

REMARKS,

By Elder JOHN TAYLOR, in the Bowery, in C. & L. City, General Conference, Oct. 7th, 1865.

REPORTED BY G. D. WATT.

It is good to meet together as we are met on the present occasion. It is good to speak on the goodness of God, and it is pleasant and instructive to hear; we enjoy a privilege that is not possessed by any of the inhabitants of the earth except ourselves; it is a privilege, which, when properly understood by the Saints, they will esteem to be greater than any other earthly blessing that can be bestowed upon them. We assemble together in a different capacity from that of any other people; we meet here as the representatives of God upon the earth. Yet occupying the high position that we do, blessed as we are with the light of truth, with the Holy Priesthood, with the fulness of the everlasting gospel; in possession of light and intelligence that is not imparted unto others, but of which they are ignorant, we stand emphatically as God's elect, as His representatives on the earth; at the same time there is mixed up with us a great amount of weakness, infirmities and follies, and we need continually the aid, teaching and protection of the Almighty God, to govern, guide, lead and direct us in the right path.

As I before stated, we stand in a different position to the Almighty and to the world from that of any other people. To us God has revealed His will; He has opened the heavens to us; among us He has organized the Holy Priesthood, and revealed those principles which exist in the eternal world; of us He has made messengers of life and salvation, to us He has communicated His law, and from us He expects obedience and a ready co-operation with Him in bringing to pass those great events that must transpire in the building up and establishment of the kingdom of God in the last days. The Lord is anxious to do us good, to enlighten our minds, to inform our judgment, to unfold unto us His will, and to strengthen us and prepare us for the great events that must transpire in these last days. He is desirous to show us how to save ourselves, how to bless ourselves temporally and spiritually, intellectually, morally, physically, politically and in every possible way that He is capable of bestowing His blessings upon fallen humanity. He is desirous to perform a great work upon the earth, to bring about a great revolution among men; to establish correct principles of every kind, and to make the earth and the inhabitants thereof fulfil the measure of their creation, and prepare all, that are capable or worthy, to receive everlasting life and exaltation in the celestial kingdom where He dwells. He is desirous of making use of us as His instruments in the development of this great work in which He has engaged.

We have been in the habit of reading the words of the prophets in relation to the establishment of the kingdom of God, and what they have said and the Spirit by which they were inspired. We have reflected a good deal upon what the Lord would do in relation to establishing correct principles upon the earth in the last days. We have read about these things and we have believed them in part, and as the Spirit of God has beamed upon our minds, latterly we have been enabled to comprehend more fully some of the things that the prophets in ancient times wrote about, but of which they understood very little, and we can only understand them as we are taught; we can only comprehend the designs of God as He reveals them to us; we can only understand our duty as the Spirit of God makes it manifest, either through the Elders of Israel, or by the revelations of God to ourselves, or both.

It is in vain for the Elders of Israel to teach the principles of truth unless the people are prepared to receive them; and it is vain for the Lord to communicate His will unto the people, unless the people possess a portion of His Spirit, to comprehend something of that will and the designs of God towards them, and towards the earth upon which they dwell. Nor can the Lord work with them unless they are prepared to co-operate with Him in the establishment of His kingdom upon the earth.

There are a great many things of which we speak that seem to be very simple, and very unnecessary, in the estimation of some, for us to talk about. We have heard in this conference reports from different parts of the Territory about their crops, about the way the land is cultivated, about the kind of improvements the people are making, about the prospects that lie before them for sustaining themselves with all the common necessities of life, etc. And

