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DISCOURSE

By Elder JOHN TAYLOR, Tabernacle, Sunday Morning, May 18, 1862.

[REPORTED BY J. V. LONG.]

We have just heard that

"Angels from heaven, and truth from earth,
Have met, and both have record borne."

We have also been hearing of things pertaining to the kingdom, of the events that are about to transpire, and that are transpiring in these last days.

Jesus said in his day, when speaking of a certain class of individuals, "Because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand."—Matthew XIII, 13. It has been so in almost every age, and it is so at the present time in the world, and to a certain extent among the Saints of the Most High God. It is difficult for us, sometimes, to see and comprehend, and to appreciate our privileges. Mankind have labored under this difficulty in every age of the world. We come into existence; we find ourselves surrounded with blessings; we entertain ideas in relation to the great God that rules and overrules in the affairs of the universe, but we are more or less beclouded in our minds in relation to the great principles of eternal truth. It is so among the people in the world, and also among this people, although we see things more clearly and with a different vision, and understand things more correctly than the rest of the human family, yet we do not comprehend our true position and relationship to each other. If we do we do not walk according to the light which is given unto us by the Spirit of eternal truth. What is more pleasant, naturally, for the mind of man to reflect upon than the things of the kingdom of God? The power, the wisdom and intelligence of the Great Eloheim in his works and designs, and our relationship to him, to the world, and to each other? How deep and sublime and incomprehensible to us at present that wisdom and intelligence that governs this world and all others, that regulates the planetary system, that produces seed time and harvest, summer and winter, that causes all the vivifying influences that operate to supply the necessities of animal life in the myriads of the creatures of God, that spreads throughout the universe and fills all worlds as well as ours with life, being and existence. What could be more joyous and pleasing than for this, and every other world to be under the control of that intelligence and wisdom that governs all animate or inanimate matter. In relation to this world it has been a thing that the prophets have delighted to dwell upon in days that are past and gone; it is a theme that the poets have sung about; they rejoiced in the prospect of the new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; they have also delighted to dwell upon that which shall exist in the animal creation, where the stronger shall no longer press upon the weaker. They have also deplored the fallen condition of mankind generally; they have lamented over the evil passions and feelings that prevail among the human family. They have deplored the crime, the war, the bloodshed and strife, and in their songs they have rejoiced in the prospect of the time coming when these things shall be done away, when the Lord shall take the government into his own hands, when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and the leopard become docile and harmless, and when there shall be nothing to hurt nor destroy in all the holy mountain of the Lord. But the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Among the "Red Republicans" of France, as they are called, a great many of the leading and prominent infidels think that by their influence they will be enabled to bring about the millennial glory. They deprecate all these influences that lead to evil, and they would like another state of things to be introduced among the human family. In fact, as the President stated here not long ago, it is not natural for men to be evil. All men admire that which is good; all men admire virtue and truth, whether they possess them themselves or not, they still admire that which is good in others. You may go to the most wicked man that exists and talk to him upon this subject, and he will say at once, "I am not an example, but such a man is, and there are certain principles that I admire, and if I could see them carried out I should be glad." Who does not admire the truth? And if men carry out good principles in their lives, all others admire both them and the principles. Who is there that does not admire virtue, no matter how lascivious they may be themselves? However dishonest the man may be himself, there is a feeling of admiration of honesty in others. This feeling prevails among the children of men. The only thing with them, and that which puzzles us, how shall the world be redeemed? How shall mankind be purified and correct principles be introduced among the human family? Men

know that their hearts are evil, and they are ever ready to charge this upon others. The question now is, how shall good and godlike principles predominate among the human family? and how shall fraud and unrighteousness be put down and correct principles rise to the rescue of a fallen world? This is the problem that philosophers have tried to introduce, and that wise men in all ages have endeavored to solve. Great men in every age have tried to introduce something good—something that was calculated to do away with the evils that have existed, and to this end they have introduced something which they thought was more noble, more dignified, pure and philanthropic, principles more holy than those that have prevailed. This subject has attracted the attention of all men, and the design of many of these philanthropists has been to lead mankind in the way of life; to introduce correct principles amongst a fallen world, to bring people to a state of truth, light, life, happiness and exaltation in this world or in the kingdom of God.

What is it that missionary institutions are put on foot for? To convert the heathen, that they may introduce among them correct principles, supposing that they have got them themselves, and that all the world may be brought under this divine influence which they suppose they possess, and be civilized and evangelized and obtain an exaltation in the kingdom of our God. All kinds of societies have been organized in the world which have had for their object the amelioration of the condition of the human family. For instance, almost all have seen that drunkenness was an evil, and hence men have introduced Temperance Societies, which are very good, but that does not constitute the kingdom of God, but it shows what feelings have inspired the human bosom, striking at the foundation of evil.

