

GENERAL CONFERENCE.

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desiring to serve God. But this has constituted sought to combine these three forms, but as the inclination of the people was to increased liberty, the monarchical and aristocratic elements have grown effeminate, and today that government is even more democratic than is that of the United States; that is, the influence of public sentiment has a greater effect upon the policy of the government. For two hundred years the sovereign has not dared to exercise the veto power; while the ministry is changed according to the expression of the popular will, as indicated at the ballot box. I do not make this assertion in derogation of our form of government; there may be seeds of weakness yet undeveloped in their system.

The Constitution of the United States is democratic in its form, as it was created by the people; for the same reason the constitutions of the various States are democratic. But the laws are republican, because enacted by the representatives of the people. The Senate has co-equal power with the House of Representatives in legislation, but is not elected by the people. The State of Nevada, with less than 65,000 population, has two senators, while New York, with nearly 5,000,000, has no more. The Senate is, therefore, not democratic in the manner of its creation. The Senate, unlike the British ministry, does not follow submissively the House of Representatives. Nor does the President fear to exercise the veto power, for he feels, and rightly too, that in his high position he is the representative of the people. There is another check in our system of government that is lacking in the form of the British government—the Supreme Court. They are selected by the President and Senate, and are above the influences of public opinion. They are the representatives of justice and equity, and can check even Congress in the imposition of unconstitutional laws upon the people. They neither see nor care for public opinion and clamor, but are governed by the Constitution of our country. Wherever they have bowed to public opinion they have done so at the sacrifice of their honor or their high calling. We look to them to check public opinion where that opinion is wrong. The Constitution, which governs them, can be changed in a prescribed manner, and those who seek to alter it in any other way are traitors.

We claim that the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the framers of the Constitution were directed by light from God, and their work is the result of inspiration. The form of government given in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was revealed by the Lord through an untutored boy, and is the broadest, most liberal and perfect that can exist. One of its chief cornerstones is the doctrine of common consent. The Priesthood, from the Deacon to the President of the Church, have not the power to place a man in position to rule. They may nominate, but until the people sanction they can go no further. The Lord gave to the people the right to reject any man, and man cannot deprive them of that right. Human agency is a gift of God and when men seek to restrain or control it in others they do it by the spirit of darkness and not of light. That is what Lucifer did when he sought to enforce the plan of redemption over the agency of man. But Jesus interposed and Lucifer's scheme was rejected. Wherever men holding the Priesthood have exercised their power in the least degree oppressively they have done so in unrighteousness and unauthorized by the Priesthood they held.

The Church has means for the settlement of all disputes. The first step is that of reconciliation. Every person should be possessed of this spirit, and when he goes to his brother in that mood the spirit of God is with him. In the order of the Church, when reconciliation fails, then comes arbitration. The officers provided for this are the Teachers. They have no power to adjudicate or try cases, but may reconcile differences. If they fail, the matter then goes to the Bishops—the common judges of Israel. From these an appeal lies to the Stake High Council. The decisions by these Councils, when made in righteousness, are sustained by the Lord. After the Stake High Council, still another appeal may be had. It is said "The Standing High Councils, at the Stakes of Zion, form a quorum equal in authority, in the affairs of the Church, in all their decisions, to the Quorum of the Presidency, or to the traveling High Council." It must be understood that a Stake High Council is not the High Council of the Church of Christ. The latter is the Common Council of the Church, and is presided over by the Presidency of the Church. This High Council of the Church was established by revelation, and was organized in Kirtland, February 17, 1834, according to the mind and will of the Lord. Vacancies in this Council are filled by nomination of the President of the Church, and by the vote of the High Priesthood, called together for that purpose. Here again the doctrine of common consent comes in, in regard to an organization pertaining to the High Priesthood.

The world may urge that we have a hierarchy, in which the President is responsible to no one. But that is not the case. The appeals in cases may go from one court to another, to the standing High Council of the Church,

the highest council in the Church. The President of the Church is himself subject to trial for the commission of an offense. But the common council of the Church, the only tribunal before which he can be tried, is then presided over by the Presiding Bishop of the Church and two Counselors. This is the only work of the council so constituted; so that, in case one of the First Presidency should err, he is amenable to the law of God. Thus every man is accountable to the people.

This system reaches every man in the Church. An Apostle may be tried for his fellowship by a Bishop's court; a Stake High Council can operate on his fellowship in the Stake; but his quorum must take the final action upon him. How beautiful is this perfect organization of the Church when we come to understand it.

