

## DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER GEO. Q. CANNON,

Delivered at the Semi-Annual Conference, on Sunday afternoon, April 6, 1878.

REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

The speaker read from the Doctrine and Covenants (new edition), commencing at the 24th paragraph, and ending at the 33rd paragraph, of section 58.

This is a great people, and if anything would be likely to appall a man and make him feel his own nothingness, it is to stand up before such an audience as is here assembled, to attempt to speak to them and to instruct them. We have, however, something besides our own strength to rely on; if it were not so, I should not be here. The promise of the Lord is that when we assemble together as we have this day, and as we are now assembled, he will give unto us that portion of his word and his counsel as shall be suited to our circumstances, so that every soul shall eat of the bread of life and go away satisfied, and rejoice in the privilege he may have had of coming together as we now are.

This work in which we are engaged embraces more and more. The older I grow the more I become acquainted with its magnitude, with the responsibilities that are connected with it, and especially the responsibilities which rest down upon those who are the chosen leaders of the people.

We know, as was testified to this morning, that this is the work of God, that God has laid its foundation, that God has chosen the men who are associated with it and who are in authority connected with the work, to fill the situations which they occupy. We know also that he has restored the authority that was once enjoyed by man, by which men are enabled to act in the midst of the people in Christ's stead. And knowing these things we are encouraged as a people and as individuals to press forward and to help establish that cause which he has revealed to the earth. But there are many things connected with this work, with its advancement, with the binding of the people together, with the carrying out of the great designs which God has revealed for the salvation of the children of men; which press upon our attention and cause us to exercise every faculty of our minds in thinking, in pondering upon and in giving shape to measures that shall result in the greatest good for this great people.

The principles of the Gospel we are all familiar with, as a people; we have studied the lesson from the beginning and have become familiar with it in almost all its details. We have traveled, we have preached, we have borne testimony to this work; we have helped to gather the people together, organizing them before doing so into branches, into conferences, into missions, and then have organized them into companies to travel by sea, to travel by land, to bring them to the gathering places which have been appointed. With these labors the Elders of this church have obtained great familiarity; they have become experts in preaching spiritual salvation, in preaching the first principles of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; in telling the people how they shall be saved from their sins, and what they shall do to obtain the promises of God connected with obedience to this Gospel. And we have, in coming to these mountains, obtained considerable knowledge concerning other matters. Probably to-day a man would not be open to the charge of egotism, of being vain concerning the people, were he to say that to take the Latter-day Saints, the men of this church, and in no other body of men of the same numbers will you find men of such experience in preaching, in traveling, as missionaries, as Elders, in organizing the people, in handling companies of large bodies of men and women and laying the foundation of settlements, in building cities, in developing countries, and in organizing systems of government in those countries. I do not know that I am open to the charge of being vain concerning the Latter-day Saints when I make this statement—that in all the earth, among all the inhabitants of the earth, you cannot find so large a body of prin-

cipal men familiar with spiritual things, familiar with temporal things, familiar with the handling of large bodies of people and organizing them and dictating their labors and planning for their temporal salvation, and for their good government, as you will find in the midst of these mountains and numbered in this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

And yet, after making this statement, we stand, as it were, at the very threshold of our work, just at the door of it; we have scarcely accomplished anything to what remains to be done connected with the work devolving upon us. We have made a beginning, it is true, we have solved some problems; but there is an immense amount of work to be done by us as a people, and especially by those who act in our midst in the capacity of leaders. The highest qualities of statesmanship are needed and called for; the highest qualities that men and women possess that make them capable of planning for nations, devising schemes and plans that will not only save a town or a small community of people, but that will extend to nations the means of saving them from national peril and from evils that menace the existence of every power that now exists upon the face of the earth.

You look abroad to-day among the inhabitants of the earth and see their condition, see the evils with which they are afflicted and which threaten the downfall and the overthrow of nations; and we need not go beyond our own land to gain experience in this matter, and to ascertain the danger which besets this republic, the most glorious nation, and the most glorious form of government that exists upon the habitable globe. How many times is it said that this republic cannot stand, that evils are working and undermining the fabrics of government, and which threatens its speedy overthrow? You can scarcely talk with a thinking man upon these subjects, a man who takes in the extent of his vision all the evils which threaten our nation, without having him acknowledge that the future, in many respects, looks exceedingly dark, and that it is somewhat doubtful whether the republic can be preserved as it is at the present.

With all these facts, then, before us, it is well for us to-day, assembled as we are in this general Conference, to take into some consideration our own condition, the circumstances which surround us, and examine them in the light of intelligence and wisdom, as He has given it to us, and whether we should not take steps to preserve our existence, and not only preserve it, but perpetuate, and to increase our power, and to cause that work with which we are identified to continue to progress and fulfill its high and glorious destiny.

