

## DISCOURSE

BY

PREST. JOHN TAYLOR,

At the Quarterly Conference in the Salt Lake Theatre, Sunday afternoon, January 6, 1879.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I HAVE been interested in listening to the remarks that have been made by the brethren who have addressed us during this Conference; and I propose myself to offer a few reflections that have passed through my mind while listening to the teaching and instruction that has been presented.

There is a feeling prevailing more or less among all the branches of the human family, that the nation or people to which they belong is superior in many respects to others, either in government, in morals, in science, in manufactures in the arts or in religion, as the case may be, and the Latter-day Saints are not without this sentiment. We feel that God has blessed us more abundantly with wisdom, and knowledge regarding himself, his ways, his laws, and in relation to eternal things, through our obedience to his will, than he has others, and that we are moving in a higher plane than the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam. Admitting this to be correct, there is nothing whereof we as individuals or as a people ought to boast. If we have received any intelligence or knowledge pertaining either to the present or the future, it has been solely through the communications that God has been pleased to make known to us. For naturally we are very like other men—not much taller, not much shorter, not much more intelligent, not much more ignorant, than they are. There is not so great a diversity among peoples as some imagine, other things being equal; it may be well for us to reflect a little on the position we occupy in relation to others, in relation to our God, in relation to the world in which we live and the peoples by whom we are surrounded; to reflect upon the past, the present, and the future, and to comprehend, if possible, our true status before the Almighty and before all men.

It is indeed true that God has conferred upon us many great and peculiar blessings for which we are indebted to him; but at the same time the Lord feels interested in the welfare of all men, and all peoples of all nations, of all creeds and all religions—not in their religions as religions, but in the people who profess to believe in them; and he is acquainted with the peculiar ideas, habits, dispositions and feelings of men everywhere. One of the old apostles in speaking upon these things, says, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitations; that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." It is further said, "that we are all his offspring," and again "that he is the God and the Father of the spirits of all flesh;" and consequently he is interested in the welfare of all the human family, everywhere—among all peoples, all nations, all kindreds and all tongues.

Now if this be the case, which we have no reason to doubt—then he is interested in all the human family, and he will try to promote their welfare and happiness so far as he is capable of doing, according to certain laws by which he himself is governed, as well as all things in creation, and the learning we have heard so much about is simply a knowledge of some principles associated with those laws which are generally denominated the laws of nature. In relation to the nations or peoples the Lord will do as well by them as they will let him, and as far as the laws by which he is governed will permit, just the same as we would towards our children. We fathers and mothers, have children; they do not always do as we would like to have them do; but we wish to look over their frailties and imperfections as much as possible; but when it comes to certain points, then both father and mother have to stop. If our children violate the laws of the land, they have to be judged by those laws and we can not prevent it, neither should we try to. Still our feelings are drawn

out towards our families, and it is right and natural they should be, for these paternal feelings are planted in the human breast by the Almighty. It is therefore proper that we should have affection and to manifest kindness, forbearance and long suffering towards all our children and all those with whom we are associated. God has this kind of feeling towards his children; and it is a portion of the spirit that emanates from him that prompts this affection and regard for our offspring.

These things are connected also with other matters. We try to look after the welfare of our children; we try—that is, those who are not utterly depraved—to lead them in the right paths, and to influence their minds and their morals and to teach them correctly both in relation to religion, education and morals, as well as secular matters, in order that they may become intelligent men and women capable of sustaining themselves, that they may improve the talents God has given them, and that they may be able to comprehend some few of the laws, at least, by which the creations, the worlds are governed and the principles by which we are surrounded in this world, as also a knowledge of the laws of life. This is all very proper; and it is also proper that men should cultivate pleasant relations and have a good, kind feeling towards others. One of the greatest evils alluded to in holy writ that, it is said, would develop itself in the last days is thus delineated: "in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves" instead of having that kind, brotherly, affectionate feeling towards others, they shall be "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." This is spoken of as being one of the greatest evils that could exist among men.

As I before stated, we have a regard for our children, and God has also a regard for us. We wish to train our children in the way we wish them to go; other people wish to do the same. Talk about the Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and other denominations, no matter what their ideas or feelings may be, no matter how inconsistent and foolish we may regard their manner of worship, yet many of them are quite sincere in trying to benefit their children. And God is sincere in trying to promote their happiness and welfare as well as he is ours, both in regard to this world and the world to come. And hence he will do the best he possibly can with all peoples. But as I stated before, being governed by law, he can only treat them according to their merits. They will "be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether those deeds be good or evil." And when that judgment takes place all men will have to abide its award; there is no appeal from it. No court to which they can have access whereby they can change the decree of the Almighty. The Lord knows this and he has prepared certain classes, so to speak, in his school here upon the earth for his people and for all the world. And he has provided a means of instruction for the inhabitants of the earth, looking upon them as eternal, immortal beings, having to do with time and eternity. But all things, as I remarked, are under the influence, control and government of law, just as much as the planetary system with which we are connected is governed by law. It makes no difference what a few of us may do, or how the world may act, the sun rises and sets regularly, the earth revolves upon its axis, and so it is with all the planetary systems; there is no confusion, no disorder in any of the movements of the heavenly bodies. They are governed by a science and intelligence that is beyond the reach of men in mortality; yet they move strictly according to certain laws by which all of them have been, are and will be governed. And these laws are under the surveillance and control of the great law-giver, who manages, controls and directs all these worlds. If it were not the case they would move through space in wild confusion, and system would rush against system, and worlds upon worlds would be destroyed, to-

