

DISCOURSE

BY

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REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I MADE some remarks yesterday afternoon in answer to certain questions which have been put to me in relation to the principle of tithing, and I thought this morning that I would make a few additional remarks on the same subject, and perhaps touch upon some other matters.

I read over yesterday certain questions which have been asked me pertaining to this matter; and I thought I would take the liberty of answering these questions to this Conference. Perhaps there may be some here to-day who were not here yesterday, and there may be some here to-day who do not read the Doctrine and Covenants, and who are not acquainted with some of the principles relating to this subject. Therefore I will read again that which was read yesterday afternoon, which will be found on the 418th page of the Doctrine and Covenants, new edition. There may be some who have not this edition, and I will say therefore that the same revelation will be found in section 107 of the old edition.

"Revelation given at Far West Missouri, July 8th, 1838, in answer to the question, O Lord, show unto thy servants how much thou requirest of the properties of the people for tithing?"

"Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the Bishop of my Church of Zion, for the building of mine house, and for the laying the foundation of Zion and for the priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church; and this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people; and after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one tenth of all their interest annually, and this shall be a standing law unto them for ever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord.

"Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass that all those who gather unto the land of Zion shall be tithed of their surplus properties, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you."

"And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy, and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you it shall not be a land of Zion unto you; and this shall be an ensample unto all the Stakes of Zion. Even so. Amen."

The scriptures say that we shall receive line upon line and precept upon precept; and therefore it is necessary sometimes, to carry out these ideas in order that, where a people have been misinformed or have not judged or heard correctly, they may be put right in relation to all general leading principles. A feeling has more or less prevailed among the people that tithing is a matter to be decided on exclusively by the individual paying it, and that if he pays it, all right; if he does not pay his tithing, it is not quite so right. It makes not so much difference. A good saint perhaps, may be honorable and upright and honest in dealing; may be a tolerably good neighbor; he may be zealous to a certain extent, according to his ideas and notions, in regard to the propagation of the word of truth; he may be active and energetic in many things; but if he does right in the main, tithing is a matter of very little importance; it is only a temporal idea, it does not concern us much, it is only meant to meet the financial affairs associated with the Church—and that is a matter of very little importance.

Now it is proper that we should be correctly informed in relation to these matters and as I stated yesterday, there is a great diversity of opinion existing among men, and even men in authority in the Church, say, Bishops and probably Presidents of Stakes and others, in relation to the principle of tithing. Now, it is proper that we should have a correct view and a proper understanding of this principle. We are here to carry out the purposes and designs of God, and as I understand it we have been gathered together according to certain revelations which have been given for the

establishment of His Church upon the earth, and that we, as a people, profess to be the Lord's people, and under His guidance and direction. Each one, if he is living his religion, is supposed to have the spirit of light, of truth and intelligence within himself, the spirit of revelation, the Holy Ghost given unto him by the laying on of hands which, if he follows in all its guidings and dictates will lead him into all truth. Each man and each woman is placed in the position that they can draw nigh unto God through Jesus Christ: to have the light and intelligence of the Spirit of God imparted unto them; but because of the weakness of man, because of our many infirmities, and because of the powers of darkness and of the many influences that have been at work from the commencement of the world until the present time seeking to destroy, to uproot and to overturn the principles of eternal truth, and to lead men into error, darkness, confusion, and death, and because it is the way and order of God, He has ordained a holy Priesthood for the guidance, for the direction, and for the instruction of His people.

We are told that in ancient days God placed "in the Church first Apostles, secondly Prophets, thirdly Teachers;" and again, "He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers." For what? "For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: but speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." That was the teaching of one of the old Apostles. Furthermore, the Lord has instituted in the Church in these last days the same priesthood that formerly existed, and for the same purpose. We have, say, a First Presidency; then we have the Twelve; then we have High Priests; then we have Seventies; then we have High Councils, and Bishops and their Counselors; then we have Presidents of Stakes, each Stake in its form a compact body, with a President and his two Counselors, and Bishops operating in their place, and the High Councils operating in their place, with the Priests, Teachers and Deacons operating in theirs, all working and operating together. Then we have Relief Societies, and Mutual Improvement Societies, and our Sunday Schools, and Primary Associations, and all the various organizations and institutions which are organized for the instruction of the rising generation, male and female. Thus we have the various officers in the church performing their several duties with honor, integrity and truthfulness before God, looking after the interest, the welfare and the happiness of those that are associated with and that are under their jurisdiction. Then these various Stakes, in their organizations, with their Presidents, are subject to the presiding authorities, and the Presidents thereof have to render an account to the Presidency of the Church; and the Presidency of the Church ought to be able at all times to render an account to their Heavenly Father.

