

ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY

Two difficulties confront the ordinary speaker at a general conference of the Church. One is to select a theme suitable to the occasion; the other is to present that theme in some degree of completeness without overrunning the allotted time.

I recognize, of course—we all do—the wisdom and the necessity for time limitations, where so many speakers are to be heard from; and I try to conform to the regulation. But it is not the easiest thing in the world to lose one's self in a subject and keep an eye on the clock; to talk about eternity and all the while be thinking about time—the time to close. "No man can serve two masters."

This is my reason for using notes on some occasions. I can speak without them, and generally do, but cannot condense my thoughts so well when speaking impromptu, as when I have committed them, in part at least, to paper.

THE WORTH OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowing just what to say, on any occasion, is very important. Knowing how to say it, or having the power to say it in a way that appeals, is equally so. A machine in a big plant broke down, and an expert was called in to fix it. He gave two taps with his hammer, and the machine started. The bill was \$250. The superintendent, as soon as he could get his breath, demanded an itemized statement. It came, and read as follows: "Tapping with hammer, \$1.00; knowing *where* to tap, \$249."

It is just so with the speaker. He must know where to tap and even then must leave it to the Lord to do the tapping. Our Heavenly Father knows our needs, and he alone can supply them. He knows where to tap, and the speaker is the hammer that he taps with. The sledge-hammer blows struck during this Conference are samples of his handiwork. They ought to be sufficient to set any machine going—in the right direction.

FIRST PRINCIPLES

Daniel Webster, in his great reply to Senator Hayne upon the necessity for the preservation of the Union, counseled a return to first principles. Our own Brother Roberts, equally eloquent, gave similar advice at one of our recent general conferences. I find myself in much the same mood today. I desire to speak upon the first principles of the Gospel.

One of our Articles of Faith reads as follows:

"We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: First, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; Second, Repentance; Third, Baptism by Immersion for the remission of sins; Fourth, Laying on of Hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost."

I learned these principles in Sabbath school, when I was a boy, and they have served me all the days of my life. I took them with me when, as a youth of twenty-one, I went out into the world to preach the gospel. I found them as effectual in combating error, as did David the stone

and sling in his encounter with the Giant. I have never met the man or woman who could gainsay them.

UNPROFITABLE QUESTIONS

And our missionaries today can say the same, when they preach these principles in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit, testifying to the Restoration of the Gospel, and letting alone such unprofitable questions as, Who wrote the Book of Genesis? Was Job a fictitious or an historical character? Does God save man or does man save himself?

This Church was not established, nor are its missionaries sent forth to quibble and contend over these or any other questions. With a world's salvation trembling in the balance, it matters very little which was first—the chicken or the egg, or whether a house burns up or burns down.

BIRGHAM YOUNG'S COUNSEL

Fifty years ago, when I was a young missionary in the State of Ohio, I received a letter from President Brigham Young, containing these golden words: "Never condescend to argue with the wicked. The principles of the gospel are too sacred to be quarreled over. Bear your testimony in humility, and leave the result with the Lord."

That is all we can do. This is God's work, not man's, and He is doing it in his own way, and using men and women as his instruments. No man can say, of any part of the Lord's work, "I did it." No flesh can glory in his presence. The missionary does his whole duty when he bears a faithful testimony by tongue or pen, by word and deed, and leaves the result with the Lord.

CONTENTION AN EVIL

Contention is "of the devil," the Lord says, and the time is so precious and so short between Now and the End, that we need every minute of it to deliver our message, to cry repentance, and warn the world of divine judgments that will follow the rejection of the gospel.

WHAT THE GOSPEL IS AND WHAT IT DOES

The Gospel of Christ "is the power of God unto salvation." It is more than that—it is the power of God unto exaltation. It redeems, saves and glorifies all who yield obedience to its requirements. It is the Pathway to Perfection, and was instituted as such by the wisdom of the Gods before this world was formed, before man had fallen, before he had need of redemption and salvation. There is only one gospel, but there have been many gospel dispensations, and this is the greatest and the last. There never will be another upon this planet. It is the last time that God will so speak to man. But he will speak in other ways, by other tongues, and the world will have to listen:

OTHER TESTIMONIES

"For after your testimony"—the Lord says to the Elders of Israel—

"cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground, and shall not be able to stand.