gether with their inhabitants. But they are governed by a superhuman power, by a spirit and intelligence that dwells in the bosom of the Gods, about which mankind knows but very little. It is so with regard to all the forces of nature—the earth on which we stand, the elements of which it is composed, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and everything in nature is governed strictly according to immutable, eternal, unchangeable laws, practically philosophical, and strictly scientific, if these terms are preferred; but they are nevertheless placed there by the Almighty.

Now in regard to the world, and the position we occupy in it. There is something peculiar about the relationship we sustain to the world of mankind with which we are surrounded. It is not proper for us to be censorious, to upbraid people for things that they do not comprehend and that are beyond their ken; we should be courteous and charitable to all, and not find fault with men because they do not comprehend things as we understand them. But try to understand our true position and the relationship we sustain to our Heavenly Father, to his laws, to the peoples with whom we associate, and to the world in which we live.

We read of many prominent men who have existed in the world in various ages. For instance, there was Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, Jesus and his disciples, the people who came to this continent, Ether and the brother of Jared, Lehi and Nephi, Alma, Moroni and many other prominent individuals who held intercourse with the Almighty, who were placed by the Lord in a position whereby they could receive communications from him, could learn his will and teach it to others. We look upon these men as great men, and justly too, as wise men, as intelligent and philanthropic men; as men who were interested not only in their welfare, but in the welfare of the peoples by whom they were surrounded and the world in which they lived.

These men did not come as the censors of the world; they did not come to aggrandize themselves, to build themselves up, nor to control or coerce others. What was the great blessing conferred upon Abraham? "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" not cursed, not destroyed, not annihilated; but as a messenger of God, as the elect of heaven, as a man whom he had chosen to accomplish his work, and whom he would use through those principles that existed in eternity to pour blessings upon fallen humanity. That was the feeling which was manifested, as I understand it. It is true that Abraham, when a parcel of thieves came along in the shape of a confederation of kings, and took away his nephew and others and despoiled them of their goods, that he gathered together his household, pursued them and smote many of them, and delivered those they designed to oppress and brought the captives back again to their own places. And when he had done it, what then? Why, said they, Abraham you have done a good deed, you have delivered us and brought back this spoil, take what you please. But he told them that he did not want any of it: "You were injured, robbed and despoiled, and carried captive: these men came upon you and fraudulently despoiled you of your goods; and here is my nephew, Lot, who is an honorable man and one in whom I am particularly interested, and I was only doing for you what one man ought to do for another; I will take none of the spoils. Here are these young men who were with me, you may give them what you like, but you shall not have cause to say that you made Abraham rich."

Prominent men who were the descendants of Abraham acted in the same way; true benevolence makes all cosmopolitans. It has been the feeling, the design of all good men to benefit their fellow-men; and even the philosophy of the heathen has advocated this to a certain extent. What was the message of Moses when he was sent as a deliverer to the children of Israel, whom the ungodly Egyptians had oppressed and made slaves of. He as the sent of God delivered a message, thus saith the Lord, let my people Israel go. A message of mercy to Israel, and not even injurious to the Egyptians, unless opposed by them. Did he deliver them by any inherent wisdom or intelligence in him? No, but by the power of the Almighty, by the

revelations of God and by the intelligence that God gave to Him. His labor was especially a message to deliver Israel from bondage and unjust oppression. He brought them out, and God worked with him. And when their enemies pursued them, he protected them; he opened the sea and made the waves stand up while they passed over dry shod. Some of these philosophical people—I do not call them scientists, but ignoramuses—say, that is contrary to the laws of nature. But it is not contrary to the laws of God, nor the power of God, for he can do things just as he pleases, and manage them according to his own will and purposes, and he is acquainted with other laws in nature, of which men are ignorant. Moses, we are told, was a stranger in a strange land, where he saw a bush that burned with fire and the bush was not consumed (it might be said that this was contrary to nature's laws also); and a voice spoke to him which proceeded from the bush, telling him to take the shoes from off his feet, for the ground whereon he stood was holy; also telling him that he was a chosen messenger of the Lord to accomplish a certain work. And the Lord taught and instructed him. And Moses went before the king of Egypt and the powers thereof and delivered the message that God had given unto him. It was not a very agreeable message for them to hear, nor a very pleasant one for him to communicate. But he was a man of God and had the fear of God before him; the Lord had selected him as an instrument, and although comprehending his weakness he shrank not from the responsibility, but went forth in the name of Israel's God to perform the commission committed to his care, and he delivered the Israelites. It is true they were rebellious and ignorant, and it is true they were self-willed, and many of them were very corrupt; it is true they could not endure the light of the blessings of the Gospel; and it is also true that when God would have made of them a kingdom of priests they could not receive that priesthood, nor be governed by its influence. He then took from them the Melchisedec priesthood, leaving them the lesser or Aaronic priesthood, because they would not and were not competent to magnify the duties of the greater, and of that they were necessarily deprived. What then? God did the best he could with them, as he has done with every nation and every people; he, however, sent prophets among them from time to time.

