

What think you, brethren and sisters—ye that are called Latter-day Saints, were they, as a people, more wicked than the rest of mankind, that God should have dealt with them thus? I answer, No. But of a truth they were the best people upon the face of the earth, and the only people that had the Priesthood of God among them.

They were the people whom God had delivered from Egyptian bondage with an outstretched arm; and by his power, they were the only people God could make use of. They had faith sufficient that he could govern and control them; and so far from being the worst, they were the best people upon the earth; but upon them rested the responsibility, and they did not improve upon their privileges and appreciate their blessings as they ought to have done; and for this reason were they set forth as examples to all who should live after; and the responsibility of their carcasses falling in the wilderness, the responsibility of their being led into the desert, the responsibility of all their trials and troubles was not upon Moses and their leaders, nor upon their God, but upon themselves; for, had they been pliable, submissive, willing, and obedient, and had their spirits been pliable before the Lord, willing to be molded and fashioned, they could have been led forth conquering and to conquer, and been planted in Canaan just as well in two years as in forty. And if this people were capable of receiving it, the Lord could as well give them the kingdom today as forty years hence. And if the people of the United States would have hearkened to the voice of the Lord, given through the Prophet Joseph, they might have been a more prosperous and powerful nation today.

The history of all religious generations and dispensations is similar, and shows this fact to us, that human

nature is the same in every age of the country, and among every country, and among every people—that all men are subject to like weaknesses and have to be taught gradually.

Children grow from infancy to manhood; and whether God leads our footsteps in correct paths or not, he is only leading us to school: he is only directing our course in a round of experience by which he trains us, and makes us one, cements our hearts together, and rids our spirits of iniquity and abomination. He wants to teach men and women how to walk together in union and be great—to teach this people how to be bound to him and to those that he sets over them, and to teach his Saints how to reign in the house of Israel as his servants.

I do feel conscious that if the men of Israel do their duty and live their religion, reformation will go forth from them through their families, and it cannot be stayed; and every branch of every family in Israel will feel the effects of that reformation: every woman and all her children will feel it.

If a man of God lives his religion and is controlled only by the Spirit of Zion in his family, and if he has a turbulent, disobedient spirit in his family, that spirit will be subject or that individual will be separated from his family, upon the same principle that turbulent persons that repent not are severed from this Church by the vote of this people; and when that turbulent person is severed, he will dry up and wither, and will be gathered and burned with the ungodly.

It may be that heretofore the fanning-mill has blown out more of the men than it has of the women; but if it has done this, it is because the sieve is not quite fine enough. But as the work of reformation goes forward, it will sift to the very bottom; and every member of every family in