

## SERMON BY ELDER J. W. WIGHT,

At Lamoni, Iowa, April 7, 1894.

Subject, CONVERSION THROUGH OBEDIENCE TO LAW.

BRETHREN and sisters, you cannot realize, this morning, at least the major portion of you, the joys that are uppermost in the mind and makeup of your speaker on returning from so long an absence; neither is it possible for the tongue to give expression to the feelings of the heart; and for this reason the task is not essayed.

The portion of Scripture to which we shall especially invite your attention will be the nineteenth Psalm, beginning with the first verse: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me

from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer."

It would be one of the most pleasurable events that could possibly transpire if it were a demonstrated fact that every individual in the church were to give heed to that grandest and best of all sentiments, "More to be desired are they than gold." It has been thought, however, that it would be well to dwell more particularly upon that portion found recorded in the seventh verse, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

Were we to make an examination of every condition and phase of society, and were that examination made upon the basis of prejudice entirely removed, we would discover that from no other source known to the human family are the simple made as wise as they are by an entire and complete dependence upon the inspiration of the promised Comforter. And to me, from the standpoint that it has been possible to make the investigation, it has occurred as one of the very strongest evidences with regard to the divinity of this work. There are before me those known in early youth and of whose acquaintance and relationship I thank God none need to be ashamed, that stand to-day in the congregations of the Lord as men known among men, as men known for their much wisdom. And when memory carries us back along the

channels of time gone by, we cannot help but reflect that there were occasions and times when their simplicity was even known by the ignorance they manifested. And what has placed them in the peculiar positions that they occupy to-day, without the possibility of a collegiate education? I am prone to confess to you this morning I cannot understand it only as the movings and promptings of the inspiration of God's Spirit have caused them to become what they are.

You will bear with me if I tell you that I am very well acquainted with one who, in his early youth, was so specially bashful, so terribly backward, that on one occasion, while seated at the table partaking of the physical food, there entered the room those with whom he was specially well acquainted, but yet chanced to be of the tender sex. Somehow or other, likely because of his peculiar makeup, he always had a horror of them, and he had such a horror (I mean that to apply in his early youth), on this occasion that he actually got down under the table; and all the persuasion in the world could not get him out of there! Well, now, let me tell you, that from time to time I have marveled, I have wondered how it was possible for that same individual to arise out of such conditions and surroundings and face public audiences. Can it be other than by the grace of God that such conditions can arise and accrue? Memory reflects while standing before you this morning that of all the examinations made, of all the investigations of different conditions and makeups of society, more especially in a religious direction, it cannot. And to me, from this standpoint alone, this work is a "marvelous work, even a marvelous work and a wonder;" for nothing from a human standpoint could bring out such a development as we see manifested all around us. There is before me an individual, for instance, who, on one occasion, so it has been said by himself, felt that because of his peculiar knowledge obtained through college that he felt that he was going to show the people that he knew how to preach. And he had associated with him an individual of whom he knew there had never been such educational qualifications possible, and he thought, "Well, I will show them how to preach as compared to that individual."

And he tried it, and the result was that afterwards he only wished that he could preach as well as that individual that never had the same advantages he had. Let me tell you, and he knows it, and we all know it, that it is nothing but God's Spirit moving that caused such results as this, nothing else in the world. As the brother remarked in his prayer, we have been so far removed from the conditions incident to the head, as it were, that we discover that in many respects we are far behind the times. And let me tell you, brethren, you young brethren especially, if any of you want to make sacrifice, if any of you want to show your integrity to this work, be willing to go to foreign lands, and remain there so far removed that you know but little, as it were, of the actual events transpiring so far as this work is concerned, and methinks that there you will have the chance presented to you to develop in a peculiar way. That is to say, there you will depend more upon the law of the Lord than you could possibly depend anywhere else, because there you find that you are thrown entirely upon such resources as these, and from these alone can you draw.

It may be possible that in the scattering remarks that are offered this morning we shall find, or you shall find, at least, that we are treading the same ground that was gone over last night. If so, our only apology therefor shall be, our absence. It was impossible under the conditions to be here, and therefore we have to present what we do without a knowledge as to what was presented last night.

