

DISCOURSE

By Elder William G. Mills, Bowery, Sunday Morning, May 10, 1857.

[REPORTED BY J. V. LONG.]

Beloved Saints, trusting in your confidence and prayers I will endeavor to fill the call made upon me this morning. I feel considerably my own weakness in standing before you, but as that is a general feeling, I will not offer it as an apology at this time.

All the children of men that dwell upon the face of the earth have come for one purpose, to answer one object and end. We make our entrances upon this stage of action, pass through the various scenes, and play our parts to accomplish one thing; and no matter when or where we have been born, or under whatsoever circumstances we labor, one and all of us have one grand and special object before us; and that is, to yield obedience to the will of our God, to learn his laws, and become strictly obedient to his commandments, that we may ultimately appear in his presence, to enjoy that glory which he has in reserve for his people.

Various are the means adopted by men in order to persuade their fellow creatures to yield obedience to the will of God, but so multifarious and contradictory have been the schemes that, in a great measure they have failed to accomplish their design.

The minds of all men are more or less capacitated to receive the truths that are presented before them, and according to their abilities to receive truth they should lay hold of it and put it into active operation for the good of mankind in general. And though it is truth that our minds are seeking after and grasping for, yet at the same time they are all alike seeking to establish their own views of truth, of right and righteousness. We have all minds constituted differently, and yet they are all alike unless there is a fault in nature.

We have all ears to hear, and tongues with which to speak, and hands to execute those various things which are necessary for us to do; in these we are all alike, and so are the faculties of our minds. We differ in degree but not in organization, as we differ in features and size, yet we have all the same component parts, features and members in this life. All our minds are created perfect so that we may learn the will of God; every being is so organized that he can comprehend and receive the truth.

If we will leave the traditions of our youth and put them on one side, we will find that our minds are one; and if one, they are bound to bend to truth, for truth being eternal will not bend or turn to suit our various creeds and caprices, and all men must ultimately bow, believe in, and perform the same duties, ordinances and purposes; we must make our business in life secondary to the serving the great God.

The mind of man loves to be free, it so far hates to be in bondage that it will not acknowledge that it must be in submission to others, as the great law of God requires. For this purpose he has sent us upon the earth that we might put those things into execution that are required of us. We find that from the time we are first pressed with tender caresses to the bosoms of our mothers until we fill the darksome cradle of the tomb our minds are continually subject to the will of others. When we were children, sporting round the knees of our parents we could not always know why we were subject to their will, and we thought that many of their commands to us were whims and fancies, but as we grew older, reached the years of maturity and mixed in with the masses of society, we found that they had an object in view, viz.—to make us useful in life, and obedient to the laws of God, man and nature.

When we leave the knee of the parent and pass to the academy, we there find that we have to become subject to the will of others and the laws necessary for the discipline of body and mind. Passing from there to the actions and business of life we have to bend to the laws and become obedient to them, otherwise we are distinguished as being parties that are unworthy of social intercourse with men. And we have, even in the common courtesies of life to be bending to the will of others; this is invariably our duty all through all the meanderings of life.

We find that this is likewise the grand means employed to make us ultimately subject to the mind and will of God, and that which is given as natural in mortal life is an inkling of the relation to immortal life.

Man being a social creature, living in communities where many are associated together, he has necessarily to be governed. The shrewd mind, the keen intellect has learned and observed this order of things from the days of Nimrod, the grandson of Noah who established the Babylonish empire down to Napoleon who sits on the imperial throne of France, that man must be governed, that his happiness may be secured upon the earth. In order to accomplish this they have brought forth various schemes for the government of man; probably the three most prominent are the monarchical or kingly, the aristocratic, and republican. These have been the most popular and powerful.

Were I to select any particular government I could show that although they may be beautiful, they have in them the seeds of their own dissolution. I will not speak of the government under which we live, for at the present epoch it might be considered treason, but I will speak of the government of Great Britain.

In that government there is a king, (or Queen as at present) the aristocracy and the commons. These form the body politic of the government; and if the king brings forward a measure that is thought to be improper, there are lords and the commons to set it aside. Then if the lords introduce a measure that does not meet with public approbation there are the king and the commons to set it aside. Then if the commons bring in a measure, there are the lords and

the king to oppose it. And thus it is that they consider tyranny cannot be brought upon the people.

