

what Jesus said regarding the moral and religious nature of God and man. The second fundamental he names as the acceptance of Christ's religious teaching and practice on the ground that it sets forth the principle which can be workable on our world, and the one principle potent enough to overcome our world. As the third condition in that belief he begins with Jesus' teaching as to the nature and character of God and he names the Father whom Jesus teaches as having redemptive love freely and supremely given, supremely exemplified in good will toward man. The fourth condition of this universal belief in Jesus means to be a son and a brother in this kingdom, this divine family which Jesus teaches; and to be a son and brother means to love our fellowmen the way God loves us.

These this prominent writer gives as the fundamentals of Christianity. These the elders of the Church of Jesus Christ are preaching. Their aims are lofty, their purposes are sublime, and the world instead of speaking against them should encourage them and uphold them. Particularly this is true of the state of Utah. Every citizen of this state owes an obligation to the 2,000 missionaries who are out representing this state in honor. Why should anyone condemn the missionaries who are out preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ without price, paying their own expenses for teaching to the world the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and bearing witness in kindness and love, that our Father has appeared to man, that his Son Jesus Christ has been raised from the tomb and now lives, bearing witness to the word of the immortality of the soul? Who should vilify people for standing on that sublime ground? They testify further that the Church of Christ is organized in its perfection, and if the world will accept that Church and apply its principles economically, educationally and socially, the brotherhood of man will be established and the millennium for which all honest souls are longing will be hastened.

#### TESTIMONY

I testify to you here that God lives, that he is near to his servants, and will hear and answer them and guide them when they come to him. I know that my Redeemer lives. I know it! I know that he has spoken to man in this age. I know that his Church is established among men. God help us all to be true to it and help the world to see it as it is and not as ignorant men, and vicious men and women sometimes picture it, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY

##### PRIESTHOOD CONVENTIONS

During the past three months, by direction of the First Presidency of the Church, there have been held, in many of the stakes of Zion, priesthood conventions, the purpose of which was to stimu-

late renewed zeal and increased activity in the councils and quorums of the Priesthood. I hail with delight the inauguration of this heaven-inspired movement, in which I am proud and happy to have taken part.

The Priesthood, which means divine authority and the men in whom that authority is vested, is by far the most important thing in the Church of Christ; being, in fact, the rock upon which it rests. There could be no Church without the Priesthood. It is therefore of vital consequence that all the quorums and councils should function effectively toward the great ends for which they were instituted.

To my mind the most enjoyable of the meetings held in connection with the priesthood conventions, were those in which the brethren who had been appointed to speak related instances of the power of the Priesthood that had come under their observation or within the range of their experience. What I heard in those meetings awakened in me a desire to discourse briefly upon the subject at this general conference of the Church.

#### A GOD OF MIRACLES

Among the words of the Savior, as recorded in the New Testament, are the following:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you. He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” (John 14:12.)

To what particular works did the Savior refer when he made this remarkable promise to his disciples? I believe that he had reference to or meant to include the wonderful works connected with his mortal ministry—the miracles whereby he manifested his divine power, and concerning which it is written: He “did not do many mighty works” in certain places, “because of their unbelief.”

The “beginning of miracles” in the Savior’s ministry was the turning of water into wine, at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2:11). Afterwards he fed a multitude of five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. He walked upon the water, stilled the tempest, healed the sick, cast out devils, gave sight to the blind, raised Lazarus from the tomb, and did many other marvelous works.

#### SIGNS TO FOLLOW BELIEF

He endowed his apostles with the same power (Matt. 10:1-8), and having commissioned them to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” he said, “And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17, 18). “And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord

working with them and confirming the word with signs following" (Ibid 5:20). No good Christian doubts this, nor does any faithful Latter-day Saint.

