

Want of Governing Capacities Among Men—Elements of the Sacrament—Apostasy, Etc.

A Sermon by President Brigham Young, Delivered in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, June 5, 1859.

Some of the questions propounded by brother Clements, in his remarks, produced in me rather a humorsome feeling—especially the inquiry of the lady as to why she was not a man; and I perceived that it had the same effect upon the congregation. In the first place, permit me to answer that inquiry according to the spirit that passed over the congregation. It brought to my mind a conversation concerning a certain gentleman who has been in high office in the United States. The person I was conversing with placed much stress upon the circumstance that both those gentlemen and myself were Yankees. I thought that I was tolerably well acquainted with his character. I deemed him to be a good, kind, affable, and honorable man. After much conversation, I told the person that I had but one fault to find with that gentleman, and that was not really a fault—only a slight mistake. He ought to have come into the world a woman. And, perhaps, the lady brother Clements has referred to should have been the officer, and the officer should have been that lady.

Pardon my humorsome remarks, for I feel a little, perhaps, as I should not, after hearing so serious and good a discourse as we have this morning. At times there is a spirit in me to treat things according to their nature, and then my style must of necessity be somewhat in accordance with the subject. I will treat the question in a more serious manner.

Who the lady is I know not, and I have seen a great many like her, and I think there would be much more sound judgment and true, sound philosophy exhibited, if persons would inquire why about three-fourths or seven-eighths of the men are not women. Why so? Because of the imbecility in the brains of men. Look through Utah and over the world, and how many who have beards are men in their capacities in the common avocations of life, to say nothing about kings, rulers, statesmen, presidents, and governors? How many men are there capable of sustaining themselves, a wife, and two or three children? Men who from their youth have been taught the strictest economy are incapable of sustaining themselves and a small family, aside from ability to govern and control a people, a nation, or a kingdom. Hundreds of thousands—yes, millions of men, do not exhibit the mental ability that one might suppose women should possess and exhibit. In our own community there are plenty of ladies who, give them the entire control of their own domestic affairs, will make a better living, live in better style, and rear their families better than at present.

Search among the various nations, and you can find men of very respectable talent—men learned upon various subjects, skilled in mechanism, philosophers of various grades, and historians; but can you find a man that is capable of rightly dictating a nation? You may ask the wisest men in a nation if there are great statesmen now living among them, and they will tell you that their real statesmen have all gone to the silent tomb. Have we any? Where can you now find statesmen in the United States possessing the ability that Daniel Webster and many others had—men who can foresee the results of the acts of individuals, of legislators, and of Congress fifty years hence? Where is there a nation that has been able to preserve its organization from the early ages of the world until now? As you have been often told, the providences of God are with them, though they know it not. He sets up a kingdom here, and casts down another there, and overrules the acts of the people to produce the results he desires. In regard to ourselves, there is not a man or woman in this kingdom, if they possessed the true principle of knowledge and wisdom, but what would know at once that they are not yet capable of magnifying any higher station than they now occupy. There is not a man or woman here but occupies a position in which they have full liberty, freedom, and opportunity to dispense their skill and knowledge to benefit themselves and the community: they are not coerced to lose one particle of time and ability.

If I find a man, as I do once in a while, who thinks that he ought to be sustained in a higher position than he occupies, that proves to me that he does not understand his true position, and is not capable of magnifying it. Has he not already the privilege of exhibiting all the talents he has—of doing all the good he is capable of in this kingdom? Is he curtailed in the least, in anywise or place, in bringing forth his wisdom and powers, and exhibiting

them before the community, and leading out? No, not in the least. Are any of you infringed upon or abridged in the least? Is there a sister who has not the privilege of exhibiting all the talent and power she will, or is capable of, for the benefit of her sisters and her children? Are the sisters deprived of any liberty in displaying their taste and talent to improve the community?

When I hear persons say that they ought to occupy a station more exalted than they do, and hide the talents they are in possession of, they have not the true wisdom they ought to have. There is a lack in them, or they would improve upon the talents given.

