

## DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER FRANKLIN D. RICHARDS,

DELIVERED AT THE

Forty-sixth Semi-annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday Morning, Oct. 11th, 1875.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

WE are blessed at this Conference with a very large amount of teaching and instruction of a most interesting and important character, which, if accepted and adopted as the rule of our conduct, will prove of great benefit to us individually, and of vast benefit to us collectively. But it is with many of these instructions as the Savior once said to some who came to him and inquired about a certain matter. Said he—"If you will receive it this is the Elias which was to come." So it is with these precious instructions—if we will receive them they will be to us as a people of great assistance in enabling us to wake up from the slumbers which many of us have indulged in, and to engage in a degree of usefulness that will make our lives profitable unto us and others.

The work of the Lord, ever progressing, ever advancing, brings us, from time to time, new and peculiar features, of faith and doctrine, and rules of life and conduct, for our consideration. And this is one reason why the gospel presents such a continued growing and increasing attachment and fascination to the Latter-day Saints—an interest which no other people feel, because they do not have professions of faith which increase, develop, and, in their tendency, bring their adherents and devotees nearer to the knowledge of God, or to the perfection of practice in their faith; and hence our minds are continually fed with something different and varied, yet a constituent part of the great whole, that leads the people forward, increasing from faith to faith and from knowledge to knowledge, and, if living to that knowledge, to an increased ability to carry it out acceptably to God, and profitably to the interests of his kingdom.

There are some of our brethren who seem to think and feel and take it rather hard, the way that the word of the Lord and the counsel of his servants come forth unto them. I refer to our brethren who have made to themselves wealth and accumulated the means and comforts of life by trading and dealing in the midst of God's people. It seems to be now as it was in days past. The Savior himself understood the most intricate workings of the human heart, and comprehended the most insidious devices of the adversary of souls, and also the ways and means by which he, like a roaring lion, sought whom he could consume and destroy. The Savior said, in his day—"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Now why is it so very difficult? We see and hear, in our own day, that it is hard, difficult, for a portion of our brethren to conform themselves to that mode of life that will enable them to secure to themselves blessings in the Kingdom of God. How is it, I ask myself, and why? And when I reflect upon the answer it comes in this wise—Have not they who find it thus difficult to conform to the requirements of heaven through the priesthood accumulated their wealth from God's people? Yes. And have we not heard, during this Conference, from the mouth of President Young, Elder Woodruff and others, of the deep sufferings in which the elders went forth in the beginning and gathered up the people from the four quarters of the earth? And do we not know that this people, which constitute the inhabitants of Utah, have been gathered here by the labors of the Presidency, the Twelve Apostles, and the elders whom they have chosen to assist them? Certainly we do. The building up of the Territory of Utah is the fruit of the labors of the priesthood of the Son of God; and the people that have come here, and who compose the population of this Territory are they who have obeyed the gospel at the risk and frequently at the loss of all temporal blessings which their employers or their rulers could divest them of on their accepting

its holy principles. A great many have been brought here by the charity and aid of their abler brethren and sisters, who, like themselves, once were poor and destitute, but who, after reaching here, gathered around them the comforts of life, and, by their donations, aided in bringing multitudes hither who, but for the assistance thus rendered, must have been in Babylon to-day.

Now, seeing that some of our brethren have amassed to themselves riches by trading and dealing with this vast multitude of people gathered by the labors of the priesthood, is it any more than right and proper that God and his people should ask of them to use their means so as most effectually to bless His people and bring to pass His purposes? Not as some would have it—that the means thus acquired should be sown broadcast or thrown away among the people, not at all; but let the owners of this wealth acknowledge the hand of God in enabling them to accumulate it, and now let it make of them benefactors in the midst of the people, by taking to themselves the same spirit that President Young has poured forth during this conference, and, with him, seek to bless the house of Israel. And let the people, from this day on, add to this means their prayers and blessings for you, and let yourselves and your substance be hallowed and consecrated to the service of God and his people, that what you have thus accumulated may exalt you in the midst of the Saints and give them to see that by this you will do them the greater service and administer more abundant good unto them. By so doing you can identify yourselves with God's people, and yourselves and all that He has given can be made useful to the greatest extent in advancing the Redeemer's Kingdom, while the prayers and blessings of a host and the blessings of the priesthood can yet be bestowed upon you, and you can be an exception to that saying—"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