"And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea, heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

"And all things shall be in commotion; and surely, men's hearts shall fail them; for fear shall come upon all people;

"And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice, sounding the trump of God, saying, Prepare ye, prepare ye, O inhabitants of the earth; for the judgment of our God is come: behold, and lo! the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." (D. and C. 88:89-92.)

ETERNAL PRINCIPLES

The Gospel's fundamental principles are eternal. They never were created. They are self-existent. Divine wisdom, recognizing certain laws and ordinances as essential to human uplift and advancement, placed them in the gospel plan and made them available and effectual unto man's redemption, salvation and eternal glory.

And how were they made available and effectual to those high ends? Here we touch the question of whether God saves man or man saves himself.

A SINISTER SPIRIT

A sinister spirit is creeping over this world—a spirit of arrogant self-assertion, a disposition to do away with God, to shut him out from his own universe, to strip the Divine One of his divinity, deny his miraculous power, and regard him as nothing more than a superman, a good and wise Teacher who points out the Way in which men should walk—and that is about all. Even in the pulpit such things are said at times. In current literature divinity is below par. Any writer who makes a sensational assault upon religion, robbing Christ of his Christliness, finds a willing publisher and a ready sale. One who stands up stalwartly for God and Truth—his manuscript goes begging.

NO MARKET VALUE

Pure religion has no market value. It's the humbug that prospers. All religion is looked upon by many as old-fashioned fogyism, something out of date, and it is deemed progressive and even heroic to get along without it. Dr. William B. Riley, in a recent address in this city, said: "The idea has been put forth in some of our secular institutions, that a person should make his own moral decisions, without regard to divine law." Heaven forbid that such a spirit, or anything like it, should ever invade the Church of Christ—the Church of the Latter-day Saints! Says Riley again: "Make man believe that he is responsible only to himself, remove all belief of higher power, and it is certain that a state of anarchy will prevail."

Let me now read to you a very splendid poem:

INVICTUS

By William Ernest Henley

Out of the night that covers me,
 Black as the pit from Pole to Pole,
 I thank whatever gods may be,
 For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
 I have not winced nor cried aloud,
 Under the bludgeonings of chance
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
 Looms but the horror of the shade,
 And yet the menace of the years
 Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how straight the gate,
 How charged with punishments the scroll,
 I am the master of my fate,
 I am the captain of my soul.

We all admire courage, fortitude, and the power to patiently endure. We recognize such traits as essential to success, both in spiritual and in temporal pursuits. But these heroic qualities, admirable though they be, and desirable withal, cannot lessen one jot or tittle the need for a Savior, to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. In this wonderfully virile and powerful poem, there is no recognition of any need for divine help. That, to me, is a defect. Of course, a man must know God before he can recognize him, and this poor man evidently did not know him.

A BROKEN REED

A reasonable amount of self-reliance is a good thing, is a pillar of strength in any human character. But when a man relies wholly upon himself and seeks no help from the divine Helper, he is leaning upon a broken reed, however mighty he may think himself.

David was self-reliant when he met Goliath of Gath; but it was because he knew God was with him. "He will give you into my hands," said the shepherd boy. And it was his simple faith, his sublime trust, his absolute confidence in the Almighty, that overthrew the Giant—not merely a sling with a stone in it.

"I am the captain of my soul," is true only to a very limited extent. Man is a free agent, with a will of his own, with the power to achieve, to succeed or fail. That much is true. But there is a Greater Captain of our souls, to whom we all owe allegiance, for He redeemed our souls from death, and they are his; he purchased them with a price. Self-reliance is a good thing, if not carried too far. But self-assurance, self-sufficiency, self-conceit, is a bad thing. There is no such thing as absolute independence. We depend upon one another, and all are dependent upon God.

