

DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR,

DELIVERED

In the Assembly Hall, Salt Lake City,
Sunday afternoon, Feb. 10th, 1884.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

WE meet together from time to time to speak, to sing, to pray, and, according to an institution which has been provided, to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and also to perform those various duties devolving upon us as servants of the living God. It is pleasant for the Saints to meet together to commune with each other, to listen to the words of life, to reflect also upon their position and relationship to God, to His Church and Kingdom, as well as to examine into their own feelings, and, under the guidance of the Lord and of His Holy Spirit, try to find out what relationship they sustain to their Heavenly Father, and whether they are performing the various duties devolving upon them and are seeking to carry out the word, the will, and the law of God.

We are certainly a very peculiar people gathered together in these valleys of the mountains, we are assembled here from many nations; it would be difficult to say at present how many; but I think on some public occasion a while ago there were twenty-five or twenty-six nationalities represented. In this respect, we present a very singular aspect and occupy a very peculiar position in the history of the day and age wherein we live. Our religion differs very widely from that which exists in the world. Our ideas of God, of futurity, of heaven and of hell, and of the future destiny of the human family, not only of ourselves, but of all nations, differ very materially from that of others. Our social ideas, too, are very dissimilar from those entertained by others. And, again, our political ideas are not in accord in many respects with those of others, and thus we find ourselves in a very anomalous position, gathered together here in these valleys of the mountains, separated to a great extent from the rest of mankind. We were a few years ago very decidedly separated. Now this portion of the continent has become almost the highway of the nations. I frequently meet with persons from France, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, from the various Principalities of Germany; from Russia, Italy, Spain, Portugal; from Australia and the Islands of the sea, and from almost all the nations of the earth. They pass by here, and hearing that we are a strange sort of a people they are desirous to know something about us as they pass through.

It frequently becomes a question in the minds of many—How and in what manner did these things originate, and what is the object of our being thus gathered together as a separate and distinct people? By what motives are we actuated? The world of mankind, whether in this nation, or in any other nation, form very strange notions in regard to our reasons for thus gathering together. Although we have been striving for a great many years to enlighten the world in relation to this and other matters, still they seem very much at sea in regard to the position which we occupy, and to our moral, social, religious and political status. So that it becomes almost impossible for people at a distance from here, notwithstanding we profess to live in an age of light and intelligence, in an age of railroads, telegraphs and telephones, in an age when rapid communication can be had, say from all parts of the earth in one day, in an age of professed knowledge of science, literature and art, and of everything that is calculated—or ought to be if properly conducted—to promote the welfare of the human family; I say that, notwithstanding all these things, if there is one subject about which the human family to-day is grossly ignorant, it is on the subject of the principles of the Latter-day Saints. A short time ago a very distinguished European gentleman, after eulogizing the appearance of our city, the quiet and order that prevails, etc., said to me, "President Taylor you can scarcely conceive how impossible it is, outside of your Territory, to obtain correct information regarding you as a people;" and an editor of *The North American Review* told me he came here from New York, expressly for the purpose of getting me to write an article on our present status, thus again exhibiting the strange attitude which we occupy before this nation and the world, and demonstrating that in consequence of such a flood of falsehood, vituperation and abuse which is constantly circulated against us, that it is almost impossible, as before referred to, to obtain any correct information concerning us. Some of the literary men who come along here express to me the opinion that we have been maligned and misrepresented a good deal. I tell them that in an age like this people ought to know better; that they ought to be better informed; that they ought to make themselves acquainted with facts within the reach of everybody; and that there is no excuse for ignorance in relation to these matters. Still this ignorance continues. There is an under current that men generally are not acquainted with that operates in the minds of men and produces these results of which I speak at the present time. To the Latter-day

