

Opening of the Last Dispensation—Development of the Work of God—Sending Forth Missionaries—Usefulness of the Sisters—Improvement Associations—Education—Cooperation

Discourse by President John Taylor, delivered at the General Conference, Tuesday Afternoon, April 8, 1879.

I will state that I feel very much obliged to my brethren for the generous feeling manifested to myself. Permit me, however, to say, with regard to some of these ideas presented to the Conference by Brother George Q. and which he has said, he has frequently presented to me and others of the Twelve, that while I duly appreciate the feelings and views of my brethren, and am not ignorant of the proprieties of life, individually I would not wish to change my position. Personally I care nothing about the outside show, the glitter and appearance of men; but I do care about the great eternal principles associated with the Church and Kingdom of God upon the earth. And as has been stated, it was some time before I could make up my mind to accept a proposition of this kind. And I accept it now simply in the capacity of your servant for Christ's sake for the benefit of the Kingdom of God and that all things may be conducted in a proper manner.

Now we will let this pass, and talk about something else.

I have been very much interested in the remarks that have been made at this Conference. It is now forty- nine years since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. There were then, as you heard stated and as we very well know, six members organized. There were however, more than six persons in the Church, as was remarked by Brother Snow, the organization being effected for the purpose of legal recognition, still there were only a very few, and as the spirit of revelation rested down upon God's servant Joseph in these early days, who like Adam, Moses, Abraham, Jesus, Jared, Nephi, Moroni and others, had the heavens unfolded to his view, and although the Church was so few in number the principles and purposes of God were developed fully to the vision of his mind, and he gazed upon the things that are to transpire in the latter days associated with the dispensation that he was called upon by the Almighty to introduce. He learned by communication from the heavens, from time to time, of the great events that should transpire in the latter days. He understood things that were past, and comprehended the various dispensations and the designs of those dispensations. He not only had the principles developed, but he was conversant with the parties who officiated as the leading men of those dispensations, and from a number of them he received authority and keys and priesthood and power for the carrying out of the great purposes of the Lord in the last days, who were sent and commissioned specially by the Almighty to confer upon him those keys and this authority, and hence he introduced what was spoken of by all the prophets since the world was; the dispensation in which we live, which differs from all other dispensations in that it is the dispensation of the fulness of times, embracing all other dispensations, all other powers, all other keys and all other privileges and immunities that ever existed upon the face of the earth. At that time he was a feeble youth, inexperienced, without a knowledge of the learning of the day. But God put him in possession of that kind of intelligence, and what may be termed a scientific knowledge of all things pertaining to this earth, and the heavens, if you please, which was altogether ahead of all the intelligence that existed in the world. He commenced as opportunity presented by following the education he had received from the Almighty, by teaching the principles of life and salvation, the principles of the everlasting Gospel, by conferring upon others that priesthood which had been conferred upon him, and by organizing a state of things that was after the pattern of the heavens, that was calculated to live and grow and increase, that had the principle of life and vitality within itself, and that was calculated to draw together the honest in heart and assimilate them in their ideas and views and feelings and faith, and empower them to operate with him and with the Lord and with the holy priesthood that had existed in former ages. And thus he commenced to organize the Church with all its various offices under the direct inspiration, guidance and revelation of the Lord. The First Presidency was pointed out, the Twelve were also pointed out and designated, and these quorums were ordained. The high priesthood was organized however before these other quorums took shape. Then there were the quorums of Seventies, then the quorums of Elders, then the Bishops, then the quorums of Priests, Teachers and Deacons, together with the High Councils and all that we know about these things. He taught us all that we know about them; God taught him. Hence in the various organizations of the several quorums of priesthood

whether it relates to the Melchizedek, Aaronic or Levitical priesthood, all of these, together with the duties devolving upon each, were given by the Lord. And hence the church that we are associated with is called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Hence Jesus Christ is the medium through whom we are to approach the Father, calling upon him in the name of Jesus; for there is no name given under heaven, nor known among men, whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ. And although they do not do it now, yet the time is approaching when to him “every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is the Christ, to the glory of God the Father.” And hence the religion we profess is one that has been given us from the heavens. We cannot dispense with it; we cannot dispense with any part of it. It is not of man, but from the Lord God, our Heavenly Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, making use of his servant Joseph and those whom he should call by revelation as the instruments to carry out the purposes of God upon the earth. The priesthood we have received we received not of man nor by man, but by revelation. And Latter-day President Young, a little before his death, organized all the various branches of the Church into Stakes, with the officers thereof, carrying out the design of God and his revelations to Joseph Smith; and placed them upon the foundation that was first laid by Joseph Smith under the immediate revelations of the Lord. And God expects it at our hands that we magnify our calling, and that we cleave unto him as his servants upon whom he has conferred this priesthood. He expects it at our hands that we shall magnify it, and not operate according to our peculiar notions, but according to the will and law and guidance and revelations of God in all things and under all circumstances; for we are here as Jesus was here—not to do our own will, but the will of our Heavenly Father who has sent us, and who has called us to this high calling, and has made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

