

## DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER GEORGE Q. CANNON,

DELIVERED

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REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

Six weeks ago yesterday I left this city to visit the settlements throughout the southern portion of our Territory. My trip has been one of the most interesting and pleasant I ever undertook, and I have rejoiced exceedingly in the opportunity which I have had of meeting with the people in that section of country. There is a great anxiety in many places and with many people to know what the condition of affairs is in that region. I can say that I never saw our people feeling better as a general thing, and more willing to do that which is required of them than at the present time. There was great anxiety among them to be instructed, and the meetings in every instance were crowded, the people turning out with great alacrity, and expressing regret that we could not stay longer. Brother Erastus Snow and Brother Musser and myself attended most of the meetings. Part of the time in visiting the western settlements I was alone. The anxiety of the people seems to be to know what to do and to be instructed in the best manner of doing that which God requires at their hands; and this is the spirit which, as Latter-day Saints, we should entertain and cherish. God has called us to be a peculiar people; he has raised up prophets, has organized his church, has placed within it those callings and offices and gifts and qualifications and blessings which characterized the Church in ancient days, and he has condescended in his mercy and goodness to reveal himself unto the children of men, to teach them, counsel them and inspire them so that they may be instruments in his hands in building up his kingdom, and laying the foundation of that work of which the prophets have spoken, and which we are told shall stand for ever. We as a people, with the views which we entertain, should not make up our minds to live in accordance with the methods of life, the modes of doing business, and the habits and the traditions of our forefathers, who have lived in ignorance of these principles and of this spirit of revelation—for we are required, in obeying this gospel, to hold ourselves in a position to receive the word of God, to be counselled, to be directed, to be guided by that word in all our transactions, in the doctrines which we believe, in the habits of life which we adopt and in all our practices and labors. This is one of the first lessons which is impressed upon us in starting out in obedience to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The very first teachings we received impressed upon our minds the necessity of forsaking these errors and false traditions which we have received from our fathers—errors in doctrine, false traditions concerning God, concerning his kingdom, and concerning the plan of salvation which he has revealed; and if we have profited by that first lesson we have been continually progressing, learning new truths, new to us, acquiring knowledge concerning ourselves, concerning the work with which we are connected, concerning the earth and the inhabitants thereof, and we have been unlearning and forsaking the errors and the faults of our forefathers and of the world from which we have been gathered.

The prayer which Jesus taught his disciples to ask the Father that his kingdom might come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, will be fulfilled by means of this work with which we are identified. The foundation of that kingdom has already been laid. And the aim of every true Latter-day Saint, from the day that he or she joined this church until to-day, has been to approximate to that life which we are told is led by those who are exalted through keeping the commandments of God—to do the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven; for as the Apostle John says—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope within him purifieth himself even as he is pure." So with the Latter-day Saints, they have a hope of salvation within them, they desire to keep the commandments of God, and they have been seeking, from the beginning until to-day, to purify themselves, to live a heavenly life, and to reduce to practice in their daily walk and conversation, those precepts and laws, obedience to which would prepare them to dwell eternally with God in the heavens.

There is a characteristic about the faith of the Latter-day Saints, in which they perhaps differ from most of the professed followers of Jesus Christ—they do not believe that God expects or desires them to put off acquiring these perfections, powers, gifts and graces which belong to the heavenly world until they reach that world; but they believe that God has placed them here in a state of probation, and that he has hid himself only to a certain extent from them; that he has drawn a veil of darkness between himself and his children on the earth for the purpose of trying their faith, of developing their knowledge and testing their integrity, so that those who will feel after him in faith, persevering in the midst of ignorance, darkness, doubt, confusion and the temptations of Satan, and all the evils with which we come in contact in this state of being may receive his blessings

and the gifts, graces and favors which he bestows upon his most favored children. Hence, the Latter-day Saints believe in doing everything here that will help to prepare them for life eternal in his presence. They look upon this world as a place where they should attend to these things. By baptism? Yes. By having hands laid upon them? Yes. Have the gifts of the Holy Ghost? Certainly, have them here as well as hereafter, have them here to a partial extent to prepare them for the life that is to come. Have the voice of God here? Yes, why should we not know God's will here? Why should we be closed out entirely from all knowledge of God here, and yet believe that as soon as we die we are ushered into the fulness of his glory. Receive these blessings here? Yes, every blessing that is necessary. Be perfect here? Yes, it is man's privilege, the Latter-day Saints believe, to be as perfect in his sphere as God our eternal Father is in his sphere, or as Jesus in his sphere, or as the angels in their spheres. Said Jesus to his disciples—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Perfection, then, is to a certain extent possible on earth for those who will live lives that are agreeable to the mind and will of God.