It is like the government of the United States, (and I will be pardoned for making allusions to it) but I will say that though it is the most beautiful, and though it is said that God has had a hand in making it, still I contend that he has allowed a part to go in that will eventually dissolve it; that is the feet to rule the head. But see the result of these governments at the present time, the boasted beauty of the British and other governments,—the counteracting influence which they inherit—is their disease, and will be their death; as the hectic flush on the fair cheek of the consumptive, indicate rapid dissolution.

Which of these has God designed to govern the human family by? God purposed in the beginning that men should be governed according to His will, that they might effect one end upon the earth, and learn the great and exalting principles that will bring us into his presence.

I assert fearlessly that not one of the systems of government by which the nations are controlled is designed to govern the world, and for why? Because there is not the similarity of the government of God in any of them. It is true that it is said that by God 'princes rule and kings give judgment, and that he has sanctioned these things, these institutions; but I question very much whether God or the devil has most to do with the organization of the governments of this earth.

I read that the devil on one occasion brought Jesus upon the pinnacle of the Temple, and showed him all the kingdoms of this world, and said unto him 'all these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me, for,' said the devil, 'they are given into my hands and unto whomsoever I will I give them.' I conceive therefore, that there is more of the composition of the devil in the kingdoms of this world than there is of the government of God.

In the midst of all this, then, I ask what means ought to be adopted in order that the people may be brought to do the will of God? And I would further ask, who has the right to govern man that now lives upon the earth? Ought not He who created the vast machinery of the world, who holds this planet in His care and governs in nature, rule by his own means the nations of the earth? Yes! and none other has any right until deputed directly by Him, as Moses, Samuel, Jesus and Joseph and Brigham.

It is an old saying that, where there are many men there are many minds, but I conceive that man was not to differ, but as they have come from the same parents, male and female, they should have one mind, acquire the same truths, obey alike the same Being and attain the same glory, and bend to that principle of oneness that God may be 'all in all.'

There are mathematical truths which all men must believe alike, such as twice five are ten, five tens are fifty, and upon such points all men must think alike, there is no possibility of difference. There can be no excuse in differing with the astronomer in relation to his views on the harmonious revolutions of the heavenly bodies, neither can there be any excuse for differing with God in his views of truth. Divine truths are as demonstrable as what are called secular truths, if we have qualified, authorized and inspired teachers. The Head has a right to send those truths unto man which he knows will be for his benefit, for it is He who holds the right to control this earth and the destiny thereof, and that God therefore is the being who must ultimately control the earth according to his design. What is his design? There is a part of a good old prayer, which we used to hear sometimes, and which we now hear occasionally: 'Thy will be done on the earth as it is in heaven.' What is it in heaven? Does the hand say to the head thou shalt not rule? Do the various members of the body say that it is by their suffrage that God shall rule? No; no such thing is practised there. God rules by his own will, and if the will of God must be done upon the earth as in the heavens, God must rule according to his own will and plan.

To this end he has sent a messenger and restored that order of government which is necessary to bring about this end. He has sent an angel to one man, to Joseph Smith, and given authority and power to control men upon the earth according to His own plan, and this is the great, grand, saving principle for us—that we must be subject to the head, and so must all mankind who wish to be saved in the kingdom of God, subject themselves to the same order.

There are several officers in this government, constituting a perfect system. The poet says:

Order is heaven's first law, and this confessed,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest;
More great, more wise, but who infers from hence

That such are happier, shocks all common sense.

We must be ruled by the head, and that head must carry out the designs of the great Lawgiver. I cannot conceive of any other plan or power being able to carry out the designs of the Almighty but that of a theocracy, the one that is established here, and I believe that no other set of men nor power can carry out this government except those who are governed and inspired by the revelations of the Most High.

Thus, then, when the man of God speaks, the principles he sets forth must be learned by every one of us, and our private views must not be brought to bear when we hear the glorious truths of the gospel laid down by the Prophet, so plain that the 'wayfaring man need not err therein.' I know that we are accustomed to bring our minds to bear and to reason upon the question; we bring forward our little views and begin to test it by past revelations and past teachings, which things are wrong. But for one man to begin to cavil with another, and with the purposes and designs of other men who may be the leaders, has been a common practice, and kept the world from advancing; many beneficial principles have been

kept back for years in the nations' legislatures by needless and nonsensical discussion.

Notwithstanding the opinions of many to the contrary, it is right for one man to be subject to another, and to yield obedience to the head who is over him, for man has a head over him and he must be governed by that head, and a body must be compact in order to be right.

