# Practical Beliefs of Latter-day Saints

## Address Delivered at the Salt Lake Tabernacle, Sunday, November 6, 1910, by

## DR. JAMES E. TALMAGE.

(Reported by F. W. Otterstrom.)

IN arising to address you, my friends, I confess to two desires. The first and the foremost is that I may be able to speak unto you only that which is true; the second, that should I fail in the first, you may recognize the error. For I care not to have the responsibility rest upon me of finding that you have gone forth from this place with erroneous conceptions as to our belief and as to the claims of the Church which I represent.

The special purpose of this day's service has been sufficiently explained to you. You noted, perchance, the explanation that the people are generally assembled in their several wards this afternoon, whereas on other Sundays of the month, except the first, you will usually find an audience of many thousands here in the regular course of appointed worship. The purpose of this special assembly in the several wards was stated to you as being incident to this day's character as a day of fasting and of prayer; and that feature of Latter-day Saint custom is significant. The people are taught to gather at specified times, notably on the first Sunday of the month, not only to engage in prayer—which, indeed, should be characteristic of the sincere soul on all days and, in a measure, at all times—but that they should go there, if there be no reason to the contrary, fasting, that they may thereby gain additional spiritual strength. But, it is also expected and, in a manner, required of them that as they thus gather they shall bring the offerings they may choose to make for the help of the poor. It is recommended that, when not interdicted by special condition, they abstain from food, during the early meal times of the day, and that they bring at least what those meals would cost in the household, and place that at the disposal of the proper authorities of the ward to be used in ministering to the poor. For we are simple-minded enough to believe that our prayers are not acceptable unto God if they come up mingled with the cries of the hungry and the groans of the suffering who are left without attention and care.

### PRACTICAL RELIGION.

This religion of ours is peculiar today in being pre-eminently a practical religion. There is more in it than a mere system of theology, more than a mere code of dogmas relating to spiritual conceptions. We believe not only in profession but in doing; and this practical feature of our religion, illustrated and represented by the order of the day, I say is significant and is indicative of that practical spirit which we hold should and of necessity must pervade all true religion. Prayer consists not in words, my friends. The most acceptable prayers are not those that are couched in choicest English, nor those composed according to the strictest rules of rhetoric, but those that go forth with the seal of the heart's desire, best attested by heart-effort. This religion, called Mormonism, I repeat, is pre-eminently practical; and it is in a manner distinguished, amongst the religious professions of the day, in another particular: It is remarkably simple. We hold that worship is no mere matter of ritual or formula, that no specially devised chancels or altars are required, that while it is seemingly proper that we should erect the best houses of worship that our intelligence can create, nevertheless the stone of the desert may be an acceptable altar, and the canyons and mountain peaks may, indeed, be cathedral walls and chancels. We are so simple-minded as to believe that words mean what they express, and worship unto us is what the very name declares.

### CONCEPTION OF DEITY.

Students of English, amongst you, know that that word "worship" comes to us as the child of Anglo-Saxon parents, "weordhscipe" distinctly meaning "worthiship;" and no man can really, truly, and sincerely worship unless he has some conception of the worthiness of the object to whom his worship is addressed. Hence we believe that to worship acceptably we must know something of the great Being to whom our prayers are presented. We may not be able to comprehend him in his majesty and might, nor in his superlative excellence, but we should know him as he would have us know him, King, Ruler, Creator though he be! He has given unto me and unto you the right to approach him and call him by the endearing name of Father. There is a simplicity and a familiarity about him that enters into the heart. We may in a measure comprehend him as Father, and the Latter-day Saints believe, and claim, and dare affirm, that that is no mere figure of speech, no mere metaphor, but that he is in very truth the Father of the human race, and that we mortals are born of immortal parentage, and that immortality and eternal life await us as our heritage and as a birthright conferred upon us by our immortal parents.

