

The Position the Saints Have Occupied Has Been a Peculiar One—The Unity of the Saints—Home Manufacture Preferable to Importation—Organization Necessary to Self-Sustenance

Discourse by Elder John Taylor, delivered at the Adjourned General Conference, held in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, May 7, 1874.

Those things which we have been listening to are of very great importance to the Latter-day Saints. Situated as we are, entertaining the views that we do, in possession of the light and intelligence that have been communicated unto us, we stand, in these respects, in an entirely different position from that of the world with which we are surrounded; and, as has already been stated, it is necessary that we begin to reflect a little upon that which has been revealed to us, that we may understand our position and relationship to each other, the duties and responsibilities that devolve upon us as fathers, as mothers, as children, as Elders of Israel, and in all the various relationships of life, and that we may comprehend the requirements made of us by our heavenly Father. Some of those things which have been presented before us are obvious to every reflecting mind, there is nothing strange, anomalous or peculiar about them; they are things which have been more or less advocated by different statesmen among the various nations of the earth, and, according to circumstances, they have been adopted, more or less, by a great many people, and we, the Latter-day Saints, have approached nearer to them than many of us seem to have any idea of. There would not be time, at present, to enter into an elaborate detail of the various plans, ideas and workings involved in the principles which have been presented before us this morning; but in taking a cursory view of our position, we shall find that it is very different from that of any other people. We have already carried out a great many of those things which have been referred to, that is, a great many of us have; not all. The position that we have occupied in this nation, in the States of Missouri and Illinois, and in the various countries of those States, and the history of this people has been a very peculiar one. It is true, as has been said that if we would give up our religion, and act and feel as others act and feel, we should be hail fellows well met with the world, and we could have the fellowship of the devil and all his imps. We could have this all the time if we would conform our ideas to theirs. But what are their ideas? Who can describe them? They are simply a babel of contrarities, contradictions, confusion, ignorance, darkness, speculation, mystery, folly, vanity, crime, iniquity and every kind of evil that man can think of, and if we were willing to join in with this it would be all right, and we should be hail fellows well met. But we do not propose to do that. God has spoken from the heavens; the light and intelligence which exist in the eternal worlds have been communicated, the heavens have been opened and the revelations of God given to man, and we have participated in them in part, and the light thus received has enabled us to look at the world as it is; it has opened to our view the visions of eternity; it has made us acquainted with our God, with the principles of truth, and we would not barter that for all the world has to give us. We rejoice, therefore, and thank God for the light and intelligence that he has communicated to us, and so far we have measurably been one, and we could not have helped ourselves and prevented it, if we had desired to, for the world was determined to make us one, or make hypocrites of us, like themselves; one of the two. We had either got to be one, or deny the principles that God has implanted in every honest man's soul, and we would not do that. No man will barter his independence, no man will barter his convictions, no man, who is intelligent and honorable, will barter his religion or his politics at the caprice of any other man. God has implanted certain principles in man, and as long as manhood is retained they cannot be obliterated, they are written there as in letters of living fire, and there they will remain so long as we retain our manhood and standing before God. What has been the result of this, so far as it has gone? Why, when the people in Missouri proposed that we should live among them in peace if we would leave our religion, did we do it? Not quite. What did we do? We clung to our religion. And what did those honest, generous, gentle, intelligent, Christian people do? Robbed us of nearly all we possessed, and with the balance we agreed to help one another to get to some place where men could worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, if such a place could be found in republican America. Well, we left. Did we unite? Yes, we did; and every man that had a team, a wagon, two, three or four horses, two, three, four, five or six yoke of cattle, or bread, money or clothing, distributed among his brethren, and we helped one another out until every man who wanted to leave had left. There might have been a few miserable "skeezeks," such as we have among us here, a few miserable hounds left, but what of them? Why, nothing at all, they did not think anything of

themselves, and nobody thought anything of them.