The system of Church government is not theocratic, but theocratic—democratic—the voice of God and the consent of the people. It is an intelligent government, and intelligence is the glory of God. Jesus of Nazareth won the victory over darkness and oppression in heaven, and He will win it on earth. Wherever the spirit of oppression dwells, it comes not from God. The law of the Gospel is the perfect law of liberty. The man who enjoys the spirit of God is a freeman. He may be consigned to prison, but you cannot overcome him. You cannot chain him, for he knows that to the right victory will come. Any man in this Church who exercises unrighteous dominion will, unless he repents, become a mockery before the people of God, and drift into apostasy. In the Doctrine and Covenants it is said:

Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—

That the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion, or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the Priesthood, or the authority of that man.

Behold! ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks; to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God. We have learned, by sad experience, that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

Hence, many are called, but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood, only by persuasion, by long suffering, by gentleness, and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.

Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost, and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death; Let thy bowels also be full of charity toward all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly, then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God, and the doctrine of the Priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven.

The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth, and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

Here you see what can be accomplished by the strong cords of love; here we learn what can be done by persuasion. And all other means, all that operate through coercion and oppression, shall fail.

The foregoing synopsis necessarily gives only an imperfect idea of Brother Thatcher's discourse, which, even in its entirety, was remarkable for condensation.

ELDER JOHN NICHOLSON

was the next speaker. He said he found himself in a somewhat embarrassing position, feeling the importance attached to the duty of addressing such a vast assemblage of the people of God. I have greatly enjoyed the teachings imparted during this conference. Many important questions have been brought before our attention, the most prominent according to my view, consisting of about the following: The educational character of the apparently adverse circumstances that surround the Saints; the necessity of more intense and earnest devotion to the interests of the young; the sustaining of the work, to which we profess to be devoted, in a substantial way; and not only the powers and rights of the Priesthood, but also some of its limits. I have been for some time deeply impressed with the situation in which we find ourselves, and coincide with the position assumed that we are in the most powerful school that it is possible to institute—the school of experience, without which it is impossible to increase our faith. I feel to lift up my heart in gratitude to God that we have difficulties and obstacles to meet and overcome, for without these there would be no progress.

It is plainly laid down in the Doctrine and Covenants that, in order for the Saints to know that they are acceptable to God, they must place themselves in a position to show that they are willing to sacrifice all things, even life itself, for their religion. This is a position that lies in the future,

and we must be educated up to that point. Some of the noblest instances history affords of self-sacrifice for the cause of God, have been cited, especially in the opening discourse of Apostle Lorenzo Snow, at this Conference. One of these instances is that of the three Hebrew children, before whom was placed a remarkable ordeal—to choose one of two alternatives. They were in a condition of preparation for the ordeal, and, when threatened with the fiery furnace, if they would not bow down to the image, they said, We do not know but we may be destroyed; but this we do know, that we will not bow down. They were conversant with the latter fact, if not with the other. It has occurred to me that, notwithstanding the claims we make that we are willing to sacrifice all for the truth's sake, there may be some question as to whether that has been our position in some things. There are in my heart some serious doubts regarding it. We are not yet far enough advanced.

There is one thing of which we may be certain, and that is that the Lord will fulfill his promises. He has said to the Saints, in a revelation given August 6, 1833:

I will try you and prove you herewith; And whoso layeth down his life in my cause, for my name's sake, shall find it again, even life eternal.

Therefore be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy;

For if ye will not abide in my covenant, ye are not worthy of me.

This is one of the glorious promises to the Saints, that they shall have the same opportunity as did the three Hebrews, when it will be seen who it is that will say, We don't know but that we may be crushed beneath the overwhelming weight of oppression that may crowd upon us if we do not surrender our religion, but this we do know, that we will not go back on any of the revelations of Jesus Christ. I expect that day to come, for the Lord has decreed that He will have a tried people in the day of His power. If that day of power is imminent He must have that people. It will not be merely a few men who are willing to go to prison, or to the death if need be for the cause of God; not the trial of a few families, whose sufferings, especially those of women and children, have been intense beyond computation; but it will be an application to the entire people, for the Lord has declared that He will have a tried people as a whole. The present situation is one to prepare them for what is coming. In my opinion, there are things which God directs and reveals, and others that He simply permits, and will shape the course of events to show the weakness of men and His own omnipotence. As Apostle Snow has said, deliverance will come to us only by the same process as that by which it came to the three Hebrews. How much power had man to protect them, or to stay the consuming flames of that furnace? None whatever. After we have used our own wisdom, and shown that it is insufficient, He who sitteth upon the throne will make bare His arm and bring to pass His glorious purposes.

In relation to our children, I have had the deepest solicitude. Sometimes I think we take too much credit to ourselves for what we do for them. The educational movement we seek to institute now, comes at a late day. Some of our children are repudiating the principles of truth. There are causes for this. Let us inquire what they are and remove them, and then the evil effects will cease. There is a result in that line which is produced by a most potent cause—the apparently contradictory positions we have taken in some respects. This has eliminated faith in many cases from the hearts of the young. This we know to be a fact, therefore let us look it squarely in the face that we may apply the remedy.

