

TRIBUTE TO THE BIRTHDAY OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH.

Written for and read at a celebration of the day in the St. George Tabernacle.

In genial fellowship we hail this day,
And our commemorative service pay—
Entwining fresh garlands for th' auspicious morn
Of that blest day when Joseph Smith was born.

Long centuries of time had come and gone,
With prophets of the living God unknown;
From heav'n's high court no voice nor sound
Was heard—

From realms of light no angel form appear'd:
The 'people heap'd up teachers' false and vain

"With itching ears," and thirst for worldly gain;

And Christendom, with all its boasted lore
And "hireling priests" ignored the gifts and power

Of Christ's pure gospel, which salvation brought
When in its fullness, his apostles taught.

To check the swelling tide of wickedness—
The noble and the pure in heart to bless,
And God's eternal purpose to fulfill,
Required a prophet, to reveal His will.

The prophet came, and early in his youth,
Received the mighty keys of light and truth—
Of wisdom, knowledge and to usher in
A Dispensation, and its work begin.

Harmoniously in him, at once combined
Goodness of heart and strength of master-mind,

Embodying childlike, sweet simplicity
With superhuman, Godlike majesty.

He, with the keys of old, Elijah held,
Thick clouds of darkness from the grave dispelled—

Unlocked the prison doors, as Jesus did,
Which long had bound the spirits of the dead.

Thro' him the priesthood of the living God
Has been restored to earth—"the iron rod"
Which o'er all nations shall extend its sway
In righteousness, to crown the latter-day.

Bold as a lion, none but God he feared,
And yet as humble as a child, appear'd
When he approached his Maker to implore
Strength to endure the weight of wrongs he bore;

And when he intercession made with God
For aid to spread the gospel light abroad,
To bless and save mankind from guilty strife
Though men, in blindness, sought his precious life.

We celebrate our glorious era's morn,
The day the Prophet Joseph Smith was born
A mighty destiny hangs on that birth,
That yet will revolutionize the earth—
Not only earth—the worlds beneath 'twill move:

It has already stirr'd the worlds above:
The heavens were opened, and at once came down
The Father God and his Beloved Son
To our great prophet, then a humble youth,
And lighted near, the glorious lamp of Truth.

"The gates ajar"—now angels come and go
From heaven to earth, and spirits from below.

Where'er the gospel Jesus taught, has spread,
The nations tremble with foreboding dread—
All Christendom is filled with rage and fear
While "broken reed" to "broken reed" draws near.

To war with God, the wicked now combine,
And hostile sects in mutual efforts join.

Here in St. George, Jehovah's Temple stands—
A monument of faith in God's commands—
Emblem of purity and holiness,
The worthy living and the dead, to bless.
It speaks in tones of more than mortal speech,
And more than human thought has power to reach,

That God is with us. And it testifies
That Joseph Smith, the great, and good, and wise,
Is God's TRUE PROPHET, and his memory dear
The hosts above, and saints on earth revere.

He changed the current of its ebbing tide
And forced the ship of life to upward ride—
In plainness marked the "narrow way" to God,
And sealed his testimony with his blood.

E. R. SNOW SMITH.
St. George, Dec. 23, 1880.

DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR

In the Assembly Hall, Sunday Afternoon, Jan. 2nd, 1881.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

I AM pleased to have another opportunity of meeting with you on this the first Sabbath of the New Year; and I will take the opportunity of wishing you all a very happy New Year; and I will add to all the faith-