Now as fast as the Latter-day Saints can comprehend the life that God, his angels and those who are made perfect in his presence lead they should be willing, and I believe that the most of them are willing, to copy after that life in this state as quickly as possible. "Well but," says one, "how useless it is for frail, fallible, mortal beings to attempt to live lives of perfection like the angels and those who are just and perfect in the presence of God!" I know that if we are to judge of men naturally, as we see them in the midst of their sins, breaking the commandments of God, trampling upon his holy ordinances, disregarding his requirements, we should say it is useless; and it is not only useless but it is impossible for men ever to reach that perfection of which we speak. But I am encouraged in my hopes that perfection, to a certain extent at least, is possible even in this mortal life, by witnessing the results in the midst of a people who are striving after it. I know that the efforts of this people in this direction, though not always crowned with the success that we have desired, yet there has been abundant cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving in the progress which we have made. We have attained unto a degree of union and love that approximates to some extent to that union and love which we believe exist in the eternal worlds. We have not yet reached, probably, that point when we can love our neighbor as we do ourselves; but still, if we strive for and keep that object in view, and endeavor to reach that perfection, undoubtedly we shall overcome our selfishness, and all those feelings which seem to be a part of fallen human nature, sufficiently to carry out that command of God.

If we could get a glimpse of heaven, that heaven to which we are hastening, or to which we hope we are hastening, have you any idea that there would be any conflict of interests among the inhabitants of that blissful abode? Do you imagine that we should see one arrayed against another, that there would be clashing and struggling, each one scrambling to get the advantage of his neighbor, and to acquire influence and power, and the blessings that belong to that abode more and greater than his neighbor? That is not the idea that we have formed of heaven; we have not entertained such views, but we imagine when we get there that God will be the possessor—he is the possessor—of all things that are comprehended within that sphere of existence, that the thrones, the principalities, powers and crowns, and even the very garments that the exalted wear belong to God, and that he will give them to us, that we shall possess them, subject, of course, to his law and to those regulations which he will enact, or which he has already enacted. I do not suppose there was a Christian that ever lived, I do not suppose there was a heathen that ever lived who expected that, when he got to the next world, to the place of bliss which he anticipated in his faith while here, he would live in anything like the condition he occupied here. Converse with the Christians about the next world, and they will all say that they do not expect to have anything; that they are redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, and that all the glory and honor of their salvation they ascribed unto God and the Lamb; that they will be content with anything he chooses to give them when they reach there, they would be content to be doorkeepers or to occupy the lowest position if they could only be permitted to dwell in the presence of God. And the heathen who believe in a future state of existence, and this belief is universal among them, (I believe it was Bancroft who said that atheism is the sin or crime of civilization, and not of heathendom or of natural men.) the heathen universally believe in a future state of existence, and they picture to themselves a condition such as I have described, of course varying according to their faith and their views of this life, thinking that they will have circumstances similar in that life which is to come, with this difference only, that they will be more perfect and will be delivered from the evils to which they are subjected here as mortal beings.

If then, my brethren and sisters, we are striving to live in accordance with that life to which we are hastening, we, by a little reflection, can see how much there is for us to do in order to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the first teachings or revelations that was given to this church after its organization, was to the effect that we should dwell together as one family; that there should be an identity of interests among us; that we should approximate to some extent at least, and as far as practicable to that identity of interests which we understand, by the revelations of Jesus

Christ, to exist in the eternal worlds. This revelation is one of the earliest given to this people, and its practice was entered upon in early days. We have been told by those who are old enough to know, and who had experience at that time, that to the disobedience or failure of the people in carrying out this revelation was due the expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from Jackson County in the State of Missouri; and that, afterward, the same causes operated to produce the results which the people experienced at that time, God suffering the enemies of his kingdom and people to have power over them because of their disobedience to respond to the call which he made upon, and to the commandments which he gave unto, them.

