

DISCOURSE,

By President BRIGHAM YOUNG,
delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt
Lake City, September 25th, 1870.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

A few words to the Latter-day Saints. First, I feel very thankful for the privilege of returning to my home and my friends that dwell here in this city. I am thankful that I am able to stand before you to bear my humble testimony to the truth. Truth, in the end, will prevail.

You have been hearing a description of our travels, of the route we passed over, and the ministrations to our comfort from our friends in the South. I feel wearied, having been broken of my rest a good deal, not being able, while travelling, to obtain the quantity of rest that I require. I feel almost unable to stand here before you, still I look flush and hale and hearty, and think that I have probably gained from six to ten pounds of flesh since I have been gone. We have only travelled a little over nine hundred miles in twenty-eight days. How many times we have preached I do not know. I have not kept count. Whenever we came to a settlement, either in the daytime or evening, while stopping to feed, the brethren would say, "Can't we have a meeting? We want a meeting! Brethren, will you hold meetings?" Frequently we would say "yes," and while our animals were refreshing themselves, we would assemble with the people and talk with them.

It made no difference how arduous our labors had been: If we had travelled and preached a month without sleep, I don't know that the brethren would have supposed that we needed rest. I asked one brother, a presiding elder, who wanted to have a meeting, how old his father was. "Why," said he, he is sixty-seven. I suppose that man does not do as much labor in a month as I do in a day, take it year in and year out. Still I may be mistaken in this. Said I "Brother, if your father had endured what I have endured for three or four weeks past, and was asked to go to meeting and there spend an hour or two, talking to the people, you would feel insulted, and would consider it an imposition for your father to be required to labor without cessation." Said he, "I did not think of that." Said I "I am considerably older than he is, yet look at my labors!" So we passed on and did not have a meeting. But it was meeting, meeting, meeting, from the time we left this city until our return.

In our communications to the saints I have taken the liberty to speak of our traditions. The world of mankind have no idea of the force of tradition upon them. It does not come into their hearts; they do not contemplate it, if they did they would correct many of their errors, and cease a great many of their practices and adopt others more in accordance with the principles of life and truth. We wish the Latter-day Saints instructed in such a way that the traditions they communicate to their children will be correct. If we did but understand truth from error, light from darkness, and knew the will of God perfectly and were disposed to do it, it would be just as easy to give our children an education to profit themselves and others, to enable them to be profitable to the human family, and to show forth that wisdom which God has given us, as to take a course to fill their lives with error and wrong. Many, very many, people regret much of their lives, because, through circumstances over which they have had no control they have been deprived of the knowledge that some few possess. It makes no difference how children are brought up so far as the permanence of the impressions and habits of childhood are concerned. Whether surrounded with error or truth, the web woven around them in childhood's days lasts, and seldom wears threadbare; but in many instances it grows brighter and brighter and stronger and stronger until its possessor goes down to the grave.

You have heard it declared here, within the few minutes just passed, that we have the truth, the priesthood of the Son of God; that we are endowed with that understanding and wisdom by the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we do know the way of life and salvation, and know, better than any other people, the course to pursue here on this earth to prepare us for glory, immortality and endless lives which are to come. If this is the fact, we should manifest and show it forth to God and man by our teachings, practice and every act of our lives.

I may say that the infidel world has grown up in consequence of false religions; it has been strengthened by false theories. For any individual in the world to teach what he does not practice is a stumbling block to all beholders; then if the Latter-day Saints know the truth and do it not, certainly, great will be their condemnation. Hence it stands us in need to be on the watch continually. I do not know of a more absolute monarch that ever reigned on earth than the one who has perfect control over his passions. Do you know of a more absolute monarch than such a person? If you do, I do not. We should all learn to govern and control ourselves! The question may be asked "Can we govern our own thoughts?" Yes, we can by steady application in gathering to ourselves reflections,

thoughts and meditations which are according to truth and righteousness and justified of God and of all the good on the face of the earth, we can avoid evil thoughts, communications, reflections and enticements and can bring the whole man into subjection to the law of Christ. Is this the fact? It is. If we are filled with good thoughts, ideas and feelings formed by the precepts which God has taught for the salvation of the human family, our communications will be beneficial to our fellow beings. This is to the Latter-day Saints.

