

Political Parties and Christian Sects—The Sabbath—Marriage

Discourse by President Brigham Young, delivered in the Tabernacle, Ogden City, June 4, 1871.

It is a great work to instruct ourselves and each other; and to bring ourselves into perfect subjection and to an understanding of principle. We know what it is to meet with obstructions, difficulties and contradictions of various kinds; and this people know pretty well what it is to have to contend with the influences of the wicked world; but we have reason to rejoice and be exceeding glad that we are not in the same circumstances now that we have been heretofore. We have peace here in these mountains, and since we arrived in these valleys we have been free from those obstructions with which our pathway was constantly strewn before. It is frequently asked me why we left the States and the society of our Christian brethren. My reply has invariably been, "We stayed with you just as long as you would let us, and when you would let us stay no longer we had to hunt up some other place, and we came to the valleys not out of choice but out of necessity." It is true that we have had some little things to contend with here, but it amounts to no more than a war of words. Our religion will bear investigation, and we invite the Christian world to investigate and to exchange ideas concerning faith and principles.

Brother Wells has been telling you about some of the influences that we had to contend with in Illinois. This gentleman was not a "Mormon" when we went from Missouri to Illinois, neither was he when we left that State, and he was in a position to know what the feelings of the people were; his neighbors composed the band that slew Joseph and Hyrum in the jail at Carthage. He is acquainted with the circumstances. He says he has put them from his mind as much as possible, and does not think of them. I am happy to hear it. I wish we may never be under the necessity of again referring to what we have passed through; but we shall be, there is no question; and if we have to meet with influences of another character now, all that we have to do is to be prepared for them; and if the Lord brings us into circumstances in which we shall be as willing to live our religion and pray as some are to fight, it will be much better for us. We have many Elders in Israel who would much rather fight for their religion than pray. As for a person being saved in the celestial kingdom of God without being prepared to dwell in a pure and holy place, it is all nonsense and ridiculous; and if there be any who think they can gain the presence of the Father and the Son by fighting for instead of living their religion, they will be mistaken, consequently the quicker we make up our minds to live our religion the better it will be for us. If we live so as to enjoy the spirit of the faith that we have embraced there is no danger of our being deceived.

To those of our Christian brethren who have come here, not to join a mob to kill or persecute the Saints, but to see how many of those who have obeyed the Gospel they can induce to forsake the holy commandments of the Lord Jesus and to follow after phantoms, I say the quicker this war of words commences and the fiercer it is carried on the better it will be for the Saints. So we say come, brethren, come with your big tents, your meetinghouses, your arguments and all the philosophy you are in possession of, for we have a religion that we would like the inhabitants of the earth to understand. We have nothing in the dark, nothing but what is good for man; and we would say to all try our religion. We have tried and we understand the religions of the world; and in some remarks I made yesterday I ventured to say that our youth know more of heavenly things than old men do in the Christian world. If any doubt this, just take our children and question them, and if they have the courage and boldness, see how quickly they will lead members of the sectarian world into waters so deep that they cannot see the shore. But if a war of argument is desired or intended, I do not mean contention, but an exchange of ideas, we are willing to give to all who want them the principles of the Gospel of life and salvation, and they can give to us all they know of the Gospel as they have embraced it, which is no more nor less than a system of morals or ethics, and is excellent as far as it goes. But the Gospel that we have embraced includes every principle of morality and virtue that is taught by any person on the earth, whether he does or does not know or profess to know Christ.

If we are brought into circumstances where we have the privilege of telling strangers what we believe in we are very willing to do so; but the first thing with them is, "Oh, your strange doctrine, your peculiar doctrine!" How often this is said to me in my office. I say to them, "What peculiar doctrine? Will you please to name it?" The reply is, "Well, you know you have a peculiar doctrine;" and the ladies stand anxiously waiting for somebody or other to give it a name. I sometimes say, "Is it plurality of wives you mean?" "Yes, yes, that is the doctrine." If I were to

answer my own feelings to such parties, I would answer them and say, "That is nothing; so far as a plurality of women goes, you men, if you will allow me this vulgar expression, 'knock the hind sights off the Mormons.'" But that is vulgar, and so let it pass.