Our first thought that we wish to present to you with regard to the text chosen, is this: That the law of the Lord, being perfect, we will never arise to the conditions of perfection only by an obedience thereto, and a continuous observance thereof. We believe that we speak this thought from a logical standpoint; that it will be utterly impossible for us ever to arise to the conditions of perfection, to which we hope to attain and are wishing to obtain in the by and by, only by an obedience to, and an observance of, that law. In reflection we travel back away up time's vista to the earliest times of creation, and behold there two beings to whom the Creator had revealed himself and commanded that there were certain

observances to be fulfilled, among the which was the law, the transgression of which would place them in a condition far beneath that which they occupied. Time passes, and therewith changes are wrought; transgressions ensue; they fall. And here is remarked the thought, which again occurs to the mind as being a logical conclusion, that since by the transgression of law man fell, he can never be redeemed only by obedience to law. It would be utterly impossible to regain the position lost only by an obedience to law, since it was through the fact of transgression of the law that he fell. Another thought in connection therewith is this: That it was God's law, the law of the Creator, that man transgressed, and therefore it will be only by the law of God, a law given of the Creator, that he shall ever be brought back again; that he shall ever be redeemed from the results of that transgression.

We have been met from time to time with objections. I remember, for instance, some years ago, that an individual with whom I was well acquainted at my home in Monona county came to me and said: "If you people would only cease preaching doctrine, and present moral sermons, it wouldn't be very long till you would convert the whole world." I said to him, "Sir, as one claiming to be an ambassador for Christ, I would not dare to go before a public audience [and you see I was emphatic upon this point] and tell them I had come as a representative of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and leave behind me his doctrine."

I cannot understand, I have never yet been able to comprehend, how it would be possible for one in the conscientiousness of his soul to stand as a representative of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and tell the people that he had come to them to preach moral sermons, while on the other hand he was to entirely do away with, obliterate, as it were, every vestige of doctrine; that the world somehow or other had arisen to those peculiar conditions and surroundings by which they were not at present "hungering and thirsting" after doctrine, and therefore in order to step into the popular scale, as it were, he had come unto them simply to present them moral sermons. I said to that individual, "Sir, if we take that record in our hand we find the Master de-

claring, 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know.' K-n-o-w don't mean to guess; 'he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' That is to say, upon the authority of his own individuality." And again, referring to the apostle instructing the boy Timothy to preach doctrine, because by so doing he would save both himself and them that heard him, I said, "Sir, what position would I occupy did I stand before the people and tell them that we had ceased preaching doctrine?" We would be confronted with the text, "It is written," "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Again: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." Brethren, and sisters, and friends, what would you think of me this morning did I stand before you and publicly confess that I had come here, not to preach doctrine, not to preach the law of God, but had come simply to present unto you a moral phase with regard to your present condition and surroundings, and expected that that moral phase alone would save you in the life to come? Do you think it would be possible that you could be redeemed thereby? Nay, verily. Why? Because back yonder your foreparents transgressed the law. Mark that thought; reflect deeply and remember it, that they transgressed law; and that down yonder in the meridian of time Christ left the mansions of glory and descended into the condition of evil surroundings, and brought with him *law*. What for? That man might be redeemed. And do you wish this morning to impute unto him the thought that he did not understand what he was doing? Do you wish to impute unto the Father, unto the Great Jehovah, this morning, that he did not understand the conditions and surroundings of the human family? Do you wish to impute such thoughts as these, and thus degrade, not only yourselves, but endeavor on the other hand to degrade both God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ?

I was once preaching in a little place, Drysdale, in the colony of Victoria. We are just as foolish over there as the elders are in this country. We generally put

ourselves in a position to be shot at by giving liberty for questions. One individual in the audience arose and asked several questions. Our remarks had been especially confined to baptism. The answers seemed to have taken such a peculiar hold of him that somehow or other we got the good side of him sufficiently for him to invite us to go home and have supper, and you know that is a big thing with some of the elders, especially when their physical attainments are as large as your speaker's. We went together to his home, his wife began to prepare the supper, and he sat in his chair with his head in his hands as if in deep reflection. Suddenly he raised his head up, and said he, "Mr. Wight, I wish you would tell me why you are such sticklers [I think that is the term he used] for baptism." I said, "Sir, you will excuse me, but it has been said that the Yankees always answer a question by asking another, and in order to answer your question and show you the position that we both occupy, I shall ask you in all sincerity, Do you believe the Bible?"

