

## DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PREST. JOHN TAYLOR,

In the Tabernacle at Provo,  
Sunday afternoon, Novem-  
ber 30th, 1879.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

We have heard a good many great and important truths uttered by those who have addressed us since the commencement of this conference. We have these conferences appointed for the purpose of adjusting and regulating any matters that may arise in the several Stakes, and for teaching and instructing the people on all matters pertaining to their welfare relative to this world as well as the world to come.

My brethren of the Twelve and myself have been traveling around considerably lately, among the people. We have visited some of the most prominent Stakes and attended their conferences; among which are the Stakes of Sanpete and Cache Valley—two of the most prominent of the Territory in which temples are being built. We thought we would like to visit them and see the condition of affairs; how they were progressing, what advancement they were making in these important labors, and then if they needed assistance of any kind we could render it intelligently after enquiring into their position. We found in both of these places that the people had been very energetic, very faithful, diligent and liberal in the prosecution of this work, that is, in building temples to the name of the Lord, that they may go and administer therein and attend to the ordinances of God's house for themselves, and receive those blessings which God has to confer upon His people, and administer not only for themselves, the living, but also for the dead. We found that a very large amount of means had been used in both of these valleys, including the districts around, appointed to assist them in the erection of these temples, and they are building up splendid edifices in both places. The one in Cache Valley is built of hard rock, a species of marble, that will make a very strong wall. There is, however mixed up with it in different places, some very fine sandstone, which they have to bring from quite a distance. They have raised the walls of that Temple about fifty-five feet and are still persevering. We found also that they were prosecuting their work very assiduously in Sanpete. They have beautiful sandstone there of a light color, easy to hew, which will make a beautiful structure when completed, almost equal to ours in Salt Lake City, with this difference, it is simply dressed outside. Hence things are progressing rapidly which evinces a good desire among the Saints to carry out the purposes which God has designed and which they have engaged along with us to perform.

In visiting these places we felt a desire to see the people that lived in the settlements around. We made an attempt to this end before, but could not accomplish it because of the pressure of circumstances that required our attention in the city; but this time, being at liberty, we visited all the principal settlements in Sanpete and Cache Valley, which are quite numerous. We thought it was proper, seeing they have as good meeting houses as you have here. They have a much larger meeting house in Cache valley than you have here, and I think the one in Ephraim, Sanpete, is larger than this—yet they could neither accommodate all the people, nor get them together, and you could not here. We could take some of the houses in which we have attended meetings, and put most of the people who are seated in the body of this tabernacle into them. If the Saints wanted to attend conference they could not find room, and consequently we thought it better to visit them at their homes, see how they were situated, feel after their spirits and let them feel ours; converse with them, preach to them and see what they were doing.

We found that in these temple districts, whilst they had been very energetic and very generous in their feelings in contributing to the work, they needed some considerable assistance, and we felt it to be our duty to assist them out of the

general fund of the Church, the same as we do in Salt Lake City; but of course not to the same extent.

They were working in union in a kind of united order; but not of course fixed up in that order. But as we are operating together in the interests of the Church and Kingdom of God, we deemed it quite proper that those places should receive the necessary assistance; and we thought also that that kind of feeling and spirit would also be satisfactory to our brethren of the priesthood and to the Saints generally throughout the Territory, for we are one or ought to be one in our endeavors to build up the Church and Kingdom of God. Having enjoyed ourselves very much in preaching and in mingling among the Saints in the places where we have visited, we thought we would come to you and do likewise—not particularly to talk to you, because you doubtless have enough of preaching, and perhaps a little more than you can attend to; but in some places the people do not have the same opportunity that you do here in Provo, for we sometimes slide by many settlements on the road, and it appears in some instances as though they were neglected. We thought in coming among you we would bring our own carriages as we used to in former years, and go by the highway and visit the folks at their own homes, go into the highways and by-ways and try to meet with all the Saints, for we are all one, all having been baptized into the one baptism and ought to partake of the same spirit and be governed by those glorious principles which God has revealed for the teaching and exaltation of the human family. Besides, there are a great many circumstances transpiring from time to time which render it necessary that we should be conversant with one another's feelings; that we should understand the mind and will of the Lord, and that we should be prepared to operate with Him in the interests of the human family, in the establishment of Zion and in the building up of the Kingdom of God on the earth. I always take pleasure in preaching the gospel—I have done a great deal of it—and my brethren of the Twelve feel the same. There is nothing I take greater pleasure in than in proclaiming the gospel to the nations of the earth, and in mingling among and preaching to the Saints of God. Although I cannot now go abroad, yet I can, and so can my brethren of the Twelve associate with you—for they feel as I do in relation to this matter; we can visit the Saints at home and talk to them on the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