"But," say they, "what of your peculiar doctrine? What did you come to the mountains for? What did you leave us for? We suppose it was on account of your peculiar doctrine." I reply, "Pause! Wait a moment! When we left the confines of what is called civilization the doctrine of plurality of wives was not known by the world, and was not taught by us, and was known only to a very few members of our Church; but since we have declared this revelation we have dwelt in peace and safety, so we were not persecuted for that, sure. We did not leave Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, or any other State or neighborhood within the confines of civilization for believing in the doctrine of a plurality of wives." I say this to all who hear me. I want our young folks to understand this, or they may perhaps grow up with the idea that we were driven from our homes in consequence of our belief in celestial marriage. I want all our young, and all who believe the Gospel and all who do not believe it, to know that we were driven for believing in the Old and New Testament; not for believing in the Book of Mormon, but in the Bible, and then practicing it in our lives. This, and this only, is what we were driven for. It is now called the "one-man power;" then it was "the 'Mormons' clan together;" and this was the rock of offense or seemingly so; but in reality it was the same then as now and now as then—we as a people believe in the Scriptures of divine truth, and we are united in endeavoring to live according to the precepts thereof.

When Brother Wells was speaking he said the Christian religion had failed. I will say just what he meant to say—namely, that *professing* the Christian religion has failed to bring the world into subjection to moral laws. I would not say that Christianity has failed; the religion of Christ has not failed, but those professing this religion have failed to bring the world into subjection to good and wholesome laws. You may take up politics, for instance, and in our own country there are a great many parties who differ in their views and opinions with regard to governing a nation, and on every hand they are contending against each other. This division exists even among the professing Christians. The Catholics and Quakers are probably less divided than others, but they are far from being one in politics; and the same is true to a greater extent of the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, and so on. When we see a religion, and one which is claimed to be the religion of Christ, and it will not govern men in their politics, it is a very poor religion, it is very feeble, very taint in its effects, hardly perceptible in the life of a person. The religion that the Lord has revealed from heaven unites the hearts of the people, and when they gather together, no matter where they are from, they are of one heart and one mind. Those who have no idea of the effects of the Gospel attribute the oneness it produces to the influence of individuals now living on the earth, instead of giving God the glory, praise and honor.

The religion of heaven unites the hearts of the people and makes them one. You may gather a people together, and no matter how widely they differ in politics, the Gospel of Jesus Christ will make them one, even if among them were found members of all the political parties in the country, I do not know how many different political parties now exist in the country. There used to be only Federals and Democrats, then Whigs, Republicans, Locofocos, Barn-burners, and Free-soilers. Then the "Know Nothings" sprang into existence. I believe the Ku-Klux is a new political organization; and I have heard that, in the City of Washington, the Anti-Ku-Klux, another political party, has recently been organized. If members of all these various organizations were to obey the Gospel and gather together, the religion of heaven would clear their hearts of all political rubbish and make them one in voting for principles and measures, instead of men, and I think that any religion that will not do this is very feeble in its effects. The Christian religion, or what is called so, has failed to subdue the world; but what will the Gospel of Jesus Christ do? If the Gospel that we preach, and which we are trying to set before priest and people—for we want all to know and understand it—if it does not have the effect of convincing men and women of the truth sufficiently to induce them to yield obedience to its ordinances and to embrace the doctrine of life and salvation, and accept the overtures of mercy, learn Christ and obey him, it will drive them to the wall of infidelity. Do we believe this? It must be so. Do others believe it? No, they do not. The Christian world do not know that they are infidels in their belief in regard to the character of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Priesthood and its laws and requirements. If a man does not believe that he ought to be baptized for the remission of his sins, he is an infidel to baptism. My definition of the term infidel is that if any principle or doctrine is set before me, and I say I disbelieve it, I am neither more

