

DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT GEO. Q. CANNON.

DELIVERED

At the Quarterly Stake Conference,
held in Logan, Cache County,
Sunday Morning, May 6th, 1883.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

I feel greatly pleased at the opportunity of meeting once more with the Saints in Conference in this place. It is nearly two years since I have had this privilege, during which time many important events have transpired. There is one thing, however, connected with the work of God which is very gratifying, that notwithstanding the perils through which we have passed, though our liberties have been menaced, and the perpetuity of the institutions of the kingdom of God have to human appearances been endangered, we still meet together this day in this Tabernacle unembarrassed from the efforts of our enemies and free to worship our God according to the dictates of our own consciences. This land to which God led us and in which He has planted us is still a land of liberty to us and to all those who are of our faith. To me this is a cause of profound thankfulness, for it is an evidence that God has not forgotten us, that the promises which He has made are still kept in remembrance by Him, and that as a people we have been living so as to receive the fulfillment of those promises and the benefits which flow from them. And there is no doubt in my mind that if the Latter-day Saints will still continue to do as they have done, will be faithful to God, and to the covenants we have made with Him, and will persevere in the path which He has marked out and which we have commenced to tread, that we shall still be preserved, that we shall still have our liberty, that our enemies will not have power to disturb or interrupt us to any extent, or to bring down upon us those evils which they have sought after so diligently.

I believe that the testimony of the servants of God concerning the condition of the Saints in this Stake and in other Stakes is true, and that as a people the Latter-day Saints are striving to live nearer unto their God and to put in practice more perfectly those holy principles which He has revealed unto us. I believe there is more diligence being manifested in the various Wards and throughout the various Stakes than has been manifested in the past. I believe that there is a higher standard of life being sought after by the Latter-day Saints. I believe that the Priesthood themselves are seeking more diligently to carry out the counsels which God has given and to set examples unto the people that they shall imitate, and I know that the Spirit of God rests down upon His servants to make them more rigid in the enforcement of the laws that God has revealed unto us concerning the government of His church, so that there may be more purity, a higher standard of purity enforced and maintained among us than has been in the past.

We have had from the beginning of this work revelations given to us concerning the lives that we should lead. We consider the Christian world who have this Bible as their guide very delinquent because they do not live up to the commandments which are herein contained, because they come short of obeying the requirements that God has made through the Gospel as contained in the Bible, the Old and New Testament. But I often think of our own condition. We have in this book, the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, which is the word of God to us, a perfect law. Here are contained the requirements, here are contained the ordinances that God requires this people, called Latter-day Saints, to obey. Now, let me ask you, brethren of the Priesthood, let me ask you, brethren and sisters of the Church, how many of us who are here to-day live in accordance with the requirements of God's word as contained in these revelations? I can truthfully say that as a people we do not live up to the requirements that God has made of us. I can truthfully say that as a people we do not obey God's commands to us—the revelations which are contained in this book, and which we receive as the word of God, not to a past generation, not to a people who lived 1800 years ago, but the word of God is to us who live now and who con-