### ELEMENTS OF SIMPLICITY.

There is this element of simplicity running through the whole system known under the name of "Mormonism." When Christ said unto the people of old, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," we believe he uttered no empty wish only, but that he expressed a possibility. I admit that we are far removed from perfection in our present state, but the capacity to attain perfection is born in you and in me. I know not what ages will be required, what eternities may elapse before any one of us may attain to that standard that may be designated as perfection, but we are headed that way! We are traveling that road; and the destiny of the human race is upward and onward, for they are the children of the eternal God. Mormonism is extreme, indeed, in its teachings as to the possibilities of evolution; it goes so far as to say that man shall evolve from one stage to another, from one condition to another until he shall attain the rank and the powers of godship. We go so far as to believe that there is no end to the development of the human soul, to the advancement of the born heirs of Deity.

Simple, indeed, is that theology—offensive in its simplicity, in a way—but was not "simplicity" the charge that gave rise to the scorn with which the early gospel was attended? The criticism brought against the church as founded by the Christ, in the meridian of time, and as built up by his apostles during the first century after the crucifixion, the stigma cast upon it, the reproach hurled against it was: "It is too simple. No trained priests are required to minister in its ordinances. No elaborate temples or ornate altars are needed. There are no mysteries in your rites." And for that reason the church was condemned, and its adherents were persecuted; and then, as the spirit of apostasy grew, an attempt was made to remodel, in a manner, the simple ordinances of the church, to make them conform the better and the more to the general desire for mystery. The ordinance of baptism, so striking in its simplicity, was changed and modified until it became mysterious. No longer was it considered the simple ordinance established for the remission of sins, consisting of immersion in the water in type of death and burial, and coming forth, typical of the resurrection, but it was to be attended by mysterious anointings with oil, before and after; and, in the fourth century we find the baptized neophytes required to clothe themselves in white robes made after the fashion of children's attire, and they were fed on milk and honey, to impress upon them that they were children in the faith, newly born. With these alterations the sanctity of the ordinance departed, and all because in its original form it was too simple to appeal to the imagination. There is nothing imaginary, my friends, in that solemn requirement, "Except a man be born of the water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The declaration is all-comprehensive, couched in language which even the child can understand; there is nothing left to the imagination. So be not offended at the simplicity of our form of worship. It is characteristic of truth that it is simple.

### TOLERANCE NECESSARY.

We have regard for your preferences in worship, even as your presence here today declares that you have respect and regard for ours; for one characteristic of this so-called modern church is its insistence of the toleration of all honest beliefs. We hold that intolerance is unscriptural, as truly as it is unjust. As stated in one of the articles of our faith, "We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may." Such is the platform of toleration upon which we stand. Therefore, if I have amongst my hearers here today Methodist friends, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Catholics, Episcopalians, I have respect unto your faith, because you regard it as sacred, and I hold that you should have respect for mine. I ask for myself no greater measure of liberty in my worship than I claim for you, but that does not say that because I have respect for you and your faith that I accept it. I may consider it wrong, defective, incomplete, unsatisfying; and, on the other hand, I may, as I do, claim that my church is the Church of Christ, as its name indicates, and those claims for toleration and yet for excellence of that which I believe are in no way inconsistent. For worship, to be acceptable, must be voluntary; it must spring from the heart. Worship cannot be forced on the part of any man, and we ask you only, invite you simply, to examine into the claims made by this Church, and if you find them to be sound, logical, consistent, scriptural, true, we leave it to you to accept them or not as you choose. We do not force them upon you, for such would be contrary to the very teachings of the Church itself. We send our missionaries out, thousands of them are in the field now, asking only that they present the truth in the simplest way they can, and leave it then unto those unto whom it is presented to accept or reject. This Church does not rest upon the foundations of other churches torn down, nor are its walls built of the bricks and rocks torn from other edifices; and if it cannot live, and thrive, and grow, and develop except by attacking others, it ought not to live. We hold that this so-called new—certainly restored—gospel, is positively alive, that it has life within itself, and that it is destined to grow and to spread until it shall fill the whole earth.

