

Why the Saints Meet Together—Their Pretensions—What Their Profession Implies—No Right to Sit in Judgment on the World—All Children of a Common Father—Many Good Men Inspired By the Spirit of God Who Did not Possess the Gift of the Holy Ghost—How Joseph Smith Obtained Knowledge—The Gospel—What the Savior Required—Operations of the Holy Ghost—What is Required of the Saints—Their Feelings—Duty of Missionaries—National Feelings Buried in Embracing the Gospel—Relationship to God—Destiny of the Faithful—What Have Religionists of the World to Offer?—Character of the Would-Be Reformers—Rights to Be Contended For—Corrupt Practices Condemned

Discourse by President John Taylor, delivered in the Assembly Hall, Salt Lake City, Sunday, Feb. 11, 1883

(Continued From Volume XXIII, Page 376, Journal of Discourses.) to assist us? The Lord, and if He does not I am sure we cannot do it, and if He does not show us how we cannot do it. Well, some people come and try to convert us. Very well, let them convert away. If they have anything to convert you to, I say for God's sake take it, if they have something that is more intelligent than that which has been communicated to you. We are desirous to obtain all truth from whatever quarter it comes, and every good thing that can be made manifest, and if anybody has got any truths that we have not we are prepared to embrace them, but we have no truths to barter away for the fictions, ideas, theories and opinions of men. It is written: "They shall be all taught of God." Have those men received anything from God to communicate? If they have let them state it, and if they have not let them hold their peace. "They shall be all taught of God." He will be their instructor, their judge, their guide, their director and their lawgiver, and he will give them the light and intelligence which they require. We are operating with and in possession of principles that are great, grand, glorious and intelligent, that have existed in ages past, that exist today, and that will exist forever and ever, worlds without end, Amen. We are building up the Zion of God, and He is to be our instructor. We are building up the kingdom of God, and He is to be our guide. We are building up the Church of God, and unless we are under the guidance and influence of the Spirit of God, we neither belong to the Church of God, the Zion of God, nor the kingdom of God. And hence it is necessary that we should comprehend the position we occupy.

We have been in the world and we have preached the Gospel to the world and are doing it, and that is part of our duty, and we are fulfilling it as fast as the Lord opens the way. We have done a great deal. I think that at an assembly some little time ago there were twenty-five nationalities represented. Is there any difference of sentiment among these diverse people? No. In speaking with a gentleman recently on some of the difficulties between the English and the Irish people, I told him that it was lamentable that such a feeling should exist. Well, said he, they are two different races and they cannot affiliate, one being Celtic and the other Anglo-Saxon, and their sympathies and feelings are dissimilar. Their ideas and feelings differ; their education and their instincts differ. That is very true so far as it goes. But what of us? We are gathered here under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that as I before said, produces a unity of feeling and spirit, a oneness and sympathy that does not exist in the world and Jesus has said, By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another. We have people among us from all parts of the United States, from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, from England, France and Germany, from Denmark, Norway and Sweden; also from Iceland, Australia, New Zealand, from the islands of the sea, and in fact, from nearly every civilized country. And how is it brethren? Are we Scandinavians; are we English; are we Scotch, Swiss or Dutch, as the case may be? No; the Spirit of God, which we obtained through obedience to the requirements of the Gospel; having been born again, of the water and of the Spirit, has made us of one heart, one faith, one baptism; we have no national or class divisions of that kind among us.

What, then, are we aiming at? We are aiming to introduce among us the principle of virtue, integrity, honesty, and a knowledge of God and of His laws. This is what we are seeking to do. And do we injure any man or set of men in so doing? I think not. I will say to the credit of our merchants, that they are spoken of as honorable men, as men who pay their debts better than the majority of mankind. Such is the report I hear from gentlemen with whom I communicate. This is pleasing to hear. It is pleasing to see the principle of honor introduced in our trading; and we ought to be honorable one with another and with all men, treating all with the respect they deserve and merit at our hands. But because we do this are we to submit to every kind of indignity; are we to submit to be outraged, to be traduced; are we to permit, in a social capacity, evils and crimes to be introduced in our midst, and never lift up our voice against them? Are we to permit our sons and daughters to affiliate and associate with corrupt men and women? No. But if our youth choose to pursue a course of that kind, all well? No, I will not say it is well; it would be better if they did better. We are here to introduce correct principles; and we profess to be moving on a more elevated plane; we profess to be under the influence of the inspiration of the Almighty; and God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.

