

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 13.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, MARCH 14, 1896.

VOL. LII.

DISCOURSE

Delivered at the Morgan Stake Conference, Morgan, Sunday, February 16th, 1896, by

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I am very pleased to have the opportunity of meeting with the Latter-day Saints in this Stake of Zion. Since I left home I have tried to recall when it was I was here last. I think it was thirteen or fourteen years ago; it was while President Taylor was living. Various causes have contributed to prevent visits here. Of course, the Twelve Apostles visit the Stakes regularly; but I have felt impressed of late that the First Presidency should also go around and visit the people as far as possible. One reason that we have not done this to a greater extent has been President Woodruff's inability to endure the fatigue of travel. His health is excellent, for one of his age, and he is able to perform a good deal of labor; but he cannot travel around as he once did. I hope, however, that President Smith and myself will be able to visit the conferences and let the people see us, and we see the people, because a strange condition of feeling has arisen among the Latter-day Saints concerning the authorities of the Church. We hear things said concerning them that to me are exceedingly painful. Misrepresentation, not to say calumny, has been indulged in concerning the First Presidency of the Church and some of the Twelve to an extent that I never believed possible among the Latter-day Saints. There are causes for this, with which doubtless the most of you are familiar. Politics has caused serious divisions and feelings in various quarters, and men have allowed their tongues to say things which in their cooler moments and when under the influence of the Spirit of God they would shrink from. I do not know that I have heard of any talk of this kind being indulged in in this Stake; but in some Stakes it has been indulged in to a very dangerous extent.

Now, I desire to say to you, my brethren and sisters, that the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been, individually and as a body, laboring with entire singleness of purpose and with entire devotion to the work of God and its promotion in the earth. It may not be improper for me, as one of that Council, to make this statement, because I am thoroughly familiar with the motives, with the spirit and with the action of the First Presidency. President Wilford

Woodruff, who holds the keys on the earth at the present time, is a man in whose praise it is, I hope, unnecessary for me to speak. Those who know him know that a more innocent, guileless, pure, lovable man never lived upon the face of the earth. There may have been men with greater gifts—men greater in other directions; but certainly no purer man, no more unassuming man has ever lived. I have been familiar with the leading men of this Church from my boyhood up, and with some of them as intimate as one man could be with another, and I speak in this manner in regard to President Woodruff with entire confidence and know that that which I say is borne out by the facts of his life. He labors with a diligence and a zeal that I sometimes think too great for one of his advanced years. Those who know him personally must be aware, and those who do not know him personally must have heard, that he is one of the hardest working men we have ever had among us. The Lord has been with him, and has revealed His mind and will to him. The Lord has sustained him, and the Lord has blessed every man and woman who has listened to his counsel, and has borne testimony by the blessings which He has bestowed that it was His will that the counsels of His servant Wilford should be listened to and obeyed by the Latter-day Saints. Of President Smith and myself I will not speak, farther than to say that we have endeavored, to the extent of our ability and of the power which God has given us, to sustain our President, to be one with him, and to carry out as far as we could that which the Lord has revealed through him and to us as the First Presidency. We have helped bear his burdens, and we have labored with such diligence as we could in this direction; and I feel led to say here this afternoon that we have labored with all purity and singleness of purpose, with entire devotion and unselfishness in the cause of our God, in sustaining His work and in performing the duties that devolve upon us as the Presidency of the Church. We have not spared ourselves in any direction to accomplish this, and have sought with all the faith and power that God has given unto us to know the mind and will of God concerning this people and this work, so that we might be able to perform the duties of the responsible station that we hold. We have not sought this position. President Woodruff, you well know, is not a man that had ambition or inspiration of this character. When I was first called to be a counselor to President Taylor, I besought him and the Council with all the energy of my soul not to call me to act in that position, but to call some one else; for I felt that everyone of the Council

was more fitted for that position than I. And when President Woodruff called President Joseph F. Smith to be his counselor, he expressed himself in the same manner and besought President Woodruff not to choose him, or at least to select someone else in preference to himself. In this spirit we have accepted the duties of our positions—not for personal gratification, not to give us prominence, but to do that which we have felt to be the will of God. And I do know that God chose Wilford Woodruff, that God chose Joseph F. Smith, and that God chose George Q. Cannon to be the First Presidency of this Church. I can bear testimony to that with all my heart.

I wish to say further in this connection, that we have been as united from the beginning and up to the present hour as it would be possible for one man to be united with himself. Never a shadow of disunion has ever crossed the mind of any of the First Presidency of the Church. We have been as united as it is possible for men in the flesh to be. And we have rejoiced in this, because it has given us strength with the Twelve Apostles, and with the other officers of the Church; and it has strengthened us also in our associations with the Saints, in teaching them, and in reproving them when the Lord has given us the spirit of reproof or warning. I speak of this from my personal standpoint. I have felt strong because I knew that we were one in our councils, in our deliberations, in our conclusions, in our views concerning everything connected with the work of God and its management upon the earth. I desire also to say to the Latter-day Saints, that whoever arrays himself in any manner against the authority which God has placed in His Church for its government, no matter who it is—one of the Twelve Apostles even, or any number of them—unless he repents God will withdraw His spirit and power from him; and He will show the world, He will show the Church, He will show the officers of the Church, that that which He has spoken in the past concerning the authority of the Holy Priesthood and the respect and honor which He requires His servants and people to show to it, is true and must be carried out, or He will withdraw His spirit and power from those who take a different course. If any of you, my brethren or my sisters, have indulged in the spirit of murmuring and fault-finding, and have allowed your tongues to give utterance to thoughts and words that were wrong and not in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel, let me say to you here today that you ought to repent of it with all your hearts, and get down into the depths of humility and implore Him for