nor less than an infidel to that principle or doctrine. Are the sectarian world infidels according to this definition? Yes, and if we had time we would take some passages of Scripture and prove it. Take, for instance, the character of the Savior, and the sectarian world are infidel on this point. What do they believe about it? I do not know what they believe, and they do not know themselves. Many of them do not know that they believe anything. They would be glad to believe if they knew what to believe. But not knowing what to believe, they say, "We do not know, we do not understand, we cannot tell. We understand some things by reading the Scriptures; but the ministers tell us they have a spiritual meaning." Now what does this favorite saying of the ministers—"a spiritual meaning"—convey to the mind? Something or other that you and I do not understand, that is all. Well, then, partially, I will say, to a certain degree, it leaves us in infidelity. This is the situation of the sectarian world today—they do not know what to believe, and consequently they are full of unbelief and doubt, and we say that our children ought to know enough to teach the whole world with regard to these things. The divines of the day, when they have graduated from the schools, seminaries and colleges, so far as their knowledge of heavenly things goes, are a bundle of trash and ignorance. I meet with some occasionally, however, who are very religious. I met with a gentleman in my office last Friday evening, who was very tenacious on some points touching morality. He put me in mind of a great many I have met in my travels—strong, staunch Christians. What did the religion of that individual consist of? I told you yesterday—ignorance and impudence—that is about the amount of it. Such men would be Christians if they knew how, they would like to be. But will they receive the truth? Our doctrine and practice is, and I have made it mine through life—to receive truth no matter where it comes from. Is there truth in heaven? Yes, it dwells there, it is the foundation of the heavens. Is there truth on earth and beneath the earth? There is. Is there truth in the words of a good man? Yes. In the words of a wicked man? Yes, sometimes; and there is truth in the words of an angel, and in the words of the devil, and when the devil speaks the truth I should have the spirit to discriminate between the truth and the error, and should receive the former and reject the latter. For example, you read in Genesis about the formation of the earth and the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden. By and by the devil comes along and tempts Eve, by offering her the fruit of a certain tree, assuring her at the same time that the very day she ate of it her eyes would be open and she would see like the Gods. Did the devil tell the truth? He did. Did he tell a lie? Yes, and how many of them he told to one truth I have not taken pains to examine. You take a wicked person, an opposer of the truth, one of our apostates, for instance, and he will tell you a little truth and mix it up with a great deal of error; but we should know enough to understand and receive the truth; that will do us good, and if we reject the error it will do us no harm.

This is our position, and we say to all Christians come and investigate our religion. Do we understand Methodism, Presbyterianism, Quakerism, Shakerism and the various other isms of the Christian world? Yes. I learned these, as far as their creeds go, many years ago. That which they could not tell and did not understand, I never did learn. My objection to their creeds and systems was that they talked about things they did not understand and could not tell a word about; consequently I was called an infidel. We say, give us the truth; but when strangers come to see me their first reflection is, "I would like to ask him a question if I dare." What is it? It is all about wives. My conscience! What a generation of gentlemen and ladies we have! Their thoughts and reflections are continually about wives and husbands. Why the mind of a pure Saint and Christian is above such things. If it is necessary to take a wife, take one; if it is necessary to have a husband, have one. If it is necessary to have two wives, take them. If it is right, reasonable and proper and the Lord permits a man to take half a dozen wives, take them; but if the Lord says let them alone, let them alone. How long? Until we go down to the grave, if the Lord demand it. If he require an Elder or Elders to take their valise and travel and preach the Gospel until the day of their death, they should do it; and if they are not happy in so doing, it would prove that they do not possess the spirit of their religion.

This gentleman to whom I was speaking on Friday was tenacious with regard to the Sabbath; that was his whole theme. He commenced about our running cars here on the Sabbath Day. I told him in as few words as I could, that my feelings were not to do it, and if I had the management of railroads I would stop it. Why? Because the Lord has said that it is not good for us to work the seven days; it is good to work six and rest the seventh. Our system requires rest after six days' labor, and consequently he has set the seventh apart for that purpose. But I told him I could not control that matter; the people want to run from Salt Lake to Ogden and back again to Salt Lake on Sundays, and consequently, as it is a matter of necessity, we run the cars on the Sabbath. Said he, "How can you reconcile this?" Said I, "It ought to be done, that is how I reconcile it." Know whether you ought to do a thing or

not, and if you ought to do it, do it; and if you ought not, let it alone. That is the way to live. You cannot read anything in the Bible about a railroad from Salt Lake City to Ogden, nor from the Atlantic to the Pacific; you cannot read anything about telegraph wires, nor whether they should work on a Sunday or lie still; nor anything about running a railroad, or a stage, or about the labor of the people who live now. By reading the Bible we can learn something about the way the ancients regulated their labors as far as the Lord told them what to do. It is one of the most simple things in the world for people to understand what course they should take; what a pity they do not all understand it! If men would live and humble themselves like children God could dwell within them and could dictate every heart. But to enjoy this we must live before the Lord, so that our minds would be like a sheet of white paper such as our reporters here are writing on, then the Lord could and would dictate all our movements. Live with a conscience void of offense towards God and man and the spirit of inspiration would indite matter on every such well regulated conscience. But our consciences are made by our parents and teachers; and just as we are taught by others are our consciences dictated. But we should all live so that the spirit of revelation could dictate and write on the heart and tell us what we should do, instead of the traditions of our parents and teachers. But to do this we must become like little children; and Jesus says if we do not we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. How simple it is! Live free from envy, malice, wrath, strife, bitter feelings, and evil speaking in our families and about our neighbors and friends, and all the inhabitants of the earth, wherever we meet them. Live so that our consciences are free, clean and clear. This is as simple as anything can be, and yet it is one of the hardest things to get people to understand, or rather to practice; for you may get them to understand it, but the great difficulty is to get them to practice it. If we, both priest and people, will practice this, the Spirit of the Lord can dictate and tell us our duty, and when that is presented before us we will go and do it.