Now we will pass on. What was the message that Jesus came to proclaim to the people, a message of destruction? A message of death? A message of condemnation? No, no; it was a message of glad tidings and great joy to all peoples. And what did he tell his disciples to go and preach? Destruction to all people? No; his commission to them was: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Where? To all the world. And what was the nature of that Gospel? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, which would place men in a position whereby they could have communion with God their Heavenly Father, having a hope blooming with immortality and eternal life that entered within the veil, whither Christ their forerunner had gone. Hence it was a message of mercy, salvation and exaltation to all people who would receive it. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." If they were condemned, if they suffered the wrath of God, it was not because they had not life and salvation held out to them; it was because they rejected that life and salvation through the preaching of his word and the atonement of his only begotten Son. Was there anything injurious in this? No, nothing of the kind. It was in the interests of humanity; it was for the welfare of the world. It was to teach man, through those heavenly principles which he had communicated, the laws of God, to put them in possession of those rich treasures of eternal life, opening the kingdom of heaven to the believer who would obey his laws and be governed by them. This is the message that God has always proclaimed to the people.

When Joseph Smith came, what

did he preach? Just the same as all the others had done. Was it because of any peculiar philosophy, or any remarkable intelligence that he had in and of himself in the first place to comprehend those principles that he revealed? No. It is true that he was a chosen instrument of the Almighty for that purpose; it is true that being one of the seed of Abraham, that peculiar blessing belonged to him. It is true that Abraham in former years through his genealogy was made acquainted with the rights pertaining to the priesthood, and that Joseph Smith had those rights in common with Abraham, being one of his seed. And it is true that he was selected for this purpose, but until the Lord made himself known unto him and revealed his purposes, he knew nothing about the things of God any more than you or I did. I know this for I have talked with him upon these subjects. Well, what was the nature of his mission? It was to restore the ancient Gospel; it was to bring forth the record of the Gospel upon this continent, which the people who lived here in former years had forfeited, because of their transgressions; it was that the stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim might be united with the stick of Judah, in their testimony, evidence, prophecies, doctrines and ordinances, developing correct principles, that things as they exist in the heavens might be made more plain to men upon the earth, and that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word should be established. Was it to condemn the world? Not unless the world rejected it. What was the Gospel Joseph taught? Just the same as that which Jesus and his disciples taught. He called upon the people to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, and they should receive the Holy Ghost. And did he and his brethren go forth and preach this doctrine? They did. And was the promise they made fulfilled to those who believed and obeyed? It was; and you are my witnesses to-day that these things are true, it having been made known to us by the Holy Spirit of promise, the Holy Ghost, which takes of the things of the Father and reveals them unto man. And is anybody harmed by this? Who is injured? Whose rights are interfered with? Whose principles are trampled under foot? Nobody! Is anybody forced to obey this Gospel? No! Has anybody been coerced into any measure pertaining to these matters? No! It has always been proclaimed and is to-day, "It is all free grace, it is all free will." Would you curtail anybody in their religious rights? Not by any means; I would leave them with their God. If they cannot comprehend, or comprehending have not the inclination to obey correct principle, I would leave them with their God, in whose hands we all are, and in whose hands are the issues of life and death. If men do not love the truth we cannot help it; if men become corrupt and unrighteous and full of infidelity we cannot help it, we did not place them in that position, it is their own act. Can you find a set of men to-day in the wide world, men who are filled with more philanthropy and benevolence, or greater benefactors to mankind than these Elders who are around me? You cannot find them on this little earth; you cannot find men anywhere that have and will make the sacrifices for principle that the Elders of this Church have done. I see those around me that have traveled hundreds and thousands of miles without purse or scrip, in the midst of persecution, contumely and reproach, to deliver the message of life to the people, because God had commanded it, and because they were desirous to promote the weal and happiness of the human family. How have they been treated? Just as Jesus was treated; just as his Apostles and just as the prophets of old were treated. Men have always killed the prophets and stoned those who were sent to them. But then what of that? That is all the worse for those who did this; they have the hardest row to hoe, for they as well as we have yet to appear before the Judge of the whole earth, and he will say, I called but you refused; I stretched out my hand but you heeded it not; hence, "I will laugh at your calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh." That is the way he puts it. I offered you light; I offered you truth; I offered you intelligence; I desired to promote your happiness, your well being, but you would not have it, and