

RELIGIOUS WORSHIP A NATURAL AND UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE—
SINCERITY NO TEST OF TRUTH—PRIESTLY AUTHORITY, ETC.

A DISCOURSE BY ELDER GEORGE A. SMITH, DELIVERED IN THE TABERNACLE,
GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, NOVEMBER 1, 1857

Recorded by G. D. Watt, J. V. Long

Our Father who is in heaven has placed us in this world in the present generation, and has placed before us laws and principles by which we may obtain exaltation and celestial glory.

In the acquisition of any department of science, the laws thereof must be ascertained and the application properly made, or it is not in our power to become acquainted with its branches, so as to master it and realize the benefit of its effects. So, also, in entering into the kingdom of the Most High God, we enter by a door preparatory; and, to all those who have been traditioned in the false religions of the present age, this door seems to be but little understood.

I have watched the movements of persons coming into the Church of Christ from sectarian churches for many years, and I discover that they are almost entirely enveloped in a kind of cast-iron shell; and it is with the greatest of difficulty that they divest themselves of it—of their prejudices and traditions. It is the work of years; and although many come into this Church while young, without an extensive knowledge of sectarian principles, yet such is the force of tradition, even in them, that they have to stop, consider, and question whether principles are really true and received from a proper source, or whether they are false.

There is a feeling in the human breast to reverence something. We find it among the untutored savages; we find it among what are denominated

the heathen nations—among those who are considered pagans, bowing down to worship images, the workmanship of their own hands.

I had the pleasure, while in the States, of being subject to the Sabbath-keeping rules of the railroad company. I wished very devoutly to have the privilege of spending my time with the Saints in Saint Louis: but, to avoid traveling on the Sabbath, the railroad decree had gone forth that we should not leave Chicago; so, on the Sabbath, I went to Saint Mary's Cathedral for the purpose of hearing a Catholic discourse.

I was there gratified by hearing a very eloquent gentleman explain the reason why the paintings, crucifixion, and emblems of this kind are used in the Catholic churches. He said that it was not understood with them that a person bowing before a likeness or a picture of a saint did so with the intention of worshipping that saint or picture; but that the design was to inspire in the heart of the worshipper a disposition to emulate the virtuous deeds and good actions of that saint. Hence, said the orator, a portrait of the Virgin Mary, placed in a proper position where females, especially the young, can come before it and offer their adorations, inspires in their minds chaste and virtuous ideas, holy thoughts, pure principles, and ardent desires to live as perfectly, to be as humble, and to observe the laws of righteousness as fully as did the virgin whose picture they stand before.