

DISCOURSE

By Elder ORSON PRATT, delivered in the Sixteenth Ward Assembly Rooms, Salt Lake City, Sunday afternoon, March 9, 1873.

REPORTED BY D. W. EVANS.

ON page 235 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants there is a revelation given to this church on March 9, 1832, which contains these words—

For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be, that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion, or in other words, the city of Enoch, for a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which ye have espoused to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven, that you may be equal in the bands of heavenly things; yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things; for if ye are not equal in earthly things, ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; for if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

We will next read a passage which is contained in the latter part of the 3rd paragraph of a revelation given in March, 1831. It will be found on page 218 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.

I will now read a portion of a revelation given on the 22nd of June, 1834. It will be found in paragraph 2, Book of Doctrine and Covenants, page 295. Speaking of the church, it reads as follows—

But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as becometh Saints, to the poor and afflicted among them, and are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; and Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself; and my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer.

I have read these passages of new revelation for the benefit of the Latter-day Saints who are here this afternoon, and it is well enough for us to examine ourselves, to see whether we are living in strict accordance with them, and if we are not, to see whether there are any persons throughout all the Territory of Utah who are complying with them. In one of these revelations, given in March, 1831, before the Lord had led this people to Jackson County and before we knew where the New Jerusalem was to be built, or where the great central gathering place for the Latter-day Saints was to be, the Lord informed us "That it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin." Now let me inquire of the Latter-day Saints, Are we all equal in the bands of earthly things, or have we rich and poor in our midst? The answer that all would give to this question is, Every person and every family has accumulated just as much wealth, as he or they could, for his or their own use only, and this order of things has existed amongst us since the church was organized, nearly forty-three years. How much longer will this continue? How long will every family be for themselves, every man's energy and ability be exerted only for himself and his family, every man grasping to enrich himself? He does not care about his neighbor, and if he thinks about him at all, the inquiry rises in his mind, "Have I got as much wealth as my neighbor, or as this or that person? If I have not I must strive to obtain as much; for if I have not as much as my neighbors I can hardly think to crowd myself into their society; for I have noticed that our wealthy citizens are creating distinctions of classes among us. If they get up a party in their own private dwellings, or a nice luxurious supper, for instance, it is generally only those who are wealthy in appearance who are invited, and unless I can accumulate as much wealth as they have, I shall be cast out and fall below into some other class."

I am now talking of facts as they really exist. When do you see a rich man among the Latter-day Saints who, when he makes a great feast, invites the poor and the lame, the halt and blind, and those who are in destitute circumstances? Such events are few and far between. The Savior has strictly

commanded us that when we make our feasts, instead of inviting those who have abundance and roll in the good things and luxuries of life, we should invite the poorest among us, the lame, blind and infirm, and those who perhaps have not enough food to eat. Do you Latter-day Saints do this? No, I fear not. There may be persons who are doing these things; if so, blessed are they if they observe this and all the other commandments of the Lord.

What kind of a revolution would it work among the Latter-day Saints if the revelation given in March, 1831, were carried out by them—"It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin"? How much of a revolution would it accomplish in Salt Lake City if this order of things should be brought about? I think it would work a greater revolution among this people than has ever been witnessed amongst them since they had an existence as a church.

Again, in another revelation, given in 1832, soon after the place of location for the city of Zion was made known, the Lord declared that the time had come to establish an order among his people requiring certain persons, whose names were mentioned, to consecrate a portion of their property. They were to put so many dollars into the treasury, and that was to be a common property among those individuals, for their own benefit, and for the benefit of the church. Among the persons called to enter into this order was the great prophet and seer of the last days.

This order was entered into partially by the individuals who were named, but even they were not all prepared for this partial order pertaining to the celestial kingdom of God. It was too sacred, too much in opposition to the traditions of the age, and which had existed for many generations. We all know that, since the days of the Apostles, the whole world, except the Nephites and Lamanites on this continent, have been divided in regard to their wealth and property. Among whatever nation you might travel on the eastern hemisphere, and on this hemisphere too, since it was discovered by Columbus and settled by Europeans, this individualism has existed among all classes of people, with a very few exceptions. Among these exceptions we may mention the Shaking Quakers. This sect is in great error in many respects, but its members did enter into a community of property. Their properties were consecrated and put into a store house, and were controlled by certain men who were chosen for that purpose. How wisely they used this property or how they lived on this common stock principle is not for me to say; but suffice it to say, that so far as consecration and a community of property were concerned they carried them out. But the great mass of the human family have sought for ages past, and are still seeking, to accumulate dollars and dimes, houses and lands for themselves, to bequeath to their heirs or to whomsoever they see proper. This individualism that has existed all over the world has been one of the principal means of introducing almost all the crimes that exist among men, for as the apostle Paul has said—"The love of money is the root of all evil."

The Apostles endeavored to introduce the common stock principle in their day among the Saints, but the people, even then, had been so long accustomed to accumulating wealth for themselves and their families instead of having it in common, that the Apostles found it impossible to establish this principle on a permanent foundation, and it did not continue. It might have been carried out a year or two and perhaps a little longer; but according to the writings of the Apostles to the early Christians, this principle seems to have been done away with, and individualism prevailed amongst them.

