

REMARKS

By Elder John Taylor, Bowery, August 9, 1857.

[REPORTED BY GEO. D. WATT.]

Beloved brethren and friends, being called upon this morning to address you in a few words, I do so with very great pleasure. The sea of upturned faces that present themselves to my view at the present time is indeed something new, although I have been in what may be called the metropolis of the United States for some length of time.

Gazing round upon my brethren and sisters with smiling countenances and happy, contented feelings, imparts peculiar sensations to my mind, and it is difficult for me at the present time to concentrate my thoughts so as to express the feelings that are in my bosom, if in fact I could express them. Suffice it to say that I am glad to be here; I am happy to meet with my brethren of the priesthood and my sisters and all those who are friends to the cause of God; I rejoice to see you, and am glad of the opportunity of standing before you once more to speak of the things pertaining to the interests of Zion, and the building up of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

There are many here who like me have been absent from home for some time, who, when they come to meet with former associations and friends, particularly those with whom they have battled for years in the cause and kingdom of God, feel as I feel on the present occasion; those alone, and there are many of them, can enter into the sympathies and emotions which I experience at the present time.

There is a very material difference between associating with those that have the fear of God before their eyes, whose first object is their own salvation, the salvation of their progenitors, and posterity, and the building up of the kingdom of God, and associating with those who 'have not God in all their thoughts,' who regard him not in all of their transactions, but who are living 'without God and without hope in the world,' whose hearts—and I am sorry to say it, but yet it is true, whose hearts are 'full of cursing and bitterness,' who roll sin under their tongues as a sweet morsel, 'whose feet are swift to shed blood,' and 'the way of peace,' as the prophet hath said, 'they have not known.'

There is a very material difference between associating with men and women who are the sons and daughters of Zion, and characters such as I have last named; the contrast is so striking, the spirit is so different, the atmosphere varies so much, that any man possessing one spark or particle of the Spirit of the Most High must experience it the moment he breathes the atmosphere and comes in contact with the two contending parties; the one is engaged in the acquisition of wealth. Gold is their god, and associated with that, lust, pollution and corruption of every kind.

While we are aiming to fulfil our destiny on the earth, to accomplish the object for which we were created, to magnify our calling, to honor our God, to build up his kingdom, to redeem the earth from the curse under which it groans, to roll back the tide of corruption that seems to have overspread the universe, our opponents are engaged in pursuits directly tending to dissolution and destruction. Their lives, their views, their objects are short, transient, and evanescent. Ours are wide as the universe, extended as eternity, deep as the foundations of the earth, and elevated as the throne of God; receiving and imparting blessings that are rich, glorious and eternal, blessings which effect us and our posterity through endless ages that are yet to come.

The contrast so striking, so vivid, so manifest, is it to be wondered at, when a person reflects upon these matters, that ten thousand thoughts should crowd upon the mind and produce sensations that it is impossible to fully express with human language. Such, then, are my sentiments and such my feelings.

I have been for some length of time past associated with the gentiles; I have been engaged in battling corruption, iniquity and the foul spirits that seem to fill the atmosphere of what you may term the lower regions, if you please, and the Lord has been with me, His Spirit has dwelt in my bosom, and I have felt to shout hallelujah, and to praise the name of the God of Israel, that he has been pleased to make me a messenger of salvation to the nations of the earth, to communicate the rich blessings flowing from the throne of God, and put me in possession of truth that no power on this or on the other side of hell can controvert successfully.

In regard to the world, the Elders who have been out as I have and as others have around me, know something of its nature and spirit, and the feelings by which the people are governed and actuated. Our young men and women who have not come in contact with it can scarcely conceive of the amount of iniquity, depravity, corruption, lying, deception and abomination of every kind that prevails in the gentile world.

Talk of honesty!—it is a thing in theory, and they will preach about it as loud and as long as anybody; as a matter of theory, it is honorable to be honest, to be men of truth theoretically, but when you come to put your finger upon it, you cannot find it, it is like a shadow, it vanishes from your grasp.

Where are the men of truth nationally, socially, religiously, morally, politically, or in any other way? Where are the patriots? where are the men of God? I declare before you and high heaven, I have not found them. Sometimes I have thought I had got my hand upon them, but they slipped out of my fingers.

I bless the God of Israel that I am permitted to mingle with the Saints of the Most High, to associate with men who, when I meet them and ask them concerning anything, I may expect to have an honest and truthful answer; men in whom there is some truth, some integrity, something to catch hold of, something you can rely upon.

