

DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR,

At the General Conference, Salt Lake City, Tuesday Afternoon, Oct. 7th, 1879.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

[Owing to press of important business the publication of this discourse has been delayed. Its contents will be found as valuable to-day as when it was delivered.—ED. D.E.N.]

I will state to the Conference that we have no financial account to present, because we do not get our returns from the various Stakes until the close of each year; in consequence of this we find it impracticable to present a satisfactory account to the General Conference oftener than once a year.

The Lord has given us a certain work to accomplish; and the feelings or ideas of men in the world in relation to this work have but little to do with us. We are gathered here for the express purpose of building up the Church and Kingdom of God upon the earth. We are endeavoring to do this—that is, a great many of the people are, to the very best of their ability; and we consider ourselves responsible to God for the action we take and for the course we pursue in relation to the fulfillment of His purposes. We think that in building Temples, sending the gospel to the nations of the earth and prosecuting our other labor that we are carrying out the word and will, and the commands of God. Yet it not unfrequently happens, that when we are doing our very best to promote correct principles among ourselves, as well as to spread them abroad, even to all nations, that we meet with determined and unrelenting opposition. This we cannot help. We do not seek it, but we do not fear it.

There has existed a principle of antagonism ever since the dawn of creation, namely, the powers of God have been opposed by the powers of the Evil One. Satan and wicked men have operated to subvert the plans and designs of Jehovah. And if we have a little of such opposition to contend with in our day, there is nothing new in it. The martyr Stephen when arraigned before the Council to answer to a charge of blasphemy, said, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." We have always expected that there would be a spirit of antagonism to the Church and Kingdom of God, and our Elders have been telling us, more or less, during the last fifty years, that this feeling still existed, and, indeed, every now and then, we have occasion to believe them; or, to use an old saying, "The devil is not dead yet;" and he uses his influence now, as in former days, to oppose the principles that God has revealed.

We are gathered here from many nations in order that God may plant among us the principles and laws of eternal lives; that we may operate in the Priesthood with the holy men who held it in former ages, and with God the Father, and with Jesus the Mediator, and with the holy angels in the interests of mankind, not only in things pertaining to ourselves individually, but in those that concern the whole world; not only to the people that now live, but also to those who have lived; for the plans of God reach back into eternity and forward into eternity, and we are being taught and instructed through the holy Melchisedek Priesthood, which holds now, as in past ages, the keys of the mysteries of the revelations of God. It is our privilege to operate through this order, with men who have held the same keys and possessed the same powers and have had the same communication with God, and who have looked forward to the time, with joyful anticipation, that we now live in, namely, to the dispensation of the fullness of times. For this purpose we are gathered together; for this purpose we are building Temples according to the order and revelations of God—for until He revealed these things to us we knew nothing about them. And the world of mankind to-day know nothing about Temples and their uses. If we were to build Temples for them according to the order of God, they

would not know how to administer in them; neither could we know had the Lord not revealed to us how to do it, which he did through the Prophet Joseph. We are acting upon this revealed knowledge to-day, seeking to carry out the will, the designs and the purposes of God, in the interest of common humanity, not for a few people only, not for the people of the United States only, nor for those of two or three nations, but for the people of the whole world. And the hearts of the people are being drawn after these principles; or, in other words, the hearts of the children are being turned towards the fathers, as well as the hearts of the fathers towards the children.

The spirit that is being manifested in the various Stakes of Zion is very creditable in this respect to the Latter-day Saints. And we purpose, God being our helper, and the devil not hindering us, to go on with our work, to build our Temples and to administer in them and to act as the friends of God upon the earth. And if we are not His friends, He has none, for there is no people anywhere, except the Latter-day Saints, who will listen to His laws—and as they say sometimes, "It's a tight squeeze" for us to do it. The question is, Shall we falter in our calculations? I think not; but I think we will say, as the ancient servant of God said to a man who was seeking to hinder the progress of the building of a temple to the Lord of Hosts: "I am doing a great work; hinder me not." We are doing a great work, and we would say to our outside friends and to people generally who are not conversant with our affairs, will you be so kind as to let us alone and hinder us not; so that we may go on with our labor of love in the common interests of humanity and in our efforts to promote the welfare of the world at large.

This is one thing we have to do, and we will try to do it, the Lord being our helper.