When I look over the character of the few who have been gathered together, a pretty fair representation of almost all nations, it is astonishing to see the various ideas of right and wrong entertained by them in consequence of their traditions, and the teachings they have received from their fathers, mothers, schoolmasters and school madames; the priest in the pulpit and the deacon under the pulpit. I say it is astonishing to see this variety, all springing from tradition. Not but what there should be a great variety; we see a variety of countenances in the human family, and we may also expect a variety of dispositions; but all these dispositions can be governed and controlled by the principles of right and righteousness.

Our traditions, then, should be correct! We should know how to teach our children correct principles from their youth up. The first thing that is taught by the mother to the child should be true; we should never allow ourselves to teach our children one thing and practice another. I have sometimes said to my sisters, "Do not teach your children to lie." This is the course pursued by many, without designing to do so. The very first lessons that are given to the infant mind capable of receiving impressions is to falsify or tell that which is untrue. "Well," says a mother, "if I do so, I do not know it." It may be quite true that you do not know it. But what did you promise your little girl if she would do so and so? Did you promise her a present for well-doing? "Yes." Have you recollected it? "No, it has gone from my mind," says the mother. If she does all have you promised her a chastisement? "Yes." Did you keep your word? You have not, and the child forms the conclusion in its own mind directly that the mother tells that which is not true,—she says she will do this or that and she does not do it. It is an easy lesson for mothers to learn to pass their time with their children and never give them a false impression. Think before you speak; promise your children nothing. If you wish to make them presents do so; if you promise a chastisement, keep your word, but be cautious! Never give a promise for good or for evil, but let the reward come in consequence of well doing, and chastisement in consequence of doing ill. Silence is a thousand times better than words, especially if those words are not in wisdom. But so great is the love of the mother for her offspring, so tender the feeling with which she regards it that many can not see wrong in the acts of their children; and if they do they will pass it without chastisement even if chastisement has been promised. These are our traditions, and so great is their power that we are governed and controlled by them continually.

I sometimes bring up circumstances to illustrate the traditions of the fathers. We in this country are acquainted with a great many different classes of people, different sects and beliefs in religion, and with a great variety of beliefs in regard to morality. If a mother, for instance, permit her child to bring eggs into the house, when she does not own a fowl, she knows that they come from some other source. If her child pick up a knife that does not belong to her and bring it to the house, she cultivates dishonesty in the child; and from such little circumstances, thousands of which occur, the principles of dishonesty grow and strengthen with the strength of the individuals until they become natural thieves. Perhaps this term is too harsh, and should not be so applied; it might be better to say that, through habit, such individuals become accustomed to appropriating the property of others to their own use.

I will tell a little circumstance that I was acquainted with; I was not an eye-witness of it, but heard it from one of my neighbors. A Methodist preacher, in company with a friend, was returning from a preaching tour, and while passing a plow lying by the side of a man's farm the companion of the priest had considerable difficulty to prevent him putting the plow into the wagon. Said the priest, "it will be lost, it ought to be taken care of," and he would have taken care of it by taking it home, making use of it and wearing it out, without advertising it, and the owner of the plow would have had to buy another. That is appropriating other people's property to our own use. In this case the partner of the priest forbid it. Said he, "take that and lay it by the fence; it belongs there; do not put it in the wagon," and the priest did so. You may ask, "was he a good man?" Yes, as good as he knew how to be according to his traditions.

So many circumstances flood upon my mind with regard to these traditions, that I hardly dare commence saying anything about them: that that I have seen and learned. One man brings up his child to strictly observe the letter of the law. The spirit and essence of his teaching to his child is, "you must not break the law, if you do you will be chastened by the law;"

"but at the same time," says the father, and he may be a deacon or a priest, "if you can take advantage of the poor in their daily labor, in purchasing your neighbor's property," for instance, perhaps he owns a small farm by the side of him, who, through necessity, is obliged to sell, and if he can purchase it for one half or one third its value in cash he will do it, because the law will not condemn such an act. This is tradition or the influence of it; but in the eyes of God he who thus takes advantage of his neighbor's necessities is as guilty as if he had robbed him.