When I consider this educational movement I am almost confounded at its magnitude and the evident inadequacy of the means at hand to prosecute it successfully. We are given to understand there is to be established in each Stake at least one academy. This is good. There is, however, a financial question involved, and the brethren who have the direction of affairs say they propose to support these institutions. We have an excellent school of that kind in Salt Lake Stake, with capable teachers in the departments of secular, educational and religious knowledge, so that young people who attend may graduate not only as ripe scholars but also true-hearted and intelligent Latter-day Saints. But what is the status of this school in the community? It has been necessary to charge a comparatively high rate for tuition, a fact which virtually puts the sign over its door, "The poor cannot enter here." We have before us the historical lessons of the Book of Mormon, and they should have great weight with us. We read there that a reason why the displeasure of the Lord was brought upon the ancient people of this continent was that there were class distinctions among them. One of these was the distinction created by wealth, when men who had not sufficient love of the Gospel, as is the case in some instances today, lifted their heads above their fellows in haughtiness and pride, because of their riches. Another distinction, and one against which the Prophets proclaimed, was that produced by the superior facilities af-

forded for the more wealthy to educate their children. This is a more dangerous distinction than the first, for it affects the eternal intelligence of God's children.

We must, however, make a commencement. Those men who have been appointed to act in this matter have expressed their willingness to carry on the work, but their means for that purpose are limited. What shall we, the body of the people, do? Shall we not support them and show our faith by our works? If we would live up to the laws of God we would have sufficient means to meet every exigency. Let every man, then, pay his tithing according to the law. The Lord says tithing is a law unto His people, and to His Priesthood forever. How can we fulfill that law? Can we do it by paying less than the required portion? We certainly cannot. Less than a tenth is not a tithing. Suppose an applicant for baptism were to insist that only a portion of his body should be immersed and claim that that was a sufficient baptism; we would think him insane. So with tithing. You cannot partially perform an ordinance. It must be perfect or it is of no force so far as the fulfillment of the law is concerned. You cannot fulfill the law of tithing in part only; it can only be done as a whole. Its payment is a great privilege, and should be done because we have agreed to it. If we do not we are not in an honorable position. I have never considered a man who holds the Priesthood to be a Saint of any moment unless he complies with this plain ordinance. Shall we go hence, and for the future live up to this law? Let us do it, and let the cause for our action be because it is right, because the Lord requires it at our hands, and because it is sustaining and forwarding the work of God.

Regarding the outcome of this work, I have more faith in that than I have in the present condition of affairs. The victory will be wrought out by the power of the Almighty, and in no other way. May God help us to place our feet on the rock of ages, there to abide firmly, and come what will, say, here we stand or here we fall.

It was announced that in the afternoon a meeting would also be held in the Assembly Hall, as the attendance at the Conference was so large that it was impossible for the Tabernacle to contain the people.

The choir sang the anthem:

Ye shall dwell in the land.

Meeting was brought to a close by prayer by Bishop John R. Winder.

2 p. m.

The choir and congregation sang:

Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah.

Jesus anointed, that Prophet and Seer, Blessed to open the last dispensation; Kings shall extol him and nations revere. Prayer by Elder George Goddard.

The choir sang:

Behold the Mount of Olives rend!

And on its top Messiah stand, His chosen children to defend,

And save them with a mighty hand.

The Priesthood of the First Ward, Salt Lake City, officiated in the administration of the sacrament.

APOSTLE FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS

said they would have taken great pleasure in laying before the people full reports, but these had not been received from all of the Stakes. Some Stakes had not reported at all, while others had made only partial reports. This was no doubt owing to the peculiar situation in which so many of the people were placed at the present time. These reports are very important, and should be made at least once a year, at the annual Conference in April. Presidents of Stakes were requested to hereafter see that full reports were delivered at the President's office, Salt Lake City, not later than March 20th for the April Conference, and Sept. 20th, the October Conference. A complete report had been received from the Relief Society, but it was not deemed advisable to read it on the present occasion, because of not having the other reports. It was hoped that hereafter full reports would be made promptly, that the people could be made acquainted with the growth and condition of the Church.

Apostle Richards then presented the General Authorities of the Church, who were unanimously sustained as follows:

Wilford Woodruff as President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, as one of the Twelve Apostles, and of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Council of the Twelve Apostles: Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, George Q. Cannon, Brigham Young, Jos. F. Smith, Moses Thatcher, Francis M. Lyman, John H. Smith, George Teasdale, Heber J. Grant and John W. Taylor.

