

DISCOURSE

BY

PROST. GEORGE Q. CANNON,

DELIVERED

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REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

The Remarks of Bro. Woodruff—The Prophets and Servants of God Rejected in nearly all Ages—The World always at War with Ideas that Conflict with their Pre-conceived Notions—The Savior Looked Upon as an Imposter—Joseph Smith as a Prophet—The Cause of the Outcry Against the "Mormons"—Persecution always Accompanied the Introduction of any Reformation—The Work of God, However, Cannot be Destroyed in this Dispensation—Will those who have been Persecuted in Turn become Persecutors?—It is a Poor Religion that cannot Stand Contact with the World—Plural Marriage: Its Responsibilities—Every Woman should be Married—The Law of 1862—Persecution Often the Result of Mistaken Zeal—The Latter-day Saints Cannot Hide Themselves Up—Conclusion.

I HAVE listened with great satisfaction and pleasure to the remarks which have been made by Brother Woodruff this afternoon, and I know that they are true, and that they will be profitable unto all those who treasure them up in their hearts and make application of them in their lives.

While he was speaking the query ran through my mind respecting the prophets and men of God who lived in ancient days—was there ever a Prophet of God—a man who had a message from God, who was received by the generation among whom he lived? They had very few indeed. The Prophet Jonah stands out almost as an exception. Nineveh did repent when he went to it with the message from God; but from Noah down one prophet after another was rejected by the generations unto whom they were sent and unto whom they bore messages from the Almighty. Even Moses, though successful in leading out the children of Israel, with difficulty escaped being stoned to death by his own adherents. And so with every Prophet until the days of the Savior Himself. Jesus was persecuted; Jesus was derided; Jesus was rejected. Jesus who came—His coming having been predicted by the holy Prophets and the whole nation being in expectation of Him—was rejected because He did not come according to the ideas, the preconceived notions of the people—that is of His own kindred unto whom He was sent.

The world entertain certain ideas concerning truth, they entertain certain ideas concerning God and concerning His servants, and when men come to them with something that conflicts with these ideas they are led to reject them, and it is not until a man has died, not until in many instances his blood has been shed, that he is recognized as a Prophet of God. In fact it was an accusation of the Savior against the Jews that they garnished the tombs and sepulchres of the Prophets whom they had slain. They slew them, but after their death their children said, "If we had lived in their day we would not have slain the Prophets, we would have received their testimony," while they treated the Prophets in their midst the same as their fathers had done their predecessors. But it takes time to bring men to esteem Prophets. It has taken centuries to sanctify the memory of the Son of God; centuries have rolled on before He was recognized by the world as the being that His disciples testified He was. To His generation He was a vile imposter, and was counted worthy of the most ignominious death that could be inflicted—to be crucified between two thieves. Why, they had the most irrefutable evidence, as they supposed, that He was not the Son of God. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Why," said they, "art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet." He was a Galilean, and therefore, because of His lowly birth and surroundings, they deemed themselves perfectly justified in rejecting Him. And as has been quoted to-day, so confident were they that He was not the being that He represented Himself to be—that they said, "His blood be on us and upon our children." They felt so secure in calling for His crucifixion they were willing to incur all the penalties that might be inflicted upon

themselves and their posterity for the death of a man who, in their estimation, was so vile an imposter.

In the same way it will take time to make the merits of the predictions of Joseph Smith recognized. Will they be recognized? Yes. Joseph Smith has uttered predictions which cannot be disputed, and that have come to pass. Before his death he predicted that the Latter-day Saints should become a great people in the Rocky Mountains. Years before we were compelled to leave the States he predicted that the South should rebel, and that the civil war should break out in South Carolina. That prediction was in print long years before it was fulfilled. And when it seemed as though the rebellion would break out in Florida, the Latter-day Saints never had any doubt as to where the war would commence. They knew the word of God had been spoken and that it would be fulfilled. And it was fulfilled literally, as also many other predictions that have been uttered.

But do these things come to man in a way that man will receive them? No; they come in contact with worldly pride. They invoke the same opposition that Paul had when he was at Ephesus, when the silver-smiths cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." And they bawled and cried so much in favor of Diana that his voice was drowned. So it is to-day. These things come in contact with established institutions, with established crafts; man's craft is in danger, and hence the outcry. There is a great outcry, and it comes from those whose craft is most in danger. It has ever been so, and it ever will be so while man continues under the same influence that now operates upon him.

