

DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER JOHN HENRY SMITH,

*In the Salt Lake Assembly Hall,
Sunday Afternoon, January
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REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

I HAVE been much pleased in listening to the remarks of Brother Morgan, and as they are of practical use it will be wise for us to treasure them up in our minds. I realize from my own experience the correctness of the remarks of Brother Morgan; and it is very patent to us who have studied the principles of the Gospel, and who have experienced the vicissitudes through which the Church has passed, that when you excite the combativeness of a man, when you assail his honor, when you raise the energies of his mind and body, and he imagines that you are acting contrary to his interests, to his well-being, to his advancement, it is very uphill work. I believe that if the Almighty had influenced the people of this nation to have handled the Latter-day Saints kindly, to have treated them with love, to have extended to them the hand of peace, to have treated the Saints as they have treated other people; in other words, if they had never molested or interfered with us in the exercise of those doctrines which God has revealed unto us as our heritage and as our right, we today would have been in a very different condition to what we are at the present time. For instance, if a man with whom I associate tries to aid me, to bless me and do me good, and to do everything in his power to assist me in building up a character that is noble, I cannot help loving and respecting that man. Would I not do anything in the world that would do him good in return? Take the other view of it, and let this same individual devote his time to maligning my character, to oppressing me in my business transactions, to blasting my hopes and destroying my prospects as a man, and he arouses my combativeness and hate; he arouses the feeling that I will resent the efforts he makes as long as there is breath within my body, that I will overcome the obstacle he puts in my path and if possible plant my heel upon his neck. This is the natural feeling that arises in a man's breast; but, you know, our elder brother, Jesus Christ taught a very different doctrine. He taught that "unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other;" that we should forgive those that trespassed against us in every sense of the word; in fact He has required us in a revelation given on this subject to "forgive all men," to overlook the faults and failings of all. But as I said before if the people of the world had taken us into their bosoms, if they had loved us and heaped honor upon our shoulders, we would have drunk with them at the same fountain, we would have partaken of the same spirit, and wandered into darkness as they have done. But we had accepted of a class of principles that came from our Father and God, they were pure in and of themselves, and they required of us to display to Him and to the world, in all the humility of our souls, an observance of these principles. He required of us, as He did of those of old, that we anoint the sick with holy oil, that we should lay our hands upon the sick and by the prayer of faith they should be healed. Yet these simple principles brought down the indignation of the people of Missouri upon the Saints. It was considered blasphemous in the eyes of many for us to say that God required, as He did of those of old, that we anoint with holy oil and lay hands upon the sick, and the sick would be healed, and for this they claimed we deserved to be persecuted, driven from our homes, plundered and exiled as outcasts from civilization.

As Brother Morgan has said, there is not much to be accomplished by using harsh measures. No man could accomplish anything with me in attempting to drive me; for I cannot be driven. The fear of man is something that has never entered into my heart—that is, to compel me to do certain acts that I desire not to do. But you appeal to my reason and to my judgment that this principle, or that principle, or the other principle is correct and I am open to be convinced; but you say to me, You must accept this as true, hit or miss, then I should be ready to say, My friend, you are mistaken; you have come across the

wrong passenger; you had better hunt up somebody else down whose throat you wish to force your ideas.

