

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

PRESIDENT GEO. Q. CANNON,

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday morning, October 8, 1892.

REPORTED BY G. F. GIBBS.

We assemble together in the capacity of a conference for the purpose of being taught concerning our duties as Latter-day Saints, as members of the Church of Christ, and it is of the utmost importance that when we thus meet, that we should have the presence and assistance of the Spirit of God. I should not dare this morning to arise with the intention of speaking to you if I did not hope that I should have the assistance of that Spirit. I could not of my self tell that which is best adapted to you and to your circumstances. It requires the all-searching Spirit of our God to reveal unto us, His servants, those items of doctrine, of instruction, of counsel, and, if need be, of reproof and warning, which will be of benefit to the Latter-day Saints who are assembled as we are to-day.

We are living in a momentous time. At no period in the history of the children of God in this dispensation have events been of more importance than those which are now taking place in our midst and around about us. I have been exceedingly thankful for one thing. Amid the threats and menaces and all the attempts which have been made against us to curtail our liberties, to embarrass us, and if possible destroy our religion, one feeling has been uppermost in my mind, a feeling of thankfulness that the Lord our God in this manner is permitting us to see the fulfillment of the words He has spoken through His servant the Prophet Joseph Smith and through others who have also been inspired of Him. Among the earliest predictions that were made concerning this work by the servants of God was one to this effect, that the time would come when we should not only be opposed by a small circle, a few individuals confined to a neighborhood, but as the work should spread and increase, the opposition to it would be in proportion to its growth and its expansion, until it would not be the act of the mob, or the acts of mobs confined to counties or confined to States, but that the time would come that in a national capacity blows would be aimed at us by the nation of which we form a part. To-day, my brethren and sisters, these predictions are being fulfilled in our sight. Not one word that God has spoken concerning this work will fail to the ground unfulfilled, and the very enemies of this work, those who are most anxious to destroy it, and to prove the falsity of its claims, are the very instruments in the providence of our God, used to fulfil His word and accomplish His designs. Do you think for one moment that Senator Edmunds in framing the bill called by his name, or in presenting it to the Senate for its action, had any idea in his mind that he was an instrument in fulfilling the predictions of God through His servant Joseph? Have you any idea that the House of Representatives in passing that bill, after it had passed the Senate, supposed for one moment that they were helping to establish the claims of Joseph Smith as a prophet of the living God? Or do you imagine that President Arthur, in selecting the five Commissioners to go to Utah Territory to act in accordance with the provisions of this same law, supposed that he was helping in any manner to establish the claims of what is called "Mormonism" to divinity, or that the Commissioners themselves, in coming here, have once thought that they were playing a part in the great drama of the last days, that they in their sphere were helping, or are helping to establish the truth of this work, the downfall of which is sought to be accomplished? And yet these are the truths connected with this work; these are the facts. The man who framed that bill, the man who introduced it in the Senate, the judiciary committee who passed upon it, the Senate who adopted the report of its committee of judiciary and passed the bill, the House of Representatives who took the bill up and made it law, so far as their action was concerned, and the President of the United States who signed the Act and who

appointed the Commissioners under it, and the Commissioners themselves who were thus appointed—all these men in their official capacity have helped, though they thought they were doing the very opposite, to establish the truth of the predictions of the Prophet Joseph, and of President Young and of the Apostles who have been inspired of God from the commencement of this work until this time and who have predicted that these events would most assuredly take place.

Thus we see that the wrath of man is made to praise God. The acts of men are converted to the glory of God, and fight as they may, contend as they may, resist this work as they may this work, the foundation of which God had laid, they can do naught against it. On the contrary, everything they do contributes to its establishment, contributes to prove its divine authenticity, to show that there is an overruling power greater than that of man, even the power of the most high God, and that He causes the nations of the earth and the powers of the earth to praise Him, to add to His glory and to the accomplishment of His purposes.