ful, ten thousand more of them. For we, as Latter-day Saints, do not consider that our existence ends with time, as we generally term it, but that it reaches into eternity. And that while we are here in a state of probation to fulfil the various duties devolving upon us, as Saints of the living God; while we come into the world and exist in it for a time and then leave it, we have hopes and aspirations beyond the grave, and anticipate that, as ages and cycles shall pass along and generations succeed generation, if we are true to our trust and live our religion, keeping the commandments of God and fulfilling the various covenants devolving upon us to attend to, that we shall associate with the just in the eternities to come; therefore we are living, and hoping, and expecting, and planning, and contriving, and operating, for the accomplishment of this object. We do not look upon the affairs of this life as those alone in which humanity is interested. We have been taught differently by those who have had communication with the Lord, and to whom he has revealed his will. We have been taught differently by the holy Priesthood that we have in our midst; we have been taught differently by the Holy Spirit which we have received in God's appointed way, according to his law; which spirit has enlightened our minds and given unto us as an evidence and a testimony similar to that which we heard Brother Smith speak of that he knew this work to be of God. How did he know it? Through obedience to the law of God, by the reception of the Holy Ghost and through the union and communion that exists between God and his children upon the earth. This is a principle of certainty and testimony, and an evidence that we all have the privilege of enjoying for ourselves, and of knowing that God lives; of knowing that this is the Church of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God; and of knowing also that God lives and that he is our Father, and that we are his children; and of further knowing that, "when this earthly house of our tabernacle is dissolved," we can feel like one of old, that "we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," waiting for us, and not for us only but for all who love the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Were it not for this hope, were it not for this spirit, were it not for this intelligence that has been communicated unto us by the light of revelation and by the manifestation of the Spirit of God, through the revelations of God to man in these the last days, by the opening of the heavens, by the administration of holy angels, and by the revelations of the will of God to man; were it not for this we should not have been here to-day, this congregation would not have been assembled here as they are; the Latter-day Saints would not have been in this Territory; nor would they have been anywhere else; for it is because God has seen fit in the fulness of times, according to the testimony given by the holy prophets, who have prophesied since the world was, according to the designs and eternal purposes of God pertaining to the inhabitants of the earth—those who now live, those who have lived and those who will live; were it not for the purposes of God pertaining to these things, and the communications of his will to us, we could not be, as I before stated, in the position we now occupy. But God having designed to accomplish his work in the interests of humanity, in the interests of the people of the world, in this day and age, in the interest of the myriads who have passed out of the world, in the interest of the living and the dead, he has commenced his work for the salvation, for the redemption and for the exaltation of the human family, and hence things are as we see them among us to-day.

When we talk about the theories of men, they are matters of very little importance; when we reflect upon their ideas or views, they are really unimportant, but when we talk about the law of God, the plans of Jehovah and his designs pertaining to the world in which we live and its inhabitants, and to the inhabitants that have lived, and to all humanity, then we touch upon a subject that is grand, noble and sublime; one that enters into the recesses of the heart and that touches every fibre, and that causes our hopes and aspirations to reach within the veil, where Christ our forerunner has gone, and we feel convinced that there is an eternal fitness in all the laws, in all the

truths, in all the ordinances, and in everything that God has revealed for the salvation and exaltation of the human family. We are here, and how did we come here? What was it that brought us here? Some hardly know; and then there are a great many who do understand this thing very well. We are here because we listened to the eternal truths of the gospel, and that gospel could not have been known unless it had been revealed. For no man nor any set of men, today, understand those principles which are calculated to exalt men in the celestial kingdom of God, nor could they comprehend them unless God had revealed them. And when we hear of the folly, the raving and ranting of ignorant men who know not God nor his laws, who would presume to dictate to Jehovah, who would teach something that they know nothing about; but being without revelation, are fitly represented in the Scriptures as "Knowing nothing but what they know naturally as brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed." For instance, we have our cattle, our sheep and other animals which we raise and provide food for and feed and fatten them. What for? For the knife. How could we do it if they knew what we were doing it for? I do not think they would get very fat. Still, one of the old prophets, in speaking of these men who are without revelation, says, "They know nothing but what they know naturally as brute beasts." We certainly do not wish such men for our instructors.

