

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR

At the General Conference on Sunday afternoon, April 9th, 1882.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

In attempting to address the congregation this afternoon, I trust that all will be as quiet as possible. It is extremely difficult to make the congregation hear in this place, especially in so large an assembly, when there is the least confusion. While I address you, I wish to speak such words as shall be interesting, edifying and instructive, and I desire an interest in the prayers of the faithful, that I may be able to do so intelligently, that we may be the better for our coming together.

I am aware of the position that we occupy to-day. I feel that I am surrounded by a large number of intelligent men and women, and while I am addressing you, I am also addressing the world, for the remarks I make will be reported and published to the world. Therefore, I am desirous to advance such sentiments as will be in accord with the enlightenment of the Latter-day Saints, with the intelligence of the 19th century, and with the principles that have emanated from God.

Any intelligence which we may possess and which we may be able to impart, is not of ourselves, but of God. It did not originate with us; it did not originate with Joseph Smith, with Brigham Young, with the Twelve Apostles, nor was it received from any institution of learning, nor of science, either religious, political, or social. Our philosophy is not the philosophy of the world; of time and of the earth and the heavens, of time and eternity, and proceeds from God.

A message was announced to us by Joseph Smith the Prophet, as a revelation from God, wherein he stated that holy angels had appeared to him and revealed the everlasting Gospel as it existed in former ages; and that God the Father and God the Son had also appeared to him: the Father, pointing to the Son said, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." Moroni, a prophet who had lived on this continent, revealed unto Joseph the plates containing the Book of Mormon, and by the gift and power of God he was enabled to translate them into what is known as the Book of Mormon. That book contains a record of the ancient inhabitants who dwelt upon this continent, a part of whom came from the tower of Babel at the time of the confounding of tongues, and another part came from Jerusalem in the time of Zedekiah, king of Judah, 600 years before the advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This book contains a record of the dealings of God with those people; it contains a record of their worship, of their wars and commotions, of their righteousness and iniquity, and of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ unto them, and of His reaching unto them the same Gospel that was taught on the continent of Asia, attended by the same ordinances, the same organization and the same principles.

I shall not attempt to bring any proof with regard to these matters to-day; I am simply making statements, the truth of which you Latter-day Saints know, as it would be impossible to enter into all the details in a short discourse. Suffice it to say, that the Father having presented His Son to Joseph Smith, and commanded him to hear Him, Joseph was obedient to the heavenly call, and listened to the various communications made by men holding the Holy Priesthood in the various ages under the direction of the Only Begotten. He and Oliver Cowdery were commanded to baptize each other, which they did. John the Baptist came and conferred upon them the Aaronic Priesthood. Then Peter, James and John, upon whom was conferred, in the Savior's day, the keys of the Melchisedec Priesthood, came and conferred that Priesthood upon them. Then Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha and many other leading characters mentioned in the Scriptures, who had operated in the various dispensations, came and conferred upon Joseph the various keys, powers, rights, privileges and immunities which they enjoyed in their times.

Again, Joseph was commanded to preach this Gospel and to bear this testimony to the world. He was taught the same principles that were taught to Adam, the same

principles that were taught to Noah, to Enoch, to Abraham, to Moses, to Elijah and other Prophets, the same principles that were taught by Jesus Christ and the Apostles in former times on the continent of Asia, accompanied with the same Priesthood and the same organization, only more fully, because the present dispensation is a combination of the various dispensations that have existed in the different ages of the world, and is designated in the scriptures as the dispensation of the fulness of times, in which God would gather together all things in one, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth. Therefore, whatever of knowledge, of intelligence, of Priesthood, of powers, of revelations was conferred upon those men in the different ages, was again restored to the earth by the ministration and through the medium of those who held the holy Priesthood of God in the different dispensations in which they lived.

Under the direction of the Almighty, Joseph organized a church; and when people were called upon to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, to repent of their sins, to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and to have hands laid upon them for the reception of the Holy Ghost, those who did believe and obey received the attendant blessings. Then the various offices of the Priesthood began to be conferred upon men who believed, and in due time the quorum of the Twelve was organized, whose commission was to proclaim the Gospel to every people, to every nation, to every kindred, to every tongue. Then a quorum of seventy Elders was selected, known by the name of Seventies; and we now have some 78 times 70 of those Elders.

A First Presidency was also organized to preside over the whole Church in all the world. Then there were High Priests ordained, whose office was principally to preside as well as to preach the Gospel. Then there were Elders, Priests, Teachers and Deacons; and this organization was given by direct revelation, by which the Church has been governed from that time until the present. Bishops were also appointed, whose position in the Church was clearly defined by the word of the Lord. Then High Councils were organized for the adjustment of all matters of difficulty, for the correction of incorrect doctrine, for the maintenance of purity and correct principles among the Saints, and for the adjudication of all general matters pertaining to Israel. This was the testimony to-day to the nations of the earth. The Lord stood at the head as instructor, guide and director; and the Elders were told to go forth and to preach the Gospel to every creature, because confusion, disorder, sectarianism and the theories of men had been substituted for the word and will, and the revelation, law and power of God. These Elders were told that we approached the latter times, when God would have a controversy with the nations, and the message which they had to proclaim was that which was described by John when wrapped in prophetic vision upon the Isle of Patmos. Among other great and important events he said, "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come." This was the commission given by the Lord to the Latter-day Saints. This is the mission we have been trying to carry out from that time to the present; and I myself have traveled tens of thousands of miles without purse or scrip, trusting in God, to teach these holy principles, and so have many of my brethren by whom I am surrounded.