Thus we see the positive necessity of having a gathering place, for it is one of the greatest bulwarks of the Saints of God at the present time. I have thought of the ancients when I have been thinking of the rod of chastisement that has been applied to the Saints, and I see that Jesus Christ came to establish his kingdom upon the earth, and I learn that he left it with men who extended it hither and thither. I next see their course of procedure, and behold but a few years elapsed before they dwindled into apostasy; when reflecting upon this I have asked the question with wonder and surprise: How was it that so many thousands apostatized and that the apostasy so soon became general? I have thought much upon this and have been led to conclude that the reason was, they had not the privilege of being gathered together as one compact body.

When Peter and the rest of the Apostles were ordained they went out into the world to preach the gospel. Peter went to one place, James and John to another, Paul and Barnabas to another, and they had not the privilege of assembling together often in council, and thus heresies crept in. Hence the remark of the Apostle Paul, in Gal. 2d ch. 1st and 2d verses, although he had power to work miracles and to receive revelations that almost made him vain, and notwithstanding he had power to raise the dead and to do much for the building up of the kingdom of God, yet he tells us that after preaching the gospel for 14 years, he went up to Jerusalem to compare his doctrine with that of Peter's, lest he should have labored in vain. He was not sure that he would not have to go to undo what he had done before, until he had been to see Peter.

This is a remarkable proof of the necessity of gathering together in any dispensation in order to avoid apostasy. I hold it as one great means of the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy, where he states that the kingdom shall no more be given to another people. We find that men are so constituted that they will bring in their own opinions; even our own Elders when abroad among the nations, who have been left to themselves have propagated much that was not strictly true, and had it not been for the gathering together of the Saints, that they might hear the words of life pure and unsullied from the fountain, the Prophet Brigham, the church would have been destroyed by heresy.

How often I have, when in England, rejoiced in things that have been taught, and then in the course of a few weeks have had to turn them aside as the whims and notions of men. It has seemed that they were not satisfied with having the truth as revealed through the living oracles to the people, but they must set forth for doctrine some of their own precepts and opinions; the people are not discriminating enough to discern between truth and error at all times.

We say then that as long as the Elders go forth, bring the people to this place, where the fountain will be eternally pure, so long will our doctrines be pure, but let us be scattered as the Saints of God were in the former apostolic dispensation, one man go to this place and another to that, and there reside until the day of our death, and we will have multifarious creeds, because the body is divided, and it cannot be governed when scattered as it can when in a state of compactness. Here we are placed in a position where we can learn the laws of God, and we must also learn the mind and will of those that are over us, and make the best possible use of the knowledge we acquire.

A man in this kingdom stands in a two-fold position; he stands to obey, and he stands to rule; while he obeys those who are over him, yet he must have the power of government in himself, and this principle will apply from the foot to the head; man must learn to obey first and then to govern, for he holds the position of a subject and a priest unto God at the same time. He does not rule by force of empty titles, but by the authority and power of heaven's king. Jesus said 'To him that is faithful will I give to sit upon my throne, as I sit with my Father upon his throne.'

We are also required to learn to govern ourselves; this is an important part of our religion. David could govern the whole house of Israel, put to flight the armies of the Philistines, but he could not govern himself. We must learn to govern ourselves, and this is probably the greatest part of government that we have to learn; we must also learn to govern our families, and then when we have learned these things, I consider that the Lord will have enough to do to get sufficient, good, sterling men to govern and rule in his kingdom.

I consider that never until we have learned to be obedient to our superiors will the power to govern be placed in our hands to rule over cities and empires, or to rule in the peaceful valleys of the mountains, or wherever God shall send us to be wise rulers, for such we must learn to be. Then will he put into our hands power and authority, such as will be necessary for us, to enable us to govern in righteousness. It ought to be our interest and study to learn to govern correctly.

We see the various organizations of men, and after seeing them we should endeavor to bend the minds of those whom we have to control so that they will be subservient to the mind and will of God. Inasmuch as our own mind is bent and we are in submission to the Creator, we thereby carry out the design of government, for the design of God in establishing government was to bring all men into submission to the will of heaven.

This is the design of President Young, he desires that all men may bend their minds to his counsel, to let no position nor circumstance in

life prevent them from obeying his counsel and the will of heaven. This is the design also of every man who understands the things of God, for every good man desires to honor that which he receives by the authority of the holy priesthood, and this is our duty.