stitute this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is our rule of life. This is the law for our guidance. It is embodied in this book. And how many of us, I ask again, live in conformity with it? How many of us have obeyed and do obey the word of God as it is here revealed and as it is here printed and given to us. And yet we condemn the sectarian world—all of us who have gone forth to preach the everlasting Gospel—for not obeying God's word given 1800 years ago, and have said that in consequence of this the gifts and graces and the blessings of the Gospel have been withheld from them. We have thus reasoned, we have thus proclaimed to the people and said to them that the cause of the absence of the gifts, the cause of the disappearance of the power, the cause of there being no faith in the land among the children of men to receive the blessings and the gifts of God, was to be found in the fact that they had not obeyed the commandments of God as revealed to them, or as revealed to the ancients rather, in the New Testament by the Son of God. Yet, I believe, notwithstanding what I now say respecting us, that there is a growing disposition among the people—I can feel it myself among the Priesthood, and I believe it extends to the whole body of the Church—a growing disposition to obey the word of God as it is given to us in its plainness, in its simplicity and in its fullness, and because of this growing disposition God, having mercy upon us in our weakness and in our infirmities, blesses us as He does, and He saves us from our enemies. But you can readily perceive, if you will reflect a few moments, how much the power of this Church would be increased in the land and before the heavens if the Latter-day Saints were all to obey the word of God as it is given to us in His latter-day revelations. You can readily perceive how united and strong a people we would be, and how much the heavens would be moved in our behalf, the power that would be evoked and that would be brought down to aid us and to deliver us if we only lived in strict conformity to the words of God as they are contained in this book (the Book of Doctrine and Covenants). Each man and each woman can interrogate himself and herself upon this point. Each man can ask himself in the light of the Holy Ghost how near he comes to fulfilling all the requirements which are here made, or how far he is from arriving at that perfection which these revelations demand, and each woman can do the same, and we can in this mirror of divine truth look at ourselves in our true light and see our reflection by the Spirit of God as it is revealed unto us in these revelations.

For one I know that I am far, individually, from coming up to this perfection. Yet it has been the labor of my life to be a Latter-day Saint. It has been the strongest wish of my heart all my days to be a Latter-day Saint, to be a perfect man if I could be before the Lord. Yet when I read these revelations; when I see the requirements which God has made of us as a people, I bow myself before the Lord and confess in His presence that I am far from being that which I should be, and it may be said that the same is the case with the Church.

Now God designs that we shall be just such a people in every respect as these revelations describe. God did not give us these revelations in vain, they were not spoken idly, they were not given through the prophet of God without a purpose. There was a design on the part of God in giving them, and when you come even to the very weakest, it may be said, of the revelations, or that which is the least obligatory upon us, that which was given merely as a word of counsel—the Word of Wisdom I refer to—we can judge of the rest by the manner in which that is observed among us as a people—a matter which pertains to our bodily life and health, and which is so simple that the weakest can receive and obey it. There will be a people raised up, if we will not be that people—there will yet be a people raised up whose lives will embody in perfection the revelations contained in this book, who will live as the doctrines here taught require, as the laws here revealed show unto us, and they will be raised up, too, in this generation, and such a people will have to be raised up before Zion can be fully redeemed, and before the work of our God can be fully established in the earth. In this book, as I have

said, is the pattern of the Zion of God. Here are embodied the doctrines, precepts, laws, ordinances,—everything in fact that is necessary in order to make us a perfect people before the Lord.

The perfection that we have arrived at to-day is due to these revelations. The organization of this people is such as is not to be witnessed anywhere else on the face of the earth. You may travel from one end of the land to the other; you may travel from the equator to the poles, and in no land and among no people will you find such an organization as that which we have in this land, or rather that which belongs to this Church. And it is due to the fact that God gave commandments through His servant Joseph Smith by which we have been organized upon a principle and a platform that is superior to anything known among men. There is nothing to equal it. This Church in its organization is adapted to a branch, to a small handful of people. It was well adapted to the condition of the six persons who composed the Church on the 6th day of April, 1830. It is as well adapted to the condition of the Saints to-day, covering hundreds of miles of territory, as it was to the six persons who composed the Church at that time. It will be as well adapted to the government and organization of the people when the Church of Christ shall extend itself throughout the earth and when the whole people will become the people of God, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ—just as well adapted then as it is now. God organized it; God has prepared the way for it; and when Zion is organized properly it will be found to be as admirably adapted to the wants of the children of men as the organization of the Church is to-day to the wants of the people. There will be nothing lacking in every particular it will be found adequate to the wants of humanity. The evils under which mankind groan to-day are attributable to the false organization of society. The evils under which we groan as a people and from which we suffer are not due to any lack of knowledge as the method or the means that will correct these evils, but they are due to the fact that we ourselves fail to conform to the organization which God has prescribed, which God has revealed.