When we started we were told that we were not sent to be taught, but to teach. Why? Because the world was not in possession of the principles of life, and therefore could not teach them. We went in obedience to the direct command of God to us through His servant Joseph, and we have spread forth the Gospel among the nations. And is there anything unreasonable about it? No, is it true? Yes. Is it scriptural? Yes. Is it philosophical? Yes. And I say to-day, not by way of boasting, because we have nothing to boast of (I have no intelligence but what I am indebted to God my Heavenly

Father and my brethren for), that while I have travelled through various parts of the United States and the Canada, also in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, Germany and different parts of the earth, among the wise and intelligent as well as the poor and ignorant, among all classes of men—I have stood in their halls and talked with their professors, ministers, legislators, rulers, divines, judges and wise men of every class, grade and position in life—but I have never met with a man who could gainsay one principle of the Gospel of the Son of God, and I never expect to; because truth, eternal truth, as it emanates from God, cannot be controverted.

And what is the nature of the Gospel? It is the same as that taught on the day of Pentecost by the Apostles, when they cried out to the multitude, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." That was the testimony which they bore to the people. That is the testimony which the Elders of this Church bear. There is something about this that is reasonable, that is intelligent and that is susceptible of proof. It was a very fair proposition for the Apostle to make, promising the people who would obey the requirements which the Gospel imposes upon its adherents, that they should receive the Holy Ghost. And what should this do for them? It was to cause their old men to dream dreams and their young men to see visions, it was to make their sons and daughters prophesy, it was to bring things past to their remembrance, to lead them into all truth, and to show them things to come. This proposition was not alone of a religious nature, but it was also strictly philosophical. The farmer sows oats or wheat or plants corn, and what does he expect? He expects oats, wheat or corn, as the case may be, and nothing else. There are laws and principles in nature, in the vegetable, the animal and the mineral kingdoms, as well as in all the works of God, that are true in themselves and they are eternal. There are such metals as gold, silver, copper or iron, each possessing certain distinctive elements which they always did possess; and the different bodies in their chemical relations possess principles that are always true to unchangeable laws. It is so also in regard to all the elements by which we are surrounded, and also in regard to the heavenly bodies. Because of these unchanging laws we know precisely when the sun will rise and when it will set. We know when certain planets or comets will appear and disappear. All their movements are undeviating, exact and true according to the laws of nature.

Now here is a principle of the Gospel that will admit of as strong evidence as anything in nature. What is it? "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Or in other words, sow wheat and you reap wheat; plant corn and you gather corn. It was a bold position to take. I remember that on these points I questioned the Elder who brought the Gospel to me. I asked, What do you mean by this Holy Ghost? Will it cause your old men to dream dreams and your young men to see visions; will it bring to pass the scripture which saith, And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy? Yes. Will it give you the permeating influence of the Spirit of the living God, and give you a certain knowledge of the principles that you believe in? "Yes," he answered, "and if it will not, then I am an impostor." Said I, That is a very fair proposition. Finding the doctrine to be correct, I obeyed, and I received that Spirit through obedience to the Gospel which gave me a knowledge of those principles which I simply believed before, because they were scriptural, reasonable and intelligent, according to that scripture which saith, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

I was ordained an Elder by the proper authorities, and I went forth to preach this Gospel. Other Elders went forth as I did to the civilized nations, preaching the same doctrine and holding out the same promises. Some of them were not very learned; some were not very profoundly educated. We send a singular class of people in our Elders. Sometimes a missionary is a

merchant, sometimes a legislator, a blacksmith, an adobe maker, a plasterer, a farmer, or common laborer, as the case may be. But all under the same influence and spirit, all going forth as missionaries to preach the Gospel of light, of life and of salvation. They have received the treasures of eternal life, and they are enabled to communicate them to others; and they hold out the same promises. You who hear me this afternoon, as well as thousands upon thousands of others, have listened to those principles, you have had held out unto you those promises; and when you obeyed the Gospel, you received this same spirit; and you are my witnesses of the truth of the things that I now proclaim in your hearing and of the Spirit and power of God attending the obedience to the Gospel, and you will not deny it. This congregation will not deny it. When you yielded obedience to the laws of God, obeyed His commandments, were baptized for the remission of your sins and had hands laid upon you for the reception of the Holy Ghost, you did receive it; and you are living witnesses before God. This is a secret that the world does not comprehend. Its people have not obeyed it and they do not know it; and the things of God, say the scriptures, no man knoweth but by the Spirit of God; and this Spirit has imparted to us that intelligence and that knowledge. This people have in their possession a hope that enters within the veil, whither Christ, our forerunner, has gone. They are living and acting and operating for eternity. God is their Father, and they know it. Some people think we are a set of ignorant boobies, who do not know what we are talking about, and they try to overturn the faith of the Latter-day Saints by sophistry, falsehood and folly. Whilst the fact is, we are in possession of the principles of eternal life, and are operating for eternity; and then we are operating to build up the Zion of God, where righteousness can be taught, and where men can be protected, and where liberty can be proclaimed to all men of every color, of every creed and of every nation.

