

DISCOURSE BY PRESIDENT GEO. Q. CANNON.

DELIVERED
In the Salt Lake Assembly Hall,
Sunday Afternoon, Dec. 2, 1883.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

Conditions on which the Saints shall prevail—
Prevalence of peace—The feeling in the East—Falsehoods swallowed by a credulous public—No real injury—Immediate promises—Only one thing to be feared—The Saints shall prevail through faithfulness—The praise of the world a signal for sorrow—Power of a united people—The fiercest persecution antecedent to polygamy—Selt that has lost its savor—Only one channel of revelation—*Vox Dei, Vox Populi*—The Aaronic and Melchisedek Priesthoods—Writing and Speaking—Spirits that peep and mutter—Deceitful devices of the enemy—The men who have authority—The parable of the ship—The man who presides—Invocation.

I WILL read a portion of the 103rd Section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, commencing at the 5th paragraph:

"But verily I say unto you, that I have decreed a decree which my people shall realize, inasmuch as they hearken from this very hour, unto the counsel which I, the Lord their God, shall give unto them."

"Behold they shall, for I have decreed it, begin to prevail against mine enemies from this very hour."

"And by hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God, shall speak unto them, they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are all subdued under my feet, and the earth is given unto the Saints, to possess it for ever and ever."

"But inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of this world shall prevail against them."

"For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men."

"And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor, and is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men."

"But verily I say unto you, I have decreed that your brethren which have been scattered shall return to the land of their inheritance, and build up the waste places of Zion;

"For after much tribulation, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, cometh the blessing."

I am thankful, my brethren and sisters, for the opportunity of meeting with you to-day under such favorable circumstances, and partaking of that peaceable influence which prevails always in the midst of the Saints of God. It is a great blessing which God has bestowed upon us in giving unto us peace. It is a blessing that is beyond price, incomparably greater than almost any other blessing that we can enjoy; for without it the other blessings that we might have would be, to a great extent, obscured by the absence of peace.

I have been asked by a few whom I have met since my arrival yesterday morning in the city, if there is not a great deal of excitement in the east concerning us. Some of the utterances of the papers probably have given this impression. But so far as my observation has gone I have seen no greater excitement at this time than is usual, or has been usual in years past, prior to the meeting of Congress. There is doubtless a desire on the part of those who are anxious to do us an injury, to endeavor, by misrepresentation and falsehood, to arouse feelings against us and to make it appear necessary to politicians and public men that something should be done with us to check the growth of this much feared organization of the Church of God. And it is astonishing—it would be at least astonishing if we had not seen so many instances of this character—how men resort to the most unfounded falsehoods—falsehoods which do not have even the color of foundation or the semblance of anything real and truthful—to accomplish their purposes. But presuming upon the credulity of the public respecting everything connected with our Church and our organization and movements, men abandon themselves to the most reckless assertions concerning us, without seeming to have the least fear of their being contradicted, and thinking, apparently, that anything they can say about us, however false, will be swallowed by the credulous public. In this very thing consists, to a

great extent, the weakness of the opposition that is arrayed against the Church of God. Falsehood has no existence only so far as the mere relation or statement of it is concerned. There is no foundation to it. There is nothing tangible about it. It is a lie, and it may be said, therefore, to be non-existent. And this opposition against us—that is, opposition of this character—can do us in the end no real injury, because truth must eventually prevail in our case at least. That which is real, that which is true, that which is genuine, that which has an existence, must in the very nature of things prevail in the contest with falsehood and misrepresentation. In this consists, I may say, our strength. We know that those statements which are made, so many of them, concerning us are false, and we can afford to wait to see the developments which will follow, especially when we understand, as we do, that God, our Eternal Father, has made promises unto us concerning this very condition of things to which I am now alluding. It is not a new thing for us to have this to contend with. We have been warned about it from the beginning, and in fact before the Church itself was organized. The Prophet Joseph was told what he might expect, and what all who associated themselves with him in the belief and practice of the truth might expect, and the warnings that were then given, and which have been so often repeated since to us as a people, certainly have had the effect of preparing us—to some extent at least—to encounter the evils with which we have been assailed and with which we have had to cope. God, our Eternal Father, as I have said, has made promises unto us concerning this. We are not left to imagine what shall be the result. The mind of the Latter-day Saint is not left a prey to apprehensions and fears; for God, by His word, has removed these and has given us immutable promises which the experience of 53 years has proved to us to be reliable. We have proved them to be true in the past, and we certainly can rely upon them for the future.