FALL AND REDEMPTION

Answering now the question: How are the principles of the gospel

made available and effectual for man's salvation and exaltation? It is through the Fall and the Redemption. "Adam fell that men might be"—that a race of spirits might tabernacle in the flesh, and thus become souls, capable of endless increase, of eternal progression and exaltation. But the fall brought death—eternal death, which had to be overcome before these spirits, these souls, God's sons and daughters, could fulfil their heaven-decreed destiny and go on to perfection.

Christ overcame death—conquered hell and the grave—died and rose again; and because he lives we shall live also. He gained this great victory, not by slaughtering his enemies, but by forgiving them, by allowing his own blood to be shed for them and for all, thus paying a debt that no one else could pay. "Greater love than this hath no man, that he will lay down his life for his friends." But here was One who laid down his life for his enemies as well as his friends. No mere man could do that. It required the love and the life of a God.

THE DIVINE AGONY

It took a Being capable of enduring pangs that no mere mortal could endure—pangs of the body and of the spirit, so terrible, so poignant, so far-reaching and fathomless that the finite mind stands aghast in contemplation of the infinite and awful mystery; pangs that caused him, "even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore."

And he "suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer, if they would repent." But if they would not repent, then they must suffer even as did he. (D. and C. 19:16-18.)

"For behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both women and children, who belong to the family of Adam.

"And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day.

"And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

"And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it." (2 Nephi 9:21-24. See also D. and C. 18:11, 12.)

Can anyone read that, and believe that all Christ did was to point out the Way of Salvation and bid men walk therein? What about the construction of the way? There was no way till he made one. Walking in it, however difficult at times, is a mere bagatelle by comparison.

MACHINERY AND THE POWER

Adam's fall placed man on earth and made available for him the plan of salvation and exaltation. Without the fall, the spirit would have no body, and consequently no claim upon the resurrection. And it was Christ who brought about the resurrection. He is its Author. It

was his death, his sacrificial offering, that gave vitality to the gospel plan and rendered effectual man's faith and works in his own behalf. Without the Atonement, to offset and nullify the fatal effects of the original transgression, all man's self-help would count for nothing, and the very Gospel itself would be mere machinery without the power.

IN AND OUT OF THE PIT

When Adam fell, it was as if the human race had fallen into a pit, from which they were powerless, by any act of their own, to emerge; having no means whereby to climb up and out, and not even knowing how to climb. But a Friend, all-wise and all-powerful, comes to the mouth of the pit, compassionates its wretched inmates, and proposes to rescue them from their unhappy situation. *He makes of his own life a ladder*; lets it down into the pit and says: "Now climb!" They who climb, get out of the pit. They who refuse to climb, remain in the pit—and who is to blame but themselves?

The Crucifixion on Calvary, the self-immolation of a God, is the Rock upon which the gospel rests—the Everlasting Gospel, the ladder unto life eternal.

"Faith without works is dead." We work out our salvation. There is no question about that. But we work it out through Jesus Christ, and not independently of Him. WE DO NOT SAVE OURSELVES. We but avail ourselves of the means of salvation provided by our Lord and Savior, the God who died that man might live.

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

Presented the General Authorities and Officers and Auxiliary Heads of the Church, who were voted upon and sustained by unanimous vote of the congregation, as follows:

GENERAL AUTHORITIES OF THE CHURCH

FIRST PRESIDENCY

Heber J. Grant, Prophet, Seer and Revelator and President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Anthony W. Ivins, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

Charles W. Nibley, Second Counselor in the First Presidency.

PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Rudger Clawson

COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Rudger Clawson	Joseph Fielding Smith
Reed Smoot	James E. Talmage
George Albert Smith	Stephen L. Richards
George F. Richards	Richard R. Lyman
Orson F. Whitney	Melvin J. Ballard
David O. McKay	John A. Widtsoe

PRESIDING PATRIARCH

Hyrum G. Smith