some people think that we might, when we convene together, talk about something else; about something which they would designate as being more spiritual. We meet together as men of intelligence, as men possessing natural wants, who have natural bodies, which bodies have to be clothed, to be fed and provided for; we meet together as rational individuals and as heads of families, who have children growing up that need, in the first place, to be instructed in the common laws of life and in those things that are necessary to promote our common well-being. The first thing that devolves upon all human beings, so far as I can comprehend it, is to provide a way for their own sustenance. One of the very first commandments that God gave to Adam, was when He placed him in the garden, He told him to dress or till it, so that he might be able to provide for his necessities. The fiat of the Almighty, at the time that Adam was expelled from the garden of Eden was, that man should "eat his bread by the sweat of his brow;" that we cannot avoid. By this inscrutable law we are compelled to attend to some of the first necessary affairs of life, or to go without bread and necessarily die. Consequently, when we talk about land and possessions, an inheritance, etc., we talk about things that are some of the first necessities pertaining to human existence. We live by breathing the air that God gives us, by drinking the water that He causes to flow for our sustenance, and by cultivating the earth in order that we may partake of the products of the earth. This is one of the first duties pertaining to man, and hence when we meet together to form new settlements as part of the body politic—as part of the kingdom of God, it devolves upon all of us, always, to ascertain how we can sustain ourselves in the position in which we are placed. Hence when we hear of any difficulties, such as we have heard of in the south at various times, and from other sources, pertaining to the existence of man, it causes a thrill of feeling to go through the whole of the people that form part of the kingdom of God; for if one member of the body suffers they all suffer with it, and if one member of the body rejoices the rest rejoice with it. When we hear from the south, as at the present time, that they are raising their bread, and that there is every reasonable prospect of them being enabled to sustain themselves, we feel comforted by the report. When we hear from the north of the destruction made by the early frosts, and yet, notwithstanding this disaster, of the prospects that lie before them, and the encouragement that they hold out to us of the prosperity of their settlements there, and that they will be able to provide for themselves, we feel comforted thereby, and feel thankful to the God of Israel that He is providing for and taking care of His Saints.

We believe that the kingdom of God is a temporal kingdom as well as a spiritual and eternal kingdom, to use this expression according to our comprehension; and when men are deprived of the common necessities of life, and have not wherewith to sustain themselves, they have but very little time to attend to religious matters, and they cannot be of much benefit to their brethren in helping to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth. But when on the other hand we see that the Saints are blessed in the north, in the south, in the east and in the west; when we see them industrious, persevering and diligent, and using all lawful measures to provide for themselves and their families and those that depend upon them, and when we see them cultivating the Spirit of God in them and living their religion, cleaving close to the Almighty and drawing blessings from His hand, then we acknowledge the hand of God in all things, and feel to bless the name of the God of Israel. Every one of these things is of great importance to the Saints of God, and we feel interested in all these matters. Are they prospering in the south? We acknowledge the hand of God in it. Is the climate tempered in the north? We acknowledge the hand of God in it. Do the rains descend upon our parched land and cause it to bring forth luxuriantly? We acknowledge the hand of God in it, and so we do in every thing that we see, and in every thing that we have to do with; for we read "that the wrath of the Almighty is kindled against none but those who do not acknowledge His hand in all things."

We are gathered together here as a peculiar people; we differ, as I stated before, in almost every respect, from the world of mankind with which we are surrounded. The Lord gives to them seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, and pours the rich blessings

of heaven into their laps; He gives them mechanical talent and ingenuity; He inspires them with a knowledge of the arts and sciences; He has been pouring upon them the rich blessings of intelligence and of plenty for ages, but they do not acknowledge His hand. Men boast of their own intelligence, of their own wisdom, of their own power, might and understanding; this is a general rule, with but few exceptions. They feel a good deal like the king of Babylon did when in his pride he rose up and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built? have I not done these things by my wisdom, by my intelligence, by my power and might?" With us it is different. We are indebted to God for the first rays of light and intelligence that ever beamed upon us. Who among us knew the first principles of the gospel of Christ until we heard them from the Elders of Israel? There is not a man among us that did; there is not a man in existence to-day that knows them, only as they have been communicated to him from God. Who told us that it was right to be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins? Who taught us it was right to receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands? Who taught us that it was right that there should be an authority given by God to man, to enable him to officiate legally in His name, and that everything in the shape of religion upon the earth was spurious and not of Him? It was communicated to Joseph Smith by the opening of the heavens, by the ministering of Holy Angels and by the voice of God. Until that voice was heard, until these communications were made known, the inhabitants of the world were wrapped in ignorance; they knew nothing about God nor the principles of eternity, nor the way to save themselves nor anybody else.