We commenced again in Illinois, just on the same principle. There we built a Temple, and performed the ordinances of God in his house; there we attended to our sacraments, entered into our covenants, and commenced anew to worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, and there again we found a lot of Christians, just the same as in Missouri, who did not like our religion. Said they—"Gentlemen, we do not like your religion; but if you will be like us, you can live among us; if you do not believe and worship God as we do, you cannot stay here." Well, we could not quite come it then, any more than we did before; and they killed Joseph Smith and Hyrum Smith, burnt our houses, destroyed our property, and let loose mobs upon us, and deprived us of the rights of American citizens; and finally we had to leave the States and come out among the red men of the desert, that we might find that protection among the savages that Christendom denied us. How did we get here? We helped one another. In the Temple that we had erected, and dedicated to the Most High God, we lifted up our hands before God, and covenanted before him that we would help one another to leave that land, so long as there was one left in it who desired to leave. Did we keep this covenant? We did. Why? Because we felt an interest in the welfare of our brethren; we believed in our religion, in building up the kingdom of God, and in carrying out his purposes and designs. The Christians object to all this? Of course they do, but who cares about them? I do not, not one straw; we have had so much of their tender mercies, that they take no effect now upon us. Again, we pay our Tithing. Some may inquire—"Do not the Priest- hood rob you?" I do not know, I do not think we are robbed very much, or that we are very much injured. We do not do enough of it to be injured very much, we are something like what the boy said of his father. A man asked a boy—"Are you a Mormon?" "Yes." "Is your father a Mormon?" Said the boy—"Yes, but he don't potter much at it." There are a great many of us who do not potter much at it, but still we make the attempt.

What have we done since we came here? Before the railroad was made we sent from here, year after year, as many as five hundred teams to help the poor who were unable to help themselves. Hence you see that a good deal of this unity of action has been carried out among us, but we have only pottered a little at it, we have not got right into the matter, only in part.

Our Ladies' Relief and other societies and organizations have done a good deal of this kind of thing, and they are looking after the interests of the poor, the widow and the fatherless. What is the business of our Bishops? Why, to attend to these things. Do they do it? They do. And then, if there is any enterprise, or anything required, the people are ready to take hold and do it, independent, say, of these covenants we have heard spoken of. A short time ago, in St. George, they commenced to build a Temple. Men were called upon from different parts, some from this city, a great many from Sanpete County, and from the different settlements, to go and assist down in that locality in building the Temple. Did they do it? Yes. Was there much grunting about it? I have not heard that there was. I happened to be in a meeting a short time ago, and it was said they wanted a little means to help to clothe these men, and to furnish them certain things, and in a very little while there were some ten or twelve hundred dollars subscribed, without any grunting. There is a feeling of sympathy in the hearts of Latter-day Saints towards one another, and for the upbuilding and advancement of the kingdom of God. But yet some of us are a little startled when we hear about uniting our properties, &c. I am amused sometimes to see the manifestation of feeling by some on this subject. We have been praying a long while that we might go back to Jackson County, and build up the Center Stake of Zion; that we might enter into the United Order of God, and be one in both temporal and spiritual things, in fact in everything; yet when it comes along it startles us, we are confused and hardly know what to think of it. This reminds me of an anecdote, which I will relate to you. Among the passengers on a steamer crossing the Atlantic, was a very zealous minister who was all the time preaching to those on board about the glory and happiness of heaven, and how happy they would all be when they got there. During the voyage a very heavy storm arose, and the vessel was drifted from her course and was in great danger of striking on a reef of rocks. The captain went to examine his chart, and after a while returned with a very sorrowful face, and said—"Ladies and gentlemen, in twenty minutes from this time we shall all be in heaven." "God forbid!" said the minister. Many of us are a good deal like this minister; for years we have been talking about a new order of things, about union and happiness, and about going back to Jackson County, but the moment it is presented to us we say—"God forbid."

But then on sober, second thought, another feeling seems to inspire us, and wherever we go a spirit seems to rest upon the people which leads them almost unanimously to embark in these things; and when we reflect, saying nothing about our religion, an extended system of cooperation seems to agree with every principle of good common sense. Is there anything extraordinary or new in the doctrine that it is well for a community to be self-sustaining? Why, the Whigs, you know, of this country, have contended on that principle from the time of the organization of the government, and they have sanctioned it and plead in its behalf before Congress, in political caucuses, and before the people up to the present time. There is nothing new in the doctrine of a people being self-sustaining. The first Napoleon introduced into France what is known as the "Continental system," which encouraged the production of all necessary articles at home, and it is the results of this system which today gives stability to France, and has enabled her, after the severe trials of the late war, to pay off her indebtedness and stand independent among the nations.

Now, for instance, we require a great many things in connection with human existence. We need boots and shoes, stockings, pants, vests, coats, hats, handkerchiefs, shirts, we need cloth of various kinds, and dresses, shawls, bonnets, &c., and in every reflecting mind, the question naturally arises, Is it better for us to make these things ourselves at home, or to have somebody abroad make them for us? Is it better for each man to labor separately, as we do now, or to be organized so as to make the most of our labor? We have a large number of hides here in this Territory, what do we do with them generally? Send them to the States. We raise a large amount of wool here, what do we do with it? We export a great deal of it to the States. We have got a large amount of excellent timber here, what do we do for our furniture? We send to the States for a great deal of it. Where do we get our pails and our washtubs, and all our cooper ware from? We send to the States for it. Where do we get our brooms from? From the States; and so on all the way through the catalogue, and millions on millions of dollars are sent out of the Territory every year, for the purchase of articles, most of which we could manufacture and raise at home. This is certainly very poor economy, for we have thousands and thousands of men who are desirous to get some kind of employment, and they cannot get it. Why? Because other people are making our shoes, hats, clothing, bonnets, silks, artificial flowers, and many other things that we need. This may do very well for a while in an artificial state of society; but the moment any reverse comes that kind of thing is upset, and all our calculations are destroyed.