Do we know of any here who have been brought up to work on the first day of the week, and who would like to do so now? Yes, we have them. Can they refrain from doing something or other that is like labor on the Sabbath day? It is almost impossible; they must work on the Sabbath. There is a certain class of our christians by whom the first day of the week must be devoted to labor, just to show to their fellow-christians that they are not sectarian in their feelings. Say they, "one day, to us is as good as another." God is the author of all days; all days are His, and to show to the christian world that we are free from their narrow, illiberal views, we labor on the first day of the week.

Another class of the religious world, equally conscientious with that to which I have just referred, is as stringent in prohibiting all kinds of labor on that day. Towards evening on the seventh day of the week the father cries to the children, "your chores must be done by sunset;" and as soon as the rays of the glorious orb of day have disappeared, parents and children assemble, and chapter after chapter of the bible is read, and comments are made thereon; and there the children sit until bedtime, and on the first day of the week they repair to the Sunday school, or to the house of worship, and so spend the Sabbath, believing that it is wrong to walk out, to play, or even to laugh; but when sunset comes again, away go the children to work, and the hurry of the world again begins. Do we see any such traditions as these? Yes. The traditions of another have been of such a nature, perhaps, that all labor must cease at 12 o'clock on Saturday night sure, and as soon as 12 o'clock on Sunday night comes we are at liberty to work again; and so we might go through the thousand traditions, the effects of which we see manifested by our fellow creatures around us.

I was traditioned to believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, and I believe it is a bible doctrine. I do not think I am mistaken in my religious faith. My priest would pray, "Father of all mercies, God of all grace, make thou one in our midst! Send thou the Holy Ghost upon us, upon our minds, that we may see! Reveal thyself unto us as thou dost not unto the world! Give unto us thy mind and they will! Give unto us the revelations of thy Son, and bestow upon us thy power and the influence thereof;" and after making such a prayer the sermon that would be preached would deny every word of it. Ask [the ministers of the christian world] if the Holyghost is given in this day, and they will tell you "no." I have heard it preached hundreds and perhaps thousands of times. Ask them if God manifests Himself to the human family in this our day, and you will be informed that "He does not; that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain the word of God, the plan of salvation, and all that is necessary to save the human family. God does not reveal Himself; He does not come down to dwell with the children of men; the Son of God does not come to visit His people, the Holy Ghost is not given as in ancient times." Ask them if the gift of healing is with them, and the reply is "no, it is done away." "Have you the gift of prophecy?" "No, it is done away." "Have you the gift of seeing spirits?" "No, it is done away; all these gifts are done away and we want you to understand that we do not believe them." All this is in accordance with their traditions, and it is taught to the children, and they are confused in their understandings. Well, the Latter-day Saints know better than to teach their children one thing at one time and another at another time; they also know better than to teach their children principles and doctrines in theory which they deny in practice. The Latter-day Saints are not at liberty to do this; we are not so called; we have not so received the gospel; but having received the truth in our hearts, we should practice it in our lives, and on this basis—the truth as it is in Jesus—should the traditions which we instill into the minds of our children be built.

With regard to the faith that the Lord has revealed for the salvation of the human family, teach them principles that are correct. Do not say: "Do not do this or that, child, the Lord sees you!" "Well, ma," says the child, "I heard the minister say to day that the Lord has no eye, how can he see me? How is this, ma? I want to know; is this true or is it not true? You say that the Lord looks upon my acts, and knows everything I do, and will judge me according to my acts; yet I heard the minister say to-day that the Lord has no body and no parts; that He has no ears, that He has no head, that He has no arms, that He has no feet, and so on. How is this ma?" And the child is confused in its mind and does not know what to believe; it is lost in its thought. The same is true of grown people. The children know very little more than their parents, but they would if they were let alone. I will illustrate this by a simple fact, if I do not prove

it. You go to the heathen nations, the aborigines of our country, for instance. They believe nothing in religion as we suppose, yet their ideas of God and heaven are far above those entertained by professed Christians. They believe in a God who has body, parts and passions, possessed of principle and power; who can see, handle, walk, talk and communicate. This is their faith; whether it is through tradition I cannot say. If they have no traditions on these points they have certainly imbibed these ideas from some source, and whether natural or by tradition it is immaterial to me. They are a people who know nothing of the Bible or of the Christian religion, and still their ideas are more correct than many of ours. This will illustrate what I wished, to my own satisfaction.

