

## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE CHURCH

### FROM THE TIME OF THE MARTYRDOM OF THE PROPHETS JOSEPH SMITH AND HYRUM SMITH.

#### XIII.

IN the fall of the year 1844 the Church had a foothold in various parts of the United States, the Canadas, Nova Scotia, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and islands of the sea. It was looked upon in a contemptuous manner by the self-professed orthodox churches, and was treated with that lack of charity that is commanded in the gospel. But now being formidable in numbers, knowing no distrust in its divine mission, and inspired by the Spirit of its Author, it rolled forth from sea to sea by that majestic power that is known to none, except to those who are born again of the water and the Spirit.

The Elders of the Church were aware that the gospel of the kingdom must be preached to all nations. They had to contend with the bigotry, prejudice, and religious ignorance of the age. They had to battle with long established opinions, long-continued practices, and endless variety of rituals that had become honored and venerated with age and tradition. Collegiate education had given the clergy, among the unthinking masses, prestige, "to the form of godliness," without the "power" that characterize this gospel of our Lord and Savior. Richly adorned churches, magnificent cathedrals, and extravagant salaries prompted

men to canonize false doctrines and false teachers, and made merchandise of the pure and holy doctrines of the meek and humble Nazarene. The greatest flood of falsehoods that mankind could invent were circulated by priests and people in every land and clime, in order to prevent the ministry of the Elders from being proclaimed.

The missionaries were maligned with malicious falsehoods, by the press, in the pulpit, and by the masses. Nothing shielded them but the power of God. With courage and faith, unsurpassed, they carried the message of peace and good will to nations who sat in ignorance and darkness, concerning the plan of divine redemption. The reception they received was but a repetition of the hatred manifested in the days of our Savior and His apostles. Mosheim, the historian, speaking of the ancient apostles and disciples said: "The innocence and virtue that distinguished so eminently the lives of Christ's servants, and the spotless purity of the doctrine they taught, were not sufficient to defend them against the virulence and malignity of the Jews. The priests and rulers of that abandoned people, not only loaded with injuries and reproaches the apostles of Jesus, and their disciples, but condemned many of them to

death, and executed in the most irregular and barbarous manner their sanguinary decrees. The murder of Stephen, of James the son of Zebedee, and of James, surnamed the Just (see Josephus, book 20, chapter 8), furnish dreadful examples of the truth of what we here advance. This odious malignity of Jewish doctors, against the heralds of the gospel, undoubtedly originated in the secret apprehension that the progress of Christianity would destroy the credit of Judaism, and lead to the abolition of their pompous ceremonies. The Jews who lived out of Palestine, in the Roman provinces, did not yield to those at Jerusalem, in point of cruelty to the innocent disciples of Christ.

We learn from the history of the acts of the apostles, and other records of unquestionable authority, that they spared no labor, but zealously seized every occasion of animating the magistrates against the Christians, and instigating the multitude to demand their destruction. The high priest of the nation, and the Jews who dwelt in Palestine, where instrumental in exciting the rage of these foreign Jews against the infant church, by sending messengers to exhort them, not only to avoid all intercourse with the Christians, but also to persecute them in the most vehement manner. For this inhuman order, they endeavored to find out the most plausible pretexts; and therefore, they gave out, that the Christians were

enemies to the Roman emperor, since they acknowledge the authority of a certain person whose name was Jesus, whom Pilate had punished capitally as a malefactor by a most righteous sentence, and on whom, nevertheless, they conferred the royal dignity. These perfidious insinuations had the intended effect, and the rage of the Jews against the Christians was conveyed from father to son, from age to age; so that the church of Christ had, in no period, more bitter and desperate enemies than the very people, to whom the immortal Savior was more especially sent.

The martyrdom of Christ and His apostles, led to the most important results, not merely as first revealing that great lesson which mankind has been so slow to learn, that religious persecution always advances the cause it endeavors to repress; it proved that the Christian faith, was stronger than death. Thenceforth its triumph was secure. Saul joined the crusade, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. He arrived at Damascus, blinded for a time, humbled, and that his first step had been openly to join himself to that party which he had threatened to exterminate. Thus we find that history has



repeated itself in this age. It is recorded anciently, that in the midst of much opposition, that "the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Again it is written, "And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of God and not of man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost. But the word of God grew and multiplied."

The gospel has spread and made converts in this dispensation under similar circumstances. Many who have opposed the truth, have been converted when they understood it. Like Saul, when they became enlightened, they became zealous in good works. Herod met a just penalty, the result of his false ambition and wickedness. God will not be mocked. Like Pharaoh he fell a victim to his vain and rebellious heart. Many have met an untimely grave, by opposing the truth, in our day, to our personal knowledge. If the lamentable fate of those who have fought the truth, knowingly, within the last sixty years, were fully written, it would fill many volumes. The mark of Cain, and of Judas, and of Arnold, in some degree, is engraven on the monumental memory, of all who have

betrayed trust. There is most singular providence accompanying betrayal in this life; it brings its own rewards. It bears the seed of its own punishment in this life and in the life to come. On the contrary, fidelity to a superior power generates life in all its relations, evermore. It is the good works that will induce others to glorify our heavenly Father. Good works imply the uniform habits of a life inspired with supreme love to God and truth. If we have not this—however accurate our theology, and holy our professions, our character will be but as salt that has "lost its savor."