There is one principle which I think in mentioning everyone will see the power of, and that is union. It is a trite saying, often repeated, that union is strength. Certainly we have proved the truth of this saying through the long or short period, as it may be, of our existence as a people. There is no people to-day with whom I am acquainted who has proved so satisfactorily as we have, throughout our past experience, the value of union. It is that which makes us, numerically a weak people, a strong people; it is that which makes us, one hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty thousand or perhaps two hundred thousand people throughout these mountains north and south, a power in the land; and a power certainly which there is more said about than any other power, probably, in existence. Divide us up, segregate us into communities, into sects, into denominations, into factions, and what would we amount to? Nothing; our strength would be dissipated, we would be enfeebled, and nothing particularly would be said about us more than is said about thousands and millions of others from whom we are separated. It was the union of the Latter-day Saints which in the beginning created opposition against us, brought it to the surface, and made it moving and active when there were but fifty or less members of the church. The very fact that a new principle, the principle of union, had been brought to light, through which these fifty men and women were united as the heart of one, was sufficient to arouse opposition and create, to a certain extent, fear. Sectarian influence was brought to bear against us. "Our creed is in danger, our

sect is in danger, our place is in danger, if this people with this union should gain a foothold among us." Alarm was felt in the ranks of the various sects, and they felt that although a power insignificant and weak as it were, it should be fought and its existence extirpated, if possible, from off the earth. Hence the opposition it met with in the beginning. A few weeks old, like a little trembling, puny infant not able to walk, not able to speak or make itself felt. Yet the very existence of the infant aroused fear, as great fear as that which animated Herod of old when he issued an edict for all the first-born male children of Judea to be slain. It created terror in the land; and all because a certain babe of Bethlehem had been born, and he hoped, in issuing this cruel edict, to destroy this man-child and with him the power which he feared. So it was in the beginning of this work, when it was weak and feeble it created in the minds of those who watched its birth and its after-growth a feeling of fear, and they were determined to destroy it from off the earth, if they could.

When the church moved to Kirtland and the people began to gather together to go to that place to settle, you will see by reading the history the fear that was produced. And you read the history of the settlement of the people in Jackson County, and you will see the same manifestations, only more violent, until such a spirit was engendered that the mob succeeded in driving the people from the county. You can trace it through all the history of this people to the present time. It has been the union of the Latter-day Saints that, as I have before said, aroused opposition, crystallized it and made it as effective as it has been against us. Had we been a divided people, had we been quarrelling among ourselves, had there been factions among us and jealousies among our leading men, you would not have seen this opposition, neither would you have seen the credit that has been given to us, nor the power that this people have wielded in the earth to the present time. You would not have seen this spectacle—this inspiring spectacle of 12000 people assembled under one roof to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience and the revelations of God, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, as we are to-day. You would not have seen these valleys peopled from Idaho in the north to Mexico in the south with settlements of people of one faith, of one belief, worshipping God in the same manner and calling upon him unitedly to bestow upon them the same blessings, and laboring for the same objects. The value, therefore, of union we, as a people, have demonstrated as no other people now living have. And I leave you to your own reflections to imagine what we would be without it. Everyone can think for himself, or herself, upon this subject, and can draw his or her own conclusions. But as we are united and have been spiritually, it is not the design of God, as is clearly manifest in his revelations, plainly spoken through his word, and deeply impressed by his Holy Spirit upon every heart belonging to this church, that this alone is not the object of our organization as a people. It was not for spiritual salvation alone that the word of the Lord came to us to gather out of Babylon; it was not for spiritual salvation alone that the Elders of this church traversed sea and land for so long a period, gathering the people together at such an expense of time and means; it was not for spiritual salvation alone that we have suffered the attacks and the violence of mobs, that we left our homes in the east—the pleasant places that many left, and crossed these dreary wastes, and planted ourselves in these mountains. There was something more than this embodied in the idea; there was something more than this embodied in the effort. There was temporal salvation also connected with the spiritual salvation that had been extended to us. I use the term "temporal salvation," because it is better understood probably than any other term I could use. My training has led me to blend the two, it being difficult for me to draw the line of demarcation between the temporal and spiritual; but in many minds there is a distinction. I use the phrase, therefore, that those who are familiar with it will understand my meaning. Temporal salvation is as necessary, according to the faith of the Latter-day Saints, in its time

and season, as spiritual salvation. Of course spiritual salvation occupies the first, and ought to be foremost within every heart; but we cannot accomplish our spiritual salvation and the destiny of our Father and Creator without also connecting with it temporal salvation, temporal acts, the performance of temporal labor. Hence, as I have said, it should occupy some portion of our thoughts, it should be considered by us; and, as I have remarked, we have not come out to our present location for purely spiritual performances, but to lay the foundation of a system that should stand forever, that should be connected with man's existence here upon the earth, both his spiritual and his temporal existence; a work that should affect everything connected with man and his relationship to his fellow-man.