Let me inquire now, how this selfish principle produces the great variety of evils that exist in the world? I will refer to some that have sprung from it, and have made their appearance among the Latter-day Saints, and which will increase unless we reform in this respect. For instance, wealthy persons have the power to educate their children more thoroughly than the poor man can. They can send them to the very best schools and institutions of learning, and they can keep

them there year after year until they have acquired what is termed a thorough education. Then, their fathers think, "Our sons have been trained in various branches of learning and business, they understand book-keeping and other branches necessary in following mercantile pursuits; they know how to accumulate means and how to keep everything straight. We can therefore entrust them with the means we shall leave them, and knowing how to make good use of it, they will be able to keep themselves at the head of the heap," or in other words, they will be above the poor who have not had the education they have had.

A rich man can educate his daughters, and have them taught music and everything calculated to make them refined, polite and genteel. This enables these daughters to fascinate the rich, and should a poor man come along, and knock at the rich man's door and tell him he desires to keep company with his daughters, he is told that he has no business there. Says the rich man, "My daughters must marry wealthy men, they must be exalted and be with the upper class among the Latter-day Saints."

The poorer classes, seeing that they have neither the means nor the business education and information to compete with the rich ones, grovel along in poverty and ignorance, and a distinction of classes arises. By and by these rich young men come along with their fine carriages and if a poor man happens to be crossing the street, they look down with scorn and contempt upon him, and cry, "Out of my way there," when if it had been a wealthy man they would have turned their carriage out of the way until he had passed; but the "poor scrub," as they term the poor man, must be blackguarded and ridiculed, and treated as a slave or as a person who has no right to be seen in the society of the wealthy.

What kind of feelings does this produce in the hearts of the humble poor who desire and are striving to serve the Lord? They feel in their hearts that they do not fellowship these rich persons, and this causes hard feelings between these classes. Is this right or is it wrong? It is wrong, materially wrong, and we have continued in this wrong over forty years. When shall it come to an end? When will we learn to keep the commandments of God and become one, not only in doctrine but in "the bands of earthly things"? Such a time must come, and if we do not comply with it, we shall fall behind. I will prophesy to this people on this subject. The Lord commanded me to prophesy when I was about nineteen years old, but I seldom do it, for fear I should prophesy wrong. But I will prophesy concerning this church and people, that all who will not come into that order of things, when God, by his servants, counsels them so to do, will cease growing in the knowledge of God, they will cease having the Spirit of the Lord to rest upon them, and they will gradually grow darker and darker in their minds, until they lose the Spirit and power of God, and their names will not be numbered with the names of the righteous. You may put that down and record it.

We find, a few years after these revelations that I have read were given, the Lord saw that we were so covetous and filled with the selfish principle instilled into our minds by our forefathers, that we would not give heed to the law which he gave concerning the consecrations that were to be made in Jackson county, Mo., and he determined in his own mind that that should not be a land of Zion unto the present generation of people, take them as a people; and he made this decree, after giving them revelation upon revelation, warning them by the mouth of his servant Joseph, who went in person and warned them, and sent up his revelations a thousand miles from Kirtland and warned them. After they had been sufficiently warned, for some two years and upwards, after their commencement of the settlement of Jackson county, Missouri, the Lord fulfilled that which he had spoken concerning them—that they should be driven out of the land of Zion. This was literally fulfilled. Why? Because of covetousness. You will recollect my reading, I think last conference, a letter written by the Prophet Joseph Smith. I think it is in the 14th volume of the "Star," in connection with the history of this church

published in that periodical. That letter was written to one of the brethren in Zion in relation to the consecrations of the properties of the people. The Lord said in that revelation that the principle which he had revealed in relation to the properties of his church must be carried out to the very letter upon the land of Zion; and those individuals who would not give heed to it, but sought to obtain their inheritances in an individual way by purchasing it themselves from the government, should have their names blotted out from the book of the names of the righteous, and if their children pursued the same course their names should be blotted out too, they and their children should not be known in the book of the law of the Lord as being entitled to an inheritance among the Saints in Zion.

We find, therefore, that the Lord drove out this people because we were unworthy to receive our inheritances by consecration. As a people, we did not strictly comply with that which the Lord required. Neither did they comply in Kirtland. Many of those persons were called by name to enter into an inferior order, afterwards called The Order of Enoch, in which only a portion of their property was consecrated, and even they did not comply, but some of them broke the most sacred and solemn covenants made before high Heaven in relation to that order. The Lord said concerning them that they should be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan in this world as well as be punished in the world to come. He also told them that that soul that sinned and would not comply with the covenant and promise which they made before him in relation to their properties, should have his former sins returned to him, which had been before remitted in baptism.