Saints there is nothing very mysterious about this. We have passed through this state of things in embryo years and years ago. Many of you thought, when you heard the Gospel, and your hearts had been made glad by obedience thereto, that all you would have to do would be to tell your particular friends and relations of these things, and that it would cause their hearts to rejoice as it did yours. You felt interested in their welfare and had a desire to promote their happiness, that they might rejoice with you in the blessings which you experienced through obedience to the Gospel. But lo and behold! the moment you opened your mouth on this subject, you were set down as impostors. You were probably before this a decent man or a decent woman; but now you became ostracized and cut off in many instances from association even with members of your own family. Was it because you had become corrupt? No. Was it because you had become unsocial? No. Was it because you possessed principles that were at variance with the principles of truth, virtue, honor and the word of God? No. And if you had asked them what the reason was, for their coolness and the feeling of ostracism that they manifested, they could not tell, only that you were a "Mormon." You have all of you experienced this. If this is the case, then, with your most intimate friends—with your relations, with your fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, uncles and aunts, with whom you had been on the most friendly terms heretofore—how can you expect the world to look at things in any different manner. I reflect sometimes upon the position occupied by the ancient Christians, and upon the character, position and standing of Jesus the Son of God. We all profess to reverence Him. All Christendom bows in reverence at the mention of His name; they feel there is something hallowed about it. They look upon Him as being the Son of God, and they look upon His Apostles as men of unblemished reputation, of pure lives, holy, virtuous and upright. You cannot travel anywhere in Christendom but you find churches erected to St. Paul, St. Peter, to St. John, to St. Matthew, to St. Luke, and to all the different saints as they are now called by the people. But how was it with these saints when they lived here upon the earth? They were called disturbers of the peace. It was said of them that they were stirrers up of sedition—that they were impure, ungodly men. The idea of their being persecuted, as we read of, for their religion, would have been altogether preposterous in that day. They would tell you they were persecuted for their crimes and their iniquities. They were brought before rulers, kings and judges, and they had to depend upon the Lord and His Holy Spirit to sustain them under those circumstances. Jesus emphatically told them to expect these things. "If the world hate you," said He, "ye know that it hated me before it hated you." If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" It is singular, yet it is a fact that these things did exist. While the crowds were ready sometimes to cover His path with olive branches and with their garments, and to shout "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," yet with the very next breath they were ready to cry "Crucify Him! crucify Him! it is not fit that He should live." And when He was hounded and hunted, persecuted and proscribed, at the very last, even when a Roman judge said, "What evil hath He done?" and washed his hands of the blood of this just person, they still continued to cry, "Let Him be crucified," and Barabbas, a noted thief, and a murderer, was released in preference to Jesus. This was the kind of feeling manifested toward the Savior. Were they an ignorant people that thus treated Him? No. They were what were called the *elite* of the day, the educated; men of position, the High Priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the doctors, the lawyers, the leading men of the nation; all of them engaged in this thing, and all of them partook of the same spirit. What was the cause of this? It was because He was not of the world, "If ye were of the world," said the Savior to His disciples, "the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." That is the cause. The world loveth its own. And the world is to-day, was then, and always will be, until it shall be regenerated, opposed to God, opposed to righteousness and opposed to the principles of truth. Paul makes the following statement: "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is at enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." There is nothing new, therefore, in any of these matters that we hear bruited around from place to place—from the east to the west, from the north to the south, and spreading abroad among the nations of the earth; nothing new, nothing strange, nothing very remarkable in any of these things. The carnal mind knows not the things of God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be. They form all kinds of opinions, even, with regard to our gathering. "Why don't you stop at home as other folks do?" Some say that it is an emigration scheme gotten up to make money, and that missionaries are sent out by us to deceive the weak and the ignorant, and to gather them together