This is an order, as I understand it, that is introduced by the Almighty, and by Him alone. It is not of man, nor did it proceed from man; and as it did not proceed from man, neither can it progress nor be perfected by man without the direction of the Almighty. In fact, with all these helps, with all these organizations, with all these principles, owing to the weakness and infirmities of man, we find it difficult to preserve in purity those sacred institutions that God has given unto us, and we continually need the greatest care, humility, self-denial, perseverance, watchfulness and reliance upon God. We talk sometimes about free will; is that a correct principle? Yes; and it is a principle that has always existed, and proceeded from God, our Heavenly Father. When God revealed Himself to Joseph Smith it was optional whether he obeyed His counsel or not; I suppose, however, looking at things as they exist, and as they are in truth, God understood that he would do it, he having been selected for that purpose a long, long time ago; and that the Lord knew that he would adhere to

those principles and would carry out the designs of Heaven as they should be communicated unto and required of him. We received the gospel; was any one forced to obey it? Was there any coercion in any possible way manifested toward us? Not that I know of. Was Oliver Cowdery, who was the second Elder in the Church, obliged to receive this gospel? No, he was not. Was Hyrum Smith obliged to receive it? No, he was not. Were any of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon—the Whitmers and others? No. And after they did identify themselves with this Church, were they compelled to stay in it? No. Have any of the members of the Quorum of the Twelve, the Seventies, the High Priests, or the members of the High Councils, or the Presidents of the Seventies, or any class of men in this Church, been compelled to occupy the position to which they have been called? I do not know of any, do you? I know there was no coercion used with me further than the force of truth recommending itself to my mind, neither was there with you further than the power of truth operating upon your minds. And after you received the gospel were you compelled to leave your homes to come here? No, you were not. In fact, it was your desire to come here, and you could not be kept back from coming, because you were impelled by the spirit which the Latter-day Gospel inspires to come to the land of Zion. If this is called compulsion, it is not the compulsion of man, but the operation of the Spirit of God, which you received through obedience to the gospel.

We may here ask, in acting under the dominion or control of the priesthood are any of you forced to do anything you do not want to? If you think you are in any possible way, I absolve you from it to-day, every one of you. These are my ideas about the rights of men. It is "all free grace and all free will," as the poet has it. We have not been coerced to come into the Church, we are not coerced to remain in it. But we have taken upon ourselves a profession of faith in God, and as Latter-day Saints we believe that God has spoken, that the heavens have been opened, that the everlasting gospel has been restored to man, and we believe that God has organized His Church by revelation, through His servant, Joseph Smith, in the form that we now have it. This is our faith. We cannot help that faith. I cannot help my faith, neither can you help yours. There was from the first, scriptural evidence adduced and a certain kind of reasoning used to enlighten our minds. We believed, after hearing the preaching of the gospel, that it was our duty to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of our sins, and to have hands laid upon our heads for the reception of the Holy Ghost. And when we received that Holy Ghost, which takes of the things of God, it showed them unto us; and then we were placed upon another footing from what we were before; and that Spirit has enlightened our minds in regard to those things of which I have spoken, as well as in regard to many others. If God has revealed unto us certain things can we help our faith in them, and can we help knowing this to be the Church and Kingdom of God? No. Can I? No. Can you? No. What would men have to do to deprive me of this faith? They would have to cut off my head, or in some other way to kill me; and then they could not change my faith, that would be impossible. If a man knows a thing, he knows it, and he cannot un-know it. There is one way whereby we can un-know these things, and that is by giving way to evil influences, to the powers of darkness, and by departing from the light of God; and then the light within us becomes darkness, and then "how great is that darkness." But when you talk about controlling a man's faith, it cannot be done; and I would say to people who are bent upon having me change my faith, all you have to do is to cut off my head, and even that would not do it, because I would still be myself entertaining the same faith in the next world. And therefore, all that men could do toward accomplishing this object would be to destroy the body, but that principle which God has implanted in our hearts it would be impossible to destroy; hence says Jesus, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Now, speaking again of the organization which I have referred to, connected with it are laws which are calculated to lead us on from

strength to strength, from knowledge to knowledge, and from intelligence to intelligence, until we shall all see as we are seen and know as we are known. And hence God has given for this purpose the various offices that exist in the Church and Kingdom of God. I would further ask, what is this priesthood given us for? That we may be enabled to build up the Zion of our God. What for? To put down wrong and corruption, lasciviousness, lying, thieving, dishonesty and covetousness, with every kind of evil, and also to encourage faith, meekness, charity, purity, brotherly kindness, truthfulness, integrity, honesty and everything that is calculated to exalt and ennoble mankind, that we may be the true and proper representatives of God our Father here upon the earth, that we may learn to know His will and to do it; that His will may be done on earth as in heaven. And hence, Zion is spoken of as being the pure in heart.

When the disciples of our Lord asked Him to teach them how to pray, what did He say? "When you pray say, 'Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.'" Besides other things they were taught to pray that God's kingdom might come. Why? That the earth might be delivered from oppression, cruelty, tyranny, from corruptions, infamy, licentiousness, debauchery and all the evils that afflict humanity, and which have been introduced by the powers of darkness for the overthrow and destruction of the human family. Jesus stands forth as the great propitiator between God and man. He came here as the representative of His heavenly Father; He is our great High Priest, and He lives to intercede for us before the throne of God, who is also our Father, Jesus being our elder brother.