If you ask me to specify what I may perhaps call the principal distinguishing characteristic between what is called Mormonism and other religious organizations or religious systems of a Christian nature, I think I should point to one specific paragraph in the articles of faith of the Church, which reads in this way:

### BELIEF IN REVELATION.

"We believe all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God." That, perhaps, is a distinguishing characteristic of our faith and claim. We claim that Jehovah of old is living today, that the God who spoke unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the great Being who revealed himself through the mighty prophets of old, whose words were voiced by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Micah, and all the rest of them, is speaking today and will continue to speak unto his children until the end of time. We hold that this is reasonable, philosophical, true. We do not believe that the mere record of what he has done in the past is sufficient for the present. We read with reverence the records of the holy scriptures, which go to make up what is called, and rightly so, the Holy Bible. It is the first of the standard works of our Church. We accept it for just what it professes to be—the record of the dealings of God with his children on the eastern continent, from the earliest period of recorded history, down to the meridian of time, when the Christ appeared in the flesh, and thence on for a century. We hold that that volume of scripture tells us that there was power in the Church in that early day, that authority was given to speak and act in the name of God; but that were a book even more wonderful than it is if the mere possession of that knowledge, or the possession of the volume could give unto man today the right to go forth and administer the ordinances which are there described. It were as reasonable to say that if one of them should get hold of a law book, or the book of statutes of a state, in which the law of marriage is described, that if you have the book and commit to memory the formula, that you, therefore, have the right to go out and officiate, joining men and women in the holy bonds of matrimony. Be careful, my friends, that you don't try to put that conception into effect, or you may find yourselves in the toils of the law. So, while I read of what Christ said unto his apostles, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," I fail to see how that command, addressed unto those chosen ones who had been specially ordained, can apply to me unless I, too, am called and commissioned with authority. This Church claims that the power of the holy priesthood has been restored to the earth in the nineteenth century, that the Church was re-established, and that this was in accordance with the predictions made of old.

### CHURCH RE-ESTABLISHED.

We claim that the re-establishment was as clearly foreseen and foretold as was the great falling away. The universal apostasy from the Church as established by Jesus Christ, we claim, is expressed in the name, for, mark you, though this is called the "Mormon" Church, and its system of theology is called "Mormonism," those names were first applied as epithets of derision. This is not the Mormon Church; specifically, its proper name is the Church of Jesus Christ, and its full title the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to distinguish it from the Church of Jesus Christ of former day. It has been called the Mormon Church because of the fact that early in its history a volume known as the Book of Mormon was published—and what is that? Some have called it the "Mormon Bible," a misnomer, vicious in its effect, though perhaps not applied with intent to deceive. This book is no substitute for the Holy Bible, in Latter-day Saint theology. We believe the Holy Bible to be the word of God. We take exception to no parts of it except those parts that are palpably incorrect in translation, which incorrectness the scholars of the day admit. There is nothing peculiar about that; but we do that God has done other things, made other utterances, spoken to other prophets than such as we have record of there; and this volume, the Book of Mormon, is a record of the dealings of God with his people on this the western continent in early days, even as the Jewish Scriptures tell us of his dealings with his people in the east. Now, I see nothing revolutionary, nothing irreverent in that, we simply say that God spoke to his people in the west even as he did to his people in the east; and these two volumes of Scripture, the Bible and the Book of Mormon, supplement and sustain each other. If one contradicted the other, or if one inculcated beliefs or practises that were opposed to the teachings of the other, there were reason to complain that the same God would not speak in such different ways; but, behold, we find that the spirit of the east was manifested here in the west.

