

DISCOURSE

By President BRIGHAM YOUNG,
delivered in the Tabernacle, Ogden
City, Nov. 13th, 1870.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

While I attempt to speak to the people I would like their attention, and for them to keep quiet. I do not particularly object to the crying of children, but I do to the whispering of the people. I suppose that, if we were in the congregations of some of our Christian fellow countrymen, we would not hear any children crying. I believe they have none in some societies. I am very happy to hear the children crying when it is really necessary and they cannot be kept from it. One thing is certain, wherever we go there is a proof that the people are keeping the commandments of the Lord, especially the first one—to multiply and replenish the earth.

The first of my remarks this afternoon will consist of a petition. We are told to pray, and this is one of the practices that we consider absolutely necessary. We frequently offer prayers to kings, legislatures, presidents, governors, etc.; but I am going to offer up a prayer to the Latter-day Saints, and my prayer is simply—I beseech you, my brethren and sisters, in the name of the Lord, in the name of humanity, in the name of honor and for the sake of honor, justice and mercy, that you do listen and pay attention to the exhortation of my brother Joseph, delivered this morning, in behalf of our poor brethren in foreign lands. I might ask the Lord a thousand times over to deliver them from the oppression and poverty with which they are now surrounded, and He would not do it unless the means were provided; He will not do it without agents and agencies. He will not build balloons or come down with his chariots and pick up the poor in Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, Scandinavia, the islands of the sea, or any other parts of the globe where they dwell, and load up with them and their baggage and bring them to this land while He has given us the ability to gather ourselves and the poor. If the Latter-day Saints do not understand this it is time they did. And when we pray the Lord to open the way for the gathering of the poor, we merely mean that He will operate upon the hearts of those who have the means, that they will be reasonable with themselves, their faith and covenants and the requirements of God, and toward those who are members of the same family with us. You heard the statement of Brother Joseph this morning, and there are a great many witnesses here, to the truth of what he said. When people are in poverty and in their low estate, when they are pinched with hunger and destitute of the clothing necessary to make them comfortable, how deeply they can feel for their friends! But place those very ones where they can have all they need to eat, of food that relishes and suits their appetite, and clothing enough to keep them warm and comfortable, and many of them will sit down and fold their hands, and if you speak to them about the wants of their poor brethren in foreign lands, and mention their own situation in former days, their reply will be: "Oh, I had forgotten all about that! Yes, I believe, now you mention it, that I have seen the time when I had not sufficient food to satisfy the demands of hunger, nor clothing to make me comfortable and respectable. But, dear me, I had forgotten all that, that was in the past, and I have plenty now, and, what is that you are saying?" "Why, your brethren and sisters in foreign lands are suffering." "What! Did you say that some of our brethren and sisters are suffering? I have enough to eat, and all the clothing I need to make me comfortable, and a pretty good cabin that I built myself, and I am in debt to no one and quite happy and comfortable, and I wish you would not trouble me about other people." This is the story, and these are the feelings of some of the Latter-day Saints that have been gathered from the depths of poverty. I do not wish to chide them for their well doing, and neither do I or my brethren require of them things that are unreasonable; but we are under obligations to our families, connections and friends, and then to the whole human family. We are not independent of them; we are not here isolated and alone, differently formed and composed of different material from the rest of the human race. We belong to, and are part of this family, consequently we are under obligations one to another; and the Latter-day Saints in these mountains are under obligations to their brethren and sisters scattered in the nations who, through indigent circumstances, are unable to gather to themselves the comforts of life. No matter what may be the cause of their poverty, they are helpless and destitute. Could I pick out any in this congregation who have been in these circumstances? I presume I could, a few score.

Sometimes I am inclined to be silent rather than speak of facts that have come under my own observation. I have seen people in districts of country, where they were so destitute of the comforts of life that if they gave a meal to a friend they had to pinch themselves, perhaps, for a week, having barely sufficient to keep body and spirit together; and yet when these very individuals got into circumstances in which they were well fed and well clothed they forgot their former lives.

