

ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY.

The law of obedience.—Samuel and Saul.—Ingersoll's inconsistency.—Blasphemous presumption.—How blessings are obtained.—Abraham's example.—Living by every word. Will of the Lord in 1847.—"This is the Place."—How the Gentiles will capture Mormonism.—Celestial Law.

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

The speaker was Samuel the prophet, and the one to whom he spoke was Saul, king of Israel. Saul had received a commission from God, through the prophet, to destroy the Amalekites, a wicked and corrupt people who had lain in wait for Israel when on their way to Canaan, in the days of Joshua; and so strict was the commandment that Saul was required to spare no living soul, nor cattle, nor sheep, nor anything pertaining to that nation. But he deviated from the commandment of God; made himself the judge of which part of it he should obey, and which part he might ignore; he spared Agag, the Amalekite king, and brought him captive toward Jerusalem. He spared, also, the choicest of the cattle and the sheep, and thought to justify himself in his disobedience by making a great sacrifice to Jehovah.

Meeting Samuel on the way, Saul was asked if he had carried out the Lord's command and replied in the affirmative. "Then what means this bleating of sheep and this lowing of cattle that I hear," inquired the prophet; and the king had to confess, to his shame, that he had not fully carried out the command, but had spared the wicked monarch and allowed himself to be persuad-

ed by the people to take a spoil and return with it to offer a burnt offering unto Jehovah. It was under these circumstances that Samuel uttered the words:

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

I wonder if King Saul was possessed of the same spirit that seems to imbue some men in these modern days. I have in mind a renowned agnostic, the late Robert G. Ingersoll, a wonderful man in some respects, a natural orator—magnetic, powerful in his influence over the people, brilliant in eloquence but shallow and unsafe in his reasonings. He took the ground that Jehovah was a murderer, because he commanded Joshua to exterminate the wicked races that encumbered the land of Canaan, and because Saul was required to slay the Amalekites. In his writings he condemns Joshua for his obedience, and lauds Saul for showing compassion toward the wicked king and for disobeying God's command. Ingersoll also declared that Jehovah was a law-breaker, a violator of His own statutes because, forsooth, He had commanded that "whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, and then had issued commandments requiring Joshua and Saul and others of His generals to destroy the wicked nations around them.

I have not time to dwell upon this branch of my subject; but will say, in passing, that the Giver of life cannot commit murder by taking life, and it is the supreme height of impertinence and presumption

for any man to accuse God of crime. Man cannot give life, and is therefore commanded to take no life; but life can be taken by its Author without committing sin. To execute a criminal is not murder. It is equally presumptuous to say that Jehovah, the great law-giver, is a law-breaker because He chooses, at any time, to revoke one command and supersede it by another; to repeal one law and enact another in its stead. Colonel Ingersoll was a lawyer—what some would call a statesman—he knew that the legislature of any state or territory is entirely competent to enact new laws and repeal old ones; and yet he had the blasphemous presumption to accuse the all-wise and omnipotent Creator of breaking His own laws, because, having commanded that no man should shed blood, He afterwards commanded certain men to kill. I wonder if Saul was possessed of the same idea. His offense seems to have been that he made himself the arbiter and judge of the commandment that he had received; determining which part should be carried out, and which part he could disobey; an offense so serious, in the eyes of the Lord, that He rent the kingdom from Saul and gave it to another.

It is not for man to sit in judgment upon the decrees of the Almighty. It is his duty to obey. We are told by the Prophet Joseph Smith that it is on the principle of obedience that we receive all our blessings. "There is a law," he says, "irrevocably decreed in heaven, before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated; and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedi-

ence to that law upon which it is predicated."

The example of Abraham should have been sufficient for Saul. He was commanded to slay his son Isaac; and though it doubtless wrung his heart to make the sacrifice, he was willing, and was about to make it, when he received, from the same source, another command suspending the former behest, and requiring of him that he lay not his hand upon the lad. Abraham would have carried out the first commandment, had he not received the second. And had he been unwilling, he would have been a transgressor; but, having received a commandment not to do the thing that had been commanded, if he had gone on wilfully and disobeyed the later requirement, he would have been a transgressor. Nor would the Giver of those commandments have been inconsistent. "My word is my law, saith the Lord." He has a right to require one thing today and another thing tomorrow, and the latest word that comes from Him is the word that His people must obey.

This is what it means to "live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." We cannot justify ourselves in living by that particular part of the word that appeals to us, the part that we desire to obey, but must be willing to make sacrifices. Sometimes the sacrifice is involved in the doing of a deed, and sometimes in leaving it undone. We do not take our commands from the Bible. We are not governed by the gospel as revealed to the Nephites. We are living in the dispensation of the fulness of times, and have a right to receive divine revelation, here and now, and this is our guide, our law, and we must be governed thereby. No man

can stand up today in this Church and justify himself in any course by pleading what the Nephites did, or what the Jews did or did not do. The vital question with us is: What does God require of the Latter-day Saints? We have as much right to the word of the Lord as had the Nephites, the Jews, or the early Christians. If this is not true, Mormonism is a sham and is not what it claims to be.

