

SERMON

By Elder John Taylor, Bowery, Sunday Morning, September 13, 1857.

[REPORTED BY J. V. LONG.]

It is rather a strange anomaly, particularly in the estimation of the world, that a people so numerous as the Latter Day Saints should be gathered together in one place, having the one faith and believing in the same doctrines. It is the more strange because there have been various social and political movements, aided by philosophy, established among men in various ages of the world, and almost, if not all of these have signally failed.

Among the number of social movements in our day there is that of Robert Dale Owen, who thought he could ameliorate the condition of mankind by a sort of communism, having a fellowship of goods among them, a sort of common stock principle. Everything pertaining to this speculation, however, has flatted out, and in all his schemes and movements whether in England, or in this country, they have signally failed.

It is so also with Fourierism, a species of French philosophy, established by one Fourier, a Frenchman, and advocated by Greeley of the New York Tribune. They had tried it in France and then came over to this country, and not far from New York a society of this kind was established; they had a good deal of property and, I am informed, they established something of the nature of what is called the free love principle; but within 12 months back, while I was residing in New York, everything they had was sold under the hammer.

Mr. Cabet commenced lecturing in France and had very extensive societies there. About the time we left Nauvoo to come to this land, Mr. Cabet, with a company of his men came there. This is a species of communism; they are called 'Communists,' believing, with Mr. Owen, in a community of goods. They published a newspaper in Nauvoo and one or more in France. I baptized one of their editors while in Paris on my mission, a man who is now in this valley by the name of Bertrand.

Mr. Krokoski, who was also an editor of the same paper with Mr. Bertrand, came to me to have a conversation about the first principles of the gospel. After a long conversation, he said, 'Mr. Taylor, do you propose no other plan to ameliorate the condition of mankind than that of baptism for the remission of sins?'

I replied, this is all I propose about the matter. 'Well,' he said, 'I wish you every success, but I am afraid you will not succeed.'

Said I, Mr. Krokoski, you sent, some time ago, Mr. Cabet to Nauvoo. He was considered your leader, the most talented man you had. He went to Nauvoo when it was deserted, when houses and lands were at a mere nominal value; he went there with his community at the time we left; rich farms were deserted and thousands of us had left our houses and furniture in them, and there was everything that was calculated to promote the happiness of human beings there; never could a person go to a place under more happy circumstances. Mr. Cabet, to try his experiment, had also the selection, in France, of whom he pleased. He and his company went to Nauvoo, and what is the result? You have seen the published account in the papers.

We were banished from civilized society into the valleys of the Rocky Mountains, to seek for that protection among savages which christian civilization denied us—among the *peau rouges* or red skins, as you call them. There our people have built houses, enclosed lands, cultivated gardens, built schoolhouses, opened farms and have organized a government and are prospering in all the blessings and immunities of civilized life.

Not only this, but they have sent thousands and thousands of dollars over to Europe to assist the suffering poor to go to America, where they might find an asylum.

You, on the other hand, that went to our empty houses and farms, you, I say, went there under most favorable circumstances.

Now, what is the result?

I read in all of your reports from there, published in your own paper in Paris, a continued cry for help; the cry is to you for money, money, 'we want money to help us to carry out our designs.'

The society that I represent comes with the fear of God, the worship of the great Eloheim; they offer the simple plan ordained of God, viz., repentance, baptism for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Our people have not been seeking the influence of the world nor the power of Government, but they have obtained both; whilst you, with your philosophy independent of God, have been seeking to build up a system of communism and a government which is, according to your own accounts, the way to introduce the millennial reign.

Now which is the best, our religion or your philosophy? 'Well,' said he, 'I cannot say anything.'

He could not, because these were facts that he was familiar with.

What has become of that society? There are very few of them left. They have had dissensions, bickerings, trouble and desertions until they are nearly dwindled to nothing.

I might enumerate many societies of a similar nature, commenced in different parts of the world and at various times; the results, however, would be proved to be the same; they commenced in the wisdom of man and ended as speculative bubbles. Truth, based on eternal principles, alone can stand the test.

If Owen, Fourier, Cabet and other philosophers have failed; if all the varied schemes of communism have failed; if human philosophy is found to be at fault and all its plans incompetent, and we have not failed, it shows there is something

associated with this people and with 'Mormonism' that there is not with them.