#### HIGHER CRITICISM'S ATTITUDE

Nevertheless, there is a growing disposition in these modern days to discredit and deny all such things—to do away with everything savoring of the supernatural. "Higher Criticism," as it is called, seems to regard this as its special mission. It would fain strip the Son of God of his divinity, and make him merely a good and a great man whose teachings are salutary and uplifting. Jesus Christ, we are told, was not miraculously begotten; he did not do the mighty works attributed to him; his blood did not atone for sin, nor was he raised from the dead to become the Author of the Resurrection. All these are myths and fables, invented for propagandist purposes, and are unworthy of credence by any intelligent mind. Such is the attitude of the so-called "Higher Criticism," otherwise known as "Modernism." The logic of its advocates is simply this: *We* cannot do works of that kind, and therefore works of that kind cannot be done.

I concede the first proposition, but not the second. They who doubt the possibility of miracles are indeed without the power to perform them. But this does not prove that believers lack that power. Miracles are the fruits of faith. "These signs shall follow them that *believe*." The gist of the matter is this: These doubters have done away with God, or have tried to do away with him, and consequently are unable to conceive of a higher power than they themselves possess.

#### ILLUSTRATIVE ANECDOTES

Their position reminds me of an incident that occurred many years ago, when I was a ward bishop in this city. It was Sunday evening, and a Primary Association conference was in progress at the ward chapel. One of the sisters, a Primary teacher, gathered the little tots around her upon the stand, and told them the story of Jesus feeding the multitude. Going home that night, one of the mothers, anxious to impress the lesson upon the mind of her little son, asked him the question: "What did Sister Blank tell you this evening?" "She told us about the Savior feeding the people," answered the boy. "How many people?" queried the mother. "Five thousand." "And what did He feed them with?" "Five loaves of bread and two fishes." "Well, now, how do you suppose he could do that?" The little fellow mused a moment, and then blurted out: "Well, I don't believe those in the middle got any."

His child mind could not grasp the idea that it was a miraculous feeding of the multitude, and that it was done by the power of God, and not of man.

Another little boy, of whom you may have heard—for I have

told the story more than once in the congregations of the Saints—was of quite a different turn. Johnny was his name, and he had a little brother named Billy. The two were playing in their mother's door-yard. Johnny was whittling a stick, and Billy had just caught a fly. "Johnny," said he, "what a funny thing a fly is. See what lots of legs he's got. And every time I blow him he buzzes (suited the action to the word). I wonder how God made him."

Yes, and I wonder too. I wonder how He made the sunbeam, and the blade of grass, and the flowers and the trees. I don't know—all I know is that they are.

But Johnny had an idea of how God made the fly. He went on whittling, and said: "Well, Billy, God don't make flies like men make houses. When he wants flies he says, Let there be flies, and then there is flies."

Johnny had read the Bible, and understood it. He had learned the first great lesson of Scripture: "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." His mind could allow for the difference—the vast difference between the might of Omnipotence and the puny strength of mortal man.

#### NOT CONTRARY TO LAW

One objection—perhaps the main one—urged against a belief in miracles, is that they are contrary to law. But that is a great mistake. They are in strict conformity with law. The universe is governed by law, and its Creator works in consonance therewith. But there are greater laws and lesser laws, and the greater suspend at times the operation of the lesser. When this occurs, men exclaim: "A miracle!" Others say: "It never happened, for it is contrary to law." Contrary to some law it may be, or may seem to be—some lesser law with whose everyday workings men are familiar; but not contrary to some higher law regarding which they may know little or nothing.

#### CARLYLE ON NATURAL LAWS

"What are the laws of Nature?" asks Carlyle, and answers his own question thus: "To me perhaps the rising of one from the dead were no violation of these laws, but a confirmation, if some far deeper law, now first penetrated into, and by spiritual force, as all the rest have been, were brought to bear on me with its material force. \* \* \* 'They [the laws of Nature] stand written in our books of science,' say you; 'in the accumulated record of man's experience.' Was man with his experience present at the creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals yet dived down to the foundations of the universe, and gauged everything there? Did the Maker take them into his counsel, that they read his ground-plan of the incomprehensible All, and can say, This stands marked therein, and no more than this? Alas, not in any wise! \* \* \* To the minnow, every

cranny and pebble and quality and accident of its little creek may have become familiar; but does the minnow understand the ocean tides and periodic currents, the trade winds and monsoons and moons' eclipses, by all which the condition of its little creek is regulated, and may from time to time (unmiraculously enough), be quite upset and reversed?" (*Sartor Resartus*, Natural Supernaturalism.)