Before leaving this subject, there is one thing worthy of remark—I have been exceedingly struck with it. The man who introduced the law of 1892 was a native and representative from the State of Vermont. The man who introduced the bill of March 22d, 1892, was a Senator from the State of Vermont—Senator Edmunds. The President who signed that bill was from the State of Vermont. We had another bill passed June 23d, 1874, known as the Poland Law, special legislation for Utah Territory. The framers of that bill, it is championed, the man who did more than any other single man towards pushing it through the House of Representatives, and having it become law, was a Representative from the State of Vermont. The champions of the Edmunds law in the House of Representatives, some of them were from the State of Vermont, notably Mr. Haskell, Representative from Kansas, a Vermonter by birth. It is a remarkable thing that Vermonters should be the chief instruments in framing, urging and securing the passage of legislation against us. On the other hand the man who, in the hands of God, was the chief instrument in laying the foundation of this great work in these last days, the Prophet Joseph Smith, was a native of the State of Vermont, and Hyrum Smith, his brother, whose blood mingled with the Prophet's at Carthage jail, was also a native of Vermont. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Erastus Snow, the Snow family, Albert Carrington, the Farris, the Calls, the Hatches, and numbers of the leading families in this church were born in that State. How remarkable it is, is it not, that we should have received so many blessings through men born in the Green Mountain State, and that our chief enemies, apparently stirred up by the adversary to destroy the work which their fellow-citizens, men born upon the same soil, were the means, in the hands of God, of establishing—that they, Vermonters also, should be stirred up to seek for its destruction.

We may expect from this time forward the same warfare; no cessation, no letting up, so far as the hatred of the wicked is concerned. A part only of the predictions of the Prophet have been fulfilled concerning this latter-day work. We have been told from the beginning that opposition to this, the work of God, should not be confined to one nation, but that it should extend to other nations, and that they who array themselves against us, as others have done in the past, will continue to do so until the whole earth shall be warned and its inhabitants be left without excuse, and the kingdom of God be established in power and in great glory upon the earth.

A great many of our brethren and sisters have thought, and may still think, that we are likely to see very hard times, as the result of the attacks now being made upon us. The hearts of some may almost fail them in looking forward to the future, anticipating that there will be such intense hatred and such active exertions made against us that it will be very difficult for us to sustain ourselves. No doubt we shall have all we can endure. No doubt the Lord will require us to pass through and endure ordeals that will test our faith to the uttermost, and it will seem at times as though we were about to be overwhelmed.

The powers of darkness will gather around us and everything will look so threatening, so black and so impenetrable, that except to those who look at these things with the eye of faith, it will seem almost impossible for us to escape. There will be, doubtless, many such hours and many such times in our history in the future as there have been in the past. But what of that? As the trial may be, so will be the strength to endure it. There is a wise design of the Lord our God in permitting these tests to our faith, to see whether in the midst of gloomy and threatening surroundings we shall falter, shall shrink and become timid and be overcome, or whether in the midst of this gloom, in the midst of these forbidding appearances, our faith will still be strong in our God, and in the promises, the precious promises, which He has made to us. Now we may calculate upon this just as sure as He has spoken.

