

"THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH."

A SONG DEDICATED TO PREST. JOHN TAYLOR.

The day of redemption, so near is at hand—
We can sing in despite of oppression;
But never, to meet e'en a nation's demand
Will we feign either fear, or depression;
The foes of our faith, like the billows, may foam

"But a rest for the Saints yet remaineth,"
So we'll sing and rejoice in our own mountain home,
That "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Proscribed, for opinion, in liberty's land—
Face we bondage, misrule and disaster;
Yet e'en unto death, by the truth may we stand,

And be leal to our Lord and our Master.
But sooner the ocean may quieted be,
And sooner may mortals enchain it,
Than souls can be fettered, whom truth maketh free,
While "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

The heralds of truth yet shall compass the earth;
And gather "the wheat" to the garner;
The honest will welcome the tidings of worth,

Undismayed by the wrath of the scorner.
The law of Jehovah we needs must fulfil,
We cannot reject nor disdain it;

'Tis "the hour of His judgment" and scoffers will feel
That "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

"From the wise and the prudent," the haughty and high,
The loftiest truths are oft hidden;

To "the feast of the Bridegroom" whose coming is nigh,
The halt and the humble are bidden,
Through obedience, the Lord doth a witness bestow,

Whoe'er thus desirath, obtaineth;
And thus do His people assuredly know
That "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Shall we barter our souls for a nation's applause,
That denies us fair representation?
Are we traitors? Nay, verily, just is our cause;

'Twill survive e'en unjust legislation.
The faith of the Saints shall astonish the world,
And puzzle the wise to explain it;

Hosanna! hosanna! Truth's flag is unfurled;
And "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

EMILY HILL WOODMANSEE.

Salt Lake City, May 1st, 1882.

—Woman's Exponent.

DISCOURSE

BY

APOSTLE F. D. RICHARDS,

DELIVERED

At the General Conference, Saturday Morning, April 8, 1882.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

The greatly increased numbers of Israel, and the greatly diversified and multifarious necessities which are occurring, and which increase like the branches upon a great tree, call upon us each and all, to seek continually for the mind of the Lord, that in all our varied ministrations, labors and duties, we may perform the same acceptably to Him and profitably to all of His children; not only to the Saints but to the inhabitants of all the earth, inasmuch as they will hearken to His word.

We have a vast number of witnesses and evidences of the mercy, the favor and blessing of God unto us, as a people, as well as to ourselves individually and as families, it being the privilege of all who live faithfully in Christ Jesus to see and acknowledge the hand of God in all things throughout their checkered lives.

This morning I am reminded of some choice, precious promises which the Lord has made to us in the dispensation in which we live, having a peculiar application unto us, though like blessings may have been promised to people in former generations, those now referred to were given especially to the Saints of the last days. There is one very significant saying in the revelations, you will find it in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 103, beginning at the 19th verse. It is as follows:

Therefore let not your hearts faint, for I say unto you, as I said unto your fathers, mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence, but I say unto you, mine angel shall go before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land.

Here is a very definite and positive assurance that this work is His, that He is particularly to figure in it Himself; that He has not entirely committed it, even to angels; as

represented in the parable, so beautifully expressed in the Book of Mormon, where the husbandman calls upon his servants to come and help him to prune his vineyard for the last time; we are given to understand that so we are called to be helpers to the Lord our God, to prune His vineyard for the last time.

We should not allow the cares or corruptions of the world to lead us to forget that the work in which we are engaged is the Lord's work; we should never forget that the work to which all are called, God has undertaken to direct Himself; especially as it was commenced in former dispensations, but, for obvious reasons, remains to be consummated and perfected in the dispensation of the fullness of times in which we live. The Lord has also told us specifically in His revelations that it is His business to provide for His people. Most encouraging word—calculated to increase confidence in the hearts of all those who walk by faith before Him.

Furthermore, He has condescended to tell us in the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "For behold I do not require at their (the Elders) hands to fight the battles of Zion; for as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfil. I will fight your battles," Doc. and Cov. Sec. 105, ver. 14.

