

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY

ELDER ABRAHAM H. CANNON,

At the Salt Lake Stake Conference,
Assembly Hall, Saturday, Septem-
ber 2nd, 1893.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I trust that while I occupy this position I may be filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and neither attempt nor desire to say anything but that which He will approve.

I do not know that there has been a time in our experience when we needed more of the Spirit of the Lord to guide us than at the present. It seems as though the wisdom of man falls under present circumstances to point out the way of deliverance. It is true, we are moving along in a matter-of-fact way, and what we might generally consider very satisfactory; but the report which was given by Brother Davis concerning the First quorum of Elders will doubtless apply to very many quorums and organizations in the Church. I suppose it can safely be said that not more than one-quarter of those who have a standing in the Church are really magnifying their callings and living up to the full line of their duty. This may be considered by some a very broad statement; yet I think investigation would prove it to be not far from correct. We may be performing certain duties which are pleasurable to us and easy of accomplishment; but those which come in contact with our peculiar desires and inclinations we are very apt to neglect. And thus through a failure now and again to perform our duties we are gradually drifting into a kind of indifference which is almost as bad as apostasy, and it means apostasy unless a very radical change occurs. I am not so sure but that the Church can better grapple with apostasy than with indifference. I am not so sure but we can more effectually guard against the evils which apostates and non-Mormons would introduce into our midst than we can protect ourselves from the evil influences of those who are indifferent and still have a standing in the Church. It is always easier and more pleasant, though perhaps it may be more dangerous, to fight an open enemy than a hypocritical friend. It is always better for the authorities in a Stake or in a Ward to understand the real condition of men and women and provide a remedy for the disease which afflicts them, than to be led along under the impression that certain members are desirous of doing right and yet they be secretly conspiring at the injury of the Church. I believe the Lord will provide means, in some way peculiar to Himself, to cleanse the Church of the hypocrite and ungodly, and it will cause such a shaking up among those who have a standing in the Church that it will make each man and woman appear to his or her true character. How soon this will occur I do not know, but with my

present feelings I would hail such a day with great delight.

We are confronted, my brethren and sisters, with questions today of the greatest importance to us, and which need the wisdom, the attention and the faith of all the Latter-day Saints. To all human appearance, it seems as though destruction in a business way will overwhelm the world, and that in the troubles which are to come upon the people of the earth the Latter-day Saints will not remain unscathed. We seem to have become so mixed up in the affairs of Babylon that when she goes down, Zion will be seriously affected thereby. Today we can find in our city—and perhaps the same condition exists in other parts of the Territory—hundreds of men without employment. We can find the people suffering, in many instances, from the lack of the necessities of life—men and women able and willing to work, but for whom no employment can be found; seeking for labor, if it will only afford them the food which they need to sustain their bodies. I believe that in our Territory today, and especially in this county, there are hundreds of families without food to eat for tomorrow; and able-bodied people, too, in whom there is both the capacity and the desire for work, if they could only find it, upon any terms. This same condition exists, only perhaps in greater magnitude, in the states and territories of this country, and in other nations of the earth.

The question immediately arises with every thinking person, what is to be the result of this condition? Are we to have suffering in our midst? Are people to go hungry and without suitable clothing during the approaching winter? It is a question which demands, however much we may try to shirk the responsibility of it, the serious consideration of the Priesthood of God and of His people throughout this Territory. If our brethren and sisters whom we are sending our Elders out to gather to these valleys of the mountains are to come here and starve, then we had better call home our missionaries; and instead of gathering people here from the nations of the earth, we had better scatter them abroad, to find food.

It is not only the immigration which is coming from abroad that needs our attention, but we have growing up here over sixty thousand children. If there is not enough work for those who have already established themselves in this country, what is to become of these thousands of children who are growing up, and who will need employment? We may say that the country is overstocked with people. We may accept, if we will, the Malthusian doctrine that war or some other disaster is necessary at stated times to kill off some of the inhabitants of the earth, otherwise it would be over-populated. I heard a man only a few days ago, speaking of the situation, say that he did not know what would give relief except war were declared between this country and some other country, and the people were swept off by this means. He was a man who had been seeking employment day after day and week after week, and to him there seemed no other means of relief than that. The

hearts of the people are quailing almost with fear at the prospect which is presented for the coming winter.

Why is this? Is it a fact that here in Utah our crops in previous years have been less than we anticipated? Is there too little food produced? Have we too little land for cultivation? Are our streams too meagre to water the soil and cause it to produce in its richness for our sustenance? You are my witnesses, my brethren and sisters, who live outside the city and know of the fruitfulness with which God has blessed the land, that He has not withheld His blessings from us in this respect. There is an abundance produced in this Territory and in the adjoining states and territories to sustain the population, and a far greater number of people than those who now live in these valleys of the mountains. You are also witnesses that there is an abundance of wealth within the borders of Utah Territory to sustain this people, without their having to call upon the east or the west, the north or the south, for any assistance. We have within our own grasp, if we only had the wisdom to use it, the wealth necessary to make of this Territory one of the brightest and richest spots on the face of the earth. But we have lost sight, in some measure at least, of the object of our gathering to these valleys. We have forgotten the call which was sent to us through the Elders of the Church, that we should come out of Babylon and gather up to Zion, that we might learn of the ways of God and walk in His paths. No call was made upon the people to gather up to Zion that they might accumulate wealth, that they might extend the limits of their fields, that they might build up mansions, while under the shadows of their mansions the poor and the hungry cried for food, for shelter and for raiment. Instead of seeking to learn the ways of God and walk in His paths, we have sought to learn the ways of men and to walk in the paths of men. We have looked after the golden calf. Our eyes have been turned toward that image which God requires us to forsake. We have gathered wealth, we have hoarded it, and we are using it sparingly for our own benefit, forgetting at the same time the necessities of our brethren and sisters who are living around us, who have just as much claim, though they may not possess equal ability with us for the management of financial affairs, upon the blessings of Almighty God as we have.

In this Territory we have enough land to divide among the people and provide each family with more than twenty acres for cultivation. According to statistics, we have something over fifty-two millions of acres of land. Of this there are two millions that can be reached by the streams of water which God has so abundantly increased during these latter times, in fulfillment of prophecy. Of these two millions of acres, only about seven hundred and thirty-five thousand acres are really under cultivation and producing that which they are capable of yielding for the support of the inhabitants of the land. And the land which we do cultivate, how is it treated? Is it producing in its fullness? Does it yield richly of its fruit to the husbandman? No, it does