Well, now, what plan should we pursue? It is that we should be careful and consistent in our actions. We should plead with men. We should not seek to drag them into the Kingdom of God by the hair of the head. We should rather teach them the principles of truth, and after having so taught them, encourage them, and continue to encourage them to walk in the right path. If our fellow man is in trouble, and feels that he has no friends upon the face of the earth, it is our duty to extend the hand of love and make such a one feel that he has friends interested in his welfare. In this way we have an opportunity of doing much good. We can always give good counsel. Brother Morgan has cited an instance of a young missionary who needed advice of this kind. This young man desired to come home, feeling his lack of ability to go forward and proclaim the principles of truth; he felt that he was an outcast from home, that he was among enemies and strangers and lacked the faith requisite to perform the labor of a missionary. He needed a word of counsel. Brother Morgan reminded him that the eyes of his Father in heaven were upon him, that the eyes of his friends were upon him, that the eyes of the Latter-day Saints, who had sustained him by their vote and by faith and prayers, were upon him, and that he must do something to merit the approbation and confidence of men who had stood upon the ramparts of Zion defending her interests under every circumstance, and who had never flinched in the time of need. This was the feeling that inspired these men. Now supposing Brother Morgan had written to this young man saying that he was unworthy the confidence that had been placed in him, that he had better pack up his valise and come home, as he would do more mischief than good, what would have been the result? He very likely, after having spent long years among the Latter-day Saints, a kind of worthless sort of a man, would have said upon his death-bed, "O, if I only had had some one to counsel and advise me for my good, I would not die as I die to-day; but having no one to advise me, and feeling I was an outcast from amongst my fellows, feeling I had neither the ability nor the means within my power to fill the mission I had been sent to accomplish, failure has attended me through life." Instead of this, however, this young man will bless Brother Morgan all the days of his life for the counsel he gave him, which has enabled him to seize hold of the truth, to endeavor to perform his mission, and be true to the covenants he has made with God. I know from my own experience in my own home that my father never could have driven me into observing the laws of the Gospel, he never could have driven me into being a Latter-day Saint, or into occupying any position he might have desired me to occupy without appealing to my reason; but when he converted my judgment, when he would reason with me and convince me that this principle was correct, that that principle was true, that this was for good, and that that was for evil; when he would make his home the pleasantest place I could find, and the associations of home the most joyous, this would tend to break down any influence that might be upon me to go from home, it would make me feel that he had been counselling me for my good, and that he desired to make me a man that would do some good on the earth.

This is our mission. Christ came not to preach the Gospel to the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. This is our mission also. We have to call sinners to repentance, to plead with one another, to labor with one another, and to exercise charity one towards the other. We are all possessed of many faults; we all have many failings; we are all liable to make mistakes. It therefore behooves us to exercise charity towards each other, and to be careful and consistent in our judgment, lest there be one who shall sit in judgment upon us who knows us and reads the tablets of our hearts, and who cannot err in judgment. Therefore in the making up of our judgments and our estimates of our brethren, both young and old, we should be careful and consistent, and should seek to be guided by the Spirit of the living God. It is with the sinner

we should labor. Than this there can be no happier labor given to man—the labor of saving his brother from the ditch, from the prison cells of ignorance, from disobedience to the laws which God has established and from wandering away from the paths of truth; for there is not a law of the Gospel, not one law that has ever been given to the Latter-day Saints but what has a tendency to exalt, to elevate, and to ennoble. The law of the Gospel is honesty, virtue, purity, truth, wisdom, justice, in fact it is everything that can be given to man for his good, and it behooves us who have received the Priesthood of the Son of God to be careful, consistent, just and wise, and to protect the liberties of every man even of our rankiest enemy. We must return good for evil all the day long, and those who do so will receive their reward as sure as the sun shines; while he who retaliates and seeks to revenge, he who would strike a blow because he has received a blow, will be condemned with those that are wicked. We should cultivate a desire to do good—I would not have you to pull long faces and moan and mourn—but cultivate a desire to do good to every son and daughter of God, be they Jew, Pagan or Christian. The Gospel reaches every one. This is a peculiar system of ours; it is different from any other upon the face of the earth. The world, you know, when President Young died, said that would be the end of "Mormonism," that that would be the end of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that there would be quarreling as to who should take his place amongst us, and that we would go hither and thither and yonder. What was the feeling of men acquainted with our system, of men who did not sense that there is scarcely a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who does not hold the priesthood in some form or another, that all are required to work in some position: if not as a President, then as a Bishop, and if not as a Bishop, then as a Priest, Teacher, or Deacon. And thus we are linked together in one common chain, held by one common bond, baptised by one baptism, confirmed by the same laying on of the hands, accepting the same principles, and united by the same faith. And, moreover, this faith can never be wrested from the breasts of a race of men such as have congregated in these mountains—men who have such difficulties and trials under all circumstances—men and women who never winced when their families cast them out, when wife had to abandon husband, when husband had to abandon wife, when son and daughter had to abandon father and mother for the sake of their religion. Why? Because all had drunk at the same fountain of life, and it was sweet to them; they determined that they would be found laboring in the interests of the kingdom of God. They were brought together with all their faults and failings, but they strove to overcome. So must we, their sons and daughters, strive to conquer our weaknesses, and to be true and faithful as they have been. We must stand together in a solid phalanx to battle for our rights, determined upon the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth, a system of government that will never fail, but will reach every man, extend justice to every being, and protect the rights of every son and daughter of our Father, come from where they will.

