

Dr. Richards advised some of the people to go out and harvest, and others who stay, to go on with the Temple and make work in the city.

R. D. Foster arrived in the city: his presence produced some excitement in consequence of the Saints believing he was accessory to the murder of the Prophets.

DISCOURSE

By Elder John Taylor, Tabernacle, Dec. 6, 1857.

[REPORTED BY G. D. WATT.]

Having been called upon this morning to address you for a short time I arise with very great pleasure to do so, for I always love to meet with the Saints, to gaze upon them, and to contribute my mite in offering instructions to them so far as the Spirit of the Lord shall give me utterance. I conceive that without the aid of his Holy Spirit we as Saints can do very poorly either as speakers or as hearers. For unless the Spirit of the Lord directs and guides us we are all of us in a very poor position indeed. In fact it is very difficult for any of us to understand really and positively what would be for our best good without its aid. In the world they know comparatively nothing about this. They call evil good and good evil; they call darkness light and light they call darkness.

Mixed up as we have been with the gentile world, and having formed our habits and customs among them, having been accustomed to feel as they feel, to reason as they reason, and to associate with them, it is sometimes very difficult for us to understand what would really be for our benefit and advantage, whether pertaining to this world or to the world which is to come.

I presume as we obtain more of the Spirit of God, as we receive faith and intelligence that flows from him and the revelations that he imparts, and will continue to impart to those who are faithful, we shall begin to understand a few things in a very different light from what many of us at the present time understand them. Even in temporal things there is a great difference among men in regard to their judgment, capacities, reasoning powers, and their comprehension of justice, equity, the rights of man, the duties that we owe to each other, and the various responsibilities that devolve upon us to attend to. But when we come to contemplate the things of God, the end of our existence, our origin, the position that we occupy in relation to our families, to each other and to the church and kingdom of God, it is very difficult sometimes for us to understand things correctly in relation to the position of the world, to the things that have been, to the things that are, and to the things that are to come, to the purposes of God in relation to the human family and how these purposes will be the best advanced. We shall find in reflecting upon all of these matters that there is a very great difference between the reasoning of the human family upon these matters, and the plan that God would adopt for the accomplishment of his purposes and for the bringing to pass the things that have been spoken of by the holy prophets since the world began.

There is not a position that we can occupy in life either as fathers, mothers, children, masters, servants, or as Elders of Israel holding the holy priesthood in all its ramifications, but what we need continually wisdom flowing from the Lord, and intelligence communicated by him that we may know how to perform correctly the various duties and avocations in life, and to fulfil the various responsibilities that rest upon us to attend to. And hence the necessity all the day long, and every day and every week, month and year, and under all circumstances, of men leaning upon the Lord and being guided by that Spirit that flows from him, that we may not fall into error, that we may neither do anything wrong, say anything wrong or think anything wrong, and all the time retain that Spirit, which can only be kept by observing purity, holiness and virtue, and living continually in obedience to the laws and commandments of God.

There was a people to whom one of the ancient Apostles said, 'But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things and need not that any man should teach you, because of the anointing that dwelleth in you, which is truth and no lie.'

When men obey the gospel with pure hearts, when they are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and have hands laid upon them for the gift of the Holy Ghost and they receive that Spirit, and live in obedience to the dictates of that Spirit, it will 'bring things past and present to their remembrance, lead them into all truth and show them things to come.' This is part and parcel of our belief.

What is the reason we do not always comprehend things right? Because in many instances we give way to temptation. We let our old prepossessions, feelings and influences, by which we have been governed heretofore, predominate over the Spirit of God and we fall into error and darkness, and 'if the light that is within us becomes darkness, how great is that darkness.' It is not enough then that we are baptized and have hands laid upon us for the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is not enough even that we go further than this and receive our washing and our anointings, but that we daily and hourly and all the time live up to our religion, cultivate the Spirit of God and have it continually within us 'as a well of water springing up to everlasting life,' unfolding, developing, making manifest the purposes and the designs of God unto us, that we may be enabled to walk worthy of the high vocation whereunto we are called, as sons and daughters of God to whom he has committed the principles of eternal truth and the oracles of God in these last days. It would be found very difficult for any individual left to himself to do right, to think right, to speak right, and to fulfil the will and law of God upon the earth, and hence the necessity of the organization of the church and kingdom of God upon