Let me read that prayer a little more: "Our Father who art in heaven." What, is He indeed my Father? Yes. Is He our Father? Yes. "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." We are children of God; that is the relationship that we sustain to Him. Being born of the Spirit, we become the sons of God. The what? The sons of God. And what else? The heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord. Is this the position we occupy? So say the Scriptures. And what is the difference between those who have been born of the water and the Spirit, and those who know not the Gospel, and who possess none of the gifts thereof? Let us stop and inquire. You have sons, have you not? Yes. What will the boys be when they are grown up. They will be men, will they not? They are now the sons of men. If a man be inducted into the family of God, and becomes a son of God, what will he become when he gets his growth? You can figure that out yourselves. It is said, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." What shall we be? Heirs of God. What else? Joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What, joint heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord? Yes. What do a man's heirs possess when he leaves this world? They inherit the possessions of the deceased father or benefactor. We say that God is the God of the universe, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Sustainer of all things visible and invisible. And are we to be joint heirs with Him? So the Bible states. Well may the Lord say in one of the revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith, "He that hath eternal life is rich." Jesus said to the Samaritan woman when asking her to give him a drink of water, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Again, Jesus said to His disciples: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Where? In heaven, of which we have very little knowledge, and about which we comprehend very little. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." What was there in His Father's house? Many mansions. What! Mansions in heaven? Yes? What else? He declares He was going to prepare a place for them—mansions, that where he was there they might be also. It is very plain, if we could only open our eyes and understand it as it is. There is a great difference between this principle and the ideas that men entertain regarding earthly things. The first is in accord with the eternal duration and exaltation of man, and is in consonance with his highest and most exalted aspirations; the other is momentary, transient, fleeting and evanescent. Men are grasping and grabbing at the world, and at the riches of the world. I might mention the names of prominent men of this nation—no matter, I do not like to deal in personalities—men who gather together their millions. By and by they drop down into a little place just about two feet by six, and that is all there is of it. And what of their riches? Anything pertaining to the future? No. Such men are foolish, if they could comprehend it; but they cannot. They, however, think that we are big fools. There was a prominent man whose name I have forgotten, but I remember some lines that he wrote. When I am gone, he said, men will erect a splendid monument to my memory, upon which they will write: "Here lies the great!" If I could rise and speak, I would say, "False marble, where? Nothing but poor and sordid dust lies here." Has any man ever taken anything out of the world? No. Naked they come into the world, and naked they return; they leave all their wealth behind them. Then if, as intelligent beings, made in the image of God, we disregard the teachings of our heavenly Father,

and are led by influences that are wrong, improper, impure and incorrect, and suffer ourselves to make shipwreck of our faith and our good consciences, shall we not be the veriest fools when we stand before the Judge of all the earth? But if we can succeed in securing eternal life and exaltations, thrones and principalities, powers and dominions, which we sometimes talk about and which are as true as anything can be—if we can succeed in doing this, we shall be amply repaid for all the inconveniences that we may have to put up with, and all the trouble that we may have to endure.

Now we will return to the old prayer again. "Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." What kingdom? The kingdom of God. What does that imply? Government, rule, authority, dominion. "Thy kingdom come." What, that God shall dictate affairs upon the earth? Yes. That His word, His will, His law shall go forth? Yes. One of the ancient Prophets in speaking of these things said, "The law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." You will find those things written in your Bible, and can look for them at your leisure. Now if we are to expect a thing of this kind to take place, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and when the will of God is to be done on earth as it is done in heaven, ought we not to try as citizens of the kingdom of God to introduce it and be governed by and to be under its influence? I think we ought. Are we then to yield ourselves to the false traditions, ideas, notions and opinions of men? I think not. We want to strive in all the relations of life, in our family relations, in our individual relations, in our marital relations, and in our associations with men, to conduct ourselves in that way that God would have us do if He were here Himself to speak on that subject; and to seek to place ourselves in conformity with His law, His word and His will.