A great many of the Latter-day Saints have failed, as I have sometimes thought, to grasp this idea, to grasp the idea that the Lord was founding a great nationality—if I may use such a limited phrase as that; it limits the idea to call it a nationality. The Lord is gathering out from every nation, kindred, tongue and people a community, out of which he intends to form for himself a kingdom, not an earthly kingdom, but a kingdom over which he will preside in the heavens; a kingdom that should be based upon purely republican principles upon the earth; and therefore not a kingdom in the strict sense of the word, so far as its earthly location is concerned; but a republic. And for this purpose, as the Latter-day Saints have believed from the beginning, the Lord raised up the founders of our nation and inspired them—George Washington and others—to do the work that they accomplished, in laying the foundation of a form of government upon this land under which that kingdom that he should establish should grow and flourish and extend itself without interfering in the least degree with the genius of the government. And this is the work in which we are engaged; this is the labor that should occupy our attention, and as I have said, we should take warning by that which we see around us on every hand—the decay, the disintegration of the various governments and powers, and organize ourselves so that we can preserve ourselves, and grow and increase and add to the power we already possess. I believe our people are beginning to take higher views of the organization with which they are connected, and consequently higher views of their own individual responsibility and the labor that devolves upon each one, as an individual. We see more of this spirit manifested. The Elders have ever evinced a willingness to go forth at the call of the proper authorities to preach the Gospel and perform labors of this character for the public good; but it has been a difficult lesson for us to learn that it was equally binding upon us, as servants of God, that we should labor in temporal matters with the same devotion and the spirit of self-abnegation that we did in laboring to preach the Gospel. There seemed to be a higher calling in the mind of man associated with spiritual matters; it seemed to be more dignified; it has seemed to be more worthy of men's gratuitous labor, than to labor with their hands or brain for the temporal advancement of the work and for the temporal salvation of the people. I believe that you will all have noticed that there is a change taking place in many minds in regard to this; and many men are beginning to take a different view—in fact they have done for years; probably some never had any other view, but a great many who have had different views, who have imagined that it was their duty to look at these temporal matters, are beginning to take different views, to take a higher conception of their responsibility in this direction. It is right and proper that we should do so. There is no good reason why a man should imagine that he has fulfilled the acquirements more acceptably, more approvingly in preaching this Gospel, than in laboring, after the people have been gathered home, for their salvation in temporal things.

There is a subject that has occupied a great amount of thought, and has been dwelt upon very frequently in our public assemblies for the past few years; I refer to that of the United Order. There have been some attempts, in fact I may say many attempts at organ-

ization with a view to its more complete carrying out. There is another principle connected with this that has been in force also upon our attention for many years past, namely, the system of co-operation in temporal matters. We have felt to a very great extent the importance of this; I believe the spirit of it has rested upon the Latter-day Saints. When you look back a few years, by way of contrasting our condition then with our condition to-day, you will perceive, doubtless, there has been a great change effected among us in regard to this matter. There has been considerable thought among the people concerning it; a great many have reasoned upon it for themselves, and have become thoroughly convinced of the importance of the principle. In this a good work has been done, because it is an exceedingly difficult thing to leaven the whole mass of people, like this people who inhabit these valleys, to leaven them with correct ideas and have them understand them. If the First Presidency of the church comprehend a principle, and the Twelve comprehend it, but the people fail to comprehend it, you can readily understand how difficult it would be to make that principle practical and operative. The leading men, then, have carried the whole people upon their shoulders, so to speak; if, under those circumstances, anything has to be done, it is to be done upon their faith and influence alone. But when you can get the thinking men and women throughout our community to understand and realize the importance of the principle, the victory is won, the work then is comparatively easy of accomplishment. And this has been a subject of congratulation to me in my feelings, that notwithstanding the many errors, notwithstanding the lack of success in many directions, the principle of co-operation, the principle of uniting ourselves together in the United Order has been reflected upon, has been cogitated and discussed in all the circles of this people and at their firesides, until it may be said an understanding of it permeates the entire mass of the people, as a people; and there is scarcely an argument needed in talking about it now to convince those who are the most stubborn and reluctant in giving adherence to the principle. When you hear any opponent to the principle express himself now-a-days, it is in this way: "It is an excellent principle, if we could only carry it out properly." The principle is conceded, its correctness is ascertained; it only remains now for us to carry it out properly in order for us to gain the confidence and the support of those who are doubtful upon that point. And I think this a great work accomplished. It seems to me that the Latter-day Saints to-day are in this position: "Tell us what to do and how to do it. You leading men, tell us how we can co-operate, how we can unite together. Devise the plan, suggest how it can be carried out successfully, and we are on hand to carry it out." I do not know from your expressions whether I state your feelings correctly or not on this point; but I state that which I believe, that which I am impressed with in connection with my brethren and sisters wherever I meet them, and whenever this subject or topic comes up for discussion or mention. There is one thing, brethren and sisters, that must strike us all as being right and proper; and that is to throw our efforts in one channel, to make our influence felt as an entire body, and not as I have remarked, to divide ourselves and scatter our influence so that it will be unfelt.

I have endeavored to describe to you the influence we wield because of our union in spiritual matters. The same remark will apply exactly to our union in temporal matters. Let this people be united in temporal matters; let it be known that we work together for one another's good, that we labor, as a people, to benefit the whole and not the individual, and that our influence is in this direction; and I tell you that the same influence, the same power that we wield now as a spiritual organization will be felt in our temporal affairs, in our financial affairs, in all the affairs in fact which attract our attention.

One great object we should aim to reach, that we should aim to accomplish, is to make ourselves independent in regard to manufactures. We have had, the last week, considerable conversation with leading