This ought to be an example for us who are living at a later period in the history of the church of the living God, and who ought, by this time, to have become thoroughly experienced in the law of God. It is true we are not now required to consecrate all that we have; this law has not been binding upon us since we were driven from the land of Zion. The reason why this law was revoked was because the Lord saw we would all go to destruction in consequence of our former tradition in relation to property if this law had continued to be enforced after we were driven out, hence he revoked it for the time being, as you will find recorded in one of the revelations given June 22nd, 1834, after we were driven from Jackson County. I will repeat the words—"Let those commandments which I have given concerning Zion and her law, be executed and fulfilled after her redemption." Here you perceive that, for the salvation of this people and of the nations of the earth among the Gentiles, God saw proper to revoke this commandment and to lay it over for a future period, or until after the redemption of Zion. Zion is not yet redeemed, and hence we are not under the law of full consecration. But is that any reason why we should not be under some other law differing from the one we were formerly required to practice? Do we live up to the law called the Order of Enoch, which is inferior to that law requiring full consecrations? No we do not. Let us go down another scale in the ladder of obedience, and inquire if we are carrying out a law inferior to the Order of Enoch, that is, the law of Tithing? Do the Latter-day Saints comply with that, and, to begin with, when they come from the nations of the earth, do they consecrate their surplus property to the Lord, placing it in the hands of the Bishop of his church, and after that pay one tenth of their annual income into the treasury of the Lord? Where is there a person carrying out this law which was revealed in the year 1838 and which has never been revoked? It is one of the most simple and inferior laws, far below the order of full consecrations and far below the Order of Enoch, but have we as a people complied with this? I think not. Can you find one out of a hundred persons in Salt Lake City who has carried out this law? Have you done it? The Bishops, whose duty it is to collect the tithing can answer this question better than I can, but I very much doubt whether the records of the Bishops would show that the people have complied with the latter clause of this law—namely to pay one-tenth of their annual income, to say nothing about their surplus property. Are

we under condemnation or are we not? Judge ye for yourselves. What will become of this people unless we reform, and repent of our sins in these respects? That which I have already spoken will be fulfilled upon their heads—they will lose the spirit of the gospel.

We are looking for the redemption of Zion. What would be our condition if the Lord were to say unto us this season, "Arise, my Saints, arise, go back to the land which I promised to give to you and to your children for an everlasting possession; go back and build up the New Jerusalem according to the law of the celestial kingdom, as recorded in the revelation in which the Lord says unless he be built according to that law he can not receive her unto himself. What kind of a Zion would we build if called this present season to go back to Jackson County? We would have to begin altogether a new order of things. Are we prepared for it? I think not. If the people had faithfully complied with these inferior laws they would be better prepared; but when I see the backwardness of many of the people of this Territory calling themselves Latter-day Saints, about paying their tithing, refusing to do so or being careless about it, I say in my heart, "Oh Lord, when will thy people be prepared to go back and build up the waste places of Zion according to celestial law?"

The Lord has said in this book, (B. D. C.) that the time is to come when Zion shall be redeemed. I will read the passage. It commences on page 292, and is as follows:

Behold, this is the blessing which I have promised after your tribulations, and the tribulations of your brethren; your redemption, and the redemption of your brethren, even their restoration to the land of Zion, to be established no more to be thrown down; nevertheless, if they pollute their inheritance, they shall be thrown down, for I will not spare them if they pollute their inheritances. Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power; therefore, I will raise up unto me people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel, for ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched out arm; and as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be. Therefore, let not your hearts faint, for I say unto you as I said unto your fathers, mine angel shall go up before you, but not my presence; but I say unto you, mine angels shall go before you, and also my presence, and in time ye shall possess the goodly land.

In a revelation given June 22nd, 1834, the Lord tells us that before the people of Zion shall be redeemed the army of Israel must become very great. What he meant by this, was "great" compared with the few individuals to whom this revelation was given. It will be recollected that a certain number were required as the strength of the Lord's house to go up to redeem Zion, as they supposed. They gathered together, some one or two hundred, and went up for this purpose; and the Lord said that the strength of his house did not hearken to his voice, and did not come up according to his commandment and revelation, but had said in their hearts, "If this be the work of the Lord, the Lord will redeem Zion, and we will stay at home upon our inheritances." They made excuses and would not go up. The little handful that did go up were called the Camp of Zion. Some few of them are still living. When we arrived in the neighborhood of the Land of Zion, the strength of the Lord's house not having hearkened to his voice, the Lord gave a revelation and said first, "Let my army become very great and let it be sanctified before me, that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible unto all nations." How do you suppose we are going to fulfill this, preparatory to the redemption of Zion? Are we now taking a course to sanctify ourselves before the Heavens? It is true that the army of Israel is very great even now when compared with that little handful that went up with the Camp of Zion, but though blessed with numbers, we are not blessed with that sanctification which the Lord has spoken of in that revelation. How much faith have we now, in our disobedience to the law of tithing, and to many other principles? Blessed are they who have faithfully paid their tithing all the time, and blessed are their children, they will receive their inheritance in the Land of Zion, when the Lord shall come. The Lord will bless them and their generations for ever. But those who have not complied with this law are not sanctifying themselves before God, neither are they pre-