that they may be made merchandise of. That is one idea. You all know how far that is true, and how far it is false. Others say that we are gathered here for licentious purposes—to carry out polygamic ideas, to corrupt, demoralize, and trample under foot the women that come and associate with us, and to destroy their virtue, whereas you know there is not a place in the world where women are better protected and their virtue more sacredly guarded than in Utah. They compare plural marriage to their whoredoms, seductions, their social evils, and the many kinds of iniquity, corruption and rottenness that prevail among themselves. Reasoning from their own standpoint, they consider that we are a very wicked, corrupt and licentious people. But according to the statistics that we have pertaining to these matters our immorality is twenty to forty times less than theirs here in our midst without going any further. The crimes, iniquities and corruptions committed by the small minority of outsiders in our midst very far exceed, perhaps by twenty to thirty times, the crimes of the Latter-day Saints. This excess of crime on the part of outsiders is what might be reasonably expected; for we profess to be a better people, and we ought to be a better people than those who make no pretensions to be guided by divine revelation. Examine the records of our city jail, of the Penitentiary, of the county prisons, which have been published and are being published, and you will find a full statement in relation to these matters, and the per cent of crime that exists between one and the other. Mr. Barclay, a member of the British Parliament, who lately visited us, writes in "*The Nineteenth century*," a monthly review published in London: "In the winter of 1881, a census was taken of the prisons in Utah with the following results:—In the City Prison were twenty-nine convicts, and in the county prison six convicts, all non-Mormons. In the Penitentiary, out of fifty-one prisoners only five were Mormons, two of whom were there for polygamy."

Of the population of Salt Lake City, about 75 per cent is Mormon, and 25 per cent non-Mormon." He further says: "These figures conclusively prove that the Mormons are a sober, law-abiding people, and singularly free from the grosser forms of vice; whatever may be alleged by ignorant or prejudiced enemies. Of the two hundred saloons, billiard, bowling alley, and pool table keepers, not a dozen even profess Mormonism." And since these figures were published, others in relation to 1882 have been made public. One gentleman, who has spent a considerable length of time investigating these matters, writes: "The statistics at hand for 1882 cover a wide field, taking in all the populous districts of the Territory. The total number of all arrests for crimes and misdemeanors in these localities during 1882 was 2,198 of which the 78 per cent of the Mormon population furnished 300, and the 22 per cent of the non-Mormons 1,898. So that the Mormons comprising 78 per cent of the population of the Territory contributed one-eighth of the arrests made during 1882 and the non-Mormons, having only 22 per cent contributed seven-eighths. The number of brothels throughout the Territory was 12, all kept by non-Mormons."

Regarding Salt Lake City, where he resided for some time, he states: "The criminal record of Salt Lake City, for 1882, shows that in a population of about 25,000, divided between Mormons and non-Mormons as 19 to 6, the total number of arrests was 1,561, of which 188 were Mormons and 1,373 non-Mormons. Of the 66 houses, where beer and liquor were retailed by the glass, 60 were kept by non-Mormons, and the remaining 6, nominally Mormons, were not entitled to participate in the sacraments of the Church by reason of their calling. The 15 billiard rooms and bowling alleys, and the 7 gambling houses were all kept by non-Mormons. The 6 brothels had non-Mormon proprietors, and they were filled by 31 non-Mormon inmates." There is nothing in this to be proud of; for it would be a pity if we could not live better than they do. We have gathered here, not for speculative purposes, as is sometimes charged, but to worship God, to keep His commandments, and to be instructed in the laws of life. There is no cause for boasting on our part in regard to these things; but I refer to them to show how fallacious their ideas are in regard to these matters.

Then, is it strange that we should be placed in the position that we are? Yes, it is very strange, but it is nevertheless true, and the same condition of things has existed in the different ages.

We profess to be the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ; we profess to be in possession of the everlasting Gospel; we profess to have gathered here to observe the laws and keep the commandments of God, and that we might assist in building up the Church of God, the Kingdom of God, and the Zion of God. These are really the facts of the case. True, we do not do as well as we might, nor as good, nor as virtuous, nor as upright, nor do we possess the amount of integrity that we ought; but, then, we don't propose to place ourselves on a level with the outside world; we have not dropped to their standard by a very long way; and many of us are striving to live our religion, to observe the laws of God, and to keep His commandments.

In regard to the spirit and genius of the age in which we live, there is nothing, as I have said, strange about that.

The powers of darkness have always been in antagonism to the light, truth and intelligence that proceeds from God, and till Satan is bound, and his power is curtailed by a superior power, that state of things will continue, and instead of getting better and better, we are told in the Scriptures, that the wicked shall grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Do you imagine that they will grow better? I do not.