A grand old thinker, that Carlyle. Man is not a minnow, to be sure. But neither is man's finite wisdom any criterion by which to judge the infinite wisdom of the All-wise.

#### ELISHA AND THE AX

When Elisha the Prophet caused the sunken ax-head to float on the surface of the river into which it had accidentally fallen (II Kings 6:1-6), he was working in accordance with law, but not any ordinary law. The Law of Gravitation, in obedience to which all things on earth tend toward a common center—the center of the earth—required the ax to stay where it was, at the bottom of the stream. But the Prophet evidently knew of a higher law which could suspend the action of the law of gravity as to that particular object. He invoked that higher law, and "the iron did swim."

#### MOSES AND THE RED SEA

When Moses divided the Red Sea, so that Israel might pass through and escape from the pursuing Egyptians, who were overwhelmed by the returning waters, he was working in accordance with law—divine law. And the same is true of all servants of the Lord who have wrought miracles at any time.

#### JOSHUA AND THE SUN

"Higher Criticism" laughs to scorn the idea of Joshua commanding the sun and moon to stand still, so that Israel might have light enough effectually to defeat his enemies (Joshua 10:12-14); and the Bible account which declares that "the sun stood still and the moon stayed," is treated with derision. Because, forsooth, if the sun had halted even for a moment in its regular course, the whole mighty universe would have come crashing down into chaos and ruin. Well, perhaps so, if there had been no God to uphold it—the God who made the sun and moon, and whose almighty power holds them in their orbits and controls their every action. I see nothing more marvelous in controlling the heavenly bodies, than in creating them in the first place. Be it a fact, as is claimed, that it was the earth that stood still in Joshua's day, and that the sun and moon only seemed to be stationary, that does not affect the main argument. The same God who made the earth also made the sun and moon, and could have stayed them in their course had He so willed.

## WHAT ARE MIRACLES?

Miracles are extraordinary results flowing from superior means and methods of doing things. When man wants light he strikes a match, or presses a button, or turns a switch—and lo! there is light. When God wants light, he says: "Let there be light." It is simply a matter of knowing how to do things in a superior way, and having the power to do them. Man is gradually acquiring this power. It is a far call from the tallow dip to the electric light. But the end is not yet. Improvements will continue to be made, and some day, perhaps, men may be able to make light just as the Lord makes it. Paradoxically, it might be said that the time will come when miracles will be so common that there will be none.

## MODERN INSTANCES

The Latter-day Saints are not strangers to the miraculous workings of divine power. Our history as a people is replete with such occurrences. I could relate many experiences of my own in support of this assertion, and so could these, my brethren, seated here upon the stand.

My first experience of the kind was in the year 1877, when I was a missionary in the State of Ohio. I had been preaching in the farming districts near the town of Elyria, testifying that the miraculous "signs" promised by the Savior were in the Church of Christ today, the same as in days of old. A sick woman took me at my word and sent for me. She had been suffering for six weeks with neuralgia, and was almost maddened by the incessant pain. She asked me to administer for her relief. Up to that time I had never performed the healing ordinance, and felt very timorous over the outcome, fearing that if she were not healed I would be deemed an impostor and perhaps driven out of the neighborhood. Moreover, her husband had threatened to kill any "Mormon" missionary who crossed his threshold. But I went—and was not molested.

No sooner had I laid my hands upon that woman's head, than a power came upon me that I had never felt before, nor have I ever felt it since, in the same degree. It was a burning in my bosom, so powerful as to almost deprive me of speech, and it went like fire to the very tips of my fingers. I rebuked the pain in the name of Jesus Christ, and the woman was instantly healed. "Thank God!" she said, "the pain has gone." I sank into a chair and burst into tears, overcome by this manifestation of the goodness and power of God.