There is only one thing connected with this work—speaking for myself individually—concerning which I have any fear, and that is ourselves. I never had any feeling of fear while I was at Washington, and the clouds were dark and menacing, and our enemies were threatening and active in their preparations to assail us; I never had, I can truthfully say, any fear as to the result of their operations so long as the Saints at home were united and were seeking to keep the commandments of God. But when I heard, as I did upon one or two occasions, about division—for instance in election matters—and hearing of brethren not being united upon questions of policy, then, I confess, that a feeling—a sickening feeling, if I may so describe it—would sometimes take possession of me.

God, in the revelation that I have read to you, has plainly given a promise unto this people, this Church.

"But verily I say unto you, that I have decreed a decree which my people shall realize, inasmuch as they hearken from this very hour, unto the counsel which I, the Lord their God, shall give unto them."

"Behold they shall, for I have decreed it, begin to prevail against mine enemies from this very hour."

"And by hearkening to observe all the words which I, the Lord their God, shall speak unto them, they shall never cease to prevail until the kingdoms of the world are subdued under my feet and the earth is given unto the Saints to possess it for ever."

Now, here is a promise that the Lord has given, He says, by a positive decree. It is a promise given with conditions, and if the conditions should be observed we may rest assured that the promise, in its entirety will be fulfilled. There are no reservations about it, only the reservation connected with the conditions upon which it is made. "They shall prevail"—that is if they keep His commandments, if they observe the counsel which He has given unto us. Now in the next paragraph He says:

"But inasmuch as they keep not my commandments, and hearken not to observe all my words, the kingdoms of this world shall prevail against them." Our fate, therefore, as a people—that is, as individuals at least—is plainly pointed out unto us in these two or three paragraphs. The principle upon which we can be successful as a people is given un-

to us so that we cannot be mistaken concerning it. Also if we should be unsuccessful, if we should fail and become subject to our enemies, the causes by which subjection shall be brought to pass are plainly pointed out to us. The experience of the years that have elapsed since this revelation was given in which these promises are embodied, has proved to us most clearly the truth of the word of the Lord here spoken. There has never been an hour since the Lord gave this word unto the Church—not one hour—that they have not prevailed over His enemies, when they have hearkened unto His words and kept His commandments. Where we have been surrounded by circumstances of the most threatening character, when there seemed to be no possible way of escape, God has opened, in the most marvelous manner, the path before this people and made it plain, and that which has seemed like an impassable barrier before them has been removed, and they have been enabled to pursue the path that was right for them to walk in. We know by experience that when the Latter-day Saints have been most faithful, have been most diligent, when they have been most zealous in preaching the Gospel, in building temples, in carrying out the word of our God as He has given it unto us, then the anger of our enemies has been most fierce against us. But notwithstanding the fierceness and the heat with which it has burned, it has been powerless against this people to injure us or to interfere in any manner with our growth, and with the accomplishment of the purposes of God entrusted to us. God knows this is so, and we know it. We have proved it to our entire satisfaction—it seems to me so at least. It is no good sign for us to be beloved by the world, and to be spoken kindly of by the world, however pleasant it may be to us, and however much we may shrink from the opposite condition of affairs, and dread its manifestation, and wish that it could be otherwise—and it is natural to human nature to shrink from these trials—nevertheless it is one of the worst signs for us as a people to be spoken well of by the world, and to be free from threatenings, from opposition, and from hatred. It is not the true condition for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to be in, to be petted by the world, to be fostered by the world, to be spoken well of by the world, to be welcomed by the world, to have favor showered upon it by the world, because we ought not to be of the world, God having chosen us out of the world. Our true condition is that which we occupy to-day. I welcome it; I thank God for it; for the manifestations that I see around me concerning us bear ample testimony to me that the Latter-day Saints are striving to keep the commandments of God, that they are doing the will of God or this anger, these manifestations of hatred, this intense opposition, these groundless accusations would not have an existence against us. I say this is the condition that God has designed that we should occupy, and instead of our feeling to dread it, to wish it were otherwise, to shrink from it, let us rather glory in it, thank God from the bottom of our hearts that we are connected with His work and have the privilege of taking part in such scenes as these—scenes in which our predecessors, who have gone to the rest of our God, have shared in their day and generation. Let us thank Him that we live upon the earth and have this opportunity—this great and glorious opportunity—of showing unto Him that we are devoted to that Gospel that He has revealed, to its principles, its ordinances, its endowments and powers, and to the Church that is organized upon the earth, in the plenitude of its power, in these last days. These are opportunities for which we should be most profoundly grateful. Instead of shrinking from them, instead of being sorry for them, instead of feeling to dread them, we should have the opposite feeling, one of thankfulness and gratitude unto God that we are permitted to share in them, and to live at a time like the present. I thank God with all my heart for this myself; and so far as these manifestations are concerned, they cause only one feeling within me—have done so far—and that is a feeling of rejoicing and thanksgiving within my bosom to see the fulfillment of the predictions of the holy prophets concerning this work and the hatred of the world against it.