This is one of the traditions that has come down to us of a younger generation, from the fathers of this church. It has been taught to us and impressed upon us for years, probably upon many of us since we knew anything of this work, until the belief is fastened upon the hearts, consciences and feelings of the great bulk of the Latter-day Saints, and that at some time or other, in the future of this church that doctrine would be again taught, and the requirements embodied in that revelation would be again made upon us as a people; in fact the teachings I have received have been that until we did obey that the privilege of going back and building up the center stake of Zion and redeeming that land which God first gave unto his people as an inheritance, in the State of Missouri, would not be granted unto us, and that until we did obey it we should be pilgrims and wanderers and should not have the privilege of going back and laying the foundation of the center stake of Zion and of that great temple which God has said shall be reared in this generation. So that for years, speaking of my own feelings, I have awaited, I will not say with anxiety, but, with great desire, the time when this people would have sufficient faith, and when the circumstances should be so favorable that God should command us to enter upon the practice of that principle, or to enter into that order which he commanded us in the beginning to obey.

Every time I have travelled among the nations of the earth, I have thanked God that he had provided a panacea for the evils which I saw everywhere around me. When I saw the rich revelling in luxury, crowding upon the poor, crushing out their lives, the poor living in squalor and misery, their lives a burden to them, not having, in many instances, enough food to eat, or aiment to wear, or a shelter, and when winter approached dreading it with feelings indescribable. In society in the world there is a large class of people having more means than they can spend for their comfort and convenience. They have the finest houses, abundance of food, every convenience, troops of servants to wait upon them to do their bidding, and have all the wealth they can desire, every luxury they can conceive of. At the same time there are living in the same community thousands of poor creatures destitute of the necessities of life. My heart has been pained within me in visiting the large cities of Europe, at seeing women degraded like beasts of the fields, and their lives continual burdens to them, their existence almost joyless. It has been a wonder to me how people could keep from committing suicide in the midst of the want that was everywhere apparent. I have thought, how can God bear with this people, and the cries of the poor ascending to him continually; and as I have said, I have thanked God in my heart that he had provided a means of deliverance from such evils for his people.

There is an expression used in the prophets, which I have often thought of, about the rich grinding the faces of the poor. It is a most forcible and significant metaphor. The tyranny and oppression that are practised upon the poor are terrible. In many places their faces are literally ground by those who rule over them. Yet there are philanthropic men and women, rich people who do not take comfort in their riches because of the existence of this misery on every land of which I have spoken, and they form benevolent societies of every name and nature in order to relieve the wants of the suffering poor, and yet with all their efforts the suffering is not lessened to any measurable extent. The people live and toil and die in the most squalid misery by thousands in all the large cities of thickly populated countries. I have also, in conversation at various times and under various circumstances, been told by those with whom I have conversed and who have taken some interest in the work with which we are identified, that so long as we were a primitive people and were simple in our habits, so long as we did not have a great deal of wealth in our midst we should probably continue to prosper and increase and bring forth and manifest in our lives the virtues which I described as having an existence among us. Men have told me—"O yes, Mr. Cannon, the picture you draw of the manner of life of your people is very delightful; it is delightful to find a people exhibiting such qualities as you describe as existing among, or possessed by, your people; but you are a new people, a new sect or denomination; but wait awhile, wait until you have grown in wealth, importance, numbers and power, and then we shall see whether your system possesses elements superior to the systems with which we are acquainted and which have preceded yours." Men who have reflected, who have read and have made themselves acquainted with the histories of other peoples, know full well that when once wealth increases in the midst of a people, when class distinctions make their appearance, when education is promoted and aspired after by certain classes which other classes cannot reach; when refinement, the refinement of education and culture, has its effects, creating distinctions among a people who originally were primitive, and luxurious habits come in to foster these differences, then the strength of former communities has disappeared,

and nations which have been noted as possessing the strength and the union of iron, have fallen into decay and have lost their power and have been broken into fragments and have eventually disappeared. Judging us by the light of this kind of experience many have made predictions which you have probably seen in the papers thousands of times, that there were causes operating in the midst of the Mormon community that would work out its disintegration and eventually bring about its utter overthrow and downfall, or at least bring about an assimilation between it and the systems by which it was surrounded.

