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SECRET COMBINATIONS.

*Discourse delivered at the Tabernacle,
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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I will read an extract from the book of Ether, which is one of the books of the Book of Mormon. That which I shall read is found in the 8th chap. of Ether, commencing at the 19th verse:

For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it, from the beginning of man.

And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites,

And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi;

And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed, for the Lord will not suffer that the blood of his saints, which shall be shed by them, shall always cry unto him from the ground for vengeance upon them, and yet he avenge them not;

Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shewn unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain, and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction, if ye shall suffer these things to be;

Wherefore the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you, that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you, or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who build it up.

For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents; yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men, that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.

Wherefore I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things, that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.

The book from which I have read this was translated, as we testify, by the

power of God. We believe the Book of Mormon to be a divine record. We believe it to contain the word of God. We do not substitute it in the place of the Bible; but it is another witness of the truths contained in the Bible. In it there are very frequent references to secret combinations that existed in olden times among the people on this continent. It seems that combinations were formed for such purposes as are alluded to in the words that I have read; and the prophets who made this record were inspired of God to give warning unto us Gentiles (for we are classed as Gentiles in this record), that we in our day might understand the dreadful consequences which follow such secret organizations. This book was published in the year 1829. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in 1830. At that time there were but few indications, especially in our own nation, of the growth of such combinations as are described in that which I have read. To a person who read the book then such a warning as is given by this prophet to us would doubtless seem entirely uncalled for. But in the lapse of sixty years a great change has taken place in the affairs of the nations of the earth; and now those familiar with current events can see the propriety—yea, the necessity—of such a warning as this. Communism, nihilism and anarchism have sprung into existence and gained tremendous influence among certain peoples, until kings and emperors tremble on their thrones, for fear of these secret forces which are at work, threatening the overthrow of their dynasties and the destruction of their forms of government. Even in republican France, where there is no kingly dignity held by any man, and where the people are the rulers, the government is not safe. Its prominent men stand in continual danger, and it is only recently that an attempt was made to destroy the President and others of their Chamber of Deputies. Every day that we take up the newspapers we find notices of the dreadful deeds which anarchists have resorted to in order to accomplish their wicked ends; not only seeking to destroy rulers, but in their recklessness and murderous feelings perfectly willing to destroy those who are not in any way responsible for the condition of things which exists. Well might the prophet speak in tones of warning unto the inhabitants of the earth! Well might he call upon them in this solemn manner to refrain from such organizations, and to do nothing to foster them! On account of these warnings, with which we have been familiar since the organization of our Church, the Latter-day Saints have, as a rule, kept free from all sorts of organ-

izations of a secret character. The servants of God in these days have also felt impressed to caution the Latter-day Saints on this point, that they might not be carried away by that spirit. It has been the continued counsel of the servants of God for the Latter-day Saints to abstain from every association the objects of which are secret. We have known that these combinations would exist, that they would increase in the midst of the people, and that their tendency would be evil, seeking to destroy government, to overturn existing institutions, and to array class against class, community against community. The revealed word of God has shown this to us, and the Spirit of God has impressed the truth and the importance of these matters upon us.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been built up by the revelations of God, for the purpose of correcting the evils that exist in society, as well as to save the inhabitants of the earth from their sins; not only to prepare them for the life to come, but to qualify them to enjoy the life that now is. Its mission is to save the people spiritually and temporally. In the beginning of our organization we were taught by the Lord a number of things concerning the temporal safety that we should receive by keeping His commandments. It was revealed to us that these were the last days—the days of tribulation and of calamity of which the Savior spoke; and that this work which the Lord had established by the sending of angelic visitors to the earth was preparatory to the second coming of our Lord. And the most remarkable influence attended the preaching of the Gospel by the Elders of this Church. Wherever they went those who received their message became inspired with an almost uncontrollable desire to leave the lands of their nativity, to break off their old associations of kindred and friends, and to emigrate to the place which the Saints settled in. The first place of settlement was Kirtland, Ohio. Almost contemporaneously with that the settlement in Jackson County, Missouri, was formed. Afterwards, through persecution, the people were driven out of Jackson county, and they settled in Clay county, and afterwards in Caldwell county. Finally, under threat of extermination, they left Missouri and moved into Illinois. From Illinois they moved into this country, clinging together as a united body. Every convert, as I have said, was filled with an almost uncontrollable desire to gather with the people with whom he had cast his lot. Hence it is that the Latter-day Saints are found dwelling in these mountain valleys. They have not gathered from the various nations of the earth because