One after another passages might be repeated relating to the designs and purposes of God, all going to show that He has not let out the work to be done by chance or to be controlled by others, but that He will direct it Himself.

Have we not evidences of these facts? We have as pointed and conclusive evidence of these things, already before us, as the Apostle Paul had when he told the Hebrews that, through faith the worlds were framed by the word of God; through faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, etc. Let us look at two or three prominent features of our history for evidences of His divine favor in overruling affairs for our welfare according to the counsels of His own will.

In former times there was much destruction of life and a great deal of contention between the enemies of God's work and His people. The latter have at different times gone forth, and that by the holy command of heaven, to mortal combat. The Lord has told us in His revelations of the last days concerning the laws which governed warfare in the days of Abraham, of Lehi and Nephi, etc., which are detailed very minutely in the Doctrine and Covenants. He says:

Behold this is the law I gave unto my servant Nephi, and thy fathers Joseph, and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, and all mine ancient prophets and apostles.

And again, this is the law that I gave unto mine ancient, that they should not go out unto battle against any nation, kindred, tongue or people, save I, the Lord, commanded them. (Doc. and Cov., sec. 98, v. 32, 33.)

For an account of the laws that justify warfare the Saints can read this section from the 23rd verse to the end.

In those days there was more contention or mortal combat permitted and required, in order to maintain the rights of God's people and establish righteousness before His face, when idolatrous and all manner of worship, except that of the true and living God, prevailed among the nations generally. But it is not given unto us that we should contend with weapons of war; that inasmuch as we serve Him, He will fight our battles for us. How has He done this? Have we forgotten how He managed to keep us out of the late terrible fratricidal war, when our great country was divided in a sanguinary struggle? How did He graciously regard us? It was by telling us to arise and go hence.

Some of you well remember in what haste we gathered our little remaining substance in Nauvoo, leaving our homes in the winter season, and how we crossed the river on the ice. History attests the fact that we left none too soon to escape the dire necessity of taking up weapons of war against our fellow man. The great reason why David was not allowed to build a house to the Lord, was because he had been a man of blood. He had commenced to gather his thousands of talents of gold and silver together, and was ready to build; but the Lord told him he should not, that he had been too much a man of war, had shed too

much blood; but that he might get the materials together, and that Solomon, his son, should build a temple to his name. It is plainly to be seen, in the wisdom of God, that the Saints are not to take that course; but on the contrary, the Lord requires of them that they preserve to themselves pure hearts and clean hands to build His Temples. Was not this a great and wonderful manifestation of His loving kindness, was it not a demonstration to a great people of His tender mercy in preserving us from that fratricidal strife that arose in the nation. Where is the heart that cannot be thankful for this? Here is one great, we may say, worldwide demonstration of His kindness and goodness to provide for his people, and to preserve them from dire calamities, the direct of calamities that overtake the human family. Let us then sense the feeling and spirit of the ancient prophet, Isaiah when speaking of the judgments of the latter-days that the watchmen should lift up their voices and speak comforting words to Zion. And what should they say? "Thy God reigneth." That is the word to us, brethren and sisters. "Thy God reigneth." Let us learn to know and sense it, put our trust in Him, and learn that it is He that builds up nations, and it is He that levels them to the dust; that it is He that raises up and makes rulers and people to become mighty in the earth, and that it is He that permits them to go down into insignificance, shame and contempt.