I can say to the sisters, if you have superior talents, arise and let your light shine. Prove to your neighbors and the community that you are capable of teaching those sisters whom you deem to be ignorant or neglectful. I have placed a low estimate upon the standing and capacity of men; and now let me take the privilege to say a few words to you—to the ladies who have reached the age of thirty years. According to my view of the subject, there is not one in a hundred that knows how to keep a house as it should be kept. I should judge, from what I have seen, that there are many who do not know the swillpail from the milkpail. Others do not know how to make butter and cheese, nor how to keep their children clean. Others, again, do not know how to teach their children as they should be taught.

I will not say, as do many, that the more I learn the more I am satisfied that I know nothing; for the more I learn the more I discern an eternity of knowledge to improve upon. There is an eternity of knowledge; and the little I have gained, through the blessings of the Lord, I wish to improve upon. I can teach you how to become wealthy in gold and silver, in silks and satins, and in all worldly possessions—also in the riches of eternal life. All I ask of you is to believe that I tell you the truth, and then carry it out.

Let me throw the lash at the “Mormon” Elders a little. Many of you will exchange your last bushel of wheat with the stores for ribbons and gewgaws when you really need it for bread. And, with shamefacedness I say it, some will take the last peck of their grain to the distillery to buy whiskey, and then beg their bread.

I will now answer another question propounded by brother Clements, when he said he could not answer all questions, stating that baptism was instituted, but he could not tell why. You remember reading, in the last book of the New Testament, that in the beginning God cursed the earth; but did he curse all things pertaining to it? No, he did not curse the water, but he blessed it. Pure water is cleansing—it serves to purify; and you are aware that the ancient Saints were very tenacious with regard to their purification by water. From the beginning the Lord instituted water for that purpose among others. I do not mean from the beginning of this earth alone; and although we have no immediate concern in inquiring into the organization of other earths that do not come within reach of our investigation, yet I will say that water has been the means of purification in every world that has been organized out of the immensity of matter.

The Lord has instituted laws and ordinances, and all have their peculiar design and meaning. And though we may not know the origin of the necessity of being baptized for the remission of sins, it answers that portion of the law we are now under to teach the people in their ignorance that water is designed for purification, and to instruct them to be baptized therein for the remission of their sins. If the people could fully understand this matter, they would perceive that it is perfectly reasonable and has been the law to all worlds. And this world, so benighted at present, and so lightly esteemed by infidels, as observed by brother Clements, when it becomes celestialized, it will be like the sun, and be prepared for the habitation of the Saints, and be brought back into the presence of the Father and the Son. It will not then be an opaque body as it now is, but it will be like the stars of the firmament, full of light and glory: it will be a body of light. John compared it, in its celestialized state, to a sea of glass.

Brother Clements inquired why we used bread and wine in the ordinance of the Lord’s supper. I will not teach a doctrine not found in the Old and New Testaments. Bread is the staff of life: it answers to the nourishment necessary to sustain the body of man and preserve its organization. When Jesus took the bread and blessed it, he gave it to his disciples and said, “This is my body.” You eat the sacramental bread—what for? What good does it do? What is it? Nothing but bread. You bless it and partake of it as the staff of life that Jesus Christ has given you,

and emblematical of his broken body. He is the organizer of your bodies; he is the author of this earth—the heir of it from his Father, and has purchased it with his blood, which the juice of the grape was instituted by him to represent. He poured out his blood freely to redeem a fallen world—the wine answering to the blood which Jesus spilled, if you partake of it in faith; for it is the faith that brings the blessing of life to you. It is through obedience to the ordinance that God bestows renewed life upon you. By this means the children of God have life within them to live and not die.

The wine answers to the blood of Christ, and the bread to his body. His blood was poured out as we pour out wine, and his body was broken as we break bread, to redeem a fallen world and all things pertaining to it, so far as the curse had fallen.

