

DISCOURSE.

By Elder GEORGE Q. CANNON,
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REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

THE circumstances which surround us at the present time are of a very peculiar character; probably at no period of our history has the work of the Last Days attracted the attention and the curiosity of the people generally to the extent that it does to-day. There are several reasons for this, but that which, more than anything else at this time, has directed the minds of the world to Utah is the discovery of mineral in our Territory. This has undoubtedly added greatly to the interest which has ever been felt in this strange land, and in the strange people who inhabit it. The best method of disposing of us and our system has given rise to much controversy and discussion in years past. That we ought to be disposed of in some manner has been a very general opinion and feeling in certain quarters; there has seemed to be a disposition manifested by some persons to do something so as to effectually dispose of the system called "Mormonism." They have apparently felt that it was in the way and ought to be removed, or that something should be done to retard its growth and progress, and the influence which it is exercising in the world. Did we not know through our own bitter experience in the past that this feeling is entertained by a great many people, it would be difficult for us to imagine that such is the case, for an examination of our principles, and an understanding of their bearing, operation and effects would certainly not lead to conclusions of this character. So far as I myself am concerned, if this matter were submitted to me without my knowledge and past experience in relation to it, I should say that the principles and doctrines believed in and practiced by the Latter-day Saints, and the results which have been wrought out by their operation would not have had the effect of creating animosity or ill will, or any feeling other than kind, brotherly and affectionate.

What is there about this system called "Mormonism" that should evoke the terrible amount of animosity and hatred which have been displayed at various times? The Latter-day Saints believe in Jesus Christ, they believe that he is the Savior of the world; that He died for man's redemption; that through His death we may, by obedience, be brought into the presence of the Father, and made heirs of eternal glory. The Latter-day Saints believe that mankind should repent of and forsake all sins, and be baptized in the name of Jesus for their remission; the Latter-day Saints believe that they should not only be baptized for the remission of their sins, but that baptism should be administered by those only who have authority. Not vague or ill-defined authority, based upon a commission given to others centuries ago; but an authority proceeding from God that will be recognized on earth and in heaven. The Latter-day Saints believe that, having repented of sin and been baptized for the remission of it, they who have complied thus far with the gospel requirements, should have hands laid upon them for the reception of the Holy Ghost; and that they who thus lay on hands should have authority from God to officiate in this ordinance.

Is there anything about or connected with this faith that should excite opposition, create illfeeling and arouse hatred? Certainly, when we look at this dispassionately, we must admit that there is not.

Is there anything connected with this faith, or the principles to which I have referred that does not harmonize with the scriptures? Peter, who preached the first sermon of which we have any account after the resurrection of Jesus, declared precisely the same principles which I have alluded to as being part of our belief. The other apostles taught the same principles, and enforced them upon the people to the extent of their ability and power. I know that there are difficulties and contentions in the religious world as to the mode and efficacy of baptism; some assert that immersion is not the true mode; but we are willing to stand by the scriptures and to abide by their decision, feeling assured that, if they be taken literally, those who read them will have a perfect conviction that immersion is the only true mode. But even should there be a difference of opinion on this point, it is not of such a character as to stir men up in deadly hostility towards us.

There may also be a difference of opinion in relation to the laying on of hands. Some may say this is only necessary where men are ordained, and that it is not right or proper for all the members of the church of Christ to receive the imposition of hands. But as I have said in reference to baptism so I say of this ordinance: it is clearly revealed in the scriptures and can readily be substantiated from them that the members of the church of Christ in ancient days had hands laid upon them for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and that it was the ordinance and the only ordinance instituted in God's economy for the bestowal and the reception of that gift.