To speak of men whom I have seen dissatisfied and who have gone back to Babylon, I must say that I do not very much admire their taste. If people understood things as I do, and as I have seen and experienced them, they would thank God from the bottom of their hearts that they are permitted to have a name and a place among the people of God in these valleys of the mountains.

We have been engaged in publishing a paper, which is generally known because it has been circulated here. About my proceedings and acts I have got very little to say, only that I have done as well as I could, the Lord being my helper, and I believe my brethren here have prayed for me and that I have been sustained by their prayers and faith.

I have not been in that place because it was my desire to be there, for I have had a hard struggle and a good deal to pass through, but that is common with us all, and if there were no struggle there would be no honor in a victory.

I have conversed with some of the Twelve since I came home and they all feel about the same, and when I have read about your affairs here and the position in which you have been placed, I have said, 'My brethren have had to struggle.'

There is one thing that I have noticed, wherever I have come across a Saint, they differ very materially from others. I have met with those in different places who have been sent out on missions to the various stations, and missionaries going off to preach in Canada and other places, and I found wherever I came in contact with one of them I came in contact with a man, and wherever I came in contact with those who had not been up here I came in contact with children—babies if you please—hardly knowing their right hand from their left; I mean in the practical sense of the word.

There are a great many theorists in the world; they can talk and splutter and make a noise and have a great many theories, but they cannot reduce them to practice. There is no energy, vitality or power. But come in contact with our own brethren and they are all quick, full of animation, life and energy, and there is a spirit infused into them that I do not see anywhere else. This is my experience.

You may pick up men from any part of the world you please and bring them to this place and what are they fit for? They are poor, miserable, creaking old grannies. But there is something in the atmosphere of the place, something in the scenery we have passed through, there is something in the difficulties we have spoken about and something in our joys and prospects that has a tendency to strengthen the mind and brace up the nerves; there is something too in the hope that is implanted in the bosom that is different from that in the possession of other men.

Every true man among us feels he is a Saint of the living God and that he has an interest in the kingdom of God; every man feels that he is a king and a priest of the Most High God, that he is a savior, and he stands forth and acts with energy and power, with influence, and he is full of the Spirit of the Lord; hence the difference between them and others and hence the necessity of the experience we are passing through, the various trials we have to combat with and the difficulties we have to overcome.

All these things seem to me to be so many lessons which it is absolutely necessary for the young, the middle aged and the aged to learn to prepare them and their posterity for more active scenes in the rolling forth of the great work of God in the last days. Consequently, if we have to pass through a few trials, a few difficulties, a few afflictions, and to meet with a few privations, they have a tendency to purify the metal, purge it from the dross and prepare it for the Master's use.

So far as I am concerned I say let everything come as God has ordained it. I do not desire trials, I do not desire affliction; I would pray God to 'leave me not in temptation and deliver me from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory; but if the earthquake bellows, the lightnings flash, the thunders roll, and the powers of darkness are let loose and the spirit of evil is permitted to rage and an evil influence is brought to bear on the Saints and my life, with theirs, is put to the test, let it come, for we are the Saints of the Most High God and all is well, all is peace, all is right and will be both in time and in eternity.

But I do not want trials, I do not want to put a straw in anybody's way, and if I know my own feelings, I do not want to hurt any man under the heavens nor injure the hair of any person's head. I would like to do every man good. These are the feelings, the spirit which the gospel has implanted in my bosom and that the Spirit of God implants in the bosoms of my brethren. And if men will pursue an improper course, the evil, of course, must be on their own heads.

I used to think if I were the Lord I would not suffer people to be tried as they are, but I have changed my mind on that subject; now I think I would, if I were the Lord, because it purges out the meanness and corruption that stick around the Saints like flies around molasses.

We have met on the road a great many apostates. I do not want to say much about them. If they can be happy, all right, but they do not exhibit it. When a man deserts from the gospel, from the ordinances, from the priesthood and its authority, from the revelations of the Spirit of God, from the spirit of prophecy, from that sweet, calm influence that broods over the upright man in all his acts, he loses the blessing of God and falls back into error, and as the scripture says, 'the evil spirit that went out of him returns again bringing with him seven spirits more wicked than himself and the last state of that man is worse than the first.'

