burdensome, it becomes more of a joy and satisfaction. I thank God for His Priesthood. I honor it, and I honor my brethren with whom I am connected in this Priesthood. I pray for God's blessings upon the people, that they may be filled with His Spirit. I pray that we may be faithful all the day long; that we may not simply run well for a time, but that we may labor continually, until we shall have brought about a greater degree of perfection in ourselves and the Church of God than exists today. Those who are trying to keep the commandments of God and are measurably successful, let them labor with their fellows until there shall not be a non-tithepayer left in the Church—at least, until there is a much more satisfactory condition than there is today. Let us do our part, my brethren and sisters, to bring joy to the heart of God's Prophet, in having his desires accomplished and seeing the people respond as he would have them to this and other commandments which the Lord has given. May God's peace and blessings be upon His people. May He bless us in all our undertakings and labors, and may we go forth from this Conference with renewed determination to do His will and to serve Him all our days. May God help us all to be faithful to the end. I ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen.

#### ELDER MATTHIAS F. COWLEY.

Improvements in financial affairs of the Church—Organization of new Stakes—Necessary official changes in the Priesthood—Differences among brethren should be avoided—President of the Church and other authorities should be sustained.

My brethren and sisters: I suppose that I need not ask for your faith and prayers. I always need them, and I understand it to be our duty to consider ourselves responsible as well as the speaker for the measure of the Holy Spirit that we enjoy. It is our duty also to pay the strictest attention to all that is said, and to be imbued with a determination to carry out the instructions which are given unto us.

The Latter-day Saints are understood to be a practical people. Paul said concerning the former-day Saints that the Lord would "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." I read in the newspaper recently a statement made by a man holding a legislative office, to the effect that he desired to see the wiping out of the peculiarity which characterized the Latter-day Saints. I say, God grant that it never shall be wiped out, that the Spirit of the Gospel shall never depart from us, that the principles which that Spirit has implanted in our hearts shall never be obliterated, and that we shall never cease to teach our children and our children's children that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God, that every principle which God revealed to him was divine, and that he laid his life upon the altar to establish the truth of those principles which he enunciated to the world. I hope that this peculiarity will always attach to the Latter-day Saints, and that it will become more distinct and pronounced as the years roll by. As the work of God progresses we ought to progress.

It has been now two years and a half since we first sustained President Lorenzo Snow as the successor of President Wilford Woodruff, as the Prophet, Seer and Revelator unto this Church. I want to bear my testimony to the Latter-day Saints that the work of God has always prospered, and that it has prospered most remarkably during the last two years and a half. Through a combination of circumstances that