the earth, of the properly organized priesthood, of the legitimate channel, check, bounds, laws and governments that the Almighty has introduced into his church and kingdom, for the guidance, instruction, protection, welfare, upbuilding and further progress of his church and kingdom upon the earth. As in a school it requires a man more competent to be a teacher than those who are taught; so in the church of God. And hence the various grades and positions of the priesthood. When a president, bishop, or those having authority, live up to their religion and cleave unto God, it is expected by us at all times that they will comprehend things under their immediate jurisdiction—things that they control, know the wants of the people and the best course for them to pursue better than the individuals they teach; and this extends throughout all the various ramifications of the church of God from the First Presidency down. And, indeed, between the First Presidency and the Lord of Hosts there is a regularly organized channel through which the blessings of his kingdom flow unto his Saints when they are found in obedience to his laws.

It is something like the streams that water our city. At first they come out in large streams from the mountains, then they are divided off into sections, which spread and diminish into smaller sections, but they all flow through the legitimate channel.

How could any of you water your gardens if the City creek should be stopped? It would not only stop the leading channel but all the little channels. We are made thus to depend upon one another in the order and kingdom of God. Where is the necessity of all this? Because of the things I first mentioned. But have not we all the spirit of God? We ought to have. Well then, can we not all understand? Yes, if we live our religion we can understand the various duties that devolve upon us as individuals; as fathers, mothers and children, or as Elders of Israel. We can understand those several and distinct duties to a certain extent, but we cannot lead the church and kingdom of God, we cannot point out the path for it to walk in. Why? Because that does not belong to us; it belongs to the head. One of those little streams that you get to water your garden cannot supply all this city. No, but it can supply your garden if it flows through the proper channel.

Suppose that little stream should say, 'I am independent of the fountain; would it be so?—You know it would not. It is like the branches of a tree, and the root and stock of a tree. The branches flourish on a healthy stock, and one little twig on the outside, with a few green leaves upon it and a little fruit, is very productive, beautiful and pleasant to look upon, but it is no more than a portion of the tree, it is not the tree. Where does it get its nourishment from? From the root and the stock or stem, and through the various branches that exist on the tree. It is only a small portion of the tree. It is all the leaves, twigs, branches, stem and roots that comprise the tree. The branches do not support the tree, the root, or the stem, but the stem supports the branches, and the roots the stem, and it is through that that life and vivacity flows to the branches.

As a Saint you say, 'I think I understand my duty and I am doing very well.' That may be so. You see the little twig; it is green, it flourishes and is the very picture of life, it bears its part and proportion in the tree, and is connected with the stem, branches and root; but could the tree live without it? Yes, it could. It need not boast itself and get uplifted, and say 'how green I am and how I flourish, and what a healthy position I am in, how well I am doing and I am in my proper place and am doing right.' But could you do without the root? No; you bear your proper part and position in the tree.' Just so is this people. When they are doing their part; when they are magnifying their calling, living their religion and walking in obedience to the Spirit of the Lord, they have a portion of his Spirit given to them to profit withal. And while they are humble, faithful, diligent and observe the laws and commandments of God they stand in their proper position on the tree; they are flourishing, the buds, blossoms, leaves and everything about them are all right, and they form a part and parcel of the tree, and conduce to its life, health, symmetry, beauty and general appearance.

But if we do not magnify our calling, what then? We become like withered branches. And what is done with them? A good gardener will cut them off, because they disfigure the tree; they are not pleasant, lovely and beautiful to look upon. But do's the most flourishing branch in the tree sustain the tree? It helps to do it, but it is not the tree; it is dependent on the larger branches through which the sap and nourishment flows until it comes to the little twig and fruit that is on the outside of the tree.

This is a fit similitude of the church and kingdom of God. We are cemented together, united in the bonds of one common covenant. We are part and parcel of the church and kingdom of God which the Lord has planted on the earth in the last days for the accomplishment of his purposes and the establishment of his kingdom, and the bringing to pass all those things which have been spoken of by the holy prophets since the world was. We all stand in our proper place.

While we magnify our callings we honor our God. While we magnify our calling we possess a portion of the Spirit of God; while we magnify our calling we altogether comprise the tree; while we magnify our calling the Spirit of God flows through the proper channels by which and through which we receive our proper nourishment, and are instructed in things pertaining to our welfare, happiness and interest pertaining to this world and the world to come.