There is one thing, however, that is not taken into account in measuring us, and that is that God has laid the foundation of this work. Men do not recognize that, but they recognize other causes and other influences that are apparent to them and with which they are familiar. We have consoled ourselves, in listening to these predictions, with the reflection that we are the people of God, that God has made promises unto this people, that he has said that this work shall stand forever, and shall not be given into the hands of another people. These predictions, therefore, have not had any discouraging effect upon us. But, with all our confidence, we must not lose sight of the fact, that God works by means. If we are to withstand the encroachments of the evil one we must, on our part, do that which will fortify us against his encroachments, we must take steps to render us impregnable to his assaults. We are not the first people to engage in such a work as this. Others have made repeated attempts to establish the kingdom of God on the earth. One by one the prophets fell, one by one they became victims to the power of the evil one and to the assaults of the wicked. The son of God himself fell a martyr to this fell spirit; his apostles one by one, although they endeavored in their day and generation to establish this order of Enoch to which I have referred, also fell martyrs to the same spirit of persecution, until the inhabitants of the earth had either slain or driven off every apostle, and not a man was left to stand up in the midst of the people to say—"Thus saith the Lord," having the authority and power of the apostleship and of the holy priesthood from God to administer in the things of God and to communicate the mind and will of God unto the people.

What followed? A reign of night, darkness and confusion covered the face of the whole earth. There was no heavenly voice to disturb the solemn stillness that ensued. Every man of God who aspired to revelation had been killed or swept from among men, and then, and not till then was the vengeance of the adversary satiated; but as long as there was a holy man, who aspired to the distinction, or to the honor or blessing of knowing God's will so long there were those arrayed against him who scrupled not to shed his blood, and were not satisfied until that blood was spilled.

You trace the various dispensations down from the days of Adam until the days of these apostles of which I have spoken, and see how short-lived were the attempts to establish a reign of righteousness. If we turn to the Book of Mormon, which gives an account of God's dealings on this land, we shall find that while the circumstances which surrounded the Jaredites and the Nephites were more favorable than those which surrounded the people of Asia, yet the same causes operated on this land, and after Jesus came and the wicked had been swept off by the judgments of God, and none were left but those who were righteous or partially so at least, that then they sought to establish this holy order among them and were successful, it continuing in their midst until the year two hundred and one after the birth of Jesus. And we are told that during that time all the generations that lived passed away in righteousness, before the Lord. The circumstances were undoubtedly favorable for the establishment of an holy order among that people, because, as I have said, the judgments of God had visited the land, and the wicked had been swept off; but no sooner did they begin again to divide, each one seeking after his own affairs to the exclusion of the general affairs of the people than they began again to fall into sin and transgression, and the result was that they were punished of God, and the Nephites were eventually blotted out; but we are informed that one hundred and sixty-seven years, terminating in the year 201 of the Christian era, were passed in perfect peace and righteousness. It was almost millennial righteousness. Satan was bound almost as much during that hundred and sixty-seven years in his operations among the Nephites, if we may judge by the short record which has come to us, as if he did not have an existence, or as he will beduring the thousand years' reign of peace, that is so far as leading away the hearts of the people to commit sin is concerned.

I have alluded to these various attempts on the part of holy men to establish truth and righteousness in the earth. We have seen that they have only been partially successful; they did not succeed in overcoming sufficiently to entirely bind Satan and to banish from the earth the evils of which he is the cause; but we are told that in the last days God will establish his kingdom. Brother Penrose described, this morning, in the close of his remarks, some of the results which should follow. He said that the lamb and the wolf should lie down together, and the bear and the cow should feed together, and there should be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the mountain of the Lord, but that peace and union and love should prevail throughout the earth for one thousand years. The prophets have spoken of this time, those to whom I have referred, who fell victims to the rage of their persecutors; they looked forward to the time when this kingdom should be established and should be successful, and they dwelt upon it with great delight and anticipation. The Apo-

le John, the Revelator, speaks about a thousand years of peace and righteousness, when Satan should be bound and should not have power over the hearts of the children of men to tempt them, or to lead them astray, and that this should last for one thousand years, and then at the close of that period he should be loosed again for a little season.