There are certain things, connected with what we see and know to be facts, that actually form principles, and resolve themselves into eternal principles; and if people could see and understand them they would be a benefit to them. But we are on the surface, or outlines of the facts concerning the Latter-day Saints. There are many of our brethren who have been born and brought up in America, who have never been called to pass through the ordeals of poverty that some of our people have in the old countries. A few of these American Elders, wanting in faith, honesty and integrity, while on foreign missions, have borrowed money from these impoverished people, with a promise to pay when they returned home; but those promises have not been observed. I do not know whether there are any such elders here this afternoon; but whether there is or not, I want to say to them wherever they may be, that I have no fellowship for a man that will make a promise and not fulfil it, and especially under such circumstances as I am talking about now; and if there is such an elder in this congregation I say omit partaking of the sacrament here to-day, and never cease your efforts until you pay that honest debt. I do not offer this as a petition, but as counsel, to be observed by all such individuals in the church on the penalty of being disfellowshipped by the Saints. But to myself and all of you who are free from such obligations I pray you to listen to the prayers of those who are asking for deliverance; and I have a few words to say with regard to this matter on this wise: We have nothing but what has been given or loaned us of the Lord; and if we have our hundreds or thousands we may foster the idea that we have nothing more than we need; but such a notion is entirely erroneous, for our real wants are very limited. What do we absolutely need? I possess everything on the face of the earth that I need, as I appear before you on this stand. I am not hungry, but I am well fed; I am not cold, but I am well clothed. I am not suffering for a hat, for I have hair on my head, and when I go out doors I have my hat to put on; and with these and a shelter to protect me from the scorching heat or the piercing cold I have everything that a man needs or can enjoy if he owned the whole world. If I were the king of the earth I could enjoy no more. When you have what you wish to eat and sufficient clothing to make you comfortable you have all that you need, I have all I need. Some persons, I know, will ask "Why not give the rest to the poor?" I will answer this question, as far as I am concerned, by saying I do give to the poor and am willing to. If the poor had all the surplus property of the rich many of them would waste it on the lusts of the flesh, and destroy themselves in using it. For this reason the Lord does not require the rich to give all their substance to the poor. It is true that when the young man came to Jesus to know what he must do to be saved, He told him, finally, "sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me;" and a great many think that He told the young man to give away all that he had, but Jesus did not require any such thing, neither did He say so, but, simply, "distribute to the poor." If the poor knew what to do with what they have many, yea very many, in this land would have all that is necessary to make them comfortable. But it is different with the great majority of our friends over the water—they are fettered and bound, and in the prison of poverty, and have not power to extricate themselves from the thralldom and wretchedness they are in, and hence it becomes our duty to lend a helping hand and send for them.

Many of us may think that we have nothing we can spare; but the providences of God might speedily make us think otherwise. If the Lord were to let loose our enemies upon us! Let Him hiss for the fly, and whisper for the locust, and they would come here by myriads and eat up every green thing there is in these mountains; and when they were destroyed, if the Lord so willed it, they could commence on the people and the cattle and devour every living creature on the land. Do we know this? We might know and realize it. Then, if we had a little bread to eat we should be happy and contented, and in our poverty we would be willing to divide with and assist our poor brethren and sisters, and help to save them from starvation. But now the cry is "I have a house, and I want my furniture! I have a farm, I want my teams and my wagons, and then I want a carriage and time to ride," until the whole world is swallowed up by the few. You will excuse me if I say a few words with regard to myself in these charitable sermons. What is my feeling to-day? The same as it has been for years concerning houses, lands and possessions. I say to the people "If you will give me for my property half what it has cost me I will devote that means for the gathering of the poor and the building of Zion upon the earth, and will start again with nothing. I have done it before, and I am willing to do it again if the people will take my property on these terms, and the means, to the last dollar, shall be used to send for the poor if they apostatize the next year. They will not apostatize where they are now; you could not wire them to do it, you could not whip them to it; you can not starve their religion out of them; but bring them here and give them houses and lands, horses and chariots, make merchants and traders of them and give

them our means, then some of them will apostatize, but not all. Some of them will apostatize for very little, it takes but few dollars; but they will not do it where they are. I would bring them here if they would apostatize, for they must have a chance to prove themselves before God and angels with regard to their integrity to and faith in the religion that we believe in.