Well, is this all the Latter-day Saints be-

live in? No. I do not expect to be able to tell all we believe in, or to allude to every principle this afternoon; but these are the first principles which we have proclaimed to the world. In addition to these there is another, namely the gathering together of the people of God. Wherever the elders of this church have gone they have said, and testified to the people, that the time in which we live is the gathering dispensation alluded to by the ancient prophets, when God's people should be gathered from the various nations of the earth to one place, according to the predictions of John the Revelator, David the psalmist, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and all other prophets whose writings we have in this book. They, in simplicity, have called upon the people everywhere to repent, and to gather together; and these, in substance, are the principles which the elders of this church have declared unto the people wherever they have travelled; and it is because of these principles and their proclamation, that so much persecution has been stirred up.

I know very well, the feelings of the world, and perhaps of some who are listening to-day to this brief enunciation of our principles, and the causes of our persecutions. Say they, "if these were the only principles taught by the Latter-day Saints we can not think they would have been persecuted, there must be something behind this. It can not be possible that in this enlightened age, men and women should be persecuted and reviled and their names cast out as evil for believing these doctrines?" A prevalent idea has been that this prejudice against us owes its origin and continuation to our belief in plurality of wives; but when it is recollected that the mobbings, drivings and expulsion from cities, counties and states which we have endured, and our exodus to these mountains all took place before the revelation of that doctrine was publicly known, it will be seen at once that our belief in it has not been the cause of persecution. I have an idea on this point in relation to this much-talked-of and much-abused doctrine, and it is this: I believe that from the day it was taught to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and embraced in the faith and lives of its members we have risen in power and grown in influence; we have gained favor with and enjoyed the protection of the Heavens such as we never possessed before. All the prosperity, seemingly, that we enjoy to-day has been bestowed upon us since the proclamation of that principle and its adoption by us into our faith and practice. There has been an almighty power hedging us round about and encircling us from that day until the present time; and though men have plotted and schemed, and have devised mischief, and formed machinations and combinations against the Latter-day Saints, their schemes have fallen to the ground; their combinations have proved unavailing, and we have been delivered time and time again since we came to these valleys.

There is good reason why this is so. If this principle be from God, as we solemnly testify it is, surely God would stretch forth His arm to defend and deliver a people who would be so valiant and trustful as to go forth in the face of so-called civilization and popular prejudice in the nineteenth century, and embrace and practice that doctrine, and assume all the consequences which its practice involves! Surely God, who would reveal such a principle to His people and call upon them to obey it, would defend those who had the courage to sacrifice themselves if it were necessary to carry out what they believed to be God's behest! He would stretch forth His arm, exert His power and fulfil His promises to deliver those who would thus go forth in humility and meekness and carry out a principle that he had revealed unto them;

This is the view which I take of this matter. Instead of our being left to the power of our persecutors to a greater extent since its revelation and practice, we have had greater freedom and security, and have been blessed as we never were before. It was not on account of our belief in this that we have been hated. Joseph and Hyrum Smith were slain in Carthage jail, and hundreds of persons were persecuted to the death previous to the church having any knowledge of this doctrine. What then was the cause of the persecutions of the people, and why should they have been singled out and made so remarkable above other people, many of whom believe in several of the principles that they believed in. There is not a religious denomination in Christendom which does not believe in Jesus Christ; I do not know of one that does not believe in repenting of sin and also in some form of baptism. They may differ in opinion as to the mode, efficacy and necessity of the ordinance; some may and do call it essential, while others regard it as non-essential, but it is generally believed in; and there are also denominations which believe in the laying on of hands. I do not know of one that believes in the gathering of the people together, still there are people or communities who do gather together, besides the Latter-day Saints. What is it then that makes us so marked? I will explain it in a few words as I understand it. It is because the Latter-day Saints believe that God has restored from the heavens, the everlasting priesthood,—that eternal authority by which man acts upon the earth as the ambassador of God. It is because we have testified that God has restored this once more to earth and we have received it, and that by virtue of it we act as apostles, members