"O yes," said he, "with all my heart."

"Well then, sir, I shall answer your question by simply giving you two citations. The first is found in the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew's Gospel [there's no necessity for me to repeat it before the Saints this morning, because you all know what it is, and I repeated that], the other is found in the sixteenth of Mark, the two commissions. Now," said I, "I want to mark this thought in connection therewith: That Christ had passed through all the conditions incident to his death and resurrection and that he emphasizes the fact by standing in the midst of his apostles and saying unto them, 'All power,' not a portion but all power, 'is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations.' Now," said I, "remark the the thought that Christ had given unto him all power, and after, this side of, his resurrection, he commanded these men to go and teach all nations. What else? 'Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Now," said I, "sir, you profess, first, that you believe the Bible, and I emphasize that fact by the further fact that Christ when all power had been given unto him, commanded these men

that they were to baptize. Now, sir, what will you do with this? Do you propose to take your scissors and clip from the sixteenth chapter of Mark and the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew these passages, or do you propose to let them stand?"

"By all means," said he, "I'll let them stand."

"You asked me why we are such sticklers for baptism, and now what are you going to do with these passages?"

"Well," said he, "I never saw it in that light before."

He was just like hundreds and thousands of others; for instance, an old gentleman up in Dakota before I left these shores. He came to me one night after preaching upon the mode of baptism and said to me, "Sir, you have been telling this people a falsehood to-night."

I said, "Yes sir? Will you please tell me in what respect?"

"Why, you told them that John was up at Enon near to Salim, baptizing because there was much water there."

"Yes sir."

"Well," he said, "that's not in the Bible."

This was the book I had then and I simply turned to the third chapter of John and the twenty-third verse and read it for his edification, as well as that of the audience, and the poor old gentleman threw his hands up in a sort of holy horror, and said,

"That's not in my Bible!"

I said, "Sir, when you go home make an examination and see, and you come here to-morrow night and brand me as an impostor if you don't find it there." He did not come back, and hence it was concluded that he had learned something, if it was only from one of these poor, despised Latter Day Saint elders.

These thoughts are offered to show you the grand foundation we have with regard to the law of God, and the poor, weak foundation those have who do not make a proper investigation. I will tell you one—perhaps some of you will think I have learned Methodism since going over there—but I will have to tell you one other story in order to illustrate what I want. Brother Butterworth—you all remember him, and more especially those up in Galland's Grove who heard him preach the first time, and the poor boy

standing beside me, while singing the last hymn before preaching, was trembling so that his knees actually knocked against mine—I tell you, I would like to have Brother Butterworth here this morning, brothers and sisters, and have you hear him, to show you what the inspiration of God's Spirit has wrought in that young man. Traveling on one occasion, also in Victoria, a young man came to him and said:—

“Sir, I am going to ask you a question, but I know you won't be able to answer it, for I asked Mr. Burton the same question and he couldn't answer it, so,” said he, “I know you'll not be able to answer it.” Brother Butterworth said, “Very well.”

“Will you tell me, sir,” said he, “where in the Bible it tells us that John the Baptist was baptized?”

“No, sir, I can't tell you.”

“There!” said he, “I knew you wouldn't tell me.”

Brother Butterworth said, “Allow me to ask you a question: Whose example are you taking? The example of John the Baptist or the example of Christ?”

“O,” said he, “that of Christ by all means!”

“Very well, sir, I'll soon show you where it says in the Bible that Christ was baptized.”

Now you see the position that young man occupied. He was depending entirely upon John. He was depending entirely upon the arm of flesh and forgot the all-important fact that Christ was the one to depend upon, the supreme one that all of us should rely upon.