The organization of this Church does not meet men's minds, it is contrary to their feelings, it comes in contact with their traditions and their prejudices. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It is the same idea. Can any good thing come from Joseph Smith, an uneducated man? Can any good thing come out of the "Mormon" people? And the whole world seemingly is in a turmoil. Every conceivable falsehood is told about this people. Well, this will continue to be the case; I have no doubt of it in my mind. We have got this warfare, to fight, and every people who have stood on our position had it before us. Every reformation that was ever effected among men had to be effected in the face of opposition, and frequently the foundation stones have been laid in the blood of the men who were the instruments in the hands of God in laying the foundation. Opposition in this respect is not a new thing. It is as old as Adam that there should be opposition to contend against. Jesus predicted it, because he knew it was the history of the past, and he knew it would be repeated. Thus those who embrace "Mormonism," or the Gospel of Christ, may make their calculations upon it.

But there is this difference between the dispensation in which we are engaged and other dispensations which have preceded it: we have the promise of God that His work introduced in this the dispensation of the fulness of times shall never be overthrown, so that this dispensation differs in this respect from every dispensation that has preceded it. There is no stopping this work. Men may fight it, they may kill those who advocate it, and use every means in their power against it; but the fiat of Jehovah has gone forth concerning it, and it will spread and increase and will gather within its pale every honest soul throughout the earth sooner or later, not making war, not attacking, not assailing, but by the power of divine truth and by the spirit that accompanies it bearing testimony to every honest soul. And as those troubles increase of which Brother Woodruff has spoken—for they will increase, in our own land, too; they have increased, and they will increase—men will become unsettled in their minds as to what they will do and where they will seek for protection; for the day will come when stable government in these hunted States will be very hard to find. The elements are already operating that will produce this instability. Men will be glad to seek refuge, glad to seek protection, glad to live in any place where men and women are honest and true, and where the principles which Brother Woodruff has announced, the principles of true liberty, are maintained, and God grant that they may be ever maintained.

It has been said that those who have been persecuted will, when

their turn comes, become persecutors. This has been said concerning us, "Oh," it has been said, "you are now in the minority. It is all very well to plead for liberty and contend for the rights of man. But wait. If you ever get power, you who have been persecuted will turn round and persecute other people." This has been cast against us as bearing out the history of the past. The Pilgrim Fathers, it is quoted, did this. After being persecuted themselves, they turned round and persecuted others—Episcopalians, Quakers, Baptists, etc.—who did not believe as they did. Well, we have not done this yet. We did not do it when we had everything our own way in these mountains, removed a thousand or twelve hundred miles from every other people. We gave perfect liberty to all, and there never has been an hour since we first occupied this country when our tabernacles, boweries and other places of worship have not been open to men of every denomination to preach within their walls or under their shade. Time and time again our children have been invited to this tabernacle to listen to ministers of different denominations that they might know what other people taught; this has been upon the principle that Brother Woodruff has stated, that if they have one truth we have not got, we are willing to exchange our errors for that truth.

I would not give much for a religion that would not stand contact with the world. It was said once respecting President Young that he made the remark that he would not give much for a religion that could not stand one railroad. I think the same. If my religion cannot stand all the railroads that can be brought here I do not want it for myself nor for my children. If there is anything superior to that which we believe outside of our religion, let it come, we will welcome it. We are not wedded to our religion only so far as it is true. So far as it is true we are wedded to it and as such we have espoused it, as such we maintain it, and as such we hope to die believing in its tenets and practising them; but if any one else has something better let him come along. We have sacrificed enough for truth to show that we love it. We have forsaken everything for the truth as we believe it, and a people who have been willing to have their houses burned, property destroyed and be driven into a wilderness as we have been and to create homes in this desolate land—a people that has been willing to do this should not shrink from accepting any truth that may be presented to them, and I do not believe they will. We have given no evidence of such a tendency at any time, I have never heard of it, but there has been a constant willingness to receive the truth.

And this doctrine of plural marriage that is so much talked about: we have shown our devotion to truth by espousing it. If its practice had been of the same nature as that which is popular with the world there would not have been a word said against us. It is not because other people do not do wrong with women that the outcry is raised against us. It is not for doing wrong with women, it is for marrying more than one woman, which we could have avoided if licentiousness had been our only object, that we are attacked. When God revealed that principle to the Latter-day Saints, there were men who felt as though they would rather go to their graves than carry out that principle. They were men who had lived all their days and had been true to the covenants they had made with their wives, and the thought of marrying more than one woman was as repulsive as it could be to any men in the world. They shrank from it. I heard President Young himself say, that as the hearse passed his house in Nauvoo on the way to the cemetery, he thought he would like to be the occupant of that hearse and of the coffin which it contained when he thought of this doctrine and the opprobrium that would descend upon him and upon our people when it became known that we believed in and practiced plural marriage. Here is President Taylor, and Brother Woodruff, who has spoken, and other men of mature years in those days—they know how it was. They would have shrunk from it if they could, but the very fact that they have embraced it ought to be sufficient to show the world that they are devoted to principle, that they have been willing to lay down their lives, if necessary, to carry out principle. It would be cheaper, no doubt, to discard plural wives and

