

Elder Lee R. Taylor, president of the Nebo Stake, offered the opening prayer.

A ladies' chorus under the direction of Prof. Anthony C. Lund sang a sacred anthem, "The Twenty-third Psalm."

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

People are moved to action by a diversity of motives, and much depends upon the incentives by which a man is prompted. Indeed, motives may be regarded as constituting an index to the character of the individual; and doubtless there are many whose motives are not generally understood in their full significance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF MOTIVES

I call to mind that the Master while in the flesh warned against unworthy motives: When you give to charity, he said, though as he put it "when thou doest thine alms," do not so act before men to attract their attention and win praise for yourselves; for those who do this receive their reward then and there and have nothing more to expect by way of recompense. And do not make a display of your piety and your prayers, for there are those who pray that they may be heard of men. Well, they are heard of men, they have their reward and that is all there is to it.

And when you fast, he continued, do not go about with a haggard countenance, displaying to men the fact that you are fasting or pretending to; but fast in earnestness and sincerity unto the Lord and pray unto him in secret and do your alms quietly.

Now, I would rather a man do a good deed even with a motive that may not be the best than that he should fail to do it; and far rather that he should do that good deed rather than do evil. Nevertheless there is an importance to be attached to the incentives that move us.

CONFERENCE ASSEMBLIES

In looking over these assembled thousands in the several meetings of this conference I have thought of the motives that bring such multitudes together, not only now but at all of our recurring conferences.

The gathering of people in conferences of this Church is a phenomenon, or appears to be such to those who do not know us well, while to the members of the Church it is an ordinary and regular occurrence. I am inclined to impute good motives to men, to communities and organizations, until I have reason to act otherwise. I have not lost confidence in this family of ours, this human family. We are a pretty good family after all, much as there is to be improved in our affairs; and I ascribe worthy motives to those who are assembled here this afternoon.

ACTUALITY OF RELIGION

I believe that the great majority—oh, I may say that all of us—

have come together with good intent. This is a day set apart for worship, the Sabbath, and we come with the spirit of worship in our hearts. We are here to learn more of the duties that pertain to us as members of the Church. Our religion is very real to us. There is that feature about the Latter-day Saints—they take their religion to heart. They believe what they say, and though I know we can do much better than we are doing, I believe that the people are trying to live according to what they know to be the revealed truths of their religious system. There are many to whom religion is really lacking in actuality—in factuality let me say—it does not reach the heart, therefore it does not impel to right living. Many are apt to deal with religion in the abstract and to shrink when concrete application is made. There is nothing new in this.

CHRIST'S AFFIRMATION OF HIS DIVINITY

You remember the story told, not a story in the sense of a bit of fiction but the recorded account of the Christ as he made his way from Jerusalem northward, passing through Samaria, near the beginning of his ministry, when he met a woman at Jacob's well and asked her for water to drink. She was surprised that a Jew should solicit any favor of a Samaritan, but she hastened to comply with the request, and Jesus talked with her. She asked him questions and soon became aware that he could read her thoughts, that he knew the story of her life, and she was somewhat disturbed. She raised the query, perhaps in a casual way, as to whether it was necessary to worship in Mount Moriah, as the Samaritans held, or in Jerusalem, as the Jews insisted. She reasoned on it for a moment and then put it away, really thrust it aside or tried to, saying:

"I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ, when he is come, he will tell us all things."

That may seem a good way of putting things off; but she was brought to solemn attention when he spoke the next few words:

"I that speak unto thee am he."

For that she was not prepared, the application, the present reality. The Jewish nation had been waiting for the coming of Messiah; their rabbis had preached upon it Sabbath after Sabbath, and their synagogues had resounded to the words of the prophets telling of the coming; but when they were told that he was there in their midst they rose up and tried to kill him, and eventually did bring about his death.