Another large class of men have supposed that war was a great evil, and so it is; and they have striven to introduce peace, and some of the most influential men in Europe have united together to form Peace Societies, but what do their efforts in this respect amount to? What have they accomplished? Nothing; there is nothing done; iniquity abounds just as much as it did before they tried to prevent it. Temperance societies have tried to make people sober, but people are as much given to in temperance as they were before the Temperance societies were introduced. There does not seem to be any difference. Their agents have been sent forth, and their missionaries for years and years have been laboring to ameliorate the condition of mankind and to lead them to the knowledge of God, and what have they done? Let the world answer. What have they done among the heathen nations? What have they done among what are called Christians? The Peace society—what has it done? Let the United States answer; let the present powers of Europe answer; let the world answer. No withstanding human exertions may have been very necessary in many of these moves to try to better the condition of the world, it must be acknowledged that they have signally failed, and that unless something more be done, a more powerful and a better kind of religion introduced, and a better kind of temperance, of philosophy; a better kind of morality, a more wise and liberal kind of government and a better code of laws instituted: the world has got to go on as it has done, without any amendment; in fact it is getting worse and worse instead of better and better. The great problem, it is presumed, will have to rest with us and the Almighty in relation to this matter. It requires something more potent, intelligent, powerful and wise than anything that has existed heretofore among men to introduce that change which is so desirable. Man by searching cannot find it out. Man with the utmost stretch of his intelligence, is unable to comprehend or introduce the kingdom of God upon the earth, and all the earth and all the various societies separate and combined have failed to introduce any principle commensurate with the wants of humanity and in all respects calculated to ameliorate the condition of the human family and to place them in the condition in which the prophets have beheld them when wrapped in prophetic vision and beheld the opening glories of the kingdom of God. Who doubts the sincerity of many of the reformers, whether religious, social, moral or philosophical? No man. Many of these men have been sincere, noble, brave and ingenious, and have tried to stop the torrent of iniquity; but their means have not been commensurate to the end designed; iniquity, like the mountain snows when the sun shines upon it and the south wind blows, is loosed from its rest and comes down like a mighty avalanche breaking down all barriers, bursting all bonds and deluging and destroying all before it, leaving morality and religion aghast, destroying social order, deluging philosophy and proving that man alone may as well attempt to blow out the sun or stop the wheels of time, as in his pigmy efforts to regulate the world.

How shall these things be accomplished?

I think we shall have to say as John Wesley said:

"Except the Lord conduct the plan,
The best concerted scheme is vain,
And never can succeed."

I think that unless there is a more comprehensive philosophy than that which has entered into the brains of our learned men, none of that intelligence that dwells in the bosom of the Great God, to control and guide a man's feelings and desires and to bring them into subjection to some law, by which all can be managed orderly and systematically. There is something in the designs of God and in all his operations that so far outstrip the operations of man in his most mighty efforts, for they are all puny, weak and childlike. Look, for instance, at the embarrassments which the United States at present labor under in providing for their armies; at the difficulties that they are placing themselves under. In a very short time, unless some change takes place, they will be bankrupts, and doubtless obliged to dishonor their contracts; and yet the United States are a wealthy and powerful nation. What is it that they are running in debt for? To feed their armies and their navy. There is upwards of 30,000,000 of people in the United States, and about one million of them are engaged fighting each other, and the others are busy supplying their friends' wants. It would really seem as if they were all bankrupts, notwithstanding all their financing, their resources and their wealth, and not only is that the case with them, but look at Great Britain and what they have tried to accomplish; with all their professed wisdom they have depended upon obtaining cotton from this land and now cannot do it. It is supposed that they can never get from under their indebtedness, which places a great part of the nation in a state of vassalage and poverty. What is the case with other nations? They are just the same or worse. They are maintaining their large standing armies to preserve their dignity and their pride in the midst of the proud, irritated aristocrats of the old world. What does their present condition show? It shows there is a weakness and a want of union and of confidence one in another.

Let us look at the acts of the Almighty and compare them with the acts of men. Look at the human family, there is from 800,000,000 to 1,000,000,000 that inhabit the face of this earth, on the right and on the left, in the north and in the south; and who is it that provides their dinner, supper and all their supplies? Why it is the Great God—Him who hears the young ravens when they cry, whose wisdom is infinite and who is capable of taking care of the human family. Then look at the hills and valleys and the animal creation; the fish in the sea, the beasts of the forest, all teeming with life, and yet this intelligence which is in the Almighty, and the knowledge by which he controls all things, and which enables him to take care of and provide for all creation, the myriads and myriads of beings that fill the air and sea, and yet, notwithstanding they exist in countless numbers, his wisdom provides for all of them, and he is not bankrupt, but is still abundantly able to meet his engagements for fifty years to come just as well as he is to-day. Now contrast the difference between one thing and the other.