We make an examination, then, further, with regard to this perfect law of liberty, and find one of the chiefest of apostles, the man who, in the integrity of his soul—and I have often wished that I could have the same integrity—went down so often upon his knees in prayer to his God, we are told, that those knees were actually calloused; that individual, afterwards in writing a general epistle, said, as you will find recorded in the first chapter and twenty-fifth verse of James, “Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” How did he know? How did he comprehend? Back up yonder the

Master had stood with him and the other apostles and said unto them, “It is necessary for me to take my departure,” and immediately their countenances doubtless fell, for he said, “I will not leave you comfortless. If I go away I will send unto you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth.” And what further did he promise? That when that Comforter was come, it would teach them the things of the Father. That is what it should do, and that has been one of the grandest points, one of the best bases that we have ever as an individual been permitted to stand upon. In the fact of the inspiration of the Spirit coming as the promised Comforter and taking these men and teaching them the things of the Father, we find that we are secure behind their teachings, and as I once heard Brother Alexander Smith say in a reunion up at Harlan, that when we found ourselves in such company as Peter, James, and John, we had no need whatever to be ashamed. These men who by the inspiration of God's Spirit had received that knowledge, the teaching of the Father, had been made to know, and more especially this one, that the law was the perfect law of liberty, and “whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, . . . he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.” There never was presented in the world a positive but what had its negative, and this morning if we had a desire to present unto you the negative, it would be something like this: That whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and does not become a doer of the work of that law, this man shall not—not—be blessed in his deed. Wouldn't that be it? That's the negative of the positive presented here by the Apostle James.

And we carry you on here to another thought: There never was a law, so far as we have been able to examine, so far as science has been able to demonstrate, that could ever execute itself; it must have an executor. It is one of the grand thoughts that our elders from time to time present with regard to the necessity of the existence of God. We take up this thought, then, and discover, that since it is a demonstrated fact, hence no necessity for argument, that this perfect law of liberty must have executors that while it might exist like any other and

every other law, it would remain simply a dead letter upon the statute books until such time as there were those who had the right,—I lay great stress upon this point,—who had the authority, to execute that law. Hence when these apostles came to him asking, “Master, who is greatest?” doubtless beginning to think that because they had been chosen special witnesses of Jesus Christ that thereby they had gained a certain prestige, he, Christ, in order to show them the position that they actually occupied, said unto them, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you.” And it seems to me that if there were to come to me an individual to-day who were to tell me that Christ had never called him, so far as he knew anything about only as he read it here, I would say to that individual, “Sir, you have assumed, and upon the question of assumption I cannot and will not stand.” It seems to me to be the weakest of all conditions that we find surrounding us from time to time, this question of assumption. Hence it was that when Christ was surrounded by these men, and said unto them, “Ye have not chosen me,” he imparted unto them one of the grandest lessons of their lives. They had not chosen him, nay, verily, but “I have chosen you and ordained you;” that is, he had given them the authority to execute, hereby signifying, as well as showing and declaring positively, the necessity of the execution of the law. And I will tell you, that in thinking about it, I have often wondered how it could be possible for the law they were chosen to execute, to be fulfilled in us, unless there should arise the same conditions; or in other words, unless there should be apostles in our day to execute. I have never been able to fathom it, and hence I am a Latter Day Saint again upon this point.

There is a necessity for apostles and prophets to execute. Why? Because God in his infinite wisdom, talking through the mediumship of his Son, brought into existence this peculiar office, and placed in it these officers. Therefore it seems to me it is only logical to argue that so long as that law, the law of light and salvation, shall exist upon the statute book, so long shall there be a necessity for apostles and prophets that the execution of the law may be carried out. Now it

so happens that while the officer may be but transient, as a result of death, it is nevertheless a fact that the office is perpetual, or at least as much so as is the law. And so long as there shall remain a soul to save so long shall there remain a necessity for the law’s existence. And who shall have the right to execute God’s law but those ordained of God?

Since, then, Christ chose apostles and prophets to teach this “perfect law,” as well as to execute it, does it not occur that Paul was right when he said they were not given only for “the work of the ministry and the edifying of the body [church] of Christ,” but “till we in the unity of the faith, all come to the knowledge of the Son of God,” etc. Have we yet arrived at such conditions? If not, can we do otherwise than expect such officers for the execution of the law of which we have been hearing?