But as it is very difficult to enter into all the minutiae pertaining to a tree, a shrub or herb, so it is difficult to enter into all the duties, responsibilities and influences brought to bear and weigh upon the Saints of God and upon his church and kingdom on the earth. For instance, the tree re-

quires water and good soil to nourish it, it requires congenial atmosphere and the hand of the pruner sometimes in order to keep it right. So does the church and kingdom of God. There are various influences that are brought to bear on it in order that it may flourish and grow. How can we grow as a church and kingdom unless we are taught of the Lord through some medium that he has appointed.

Who is there that can rise up and tell the destiny of this church and kingdom? Who is there, for instance, that can point out the bearings and the operation of the soldiery that are now on our borders? Who can tell the Lord's design in relation to these matters and why it is that we are thus situated?—why we are called upon to resist them, few as we now are? Could not the Lord control it otherwise? He could. Has he not the hearts of all men in his keeping? Could he not roll them back very quickly? Yes, or he could cause them to come on here. Why is it he has allowed them to come to a certain distance and kept them there?—placing them like some of you mothers sometimes do when you hang up a rod that the children can see it, and that you can point to when they are naughty.

Why is it that we have been driven and afflicted, and persecuted, and our names cast out as evil, and that we have had to endure so many privations, sufferings, toils and hardships for the last twenty years? Who can solve these questions? Who can enter into the secrets of the Most High and unravel the mysteries that dwell in the mind of Jehovah?

Who can tell why these things are brought to operate as they do and why we are placed in those peculiar circumstances in which we so frequently find ourselves as we travel through this vale of tears? Does that belong to the little twigs and branches? No. It may be a secret in the mind of the great God which is not fully developed unto us. We may comprehend a part of it and realize in some degree the position we occupy and the dealings of God towards us, but who can tell it in its full bearings? Who can comprehend the end from the beginning? Who can see what the Lord designs towards us as individuals and towards us as a people? Or rather and more directly—who can tell what he has destined concerning his church and kingdom upon the earth?—When, and how, and by what means it shall progress, whether by affliction or prosperity, whether by passing through scenes of trouble and difficulty, or by elevating us and giving us peace, and the prospect of a great deal of good according to our ideas of things?

Who can tell what means the Lord may make use of to benefit you or me? Does it remain for the outside twig, or the little stream flowing from the fountain to unravel these matters? No. Who can point out the position we shall take in a church capacity, in the capacity of the priesthood, in the capacity of heads of families, in a military capacity, or in any other capacity, in relation to all of these matters?

It needs a great controlling, directing influence to sustain, govern, direct, enlighten and dictate. It needs that every branch of the tree and every twig should be in its proper place, and should receive that nourishment from the proper source, and that spirit, and that intelligence, and that direction which God has ordained according to all the laws of nature, and that is interwoven in all his transactions with the human family; that there should be a great directing, controlling influence to guide and direct his affairs.

Furthermore, why is it that there is so much confusion in the world; that we have imbibed so many incorrect principles while living among them, which we find it so difficult to rid ourselves of at this time? It is because men have not been under that influence and power, but every man has done that which he has considered to be right without any respect to the great fundamental principles of government and the laws that ought to regulate and control the human family. This has been one great cause of the calamities that have afflicted the world in a social, in a family and in a national capacity; for nations, like individuals, have all corrupted themselves, have forsaken God, and have never been under the great governing influence that ought to regulate and control the affairs of the world.

And why is it that we sometimes feel so much of the spirit of rebellion in our bosoms, and the spirit of independence falsely so called, and feel so desirous to pursue our own course, and a latent principle within us which is so reluctant to render obedience to the laws of the kingdom of God?

In the first place, it is because of our early associations, of our former habits of thought and reflection. In the second place, it is because we do not cultivate sufficiently the Spirit of the Lord, which if we did would show unto us the right way and enable us to appreciate the privileges we enjoy. It is perhaps one of the hardest things for those associated with the church and kingdom of God, or for the human family, to render obedience to the laws that regulate that kingdom, and to the priesthood which God has placed in his church to govern it. Why? Because of our former associations and habits and because of the power of the prince and power of the air who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, and goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

We are apt to look at things in too narrow a compass, like a little twig on the end or furthest branch of a tree; it is very flourishing, its buds and blossoms are very elegant and fragrant, because it is in a healthy position. But then it would be very foolish for that little twig to say it knew all about it, when you could not cut it from the tree a single day but it would wither and die, and all its beauty and fragrance would depart.