This is the mission of the Latter-day Saints. The world call us aggressive. They say we try to overthrow their rights; they say we have no regard for law and justice. In saying this they do not understand our position, nor the feelings that actuate our hearts; they do not understand that we have a mission to perform, that mission being to preach the gospel to all mankind, to reclaim the fallen, to build up and establish every correct principle that God has revealed in the past, or may reveal in the future. Our faith is a practical faith; it reaches unto every place, it goes with us in every position. Our faith bars us from committing evil. And we have those that would warn us if we do wrong; we have those that would counsel us if we get upon the downward path; we have those that would labor with us if we turn from the truth; we have those that would extend to us the hand of friendship in the time of need; and it is a duty we owe one to the other to be frank, honest and outspoken in counsel and deliberation, to respect the rights and liberties of one another; and when any man gets the idea into

his head that the Kingdom of God cannot roll on without him, he is a badly mistaken man. This Kingdom has prospered by the help of God from the day it was given into the hands of Joseph Smith unto the present time. The Church has been persecuted, it is true. First it was the question of a village against us, then it became a question of a county, then a State, then the United States, until it is a question to-day of all the governments of the earth—for our government has called upon other governments to act against us—yet this Church and Kingdom has continued to grow. And it will continue to grow and increase and spread abroad until the principles of the gospel are preached in every land and every clime upon the face of the earth; for Zion is onward and upward; men may die, but principles never; and when men think they can break us down and scatter us to the four winds of heaven, they are mistaken, for the Elders of Israel will always be found preaching the truth. The fear of man with them is a thing of the past; the fear of man has no place in the hearts of Latter-day Saints. God and the disobedience of His laws is their only fear. Therefore my young brethren, when men would lead you away from the principles of truth and the paths of virtue, turn from them and seek the association of just men whether "Mormon" or non-"Mormon," whether Jew, Pagan or Christian. If they have good doctrine, good ideas, listen to them; but remember that "Mormonism" couches within itself every principle that has been given for the good of the sons and daughters of God; it contains "the whole truth," and, as the judge would say, "nothing but the truth, so help me God."

I do not desire to take up much more of your time. But I desired to plead with the young. This is my mission. I dare not attempt to teach the old and and grey-headed who have labored in the service for years. They may possess their faults, they may have blundered and erred many of them, but they have kept their eye upon the truth, they have been true to their friends, they have never betrayed their trust, they have never placed the iron heel of oppression upon their brethren's neck, and let us, their sons and daughters, maintain their names untarnished from stain and dishonor, and with the same determination and the same wisdom may we be enabled to accomplish our work, is my desire, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

THE REASON WHY.

THE Methodist preachers are among the bitterest enemies of the Latter-day Saints. They are not only opposed to the system that is called "Mormonism," but are very hostile to the people called "Mormons." The bitterness of spirit which they manifest is remarkable, in view of their profession.

The reason is easily traced. They have found themselves unable to meet the arguments brought forward by the Elders of this Church, and their lack of authority to administer in the ordinances of God has been exhibited in the light of the latter-day Gospel. The fate which befel their champion, the Rt. Rev. J. P. Newman, of the Garden of Eden consularship, when he boastfully swooped down upon Utah, to "beard the lion in his den," and went out plucked and discomfited, has come upon all their great "divines," when they have essayed to meet the "Mormons" on the field of theological controversy. That accounts for the acrimony which they entertain towards us.