We should all seek to be governed by the authority of the priesthood; we should strive to be placed in a position where we can learn more and more the principles of eternal truth. If we do this we shall approximate to the likeness of our God and eventually become perfect in his kingdom. The head will rule the body, and God will be all in all.

To prepare for this we must learn the true principles of government, and learn to appreciate our associations here below. As I observed before, this is one of the greatest privileges that we can possibly enjoy, to be placed in a position where all our minds must learn the principle of the gospel alike, and not be under the necessity of asking when we meet a man—'Do you believe so and so?' Some men affirm that if they please their own consciences they will be satisfied; yes, and they do it scientifically too.

I have respect to the finest conscience that may exist, but I tell you, my friends, it is a very poor guide. Every creed has its particular conscience. For instance, there is the Catholic conscience which won't allow a man to eat beef on Fridays; then there is the Quaker conscience which won't allow him to partake of the sacrament at all; there is also the Methodist conscience which will allow you to shout and rant all day as if you were going to tear your very lungs from their places; and, in short, there is a conscience to every creed; hence, I contend, that conscience is no guide at all.

I maintain we have no right to question truths and revelations of God, nor to examine his great purposes by the rule of our consciences only. I do not believe in making the law of God subject to my conscience, but I believe in moulding my conscience agreeably to the will of Jehovah. Does God ask us to do anything for his benefit? Do we believe this principle or the other for the benefit of the Lord, or because he compels us? No, all we do is for our own benefit, for the truth is unbending and it cannot be different from what it is, and though a man cannot be made to bend to it, truth still remains immutable and unchanged.

I remember hearing the sectarians say, 'If you believe baptism is true there is nothing to prevent you from obeying it.' The infidel may say the same in reference to his disbelief in religion altogether; he may say, 'I cannot believe in the God you worship,' but will he be excused on that ground? No; I say he will not, for he might see it and believe it, if his principles, his traditions, his education and false training were not suffered to becloud his mind. Neither will the various sectarians be excused because they say they did not believe in baptism, in the laying on of hands, in the sacrament, or any other particular principle of the gospel? Does God ask when he gives revelation whether we believe it or not? No, he does no such thing, for his words are true and they must be obeyed, and implicitly too. Does he say to our friends in the world, 'Do you believe in a patriarchal order of marriage as believed in by the Mormons?' No, he does not, because it is an eternal truth.

Do I wish to do away with the conscience of man altogether? No, I do not, but I wish to hold it in subjection to the will of God, and I am bold to say that all the standards you may have brought forward to test the truth by are little, small and insignificant, because as the heavens are above the earth so are God's ways above ours, and so are the ways of the Prophets; they can see the mind and will of God beforehand, their minds are enlarged for that purpose, but our minds cannot unravel the things of God as they can. But if we seek to mould our minds in conformity to the things of God we shall have the Spirit within us to make us happy under every circumstance of life.

It is then the design of the Almighty that our minds may be governed by him through his servant whom he has appointed upon the earth; for he has made it his law that man should be saved through the instrumentality of his fellow man. 'Surely God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the Prophets,' and they will lead, direct and govern all things pertaining to his kingdom. And this, brethren, is the very means by which God has designed to break in pieces all governments, whether monarchical, aristocratical or republican.

Men may talk about discussion, but I tell you that discussion has done more harm than good; it has kept back many good principles which God would have given through men, had it not been for their confusion and almost unceasing discussions. How often do we see in the parliaments of the world that a good measure is kept back for years by discussion, and 'see at the present time the condition of the whole sectarian and political world, and they are full of discussion. Truth cannot be discussed, neither is it required that it should be, but when God rules and directs he will do so through one channel, and the people must be unanimous in their reception of that truth.

We may love the systems of the world as we like, and they may tremble as much as they like, but I tell you that it is an eternal truth that God must rule by one man upon the earth. Of course that one man will call others to his assistance, as he cannot do all the work himself. Inasmuch then as this is the way we shall become one with our God, and his will be done upon the earth as it is in the heavens, I rejoice that I am associated with a kingdom of this kind, that I am in a position of this nature, where I can receive the counsels of the authorities of this church. I desire that I may ever have the Spirit within me, that I may be faithful to the covenants I have made in connection with you. I have come to this place for the purpose of doing the will of God, and I am determined to go on in this mighty