It was thus with the Jewish nation; they were considered an orthodox people, regular in religious services, but they had no spiritual life, and were fit for nothing but the fate that awaited them, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the crushing foot of pagan Rome. The light of Christ flashed a light upon the corrupt heart of their society, and made it blush. Night cannot retain its darkness, in the presence of the sun.

Christ told His apostles: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." A true disciple is a light reflecting the will of God; He shines in him and through him. His conversation, his conduct, his spirit, are rays of light from heaven. The disciples are commanded, "Let your light so shine before men." Here is a divine command

urging it. In connection with the labors of the ministry to spread the gospel, its subjects feel bound by this solemn obligation to make its diffusion the grand end of their being.

This has been the case with all the faithful members of the Church in our day. Their lives has been devoted to the cause of truth. Consecration of their time and their all have been on the altar, subject to God's call, to spread the truth, and enlighten the nations in the religion revealed from heaven. At the death of the Prophets, the power of their mission rested on their brethren who remained, more abundantly than before, and it has remained in the Church to the present. The "signs," promised to follow the believers are daily with the faithful. They have ceased to cause surprise among the Elders, as they have become identified with the daily labors of their ministry.

During the fall of the year 1844, the Elders labored diligently in the United States, and in various parts of the earth, preaching the gospel. Conferences were held in the following places: Southfield Centre, Oakland County, Michigan; Easton, Northampton County, Pa.; Philadelphia City; St. Louis; Tazewell County, Va.; Quincy, Ill.; New Trenton, Franklin County, Io.; Livonia, Wayne County, Michigan, and Comstock, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. In all of those conferences, it was unanimously resolved, that the

Saints should sustain the Twelve Apostles, as the first Presidency of the Church. They promised to tithe themselves according to their several abilities, and to aid in the building of the Temple at Nauvoo. A conference was held in Liverpool, England, on Sunday the 8th, of Sep. 1844. Elder J. A. Stralton was chosen to preside. The following branches were represented: Liverpool, North Wales, Washington and Newton, St. Helens. Total, 636 members, including officers. Conferences were held at Chalford, August the 19th, 1844. At Edinburg, Scotland, on Sep. 8th, comprising eight branches, and including 428 members, 13 Elders, 17 Priests, 8 Teachers and 3 Deacons. At Leicester, England, on the 28th of August, comprising 140 members, 4 Elders, 12 Priests, 2 Teachers and 3 Deacons. At Clitheroe, on the 22nd of September, 1844, comprising 302 members, 15 Elders, 21 Priests, 17 Teachers and 4 Deacons. On the 6th of December, 1844, Apostle Wilford Woodruff and family, in company with Elders H. Clark, and D. Jones and their families, and Elders Milton Holmes and Leonard Hardy, sailed from New York, in the packet ship John R. Skiddy, for Liverpool, England, there to commence their labors in the ministry. "May the God of Israel send them a smooth sea and a fair wind." *N. Y. Prophet.*

The *Times and Seasons* added: "We are happy to give the above information. It is gratifying to



thus witness the servants of the Lord go forth to the nations of the earth, to call the inhabitants thereof to the supper of the Lamb—God bless them."

They arrived at Liverpool, January 4th, 1845. On the following day, Elders Henry Cuerden and George Slater arrived there.

The *Millennial Star* says: "We congratulate the Churches on the arrival of such a reinforcement from head-quarters, and feel to rejoice in the prospect of the beneficial results that we anticipate from this visit."

We find the following signed by Pres. B. Young, in *Millennial Star* Vol. V: "To all the Elders in Europe. Greeting: We send our beloved Brother, Wilford Woodruff, to England, to take charge of all the business transactions pertaining to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, both spiritual and temporal, we wish you to give diligent heed to his counsel in all things; and as we have not the opportunity of informing you of what has transpired this season, by letter, our beloved Brother will make them known unto you, all things. \* \* \* The God of Israel will communicate to His disciples from time to time all things necessary for the building up of His kingdom upon the earth, until Israel is gathered, yea, even all the blood of Abraham scattered over all the earth, Zion established, Jerusalem rebuilt, and the whole earth be filled with the glory and knowledge of God."

In the month of February, 1845, President Woodruff addressed a very interesting epistle—"To the officers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Islands."