Now, what have we to fear? The only cause of fear in my mind is, as I have said, concerning ourselves—divisions, differences of views, ideas concerning the course that should be pursued that may not be in accordance with the mind and will of God. It is of the utmost importance to us as a people that we should be united. Our strength, our prosperity, our success in the past, have been due to union. It is the union of the people that has been hated and that has brought upon us the persecution that we have had to contend with. That is all that gives us importance in the earth. Strip us of union, and what is there about 200,000 Latter-day Saints in the Rocky Mountains that is at all remarkable or worthy of note? Well, we would be like 200,000 people anywhere else, full of division and strife, who do not amount to anything or have any particular importance. But unite 150,000 or 200,000 people together, of one heart and of one mind, a people who are increasing, and there is a power manifest that impresses men. They feel that there is an unusual power and influence there which they cannot comprehend, it is so different from the systems with which they are familiar. The fact that these people are united creates a dread in the breasts of those who dislike them. It is this, my brethren and sisters, that has given us influence, that has given us importance, that has made us what we are, that causes us to occupy the position that we do. Take this away from us and we are indeed, as this revelation has said, like salt that has lost its savor, good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot of men. Take away from us as a people the principle of union, and you take away from us the salt that makes us the savor that we are to-day. And it is of the utmost importance for us as a people that we should keep this constantly in view. It is against this and against that authority which makes us a united people that the whole of the attack against us is directed. It is the Priesthood of the Son of God that has made us united. It is the revelations of Jesus Christ through that Priesthood coming unto us, giving testimony unto us by the Holy Ghost, that has brought us unto this union, unto this oneness that is so characteristic of this Church. It is against the authority that has produced these results, that the whole strength of the adversaries of this Kingdom is directed.

We hear about plural marriage, or polygamy as it is termed. That is merely a war cry. It is merely used because it is a popular catch-word, and they who use it know full well that they only use it in that form and for that purpose; but that is not the real thing at issue. There is something more than that, deeper than that, higher than that, broader than that; but it is not necessary to let it be known that they are aiming at that. Polygamy, therefore, answers the purpose. It appeals to the ignorant; it excites the clergy; it stirs up the passions of the impure, and it inflames the hatred that is necessary to intensify this conflict. But if such a thing were possible that polygamy could be wiped out to-day without wiping out our faith and making us apostates, and every man that has a plural wife was to put her away, it would not lessen the hatred of those who oppose this work—not one particle. Of course, if we became apostates we would be like the world, and we would be of the world. But, I repeat, it is not polygamy; we know that. We know that the fiercest persecution we have passed through in our experience was anterior to the practice of polygamy, was when polygamy was not a doctrine of this Church, when it was not a practice of any member of this Church. Therefore, the hatred that is entertained to-day against this work is not traceable to that doctrine nor to that practice. It is the organization of the Church of God upon the earth. It is the restoration of the Holy Priesthood. It is the authority by which man is bound to man, by the effective bond of union that has been so wonderfully manifest in the history of this people from the commencement until the present time. It is that which is hated. It is the gathering of the people together. As General Clark said, who led the militia at Far West, when the brethren were prisoners: said he: "I would advise you to scatter abroad, and never again organize yourselves with Bishops, Presidents, etc., lest you excite the jealousies of the people and subject yourselves to the same calamities that have