Do not let us be mistaken in relation to all these things—that is as the world are mistaken. We complain sometimes about the injustice of men. I expect to find unjust men, many of them. We refer to certain laws that are being enacted by our Congress as unconstitutional, etc. Why, we expect they will yet pass many laws of that kind. We don't expect them to be our friends, or the friends of God. They don't profess it. We have a right to expect, of course, that they would abide by the Constitution, because that is an instrument gotten up by themselves and that they profess to be governed by and that men in authority swear to uphold. We have a right to expect that. But, then, does not all Christendom profess to believe in the Bible? Yes. And do the ministers of the various denominations? Yes. Do they practice its teachings? Do they follow its doctrines? Or are there any two of their doctrines alike? They have all kinds of theories, notions and ideas; yet still they tell you that the Bible contains the word of God. But are they governed by it? No. God placed in the Church Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers and Evangelists, and He gave unto His servants the Holy Ghost and the light of revelation and made them acquainted with the same sacred principles. They were all baptized unto one baptism, and all partook of the same spirit. How is it now? Many Lords, many faiths, many baptisms.

Speaking of the doctrine of the plurality of wives, I remember talking with one of our Presidents—I mean one of the Presidents of the United States—on this subject in Washington a number of years ago, as I have with others since on the same subject; but I remember some of the remarks made on that occasion. "Well," said he, after talking some little on politics, and one thing and another, "what about your polygamy?" "Mr. Pierce," said I,—I can mention his name now as it is a thing of the past—"it may be possible that some of us may have wrong ideas in regard to these things. We read about such a man as Abraham, who is described as 'the friend of God'; we read about such a man as David, who is described as 'a man after God's own heart'; we read about Jacob, who had twelve sons, whose names are to be written upon the twelve gates of the holy city. Who was Jacob? He was a man who had several wives, by whom he had these twelve sons. Then we read of Moses—a man of God, a leader of Israel, and a law-giver. He told the people how they should treat their children whether by the first wife or by the second, and how all these matters were to be arranged. Mr. Pierce," said I, "it is possible that we of the nineteenth century have not been able to instruct the Lord very much in regard to these matters. Probably He knew just as much about them then as we do now, and that in regard to our marital laws we may have made some mistakes." "Well," said Mr. Pierce, "I cannot say." Of course he could not.

Now, then, men assume to judge the acts of others, but they don't judge their own acts, and they strive to falsify us and to make evils of those things that God has ordained according to His economy, and that men of old, who were considered men of God, and the friends of God, practiced under His direction. It is not uncommon for men to talk about Abraham. They would like to get into Abraham's bosom—that is most of the Christians of the present day would like to have a place in Abraham's bosom. Would you? Would you really? Are there any of that class here that would like to go into Abraham's bosom? Why, should you have your wish when you woke up you would find you were in the bosom of a polygamist, and would not that be very horrible? But that would be the fact. Jesus Himself was a descendant of that class of people who had practiced the things that we to-day believe in. But they didn't persecute Him because He was a polygamist. They persecuted Him because He was a friend of publicans and sinners. They accused Him of being a blasphemer, of casting out devils through the power of Beelzebub the prince of devils. If He did any good act at all, they were ready to cry out, "Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner."

These things are facts that we cannot ignore. They stand out before us in living characters, and to use a very trite saying, "history repeats itself" in regard to these things. The same causes in one age generally produce the same results in another age.

I will now tell you about some of my feelings when I first came into this Church. It is a long while ago. When I first heard the Gospel I was compelled to admit there was something reasonable about it. I almost hoped it was not true. "If it is true," said I, "as an honest man I shall be obliged to obey it, or else I cannot have any confidence in myself." When I had investigated the subject and became convinced that it was true, I said, "I am in for it; I must embrace it; I cannot reject the principles of eternal truth;" and I will say, moreover, I don't know of a time in my life when if any-

body presented a truth that could not be controverted, but I was ready to obey it; and I am to-day. If any person in the religious world, or the political world, or the scientific world, will present to me a principle that is true, I am prepared to receive it, no matter where it comes from. Well, says one, you believe the Bible? Yes. You believe the Book of Mormon? Yes. You believe the Book of Doctrine and Covenants? Yes. I believe all that God has ever written or spoken, everything that we have on record, and I am prepared to believe everything that He will communicate to the human family. We profess to believe in all truth and to be governed by all truth.