Now the question is, what is this principle?—Why is there a difference?

The first account I ever heard of this gospel was simply preaching what are termed the first principles of the gospel of Christ. There was nothing very ostentatious about it, nothing very grand; no great pomp or parade. The Elders were in many instances uneducated, they had no particular advantages among men, but they had received certain principles, certain doctrines that were plain and easy to comprehend, things that were childlike and simple and that recommended themselves to every intelligent, unbiased mind.

What was it we first learned in relation to this gospel? Was it something very profound and philosophical, that some sage either in this or some other country had discovered, the plan of some politician or statesman?

Verily no; it was no such thing. What was it? It was a proclamation made, declaring that a holy angel from heaven had appeared, that he had revealed himself unto a young man that was born in the backwoods of America, a farmer's son, without any particular educational advantages; that this angel, having appeared unto him, had revealed unto him an ancient record that gave an account of the aboriginal inhabitants of this country; that in this record there was an account of prophets having existed on this continent in former days, of Jesus having appeared and of angels having administered unto them; an account of their having been in possession of the gospel; having the same doctrines, the same blessings, the same privileges and powers that were associated with the gospel on the Asiatic continent and that this record agreed with the Bible in doctrines, ordinances, teachings and blessings.

And furthermore, these men referred us to the Bible and showed us that this book was spoken of, that it was to come forth, that it was the 'stick of Joseph,' and that it was to be one with the 'stick of Judah,' one in prophesy, one in revelation, one in unfolding the purposes of God, and one in bringing to pass the great events that were to transpire in the last days.

We heard of these things and to many of us they seemed foolish. We heard the cry of false prophet and deceiver. The first thing that I heard from a priest, after hearing this gospel preached by Parley P. Pratt, some twenty years ago, was the cry of 'delusion.' I was immediately informed that 'Joe Smith was a money digger,' that he tried to deceive people by walking on planks laid under the water, and that he was a wicked and corrupt man, a deceiver and one of the biggest fools in creation, and so forth. I heard every kind of story and the priests have kept up the same things, pretty much, to the present day.

I remember when I first had an Elder introduced to me, I said to him I do not know what to think about you 'Mormons.' I do not believe any kind of fanaticism; I profess to be acquainted with the Bible and, sir, said I, in any conversation we may have I wish you to confine yourself to the Bible, for I tell you I shall not listen to anything in opposition to that word.

From the report which I had heard of 'Mormonism,' I thought it was anything but a religious system. I was told about the French Prophets, I was told about Matthias, Johanna Southcot and of all the follies that had existed for centuries, and then they put 'Mormonism' at the end of them all.

In my researches I examined things very carefully and critically. I wrote down six of the first sermons I heard preached by Parley P. Pratt, in order that I might compare them with the Bible, and I could not find any difference. I could easily controvert any other doctrine, but I could not overturn one principle of 'Mormonism.'

I have traveled to preach these doctrines in most of the United States and in the Canadas; I have preached them in England, in Scotland, in Wales, in the Isles of Man and the Jerseys, in France, Germany, in the principal cities of America and Europe, and to many prominent men in the world, and I have not yet found a man that could controvert one principle of 'Mormonism' upon scriptural grounds; if there is a man, I have yet to find him.

The first proclamation by the Elders was, that the ancient gospel had been restored. We had had Methodism, Presbyterianism, Dunkerism, Shakerism, Catholicism, Quakerism and every other ism that you could think of; but there was none that had the ancient gospel, no, not one.

I was however well acquainted with theology. I consider that if ever I lost any time in my life, it was while studying the christian theology. Sectarian theology is the greatest tom foolery in the world.

There are certain principles in reason which are unalterable. Two and two made four 1800 years ago, and they still make the same. Two parallel lines never would meet; they will not now. A gospel that was true 1800 years ago could not be false now. If they, then, have the same Bible and profess to have the same spirit and to be educated men, why do they not see alike? If there are any of whom we have spoken possessed of good common sense, it would lead them to union and not to discord, for the scriptures tell us, 'there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God who is above all, in you all, and through you all.'