There are a great many things associated also with this Kingdom that it is proper should be presented to us from time to time, that we may be enabled to act and to operate together and be one in our feelings religious, one in our feelings social, and one in our feelings political; for all these things are mixed up and intimately connected with the position we occupy as the Saints of the Most High God in the building up of His Zion here upon the earth. There are things spiritual, there are things denominated temporal, there are things also spoken of as being eternal in their nature, and all these subjects, in all their various ramifications, demand more or less of our attention. For instance, we are gathered together here as a peculiar people in these valleys of the mountains. We are gathered here because we embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and because of the revealing of that gospel to Joseph Smith, and because after having embraced it, we partook of its spirit, and because there was associated therewith the principle of gathering. We are gathered here under peculiar circumstances. But our first object was simple obedience to the gospel. There are circumstances growing out of this over which we seem to have very little control, by being gathered together in the position we now occupy, and composing part of this nation, there are certain political duties that seem to force themselves upon us. We came here simply on religious principles to start with, because we had faith in God, because we had faith in the restoration of the everlasting gospel; because we had faith in the gathering together of the people; because we had faith in the ordinances of the Gospel of the Son of God, because we had faith in the organization of the Church and

Kingdom of God, and the various offices pertaining thereto throughout all the ramifications of the Church. We came together therefore in a church capacity; but being gathered together as a people, we brought our bodies with us, that is we brought our souls, if you please, for the spirit and the body, we are told, is the soul of man. We brought ourselves here and being here we naturally form an integral part of the United States, and have become part of what is termed the body politic of the government. But we could not help that, and I do not know that we want to help it.

We became, then, organized in a territorial capacity and part and parcel of the government of the United States; this follows as a natural consequence.

There are a great many Saints here gathered together. I do not know the numbers; it is estimated by some to be from 150,000 to 200,000. How many there are I am not prepared to say. No matter, however, about that; but we have gathered ourselves here. Now, then, it is necessary we should be under some government. Being here in the United States, we, of course became part of that government, and, as a necessary consequence, according to the customs and usages of this government, we were admitted as a Territory. Under these circumstances, the government send out certain officers; for instance, a governor is appointed and selected by the President of the United States and then sanctioned by the Senate, and he receives his commission from the administration of the government of the United States, and he comes here as their representative. Then we have U.S. judges, a secretary, a marshal and civil officers, according to the usages that exist among people situated as we are in the Territories of the United States. There are so many representatives of the government who are properly appointed and authorized according to the form and usage that obtain generally in the country and in the administration of the affairs of this nation. We therefore come under this government and are subject to its laws and receive its officers. They come among us, which is very right they should do, according to the forms and usages that exist in the United States; and it is our duty to treat them properly, as it is their duty to treat us properly; the duty in this regard is reciprocal. We need the protection of law wherever we are, or under whatsoever circumstances we may be placed; and in placing ourselves in this position we are only doing just the same as others of our fellow citizens similarly situated are doing. This is a matter which has grown out of our religious ideas. Our religion prompted us to come together; and being together we have become a body of men, and being on territory belonging to the United States, it becomes necessary that we should be subject to its laws and usages, according to the provisions made and stipulations entered into under its jurisdiction and government. These things are all plain matters of fact, there is nothing extraneous or uncommon about them. Further, as American citizens we have certain rights, and others have certain rights. All men in the United States possess certain rights which are guaranteed to them by its Constitution. Again we have our legislative officers, provided for by act of Congress and passed by the general government of the United States. We have our probate courts, also our justices of the peace, our selectmen and the various organizations of laws pertaining to education, to public schools, and all things as they exist in other Territories. But notwithstanding all this there is one thing wherein we are very unpleasantly situated, which difficulty arises from the peculiar position we occupy in regard to our religion. There is nothing else that I know of. I have been in this Church a great many years, and lived in this nation a great many years, and have been a citizen for a great many years; but there is nothing that I know of excepting that one thing, that could in anywise be considered objectionable, and that is in relation to our views pertaining to plural marriage; there is nothing else in all our acts that any man in any part of the world can or would attempt to find fault with. No man can justly say this people have been disloyal to the Government of the United States if they say so they say something

that is not true, and a great many of them when they do say it know they are telling falsehoods. We are not turbulent, we do not create any difficulty, we do not get up mobs, we do not interfere with anybody's rights, socially, religiously, politically, or any other way. We do not interfere with a man because his religious views are not as ours; but on the other hand, as far as we have the authority we protect all men. But there are some things we have occasion to find fault with because of men wishing to trespass upon our rights. We think this wrong, contrary to comity, good faith and correct principles, and consequently we speak about it, and that is right, we have the right to do that. If any man, either in a religious, political or social capacity, trespass upon the rights of common humanity, we have as much right to express our feelings and to defend our rights as any other set of men have under the same circumstances, and no just man would seek to deprive us of this liberty.

Now, then, so far so good. While we would respect all honorable men, and would treat them justly and equitably, we do not, we cannot respect these miserable men who respect no man's rights, who would turn and give you evil for good, traduce your character and circulate falsehoods about you and seek to injure you—we cannot look upon them as honorable men. They are not so treated among any people; especially those miserable sneaks who would go round our houses and take advantage of certain circumstances and become informers and implicate you in crime under guise of friendship. All such men in any country are despised, and would be looked upon as scoundrels not fit to associate with honorable people. There is no one more contemptible than a spy. He is looked upon as the scum of society and the filthiest dregs of a community anywhere. We do not want to associate with such, we cannot, our natural feelings revolt at it, and while we respect honorable men everywhere, we say to such characters, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly, mine honor be not thou united!" These are our feelings about such individuals.