In the month of January, 1847, the Latter-day Saints were encamped upon the banks of the Missouri river. They had been expelled from the State of Illinois, and a band of pioneers was being selected for the journey across the plains to the Rocky Mountains. The word and will of the Lord was given through President Brigham Young, commanding the people to organize themselves into companies, with captains of hundreds, and fifties, and tens, preparatory to their journey to the West. That was the word of the Lord to our parents and grand-parents. The Prophet Joseph Smith had predicted that the Latter-day Saints would be driven westward and become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains, and President Young, as his successor and executor, gave that word and will of the Lord at Winter Quarters, but is it the word and will of the Lord to you and to me? Are we to hitch up ox-teams, in this day of railroads and automobiles and aeroplanes, and go wandering off to California, or to Mexico, or to Canada, and justify ourselves by pointing to the word of the Lord given in January, 1847, upon the banks of the Missouri? Why no; the fallacy is apparent at a glance.

This is the place selected by the God of heaven, where His people

should remain and become mighty. President Young declared that he beheld Salt Lake Valley in vision while on the way hither; he saw a tent "settling down from heaven," resting over this spot, while a voice from above declared, "This is the place where my people Israel shall pitch their tents."

And, remember, the Prophet Joseph had declared that this people should become mighty—not in Mexico, not in Canada, not on the Pacific coast; but "in the midst of the Rocky Mountains." You all know, if you are familiar with history, of the efforts made to induce President Young to deviate from the course indicated by that prediction. Samuel Brannan, who had rounded Cape Horn with a Mormon colony, and landed on the shore of California, met the pioneers on Green river and tried to induce them to change their purpose and plant their colony on the fertile slopes of the Pacific. Brigham Young answered, "No; this is the place; here we will build the city and temple of our God." Bridger, Harris, and other mountaineers thought to discourage him, telling him that grain could not be raised in the Great Basin; but he turned a deaf ear to their statements. He had seen this valley; had seen a great city rising here from the barren sands, and he knew more than Colonel Bridger, or Samuel Brannan; for he was guided by the inspiration of heaven.

Here the Latter-day Saints will remain, it is my belief, until they go down, in the might of Israel's God, to take possession of the Promised Land; their next general movement will be eastward, not westward, from the Rocky Mountains. Oh, but the Gentiles are coming in overwhelming numbers to outvote us, to snow us under! Well,

what if they do? If the Gentiles come to us, it will save us the trouble of going to them. Our mission is *to* the Gentiles—not *from* them; and if they come, we will not skulk and run away, but face about and extend the olive branch, preach the gospel to them, and save their souls, if we can; for that is our mission. I want to see the Gentiles capture Mormonism. The Romans conquered Greece, and were conquered, in the doing of it, by Grecian culture, learning, and civilization; and the Romans were conquered by the Barbarians who, in turn, were subjected to the Pope of Rome and became Christians. If the Gentiles capture Mormonism, it will make Mormons of them—and that is just what we want. We want all the good Gentiles we can get, and we do not care how many of them come and embrace the gospel. Talk about the Gentiles overwhelming the Mormons and destroying the work of God! Yes, just as the Romans destroyed the Jews and the Christians. I can go out upon the street today and find a Jew: I can go out and meet a Christian; but has any one seen a Roman of late? The Romans became Christians, and the Gentiles, tens of thousands of them, perhaps millions, will become Latter-day Saints and will help build up the kingdom of God. That is my faith in this work, and my confidence in the Gentiles, and in the word of the Lord concerning them upon this land.

We receive all our blessings upon the principle of obedience. There is a celestial law, a terrestrial law, and a telestial law; and we can attain to any degree of glory that we desire, but it will be upon the principle of obedience. If we obey ce-

estial law, we will obtain celestial glory. If we obtain terrestrial glory, it will be by obedience to terrestrial law; and the same with telestial law and telestial glory. And what is celestial law? It does not mean any *one* thing; it means *all* things. It is the fullness of obedience: it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. If today, you are keeping those commandments that are now in force, you are living a celestial law, and your chances are good for celestial glory. Amen.

Sister Esther Davis sang a soprano solo, entitled "A Prayer."

ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS.

The immense attendance at Conference evinces devotion to religion.—President Smith's example of faithfulness. Failure to live by law not evidence against its divinity.—To acquire true knowledge there must be no prejudice.

I sense very keenly, my brethren and sisters and friends, the great responsibility resting upon me in undertaking to lead in thought this vast congregation. My only hope of being able to do it, with any degree of profit, is through the help and blessing of the Lord; and as we never know in advance just how much we are in favor with the Lord, and how much assistance He is going to give us, we have great concern. Barring this great responsibility and anxiety, these conferences are a source of great joy and satisfaction, the present conference being no exception to the rule. The general authorities and the people have been offering earnest prayers to the Lord, for some weeks, that we might have with us, in the meet-