The blood he spilled upon Mount Calvary he did not receive again into his veins. That was poured out, and when he was resurrected, another element took the place of the blood. It will be so with every person who receives a resurrection: the blood will not be resurrected with the body, being designed only to sustain the life of the present organization. When this is dissolved, and we again obtain our bodies by the power of the resurrection, that which we now call the life of the body, and which is formed from the food we eat and the water we drink, will be supplanted by another element; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

In his remarks, brother Clements reasoned, touching persons forsaking the faith, and urged the necessity of man studying himself. If we could comprehend ourselves—could fully comprehend what our organization is, and understand the power, wisdom, and magnitude of intelligence it is capable of attaining, we should entertain many ideas very different from what we now do. To make a nice distinction, there is but a hair's breadth between the vulgar and sublime. There is but a hair's breadth between the depths of infidelity and the heights of the faith of the Gods. Man is here like a feather trembling between the two, liable continually to be operated upon by the power of the enemy; and it is through that power that the children of men are made to doubt the evidences of their own senses, when, at the same time, if they would reflect for a moment and listen to the intelligence which God has placed within them, they would know, when they saw what is termed a miracle, the power by which it is wrought: they would know when they have seen with their eyes and felt with their hands, or when they have had a heavenly vision.

Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel. One of the Quorum of the Twelve—a young man full of faith and good works, prayed, and the vision of his mind was opened, and the angel of God came and laid the plates before him, and he saw and handled them, and saw the angel, and conversed with him as he would with one of his friends; but after all this, he was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy, and has continued to contend against this work. There are hundreds in a similar condition.

In comparison, there is but a hair's breadth between the depths of infidelity and the heights of the faith of the Saints; and the organization of man is perfectly independent in its sphere. Life and death, truth and falsehood, light and darkness, good and evil, the power of the Devil and the influence of God, the things of God and the things of the Devil, all these inducements and powers are interspersed among the children of men; and they of necessity must undergo this ordeal to prove themselves; and in the absence of the Spirit of revelation, let their sound judgments arise and declare, "Though he slay me, I will not forsake him."

Some of the brethren come to me and say, "Brother Brigham, is it my duty to pray when I have not one particle of the spirit of prayer in me?" True, at times men are perplexed and full of care and trouble, their ploughs and other implements are out of order, their animals have strayed, and a thousand things perplex them; yet our judgment teaches us that it is our duty to pray, whether we are particularly in the spirit of praying or not. My doctrine is, it is duty to pray; and when the time for prayer comes, John should say, "This is the place and this is the time to pray: knees bend down upon that floor, and do so at once." But John says, "I do not want to pray; I do not feel like it." Knees, get down, I say; and down bend the knees, and he begins to think and reflect. Can you say anything? Can you not say, God have mercy on me a sinner? Yes, he can do this, if he can rise up and curse his neighbor for some

ill deeds. Now, John, open your mouth and say, Lord, have mercy upon me. "But I do not feel the spirit of prayer." That does not excuse you, for you know what your duty is. You have a passion, a will, a temper to overcome. You are subject to temptation as other men; and when you are tempted, let the judgment which God has placed within you and the intelligence he has given you by the light of the Spirit be the master in this case.

If I could not master my mouth, I would my knees, and make them bend until my mouth would speak. "But the cattle are in the corn." Let them eat; you can attend to them when you have finished praying. Let the will of the man be brought into subjection to the law of Christ—to all the ordinances of the house of God. What, in his darkness and depression? Yes; for that is the time to prove whether one is a friend of God, that the confidence of the Almighty may increase in his son. We should so live that our confidence and faith may increase in Him. We must even go further than that. Let us so live that the faith and confidence of our heavenly Father may increase towards us, until he shall know that we will be true to him under any and all circumstances and at all times. When in our darkness and temptation we are found faithful to our duty, that increases the confidence of our God in us. He sees that we will be his servants. To use a comparison, the sandbars are numerous over which the people of God have to pass, and I have not time now to notice them. You have heard an excellent, heavenly discourse: remember it, brethren and sisters; treasure it up in your hearts: treasure up every good and forsake every evil, and learn to work the works of righteousness continually, regardless of what wicked men and devils may say.