But if, on the other hand, this wealth so acquired, is held for the purpose of gratifying a vain pride, and to accumulate a further abundance of this world's goods, that they may be consumed upon the lusts of those who possess them, their interests must be separate from those of God's people and they cannot be saved with them. There are men of wealth among us whom I deeply respect, and I desire, if possible, that they and all they are and have should be saved in the kingdom of God. But I ask you all, as men of understanding and brains, you who have been able to make this money, if you use this means for some foreign, outside purpose, and not for the interests of God's kingdom, or for the advancement of his people, how can you go with them into the inheritance of the Saints of light and be blessed with all the blessings that are to be bestowed upon the poor and meek of the earth? The subject comes naturally to that point, and I ask my brethren who have wealth to consider their position. Is not this a day favorable to you? You can use the means which you possess, if you will be directed therein, so that they will prove as beneficial to you, your households, your children and your friends and elevate you to the rank of benefactors to your race, as the like wealth does in the hands of President Young. He proposes to employ his means so as to bless Israel. He and all they who walk in the truth propose that they and all they have shall be employed in the way that God shall direct through his servants, to advance the interests of this great, good and best people on the earth, who have gathered from many nations to these valleys of the mountains to find the favor of heaven. This is all I care particularly to say upon this subject at this time.

We are called upon now, in a most propitious time, to labor in the vineyard in the kingdom of God; and we seem at times to get into a condition of slumber, to become dull and unconcerned, and as if we felt in our hearts—"Let the Presidency and the Twelve attend to these things, we will jog along and attend to our own affairs." The time has come, brethren and sisters, when we ought to put away this spirit and this feeling. The family of God has become very numerous upon the earth, and their circumstances varied; while there are thousands and tens of thousands of the seed of Abraham and Jacob that have not yet heard the truth, who are slumbering in darkness among the nations, and have got to be awakened and roused to it, it is time for every man, every woman, and every child who has come to years of understanding, who contemplate the purposes of God as they are growing upon the earth, to turn their regards and considerations to the welfare of the household of faith. It can not any longer be limited to "me and my wife, my son John and his wife, we four and no more." We have to awaken to those interests that have their general effect among us as a people. The principle of union which is being taught at present among the house of Israel, and which is termed by many the United Order, is a something which to the world looks perfectly strange and anomalous; they do not know that it ever had anything to do with the religion and gospel of Jesus Christ. That is simply because they

do not know anything about it, just as it is about all the rest of the principles of the gospel. Authors of history, living contemporaneously with ourselves, have written that it was by the principle of a federated union among the churches after the crucifixion of the Saviour that gave his people the astonishing power which they held for two or three centuries in the earth. One of these authors writes that when the Saviour was crucified, instead of the work being broken up and his adherents scattered, they immediately went to work and united in stronger bonds of union, and, in their organizations, they associated themselves on a principle of communism in all their branches. This author also informs us that they then confederated together and became very powerful, and he gives them credit, for being the determining power, that placed an emperor upon the throne of Rome. This is the opinion of the author I refer to, as to the influence and power that prevailed in that order which existed among the early Christians after the death of the Saviour. All people who are going to exercise influence for the benefit of themselves or the human family at large, must learn how to unite, consolidate and employ the principle of power in order that they may accomplish great and mighty objects and ends.

You doubtless recollect reading of the ten persecutions of the Christians. It is said regarding the seventh persecution, in the days of the Emperor Severus in Rome, that there was a great opposition got up before this persecution was inaugurated towards the Christians. They and the pagans were at terrible opposition, and blood was shed as a consequence of it. At this time, when there appeared to be great difficulty and danger in the empire, there arose a certain learned man by the name of Tertullian, and he delivered a very powerful oration before the magistrates of Rome in defence of Christianity. The emperor, himself was also present on the occasion. And this learned man told the emperor and the magistrates, that the Christians formed a very important part of his constituency, and he could not afford to ignore their presence and power in the land. Said he—"these Christians are united among themselves, and"—using this precise language—"There is but one thing that Christians have not in common, and that one thing is their wives." This fact was enunciated by him as late as the year A. D. two hundred, when he was defending, before the emperor, the rights of a people who were being persecuted, oppressed and put to death because of their religion. And this modern author says that, as late as the year 305, the Christians by the exercise of this united power of their communism combined and put an emperor on the throne, meaning the Emperor Constantine.

I merely allude to this to let you know that this was something that the Christians believed in anciently, and that this is a part of what we read in that sacred book, The Acts of the Apostles, where it says they had all things in common, and no man called aught that he had his own. It was a principle of the gospel, a principle of godliness, a principle of power emanating from him who holds in his hands all power, and who will, at his pleasure, exercise it until he brings the kingdoms of this world under the dominion of and subject to the kingdom of our God.