The revelations which we have received through the Prophet Joseph Smith speak of the same period, that is, anticipate such a time as this that the Apostle John speaks of; and we have been taught from the beginning until the present time that this work, this system, this gospel, called Mormonism, should be the beginning of this work, and that it should spread and increase until it should fill the whole earth, and bring to pass the fulfillment of these predictions. Now what I wish to impress upon your minds, in bringing them to this point is this, that if we are engaged in a work that is to be more successful than any other work that has been established by God our heavenly Father from the beginning until now there must be greater faith and union, there must be more power, there must be a willingness to sacrifice more than has ever been manifested by any people who have preceded us in works of this character, or in any dispensation which God has given unto men. I know that many think that God will do a great deal. I believe that I am a believer in God's power to the fullest extent, but I have noticed in my experience, that God works by means, and that he does not himself come down in person, neither does he send his angels down, except on visits occasionally; but he commands his people, his children on the earth, to do that which he requires at their hands, and then helps them in doing this, and my conclusion is that if we lay the foundation of a work that shall stand forever, that shall never be overthrown or given into the hands of another people, we must have more faith, practise a higher righteousness, be more valiant for the truth and possess more of God's power than any people who have ever preceded us. Are we prepared for this? Did the Latter-day Saints take this into their calculation when they joined this church? If they did, it is well, if they did not, they had better begin to investigate the matter and satisfy themselves as to what their duties are. It may be said, as I have already stated, that God will assist us. Undoubtedly he will; he assisted his servants in ancient days. But we have a foe to contend with who is sleepless. The adversary of our souls has not lost his cunning. He knows that his time is short; and that the last struggle is approaching, and he will not relax in the least degree his vigilance or his diligence in seeking to destroy this work and to martyr or destroy the men and the women connected with it. The supremacy of the earth depends upon the issue of the contest. He has held the sway, he has been dominant, he has been successful in destroying the holiest and the best that ever trod the earth's surface. The Son of God himself and the pure and holy in all ages he has succeeded in destroying, and in spreading his pall of darkness over the earth, and in destroying faith from the midst of the children of men, and now that the attempt is made to revive the work of God and to establish his kingdom on the earth we may make calculations with all certainty that he will not cease his endeavors until either he, or God and his kingdom are triumphant. He wants to vanquish and he will vanquish if possible, and he will spare no means to destroy this work, for if it is established the foundation of his kingdom is sapped.

There are principles taught unto us now which will fortify us more effectually than anything that has ever been taught to us before, so far as resisting this pressure that is brought to bear upon us to destroy us. I refer to this Order to which I have alluded before—the Order of God, the order that is called after Enoch because, as we are told in the revelations, he established it among his people, and brought about that perfection which enabled him and his city to be translated. I know there are many feelings among the people in relation to this. I have heard more since I returned to Salt Lake City, in the few days I have been here concerning the feelings of men who call themselves Latter-day Saints, than I imagined existed among us. In the south the people have organized, and they have gone along very well during this last season. Bishop Callister remarked to me, when I was at Fillmore passing south, that he doubted whether Enoch himself and his people made more or better progress than they had made in the same time. I doubted it also, and subsequent observation confirmed the truth of this remark. So far as other settlements are concerned I found the people in some instances discouraged a little, but on the whole they were greatly encouraged by the results of the season's labor, and they felt to organize themselves more perfectly according to the new articles of association, and to carry out the requirements which had been made upon them. I was delighted in visiting a little town on the banks of the Rio Virgen, called Price. There the superintendent of the farming, Brother Baker, remarked, "I wish you had come about an hour earlier, you would have seen us all here together at our meal." Said I—"What do you mean?" He said they had just got through dinner. Said I—"Do you eat together?" "Oh yes," said he, "we have been living as one family all this season." I was surprised for I had not heard of it, and I was so much interested in it that I commenced immediately to make inquiries as to their condition. I found that there were from forty to forty-four men, women and children who had joined together in accordance with the counsel given by President Young while in the South. They had proceeded to farm together, and to live together as one family. I thought that the best persons that I could refer to to obtain infor-