I ask you if that is not a truth in the logic of events? I think that if I had been raised an infidel, had been surrounded by those peculiar influences, and there had come to me an individual who by means of persuasion or influence, or otherwise, were to convince me that God actually existed, that the very first effort I should make would be to try to determine something about him from the record, where “it is written.” And methinks further, that I should never rest satisfied until I had made that kind of an examination that had convinced me with regard to the conditions and surroundings of the existence of his Son when he came to take upon him mortality, and having discovered that, that I would take that record in my hand, “It is written,” and I would go from place to place, I would go to the lo heres and lo theres, and I should never stop, I could never conscientiously stop until I found that condition of things whereby there existed the same law and the same officers in the church that existed eighteen hundred years ago. From this peculiar fact and thought that since it was necessary eighteen hundred years ago to bring salvation by the execution of this law and by the existence of these officers, redemption could not be brought, though we might be living in the nineteenth century or any other time, only by the same facts and results accruing. Now I ask you brethren and sisters if it is not right to think in this line; and

I ask you how anyone can conscientiously go forth and make an examination of that with which he has never before been acquainted only by taking the fact that it is written, and upon that standpoint go forth and make an examination of the lo heres and lo theres, and never be satisfied without.

Brethren and sisters, it seems to me that my time has gone by, and if I oc-

cupy too long you will get weary. I would rather that one thought would sink deeply into your minds and be carried home with you than if I presented fifty thoughts and you did not take any one of them home with you; providing that thought shall be a good one.

(Reported for the *Herald* with the Edison phonograph by F. E. Cochran.)

## THE HINDOO RELIGION.

THE late census of British India gives its population at 221,094,277, and divides the inhabitants according to their religion so far as returned thus: Hindoos, 207,654,407; Mussulmans, 57,365,204; Buddhists, 7,101,057; Christians, 2,281,191; Jains, 1,416,109; Sikhs, 1,907,836; Parsees, 89,887; Jews, 17,180; forest tribes (animal worshipers), 9,302,083; atheists, agnostics, etc., 289. It is probable that of the Christians thus numbered not more than 300,000 are natives of India, for, in spite of the long contact of the Indian people with Europeans and the great effort that has been made to educate them in Christian thought and civilization, the bulk of the people remain altogether callous to such influences.

As may be noted, Hindooism is by far the most prevalent religion of the people of India, being the only belief of fully nine tenths of the population. Hindooism is the oldest form of faith in India, in one sense. It is the outgrowth of the early religion of the country, which was Brahminism, but it has also added many points of belief from Buddhism and other faiths. The Hindoo religion is based upon the worship of the gods, Siva and Vishnu. There are five sects of Hindooism. 1. Worshipers of Siva. 2. Worshipers of Vishnu. 3. Worshipers of the wives of these gods. 4. Worshipers of Ganesh, the god of good luck, and 5. Worshipers of the sun. Apart from these there are groups of various subdivisions, who worship demons, spirits, ancestors, animals, plants, trees, and so on. The complex character of the Hindoo faith can thus be observed. While it is undoubtedly founded on Brahminism, its modern development is

so varied and peculiar it is difficult to define it. There is no fixity in the system; in fact it is not a system, but a string of beliefs, often altogether contradictory in nature, which have been gathered up during the slow passage of 3,000 years. Professor Barth, in his book, "Religions of India," says: "It is next to impossible to say exactly what Hindooism is, where it begins, or where it ends. Diversity is its very essence and its proper manifestation is sect, sect in constant mobility."

Professor Monier Williams says of it, "The Hindoo religion is a reflection of the composite character of the Hindoos, who are not one people, but many. It is based on the idea of universal receptivity. It has first borne with, and then, so to speak, swallowed, digested, and assimilated something from all creeds, or, like a vast, hospitable mansion, it has opened its doors to all comers; it has not refused a welcome to applicants of every grade, from the highest to the lowest, if only willing to acknowledge the spiritual headship of the Brahmins and adopt caste rules. In this manner it has held out the right hand of brotherhood to the fetish-worshiping aborigines of Indai; it has stooped to the demonolatry of various savage tribes; it has not scrupled to encourage the adoration of the fish, the boar, the serpent, trees, plants, stones, and devils; it has permitted a descent to the most degrading cults of the Dravidian races, while at the same time it has ventured to rise from the most groveling practices to the loftiest heights of philosophical speculation; it has not hesitated to drink in thoughts from the very fountain of truth, and owes not a little to Christianity itself." Of course a religion