Many men at the present day will tell us that they will believe nothing but what they can see with their eyes, handle with their hands and comprehend with their judgments. And what are they prepared for? I might here ask, What does man in reality know of God and of his laws, or of the proper fitness of things? What does he know about that vitality that he himself is in possession of, or that which any other animal is in possession of? He knows nothing pertaining to it, nor can he impart it. When we talk about the wisdom of man, how far does it go? We learn a few of the laws of nature. Who gave these laws? Who originated or organized them? Who placed these eternal laws in nature? Who made the solar system, for instance, to move with that accuracy and punctuality according to exact rules and laws? Who made any portion of that system, gave it its original force or sustains it in its motion? Who planted in matter its exact and various laws? Can any of the learned and the wise of this day and age make anything of that kind or anything approaching to it? Who gives life and vitality to man? Does man give it? We are told that "there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth it understanding;" but without that what are we, although our organization may be complete in all its parts, yet without the spirit the body is lifeless, motionless and inanimate. What are we? At best but little specks in motion moving about in the world, puffed up, in many instances, with things we profess to know, when really we know nothing only as God communicates it, and can understand nothing only as he makes it manifest. Can all the philosophers of to-day make a grain of wheat and give vitality to it, much less a world? Or can they make a simple blade of grass? It is not a big thing to ask a wise man to do, especially those who desire to ignore God in his works, but can the wisest of our philosophers do it? No, nor can they discover the secrets of life nor the impulses which act upon all nature in all its varied operations. Who governs the planetary system? The great God, the same who causes our earth as well as other systems to revolve upon their axes, and provides for them, and has measured and given them their times and seasons, and their laws. Who is it that causes the blood to flow through our veins? He that has given and does give intelligence to man. Can anybody point out any of these vital principles and show that they originated independently of God? No, they cannot. And so it is through all creation, no matter what you touch pertaining to nature. When man discovers a law of nature either in the mineral, the animal, the vegetable or any other kingdom, he will find that it is governed by strict eternal and unchangeable and undeviating laws. And when men discover that, what do they find out? Something which God has placed there, something that has always existed. We talk sometimes about the great discoveries we have made,

We will refer to gas, for instance; some of us can remember very well when there was no such thing known among us as gas for lighting purposes. Who originated the elements of which it is composed? The great God; and that principle always existed. We speak about electricity and the uses to which it can be applied. Who originated that principle? "O, it was found out a few years ago and we found it very useful in communicating one with another; through its use we can send a message to-day from one part of the world to another, and can be in communication really with the world." Well, we think we have done something very remarkable, in discovering something of that kind, and it really is a great discovery; but then that principle always existed, ever since the world was framed; the only thing that we can boast of is that we have discovered a certain principle which we did not know of before; and there are ten thousand other principles beyond, which we have not yet discovered; but when we do discover them we shall find them to be the same eternal laws of God. I am reminded sometimes of a little infant. You look at the body; it comes into the world; it has its common faculties. By and by it makes a discovery, it finds out that it has a hand, and it looks at it as much as to say, It is a very curious thing, and it is a remarkable discovery that I have made. Why, it always had a hand, but the baby did not always know it.