Well then, inasmuch as these principles existed among the Saints and were known and practised anciently; inasmuch as they are eternal, and were principles of might and strength in the hands of God's people in the early days of the Christian Church, shall we slumber and always limit our narrow ideas to ourselves and our families, and the few that are around us? Or shall we waken up to the interests of the whole, and let those who have long been trodden down and have not had advantages and benefits sufficient to provide for themselves, and to accumulate houses and homes, come to a knowledge and understanding of principles by which they may enjoy what we enjoy and all partake of the blessings of God together?

There is a principle connected with this and with all the other doctrines of the kingdom of God, which, if we may call it so more than any other, is a cardinal principle of the church and kingdom, and that is the principle of obedience. It is just that which is absolutely necessary to enable us to organize, and, as a people, to go forward and accomplish what God would have us do. We have got to come to an understanding of the importance of obedience; that is, the importance of obeying God and his servants whom he appoints to dispense his will and word to us. There is no ignoring the fact that there has been a very great departure utterly from the extent to which this principle was entertained among the Saints a few years ago, in this Territory, before we so abounded in the vices of the world that have been imported into our midst, before we had so much of the blandishments of civilization brought unto us. There was a time here, when if any one wanted to engage in any important matter he scarcely felt willing to do so without first enquiring of the Lord, through his servant Brigham, whether it would be consistent with the interests of the kingdom; but latterly it has come to that, that some even think it an obtrusion upon them that the word of the Lord should be tendered them, or that the counsels of the church should be urged upon the minds of the people as something necessary and needful to be obeyed. Why is this degeneracy? Why this recession from that point of obedience and unanimity in beautiful conformity to the will of God? It is because one and another have some will, wish, arrangement and purpose of their own which may not be consistent with the church and kingdom of God, and which they wish to carry out regardless of its interests, and without caring whether it be the will of God, or whether it would be befitting, wise or practicable. And it has come to pass that many have grown cold.

How was it among God's people in days of old? Let us look for a moment at the terrible consequences which followed a single act of disobedience in the days of Israel, committed by one of her rulers, when the kings of Israel considered it their highest and holiest privilege to have a prophet of God at hand to tell them the will of the Lord. When they wanted, for instance, to go forth to battle, they would not go until they had inquired of the man of God whether they would prosper or whether they would not. In fact it was the gift and blessing of God to all Israel, in all their days of prosperity, that there was a man of God there who could declare his will unto them. On one occasion the Prophet Samuel said to King Saul—"Go and smile Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." By the by, people did not go to war then for every trifling occasion, just to extend their dominion, &c., but they went to war to carry out the counsels of heaven. When any people were sufficiently wicked, and had filled up the cup of their iniquity, then did the Lord tell whosoever he would to go forth and execute his judgments upon them. What was Saul ordered to do with Agag and his people. Was he told to kill a few of the wickedest and to bring home the best? Not at all. He was told to go out against them and to slay men, women and children; he was to make clean work of it. And furthermore, the prophet told the king that he was also to slay the flocks and the herds as well as the people, for they were all polluted in the sight of the Lord. The king went his way, and what did he do? Why he killed off the people and a portion of their flocks and herds, but he brought home some of the choicest of the latter, and also king Agag alive. And when the man of God met him and asked him if he had done as the Lord commanded him he replied, "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and I have brought King Agag, and I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites." Then said the prophet—"What is this I hear, the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep?" Saul answered—"They saved these and brought them home for an offering to the Lord." This looked very nice, but what was the result of this departure from the word of the Lord? Why, the prophet hewed Agag, the king of the Amalekites, in pieces before the Lord, and because of this disobedience the kingdom of Israel was rent from Saul, he was dethroned and the kingdom was given to a neighbor of his who was better than he.

Oh Israel, you men in high places and Saints of the living God everywhere, take notice that "obedience is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams, for rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." This principle of obedience must be cultivated in our hearts until it occupies our whole souls, until we, all we are, and all that we can command shall be subject to God and to the counsels of his servants, that we may be used and employed in advancing the interests of our Redeemer's kingdom. I hold this to be one of the higher laws of the holy priesthood, that we learn to bring ourselves into perfect subjection and obedience to the law and will of God; and not only this, but we must hand this down to our children. The Lord said concerning Abraham—"I know him, I have found him out, he will do my will and he will command his children after him." I exhort my brethren and sisters to take this doctrine and principle to their hearts, that we seek to know what the mind and will of God is and then, above all things, that we do it, lest our blessings and powers depart from us as Saul's did from him.