In regard to our religious matters wherein our social relations are concerned—for these are as much religious matters with us as anything instituted among men. Our marriage system is one of the greatest principles that God ever developed to the human family, whether men believe it or not. But there are many who are not acquainted with these things as we are; they do not understand God nor his revelations; and they really, if it came to the point, should have nothing to say against us in relation to these matters. But they do not understand it, neither do they wish to understand it; because there are a great many very corrupt men devoid of principle, and they care not what becomes of their future if they can only accomplish their present objects.

Now, then, did we seek this principle? No, we did not. Did we ask God that we might have a plurality of wives? No we did not. Was it a matter of our choice? No. The same God that revealed to Joseph Smith the first principles of the gospel also revealed unto him the doctrine of plural marriage; it was presented to us as a doctrine to be believed in and be governed by. Could we help it? What had we to do with it? It is a command of God; and the question is, Shall I, after having embraced the Gospel of the Son of God, and entered into covenant with Him to observe His laws and be governed by the revelations of His will, shall I, because of something that is distasteful to me set up my will and judgment against His, and say, "Why, I shall be despised, I shall be hated," shall I, because of a feeling of that kind violate the laws of God? No, I cannot do it; neither can you who believe in the revelation. God gave it to His servant Joseph Smith and he declared it unto us. Now, how was it? The first thing that was done, when it could be done, when the word of God came to us to do it—for there was a time after this revelation was given when we were not permitted to teach this doctrine publicly; but as soon as we were instructed to do so, Prof. Orson Pratt was sent to Washington to publish a paper, at the seat of government, and there proclaim our sentiments on plural marriage to this nation and to the world. This

mission he fulfilled—publishing a paper called the *Seer*, and lecturing in a hall hired for that purpose, several times a week. Was there anything under-handed about this, or low, or anything antagonistic to the interest of this nation or any other nation? It was merely proclaiming certain principles pertaining to eternal lives and covenants that should exist through eternity, in our sexual relations pertaining to our association in this world and the world to come. Did we interfere with the rights of others? No; and if we had any revelations, it was not for us to oppose them. But others do not know anything about these things, consequently they cannot comprehend our position. Have we done anything covertly? Not until we were forced to. Some few years ago, I remember being brought before a court to give evidence in a case. I was asked if I believed in keeping the laws of the United States. I answered Yes, I believe in keeping them all but one. What one is that? It is the one in relation to plurality of wives. Why don't you believe in keeping that? Because I believe it is at variance with the genius and spirit of our institutions—it is a violation of the Constitution of the United States, and it is contrary to the law of God. Now this is plain. You could not tell your feelings much plainer.

This was before the Supreme Court of the United States affirmed the constitutionality of that law. Well said a man to me, "Are you prepared to abide the consequences?" "Always," said I, "everywhere." That is straight forward, and in saying this, I only expressed the feelings of thousands of my brethren and sisters. Well, then, whose business is it? If I do a thing and am prepared to abide the penalty, whose business is it? Do I interfere with the friends or government of the United States? No. They have passed a law for political effect which is really intended as a trap for us. One would think that a great and magnanimous nation of fifty millions, could afford to allow a few thousand people to work out a social problem, without fear of contamination. They do not understand us, we wish them no harm. Many of them know this; but they cannot always control circumstances, and many of the members of Congress who were not willing to do anything of this sort, were crowded on by religious bigotry that prevailed among their people, just the same as others were in the days of Jesus. In his day he and his followers were maligned as we are; if he ever did any good, how was it represented? "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." And if we do any good somebody else must have the praise instead of us; but if there is any harm done, as for instance the trouble among the Indians, "it is the Mormons that do it!" I suppose if there are any storms, shipwrecks, wars or bloodshed, in Timbuctoo, among the Zulus, Chinese, Japanese, or Europeans, the Mormons will be represented as having had a hand in them! What position does this place us in? Do we wish to be governed by the laws of the United States and sustain its institutions? Yes, we do.

But while we are doing this many infamous men are misrepresenting us. But there are many honorable men who have other feelings. I have seen many of them not only in this nation but other nations, who possess more liberal and generous feelings, men of position and of all conditions in life. And among the honorable men of the earth I find there are a great many who look upon us as having been cruelly treated by those who ought to be our friends. Well, now, what shall we do under those circumstances? Having passed a law on purpose to entrap us they would now complain because we do not run right into the trap and say "take us and put us in prison." We are not such big fools yet, we have very different ideas to those. If they are ignoring principles that God has revealed to us we cannot help it. If they do not believe our statements we cannot have confidence in theirs; but one thing we do know—we are a thousand times more virtuous, a thousand times more pure, in our actions than they are in theirs. There is not a country in the world to-day where virtue and the rights, privileges, honor and chastity of the female portion of the community are more strongly protected than in this Territory. Now, that is a fact.