

Testimony of the Spirit—Counsel to the Bishops, &c

Remarks by President Brigham Young, made in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, October 6, 1860.

I feel quite thankful for the comfortable circumstances we enjoy—for our blessings, spiritually and temporally, which I realize to be the free gift of our Father and God. All the wisdom, ability, and talent displayed among the children of men are the gift of God to them. He has given us ability to make ourselves comfortable and happy, for which I am extremely thankful.

I am happy in hearing the voices of the brethren, and would be very much gratified if we had time, and it would meet the minds of the brethren, to give them an opportunity to speak as the Spirit might dictate, and bear their testimony. It has been a source of comfort to me to hear the speeches of my brethren, and to observe the variety of capacity, of reflection, and manner of communication displayed by them. I should be very glad if we could have the privilege of hearing many of them speak during this Conference. Whether we shall or not, I am not now able to say. Our Conference commences today. Tomorrow is the Sabbath, and probably many who have come from the country will wish to return home on Monday. Whether we shall continue our Conference longer than tomorrow, I do not know. We shall continue it until we finish the business to be transacted and fully answer our feelings, and then we will close. I wish to present several ideas; but I have been more edified in hearing the music in brother Kimball's remarks this morning than I would have been in speaking myself.

When the authorities of the Church are present, if we are possessed of the true spirit, we are ready to sustain the faithful, and to wish them to continue in the faithful discharge of their duties. And the brethren who rise to testify of the things of God, if they enjoy the Spirit of the Lord, know that "Mormonism" is true. No person can receive a knowledge of this work, except by the power of revelation.

All the world are ready to tell you that this work is not of God. Kings, princes, dukes, lords, and other great men of the earth are all combined in this testimony. Why do they fear this work, if it is the work of men? The very sound of it carries conviction to all the inhabitants of the earth—a conviction that it is ordained of God. Were this not so, you would not see it contended against by the priests in the pulpit, who are bitter against it, and are most vigilant in circulating all manner of falsehood concerning it, picking up the sayings of corrupt, debased, abandoned characters to swell their catalogue of lies against it, which they publish throughout the world. All this would sleep, if this work was not of God. They would never think enough of it to say one word about it. But they are pricked by the conviction of its truth when they hear the sound of it. When false reports go out against Joseph Smith and his brethren, against the Book of Mormon, and the kingdom of God, a conviction goes with them to the hearts of the people that this is the work of the Almighty. Were this not so, we should not have been persecuted—we should not have been driven as we have been. But we have been driven for the last time, thank God my heavenly Father. But our persecutions are a subject that I do not wish to speak about. We have the power in our own hands, if we live with our lives hid with Christ in God. We are here where the Lord wants us to be; and if we will be as he wants us to be, the kingdom is ours—the greatness, the glory, power, excellency, light, intelligence, and eternity of the kingdom of God are ours, and no power can hinder it.

When men lose the spirit of the work in which we are engaged, they become infidel in their feelings. They say that they do not know whether the Bible is true, whether the Book of Mormon is true, nor about new revelations, nor whether there is a God or not. When they lose the spirit of this work, they lose the knowledge of the things of God in time and in eternity; all are lost to them. Contemplate the things of God and his kingdom, this earth, man in his present condition, and you may clearly comprehend that we are now in the midst of eternity. When we preach, or pray, or exhort each other to good works, if we could realize it, we are in the midst of the kingdom of God, and his all-searching eye is here. You may readily comprehend this; for, when I look at you as you are now assembled, I can see several hundred faces at once. Now, suppose that I had power to see as the Spirit sees, I could then look through the earth and see our antipodes as well as I can look through what some term empty space. My eyes would be eternal, and I could see the vast eternities of God as I can now see your faces. God sees us; and if we had eyes like his, we could behold him as we sit here as easily as we can now see each other's faces—no matter where

he dwells, whether in Kolob or anywhere else; for his glory and light fill the sun, and we could behold it as we now behold each other's faces. God has the power to look at his vast works; and if we had power and eyes like his, we could behold him as he does us. He is in the midst of eternity. His kingdom is here, a portion of his glory is here, eternity is here, and we are in the midst of them. Let us live worthy of them, and not dishonor our being upon the earth.

There are many of the Bishops here today, and my advice to them is for them to be honest with me, to be honest with their God, to keep their covenants sacred, and to make a clean breast of all their business transactions, that their consciences may be void of offense towards God and man. I am not searching only the course of the Twelve, or that of the High Priests and Seventies, but I am searching after all the authorities whose conduct is not in accordance with the best interests of the Church; and from this time forth, if they do not do different from what many have done, they shall do wrong knowingly, with their eyes open. I want the Bishops to remember the counsel I have given them. I shall learn whether they are strictly honest or not; and if they are not honest, I will expose them. If they come out and own things as they are, and honestly prove that their past errors have proceeded from the head, and not from the heart, they can be placed upon the right track and magnify their calling. Some may not understand the cause of these remarks concerning the Bishops, and I will explain. For instance, when tithing chickens, butter, &c., are brought in, a Bishop says to his clerk—"You need not trouble to take an account of these chickens; my wife will keep an account of them;" and the Bishop's wife takes the chickens, the ham, the butter, the cheese, &c., and puts them away; and when the clerk wants to know what has been brought in by such a brother, "O never mind," says the Bishop; "my wife will give an account of it;" and the wife forgets it. "Are such things done?" Yes, more or less, all the time. This example was set long ago, and some of the Bishops have followed it.