### NEW COVENANTS.

Then, we go farther, we claim that the Church was established, as stated, upon the earth again in the nineteenth century. And what has God said to his Church since? We take a third volume, containing the modern revelations, and we say to the student, take it and analyze it, study it for yourself, see if there be not the same spirit manifested here as you will find manifested by those earlier prophets when they spoke under the influence and power of their prophetic office. My friends, we do not believe that God has talked himself out; we cannot believe that his lips are sealed, or his tongue sealed, or his arm shortened, that he cannot reach out and help, and speak, and do today even as he has done and spoken in the past. Let me ask you, what would you say if one of the professors in your universities should teach your sons and daughters that we may not expect additional truth to be discovered in any field? What would you think of the professor of astronomy who should declare that all we are to know about the heavens and bodies in space has been found out, has been discovered, has been written up and recorded, and all that the student today can do is to read the volumes of the past, and he is not to expect a revelation of truth in the present? Let me ask you, is that modern? Is that up-to-date? Is that in accordance with the spirit of the times? This is the age of progression; every day brings us word of more and greater discoveries within the realm of truth. We are surprised, indeed, if a day passes without something new being brought out; and shall it be that in the direct dealings of God with his people, we may hope for nothing new? My friends, the message of Mormonism unto the world today is this: The Lord has spoken again, as he said, of old, he would speak, and his Church is again established upon the earth with power and authority to minister in all the saving ordinances. The Church, though exclusive in its claims, recognizes with toleration and respect all other organizations making honest and sincere claims. We believe that these other churches, though without the priesthood and the power to administer in ordinances that are to be recognized in heaven, are doing good. Whenever they reach out and help, they are doing the Lord's service, whether they be churches of ancient origin, of long histories, or comparatively new and modern. Why, we believe that the Salvation Army lads and lassies, going about the streets, are doing good, and we bid them Godspeed in their work. They are rescuing many a one who would otherwise go down. They are in the service of the Master just as far and just as fully as their work is earnest and sincere.

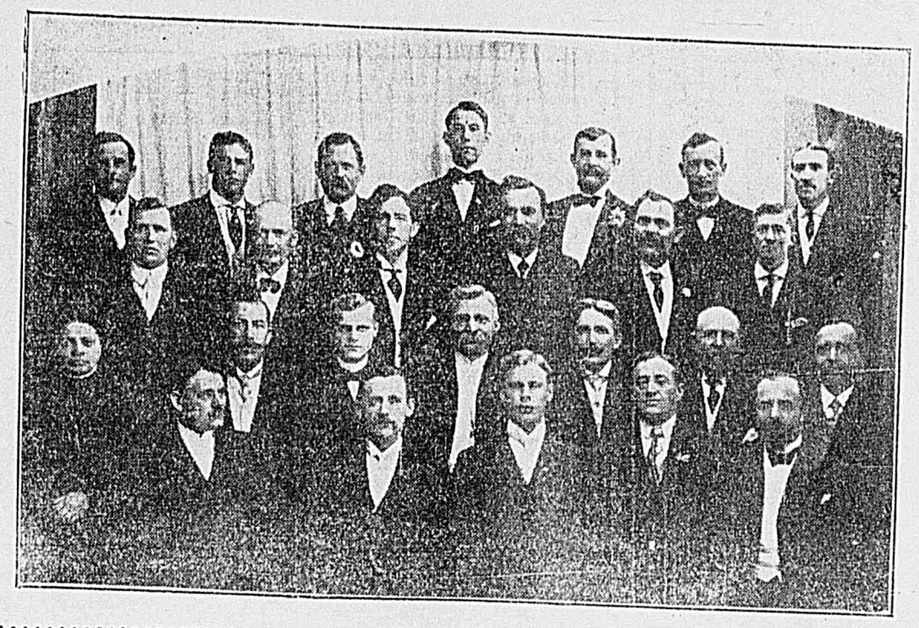
### PILGRIM MOVEMENTS.