follow the ways of the world. Do you think I would have any persecution if I had a wife here and one or more mistresses in Washington? Not in the least; there would not be one word said about my marital relations or my domestic affairs; not one word. I know this. How do I know it? Because there are those who are in that condition. But because men marry wives and give their name to their offspring, and are not ashamed of them, and are true to these wives and do not go outside of the family circle, and believe a man ought to be killed who does it—because they do this they are derided and all hell is stirred up. Now, if these things are wrong we practice them without knowing they are wrong. We believe them to be true. We believe this principle has been revealed for the salvation of women. And a man takes a great responsibility upon himself who enters into this order. Reflect upon this a moment: A man marries a wife, and he does it—if he does it properly—with the clear understanding between them beforehand that if it be right to take another, according to the tenets of his religion, he may do so. Well, he takes another wife. What is the result? He doubles his responsibility, he increases his care. What man of sense or principle is there that would take these obligations upon him lightly? Would any man do it for the sake of gratifying lust? He would be a simpleton and a villain if he did. A man in this position, if he feels as he should do, will feel there is a great responsibility resting upon him in the taking care of the children of such marriages, in the education and training of them, and the preserving of them from vice. And what is there to induce him to shoulder this responsibility except principle?

We desire to have no margin of unmarried women among us. We do not want institutions among us that are not of God, and that propagate death and disease. We desire every woman to be married, and as there are not more women than men in Utah, if every man marries, there will be no plural marriage, it will cease, and that is the best remedy in the world for this "Utah Polygamy," as it is called. Let every man marry, and there will be no single women of marriageable age. But as all men will not marry, we have instances of two and more women who love one man and who chose to live together and live together virtuously and properly.

"Ah, but," says one, "there is a law of Congress against such a thing." I know that, and I am not advising any man to do anything that would make him liable to go to the Penitentiary. But I am talking about principle, about that which we believe and practice, and that which has impelled us to action in this matter. I have taken some of my children down to Washington, and have said to them, "Now, here you see the other side. I want you to have the opportunity of seeing society and understanding something of it outside of our Territory." I would not hoodwink a child. I would set before children all that is necessary to give them light upon this subject, that they may understand it. I would like every one of my daughters to understand it thoroughly; and in speaking thus about my own family I speak about every girl in this community. I want to see a virtuous community, one that is free from vices that infest the world. Diseases that are common elsewhere are unknown in this land, among our people; and I thank God for it, and I pray that it will continue to be the case.

Shall we become persecutors in our turn? No. Why? We do not have the same motives to impel us to such a course that people who persecute have. Persecutors generally believe that those whom they persecute are doomed to spend the endless ages of eternity in hell fire, unless they can be made to repent of their errors. Persecution becomes, therefore, with them, in many instances, a highly justifiable and meritorious method of saving souls. This has been the feeling that has impelled many persecutors in every age—a holy, burning zeal to snatch souls from perdition. The men who have been most zealous in haling men to prison and inflicting torment have been as a rule, men zealous and sincere in their religion. They thought it better to destroy the body than that the soul should be consigned to hell; they thought it better for heretics to burn an hour or too on earth than that they should burn eternally. But the Latter-day

whole Christian world. The signs of the times indicate the coming of the Son of Man in power and great glory. But before His coming the gospel has got to be preached to all nations. We have been preaching the gospel for 50 years, and by it we have gathered out from the nations of the earth to these valleys of the mountains. That is why the world hate us. It is because the Lord has called us out of the world to establish the everlasting gospel. I want to say to the Latter-day Saints: Have faith in the revelations of God; have faith in the promises that have been given. We are preparing ourselves for the events that wait us. Darkness covers the earth and grossness the people. The Lord is withdrawing His Spirit from the nations of the earth, and the power of the devil is gaining dominion over the children of men. See how the time is increasing. Fifty years ago when the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith there was not one murder where there is a thousand to-day; there is not one whoredom where there are a thousand to-day; and so you may go through the whole black catalogue of crime. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you." Look at the wickedness that is on the increase in the world, covering the earth like the waters of the great deep. What will end be? Death, destruction, winds, pestilence, famine and judgments of God will be poured upon the wicked; for the Lord withheld these judgments until the world is fully warned. To this we have been laboring diligently 50 years, so far as we have had opportunity. But all these judgments will come. The seals will be loosed; plague will follow plague; sun and the moon will be darkened, and the unbelief of the world will make no difference to all these things coming to pass.

Have a desire with you, as Latter-day Saints, that we may keep faith, overcome the world and defy our high and holy callings. We will be held responsible before the Lord for the light we possess, and should be diligent and faithful in our labors, for if we turn our backs on the truth, once having known we will be under far greater condemnation than those who rejected the truth. What we may be called upon to suffer for the gospel's sake is neither here nor there. This nation and every other nation is in the hands of God. Men can go no further than the Lord will permit them to go. But we should be faithful to God and to our fellowmen, ready to do what is required of