There is this that is most extraordinary connected with us a people. God in the beginning made a promise to us, which has been oft repeated, that notwithstanding all our enemies should do against us, we should have peace, peace should reign in our hearts, peace should reign in our habitations, peace should be in our land and brood over us as a people. This is one of the great promises God made to us in the beginning. Read the closing verses of the 45th section of the Doctrine and Covenants and see what God has said concerning Zion, and the promises that are therein embodied respecting us as a people; that when other nations should be at war, when neighbor should rise against neighbor, when every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee to Zion for safety, in Zion there should be peace. Now, as I have said, it is one of the most extraordinary features connected with this work of our God, that when it seemed as though the whole power of the nation was combining from every part of the land, execrations loading the air against the "Mormons" of Utah Territory, petitions coming up by thousands, popular prejudice appealing to popular prejudice and entreating the use of bayonets, of cannon and musketry to destroy us, and when it seemed as though Congress was in such a mood that it was ready to pass any law or to frame any enactment to accomplish those ends; that in the midst of all this unreasoning excitement, in Utah Territory, in the breasts of Latter-day Saints wherever they dwelt in these mountain fastnesses or scattered abroad among the nations of the earth, there was a spirit of unflinching peace, a spirit of quietude, a spirit of serenity, a spirit of calm and undismayed resignation, awaiting quietly and patiently the good providence of our God, knowing that in and of themselves they were helpless to defend themselves against these attacks, but having unshaken confidence in the promises which God had made to His people. O most wonderful! Most wonderful exhibition of calmness! Most wonderful exhibition of consistent faith! Most wonderful exhibition of fortitude, of courage, and of unflinching trust in the almighty power of that God whose existence so many in the world deny. A rare example to the nations of the earth of the willingness of a people to put their trust in their God, even to the very uttermost. Now, my brethren and sisters, if there is any great peculiarity connected with us as a people that is noticeable it is this. You can notice it in yourselves; you can notice it in your brethren and sisters; you can notice it in your children; Presidents of Stakes can notice it; the Bishop can notice it; the Bishops' counsellors can notice it; the High Councilors are witnesses of it; the entire body of Priesthood must see the exhibition of these qualities among the people to this wonderful extent. God be praised for it. I feel to praise Him from the bottom of my heart that He has poured out upon His people this spirit of peace. We have laid down in peace, we have slept in peace, we have risen in peace, we have gone out in peace, we have come in in peace, we have prayed in our families in peace, we have gone forth to our labors in peace, we have returned therefrom in peace, we have met together in our assemblies in peace. The peace of heaven, the peace of Almighty God, has descended upon this people, and it has rested upon them in their congregations, in their social associations,

God has given unto us this precious blessing. It is beyond price. How thankful we ought to be, that amidst all these murderous threats that have been made against us, He has given unto us this feeling which has deprived us of all fear. Such a spectacle is unexampled in the history of the earth and of its inhabitants, that is in our day. Look where you will, travel where you will, mingle with people where you may, you behold nothing like this; and thus, God is bearing witness to the inhabitants of the earth that He is able to fulfil His promises, to protect His people, and to pour out upon them that precious and heavenly gift that is beyond all price, and they dwell in it and they enjoy it—their wives and their children enjoy it; and there is no fear in the hearts of any faithful man, or woman or child within the confines of our land or in any of the adjacent territories where our people dwell. Why, if we had no other blessing than this, it would be worth all the world to us. But we have, in addition to that, other blessings. God is teaching us many lessons. He is teaching us to put our trust in Him. He is teaching us that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Why should we borrow trouble for to-morrow, as long as we enjoy to-day, as long as we have peace to-day, so long as we have the presence of the Holy Ghost to-day. Let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. Let us enjoy this day in peace. Let us lay down this night in peace, putting our trust in God for the morrow. If we thus live day by day—for it is written that the just shall live by faith—if we thus live day by day, I tell you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ there is no power upon the earth or in hell that can disturb the peace, the quietude, the prosperity and success of this people or interrupt the progress of this great and glorious work of our God. I dare prophesy that in the name of Jesus Christ, for I know that it will be fulfilled, every word of it. God has stretched forth His hand to accomplish a work, and that work will roll forth. Men may die, men may be slain, men may fall on the right hand and on the left, but the column will still press forward, it will still march onward gathering in from every land and from every nation the honest, the meek, the lowly, and those who love righteousness and who desire to serve our God. I can truthfully say I do not believe that there ever was a time when threats were made against us, when greater peace and less fear rested down upon the servants of God than at the present time. I look at our President—I always did watch the captain of the ship with peculiar interest, when on the ocean surrounded by icebergs or when in the midst of great storms, as I have been a few times, I watched his eye and his demeanor, and I fancied, and I think very correctly, that I could form a good idea of our peril by watching him. I have been in storms when everybody on board, excepting the Elders, expected to go down. I did the same thing when a boy, watching the Prophet Joseph, the few opportunities that I had of doing so. I did the same with President Young when he lived. In times of threatening danger and of anxiety I noticed the spirit that moved upon him, as well as its operations upon myself. I do the same to-day with President Taylor; I have watched his bearing and have listened to his words; and I have taken notice of his spirit, as I have also of the brethren associated with him. I have witnessed but one spirit and felt but one feeling, and have had but one thought impressed upon me by their demeanor; and this spirit and the impression it makes corresponds exactly with my own. I feel that I am in accord with him and with them, and while this is the case I feel that there is no real danger for Zion; that God our heavenly Father is still watching over us, and is permitting us to pass through these trials for an express purpose. As I have already said, the predictions of the holy Prophets could not be fulfilled unless these things did occur. And why should we shrink from them? Why should we feel sorry about them? Why should we wish it otherwise? I can truthfully say, that I never saw a single moment from the time that I left here to go to Washington until I returned that I felt the least discouraged, or anything approaching a feeling of despair or gloom or anything of the kind connected with the work of God; although, as you knew, I was afflicted