I believe in organizing the tanners and having the hides tanned at home. When the hides are tanned I believe in organizing the shoemakers, and manufacturing our own shoes and boots, I believe in keeping our wool at home, and in having it manufactured in our own factories, and we have got as good factories here as anywhere. They should work up all the wool in the country, and if there is not enough raised to keep them running, import more. Then I believe in organizing men to take care of our stock—our cattle and sheep, and increasing the clip of wool, that we may have enough to meet the demands of the whole community. Then, when our cloth is made, I believe in organizing tailors' companies to manufacture that cloth into clothing—pants, coats, vests, and everything of the kind that we need. Then for our furniture, I believe in going into the mountains and cutting down the timber, framing it into proper shape, and then manufacturing the various articles of furniture that we need; if we require another kind of timber, import that, but make the furniture here. When we talk about cooperation, we have entered but very little into it, and it has been almost exclusively confined to the purchase of goods. There is not much in that. I wish we would learn how to produce them instead of purchasing them. I wish we could concentrate our energies, and organize all hands, old, middle-aged and young, male and female, and put them under proper directions, with proper materials to manufacture everything we need to wear and use. We have forgotten even how to make sorghum molasses, and our memories are getting short on other points. We can hardly make a hat or coat, or a pair of boots and shoes, but we have to send to the States and import these paper ones, which last a very short time and then drop to pieces, and you have your hands continually in your pockets to supply these wants, and by and by your pockets are empty. It is therefore necessary that we right about face, and begin to turn the other end to, and be self-sustaining.

The President said he would like the Elders to give both sides of the question; but there is only one side to this question, and that is union in all our operations, in everything we engage in. They started a little thing like this in Box Elder County some time ago, and I was very much pleased to see the way things went there. I have spoken about it once or twice in public. They have got their cooperative store, it is true; but that is only a small part of it.

Sometime ago I asked them—"You have a factory here, haven't you?" "Yes." "Well, do you sell your wool, send it to the States to mix up with shoddy and get an inferior article, or do you make it up yourselves?" "We make it up ourselves." "Then you don't sell your wool, and keep your factory standing idle?" "No, we don't, our factory has never stood idle a day for want of wool since it was organized." Said I—"That looks right. What do you do with your hides? Do you send them off?" "No, we have got a very good tannery and we tan them, and make them into leather for shoes, and for harness and for other purposes." "Oh, indeed!" "Yes, that is the way it is." "Well, then, what next?" "Why, when we get our shoes made, we have a saddlers' organization, and they make all the saddlery and harness we want." "And what do you do with your cows? Do you let them run on the plains, and live or die, just as it happens, without making any cheese or butter?" "No, we have a cooperative dairy, and we have our cows in that, and we receive so much from them all the time regularly." "Well," said I, "that looks right. And are you all interested in this?" "Well, about two-thirds or three-fourths of us are all engaged in these matters." "How about your store, does it run away with the best part of it?" "No." "Does the factory get the cream of it?" "No." "Does some keen financial man get his fingers in and grab it?" "No, we are all mutually interested in everything, the profits as well as the losses." I have learned, since I was there, that they have made it a great success.

Now, then, if you can organize one little thing in that way, everything can be done in the same way. I was talking with President Lorenzo Snow, and he told me that they pay their men every Saturday night; they have a money of their own, and they pay their hands with it, and that is good for everything they require. And they make their arrangements unitedly, and they operate together for the general good. Said I—"How do they feel about this United Order?" "Oh," I was told, "They are ready for anything that God may send along." That is the feeling among the Saints, I believe, generally. I was, I think, at the biggest meeting I ever attended in Ogden City, along with some of the Presidency and Twelve and others, and I never saw more unanimity among the people on any question than on this one. That big Tabernacle was full, and the aisles were full, and everything was jammed to overflowing, and when a vote was called, nearly every hand went up. I thank God that his Spirit is operating upon the Latter-day Saints, and is leading them to a union in regard to these things.

May God help us, and lead us in the right path, in the name of Jesus. Amen.