It has been remarked here by Bro. Penrose that all things are governed by law. This is so whether in the material world, or whether—I was going to say—in the immaterial world, but we do not know of such a thing; I will say therefore, the spiritual world, if you please. We are very singularly constituted, forming a combination of body and spirit. We learn a little about the bodies of men, but what do we know about the spirits? We know from history of some things which have taken place in the past, but what do we know about things pertaining to the future? Who can comprehend God or his ways? One of old in speaking upon this subject says, "It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou understand?" There are some prominent features which God has revealed to us; and there are ten thousands of principles which he has not revealed. Those principles that he has revealed to us, like everything else pertaining to the works and the designs of God, bring a degree of certainty; assurance, intelligence and satisfaction that nothing earthly can impart. The saints themselves, do not, in many instances, understand the "whys" and the "wherefores" pertaining to these matters. We are taught to obey certain laws; we are taught to repent of our sins, and to have hands laid upon our heads for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Here is a law that God has appointed, just the same as he has regulated these other systems of which I speak, and with which we are more or less familiar. We have electricity floating around us in every direction. In order to make it subserve our desires we have to use it according to certain laws. At present we have to string up wire properly connecting it and use a battery and a machine made for the purpose, in order to convey our thoughts to others at a distance; and without first paying due regard to these or other appliances that perhaps might be substituted, we could not communicate. When you comply with the law governing this matter, that is, when you erect the poles, string the wire, make your battery and have the machine and the circuit complete, you may then convey your thoughts correctly over the wire by the means of electricity to others at a distance. You know they have been correctly sent because you can receive your answer back; and, if necessary, have the message you sent repeated. Now the same principle is true in regard to the other things. And do the persons who operate the telegraph machine always understand all about the philosophy of it? No, but very few of them comparatively. Yet they learn to operate while somebody else does the thinking and prepares the machine and appliances for them for the purpose of introducing this mode of communicating. Now then, look at the principle that looks to many very simple associated with that way which God has ordained and appointed for man to become acquainted with him, and to be introduced to him and to his laws. How is it? why the elder goes forth to preach, and what is he

told to preach? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Now these look to many as being very simple things, very simple; yet they are things which God has ordained, they are his laws, they were in former times, they are in this time. We cannot violate these and receive the blessings, and no other people can; I do not care who they are, they cannot do it. Let us go back to our experience. There are hundreds of you present who have received the spirit of the living God; how did you receive it? You say, an elder came along, and we heard him preach; he told me to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to repent of my sins, and that he was authorized to baptize me for the remission of my sins, and he told me that if I did this that hands should then be laid upon my head and I should receive the Holy Ghost. This is the doctrine you heard. Then you had faith in God; you repented of your sins, your follies and wickedness, and you covenanted to fear God and keep his commandments, and to observe his laws. The elder then went forth and led you into the water, and he said, "Being commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you for the remission of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." He then buried you in the water and raised and brought you out of it. After he did this, he laid his hands upon your head, and by the same authority he confirmed you a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

Now that is a very peculiar operation when you come to think upon it. Why is it thus? A man goes forth who has authority given him of Jesus Christ, he baptized you for the remission of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. There is something very peculiar about it. It looks very simple; but if that man had no such authority, then he was an impostor; and if the man or men who ordained that elder conferring on him this priesthood, had not the authority to do so, then he or they were impostors; and if God had not given revelation instructing Joseph Smith in relation to these things, how they were to be done, then Joseph Smith himself was an impostor, as well as the apostles and all men professing authority. These are self-evident facts. We as a people do not profess to have received any authority from any other source, from any man or set of men, or any church or any organization existing; and if God has not revealed it, then the whole thing is a falsehood and fiction, and there is nothing to it. Here is a picture [pointing to the ceiling] of the angel Moroni appearing unto Joseph Smith, revealing to him among other thing the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. We have another here [pointing to John the Baptist] conferring upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdrey the Aaronic priesthood, and still another, representing Peter, James and John conferring upon Joseph Smith the Melchisedec priesthood. Very well. Are these things true? There are thousands of Latter-day Saints who will tell you they know it. We will come to these things by and by. But if these things were not so, then our faith is in vain, then we are dark and benighted as others are; then the things we believe in are a phantom and can avail us nothing, either pertaining to this world or the world to come; then the building of these temples amounts to nothing, if these things are a fiction, and everything we have done and are engaged in amounts to nothing. But if they are true, then there is nothing of so great importance to the world of mankind and to us, as the revelation of these truths to man in these last days, and pertaining also to our association therewith.

Now, when an elder lays his hands upon a man and confirms upon him the Holy Ghost, he tells him to receive it by virtue of the authority conferred upon him. What authority? Why God restored the authority of the holy Priesthood by those who held the keys of that Priesthood and who administer in time and in eternity, who held that Priesthood upon the earth, and who now hold it in the heavens. They came here to impart it to men, and did restore it to men. Very well, that being the case, man was again placed in communion with his God; not left any longer to guess and sup-