We used to quarrel with one another, when we were among the sectarians, about our peculiar doctrines. One was a brother Methodist and another was a brother Presbyterian, and we used to fall out about which was right, whether the doctrine of free will or of fate was right, for we did not know which was right, though both were right, if we had understood them. There was also much wrangling as to whether infants that died went to hell or not. Some sent them to heaven and some to hell, where they were to be pitched up with pitch forks and stung with scorpions and wasted there everlastingly.

This is the doctrine of the Catholic church. I have got a book at home, that I obtained in France, that represents sinners falling into a tremendous fire, and there are dragons, scorpions, serpents and every kind of reptile searching like fiends for their prey. Naked sinners are depicted falling into devouring flames and a great dragon with open mouth, forked tongue and horrid teeth ready to receive them; if they should miss it, there are scorpions and serpents and devils with three pronged pitchforks waiting a little below, that they may get the sinners and give them a good roasting.

You are here a conglomeration from all the different churches. The day when you came into this church was the time when you showed your honesty. What! Are there honest hearted Methodists and Presbyterians? Yes. And honest Baptists? Yes. Persons have been brought into this Church of all those different kinds of faith and you are actually all one.

[Pastor B. Young, 'that scares the world.'] Yes, as President Young says, that scares the world. Why are they not one? Because they have not the gospel as it existed in its purity.

Peter preached it, Jesus and James, John and Paul preached it, and the Apostles and Elders preached it on this continent; for the gospel in the Book of Mormon and the gospel in the Bible both agree; the doctrines in both books are one, the historical part differs, only the one gives the history of an Asiatic, the other of an American people.

Stephens and Catherwood, after examining the ruins that were found at Guatamala in Central America, and gazing upon magnificent ruins, mouldering temples, stately edifices, rich sculpture, elegant statuary and all the traces of a highly cultivated and civilized people, said: 'there are the works of a great and mighty people that have inhabited these ruins, but now they are no more; history is silent on the subject and no man can unravel this profound mystery. Nations have planted and reaped and built and lived and died that are no more; and no one can tell anything about them or reveal their history.'

Why, there was a young man in Ontario county, New York to whom the angel of God appeared and gave an account of the whole. These majestic ruins bespeak the existence of a mighty people. The Book of Mormon unfolds their history. O yes, but his was of too humble an origin, like Jesus of Nazareth; it was not some great professor who had got an education in a European or an American college, but one who professed to have a revelation from God, and the world don't believe in revelation, but nevertheless it is true, and we know it.

Those men who profess so much intelligence that they cannot listen to the word of the Lord and have so much egotism and philosophy that they cannot listen to sound reason and common sense, cannot be edified by these things, while we who have not such lofty pretensions enjoy them.

Now, what did Jesus teach? He said, 'go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.'—Mark xvi, 16-18.

This is what Jesus taught; this is the gospel that he and his disciples taught. Who teaches this gospel now? Do the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Dunkers, the Baptists or the Catholics? Could you find anybody that taught the doctrines that Jesus taught his disciples to teach? I have not found them anywhere, and yet the thing is so plain that he that runs may read.

Go and preach the gospel to every creature, and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned. 'O yes, we believe that.' Well, then, read on. 'O no,' they will say, 'stop there, if you please,' but it reads:—'And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.'

'But,' say they, 'you must not read that.' But it is in the Bible. 'True,' say they, 'but it is a spiritual thing, it means those that are sick spiritually, they shall be healed. It means,' say they, 'the sin-sick soul.'

It is like the school ma'm who came to a difficult word and not understanding it herself, told the child to say hard word and pass on. You must not say that which is contrary to their belief.

Now, if we look a little further, we shall find that the disciples were instructed to 'tarry at Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high.' It was necessary that they should be qualified. Did they tarry? They did.

Why was it necessary for them to tarry? Had they not been with Jesus? And had they not ate and drank with him? Yes. Had they not seen his miracles? They had, and they were called to go and preach the gospel, and were they not prepared? No, not until they had received the necessary qualification, it was not every upstart that could go and preach the gospel.

There are some now-a-days that go to college and by their learning they think they will preach a gospel without God. There are others who go because they are fools. Now when the Lord qualified the Apostles to go forth and preach the gospel he endowed them with wisdom and inspired them from on high and they spake as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, and the word that they spake was not the word of man but the word of God, dictated by the Spirit of God, pointing out to the people the way of life.