In accordance with the order of God, the Twelve, the Seventies, the High Priests and Elders have been abroad among the nations of the earth, delivering the testimony which God gave to them, and the Spirit and power of God has operated with us in our ministrations; and the results of these operations and these labors, and the faith and the self-abnegation and self-denial and the desire to do the will of God, and the testimonies that have been borne, are manifested in the Saints gathered today as we are in the valleys of the mountains. These things have been brought about by the interposition of the Almighty; we are, as such dependent upon him today, and as we ever were in all the days of our lives, for guidance, for support, for revelation, for the Spirit of God to guide us that we may not make any false steps; but as a people we must magnify the Lord our God in our hearts and honor him and observe his laws and keep his commandments. There has quite a change taken place since this Gospel was introduced, as the thousands of people who inhabit these valleys sufficiently attest. And if we continue to progress in faith, in union, in intelligence, in virtue, in purity, in knowledge, and especially in the knowledge of God and in the observance of his ordinances, the work of the Lord will continue to roll with tenfold rapidity. We are just commencing our labors, and are just getting ready to perform the work that God has laid upon our shoulders, and are just commencing to perform the work that God intends us to accomplish; everything that has been prophesied by all the ancient prophets, as contained in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and those things predicted by Joseph Smith, and every other prophet of God, will as surely be fulfilled as we are here today, without any faltering, or flagging, or hesitation.

We go on and attend to many things. Our organizations are very good; but we need, I think sometimes, the breath of life from God breathing into them all through, that, the Spirit and power of the Most High may be in our midst, and that the power and blessings of God that come through the ordinances may be in our midst, and that the power and blessings of God, that come through the ordinances may be imparted to us; and such will be the case if we are faithful in the performance of the duties devolving upon us. It is not with us a question of what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or what kind of houses we shall live in; it is not a matter of so much importance as it is to be doing the will of God to have our hearts engaged in his service, to feel that we are building up the Zion of the Lord of Hosts, to feel that we are recognized of the heavens, to feel that we are associated with the priesthood behind the veil who have lived and operated in time and are now operating in eternity; for they without us cannot be made perfect, neither can we without them be made perfect. We need their assistance from the heavens, and we ought to seek it all the time.

Let me speak of this not only to the Twelve, but to the presidents of Stakes and their counselors, and to all men holding authority, to seek to God, seek for wisdom, seek for faith, and learn to approach God, that we may draw

down blessings from heaven and partake of that faith which was once delivered to the Saints. We are trying to do some things and are doing them pretty well. Do I wish to find fault? No. Or to censure anybody? No. But I wish everybody would so live and act that they would not censure themselves, that their minds would not condemn them; for if your own hearts condemn you, God is greater than your hearts.

We are doing pretty well. We are building our Temples, and there is a laudable spirit manifested in relation to these things generally. Do all do it? No. Have all this spirit? No. I wish they had; but then we would be expecting too much perhaps. But there is a growing interest in these things, which I am glad to give the Saints credit for. And in speaking of our Temples, I suppose there are no less than 500 men engaged today in building Temples in this Territory. Some people would consider this quite a tax upon them, and, I may say, we have some who call themselves Latter-day Saints who have a little of this feeling, not much, but a little of it. But men who feel right, they feel that they and all they have belong to the Lord; they feel that they are on hand to perform the work of God, to build up his kingdom, to operate with him and with the holy priesthood, and to prepare Temples to administer for the living and for the dead; that we may indeed be not poor and helpless dolts; but feel that we are saviors upon Mount Zion, and that the kingdom is the Lord's.

There is a good feeling manifested among the brethren and also among the sisters, who are quite as zealous in most interests as the brethren are. Notwithstanding the immense labors we are performing in our building, for we are doing a good deal, we are not unmindful of other matters. There is constant labor going on in the Temple at St. George, with very little intermission, and a corps of persons steadily engaged administering in the ordinances of the Lord's House there; while in these other places, as you have heard read over, according to the financial accounts pertaining to the Temple being built in Manti and Logan—there has been expended in a short time on these two Temples nearly two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The brethren have taken hold of it with a will, and there seems to be a feeling among many of them to see who shall do the most, instead of who can do the least. And notwithstanding this there is about fifty thousand, I think, in round numbers, more tithing paid this last year than there was before these things commenced. I speak this for the credit of the Latter-day Saints. Honor, as the Scriptures say, to whom honor is due. And I am pleased to see a spirit of that kind grow and increase among the brethren.