My friends, we greet you and welcome you to the fullest investigation of the claims which this Church makes, and we say unto you, again, that while we claim certain privileges, we grant the same unto you. Let me ask you, is there any advancement manifested in that claim? Those of you who have studied the history of the nations, know how when persecution became so bitter as to be unbearable, in the olden lands, when the Puritans had to flee from England and the continent of Europe, and they crossed the then practically trackless ocean and reached the eastern shores of what is now the United States, they made their proclamation. The Pilgrim fathers, as we reverently call them, said: "We have suffered much; we have left our homes in the lands of our birth, and we have come to these comparatively unknown shores, and we have not made this sacrifice for nothing. We claim, now, the privilege and the right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and we will put to death any man that tries to worship in any other way." Such was the article of faith proclaimed by the Pilgrim fathers. Has the world advanced since that day? Has there been any progress, think you?

### FREEDOM OF BELIEF.

In the nineteenth century comes the Church whose adherents, again, have had to flee, because of persecution, not over a trackless waste of water, but over the still more inhospitable deserts; and here in what was then Mexican territory they established a common wealth, and raised the flag of the United States to which they belonged, though at that time they had been expatriated. They took possession of these broad valleys in the name of the United States, and they reiterate their proclamation, which is this, "We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and we allow all men the same privilege; let them worship how, where, or what they may." I ask you, again, has there been progress made? An intolerant church has no place on the earth at the present time, for God is not intolerant; he is merciful, long-suffering, and he has given unto you and unto me free agency, giving us the right to choose, and holding us accountable for our choice and for its results.

My friends, may the grace of God, which passeth all understanding, find a place in your hearts, and show you the truth and enable you to accept it for your own good; and may it convince you of your high and noble parentage, that you are in very truth sons and daughters of the living God. I ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen.



ELDERS OF THE AARHUS, DENMARK, CONFERENCE.

Reading from left to right—TopRow: E. J. Christiansen, J. Lyman Nielsen, Martin Petersen, N. C. Holst, Hans Sanders, E. P. Rasmussen, Carl E. Nielsen visiting.

Second Row: A. A. Smith, Antone Cramer, William D. Norman, Lorenzo Peterson, visiting; Christian Jensen, James R. Peystrup.

Third Row: Mrs. A. O. Nielsen, L. M. Breinholt, conference secretary; Niels J. Larsen, conference president; Andrew Jensen, mission president; Alma Petersen, Michael Hansen, A. P. Nielsen.

Bottom Row: A. O. Nielsen, Hilmar M. Nielsen, Andrew M. Andersen, Eric Ludvicksen, Christian Nielsen.

# March of Mormon Battalion

## Sixty-four Years Ago Today.

The march made by the battalion for the past six days has been filled with fatigue, aggravated to a great extent by the small rations and lack of water, which they would dip from the ground a spoonful at a time. All the journals at our disposal dwell upon the efficacy of prayer. President Young had appointed Fahter Pettigrew and Levi Hancock to act as fathers to the boys and give them advice, so on this occasion they quietly visited all the camps, requesting all to join in prayer and ask the Lord to direct the course they were to take even to changing the mind of the colonel that he might not pursue the southern road, as they feared the enemy would outnumber them by hundreds. This they did, and we see the mind of Col. Cooke was changed as if by magic.

Thursday, Nov. 19, 1846—The camp set off in good season to see what another day might bring forth on our journey towards the Pacific. Unfortunately some of the wagons broke when crossing the creek, which detained those in charge so they came into camp very late. Most of the battalion reached the water before dark. We marched 23 miles.