But, instead of such principles as these occupying people's minds now-a-days, it is, "How many wives have you, Mr. Young? Oh, I do want to ask Mr. Young how many wives he has." Ladies who come into my office very frequently say, "I wonder if it would hurt his feelings if I were to ask him how many wives he has?" Let me say to all creation that I would as lief they should ask me that question as any other; but I would rather see them anxious to learn about the Gospel. Having wives is a secondary consideration; it is within the pale of duty, and consequently, it is all right. But to preach the Gospel, save the children of men, build up the kingdom of God, produce righteousness in the midst of the people; govern and control ourselves and our families and all we have influence over; make us of one heart and one mind; to clear the world from wickedness—this fighting and slaying, this mischievous spirit now so general, and to subdue and drive it from the face of the earth, and to usher in and establish the reign of universal peace, is our business, no matter how many wives a man has got, that makes no difference here or there. I want to say, and I wish you to publish it, that I would as soon be asked how many wives I have got as any other question, just as soon; but I would rather see something else in their minds, instead of all the time thinking "How many wives have you; or I wonder whom he slept with last night." I can tell those who are curious on this point. I slept with all that slept, and we slept on one universal bed—the bosom of our mother earth, and we slept together. "Did you have anybody in bed with you?" "Yes." "Who was it?" It was my wife, it was not your wife, nor your daughter nor sister, unless she was my wife, and that too legally. I can say that to all creation, and every honest man can say the same; but it is not all who are professed Christians who can say it, and I will say, and I am sorry to say it, not all professed "Mormons" can say this. Live so that your heart is pure and holy, and if the Lord Almighty gives you a wife take good care of her, and do not be like many of our brethren. I heard a contention this morning between an old man and his family, I am ashamed to say it; as I said to the brethren, "It is bad enough to see young fools, but worse to see old fools." You only meet with a man occasionally who knows enough about human nature to govern his own family. Men, as a general thing, do not know the dispositions of their wives and children, nor how to govern and control them; and it is certainly a pretty close, intricate point. I have had some people ask me how I manage and control the people. I do it by telling them the truth and letting them do just as they have a mind to. I control my wives by telling them the truth and letting them do as they like. Will I quarrel with them? No, I will not. Some of them may have felt a little discouraged at this. I do not know, however, that they had a disposition to quarrel; if they have had, they are sick of it, for they have found out that they cannot raise the breeze. Devils, pigs, dogs and the brute creation quarrel. Do intelligent men quarrel? Yes, and men and women will quarrel, and sometimes they quarrel with their neighbors. I meet with some occasionally who need chastening, but as for quarrelling I do not think that I am guilty of it.

With these few remarks it is about time to close. We shall meet again, this afternoon. To satisfy my feelings I should have to say a good deal. I say to you who want to govern your wives, set them an example, continually, that is good. Let them say, "There is my husband, does he do anything that he should not do? No, he does not. He prays, he is faithful, humble, meek, full of kindness and of good words and works, I see nothing wrong in him." If a man lives like this his wife will say, "I should be ashamed to get up a quarrel, I think I had better do as he says, I think he knows better than I do, I will yield my spirit to his." If a man pursue this straightforward, manly, godlike course he will find woman in her place by his side following him. He is leading her, she is not leading him. When we find an Elder of Israel do this we find plenty of women who will go along with him. And this is the principle on which to govern a neighborhood or nation as well as a wife or children. When a king, ruler, president, governor or legislative assembly take this course, the people knew they are looking after the welfare of the governed instead of their own aggrandizement, and they will always be glad to have them in office, and they will not wish for a change. When the righteous rule, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people mourn. This is the secret of it; if we govern ourselves we can govern others.

May the Lord bless us. Amen.