Now, people take a great deal of pains to try to interfere with us in our marital relations. What have they got to give us in exchange outside of these things? O you Gentiles, present us something superior to that which God has revealed, and we will embrace it. But you cannot do it. We are at the defiance of the world to bring forth any better, purer or more exalting principles. What would they give us in return for that of which they seek to despoil us? Would they introduce all the institutions of a pseudo-Christianity, with its prostitution, the houses of assignation, its social evil, its feticide and infanticide and the political and social hypocrisy and depravity, and its debauching, demoralizing, and corrupting influence, and call this a fair return for virtue, purity, honor, truth and integrity? Would they induct us into some of the principles advocated by some of their leading ministers of using the sword, the bayonet, and the cannon to extirpate what they term heresy, set man against his fellow man and deluge the nation in blood? What do they tell us? They set themselves up as our exemplars, and among other things say, we must marry as they do. And how is that? Let me ask some of you venerable, whiteheaded men that were married in various places, what kind of a covenant did you make? You were asked if you would take the woman to be your lawful wedded wife, for how long? Until death did you part. What a miserable thing. And this is what they have to offer. A woman takes a man as long as he lives, and then when he dies all is gone into oblivion; no eternal unity, no claim pertaining to heaven or the future; no sons, no daughters, no wife, no husband. That is nihilism, I think. This is the condition they would put you in today, if you would listen to them. But we are told that we should remember the rock from whence we are hewn, and the pit from whence we were dug. God has shown us principles that are ten thousand times more exalting and ennobling than anything they have to offer. No; you may continue in such operations; that is your business. You may revel in the idea of living with your wives in time, and then dropping into the grave without hope of any further union. But let me have my wives and children, and my associations in the eternal world. Let me have a religion that will live in time, and exist whilst eternal ages roll along. That is the kind of religion I want, and if you like the other, all right, take it. But give me, if you please, the liberty to pursue happiness in my own way; if not I shall try to take it. I want none of those evanescent principles that vanish when time ceases. I profess to be an immortal being, as we all are. A spark of Deity, struck from the fire of His eternal blaze, dwells in us, a portion of that intelligence that dwells with the Gods; which, if we will follow out through the influence of the Holy Ghost, of which I have spoken, will bring us back again into the presence of God; and with us our wives, our children, and our associations. Godliness, indeed, as stated by the Apostle Paul, "is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come," and despite the ideas, the opposition and the contumely of ignorant and unenlightened men, we will rule and reign and triumph, not only in time but throughout the countless ages of eternity. That is the kind of religion that I want. I would not give a straw for the other; if other people like it, all well and good. I do not want to interrupt them. But they want to interrupt us; and they do it, many of them, though we treat them never so kindly. They seem to have a perfect

mania on these points; they run wild about our private affairs.

Now, there are certain inalienable rights that some men in this nation consider belong to all men, one of which is the right to live. The government of the United States did not give men life; they received it from another and higher source. God himself is the author of life and existence, more so than we ourselves sometimes think. There is not one of you could leave this place today unless God permitted it, and not only permitted it, but sustained you and empowered you to do so. We live in Him, we move in Him, and from Him we have our being.

Do you believe that these men are sincere when they allege that we are so very wicked and that they desire to improve our morals? It would be something like their marriage—it ends in death, and sometimes even before that. What has been the proceeding here? Who are the authors and abettors of the iniquities that prevail in our midst? Wicked and unscrupulous men, the professed advocates of reform and a hypocritical civilization, such as ministers, politicians and others. Who are the introducers and originators of our gambling hells, or bagnios, and of the open and flagrant acts of debauchery and corruption that prevail in our cities where Gentiles reside? Who are the protectors of drunkenness and other vices? Our professed Christian reformers. These are their institutions; and their emissaries have been trying to introduce the murder of the innocents in the shape of feticide and infanticide. Can we believe in the sincerity and truthfulness of such hypocritical, corrupt and degraded men? They tell us it is contrary to law for a man to be married as we are, especially if he has more wives than one. They talk about polygamy; but that is not the thing which they are aiming at. I will mention these things some other time.