But many think and others say that it is very hard to submit to everything, and retaliation is begotten in every bosom. I often find it so in my own. When we are lied about—when every kind of falsehood is uttered and printed against us that can be invented by the millions of devils that prompt the children of men to lie, it is sometimes difficult for me to repress the spirit of retaliation. But I have experienced that retaliation is seldom of any benefit. Then let them lie: they cannot escape suffering the consequences. If they tell nothing but the truth, all is right, and they will discover the kingdom of God still to prosper—still to increase and grow, until Jesus, whose right it is to reign, will rule King of nations, as he now reigns King of Saints.

How does he rule? If we believe in the providences of our God—in the supremacy of his dealings, is he not merciful? Yes. Does he cut down the children of men because they do not look at things and believe as I do? No. Will the Priesthood, when it bears rule upon the earth, ever interrupt an individual or community for not embracing the religion of that Priesthood? Never—no, never. What is the difficulty at present? It is as much as we can do to keep the Christians of the nineteenth century from cutting our throats because we differ from them in our religious belief. That is, in fact, all the difficulty. Not that the Latter-day Saints ever endeavored to interrupt any person in their faith and worship; and on this point I will call to witness all men who have been acquainted with us. True some Elders in this Church have been foolish; but brother Clements has just told you that he never crammed "Mormonism" down any man's throat, nor strove to do so, neither has any Elder while faithful to his calling. Has your humble servant ever attempted such a thing?

Here is truth—here are life and salvation. Will you have them? If you say, "Nay," all right; for you have the privilege of making your own choice. It has never altered my feelings towards individuals, as men or as women, whether they believe as I do or not. Can you live as neighbors with me? I can with you; and it is no particular concern of mine whether you believe with me or not. But my Christian brother says, "You must lay down your religion and embrace mine or I will persecute you." Have I ever offered to persecute a person, or have this people? No. But others say, "You 'Mormons' must forsake your religion."

All I ask is for the grace of God to enable us to endure to the end and be saved, and others are at liberty to make their choice. No matter whether a person is killed or not, be faithful to your lives' end, and obtain a glorious resurrection. But a few days only will pass before our mortal career will be ended, whether we are "Mormons" or not. Those only have the promise of salvation who endure to the end; and all I ask is that we may have faith to endure. Many have lifted the sword to cut down "Mormonism" in the bud, and for more than thirty years past they have striven to overthrow it, and have not accomplished their purpose; but it has grown and increased, and will continue to grow and increase, until it reigns triumphantly on the earth, and it will deal justice to all. Even the rights of devils will be respected—also the rights of all men occupying every grade and of every capacity. And those who have striven during so many years, and so faithfully, to kill this people, they will be judged according to

the deeds done in their bodies. If they never had the Holy Ghost, they can never be angels to the Devil to suffer the wrath of God to all eternity. And those of them who have lived according to the best light they had (and this will apply to all sects and parties of professing Christians, and to pagans and barbarians in all kingdoms, nations, and countries), will enjoy a glory hereafter that will be commensurate to their lives and the way in which they have improved upon their advantages; and by-and-by they will be freed entirely from the power of the Devil. They will be shut out from the presence of the Lord, which the ancients compared to hell; but no person can enter into the presence of the Father and of the Son to dwell, unless he be sanctified.

To enter into the presence of God, we must be qualified. What confidence could we have that he is the Father, only through our qualifications? As brother Clements has said, were he to appear to an unqualified person, he would have to appear as a man, and that person would want the evidence and testimony of a third person to convince him that he was not laboring under a grand deception; and then he might, with the same propriety, call for the evidence of a fourth, a fifth, etc., and never be satisfied. God is a spiritual being, and no mortal being can behold him in his glory and live, though his mind may be caught away in vision, as was Paul's. But man has a capacity given him to have the vision of his mind open to discern heavenly things, and to treasure up wisdom and knowledge by that means, until he is prepared to receive the kingdom of heaven. May God bless you! Amen.