I wish we could all understand this; but it is true, it is as true as God lives, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is admirably adapted, in fact, perfectly adapted to save man from every evil under which he groans to-day. What has it done for us? Why, as far as it has gone it has saved us; it has saved us from every evil to far as we have gone. And as for adultery, to which allusion has been made, and fornication, there are no people on the face of the earth that will be damned with a greater damnation for that sin than we, if we be guilty of it. Why? Because there is no necessity for it. The necessity that men may plead as an extenuation for their practices with the opposite sex in the world ceases to exist in the midst of the Latter-day Saints. What necessity has any man to meddle with any woman that does not belong to him? In other lands the laws make men adulterers in many instances. That is a hard saying, but it is a true one. Men are driven by their passions, very frequently, because of unjust laws, to commit crimes that their souls revolt at. But is it so with us? No. God has given unto us a more perfect law. He has commanded us to marry, all that can marry; and there is no man among us that can plead that which others may in a different state of society; no man can do that among us; and therefore I say that those men and women among us who commit adultery and fornication will be damned with a deeper damnation than any other people, because there is no necessity for it. If a man wants a wife he can get one among the Latter-day Saints. You organize society aright as God contemplated in these revelations, and those evils under which we now groan—this dishonesty and this disposition to take advantage of each other—will be done away with. God has devised a plan and has revealed it, that in its operations will relieve mankind from those evils and the commission of those sins to which they are now subject. When we are organized properly theft will cease among us, for the temptation to steal will be removed. Organize us properly and the temptation to take advantage of our neighbor will cease, because there will be no pro-

fit in it or connected with it. And it is all contained in this book. God has revealed it fifty years ago in plainness to this church, and we for fifty years have been crawling along at our slow gait without obeying the word of God, that is so plainly revealed, and that might relieve us, if we did obey it, from all those evils.

Now, my view of the Gospel is, that when it is obeyed by mankind the power of the devil will cease. That is my view respecting a part of the power that will be brought to bear to bind Satan. Satan will be bound because he will not have power over the hearts of the children of men. Why? One reason will be because they will have obeyed the more perfect law which will have relieved them from his power. You take the majority of the Elders of this Church, who are faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and Satan has but little or no power to tempt them to commit adultery, to commit sin with their neighbor's wife or with the opposite sex; they are to a great extent relieved from that, and so far as that crime is concerned Satan has but little power to tempt them, because they have obeyed a more perfect law. In the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as God has revealed it unto us, there are laws so perfect that when this people called Latter-day Saints shall obey them they will be so far lifted up above the power of Satan that he will have but little power to tempt them. But we never shall be emancipated from the power of Satan until we do obey these laws of God. An obedience thereto will bring emancipation to us and to every human being on the face of the earth, and it is upon no other principle that emancipation can be brought. It will not be as many suppose by our being withdrawn, without volition on our part, from the influences of Satan; but it will be by our obedience to the laws of God, by our conforming to the requirements which He makes of us, by our putting into practice all those higher laws which God has revealed, and which He designs we shall practice. Any soul that is waiting for some outward deliverance, waiting for some time to come when by some extraneous means, and independent of our action and the exercise of our agency, deliverance will be brought, he will wait in vain, I am afraid. Not that I would convey the idea that God is not going to help us, that God is not going to do it by His power; I would not convey any such idea, because I know and you know that without God's help all our efforts are powerless, and it is vain to seek to do anything in aid of ourselves; we cannot do it. Human nature is too fallible to do anything of this kind; but we must exercise the powers God has given to us by obeying His law, by conforming to His requirements. In this way we will be emancipated through the blessing and aid of God upon us, and in this way the earth will be redeemed from the power of Satan. The more people obey the laws of God, as God has revealed them, and as they are embodied in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the nearer they approach unto God, the more power they get over themselves and over the adversary. If there could be a man or a community found who lived in strict obedience to all the laws taught in this book [Doctrine and Covenants] you would find almost a perfect people, you would find a people in the condition of the people of Enoch—that is, they would be approximating to that perfection which he and his city obtained and which caused them to be translated.