There are one or two statements that I wish to make before I close. Have they manifested a desire to rid us of lasciviousness? Where are the bagnios? Who are they kept for? For our good neighbors who love virtue so much. Again when thousands of men withdrew from the polls that they might not be considered obstructionists, what did they crowd upon us? You have heard a statement about Mayor Little and his son. Talk about purity! Was there any purity about that! The young man was obliged to object to his father, who was an honorable man, registering, because he had what? Broken any law? I do not think he had ever broken a polygamic law, but he had two wives some time ago when there was no law against it. Some of these things we mean to contest yet. We have not laid aside our franchise. If any think so they make a great mistake. There is not one man or woman in twenty who have refrained from exercising their franchise at the polls who, if the law of the United States was carried out and constitutional principles sustained, could be interfered with according to the most rigid interpretation of the so-called polygamic laws, and we shall contest these rights. We are not going to give up everything. In the interests of peace some of us hold our franchise in abeyance at the present time; but as I stated at Conference when I spoke of these things—we mean to contend for our rights legally and constitutionally, inch by inch to the last end, and to maintain the principle of human rights in the interest of ourselves, in the interest of our children, in the interest of the honorable men of this nation, and in the interest of the freedom of man throughout the world. So do not think we are giving up everything: we have not given up one solitary iota. Yet we thought it better to withdraw until we had a fair opportunity to contest all these things peaceably, and quietly, and to contend for our rights legally and constitutionally as American citizens and as men. Can we think that men are very sincere who pursue the course that has been adopted toward us? And what on the back of the refusal to let Brother Little register? It is purity they are after; is it? Here comes along the keeper of a bagnio and its inmates? Can they be registered? Yes! Because, according to a ruling, not a law, but a perversion of law, an oath is prescribed to American citizens, wherein, loathsome, damning vices are protected. And they can register while the honorable and virtuous are rejected. And our good, Christian folks try to crowd these things down our throats. Well, we can bide our time.

I will refer to another affair that took place. Another man, when he came to be registered, after looking at the oath said: "I don't think I can take it, because I have got a wife and keep a mistress." But he was requested to read the oath. After having done so, he said: "I see the crime is here in it being in the marriage relation, and though I have a mistress as well as a wife, the mistress is not in the marriage relation, and I can take it." This man was said to be candid. Of course he was, and people say that he was honorable to tell his feelings. Yes, he was honorable, if it can be honorable for a man to pledge himself before the altar to be true to his wife and to the covenants he had made before God and witnesses—and then break those covenants; if that is honor, he may be called an honorable man, but we do not call it very honorable amongst us. This shows that lascivious cohabitation can be tolerated and

protected by men who would seek to be our teachers and our reformers. Such men and women under the old Mosaic law would have been stoned to death. I say, my soul, enter thou not into their secrets, and, mine honor, be thou not with them united.

Furthermore, there is a little thing which I wish to refer to that has lately come to my knowledge; I have a knowledge of a great many things—for men come to me with all kinds of affairs. It is a circumstance that is to be deplored. A married man considered here an honorable man, an upright man, a man that has taken an active part in some of the schools, who has given considerable to the building of churches and it has been thought that he was really seeking to do good amongst us—has lately sought to abduct an honorable young lady, or tried to persuade her to leave her home clandestinely with him and go to a distant land. How can we trust these people? These are facts; I have the letters; I know what I am talking about, and yet these are who are supposed to be Christian reformers, identified with churches, schools, and other places of improvement, who do not shrink to associate themselves with those infamies. A very low state of morality exists among them, as we know. How is it with us? Do we have men that sometimes do wrong? Yes. Do we sanction the wrong? Can an adulterer have a place amongst us? I tell you, No, he cannot, and any Bishop who would permit anything of that sort ought himself to be removed. We are in favor of chastity, purity and virtue, not nominally but really, and we should make a distinction between one thing and the other and maintain virtue and correct principles in spite of the hypocrisy and corruptions that exists, for it is among us and around us. And it is for us to look after our wives, our sons and daughters, and preserve our chastity, our honor and our virtue in all these matters. Let us seek the blessing of God, and He will help us and direct us. But because some of these men do wrong, and act iniquitously, shall we condemn the whole? By no means. There are thousands and hundreds of thousands of honorable, upright men and women in this and other nations, who outside of religion, would scorn to be associated with such infamies. Treat all men aright; but be careful of that loose system of morals that exists in the world; be careful how you associate with such people or permit them in your habitations. Look well to yourselves and to your families, to your sons and to your daughters; and let us seek to do right and cultivate the principles of truth and God will sustain us, and Zion will go onward, and our enemies will be confounded, from time to time, and salvation will flow to Israel if Israel will be true to himself, and we will try and carry out the things that God has ordained, and accomplish the work that He has given us to do. For if ever the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven, it ought to commence in the land of Zion. May God help us to do it in the name of Jesus. Amen.