Not long afterwards, I was visiting a family of Saints in the coal-mining region near the town of Akron. A married daughter of the household came trudging through a snow storm, with her two little children, a distance of three miles, to get me to baptize her. I did so, the immersion taking place in a little brook running through her father's lot. It was February, and the weather was

extremely cold. The moment I stepped into the icy stream a pain shot up to my heart, and I feared for a moment that I would have to step out again. I feared also that the little woman would not be able to endure it. So I silently prayed that the water might be tempered. Immediately there was a change in it—or else in me, for I felt the cold no more, nor did she complain of it at all.

#### HEALING SELF-ADMINISTERED

The baptism over, she went on her way rejoicing. But I was in distress. A pain had seized me in the elbow of my left arm, and it steadily grew worse. That evening I used some liniment upon it, but got no relief, and my arm continued to swell and stiffen. I could hardly move it next day, but by that time I knew just what to do. There was some consecrated oil in the house, but my green inexperience had made me think that it would be improper to use it on myself, there being no other elder present. But suffering had opened my eyes, and my faith was strong, for I felt that the pain had no business there. That night I carefully washed off the liniment, applied the holy oil, and rebuked the pain in the name of Jesus. The effect was instantaneous. I turned my arm over—the pain was gone; and I have never felt a vestige of it since.

#### THE GREATER SUSPENDS THE LESSER

One more instance, and I am done. Some years ago I was engaged to deliver a lecture in one of the towns south of this city, and was on my way to the lecture hall when I received a message from the bishop of the ward, asking me to come and administer to his little daughter, who was critically ill. Her doctor had said that she could not live till morning. Taking with me another elder, I proceeded to the bishop's home, and we administered to the dying girl. Next morning a telephone message informed me that a marvelous change had taken place. The young patient, who had not slept for days prior to being blessed by us, immediately thereafter had sunk into a sweet and refreshing slumber. She slept twelve hours, and woke up—normal, and continued so. The doctor was astounded, and the parents, of course, were overjoyed. That girl, then fifteen years of age, and now twenty-four, is an active member of the ward in which she resides, has a good position, and goes to and from her work as well and happy as if she had never known a day's illness.

Her physician had said that she could not live till morning—and no doubt he was right, from his viewpoint. Medical science had so decreed, and but for the interposition of Divine Providence, that decree would probably have gone into effect. According to the lesser law she could not live. But a greater law said: "She shall live." And the lesser could not operate in the presence of the greater.

## ALL THINGS POSSIBLE TO THEM THAT BELIEVE

Miracles belong to no particular time or place. Wherever and whenever there is a legitimate demand for the exercise of divine power, that power will act, and marvels will result. We worship a God of miracles, and he changeth not, but is the same yesterday, to-day and forever (Mormon 9:7-11, 17-20). There is but one valid reason for the absence of miracles among any people, and that is the absence of faith. "All things are possible to them that believe."

The choir and congregation sang, "How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord."

Benediction was pronounced by Elder Nelson J. Hogan, president of the Idaho stake of Zion.

Meeting adjourned until 2 o'clock p. m.

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**AFTERNOON SESSION**

President Heber J. Grant opened the meeting by announcing that the choir and congregation would sing, "O say what is truth?"

After singing, Elder Colen H. Sweeten, president of the Curlew stake of Zion, opened the meeting with prayer.

A duet, "For so hath the Lord commanded," was sung by Cannon Lund and August Glissmeyer.

**BISHOP CHARLES W. NIBLEY**

It is a great honor, I am sure, to be asked to speak to this congregation, but I approach this duty with fear and trembling. The meeting this morning, the first session of our conference, gave assurance that the Lord is still with his Saints, and still recognizes this work, and that he is sustaining his servants who labor for his honor and glory.

There is a deep significance in Elder McKay's testimony given this morning, when he spoke concerning the changed conditions in some nations of the earth where hitherto our sons suffered imprisonment for trying to preach the gospel; while now places of prominence are open to them, even the halls of the governments, in which Latter-day Saint missionaries have been invited to hold meetings. What has brought about this change?

During recent years, especially since the World War, great changes have taken place in this direction. I call your attention to a revelation of the Almighty, given to the Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith found in Section 98, beginning at the 4th verse:

"And now, verily I say unto you concerning the laws of the land, it is