Being placed in communication with God, the sophistry, nonsense and dogmas of men have no influence upon us. We are built upon the rock of revelation, as Peter was, and on the same principle. Said Jesus to him, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" The answer was: "Some say thou art one of the prophets; some say thou art the Elias who was to come," etc. "But whom say you that I am?" Peter answered and said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven; and I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What rock? The rock of revelation—upon the intelligence communicated by the Holy Ghost to those who obey the Gospel of the Son of God; by this, men shall know for themselves, and stand as the rock of ages, invulnerable, immovable and unchangeable. That is the position which we the Latter-day Saints occupy.

This then is the religious part of the question. What do we believe in? We believe in unity, in virtue in honesty, in integrity, in truthfulness and in not giving way to falsehood; we believe in treating all men justly, uprightly and honorably; we believe in fearing God, observing His laws and keeping His commandments. Do we all do it? No, not quite. I wish we did. But a great majority of the Latter-day Saints are doing this; and if there are those that are not, let them look well to their path, for God will be after them, and their brethren will be after them, for God cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance. And as we are here for the purpose of building up Zion, He expects that we will be upright and honorable in all our dealings with one another and with all men.

One part of the Gospel is that we should be gathered together to a land that should be called Zion. Have we been doing this? Yes. Some people are very much opposed to it. Have we injured anybody by gathering in this way? Is this indeed the land of the free, the home of the brave, and the asylum for the oppressed? Cannot the people of this nation afford to listen to the

principles of truth, and allow men who are fearing God to assemble together to worship Him according to the dictates of their own consciences? Have we violated any law of the United States in thus gathering together and in thus worshipping our God? Not that I know of. Have we been opposed to the United States? Not not not we never have, and we are at the defiance of all men to prove anything of the kind. There are falsehoods set afoot by low, degraded, unprincipled men. We believe that the Constitution of the United States was given by inspiration of God. And why? Because it is one of those instruments which proclaims liberty throughout the land, and to all the inhabitants thereof. And it was because of those noble sentiments, and the promulgation of those principles which were given by God to man, we believe, that it was given by the inspiration of the Almighty. We have always esteemed it in this light, and it was so declared by Joseph Smith. Did we do any wrong in coming here in the way we did? I think not. Did we transgress any of the laws of the United States? I think not. Did we transgress any of the laws of the nations we left? I think not. We gathered together simply because we were told there was a Zion to be built up. And what was that Zion? The term means the pure in heart. In connection with our gathering, I would remark, that a short time ago, at one of our public celebrations, there were twenty-seven nationalities represented. This is in accordance with the scripture which says: I will take them one of a city and two of a family, and bring them to Zion. And I will give them pastors after mine own heart; that shall feed them with knowledge and understanding. This is what we find in the Christian Bible, and there is certainly no harm in believing the Bible. The Christians send their Bible missionaries among us to circulate it, and we are always glad to receive the Bible and be governed by it.

Now, then, being gathered together, we necessarily required some kind of social relations with each other, for when we came here we brought our bodies with us as well as our religion, and we brought our wives and families with us as well as our religion; and we needed to cultivate the earth and build houses, and plant orchards, and vineyards, and gardens, and attend to the common affairs of life. And then as we began to increase we began to open and build farms, hamlets, villages and cities. Is there anything wrong in this? No. Finally, when we came here we petitioned for a state government, the people held a convention and a constitution was framed, and forwarded to Washington. Congress refused our application for a State, but they gave us a Territorial form of government and named the Territory Utah; and strange to say, how men and nations change, they are trying to interfere with us because of our polygamy, and at that time the government appointed a polygamous governor, Brigham Young. People change in their sentiments and views; I suppose they call it progress. Apostle Orson Pratt, whom you all knew, so soon as that revelation was made public, went down to the city of Washington, and there published the doctrine of plural marriage and also lectured upon it. The paper which published was called *The Seer*, which many of you brethren remember very well. They were not in ignorance in relation to these matters. It was then well understood by the nation that these were our sentiments, and that President Young was a polygamist.

But passing on. Sometime after that, we had some United States officials sent out here, who were not polygamists, but one of them went so far as to show us what beautiful civilization they had where he came from, and he left his wife at home and brought with him a strumpet and took her on to the bench with him, to let the people see how intelligent and enlightened the people were in the United States. However, fortunately for him, there was an Edmunds bill then. Still, we were not much edified. It might be according to some people's system of ethics; it may be considered beautiful or æsthetic by the admirers of this fast and progressive civilization; but we could not appreciate it, and the consequence was, that the people felt indignant, they looked upon him as a profligate, and that he had defiled and disgraced the emblem. These were the sentiments of the people then and, they are yours to-day, for you have never been