Friday, Nov. 20—We remained here by order of the commander in consequence of the pilots not locating water ahead so they made it a day of council and raised a smoke which is a signal of distress to the Indians, to which they always pay attention. In less than two hours, Spaniards came to answer the signal and see what was the matter; they were trading with the Indians of the Apache tribe. They seemed to know the way for 200 miles; one of them was impressed to go as a pilot as far as he knew the way. They said it was 300 miles to the Pimo village one way and 200 the other. One way took them to Sonora, N. M., the other to the headwaters of the Gila river, through a trackless range of mountains. These traders reported there was an army of men coming from Sonora, Chihuahua and Santa Fe to retake that country from the Mexicans. After deliberations the colonel concluded to consult Captains Hunt and Hunter. They told him they would say nothing about it, he must take the responsibility himself. Capt. Hunt persuaded him to raise the rations to 10 ounces of flour. He did so, but complained the companies had wasted flour for six days.

Saturday, Nov. 21—Took up the line of march, the colonel at the head seated on his white mule, the road leading from Sonora to the copper mines. It was agreed by our officers that we would go to the state of Sonora. Accordingly we started a southerly course when it should have been west, contrary to the feeling of two-thirds of the battalion. We had not gone more than two or three miles, when something stopped us. No person knew the cause of it, but some unforeseen power intercepted our course; we turned to the west across the plains, going, no man knew whither. When the colonel called a halt he looked first in one direction, then in another; he turned to the right and swore he was not going all round the world to get to California. It was there he was sent, he said, "and we will go or die in the attempt."

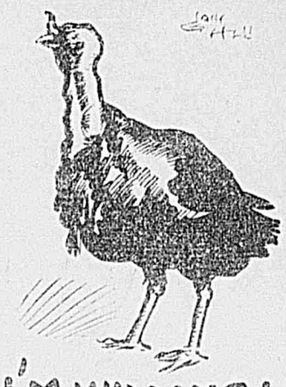
Ordering the bugler to blow the right, the colonel led the way westward, and "thank God," was in every soldier's heart; camped without water; traveled 12 miles.

Sunday, Nov. 22—The pilots marched early this morning in search of another camping place supplied with water. The command delayed until 10 o'clock then marched in pursuit of the pilots in a southwesterly direction. In the afternoon we saw smoke ahead, but it was so far we did not reach it this day. We traveled 20 miles; it was dark before we stopped. The men were very thirsty, but there was no relief; three of our men traveled the wrong course and were out all night before they found the camp.

Monday, Nov. 23—The line of march was resumed very early this morning, at 12 o'clock we were at the place the smoke was seen the day before but there was not enough water for a dozen men. Capt. Hunt blamed the colonel for coming until he had known whether there was water or not. The pilots encouraged the men by saying there was plenty of water 12 miles ahead. The colonel permited sotme of the men to stay at this place until morning and the rest of the command continued the march, but it was 10 o'clock at night when those on the first wagons came to water. Many fainted by the way and lay scattered all along the road. The place of encampment was well supplied with water near a dry lake. Today we crossed the line so the pilots said between Chihuahua and Sonora; the country looked quite delightful, with hills quite barren except in the valleys.

Tuesday, Nov. 24—There are camped near us some Spanish traders from whom we got a small recruit of 25 mules. The new pilot promises to take us to a deserted Mexican village where we can get some wild cattle to live on; he will also bring the Apaches to trade with us. After so long and hard a tramp for two days without water, it was thought wisdom to remain here a day and wait for the men who are yet behind. Later they arrived in camp in fairly good condition.

Wednesday, Nov. 25—We marched 25 miles today; crossed another range of mountains on which a Spaniard killed a grizzly bear. I was told it was not large for this country. The pass in the mountains was very difficult and the road was impracticable. My wife rode a mule all day. While crossing the valley the colonel remarked to one of the privates that he had marched with a knapsack on his back but his sufferings would never compare with theirs and he feared we would suffer still more. We camped on a creek with the necessaries of a camp ground, wood and water.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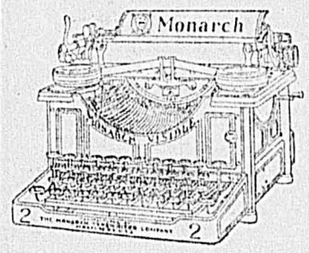


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