We have nothing to boast of in this particular. I do not speak of these things by way of boasting, but I speak of them to acknowledge the hand and mercy of God towards us as a people. What would a man give in exchange for his soul? We are told that a man will give all he hath for his life, what will he give then in exchange for his soul, or has he anything to barter for it? What is it that hath loosed us from the shackles of ignorance, error, superstition and folly with which we were bound? It is the light of heaven, the revelations of God, the ministration of the Holy Priesthood that has imparted to us intelligence in relation to these things, without this it is impossible that we could know anything in relation to them. Who is there in the world that understands anything of God, or His will? They cannot be found; they know nothing of Him. It would be needless to talk about the folly of many of their priests, and their ideas and notions in relation to these matters. What do they know of God? They tell us He is a spirit; what else? That He is without "body, parts and passions," some tell us that He sits on the top of a topless throne, etc. It is not necessary to enter into these matters; we know them and we do not wish at the present time to reflect upon them. I am simply reflecting upon my own ignorance as one of them. When I was among them I was a teacher, and what did I know? Simply nothing. I knew nothing of God, of the principles of eternal truth and life, and I could not find anybody anywhere that knew any more than I did. I am indebted to "Mormonism," to the light of truth, to the revelations of God, to the administrations of the Holy Priesthood for all the knowledge and light and intelligence that I may possess in relation to these matters; and this is the case with all of us, we were all unacquainted with God, with the Holy Priesthood and with the way to obtain eternal life, and the same ignorance that beclouded our minds, previous to the opening of the heavens to Joseph Smith, and the coming forth of the fullness of the gospel through him, beclouds the rest of the world at the present time. They know not where they are going to, nor where they came from, I used to ask myself sometimes questions like the following: Who am I? Where did I come from? What am I doing here? What is the object of my existence? Who organized the world, and for what purpose was it organized? Could I answer them? No, and nobody else could answer them for me, for they know nothing about these things; neither priest nor philosopher, nor statesman, nor any man that I could associate with could unravel these questions; they could not tell the whys and the wherefores in relation to some of these simple things that have been given to us.

The Gospel, we are told in one place, is "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and "it hath made us free from

the law of sin and death." We are told in another place that it is "good news and glad tidings," but if we comprehend it correctly, the gospel holds the keys, through the Priesthood, of the mysteries of God; the gospel "brings life and immortality to light," and wherever it exists, in whatsoever bosom it dwells, whoever has engaged in the propagation of the gospel has a knowledge of life and immortality, it is that which unavails the heavens, and without it men are ignorant in relation to the future, and of that salvation of which they talk so much. The gospel places men in communication with the Lord, so that they can understand something of God, and something of His law, and without the gospel they cannot understand anything about Him; and hence some will think one thing about him and some another. Whoever has possessed the gospel whether in former or in latter times it has brought life and immortality to light to them, it shows men who they are and what they are, it shows them something about God, and it was said in former times that, this is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Without the gospel it would be impossible for men to have any knowledge of God, or of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Hence, when Jesus asked the question of His disciples "whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" They answered Him, some say thou art Elias, and some say thou art Moses and some that thou art one of the prophets risen from the dead; but whom say ye that I am? Peter answered, thou art the Son of the Living God. Jesus said unto him, blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven, and thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

How did Peter know that He was the Christ? He knew it by revelation; he had the gospel, and the gospel brings life and immortality to light, and reveals unto the human family the existence of a God and their relationship to Him. We are indebted to God for light, for the intelligence we enjoy, for the knowledge of the gospel that is placed within our reach.

Now let us proceed a little further in relation to these matters. God is desirous of benefiting us, and for this reason He has revealed unto us His will, for this reason He has opened the heavens and communicated with us. God is desirous of establishing His law, His authority, His kingdom, His dominion among men. He is desirous to be obeyed by the human family, and to have them submit to his teachings, to His guidance and to His direction. He is desirous of establishing correct principles among mankind that will do them good, that will bless them, that will exalt them, that will prepare them to fulfill their destiny upon the earth, and the first step that He has taken is to impart unto them through obedience to the principles of the gospel of Christ, the Holy Ghost, and only through that can they comprehend God or His laws. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God, and except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We sometimes feel a little indignant at the actions of men around us, we think that they act strangely, and so they do. We think that they are very full of prejudice, and so they are; we think that they are very wicked and show a very malignant spirit towards us, and are desirous to injure us, and we have often been astonished at this when we have been abroad in the world; we have seen very honorable, high minded men and women that fear God and work righteousness, and yet there is an array of prejudice and persecution against them that would almost astonish us. What is the matter? They do not see things as we see them, there is a thick veil over them; they are something like the people that Jesus spoke about in His day, when He prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." They know not the light and intelligence of the Holy Ghost, and consequently they do not understand our position, and they are led by other influences they know nothing about. They do not see the kingdom of God nor can they. I do not care what their wisdom is, nor their intelligence, I do not care what school they were taught in, or who was their teacher, I care nothing about the extent of their capacity, reading or intelligence acquired or possessed, unless they have possessed the Spirit of the living God, they cannot comprehend the affairs pertaining to the kingdom of God. Well, but are there not many very honorable and high-minded men in the world that are