Counselors to the Twelve Apostles: John W. Young and Daniel H. Wells.

The Twelve Apostles as the Presiding Council and Authority of the Church, and, with their Counselors, as Prophets, Seers and Revelators.

Patriarch to the Church: John Smith.

First Seven Presidents of the Seventies: Henry Herriman, Jacob Gates, Abram H. Cannon, Seymour B. Young, C. D. Fieldsted, John Morgan and B. H. Roberts.

Wm. B. Preston as Presiding Bishop, with Robert T. Burton as his first and John R. Winder as his second Counselor.

Wilford Woodruff as Church Historian and General Church Recorder, with Franklin D. Richards as assistant.

Clerk of Conference: John Nicholson.

The following officers of different organizations were also presented and unanimously sustained:

Central Committee on Education for the Church—Wilford Woodruff, chairman, Salt Lake City; Lorenzo Snow, Brigham City; George Q. Cannon, Salt Lake City; Karl G. Maeser, Provo; Willard Young, Salt Lake City; George W. Thatcher, Logan; Amos Howe, Salt Lake City; Anton H. Lund, Ephraim; James Sharp, Salt Lake City.

President of the Relief Society, Zina D. H. Young; Secretary, Sarah M. Kimball; Assistant Secretary, Romania B. Pratt; Treasurer, M. Isabella Horne.

President of the Young Ladies Improvement Associations, Edna S. Taylor; Secretary, Mary E. Cook.

President of the Primary Associations, Louie Felt; Secretary, Cornelia H. Clayton.

General Superintendency of the Young Men's Improvement Associations, Wilford Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith and Moses Thatcher.

General Superintendent of the Deseret Sunday School Union—George Q. Cannon; Assistants, George Goddard and John Morgan; Secretary, Levi W. Richards; Treasurer, George Reynolds.

Apostle Richards explained that the names of the counselors in the superintendency of the Young Ladies' and other associations were not submitted, as the list was not at hand, but there were no changes. Sister Young, of the Relief Society had not yet selected her counselors.

APOSTLE JOHN HENRY SMITH

said in substance: I ask for the faith and prayers of the congregation. I am laboring under the disadvantage of a severe cold, but I realize that the prayers of the Saints avail much in the interest of any of our Father's children.

I will read a portion of the second chapter of the Prophet Joel:

And it shall come to pass that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

In reading this portion of the Scripture, it is not my intention to follow it as a text but to draw your attention to it as one of the most precious promises of God to His people. It seems to me that such promises should be fastened upon the mind of every Saint.

Many principles have been touched upon as important to the Church of Christ. Our brethren have spoken about matters of faith, of a temporal and spiritual character, and pointed out to us the obligations into which we entered when we stepped down into the waters of baptism. They have touched upon the education of the youth of Zion. It has been admitted by some speakers, at least, that scepticism, to some extent, has made its appearance among the youth of the Latter-day Saints. Our efforts to a great extent have been to cure this evil. It would, however, be useless to anticipate the possibility of so living and so teaching that we could save all the children that belong to us or keep from their minds the influence of the scepticism of the time in which we live. We should make every effort to implant in the minds of our children faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This obligation rests upon us from the instructions given us in the revelations of God. In the organization of the Church the necessary provisions were made to meet the requirements of the case. Our quorums of priests and teachers were instituted for the purpose of laying the faith deep in the hearts of the sons and the daughters of Zion, that they should need to entertain no doubt, if they would only exercise the minds their heavenly Father has given them.

The passage read informs us that the Lord would bring about a time when dreams and visions and inspiration by the spirit should be manifested to a large extent among His people. In fact the passage takes a much wider field, saying that God would pour out His spirit upon all flesh, but when the Prophet Joseph came forward and announced that he had been permitted to receive manifestations from God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, the world was opposed to the idea. When he declared that God had again spoken from heaven, the whole world came into commotion. But they were led to witness one of the greatest displays ever witnessed. One ray of light after another dawned upon the universe in rapid succession, and they have continued to flow and will do so, until our Father in heaven may see fit to restrain them.

Have we pointed out to the young that living and active faith is the result of inspiration from God? That inspiration is among the moving forces of the universe?

Joseph Smith, the Prophet, announced that God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, His Son, were revealed to him, and commissioned him to commence the work of ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times, in which God would renew everything upon the earth, and the sons and daughters of men should bask in the rays of eternal life. At that time, the world had informed us that the voice of inspiration was hushed. The windows of heaven were closed so far as revelation and prophecy were concerned. I would ask the stranger as well as the Latter-day Saint, was it not inspiration that led to the discovery of the power of steam? It is true all the details did not dawn upon the first dis-