There has been a good deal of care bestowed on the sending forth of missionaries whom we have sent forth among the different nations abroad and to this nation. There is a duty devolving upon the Twelve and the Seventies especially, to see that this work is performed; and we have been alive to this matter, and have aimed to call men that would not be embarrassed or perplexed in their minds, but such as would go forth as the servants of the Living God, who would not, when they got about two hundred miles from home, commence to think when it would be time for them to return; and the fruits are fast beginning to be borne in the European, the Scandinavian and other missions, and also in the United States. And we wish it to be understood among the Elders and Seventies that we do not want men to go on missions who look upon it as a painful duty for them to fulfill; we would rather such men stay at home. But he that hath a desire to preach the Gospel to the world, whose life is upright, pure and virtuous, and who is capable of presenting the principles of the Gospel to the world; he is the kind of man we are desirous to send. We do not want anybody to go simply because it might be thought that a mission would do him good, or that it might save him from some evil he might be likely to fall into. We do not want men to go abroad representing the Captain of our salvation to reform themselves; let the work of reformation be done at home. We want men to preach the Gospel who are honorable and upright men, and full of the Holy Ghost; and when such men go they go with our faith, carrying with them our esteem and love and affection; and if they need anything, we will give it to them. If their families need anything, we will have them looked after, we will feed them and clothe them and take care of them, and consider that they are our brethren and not that they are poor, miserable paupers, or that their wives and families are a trouble to us; we want to do away with all such feelings. Let us cultivate the spirit of magnanimity and kindness, and as the Lord blesses us, let us bless others; and that is all the things of the earth are worth. Do good to all men, especially to the household of faith. And by and by, as was the case formerly, those who go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, will return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

Furthermore, we have an auxiliary among our sisters here. Brother Geo. Q. Cannon represented how they were imposed on in many lands and how they had been. Why should they be? Are they not our mothers? Are they not our wives? Are they not our sisters? Are they not our children? Should we not protect them? Do we profess to be in the image of God, holding the holy priesthood of God, and then would we treat the fair daughters of Zion with contempt, or permit them to be injured or imposed upon in any way? God forbid. They are flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone; they are our helpmeets, and our associations and our relations with them ought to be pleasant and agreeable and with all long-suffering and fidelity. And then the sisters should turn round and help to bless one another, and act as our teachers are doing in other respects—teaching their sisters, looking after the poor and assisting the bishops in the performance of their labors. And the Relief Societies which have been organized have been of very great benefit to the Saints of God. And I say, God bless the sisters, and inspire them with more of that heavenly spirit, that they may assist their husbands and their brethren and their children—their sons and their daughters—to promote correct principles, to stem the tide of iniquity, and to promulgate virtue, truth and purity among the Saints of God. And I would say, it is the duty of the bishops and presidents of Stakes to assist them all they can, which I believe they generally do, to carry out everything that is good and praiseworthy.

There is another class of people among us doing a great deal of good; that is our Mutual Improvement Associations; both Young Men's and Young Women's. How much more pleasant it is to see our youth grow up in the fear of God, trying to instruct one another in the principles of life and salvation, than to see them ignore the laws of God. How pleasing to us! How pleasing to God and the holy angels! Let us encourage these things, and instruct our sons and daughters, that they may grow up in intelligence, virtue, purity and holiness before the Lord.

And then we want to study also the principles of education, and to get the very best teachers we can to teach our children; see that they are men and women who fear God and keep his commandments. We do not want men or women to teach the children of the Latter-day Saints who are not Latter-day Saints themselves. Hear it, you Elders of Israel and you school-trustees! We want none of these things. Let others who fear not God take their course; but it is for us to train our children up in the fear of God. God will hold us responsible for this trust. Hear it, you Elders of Israel and you fathers and you mothers! Talking about education, as I said before, Joseph Smith knew more in regard to the education than all the philosophers and scientists of the earth; and he knew it by the revelations of God. We want to get together to train our children up in the fear of God, to teach them correct principles ourselves, and place them in possession of such things as will lead them in the paths of life.

I find it is time for me to quit. I feel to thank you for your attendance at this Conference, and for the kind of spirit that has been manifested here. And to thank the members of our choir who have made for us sweet music; and I would say that our choir is a credit to our Territory and to our people. And furthermore they are meeting together for the purpose of cultivating the art of music, and that we may be organized and be more perfect in relation to these things.

I would like to have said something about our Sunday Schools. I do not believe we are behind any people on the face of the earth in relation to these matters. I am informed by the general Superintendent that we have 29,000 children attending Sunday Schools; and I would not be afraid to say that that is more than attend the Sunday Schools in all the Territories put together, outside of Utah. (A voice from the stand—"And in half the States.") Some one remarks, and in half of the States. I do not know how that is. But they do say our children are Utah's surest and best crop. Let us try to train them up in the fear of God, that we may have his blessing to be with us.

I would like to have said something, too, about our cooperative associations. I am pleased to inform you that the Cooperative Institution of this city is doing remarkably well; it is on a solid foundation and everything is moving along pleasantly and agreeably. We have organized for some time a Trade's Union, through which all the people of Utah can be represented. And while the Co-op calls upon us to sustain them, which is right and proper, we want the Co-op to sustain us. There are two sides to this question, hence we have an organization called a Board of Trade in a number of the Stakes, and expect to perfect them in all the Stakes, that the whole people may be represented at our general board. Then we expect to spread and grow in manufactures of all kinds, that we may become a self-sustaining people, a people who shall be independent, under God, of all other powers.

I will not detain you. God bless Israel, and all that bless Israel, and let our enemies be confounded. And God grant unto us power to serve him and observe his laws that we may have a claim upon his blessings, and at last obtain eternal life in his kingdom, in the name of Jesus. Amen.