

DISCOURSES

*At the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,
Sunday afternoon, October
30th, 1892.*

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

APOSTLE ABRAHAM H. CANNON.

I have been requested, my brethren and sisters, to occupy a portion of the time allotted to our meeting this afternoon, and while I do so with much fear, I trust that through the influence of your faith and prayers in my behalf I may be led to say those things which will be instructive to us all, and will also be a means of encouragement and, if necessary, of reproof. I do not feel that there are any principles of my own which I desire to advance, nor do I wish to attempt to address this vast congregation according to the human wisdom which God has given me, but only as His Spirit shall prompt me to speak unto you.

I am often reminded of late of that scripture written by Paul, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." When I have reflected upon the circumstances surrounding us and the difficulties we have to meet, it seems to me that we have everything to discourage us and to make us turn back from the path upon which we have entered in connection with the work of God, unless we have some hope within us concerning the future and that eternity to which we are all hastening. We not only have the cares of life to endure; we are not only troubled daily in our business and household affairs; not only do we have resting upon us all the responsibilities which are common to people in the world; but in addition to all these, we have to meet the persecution, the oppression, the contumely and the scorn of the majority of the human family. We have already, as a Church, suffered far beyond the power of human tongue to describe. Our people have been driven from their homes time and time again. Of their property they have repeatedly been robbed. They have lost, through death at the hands of wicked men, some of those who were most dear to them. They have suffered everything which human beings could endure and still live. Notwithstanding what they have done for the benefit of the human family in the preaching of the Gospel and in the promulgation of that doctrine of gathering which has afforded relief and temporal blessing to so many people, they are today bereft of the encouragement which their acts certainly merit. They are the only people, in my opinion, who could have redeemed these desert valleys. They are the only people who could have beautified this land as they have done and made it a place which men covet, and which is desirable almost above every land upon the face of the earth. I do not mean to say that they could have done it had it not been for the blessing of God which attended

their labors. I do not believe that they could. But it was the result of circumstances over which they had no control that they were brought to this land, that they settled these valleys, that they continued to live here, and that in the providence of God they have made this a place so delightful for their own occupation and for homes for others who desire peace, contentment, and prosperity in the things of this world.

In view of all these things which they have accomplished, it seems to me that the hearts of men throughout the whole world, and especially in this country, should be filled with gratitude for the services which these Latter-day Saints have rendered to their country in the redeeming of these sterile wastes, which would doubtless today, but for their labors, be still marked as the Great American Desert. But the results are not such as we might hope would follow such labors. The Latter-day Saints are not yet received with kindness by the people of the world. They are not treated with that consideration that they should be by their fellow men. But we have become so accustomed to suffer at the hands of those who do not understand us that it is almost second nature to us, and we have been able to find peace and joy for our souls even in the midst of the greatest tribulations which it seems possible for men and women to endure. These things we can still endure, if we enjoy the favor of God, until we have accomplished the work which the Lord has marked out for us to do here on the earth. It need give us no concern when we see the powers of darkness marshalled in opposition to us in the accomplishment of these duties which are required at our hands. On the other hand we can lift up our hearts and rejoice, if these things come upon us for righteousness sake; for we will receive in eternity, if not in time, all the blessings concerning which Jesus spoke, and concerning which God has spoken through His Prophets, both in ancient and in modern times.

But when, my brethren and sisters, we see a spirit of discord and contention, a desire to persecute, a desire to oppress, a desire to divide, growing up in the midst of the Latter-day Saints, then we have cause to fear and tremble; we have cause to seek the guidance and the strength of God to resist this spirit, which will assuredly lead us to destruction as the spirit of Christ will lead us to salvation and to triumph. And I do not suppose that there is anyone who has reached the years of maturity among the Latter-day Saints but can see that there is such a spirit finding place in certain quarters among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Are there any who can deny that the same spirit which characterized the Saints in the early settlement of these valleys has fled, to a certain extent, from our midst? Do you find among Latter-day Saints that same harmony, that same love that same union and that same spirit of peace which were familiar in the early settlement of these valleys? Various causes have contributed to the growth and expansion of this spirit to which I refer—a spirit of division, finding its way into

the homes of Latter-day Saints and creating discord and strife where formerly there was love and union. What the result will be it requires no great prophet to tell.

We read in Scripture of the warnings which were given by the Savior Himself upon this very subject. He said that a house divided against itself could not stand. He warned His disciples to seek for that spirit of oneness which was characteristic of Himself and His Father in heaven; for He said, "If ye are not one, ye are not mine." You, my brethren and sisters, are aware of the special features which characterized the saints in former days, and which are characteristic of Latter-day Saints as well. You remember the result which followed the preaching of the Apostles when they received the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost and the multitude cried unto Peter for information as to how they might be saved. After receiving the ordinances of the Gospel, they became one in all things as a result of their acceptance of these principles. They were at one in their temporal affairs as well as in their spiritual concerns. They saw eye to eye. There were no bickerings among them. There was no strife nor contention. But there was a spirit filling each heart and resting down upon every individual that made him love his neighbor as himself, and love God, his Creator, with all his heart. They were ready to show that supreme love of which Jesus says there is none greater—to lay down their lives for their friends. The Apostles showed their love, not only for their brethren, but for the principles which they had espoused, by themselves suffering martyrdom at the hands of their enemies.

That same spirit has found place in the hearts of the people who have received this Gospel in this day, in every land where it has been preached successfully. There have been no national lines separating the Saints of God. The brother from the islands of the sea was as welcome to the circle of the Saints as the one who came from Europe or from America. The brother or sister of the dark skin was considered just as welcome in the midst of the Latter-day Saints and as having equal privileges in the work of God, if they were of the House of Israel, as the brother or sister of the white skin. The Gospel leveled the whole community. It made of us one people, as long as we practiced its principles and the love of it was supreme in our hearts. But immediately upon any other spirit taking possession of us, it banished this spirit of love and of union; and those who gave encouragement to any such feeling gradually drew away from the flock of Christ and went into darkness and apostasy, from which it was impossible to return without sincere repentance. It is impossible for people to continue in the pale of this Church if they are divided one against another. It is just as impossible for men who are continually raising discord and strife among the saints to remain in the midst of the people of God as it was for Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, that talented and brilliant son of God, to retain his position in the heavenly kingdom when he rebelled against the will of the Father. You know how it was then. The Lord presented to