Well, it is not necessary to dwell long upon these things; enough perhaps may have been said to show the wisdom, the knowledge and the forethought of the Almighty. Now what is it that we want? If we could have it and knew how to obtain it, and if there was any way of accomplishing it, we want to get that wisdom which dwells in the bosom of God; that intelligence which governs the universe, that produces seed time and harvest, and causes everything to progress in regular order, under the sanction of that care, forethought and comprehension and power that enables the Lord our God to provide for all of his creatures, to supply our wants; and this shows something of that beneficence that dwells in his bosom, that enables him to feel for the wants of his neighbors as for his own, and to seek after common welfare and interest. If we cannot get God to be interested in our cause, if he won't put his hand to the wheel, we may despair of ever bringing about that thing that the prophets have spoken about, just as much as Moses did in former days when Israel had sinned against God. After that the Lord led them by the pillar of fire by night and a cloudy pillar by day. If they had been faithful the Lord would have allowed them to accomplish their journey through the wilderness in a short time, but in consequence of their hard-heartedness and their rebellion against the servants of God and the principles that he introduced, the Lord got angry, as he had a right to do, at the corruption and perversion and rebellion that prevailed among this people. For their hard-heartedness he got angry with them and said "I won't go any longer with this people, you can go, Moses, but they won't be governed by my advice,

therefore you can take them along." Moses knew very well that he could not do it, and therefore he said, "O Lord if thou go not up with us, let us not go. There are difficulties to contend with and the Philistines will be against us; we have got to depend upon thee to feed us with manna from heaven. We have had to depend upon thy wisdom thus far; we shall be swept from off the land if thou go not up with us, therefore carry us not up hence."

This was the feeling of Moses when he stood in the midst of the rebellious children of Israel. Well, what is it that we are engaged to do now? Why we are engaged in just the very thing that we have been singing about, viz.:

"Angels from heaven, and truth from earth,
Have met and both have record borne."

God has sent his angels, and he has declared that he would introduce his kingdom and his government, and establish his dominion and authority according to the saying of one of the old prophets, "The Lord is our king, the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, and he shall reign over us." That was the kind of feeling the people had in those days, when they felt right, and this is the kind of feeling the people have in these days when they have the right spirit; and this is the feeling that we profess to carry in our bosoms, and which we profess to carry out in our lives. We have generally been able to see through the fallacy and weakness of all human institutions. We believe that the Lord has revealed himself from the heavens, and that the manifestations of the power of the heavens has been revealed, and the intelligence that dwells in the bosom of the Almighty and the records that have been hid up for ages we have found, they have been developed and made known to us in connection with the revelations of the Spirit of the Most High God, for the purpose of establishing the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth, and bringing in a righteousness, freedom and peace. These things have been introduced for the very purpose of developing and accomplishing those things that have been hid up in the bosom of Jehovah from before the commencement of this earth. He well understood his designs ere the Morning Stars sang together for joy; he knew what he was to accomplish years and years ago, before any of our fathers had an existence upon the earth, and for this reason the earth was organized and framed, and for this purpose we came here. God had designs generations ago to accomplish his purposes, and those purposes which he designed from the beginning will be accomplished in spite of all the combined influences of earth and hell. What was the object of our formation and the formation of the earth and of all intelligent beings upon it? God in his own due time, after the folly, strength, weakness and vanity of the human family have exhausted themselves, and after trying all their experiments and all their wisdom being exerted to find out God, then the Almighty will show them that he can accomplish his purposes. It is our business to learn the Lord and seek unto him for wisdom and intelligence. The Lord has opened up this work by opening the heavens, by communicating his will and unveiling his purposes and designs to the children of men, by the introduction of the holy priesthood and by the manifestation of his power, and by the marvelous deliverance which has been wrought for us, for our guidance; in this way he has given proof upon proof, and intelligence upon intelligence and testimony upon testimony and evidence upon evidence have been given to convince us of the position that we occupy and of the will of God that have been communicated unto us. The Spirit of inspiration has been given unto us, and we have had our testimony made as firm and sure as the rock of ages, upon the principles of eternal truth, and all this that our steps might not waver and that we might yield obedience to the laws of heaven and continue in the observation of the statutes. But notwithstanding all our privileges and blessings a great many of us seem to have ears to hear but hear not, hearts to understand but understand not, and although we are made partakers of the munificence and goodness of God, and notwithstanding his intelligence continues to be poured out upon us from day to day and from year to year we seem to treat lightly the blessings he has showered out upon us. This is not the case with all; I believe the great majority of the people feel it in their hearts to do right, to keep the commandments of God and to yield obedience to his laws, and to magnify their high callings and help to build up his kingdom on the earth. This is the feeling and desire of the great majority of his people; and probably as others learn more and comprehend more they will feel a stronger desire to walk in accordance with the commandments of God and fulfil all his behests.

If we could see and feel our position we should feel when men surround us with their temptations and tell us of privileges we should