and bowed down in sorrow because of domestic affliction; but aside from that (and even that did not discourage me) at no moment, when in the midst of the worst contest I ever engaged in, did I have a feeling of discouragement or gloom. I knew very well that all that was taking place was in accordance with the plan of our God, with His purposes and His designs. These things must be, in order to accomplish the work of God, in order that every man may be judged according to his works, and in order that this nation, as a nation, may be held to a strict accountability for its acts, or the acts of its representatives. I have nothing, therefore, to regret about this. My feelings I have expressed in this stand since my return; they were expressed by the brethren that spoke upon these subjects.

Referring to the acts of the Commissioners, I am exceedingly thankful for everything that has been done. I have never desired to see us as a people reduced to the degraded level of wicked men and wicked women; no, not for one moment. What, my sisters who have entered into holy covenants, in sacred places, who have in their priestly garments been administered to by the Priests of the Most High God in the holiest sanctuaries that are upon the earth, for them to be placed upon the same level with common prostitutes! My soul revolts at the thought. And my brethren who have in like manner gone into holy places and taken upon them sacred covenants, in the name of the Most High God, and have had the holiest ordinances that God ever revealed to man, administered unto them by that authority which He has given—for them to be reduced to the level of adulterers and whoremongers! God forbid that such should be the case. From the very moment that I read that oath (the oath prescribed by the Commissioners) I thanked God in my heart for it. I would not have it otherwise. I would not have the rules changed in the least degree, unless, of course, our brethren who represent the political interests of the people could, by applying, have them changed; but I did not believe they could accomplish this, and I am thankful, therefore, that the rules were not changed, because they draw a sharp line of distinction between the Latter-day Saints and the wicked. It sustains the claim that we have made all the day long, that it is our religion that is assailed; that it is the solemnization of the holy marriage ordinances that the blow is aimed at, and not the illicit commerce of the sexes. And I am glad too that every man and every woman that ever were open to the charge of having engaged at any time in plural marriage, are in the same condition; that the rule has been so rigidly made, and so sweeping in its character, as to include all who have lived in plural marriage. It is an honorable distinction to belong to a class whose only offence is that they married women, or married men, instead of living together in violation of God's law. If there are any who think they did not act honorably in thus living, let them ask forgiveness. If they have done something they are ashamed of they can sue for amnesty. While those who have done nothing that they are ashamed of, or that the whole world should not know of, are relieved from the unenviable task of seeking forgiveness.

God is ordering this matter just right; and if we should fail in any point, He will make it up. He will supplement it by His overruling power and wisdom. He is watching our affairs. He knows exactly our circumstances; and He knows exactly how much we can bear; and when we have to pass through deep waters He will be near us; when we have to pass through the fire He will be on our right and on our left hand. He will not forsake us in our hour of distress and tribulation, but he will be nearer to us then, if possible, than at any other time in our lives. Therefore, of all people upon the face of the earth, we have the greatest cause to rejoice because of these things.

I was very much struck with some remarks—I did not hear all of his discourse, having been called out to attend to some business that could not be postponed—by Brother Lorenzo Snow; they struck me with a great deal of force. I refer to his allusion to the three Hebrew children and the glory that followed their submission to the will of God, and their resistance to the decrees of the pagan, the heathen king. I believe that glory will be added to the