We here enjoin a few abstracts therefrom. "Should any of the Saints have formed an opinion that the Apostles, Prophets, or Saints of God in the last days would not seal their testimony with their blood, I wish to make it as an error by citing testimony upon the subject. John the Revelator, while wrapped in the visions of the Almighty saw events that were to transpire in the last days, before the second advent of the Messiah; and in the opening of the fifth seal, he "saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and when they asked how long before the Lord would judge and avenge their blood on those that dwelt on the earth, they were informed they must rest for a little season until their fellow-servants and brethren should be killed as they were. \* \* \* As many spirits have gone out into the world in the last days, one of them was plainly manifest in the prophetic editors of many of the public journals of the day, by prognosticating that as the Prophet was dead, the work of the Latter-day Saints was ended, that they would disperse, and the cause fall away and die. They might as well have said in the case of the crucifixion of Christ,

because He was dead, that this testimony would die, and His apostles desert the cause, and the work fall to the ground to rise no more for ever; but it was the reverse, His testimony just began to be in force, His apostles having the keys of the kingdom, walked up into the calling, and magnified the work, three thousand souls uniting with them in one day, while the work spread far and wide. So it will be in this case, the testimony of the late martyred Prophets will now be in force, the principles of light, knowledge, and glory that have flowed from their lips, is too firmly rivetted in the hearts of thousands of the Saints to die, but on the contrary must live and bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God. The fire of eternal truth, and the power of God, have burned too long and deep in the flesh and bones of the Twelve Apostles of this dispensation, while sitting under the quickening voice and testimony of those Prophets, to be quenched with anything but death, neither will it permit them to turn from their course to spend their time in the engagement of merchandise, farming or fishing. A double portion of the Spirit of God, and the power of the priesthood will rest upon the Elders of Israel as they go forth into the vineyard until tens of thousands will rejoice in the fullness of the gospel of the Son of God. \* \* \* The walls of the Temple arose much faster then ever before, the laborers upon that house manifested a

determination not to leave it until it was finished, even if they obtained nothing but their daily bread for their reward. \* \* \* you may rest assured that the quorum of the Twelve are determined to carry out the order and principles of the Church, according to the law of God and of righteousness; they will take a decided stand against every principle or practice manifest in the Church, contrary to the law of God, of reason, revelation, virtue or holiness. \* \* \* The Twelve are not alone in their feelings in this important work; the High Priests, Seventies, Elders and Saints, as a body throughout America, are inspired by the same spirit, and are ready as one man to sustain the quorum of the Twelve by their faith, prayers, confidence and works, and carry out those glorious principles and measures, the foundation of which was laid by the martyred Prophets of God. O ye Sainst of God in Europe, should we stand still, withhold our tithings and offerings and see our Brethren in Nauvoo build that Temple, and then like Jacob of old secure alone unto themselves the promised blessing! may God forbid; rather let all the Saints throughout the world send up their tithings, with their names to be recorded in the Book of the Law of the Lord; by so doing they will not only keep the commandments of the Lord, but will own their share in the house, and have a right to all the promised blessings, ordinances,



oracles and endowments which will not only benefit them, but their posterity to the latest generation.

\* \* I wish most strongly to urge upon all officers and members of the Church throughout this realm, that they strictly observe and abide by the laws of the land, so long as the government protects our lives, persons and property—guarantees unto us the rights of conscience in common with all its subjects, it is perfectly right that we should be submissive to the laws of the

same; and for us to honor and respect the Queen of this realm, with all the officers of government in their respective stations, is no more than following the example of our Lord and Master, who was ready to render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, and unto God the things that were God's, and any course of conduct contrary to this cannot be sustained by the authorities of this Church."

*David John.*

## THEOLOGICAL.

### FAITH AND REPENTANCE.

THE first requisite of any man's religion is faith; he must have faith in something, or he believes nothing. The infidel says he has no faith, but that is not true, for he does have faith that existence ends with this life. He has on knowledge to that effect, so that his belief in that matter is founded on faith. The Chinaman believes that his Joss has the power to inflict evil or to reward good; so he gives this image his worship, and puts his faith in the almond-eyed idol. Now, let me say here that the heathens who worship images are in precisely the same position as devout Catholics. A Catholic says he does not worship the images of the mother of our Savior and of the saints, but he worships the soul or divine spirit which the image is a copy of. The image is but to

present something tangible to his mind, not that he believes the image itself is the creature of his worship but it represents that which he worships. It is precisely so with the heathen, the Africans, the Indians who worshiped the sun, the Greeks, the Romans, all heathendom have been in precisely the same condition. Traditions of God have been handed down to them and as they have lost the light and way, they have corrupted the proper symbols and have fashioned various likenesses which have been something tangible to them. To me there is something strangely pitiful in the blind worship of an infidel or a Catholic; it is an acknowledgment that the soul is not strong enough to live by faith and by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, but that some visible form or likeness must be in sight, so that it can be seen,