of the seventies, high priests, elders, bishops, priests, teachers and deacons, and in the several offices God has placed in His church. This is the secret, my brethren and sisters and friends, of the opposition that is and has been waged against the church of God. We might go forth and preach belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, and baptism for the remission of sins, as Alexander Campbell did; we might say, as some of the sects do, that it is necessary to lay on hands; we might gather the people together, and do any or all of these things, but if we did not have the right to exercise heaven-bestowed authority there would be no particular opposition to us. Of course, the nearer a man draws to God, and the more he lives according to the plan which God has prescribed the more opposition he meets with. Satan will stir up strife, animosity and hatred against him. On this account Luther, Calvin, John Wesley and other reformers have been persecuted. The nearer they came to the truth, and the more zealous they were in proclaiming it, the more opposition they met with. Men, in reasoning upon this subject, say that, every sect, at the commencement of its career is persecuted because men are not familiar with its doctrines; but, when they become known, opposition and persecution cease. They predict this about the Latter-day Saints; but the truth of the matter is this: if every new sect is persecuted, it is because it fearlessly denounces the sins, follies and vices of the age, and so long as they continue this so long are they persecuted; but the moment they assimilate to the world, gloss over its follies and go with the stream and float with the popular current, opposition ceases. This has been the case, more or less with every sect; but when men predict this of the Latter-day Saints they do not understand the nature of the work in which we are engaged: they do not comprehend the nature of the claims that we make; they have no understanding of the authority that we exercise. The distinction, to which I have referred, between us and others is, that we claim to have the holy priesthood.

"But," says one, "has not this authority always been on the earth? Why, ministers have gone forth and preached now for centuries, authorized by the divine commission of the Apostles,—'Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.' On the strength of this commission they have gone forth for centuries, and why do you Latter-day Saints claim additional authority? Has the authority not existed ever since the days of the Apostles?"

If it has, where are its fruits, where are its powers, and where is the proper exercise thereof exhibited? Shall we go to the church of Rome and inquire of it? It claims to have uninterrupted apostolic descent from Peter, down through the ages until we reach our own day. Say the Episcopalians, Lutherans, Calvinists, and all protestant sects, "No, she is the mother of harlots, she has defiled herself; that church is false, and God has taken from her the authority she once had. If we go back to the middle ages you will find that her popes have been corrupt, and there have been times when there were more than one pope, and if history can be relied on a woman once occupied the papal chair; therefore we Protestants abhor her and call her the mother of harlots; we have come out of her and have renounced her and her wickedness. Neither she nor her priests have any authority."

But the Catholic, on the other hand, maintains that his church, and his alone has the authority, which Protestant Christendom declares she has lost. And here a question arises in my mind, for as the Protestant churches say that the Catholic church is the mother of harlots, I turn to the mother and ask who and where are her daughters. Is Lutheranism a daughter of hers? Is Calvinism a daughter of hers? Is the church of England, founded by Henry the Eighth, a daughter of hers? If they are not, where are her daughters? Where shall we look for them, if not in the midst of the Protestant churches? If I go to the Episcopalians and ask them for their authority, what reply do they give me? "We exercise that which has come down to us from the Catholic church. We came out of that church because of her impurity, but we brought with us authority to build another church, and ours is the church of God."

But says the Catholic church "we have severed you from us;" and I, as a Latter-day Saint, say to the Episcopalians: If the Catholic church had authority to give you the priesthood, and you derived it by imposition of hands from the Catholic clergy, then it had power to deprive you of that authority; if it had power to bestow authority it had power to withdraw that authority; and the Catholic church did excommunicate Henry the Eighth, Latimer, Cranmer, and all who took part in that defection, and branded them as apostates, and, if they had any authority, deprived them of all they possessed. The same is true of the Lutheran and Calvinist churches, and all others who descended from her.

But there is another view to be taken of this matter. Jesus said to His Apostles: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned; and these

signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils," &c.

Now, my protestant brethren, if you take one part of this commission, why not take the whole of it? You say that by virtue of this authority which Jesus gave unto His apostles, you go forth and preach the gospel; but if you take this part of the commission why not take the whole, and have the signs following them that believe your teachings, and have devils cast out, the sick healed, &c.