Have we any light, any intelligence, any knowledge, have we advanced in the principles of truth communicated to us? Yes. How did we get our intelligence? Tell me ye wise men of the world, you that have mixed with the world, that

have studied their laws, principles of government, usages, habits and customs, and have made yourselves familiar with their erudition. What do you know of the relation and fitness of things, of the position man occupies to his Maker?—What do you know in relation to yourselves as individuals? What do you know in relation to the purposes and designs of God? What do you know about the first principles of the gospel of Christ? I do not think you know anything about them, if you do, you are wiser than men I have come across in my travels through the world.—You are indebted entirely, just as that little twig is for its life and vigor to the tree, so are you to the Lord for the light and intelligence you have received on every subject. You are indebted to the Spirit of God for your wisdom and intelligence, as much as the little twig is indebted to the tree for its vitality, leaves, buds and fragrance.

If that is the case so far, how much more will it be so in the future? Who is there that can contemplate the mind of God, and unravel the designs of Jehovah? Who can foretell the destiny of the human family? Who can point out the path that we as a people shall walk in? Who shall say in regard to any of the dealings of God with us, that this is right and that is wrong, that such a thing is for our benefit, and another thing is for our injury? Who can mend, alter or change these events, and make them better than they are? If we cannot tell all these things let us be reminded of another thing, never to find fault with things as they transpire, with things that we cannot improve. Some of us may say, well, it is a little hard we should be placed as we are at the present time. And if we had been in Egypt it might have been better with us. However if we were now in Egypt we could not say we were eating the leeks and onions, for we are now eating them. Our enemies are on the outside. But we might say we have thrown into awkward circumstances; we have had to go out in the inclement season of the year to face a foe because of our religion, and if we had been somewhere else we might have avoided it. You might, and you might have not, that would altogether depend on circumstances.

If you had been among those fellows out eastward, you would have been worse off a great deal. I would rather be in our position than be in theirs. 'But the future,' say you. 'How do we know but next spring they will come in here and swallow us completely up?' Br. Brigham says, 'we shall have to be greased first.' And there is no grease on their cattle to do it at present. What do we know about these things? I speak so that we may reflect upon them. 'We would a little rather those men were away somewhere else.' I do not know that I would. I feel that notwithstanding our inexperience, and the many blunders we make, and the various evils many of us fall into, we are the best people there is under the face of the heavens, and that God has called us, and set us apart, and placed his name among us, and given unto us the oracles of God, to reveal unto us his mind and will, that by us he may establish his kingdom on the earth.

In relation to anything that has or may transpire, I feel that we are in the hands of God, and all is right. 'But we would like to have whipped those fellows out,' so say some of us. 'We would like to see them turn tail too and go off their own way.' But I would not, because the Lord would not. I feel perfectly easy, that I am in the hands of God, and every thing I have, and so are you, and we are his people, and he is our God, and his Spirit dictates, rules, controls and governs, and while we do right, and keep the commandments of God, and live up to our privileges, we have a right to claim the Spirit of God, and live in the enjoyment of it every moment of our life.

As it regards his kingdom and purposes, I would rather risk his judgment and plan than my own, I feel myself so incompetent, and I believe you are the same, and know so little about the future designs of God, and his purposes pertaining to the human family, and what will most conduce to our individual welfare, and to our welfare as a people, that I do not want to put my hand to steady the ark.

I will say, 'It is the Lord, and let him do what seemeth him good.' If he has a mind to let the devil send up one thousand, ten thousand, or five hundred thousand men against us, all right. I was going to say, who the devil cares? we are in the hands of God. And while we are willing to do his work, and fulfil the duties that devolve upon us, it is his business to take care of his Saints, he has said it is, and I feel like saying, amen to it.

I want to learn what my duty is, not only for one day, but every day, and then to try to do it. This is a feeling we ought all to have, as I understand it. A great work has to be established on the earth.

We read and talk about things and reflect upon what the Lord is going to do. He is going to build up his kingdom, and all kingdoms, powers and dominions will be brought into subjection to the kingdom of our God; and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard, I saying, blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

These are very nice words, and the prospect is very pleasing indeed. But, the question is, can we acknowledge the hand of God? Can I acknowledge his dealings with my family? If you reflect back, some of you were in better circumstances than you are now, you were better clad and provided for in many respects; while you reflect on this, and find that you have many hard things to cope with, can you say it is the hand of God, let him do as seemeth him good? If you have to get out into the cold storms and snow, and if your wives are troubled about it, you sisters, can you say, it is the hand of God, and let him do as seemeth him good?

Can you feel that you are the children of God, associated with his kingdom, and that it is one