Now, then, God has gathered us together for a purpose, and that purpose is to build up Zion and to establish His kingdom on the earth and He could not do it in any other way that I know of than the way in which He is doing it; He may however have some other way, but if He has I am not acquainted with it. It is sufficient for us to know that He has chosen this way. We are doing a great many good things. I feel very much interested in the labors which are being performed. My heart is drawn out in many instances to many peoples and organizations that are engaged in trying to teach the people the ways of life. When I see the Twelve thus engaged, traveling about from place to place teaching the pure principles of the gospel of peace, I feel like saying in my heart, God bless you, and God sustain you; and all Israel ought to have the same feeling. Then when I see our missionaries doing the same thing not only in our midst but elsewhere, seeking to promote the benefit of men, to introduce correct principles and to expose error, and to lead men to the truth and to gather them to Zion, I feel to say, God bless you in all your operations, and may the Spirit and blessing and power of God be with you; and all Israel ought to sustain such men who are engaged in such beneficial labors. Then when I see our Sunday Schools in operation, with our young men and women and in many instances the aged men and aged women taking an interest in our youth and trying to train up the rising generation in the paths of life, I say to all such, God bless you and may His peace and blessing be upon all who are interested in the welfare of Israel. And again when I see our young men and young women associating themselves together for mutual instruction and edification, learning to comprehend correct principles and educating themselves to become efficient laborers in the work, the great, the important, the eternal work of God which He has committed to us—when I see our young men and women engaged in that way, I say to such, God bless you, and may the peace and the blessing of God be with you. And when I see our juveniles who are organized as Primary Associations brought together and taught to sing the praises of God and to comprehend the principles of the gospel—and in many instances their parents scarcely sense the responsibility God placed upon them when He placed these precious jewels in their care making them the fathers

and mothers of lives—when I see our brethren and sisters engaged teaching these children to lip the praises of God and to honor and obey their parents and to do that which is right, I say God bless them. And when I see our Bishops engaged in doing the will of God and exerting themselves to promote the welfare of His people over whom they preside, and seeking counsel from God and other sources, and doing all they can to build up Zion unselfishly, with pure hearts and clean hands, I say, God bless you and may the spirit and power of your office rest upon you that you may magnify it and honor your God. And when I see the Seventies and Elders go among the nations of the earth, as many have done before, trying to benefit mankind, trying to snatch them from the fearful calamity that is near at hand, but people do not know it, when I see men going forth to accomplish the purposes of God and gather out His elect, I say to such, God bless you; and I feel desirous and hopeful that these men may be able to present the eternal truths of heaven in such a way that the honest in heart may see and admire them, and participate in the blessings resulting from obedience thereto.

We are here, then, to build up Zion. We have a temple going up here, and we have others in course of erection in other places. Now, while we have no disrespect for the world, no disrespect for the nations in which we live or to the authorities thereof, if they act wisely, well; if they do not act wisely it is not so well. No matter about that; we can trust them in the hands of God. We are the friends of all men, and are the friends of this nation; we are the friends and supporters of the Constitution of this nation, we are the friends of right, of freedom and of good administration and good men every where and that on the principle of which I spoke a while ago—on the principle of freedom, liberty, believe, and let believe, worship, and let others worship, worship as you please according to the dictates of conscience, and let others do the same. It is for us to be governed by correct principles, and as far as it lies in our power to extend to all men this right, and then maintain, on correct principles, our own rights, the rights of others and the rights of God. These are my feelings in relation to this matter. But the world do not comprehend our principles; they cannot. But we can afford to teach them the gospel even if we are abused for doing it; we can deal justly with them, and then suffer their abuse. No matter. We can do all this and a good deal more, and also advocate the rights of men, look after our own interests and welfare, and the interest of the community we are associated with, and sustain all just laws and correct principles. And then we can leave those men who violate correct principles in the hands of God. But they cannot comprehend these things, they do not possess that spirit which alone enables men to fulfill those principles, which are given by the Almighty for the benefit of the human family. We do understand them, I mean those who are faithful to their profession, as Latter-day Saints; but some of us possess the spirit by which they are actuated, and I am sorry when I see it. But as a people we are not of the spirit of the world; we are here not to pattern after the follies of the world, but to build up Zion, the Church and Kingdom of God upon the earth; and God has given unto us a portion of His Spirit that we may seek after Him, and seek to carry out His will, and He will continue to enlighten our mind, and we shall grow and increase, and our path will be as that of the just, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Do the world understand anything of the religion we have received? No. It is nothing new to say this; this was understood long, long ago.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him, neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;" and when they do not possess the spirit of truth, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, by which alone they are understood, how can they comprehend them? Well, having said so much, let me come back to the question of tithing.

The people were anxious at the time the revelation was given in Far West, to know what the Lord required as a tithing from His Saints. I was there at the time; it was in 1838—quite a little time to look back to. Some time, however, before this revelation was given, God had revealed the principle of the United