

NECESSITY OF UNDERSTANDING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES  
OF THE GOSPEL—OF UNION AMONG THE PRIESTHOOD,  
AND ATTENTION TO TEMPORAL DUTIES

DISCOURSE BY ELDER GEORGE A. SMITH, DELIVERED IN THE TABERNACLE,  
GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, APRIL 7, 1862

Reported by J. V. Long

“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—Hebrews v. 12, 13 and 14 verses.

It may seem to my brethren and sisters a little surprising, that I should introduce the remarks which I have the privilege of addressing to you this morning, by reading the sentiment which is conveyed in this text. For when for the time we ought to be teachers, we have need that one teach us again the first principles of the oracles of God. But how often is it necessary, and has it been necessary, for those who are inspired of the Lord to complain of the brethren making such slow progress in the things of the kingdom of God? How often do we hear our Presidency lament the ignorance, folly and vanity that are exhibited by many of those who are called upon to be and who should be teachers indeed. I have thought that in some circumstances there was a neglect in the Branches of preaching to and rehearsing in the ears of the rising generation, those first principles of the Gospel which were taught

to us when we received the Work of the last days, and especially the principle of faith. We grow up in this community and the principles of the Gospel become, to a great extent, natural to us. But many of the young are untried and without experience, and they lack the power to contrast the principles of truth with those of error, and hence it is regarded as important by the Elders that they should have the opportunity, at some period, of going abroad to preach the Gospel and have a chance to test, by actual experience, the power of the principles of truth when brought in contact with the wild fanaticisms which the world has dignified with the title of religion.

It was remarked yesterday, that the progress of the people was so slow, that the Presidency could not develop those principles which were for the benefit of the people, for their glory and exaltation, only at a very slow rate, powerful as we may think the “Mormon” mill to be. The President tells us that he has to regulate the feed very moderately, or injure the weak minded. Some of the brethren, for want of a more perfect understanding perhaps, give way to temptation and turn away, and become to a considerable extent like a man who comes out of the dark into a well lighted room, he is blinded with the light, his eyes are unprepared to meet such brilliancy. This is illustrated very clearly in the organiza-