It has become proverbial, where apostate

Mormons live, to say, 'O, he is only an apostate Mormon.' They look upon them as ten times meaner than a 'Mormon.'

I happened to go into a barber's shop one day to get shaved. A man came in, and when he went out again the inquiry was made, 'Who is that man?' 'O, he is only an apostate Mormon.' Their mouths are full of cursing, and you will find them chewing tobacco and getting drunk, thinking that by so doing they will recommend themselves to the people, but they have not learned the art very well, they can't swear and degrade themselves so naturally as others, and the people find them out and repudiate them.

You that don't know him, have heard of Thomas B. Marsh, who was formerly the President of the Twelve Apostles, but who apostatized some years ago in Missouri; he is on his way here, a poor, decrepid, broken down old man. He has had a paralytic stroke; one of his arms hangs down. He is coming out here as an object of charity, destitute, without wife, child or anything else; he has been an apostate some 18 years. Most of you know his history. He has been all the time since then afraid of his life, afraid the 'Mormons' would kill him and he durst not let them know where he was.

In meeting with some of the apostates he said to them, 'You don't know what you are about; if you want to see the fruits of apostasy, look on me.' I thought they could not look on a better example.

In relation to some of those other folks that left here, the Gladdenites and others, where are they? Some of them that contended most strenuously for Gladden have cast him off and now have nothing to tie to. Where is their hope of salvation?

In regard to the spirit of the times, I do not know but that I have published my feelings. I would observe, however, that there is a material difference between the people of the East and the people of the West. A great majority of the people of the West, on the borders, may be emphatically termed 'border ruffians;' the Eastern people call them by that name and by that name they are known. There is a species of ruffianism among them, of rowdiness, groggerism, of bantering, bullying, fighting and killing that is a disgrace to humanity.

The most of you who have read the news must be familiar with the scenes that have transpired in Kansas between the two parties that have existed there, one party in favor of slavery, and the other opposed to it. There has been a great struggle between them and mobocracy has abounded to a great extent. Who are the best and who are the worst would be very difficult for me to tell.

The eastern people, of whom I have been speaking, as quick as they go to the borders, partake of the spirit that reigns there and turn 'border ruffians' too. It is not difficult for them to enter into it, for the spirit of deep seated hatred which prevails among many in the East towards the South soon breaks out and their feelings are manifested in acts of violence, and they generally maintain their points by the bowie knife and pistol, by mob violence, vigilance committees, etc.

This disorder of things extends all along the frontiers. If a man does not do right they get up a vigilance committee and it takes up a man, judges him, whips him, banishes him or puts him to death, as they please; and it has become popular to act in this way in all those border places.

They are called 'border ruffians,' and I think the name is as appropriate as anything you could give them. I do not know that I could pick out a better title. In the East they do it with their tongues; they do not use the bowie knives, pistols and rifles so much as in the West and in the South, but a spirit of rancor, animosity and hatred seems to be engendered in the bosoms of the people one against another. They have their most deadly enemies in their very midst. Every man's hand is against his neighbor.

The feelings of the North and South have run very high, each party seeking to support their own peculiar views alone, and truth is out of the question. If they tell the truth, it is by accident. The object is not to tell the truth but to sustain parties and party interests, for to tell the truth is not generally considered very politic.

True, there is a great profession of truth and a great deal of apparent abhorrence of lies and falsehood, because falsehood is not popular, although it is practised all the time.

The ministers say it is right to tell the truth, and then go to work and lie. One politician banters another on account of the hypocritical course he has taken, and as quick as he has done that, he goes to work and lies, and deceives as much as he possibly can to sustain his party; and it is not whether a thing is true or not but whether it is policy or not, and if a thing becomes policy, every influence, every kind of chicanery, falsehood and deception is brought to bear upon it, and when a little truth will tell better, they mix that up along with it, but it is generally the least ingredient in the whole mass.

Talk to them about the gospel, and the scriptures!—they seem to think, even the ministers among them, that it is old fogysm. Talk about Abraham and his institutions!—say they, 'you are taking us back to the dark ages; such things would do eighteen hundred years ago, but we are more enlightened now, we have got more philosophy, more intelligence, and comprehend the nature of human existence better, we are men of greater renown than they; those things might do for our grandfathers and great grandfathers, but they will not do for us.'

If a little scripture will suit them, they put it in, but if it won't, they keep it out and talk about expediency; expediency is the great principle by which men are governed.