How has it been when our enemies in our midst, in violation of a sacred principle of the Constitution, have said that we should not bear arms, which we had been wont to do in celebrating the anniversary of our national independence, and for our own protection in this new and Indian country, and that too in accordance with a provision of the Constitution; when we submitted in silence to this indignity, what has been wrought out in our behalf? As if the heavens took momentary record of it, from that day to this the enemy that has existed among the unprincipled, low and degraded Lamanites upon our borders has been hushed to silence; the manner in which we have dealt with them has been felt for good. Terrible wars have been prevented by the influence of the Latter-day Saints among them, until to-day it is not necessary that any, in this region of country, should have arms to protect themselves unless it be from professed friends. Is there no God in this? Look all around us, God has made even our adversaries to be at peace with us. He has made the blessings of peace to be multiplied around us until the very occasion for weapons of defence is removed. The wicked had no sooner forbidden us to bear arms when God in His tender mercies and parental solicitude removed the very occasion of defence, leaving us at peace with all around us. The glorious tidings, "peace on earth and good will to man," have come sounding to us through the ages, and they are being echoed and re-echoed to us by the voice of those who hold the keys of the kingdom, and we see it not only in word but in power and demonstration of truth.

These are none other than the blessings of God unto us, my brethren and sisters. We ought to think of these things; we ought to acknowledge in gratitude this dispensation of His providence; and we should make it our business to sanctify ourselves before Him; yea, let the man that has taken to his cups depart from them; and let the man who has drunk of the spirit of the world, and who fraternizes with the ungodly, turn from the error of his ways, wash himself from the filth of unrighteousness and purify himself before God, and call upon His name that He may forgive and extend His pardoning favor. It is to be deplored that there are so many that are so easily to be civilized by this damning "civilization" that has come among us; it is an occasion of sorrow to the Latter-day Saints that so many are so easily drawn away to affiliate with the ungodly. When we remember the mercies and blessings of God to us, it is a fitting time to turn and seek His face and favor afresh, and renew our covenants before Him, and become worthy in His sight.

I might enumerate many other instances of the goodness and mercy of God unto us, how He fed the suffering Saints with quails on the banks of the Mississippi, how He sent gulls to rid us of the crickets when they threatened us with starvation here;

I must refer to the time when the Lord permitted the United States to send an army to Utah. It was told to us that there were a million of bayonets in the States ready to be turned toward Utah. We did not count them, but we know the details of their coming and how the soldiery arrived here. They came with their mouths full of ribaldry, full of threatenings, full of animus and destruction towards President Young, his family, the Apostles and towards all that were immediately associated with them, threatening to hang them like Haman upon a tree. But God in His mercy before they got here very much cooled their ardor; and when they arrived they came as harmless as any 4th of July celebrators. They marched in quiet through our streets no man daring to commit an indignity as they passed.

Our Heavenly Father sanctified this to our good, for while they scattered much means among us, scarcely an act of hostility was committed, and, when the time of terrible destruction came they marched away to the violence of death. Is not the hand of God to be seen in this? If so, should we not acknowledge with thanksgiving His mercy in thus making us the objects of such care. We ought to bestow the best efforts and energies of our lives to build up His kingdom, establish His righteousness, and make Him our friend for time and eternity.

I would not dwell too lengthily upon these things, although they show the divine goodness and tenderness. Is there a loving father that deals more affectionately with his children than this? Could the Lord deal more lovingly with us? It is to be feared that His tender mercies are so abundant and we become so used to them as to grow ungrateful.

A few words in regard to the fundamental law established for the guidance of the people of this great nation, called the Constitution of the United States, that instrument was framed by our forefathers, who purchased the power to do so with their blood; they were men who went into the revolutionary war pledging their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor, and placed everything they possessed upon the altar of liberty. The Constitution they adopted has been admitted by European statesmen to be the grandest palladium of human rights known upon the earth. The flag of our nation has commanded respect in every part of this habitable globe, whether on land or sea.

All representatives and officers of the government, state or national, from the highest to the lowest, lift up their hands to heaven and swear that they will observe that Constitution and the laws of the nation or State, as the office may require, to the best of their knowledge and ability, so help them God. When Congress so far descends as to make special laws, and send forth its legislative missiles to us bearing the odor, power, and character of attainder, and *ex post facto* laws; when they can provide, directly or indirectly, for conviction without trial by jury; when they frame and pass measures having for their object the deprivation or spoliation of rights common to all citizens, and that in direct opposition to the provisions of the Constitution, as appears on the face of the Edmunds bill, they themselves violate that oath of office which they took before God and their country. They may, standing in high places, think that it does not become citizens to question their acts; but citizens of this Republic are the sovereigns of the nation; and when the Constitution was created it was provided that every power not granted by that instrument was retained by the people. Public men, in the true spirit of the Constitution of our government, are the servants of the people, put in office to administer the will of the people as defined in that instrument.