THE REVOLT AT NAZARETH

From Samaria our Lord went on to Galilee, and there, in what has been called his home city—though not the place of his birth, yet the town of his youth, Nazareth—he went into the synagog after he had become thirty years of age, the age at which a Jew was entitled to be heard if he had anything to say, in the synagog, and he there appeared

for the first time so far as we know in what we may call the speaker's stand, perhaps by invitation. The president of the synagog handed to him the roll, the Book of Isaiah. Jesus opened to what in our Bible is the sixty-first chapter and read from it as recorded by Luke:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Possibly there were few if any there who had not heard that scripture quoted aforetime. It was a favorite with speakers and commentators of the day, and it aroused some solemn interest in all who listened to him, but his words that followed struck to the heart of everyone:

"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

They were startled. Some began to find fault, and the tumult culminated in their seizing him and dragging him to the brow of a nearby hill, intending to cast him down to his death even at the beginning of his ministry. But his hour had not yet come. It was the present, the individual application, that had stirred their anger. And so with many other incidents in the life and earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus.

PREDICTED SIGNS OF THE END

As you read in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew our Lord declared as one of the signs of the approaching end of the dispensation of which he was speaking, that this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come. That scripture has been preached in many places, synagog, tabernacles, cathedrals. People passively believe in it, yes, it is scripture and it goes with other scripture. But when the voice of authority is heard declaring that this Gospel that we preach is the Gospel referred to by Jesus Christ, verily the Gospel of the Kingdom, that it is now being declared in all the world, that this declaration is a witness unto all nations, people get angry; they reject it; they do not want the application. In theory it is to them all right. As a matter of record they are willing to let it stand, but if you apply it to them they object. This is the attitude of many.

ELIJAH'S COMING

So we could cite instance after instance. Indulge me in one other. Remember what the Lord said through Malachi regarding one particular characteristic of the last days, that before the great and dreadful day of the Lord Elijah the prophet would be sent with a particular mission to turn the hearts of the living children unto their dead progenitors, and on the other hand to turn the hearts of the dead ancestors, alive in the spirit, to their posterity now in the flesh. Yes, that is scripture also,

and many have quoted it and let it pass. But when we raise our voices in solemn declaration that Elijah the ancient prophet has come, that that prediction has been fulfilled as to its initiation and is in rapid course of progressive operation, people object. When we say that on the third day of April, 1836, Elijah appeared in person, a resurrected being, in the Kirtland Temple, and did confer his authority, power and commission, upon the prophet of this dispensation, people refuse to receive it and they are loud in their denunciation of the claim.

A SPECIFIC INSTANCE OF DENIAL

I call to mind that it was my privilege once to address the Philosophical Society of Denver on the Philosophy of Mormonism. I quoted that passage from Malachi, and dwelt upon it at some length. In the discussion that followed the address a cultured gentleman, a Jew, took part. He said:

"I wish I could believe all that the speaker has said tonight, and I believe much of it; but when he tells us that Elijah, the ancient prophet, has actually come in person to the earth in this age, I say simply that I can not believe it. I wish I could, but I can not."

Well, of course the rejoinder was simple when my turn came again:

"Do you accept Malachi as one of your prophets?"

"Certainly."

"Do you believe what he said when he voiced the word of the Lord that in the last days Elijah the prophet would come?"

"Well, yes; yes of course."

"Now, we simply affirm that your Jewish prophet Malachi was a true prophet as is proved by the fulfilment of his prediction; that Elijah has come; that the work without which the earth would be smitten with a curse is now in progress."

SIGNS OF THE TIME

The calamities of these days, phenomenal disturbances in nature—earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, destructive hurricanes—as also the struggle of nation against nation in actual warfare and in scheming diplomacy, the pestilence and the famine—these and yet greater disasters have been definitely predicted. None can gainsay their actuality, and all who read must see that they were foretold.

Yet men are prone to deny the reality of these dread occurrences as signs of the time, telling of the imminence of the Lord's coming to rule among men and to inaugurate the millennium of a new order. Conditions prevailing in the world today demand our serious attention. The solemnities of the eternal word and plan should move mankind to repentance, reformation, and soulful worship of Deity, worship expressed in a rectification of individual and national life.

I plead for the reality, the actuality of religion, in belief and practice, feeling that this is no day for mere theory and supposition. This religion of ours, this Church of ours, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is real, vital, living, eternal. God help us to understand and live accordingly, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.