Now, brethren and sisters, I pray you to remember the poor, and every time you feel like spending twenty-five or fifty cents in tea or coffee, liquor or tobacco, stay your hand and put that money into a safety or charitable fund to help to gather the poor. Bro. Joseph has been pleading for them; I am giving you the plan. If we will leave off tea, coffee, liquor and tobacco and devote the means as I have requested, we shall bring the blessings of Heaven to ourselves and bestow the blessings of earth upon our brethren and sisters, and we shall feel that comfort and consolation that we could not feel otherwise. Our hearts will rejoice, our food will be sweet to us, our dreams will be pleasant and our reflections will be filled with peace, comfort and consolation in the power of God. But if we shut up our bowels of compassion our condition will be exactly the reverse.

If the people will take this course towards their poor brethren and sisters it will relieve our hands at once. I suppose that there is a million of money now due the Perpetual Emigration Fund, by those who have been gathered who have not paid their arrearage. But we can not get it. If we were to send an agent through the Territory to collect this indebtedness from these brethren and sisters, it would probably cost more to sustain him than the amount he would collect, consequently we conclude to say nothing about it, and to use the means we have or that is contributed for this purpose.

As for our being comfortable, I will venture to say that we could pick out, in this congregation, needless articles of dress that have cost several hundred if not thousands of dollars. I do not like to charge the ladies with extravagance, but how many yards of cloth does it take now to make a dress? If Brother Heber C. Kimball were here he would tell you he used to buy six yards of calico for his wife Vilate, who was a tall woman. That used to make a dress, and it was a pretty large pattern; then it got up to seven since my recollection, then to eight, then to nine, then to eleven, and I have been called upon to buy sixteen, seventeen and eighteen yards for a dress. I know there is a cause for this. My wife will say "Dear me! Sister so and so wears such and such a thing, and I want to look as well as she does; and you have plenty of means, Brigham, O yes, you have plenty of means and you can buy it as well as not." Well, all that I have said, and my general reply is "If I am pressed to the necessity of indulging my family in these needless articles the responsibility must be upon themselves, not upon me." I will not take that responsibility. In the day of reckoning if we are in debt and found wanting in consequence of our extravagance I will not bear any more responsibility than I have incurred in my own person in the gratification of this taste for needless articles of dress, and that will not be much I reckon.

Now, brethren and sisters, do you indulge in this taste for fashion and frivolity in dress? Most assuredly you do, and circumstances right before my eyes furnish proof of this. I will venture to say that my mother wore the cloak and hood that her mother before her wore, and wore them until the day of her death when she had occasion to wear a cloak; and when she left this place for the next apartment she was forty-nine years old; and they went to her daughter. I do not know what has become of them. She did not take a cloak worth twenty-five, thirty, forty or fifty dollars and sit down in it with a child with a piece of meat in each hand to grease it all over. But now, let some women get a silk or satin dress and they will, perhaps, while wearing it, take up a child that has a piece of chicken in one hand and a piece of pork in the other, or a cup of milk to drink, and as likely as not some of it is spilled on her dress, and then they say "Well, I declare my dress is spoiled."

I recollect very well, and so do others in this room, when our fathers and mothers raised the flax and the wool, and when it was carded with hand cards, spun on hand wheels, and woven into cloth on hand looms, and in this way the wants of the family had to be supplied or they had to go without. But now every woman wants a sewing machine. What for? To do her sewing. Well, but she can do a hundred times as much sewing with a machine as she could by hand, and she does not need a machine more than one day in two or three weeks. "O yes," says she, "I want my sewing machine every day of my life." "What are you going to do with it?" "I am going to sew;" and when the sewing machine is procured they want a hundred times as much cloth as they used to have. Now, too, they want a hired girl for every child, and a hired man to every cow in the yard. I will admit that I am extravagant in these expressions; but they show the present condition of affairs. The improvements which have taken place during the last half century in matters pertaining to domestic life are wonderful, but has not the extravagance of the people kept pace with these improvements? It is true that the people are getting wiser in some res-

pects, and some are getting wealthy; but there is only so much property in the world. There are the elements that belong to this globe, and no more. We do not go to the moon to borrow; neither send to the sun or any of the planets. There is not a man on the earth who can open a trade with any of the planets; all our commercial transactions must be confined to this little earth and its wealth cannot be increased or diminished; and though the improvements in the arts of life which have taken place within the memory of many now living are very wonderful, there is no question that extravagance has more than kept pace with them.