When men in high places forget themselves, and in violation of their oaths dictate or forbid what shall or what shall not be observed as religious rites, they become amenable to the higher laws, and will have to answer to the charge of perjury to an immortal court, from whose decisions mortals have found no mode of appeal by any bill of exceptions.

The principles upon which our government is founded are most excellent, and to all intents and purposes most satisfactory. The great and learned Webster, Clay, and their contemporaries, considered them a standard of liberty—far

above that of any other country upon our globe; something that every American had cause to be proud of. If the American nation will be governed by its doctrines, it will extend to the whole human family the precious boon of liberty, and will make this land in reality an asylum for the oppressed of all nations. But we have come to a time when Congress has undertaken to dictate our ethics, to declare what we may or may not accept as tenets of religion. This is a right or power that is not conveyed in the Constitution; but on the contrary, Congress is expressly prohibited from making any law establishing any form of religion or preventing the free exercise thereof; this right of worshipping God according to the dictates of one's own conscience is the right of every American citizen.

Aside from what may be pronounced legal, there is an equity side of the court to which all God-fearing people have recourse. One principle of which the courts of the nation seem to have taken no consideration, but which the Latter-day Saints cannot afford to pass unnoticed, is this. Wherein it is given in the Constitution that the States shall make no law to impair the obligation of contracts. I wish to ask the people, not in the legal sense, but in the sense of equity, of righteousness and eternal truth, if the marriage relation is not to all intents and purposes a contract? Do we not enter into a covenant, a contract, an agreement with our wives. Yes; not only a contract, an agreement of a civil nature, as it is regarded in the world, but our contracts are of a higher order, of a more sacred nature extending as they do in perpetuity from time into eternity. Now, if it is a violation of States rights to pass a law impairing the obligation of contracts in common financial matters, is it not a graver and more serious violation of the Constitution to pass a law impairing the obligation of contracts as between man and wife? It is laid down by the most eminent law writers of our country that properly maintained marital relationship is the true basis of all human society; it needs the solemn covenants of husband and wife to be taken into account, and then what follows? The reasons why contracts and faith in them should not be violated is because of vested rights that accrue under those contracts; and have you any vested rights, my brethren and sisters, under the contracts that you have made with your wives and husbands, have you not acquired under those covenants and contracts the most precious of vested rights—those of sons and daughters given you in the flesh? These are possessory rights, the value of which bear no comparison with any thing that can be called goods or chattels. We look upon the increase of our families, as the foundation of our eternal dominion, we cannot but look upon any hand impairing the obligation of these contracts as striking at the very root of our prosperity. Our children are our vested rights growing out of these holy relations, rights not only of a temporal but of an eternal, and finally immortal character, and of the highest possible consideration.

I apprehend while I talk upon this subject that it is very improbable that the courts of the world would regard these matters in any such light, but they are matters which pertain to the laws of the living God before whose court we shall all appear and our rights be vindicated; those who have undertaken to deprive us of these rights will also appear and on such a writ of errors as will bring them effectually within the jurisdiction of the court.

The Lord has given unto us these rights, which we are learning to appreciate, but which the world know nothing of. Is it to be wondered at that they do many things, as did those who slew the Savior, concerning whom He said, "They know not what they do?"

The rulers of our land have undertaken to set snares for our feet, to bring us into subjection to the political will of the Republican party to teach us how to promote party discord, be oppressed with heavy taxes and become burdened with debt. Let us put our trust in the living God, and see that while we violate no law of man unnecessarily, that we do not violate any of the laws of God, so that we may be entitled to His protection and that his blessing may abide with us.

Not desiring to occupy too much time, I would exhort my brethren and sisters to renew their diligence in trying to honor the Lord by keep-