Why was it necessary for those Apostles to tarry at Jerusalem? They had an important mission to perform; their testimony was going to seal the doom of nations. Their message was, 'he that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned'.

Could the Methodists, Baptists or Presbyterians say this? No. No one professes to say that their word will seal the doom of nations, among modern christians.

Those men, however, who stayed at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high, made this profession. They assembled in an upper room and the Spirit of the Lord God rested upon them and they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. There were no Methodists or Presbyterians, or Baptists there.

As soon as it was noised abroad, the multitude came together and some said, 'why, these men are drunk, we have got a lot of drunken scamps here, the followers of Jesus of Nazareth,' but Peter said, 'O no, this is not the case, it is but the third hour of the day'. The Jews never got drunk before 9 o'clock in the morning, so that was a sufficient argument.

Peter said, 'these men are not drunk as ye suppose, but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophecy.' Acts ii. This is not drunkenness, but it is the power of God beginning to be made manifest; these are the servants of the living God, the Apostles of the Lord, set apart to preach the principles of eternal truth to the nations of the earth, and they are speaking as the Spirit gives them utterance.

The Apostles began to tell them about Jesus, that he was the Son of God, that they had rejected him, crucified and slain him. They testified that he was not an impostor as the people had supposed, but that he was the Messiah.

When they heard these things they were pricked to the heart, and cried out, 'men and brethren what shall we do?'

You have heard this kind of cry in those revival meetings among the sectarians; people would get convinced and under a sort of contraption of mind, and they would want to know what they should do to be saved.

Now here was a lot of people gathered from all parts of the surrounding country, speaking different languages, and Peter was preaching to them to believe, repent and be baptized, and while reasoning upon the crucifixion of Jesus Christ they cried out, what shall we do? Did he tell them to go to the anxious seat to be prayed for? No, he did not know anything about such a seat; the devil had not yet invented it. Did he tell them to go and put their names into a class book and that they would receive them on probation and then if they were worthy they would be received as members? No, this is something in advance of Peter's time, it is something of christian civilization.

It was necessary that we should have the enlightenment of the 19th century to reveal these things. Did he tell them to pray? No, he did not; prayer is well enough in the season thereof, but they had something else to do.

Is it not right to go into your closet and pray? Yes, but when you have ordinances to attend to, then that is your business. What did Peter say to them? He said, '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'.

You perceive that he told the people the same that Jesus told him to teach.

'In the first place, you tell us to repent and then to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and what then?'

To have hands laid upon you for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

'What will the Holy Ghost do for us, Peter?'

You have seen its effects upon us. It shall bring things past to your remembrance; it shall show you things to come; it shall make prophecies of you. Your sons and daughters shall see visions, the heavens shall be opened unto you. You shall know of your origin, comprehend who you are, what you are, where you are going to, the relationship which exists between you and your God, and there shall be a channel opened between the eternal worlds and you, and the purposes of God shall be made known unto you.

What did the Elders of this church preach to you? The very same things which Peter taught. And have not the same effects, or signs followed them that believe? They have, as you all know this day. [See 1st Cor. chap. xii.]

I will tell you how I felt when I was investigating the doctrines of 'Mormonism.' I compared them to try if they agreed with the Scriptures, but when I tried to pick 'Mormonism' to pieces, I could not do it. And now, said I to the Elders, you promise me that if I embrace the doctrines you teach I shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; what will this produce? They told me it would produce the same as it did anciently. If I had not experienced those things and seen them manifested around me, I would have got up and called those men impostors. I would have said, 'Sirs, you promised me and others blessings which we have not experienced, and this people and you, sirs, are impostors.'

I do not call the priests of the day impostors because they do not profess anything of the kind that I have spoken of, they are simply false teachers, 'teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,' as the Scriptures say.

We read the Book of Mormon and found it contained the same doctrines the Apostles taught on the Asiatic continent.

And what has this gospel done? It has caused you to leave your families, your connections, your homes and your associations in life. Many of you have left thousands and thousands of dollars worth of property, you have wandered over oceans, deserts, plains and mountains, you have