In asking these questions I do not wish to be harsh or to reflect on any sect, but only, in honesty, to place the truth before you from my standpoint. Say, the so-called Christians, in answer to the above questions: "We do not believe in these things; this power has been withheld, it was only bestowed in the apostolic age, and was necessary then for the establishment of the gospel."

If that is so, where do you find authority for making the assertion? If you take part of this commission given by Christ to His apostles, what right have you to reject the remainder? Why not reject the whole? I say that, by a parity of reasoning, if you take a part you ought to take the whole. You can not consistently take one portion of scripture and say "this applies to me, or is mine, and I have a right to act by the authority it confers;" and then to say of the other: "I dismiss it, and want nothing to do with it." That is mutilating the word of God, and wherever you find men who have authority from God to act in His name, you will find these gifts and blessings attending their administrations, just as in ancient days.

Suppose a descendant of John Adams, the first minister of this government to the Court of St. James, should find an old document that had been given to him by the Continental Congress authorizing him to go and act as its minister. He reads this document in which his ancestor's name is mentioned and in which he is duly empowered to act as ambassador for the United States, and he says "here is a document, I have it, the original that was given to my great ancestor. I do not see why I should not go and act as ambassador. This document was not given to me, it is true, but I want to act in this capacity."

He goes across the water, travels to London, goes to Court, and presents his document and says, "I am empowered to act. I am sent over by the United States as ambassador to the court of Great Britain." "Where is your commission?" "Here." "Why, this is an old document, it was given to John Adams. Is that your name, and are you the man?" "Oh no, I am not the man, but I am a descendant of his." This would be just as consistent, as for a minister of religion in this day to claim authority because he has a record of the commission which Jesus gave to His disciples. If one case is consistent, so is the other, if one is not, then the other is not.

My brethren, sisters and friends, you now, probably, begin to see the reasons why the Latter-day Saints claim that God has restored the authority and the everlasting priesthood: you now, probably, begin to see some reason why God should send His holy angels from heaven to earth again.

"But," says one, "I thought there were going to be no more angels, prophecies or revelations. I have been taught that the canon of scripture was full, and that it was not necessary for God to speak again to man on the earth."

Oh, this delusive idea! This damnable doctrine which has been preached until Christendom is completely filled with unbelief, so that the man who believes in revelation and that there is a necessity for it is set down as one who is unworthy the society of his fellows! Oh, the dreadful effects which have followed the proclamation of this fallacy for so long a period! What are the effects, resulting from it, that we see to-day? Christendom rent asunder, divided into sects and parties, the name of Jesus derided and sneered at, and the pure gospel lost because of the propagation, for centuries, by so-called christian ministers, of the soul-destroying and damnable heresy that God cannot or will not speak to man again from the heavens; that God will not reveal His will, send His angels, or exercise His power in the affairs of earth as much he did in ancient days. Look at the effects of this! Travel in all our cities of the Atlantic and Pacific, and what do you see? Men and women professing to be followers of Jesus Christ, and yet all divided and split asunder, and quarrelling and contending,—even members of the same church divided asunder. The Methodist church north, and the Methodist church south; the Presbyterian church north, and the Presbyterian church south; the Baptist church north and the Baptist church south, and thus the religious world is divided and split asunder, and there is no authority to say what is truth or who shall proclaim it; there are none to say in the midst of the people, "Thus saith the Lord," or "Here is the path, walk ye in it;" and if a man comes forward claiming that he has this authority he is met with the accusations:

"You are deluded, you are an impostor, you preach false doctrine, we will have none of your teaching. Men who believe in prophesy and revelation are liable to be deceived, and we are afraid of you, we do not know but you will deceive us. Jesus said there should be false prophets, we believe you are one of them."

And thus they fortify and encase themselves in their unbelief and reject the word of God, and if Paul or Peter were to rise from the dead, and go amongst them, and