Talk about politics—what is it? It is this or that man's policy. 'If it is policy to tell the truth, we will tell it, if not we will tell a lie.' A man cannot obtain a cause because it is just, but because it is policy and because he can bring certain influences to bear on that thing. This is about the position of things as I find them, so far as my experience goes.

But, as is the case in Congress, bullyism seems to be one of the most prominent arguments in the West, where they seem to imitate their honorable example. These are the two prominent places, Kansas and Congress. Br. Bernhisel here has been among them there, he knows something about it, and something about their proceedings. If a man dare get up there and speak his sentiments, another stands over him with a cane and goes to work at caning him and lays him in a sick bed for several months, so that he cannot speak; and for this dignified act he is presented with numerous canes by his constituents to show how they appreciate this Congressional argument and to prove to others that if they speak the truth they may look out for a caning.

These things take place in this land of liberty and in the Congress of the United States.

We have had a good deal of trouble sometimes in getting our appropriations, in fact not sometimes, but always. And I will tell you how they do in the West and in California. A fellow goes up and seizes another by the collar and says, 'damn you, if you stand in my way I will put this into you,' showing him a deadly weapon. The official says, 'I am afraid that fellow will kill me, I will give him what he wants;' but if an honest man goes and asks for his rights, he cannot get them, simply because he is honest, particularly if he happens to be a 'Mormon.'

I have vowed in my own mind, over and over again, if I was in Utah, the United States might stand over me until dooms-day before I would do anything for them unless I was paid for it before-hand. Excuse me, Governor Young, if I am not very patriotic. No man need call upon me to do anything in Utah for the United States, unless they pay me the money down. I won't trust them.

I speak from experience, from things I have seen and known, from circumstances that have come under my own notice. I have seen the difficulties my brethren have labored under when they have had to do with Congress or the Departments at Washington.

Any unprincipled scoundrel, no matter how mean, if he comes with a bowie knife or revolver in his hand, can get what he wants. People back East used to blame me for speaking and writing plain. I talk the same now. I feel that I can be sustained by the truth, and if I cannot live by truth, I will die by it, and I am not afraid of telling it before any people.

I met a gentleman on the road on his way to the States from California. I asked him how things were getting on in Utah. He said, 'very well; all is peace there, they seem to do very well. Are you going there?'

Yes, sir, I am going to Utah.

'Do you live there?'

Yes.

'I think it is not prudent, the policy upon which they act. I would recommend your people to pursue a quiet policy. I saw everything peaceable and quiet there as could possibly be in any community, but I heard Governor Young talk about General Harney; he said he was the squaw-killing general. I did not think that was courteous to be said of a United States officer.'

I replied, are we the only people that must not talk about the United States officers? What do you do in California, in the East, and everywhere we go? Are we going to be imposed on from time to time and not have the privilege of saying our souls are our own?

'O, I merely recommend it as the best policy to be peaceable and quiet until you get to be a State, and for the present put up with these things.'

I said, we have been outrageously imposed upon by United States officials; they send out every rag-tag and bob-tail and every mean nincompoop they can scrape up from the filth and scum of society and dubb him a United States officer, and are we expected to receive all manner of insults from such men without one word of complaint? They will assuredly find themselves mistaken.

'What! you don't mean to say that you will fight against the United States?'

We don't want to, but we feel that we have as much right to talk as anybody; we have rights as American citizens and we cannot be eternally trampled on, but we shall assuredly maintain our constitutional rights, speak fearlessly our opinions and take just the course that we think proper. That is our policy and we shall pursue a course of that kind.

He replied, 'My idea is that quietness and peace is better.'

I told him, it is sometimes, but a little bristle sometimes does good in keeping off the dogs. That is about how I feel.

In relation to the general condition of things in the East at this time, there has been a great hue and cry, and almost every editor, priest and dog that could howl has been yelping. They joined heartily with Drummond, one of our amiable, pure, virtuous United States officers; you know him; I never saw him, but I have heard about him as one of those spotless, immaculate, holy kind of men that they sent from the United States to teach us good morals, correct procedure, virtue, etc., etc.

This pure man commenced a tirade against us, then other dogs began to bark. We soon told the truth about him, then by and by somebody else would tell it, and he now stinks so bad that they actually repudiate him; he is too mean even for them and they had to cast him off; they supported him as long as they could and finally had to let him drop.