I say, with regard to traditioning children falsely, especially in religious matters, rather let them alone; give a good common education, and no teachings whatever with regard to the Bible, and their own philosophy will teach them there is a Supreme Being, better than many who, though identified with Christian nations, have repudiated their religious notions. I mean the infidel world, and its members are very numerous. The philosophy of the child, if untrammelled by false tradition, will teach him, by what he sees every day, that there is a Supreme Being, a supreme principle and power somewhere. It can not think of anything but what is brought into existence in some way or other. Nothing is self-made or self-existent. This is the natural philosophy of the thinking child. As it grows up the idea naturally suggests itself to its own mind "I did not bring myself here; I have parents. I understand this; this is on natural principles. I can, to some extent, understand the creations which are before and around me." Says the child, "I can understand very readily that if we cast wheat into the ground when it is properly prepared, it produces wheat; if we cast corn into properly prepared ground it will produce corn. So of rye, the various grass seeds, shrubs, plants and flowers,—they all yield according to their kind." This, the child naturally understands, "but," he says, "where is the origin of myself? I know not; yet it must be somewhere. The origin of life, whether human or inferior, must be lodged in some character whom I have not seen! Follow it back, no matter whether it be for six thousand years, six millions, six million millions, or billions of years, the figures and numbers are immaterial, I must have come from some source, my natural philosophy teaches me this." But, leaving the natural philosophy of the child free from false tradition, let us enquire, What does the philosophy of the Christian sects, or many of them, not all, teach? "God made the world in six days, out of nothing!" This is very wrong; no child should be taught any such dogma. God never did make a world out of nothing; He never will. He never can! There is no such principle in existence. Worlds are made of crude element which floats, without bounds in the eternities,—in the immensity of space; an eternity of matter,—no limits to it, in its natural crude state; and the power of the Almighty has this influence and wisdom,—when He speaks He is obeyed, and matter comes together and is organized. We take the rock, and the lime from the mountains and burn it and make mortar with lime and sand and lay the foundation of houses, and rear the superstructure with bricks, stones, adobies or lumber. We bring these elements together and organize them according to our pleasure. We should teach our children that God has so organized the earth from the rude, rough native element. It is true that some believe that it never was created! Well! all right then! It is here anyhow; they cannot dispute the fact that the earth is here, no matter how long it has stood!

This calls to my mind some circumstances of our trip. We had Major Powell with us on some portions of our journey South. He is now preparing to explore more of the Colorado. He was engaged in this undertaking last year; then he went on his own responsibility. This year he has received a little aid from Congress. One evening while sitting by the camp fire said I, "Major, how long will it take light to come from the nearest fixed star to the earth? Some of our astronomers say thirty thousand years." Said he, "O dear! thirty thousand years will not do it, it will take as many millions of years." Well, that opened up conversation, and I do not know but I might have indulged in a little of my boyism. In our journeyings we came to some petrified trees lying on the ground; they were broken to pieces. Some had very fine quartz between the bark and wood, very finely formed, beautifully crystallized, perfect diamond shape. Said I, "Major, how came these here?" Well, he did not know when they were brought, or how they had become petrified; they had certainly, according to his opinion, come from some other country, for no such trees grow here now. In our travels we came to one place where there had been a slide of rocks, and there was a perfect bed of oyster shells in the rock—perfect rock. Said I, "Major, how long has it taken for these shells to become petrified?" He philosophized a little upon it, when I said, "Look here, you and I both know that there are springs of water that will petrify things of this kind in a short time, and that petrified human bodies have been exhumed which, it was known, had not been buried very many years, and how do you know that it