It also explains the reason why men pretending to be the ministers of the Savior of mankind assume in relation to us the role of destroyers. They urge legislation to deprive us of the common rights of citizens; they advocate the policy of physical force to break up "Mormonism;" they breathe the spirit of vengeance and extermination against its followers; they regard not the ruin which their measures would bring upon women and children, but strive to bring upon this community of believers in Christ, the penalties of special law and the brute vengeance of popular prejudice. They cannot refute our reasonings nor overthrow our doctrines, so, like the bigots of all nations and the Cain-like haters of the Saints in all ages, they look to violence and the secular power for effectual weapons.

We are believers in the same Bible which they laud so much with their lips. If our faith and practices are obnoxious to them, why do they not strive by scripture and the spirit of evangelism to turn us from the error of our ways? And if their object is what they pretend—the overthrow of something they consider immoral and degrading, why do they not devote their energies to the foul and wide-spread corruption in which their own churches and societies exist? Is there nothing to be done in the great cities of Christendom towards the purification of public morals, and the cleansing of social life? Why exert themselves so much over the imagined condition of a handful of people in the Rocky Mountains, while hundreds of thousands who swarm all around them are plunged in moral filthiness and wallowing in crimes against nature and against God? He who discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, knows the deep hypocrisy, their vain pretences, and will rely upon them the woe that He pronounced upon their brother Pharisees of old.

At a conference recently held at Newark, New Jersey, the same bitter, anti-Christian spirit prevailed which has characterized other Methodist gatherings when the "Mormon" question has been discussed. The New York *Sun* handles the reverend "Mormon" haters, whom we leave in the exposure of the rays of that literary luminary, which shine upon them under the heading of, "Why Look So Far for Work To Do?"

"The Methodist conference at Newark was much agitated on Wednesday over the polygamy of Utah. It appointed a committee on the subject and was greatly stirred by speech in denunciation of the system."

We observe that the church very generally are becoming excited over the marriage customs of the Mormons. One clergyman lately remarked that the whole community ought to be blown up with nitro-glycerine, as the Czar was destroyed the other day.

But why do these religious bodies take so much pains to denounce polygamy, and spend so much time venting their indignation against it? It is a system odious in our eyes and nowhere in the country except in Utah is it tolerated by public opinion. Even there it must be practised by evading the law against bigamy, and by keeping the plural marriage a secret with the Mormon Church. Will the application of nitro-glycerine expose to view the mysterious ceremonies, so that they can be legally proved?

And, moreover, polygamy is a minor evil compared with many which confront the Christian church in these days. It is a waning system in Utah, and its destruction altogether must come before long under the operation of natural causes. Further legislation may be necessary to hasten its overthrow, and save its victims from ruin; but violence of speech or conduct will help to destroy polygamy.

Moreover there is no evil example proceeding from Utah over the country. Because the Mormons pretend to think or really do think that they are obeying God in having many wives, the rest of the people are not becoming tolerant of avowed polygamy. Nobody proposes to change our laws so as to let us keep harems filled with wives to their pleasure. Even the man who marries a wife when he has another living, commits a crime punishable with long imprisonment unless he has gone through the formality of a divorce.

Why then does not the New Methodist conference devote its attention rather to the immoralities which abound in its neighborhood? Bad as polygamy is, society suffers from evils of its own which are even worse. Because of the failure to deal with them, churches are losing their hold on the public. Why look afar for reformatory work to do, when at home there is so much need of genuine Christianity? The time expended by the Newark conference in denouncing polygamy would have been better employed in devising means for curing our own social evils whose countenance and growth are leading so many men to reject the current Christianity as spurious and impotent.

Polygamy in the United States is a disease easily cured and of little consequence in comparison with many other moral and social maladies which demand the attention of the church."