When God revealed the Gospel He designed that we should obey these laws. He taught us in the first place that it was necessary to have faith in Jesus Christ, then to be baptized for the remission of sins, then to have hands laid upon us for the reception of the Holy Ghost. Then the people that were scattered were taught to gather out from the nations of the earth. Every law that they obeyed brought salvation. Every time they bowed in obedience to the requirements of God they brought, by their obedience, salvation to themselves and to their families so far as their families conformed to the requirements. When they got to Zion, if they obeyed the law of tithing, it brought salvation. And so with every other law that God has taught in the revelations that has been given unto us, and the men, as I have said, who have the most faithfully complied with those requirements have entered into themselves, through the blessing of God, the most perfectly

from the power of Satan. I look upon the men and upon the women who have entered into the new and everlasting covenant concerning patriarchal marriage as being more advanced than their brethren and sisters who have not obeyed the law. And if a community be found who would enter upon the order of Enoch as God has revealed, and who would hold themselves and their property subject to the law, I should look upon them as more in advance and still nearer to that perfection which God designs to bring about in Zion among the Latter-day Saints. It should be the aim of every man and every woman in this Church thus conform to the law and the will of God, because by so doing they bring salvation to themselves and to their children, and if they persevere in doing so, God will bless them in their efforts, and they eventually be brought to live with Him and to dwell in His kingdom and to receive the exaltation and glory that He has in store for them. Now, I have obeyed those laws far, because I know they have effected. I obey the Word of Wisdom—or try to obey it. I know it brings a blessing. In like manner I obey the ordinance of baptism; in like manner I seek to have hands laid upon me for the reception of the Holy Ghost; in like manner I pay my tithing; in like manner I have gone on and on, and done that which God has commanded of me, because in each and every act of this kind I knew that it tended to bring salvation to myself and to my family. And I know the doctrine of patriarchal marriage upon the same principle, because I knew that it was a principle of salvation and of exaltation, and I would be exalted in the presence of God I must obey the law. I will be with other laws which yet in the future and which will reveal to us as we grow in and in the knowledge of the law. He will continue to give revelation upon revelation, precept upon precept, and He will reveal unto more light and more knowledge give unto us more power and more of the gifts and graces of the Spirit as we become more perfect keeping the laws He has revealed.

It has been said—and I think who have had any experience that it is true—that in fact where the Word of Wisdom is obeyed there is greater faithfulness in ministering the law of the house of God unto the sick. We have a family in Lake City who, I think, on account of the number of those who were sick in his ward, he brought a statement to the President's office to the effect that in the families where the Word of Wisdom was strictly observed deaths had occurred than in families where the Word of Wisdom was not observed. Diphtheria or other disease was raging at that time in the city, and in his particular, and his mind was to this matter, and after making inquiries he said that there were more cases of health restorations to health through administrations of the Elders laying on of hands in families where the Word of Wisdom was observed than in families where it was neglected, and that deaths were frequent in the latter.

[President Taylor:] Then none died in the families where Word of Wisdom was observed.

President Taylor says that none died in the families where Word of Wisdom was observed. It is not natural that this should be the case. Have we not proclaimed to the world the graces of the gospel because we do not keep the word of the Lord? Has not this been money to the nations of the world? Yes, all of us who have sought to proclaim the word testified time and time again that that rule apply to us. Certainly it will. The more we obey the laws of God most perfectly, and the women who do so, are greatest faith, and God will bless them in proportion to their obedience. He will bless their families in proportion to their faith; the gifts of the Spirit will be manifested in their behalf than upon those who deliberately violate or are careless concerning the word of God. It is certainly true. So it is with the law that God has given. The more we approach unto God the more we live in accordance with the revelations He has given; the more