At the death of Joseph, when the Twelve returned to Nauvoo, to use a comparison, the horses were all harnessed and the people were in the big carriage, and where were they going? They did not know. Who would gather up the lines and guide the team? No man would step forward, until I did. There was not one of the Twelve with me when I went to meet Sidney Rigdon on the meeting ground. I went alone, and was ready alone to face and drive the dogs from the flock. When I got hold of the lines, and began to direct the team, I found tithing butter spoiled, potatoes rotted in the cellars, and pork spoiled in the barrels, while the brethren at work on the Temple would come to their labor without breakfast, and pork, butter, beef, &c., rotting under the feet of the Temple Committee. Said I, "Empty these barrels, or I will walk into your cellars and empty them for you: let these workmen have something to eat." "Oh," said the committee, "we are afraid there will not be enough to last a year." Then, if we starve, we starve together; and if we live, we live together. I ordered the wheat, the pork, the butter, &c., to be issued to the workmen. Too many of the Bishops here have taken pattern from those who have gone before. I have been to Bishops' houses when they had hams and eggs during months in the year, while our hands on the works were not able to get one; for the Bishops had eaten all the hams, every egg and chicken, and all the butter. I will trace out those who conduct in this manner and expose them, unless they honestly report their transactions and strive to do right. Brethren, you may think that I am a little extravagant in my talk; but time will prove.

When a good, handsome cow has been turned in on tithing, she has been smuggled, and an old three-titted cow—one that would kick the tobacco out of the mouth of a man who went to milk her—would be turned into the General Tithing Office, instead of the good cow. If one hundred dollars in cash are paid into the hands of a Bishop, in many instances he will smuggle it, and turn into the General Tithing Office old, ringboned, spavined horses, instead of the money. I am inquiring after such conduct, and will continue until I cleanse the inside of the platter.

Brother Heber has been speaking about discipline. Elders in Israel, I am as willing and ready to be closely examined and scanned as I am to examine and scan you. Walk into my office, examine my books, and scan every act of my life. I am as ready to have it done as I am to search into your practices. You may say that you have not been dishonest, or, if you have been, that you were ignorantly so. I am glad, if such statements will prove to be correct. I never saw the day in this Church that I could consider it honest to take one cent of tithing and turn it out of its legitimate channel; but some of our smart men do not know as much as that, though they would seem to know more of the great things of the kingdom than I do. I want to instruct you in the little things. It is the little foxes that spoil the vine; it is the little acts of men that make up the sum of their lives and form their characters for

eternity.

Some may think that I am rather too severe; but if you had the Prophet Joseph to deal with, you would think that I am quite mild. There are many here that are acquainted with brother Joseph's manner. He would not bear the usage I have borne, and would appear as though he would tear down all the houses in the city, and tear up trees by the roots, if men conducted to him in the way they have to me.

I am required by those who sit here today and by the whole Church to bear off this kingdom, to see that it is preserved inviolate, and that the Priesthood is honored; but it seems, on the right hand and on the left, as though there is a concerted plan among nearly all the Elders and High Priests to keep every dime of money out of my hands, make me pay the debts of the Church, do the work, and they keep the means and use it for their own purposes. The ancient Apostles and ministers of Christ could not live without eating. They had to eat, drink, and wear—to have sustenance while on earth. So do I, though I do not require the rich luxuries of life. I am not so fond as many are of high living, but I have to eat and rest. And when a Church debt comes from England, New York, Missouri, St. Louis, or elsewhere, the money has to be paid. I cannot chew paper and spit out bank bills that will pass in payment of those debts, neither shall I undertake to do it. I want the gold and silver that are paid on tithing, and the identical horses, cows, and young stock that are brought in on tithing; or, if stock and other products are retained, give us better than what you keep, and not keep the good and give us the bad. Neither do I wish a person owing tithing to offer an old hipped horse at forty dollars, and ask me to pay him twenty dollars in cash and let the balance go to pay tithing, when the old animal is not worth ten dollars.

Pour means into the storehouse of the Lord, and prove him, and see whether he will not pour out greater blessings than you can contain. You have not room enough this year in which to store the abundance of grain the Lord has given you: you have to store it in wagon boxes, &c., and much of it goes to waste, and the people are not blessed for it. You ought to carefully save every kernel. As for prophesying that a famine will come upon you, I shall not do so. Should it come, we will do the best we can. We have had a light famine here, and dealt out provisions to the brethren as long as we could, and got along very well.

May God bless you! Amen.