

BISHOP JAMES THOMAS. "Faith without works" has never accomplished much. Religion that is practical and applicable to the every-day life of any people is good for them, regardless of any peculiarities of creed. Bishop Thomas, of the Eagle Rock ward of the Church of Latter Day Saints, must be recommended as a man of the highest quality of business ability, — one who makes a business of religion and does not attempt to do business except by the rule which is the rule of his private life.

Bishop Thomas is a native of Wales and a son of John and Mary (Roberts) Thomas. He was born at Llanelly, Carmarthenshire, April 29, 1848. His parents were converted to the faith of the Church of Latter Day Saints that same year. His father, who was a tailor, came with his wife and seven of their sons to America, twenty years later, and settled at Salt Lake City, Utah. There he devoted himself to his trade until his retirement from the active life. He is living at Smithfield, Utah, aged eighty-four years. His wife died in 1885 aged sixty-five. John, Thomas, William, James, Lorenzo, Dan and George, their seven sons who came with them to the United States, all settled in Utah and were ardent adherents to the Mormon faith. Dan alone has died.

James Thomas, fourth son of John and Mary (Roberts) Thomas, was educated in Wales, where he learned the tailor's trade with his father and worked at it before he came to the United States. He followed it successfully at Salt Lake City, Utah, from the date of his arrival there until 1882, when he came to Idaho and opened a tailoring establishment at Idaho Falls. Later he added a millinery department, and in 1892 a ready-made clothing and men's furnishing department. As a practical tailor of almost life long experience, he has an advantage over ordinary merchants in selecting ready to wear clothing. Not only is he able to judge instantly the quality of the cloth and trimmings, but a glance suffices to inform him if garments are artistically cut and properly tailored, and he carries no goods that do not in every way come up to his high standard of quality and finish. He has built up a large trade, for the public has come to know that anything bought at his establishment is exactly as represented.

The history of Bishop Thomas's religious development would be most interesting in a work devoted to the spiritual side of life, but it will scarcely be looked for in a history of the material growth and prosperity of Idaho and her people. Suffice to say that he showed such zeal in church work and developed such conspicuous talent as an expounder of the word of God, as it was revealed to him through the teachings of the disciples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, that, as one of the ministers of the church, he was sent to England to preach and to make converts. He was so successful in this work and in other important duties which were entrusted to him, that in 1885 he was ordained a bishop and in that high and responsible office is serving his people with rare ability and fidelity, with authority over the Eagle Rock ward. His duties are many and diverse. Aside from his ministerial office, he has a business-like supervision over the temporal affairs of the church in his ward, and is especially charged to see that the poor, of any religion or no religion, do not suffer for food or other absolute essentials to continued existence which may be supplied by the charity of the church. The members, elders and bishops of the Church of Latter Day Saints are all enjoined to work, and they are more than self-supporting in their relation to the work they are given to do. At Idaho Falls a fine meeting house of sandstone has been erected, and the church is thrifty and progressive.

Politically Bishop Thomas is a Democrat, and as such he has twice been elected a member of Idaho Falls town council, and in that capacity has served with the practical, business-like effectiveness that characterizes everything he does, holding the welfare of the whole people in view at all times. In every way he has shown himself public-spirited and deeply concerned for the growth of Idaho Falls and the advancement of its every important interest. Personally he enjoys the friendship of the best and most patriotic citizens of southeastern Idaho, and is highly regarded in business circles throughout Idaho and adjoining states.

Bishop Thomas was married, in Wales, in 1866, to Elizabeth Richardson, daughter of Charles and Mary (Harvey) Richardson, this event occurring before he came to America, and his wife came with the family party, as did the wives of some of his brothers. They have a son and a daughter. Lorenzo R. Thomas, the son, is a prominent citizen of Bingham county, and is now filling the office of register of the United States land office at Blackfoot. Mary E., the daughter, married S. H. Jacobs and has five children.