Then another thing we are called upon to do is to preach the gospel to every creature throughout the world. "Why, the people will oppose you?" That they always did. But Jesus said, and I will say by way of repeating His words—for they are as true to-day as they were in His day—"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Therefore we need not be troubled about it. When we first started out in this work we never looked for anything else, and we have not looked in vain either; we have found an abundance of it, and we have commenced to regard it as a natural thing. But we must not forget that we owe a duty to the world. The Lord has given to us the light of eternity; and we are commanded not to conceal our light under a bushel, but on the contrary we should let it shine forth as a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid. We need not try to get into an out-of-the-way corner from the gaze of the public eye, for we cannot. We thought we had wandered a long way from civilization when we came here; but, according to the remarks of the speakers this morning, a certain degree of it has followed us, and we are not quite out of it yet. But there are some things we can do. We will let them pursue their course, and we will ask them, if they will be so good and so kind as to let us worship God according to the dictates of our consciences. This is not a very great boon to ask of anybody. Still we do ask that we may be permitted, in this land of liberty, in this land which we call the home of the brave and the land of the free; the asylum of the oppressed of all nations, we ask that we may have the simple privilege of worshipping God according to the dictates of our own consciences. Then, while they are trying to injure us, we will try to do them good. We will teach them good principles at home, and we will send the gospel abroad. And the kind of men we want as bearers of this gospel message are men who have faith in God; men who have faith in their religion; men who honor their priesthood; men in whom the people who know them have faith and in whom God has confidence, and not some poor unfortunate beings who are wanted to leave a place because they cannot live in it; but we want men full of the Holy Ghost and the power of God that they may go forth weeping bearing precious seed and sowing the seeds

of eternal life, and then returning with gladness, bringing their sheaves with them. These are the kind of men we want. We do not want the names of men of the former class presented to us to go on missions; if they are and we find it out, we shall not send them; for such men cannot go with our fellowship and good feeling. Men who bear the words of life among the nations, ought to be men of honor, integrity, virtue and purity; and this being the command of God to us, we shall try and carry it out.

Some imagine that we have almost got through with our work; when the truth of the matter is, we have hardly commenced yet. Here is Brother Joseph Young, who represents the Seventies—Brother Joseph, how many Seventies are there enrolled. [Brother Young replied that there were 5,320.] I am told that there are 5,320 Seventies; we expect to call upon a great many of these men to go abroad and proclaim the fulness of the Gospel. We received a small order lately—you know, we talk business sometimes—for 40 missionaries to go and labor in one place; they did not send the money to pay their fare; but then, we have the missionaries, and we will trust in God for our pay and we shall get it if we are found doing His will and carrying out His purposes.

Again, another duty we have to do is to preserve the order of God among ourselves. And here is a great responsibility resting upon the Presidents of Stakes and their Counselors, and upon the Bishops and their Counselors, and upon all men holding authority in the Church and Kingdom of God, and upon the Twelve specially, to see that the order of God is carried out, and that iniquity does not exist among the Saints of the Most High God.

We talk sometimes about the outside world, and we sometimes indulge in casting reflections upon them—and there is plenty of room for it, no doubt; but then, what of ourselves? What do we do? Do not our own members keep some of the very saloons we talk about? and do not we engage in this business because we are afraid somebody else will? Why, that is the argument of the thief. He says, "If I do not steal, somebody else will." But, besides, say these brethren, "We want to get a living." But before I would live in that way, I would die and make an end of it; I would not be mixed up with such concerns nor have any hand in them, but pursue another and more honorable course to get a living than in seeking to put the cup to the mouth of the drunkard and in leading our youth and others who may be inclined that way, in the path that leads to death. What else do we do? Why some of us Elders, and some of us High Priests and Seventies frequent these places and get drunk and disgrace ourselves and our families, and the people with whom we are associated. And what else do we do? We are commanded to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy; and yet we find that our trains leave this city every Sabbath, until the weather gets too cold to bathe, carrying many of our people, who indulge in all kinds of amusements and thus violate the Sabbath which we are commanded to keep holy, which many respectable Gentiles would never think of doing. And yet you are Latter-day Saints, are you? You are a good people, and you will talk about the gift of the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of God being in you, while you are violating some of the plainest every-day principles of the gospel of Christ.

And what then? Why, we have been told about the Gentiles introducing into our midst what is termed the social evil; and we find some of our youth, and older ones too, contaminating themselves with it, thereby breaking their covenants and forsaking their God, and disgracing themselves before God, angels and all good men. Such men are a disgrace to any community, much less to a community professing, as we do, to be Saints. Are such persons Saints? No, they are not. Can we fellowship them? No, we cannot. God requires it of us before we talk of cleansing the outside of the platter, to see that the inside is clean; to place ourselves right upon the record. Do we do it? Well, sometimes—I was going to say "hardly ever." Sometimes we do it, but in a great many instances we do not do it. What is the matter? Good men have mean sons, and the sons must not be handled. Why so? God, you will remember, had a host of sons in heaven who did not

do right, and they were cast out, even a third part of His entire family. That is the way I read it. Again, there are some sons who are good men, who have reputable fathers, who have departed from correct principles, but out of respect to the fathers in the one instance and the sons in the other, we allow evil ways to go unchecked. Well, you Presidents and you Bishops and you Priests and Teachers may do that if you please, but their blood will be upon your heads, not upon mine. And we call upon you to honor your calling and Priesthood and purge from your midst corruption of every kind. And we call upon the Presidents of Stakes and their Counselors, upon the Bishops and their Counselors, and upon the Priests, Teachers and Deacons, to magnify their offices, and not to be partakers of other men's sins. For as sure as I live and as God lives, if you do God will require it at your hands. And therefore, I call upon Presidents and men in authority, where men do not magnify their calling to remove them from their positions of responsibility and replace them by men who will; and let us have correct principles and the order of God carried out in Zion.

Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers and Evangelists were placed in the Church of old for what? "For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." It is so to-day. My brethren who have spoken have told you plainly of many evils that exist in our midst; but we can scarcely perceive them, many of us. Sometimes it is very difficult to discern between a Saint and a sinner, between one who professes to fear God and one who does not. It is for us to straighten out these matters; and you men in authority will be held responsible, and the Twelve will be held responsible, and I hold you responsible, and God will hold you responsible for your acts. The great difficulty with us is that we are too fond of catering to the world, and too much of the world has crept into our hearts; the spirit of covetousness and greed, and—what shall I say?—dishonesty has spread itself like a plague throughout the length and breadth of the whole world in every direction, and we have drunk more or less into that spirit. Like a plague it has pervaded all grades of society; and instead of being governed by those high, noble, and honorable principles that dwell in the bosom of God, we are after the filthy lucre which is spoken of as being the root of all evil; and instead of setting our affections upon God, we set our affections upon the world, its follies and vanities. Come ye out from the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord; and honor your priesthood and calling, and show and prove to the world, to angels and to God that you are on the side of truth and right, of honesty, purity and integrity, and that you are for God and His Kingdom, let other people do as they will.

We sometimes talk of the affairs that are taking place around us. There is now a little commotion that interested parties are getting up about the "Mormons" for the purpose of forwarding their political operations. Bless your soul, we knew about that long, long ago, and also knew what it would be for. It is about the same with these parties as it was with the editor I have read of; the printer asked for "copy," it was handed him, but it was not enough, he wanted more. The editor told him that he had not time to prepare any more then, but to pitch into the "Mormons." That was a kind of standing matter they kept on hand. The move that is being made now is simply a political scheme, out of which to make political capital. It was started by interested demagogues for that purpose in order that they might have the honor of putting down "Mormonism" and sailing into power on the current of incensed public opinion. Now they can have all the honor they can get on that score; and I guess it will be the same as Stephen A. Douglas and others have attained to by pursuing that course, and I think no more.

We are here to serve God and keep His commandments; and if we will purge ourselves from our iniquities, live our religion and keep the commandments of God, there is not power on this side of hell nor on the other, that can harm us, for God will be on our side to protect us in the position we occupy.

There is one thing I wish to speak to you about that you are well acquainted with. We had a little commotion gotten up about some of our money matters associated with the heirs of the late President Young, and it has been talked about generally. We thought we had made a settlement with them at one time which we did, and the executors of the estate took their releases which exonerated them from all blame, and they avowed themselves satisfied with the settlements made. But then, some men's words do some men's signatures do some amount to much. What men? Why some of our very pure high-minded lawyers are above entering into such things because of a little money inducement. It would not be proper to say they were anything pure, high-minded and honorable men, for it is understood that lawyers are, is it not? Well, I knew we had treated them liberally before; and so did you. I knew we had given them all that ought to give them, and more. But we felt to be generous to the heirs of President Young; and did what we could to promote their welfare. Still these things came out. No matter. Bonds and signatures and releases amount to nothing with some people. So they started in, and we have a legal fight about it. Some of the Apostles have had to be confined in the penitentiary; and it was a narrow squeeze with me. [Laughter.] But then I have been in places before, and was shot at while there and hit, and therefore it was not much concerned about it. Well, they wanted to get hold of some of your means and property, which I held in trust, to which they had no right to touch. No, they could not do it. "Well," said they, "you have to go to jail." "Well," said I, "jail it is then." Some folks go to rusticate at Soda Springs and other places; I think I will go and rusticate in the penitentiary. But they would not have me. [Laughter.] They took Brother Cannon, Brother Brigham and Brother Carrington, suppose they considered them their men, and that I had better get out. There are all kinds of cunning things started up; and among of things that has grown out of this contest is what is termed a suit; and because of this movement some people think we are going to law. I will tell you how much. We were merely attempting to put the complaining heirs in the same position as they had put us; thinking that by doing so they might be able to reflect that there were other people in the world besides themselves and that other people might be placed in jeopardy besides some of our brethren. "But," say you, "was it not contrary to a law of the Church to go to law with your brethren?" We did exactly do it; we merely started I will tell you what we would have done if this settlement had not been made. We would have called up all those who were good and honorable of President Young's family, and I am happy to say that a very few exceptions they are of class and are desirous to carry and fulfill their obligations, stand by the covenants they have entered into—we were going to upon them to turn over to our heirs, and then we were going to call others off the Church, and then to law with them and sue for the property as they had for ours. This is all. I thought I would explain this because it is not generally understood by the people. It is one of those things called a legal fiction, which had to arise to certain technicalities of the law in order that the proper releases might be given, releases that would settle these difficulties.

This compromise was talked but it could not be reached readily, for some of them wanted little more money, and the lawyers wanted a little, and of course honorable gentlemen should have it. Well, the compromise was at last effected. We thought it better to furnish them a little means than to have these unpleasant things going on month after month, and perhaps year after year; and we could see that we would have to be very smart indeed to prevent some of these men of honor from running away with the balance of it. This being done, we have done all we could to try to promote peace in the midst. We have taken the best of counsel, and have acted in the