Then, in regard to our position—referring to that again—we are gathered here from the different nations of the earth, from England and elsewhere. I remember the time very well when the Gospel was not preached in England. I remember when Brothers Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Wilford Woodruff, myself and others took our first mission to England. Many of you that are here whose heads are white like mine will remember the circumstance. We took our departure after laying the corner stone of the temple in Far West, Caldwell County, Missouri. The people were much excited about the Mormons at that time, just as they are now, and every once in a while. They had gotten up a furor against us; and Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Bishop McRae, and others were seized by a mob and imprisoned; and many of you may have read the remarks made by a certain General Clark—the famous, or rather infamous General Clark. He told the people—the same as they tell us now—that it was wrong to gather as they were then doing, and as we are now doing, and place ourselves under Bishops, etc. And said he,—I heard him—"Oh, that I could invoke the spirit of the unknown God to rest upon you that you may be delivered from the delusions with which you are encompassed." But his "unknown God" didn't hear him, and the "delusions" have still gone on. We had been driven out of Missouri. They were so good a people and so virtuous, and we were so bad. But we were not polygamists then; we had not entered into the awful crime of polygamy; but we dared to worship God according to the dictates of our own conscience. They drove us out, took possession of our property, and robbed and pillaged everyone they could. After doing this, they did not like that their action should go out to the world; so the legislature actually made an appropriation for us—that is, for the poor "Mormons"—of \$2,000, if my memory serves me aright. They had killed and destroyed any amount of our cattle and hogs, and anything and everything of that kind that they came across. Still they pretended to be very sorry for us and solicitous for our welfare. In order that we might not suffer they went into an adjoining county where our people lived, stole a lot of hogs from them, and then turned in those hogs to make up the appropriation made by the legislature of Missouri! They were so liberal in their operations! They stole the hogs from one portion of our people and then gave them to another. I saw the hogs come in, and they were butchered and divided among the Mormons.

These are some of the things that I am acquainted with. Was I surprised when I saw such operations? No. I expected when I came into this Church that I should be persecuted and proscribed. I expected that the people would be persecuted. But I believed that God had spoken, that the eternal principles of truth had been revealed, and that God had a work to accomplish which was in opposition to the ideas, views and notions of men, and I did not know but it would cost me my life before I got through. It came pretty near it at one time; yes, at many times. I have had to "stand the racket" in a way that many of you folks don't know much about. More than once, I have had to face large crowds of people in the shape of armies, expecting to come in to contact every moment—no farther off, perhaps, than the length of this hall. That is not a very pleasant position to be in. But I was in a worse scrape in Carthage jail when Joseph and Hyrum were killed—penned up in a room and attacked by a blackened mob. I had to stand at the door and ward off the guns while they were trying to shoot us, and we without arms, and under the protection of the Governor of the State. Dr. Bernhisel and myself were sent by Joseph Smith to wait upon the Governor and lay before him the facts of the case. We told him that we were competent to take care of ourselves and did not require any of his aid, for we had an organized body of militia that were quite competent to protect us from their mobs, and asked his advice. He thereupon stated it would be better for us not to bring an armed force, and pledged his faith and the faith of the State, as Governor, for our protection. We consented. This he said to Dr. Bernhisel and myself; and that pledge was violated by the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in Carthage jail, and I myself received five balls in my person; but then I am here yet.

Was there anything surprising in all this? No. If they killed Jesus in former times, would not the same feeling and influence bring about the same results in these times? I had counted the cost when I first started out, and stood prepared to meet it.

We afterwards came to these valleys of the mountains. We people have