now come upon you * * * my advice is that you become as other citizens least by a recurrence of these events you bring upon yourselves irretrievable ruin."

Unwittingly he told a great truth pregnant with meaning. That is really the great cause of hatred against this people. If you were to divide up and cease to listen to your Bishops, to your presiding authorities, to the Presidents of your Stakes, to the Apostles, to the Presidency of the Church, what is there about you that would excite opposition? What is there about you that would make you worthy of newspaper notice? As I have said, you would be like any other number of citizens who are not banded together by the ties of the everlasting covenant and of the Gospel. Having had the truth, and having had the savor of righteousness, you would be like salt that had lost its savor, it would be good for nothing, fit for no other purpose but to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men. This figure of the Savior in this revelation—and as He used it to His disciples—is a most forcible and comprehensive figure. There is no article in the world that is so utterly worthless as salt after it has lost its savor. You cannot use it for any purpose, and it is good for nothing except to be trodden under the feet of men. And how truthfully it is exemplified in the history of this people! When a man has lost the Spirit of God, become an apostate to the work of God, of what further use is he? He is good for nothing. He don't make even a good sectarian. And it would be so with us as a people if we were to lose the salt of the Spirit of God; we would be good for nothing.

Now, there is only one way in which the commandments of God can be revealed unto us. God has not left this in doubt. He has not left us to grope in the dark respecting His methods of revealing His mind and will unto His children. In the very beginning of the work of God in these last days, to remove all doubt upon this subject, God gave revelations unto this Church in exceeding great plainness, and there was one principle that was emphatically, dwelt upon and enforced, namely, that there was but one channel, one channel alone, through which the word of God and the commandments of God should come to this people. The word of God was not to come from the people up. It was not *vox populi, vox dei*, but it was to be *vox dei, vox populi*—that is, the voice of God and then the voice of the people—from God downward through the channel that He should appoint, by the means that He should institute, that word should come to the people, and when obeyed by the people would bring the union and the love and the strength consequent upon union and love. And this has been the peculiarity and the excellence of this work of God thus far in the earth. Its excellence has consisted in this. Its power, its glory, the glory that we have as a people, the glory that belongs to the Church of God consists in this peculiar feature, that the word of God to us comes from God and not from the people. It is received by the people, accepted by the people, submitted to by the people, and this has produced the union and the love, as I have said, that have characterized the work thus far in its progress in the earth. Take away from it this feature and it becomes weak as water that is unconfined. There is no strength to it. There is nothing to be feared about it. There is nothing to excite animosity or hatred. But give it this feature and it becomes a power in the earth. Even if there were only six men it would be a power. Let there be twelve and it is twice the power, and you go on doubling it and it increases in a proportionate ratio, and it will do so, as long as that principle is maintained and lived up to. God revealed that principle in the beginning. Oliver Cowdery—a representation of whose ordination is given to us on this ceiling—received at the same time that the Prophet Joseph did the Aaronic Priesthood. John the Baptist, who last held the Keys of the Aaronic Priesthood in the flesh upon the earth, laid his hands upon Joseph, the Prophet, and him at the same time. He afterwards received, in common with Joseph, the administration of those who had held the keys of the Apostleship in the flesh on the earth—that is, Peter, James and John. They administered unto him at the same time that they administered unto Joseph, upon the same occasion, and he became an