We live in times that are peculiarly interesting indeed, when we consider and reflect upon God's providences and blessings to us. Yet we are forgetful and weak, and in many ways fail to realize our obligations and indebtedness to Him, and our many shortcomings in keeping His commandments. We have, many of us, under the various changing circumstances surrounding us in these valleys—working in the canons and at every sort of thing—done that which we ought not to have done, and which has been displeasing in the sight of God. It is a standing fact that many have come to think that Sunday is a day of very little importance, not even of sufficient consequence to get up to the Tabernacle to meeting; and yet the Lord requires his people to come together on the Sunday and partake of the Sacrament, that they may witness unto him that they always remember the sufferings of His Son, that they are willing to take upon them his name and to keep his commandments, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Some of the people get very careless about these things. They feel tired with their week's toil, and they become so regardless of the things of God that they omit their prayers, and continually neglect the every-day simple duties required of them as the children of God, and without attending to which they cannot retain that Holy Spirit so necessary to aid them in the performance of life's duties acceptably to their Creator. But God, in his providence, again grants us a time of repentance and remission of sins; and now is a truly blessed time for many to consider their ways and turn to the Lord. They who have offended their brethren, before going down into the waters of baptism, should obtain each other's forgiveness, kindly fellowship and love, in order that the blessing of God may be upon them; "for if you forgive not those who have trespassed against you, how shall your Father in heaven forgive you your trespasses?" Again, when our Saviour was teaching his disciples how to pray, he told them to say—"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." And I could not but notice in the Dedication Prayer, yesterday morning, that it was asked of God,

in the same wisdom, to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. It should be the aim of all to obtain the forgiveness and fellowship of each other, that we may renew that confidence, love and blessing which we felt when we came first into the waters of baptism, and which we need to have continually with us so as to have a conscience void of offence towards God and all men, but especially towards the people of God. Let us forgive and love each other; let us bless and be blessed of each other and of God our Father, and let us go on helping to build up his kingdom and his Zion on the earth, and the wicked may take heed as best they can. The great day is coming when they will stand afar off and howl, weep and mourn for the miseries that will be upon them; they will not even have power to come up among the people of God to harass, annoy, distress and perplex them.

We would to God that all men would learn that he has set up his kingdom, that his servants are building it up in the name of Israel's God, and that we expect it to fill the whole earth. Ladies and gentlemen who are unbelieving, where will you be on that occasion? If you will be with it and have its blessing, and the favor of God to be upon you, repent of your sins and of your ignorance and folly inasmuch as you have entertained doctrines that are inconsistent and vain. We realize that our fathers have inherited lies and vanity and things wherein is no profit, but we have escaped from their false traditions, and rejoice in the knowledge of the truth. But how is it with you? What do you believe concerning God? You believe that he is a being without body, parts or passions; that is, in others words, you believe that God is nothing, for no being can exist without these attributes, either in heaven, earth or hell. Then again, where are you going? Where would you have the Lord reign and his people glorified?

"Beyond the bounds of time and space, Look forward to that heavenly place, The Saints' secure abode."

There is no such place in existence, and not one of you will ever live long enough to find such a place. Then turn from the folly of such things, turn to the living God, who has made you in his own image, and who has given us to understand in his revelations that he possesses the same general attributes with which he has endowed us. I say, come to the living God, and understand your relationship to him, and take hold and help him to benefit and bless the poor of mankind, and have your blessings and inheritances and be numbered with us.

Feeling thankful for this opportunity I will now close my remarks, praying that the blessings of this Conference may enrich and strengthen every faithful soul, that the path of duty may be plainer and that they may have more strength and energy to walk in it, and be enabled to discharge every known obligation and responsibility to God with an eye single to his glory, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

Y. M. M. J. A.

RICHMOND, Cache County,  
December 29, 1875.

Editor Deseret News:

A meeting was held last evening, in the hall at this place, for the purpose of organizing a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association.

Addresses were made by Elders M. H. Hardy and Morris Young, showing the necessity of and the good resulting from such associations. After which the following officers were elected by unanimous vote—Uma U. Hobson, President; Robert N. Lewis and William Skidmore, Counsellors; and Edwin Smith, Secretary.

After some suggestions as to the mode of conducting meetings, and of subjects for consideration, the meeting was adjourned until Saturday evening, January 1st, 1876. A meeting was appointed to be held at that date for the purpose of enrolling members, and such other business as might be deemed necessary.

HENRY STANDAGE,  
Clerk pro tem.

## Our Country Contemporaries.

Utah County Times, Dec. 31—

We announce, with some regret, that this will be the last issue of this paper for the present.

We beg to say here, that we suspend, not because the publication is a failure, but, because we do not want to sacrifice too much in another direction. There may be hopes of its resumption, if the public of this County manifest a proper desire and spirit in the enterprise.

We learn that the sales at the Provo woolen factory, for the month of November, 1875, amounted to the handsome sum of \$23,254.49. The wool received into the factory for the year 1875 is \$267,000, and there are 140 persons employed in its working.