We talk to the Latter-day Saints a great deal, and we wish them to become a thinking people, a people that will reflect and begin to systematize their lives, and know the object of their existence here. This life is as precious and valuable as any life ever possessed, or that ever will be possessed by any intelligent being, and hence the necessity and propriety of understanding its object and using it to the best advantage in every respect, and of understanding principle in all things.

It was observed here by Brother Taylor, this morning, when speaking of the arts and sciences, they are from eternity to eternity. They can neither be increased nor diminished; and the Lord has had to teach the people all that they know, no matter whether it be the wicked who acknowledge Him not, or the righteous, both are alike in that respect,—they receive their knowledge from the same source. The construction of the electric telegraph and the method of using it, enabling the people to send messages from one end of the earth to the other is just as much a revelation from God as any ever given. The same is true with regard to making machinery, whether it be a steam boat, a carding machine, a sailing vessel, a rowing vessel, a plow, harrow, rake, sewing machine, threshing machine, or anything else, it makes no difference;—these things have existed from all eternity and will continue to all eternity, and the Lord has revealed them to His children.

In the infancy of creation the human family commenced down at the bottom of the ladder, and had to make their way upward. How small and frail that commencement looks now; why, it is considered almost beneath the notice of the wise of this day to talk of the intelligence of our First Parents. When they waked from their sleep and found themselves in a state of nudity, we are told that they hid themselves, because they were ashamed and mortified and did not wish to expose themselves when the Lord came along. And he picked some fig leaves,—what a simple idea! He picked some fig leaves and sewed them together and made aprons of them. I do not know whether He used scissors or His penknife for the cutting out of the garments, or what kind of a needle and thread He used, but He made aprons for the whole human family—Adam and Eve! What a simple idea! It is beneath the notice of the mechanic or artist, or the science of the world now-a-days. Yet simple as it seems now, the Lord had to reveal to our first parents the *modus operandi* of the manufacture of an apron of fig leaves. And when they wanted a little copper made up, after having found the ore, the Lord had to come along and show them how to do it; and how to manufacture the iron. How simple this is! It is beneath the notice of the intelligence and science that are in the world now; the scientific men of the present time say those were the days of ignorance. Yes, that was in the period of the childhood of the human family, in the infancy of the world. But what does it manifest unto us? Why that there is a Being superior to man, and though we may not know the place where He resides, He has come along occasionally and shown His creatures how to make and work up brass, iron, copper, and in fact has revealed to them everything they know at various stages of their development and progress.

The people of this day think they know more than all who have preceded them,—that this is the wisest generation that ever did live on the earth. Perhaps it is in worldly things, and in some of the arts and sciences it may be; but there is no question that many things of great worth known anciently have been lost. Archaeological developments and investigations bring to light facts in the mechanical arts which set at defiance the skill of the world in our day. For instance, where is the mechanic now, who can sharpen copper so that it would shave the beard from a man's face, or chop timber like an axe made of steel? The skill to do that is not in existence now; yet it once was, and many other arts, revealed to man anciently, have been lost through the wickedness of the people.

I want to say a few words about our religion, but first I will ask you to remember this prayer which I offered at the commencement of my remarks with regard to the poor. If you will do that they will be looked after and brought home. Now we will talk a little about our religion. Ask the scientific men of the world how many of the arts can be reduced to a science? When they are so reduced they become permanent; but until then they are uncertain. They go and come, appear and disappear. When they are reduced to science and system their permanency and ability are assured. It is so with government,—until it is reduced to a science it is liable to be rent asunder by anarchy and confusion, and caprice, and scattered to the four winds.