

REMARKS

By President George Q. Cannon, in the Eighteenth Ward Chapel, on Sunday Evening, February 1st, 1891.

[REPORTED BY ANGUS K. NICHOLSON.]

The announcement of the Bishop saves me the necessity of asking for your faith and prayers. I would not stand here if I did not believe I might receive the assistance and Spirit of God. I have been in public life since my youth, but I never arise before a congregation without feelings of timidity. It seems almost incredible, but it is nevertheless my weakness. I have always learned to put my trust in the Lord.

As you know, it is not our practice to prepare anything beforehand to say to the people. I never did it in my life. I have pondered in my heart the principles of the Gospel and of righteousness and have trusted to the Spirit of the Lord to suggest the things to be said. I know it is the proper way, because how impossible it is for me to know the wants of your hearts, whether you need strength or comfort? The people have wants which the spirit of faith can supply, and no matter how simple the language or trite the subject, it is a remarkable feature connected with the preaching of the Elders that when the Spirit of God accompanies the words they carry light, intelligence and comfort to those who hear them. I think this is a very remarkable feature of the principles of truth. The repetition of them does not take away from them their value or make them stale to us, but they are profitable and bring intelligence to the mind. It is this great power that has attended the preaching of the Gospel in our day that has convinced so many, contrary, in numerous cases, to their own inclinations, for they could have no inducement from a worldly standpoint.

We hear a great deal of the principle of revelation. If we believe in it, no doubt we have our ideas about revelation and the way it is received. I suppose everyone who has read the Bible has derived some impression regarding this subject. The principle of revelation is a gift enjoyed by the Saints to a greater extent than they themselves imagine. Some have an idea that there must be some supernatural influence or power rest down on the person who receives revelation, that transforms him to a certain extent, and makes it apparent to a man who knows him that he is something beyond what men naturally are, and there is disappointment, I presume, because of expectations not being fulfilled in this direction. I need only refer you to the case of the Lord Jesus, who possessed the greatest power of all men, being a God. Notwithstanding His position, the greatness of His calling, and the power that he possessed and manifested in the midst of the people, there were very few who recognized in Him the being that He was. He did not come up to their expectations. They did not look upon Him as the Messiah. In fact His own Apostles had to exercise a great deal of faith to understand who He was. It was only by revelation that Peter knew that He was the Christ, for Jesus told him that flesh

and blood had not revealed this to him but his Father in heaven. No doubt the Apostles walked among men possessing great power, attracting great attention on the part of those with whom they mingled. It required, however, the discernment that God gives to recognize them; it required spiritual perception—something more than man naturally possesses—to distinguish them as the servants of God.

The spirit of revelation is the spirit of light. Do all mankind enjoy this spirit, or is there only a certain class who have it? Every human being that comes into the world has received a portion of the Spirit of God to enlighten his mind. Every one is born with it who is perfectly born, but that is not the gift of the Holy Ghost; yet this gift of revelation or prophecy is received by all and is enjoyed to a greater or less extent by all, according to the cultivation bestowed upon it. We have perhaps known persons, not members of the Church, who have had this gift to a wonderful extent. They have had impressions which have afterwards proved to be true. How often in everyday life we are thinking of a person and we meet him or receive a letter from him. We may not have thought of him for months, but something spontaneously brings him to our mind, and before many hours we perhaps either see him or hear from him. This, I believe, is the Spirit of God, or the spirit of revelation.

How often it occurs in the experience of a person that he is prompted to do a thing and having done it he will afterwards see it is the thing he ought to have done; or, neglecting to do it, he has seen that he has made a mistake in not following the prompting. It is almost as though he heard a voice. The man who lives in accordance with the promptings of this spirit is to an extent a prophet, and if he live in accordance with it strictly—no matter whether he never heard the Gospel of the Lord Jesus or never knew anything of the Bible and other sacred records—he will be saved if he follows that light. God will not judge us from a light we do not know, and the more we know the stricter will be our judgment. A man who possesses an understanding of the principles of the Gospel will be held to stricter accountability than the man who does not comprehend them. Heathens will be saved ahead of thousands and thousands who profess belief in Christianity, for it is revealed that they will have part in the first resurrection. Where much is given much is required; where little is given little is required.

In regard to revelation, it is our duty to walk in its light. When a matter is presented before us for consideration, if we will live as we should do, we shall know which course is right. It is our duty to follow the light—that is, the spirit of revelation. That is the way the Church of Christ is led. That is the way Moses led the children of Israel. It was by following the light as it presented itself to his mind, the path being made very clear before him. That which was dark, or which produced a stupor of mind, or was not clear to him, was not followed by him. That which is plain and clear, and which our minds are not unsettled about, is always safe to do. When we shall do this we shall

be led by the spirit of God till we reach his kingdom.

Some men say, "Why does not God remove all difficulties from our pathway?" If He did so there would be no development. His reason for placing us here was to develop our divine natures. If we were not surrounded by darkness we could not develop. We must taste the bitter in order to relish the sweet, that our spirits might be purified, and that we might exercise our free agency. Good and evil must be presented before us. We are as free agents in our sphere as the angels are in theirs. We are free to do right or to do wrong, and to choose the path we shall tread in.

He'll call, persuade, direct aright,
Bless him with wisdom and with might,
In nameless ways be good and kind,
But never force the human mind.

God will force no man to heaven, because he would be of no value if there. When we get to heaven it will be because we have developed within ourselves the qualities that make heaven. We must develop heaven within ourselves, so that there will be perfect harmony between us and our surroundings. I have seen men enjoy great happiness in the midst of the worst surroundings. A man of this character might be happy in hell if he were sent there on a mission, because he would carry with him the elements of happiness. Angels may come from heaven to earth and mingle in earthly scenes and yet be happy. They do not lose their angelic qualities nor their happiness.

I thank God for giving us our agency, because I think this earth will be a furnace to cleanse me and prepare me for a better condition of affairs and a better life, and I believe this of all of us. The Lord has placed us here for wise purposes. It is just as necessary that our bodies should be subject to law as it is that our spirits should be. These bodies of ours are naturally rebellious—full of strange appetites. We are here to conquer these desires. All of us will be sanctified and redeemed if we are faithful. But we must bring this earthly substance in subjection to the will of God. When men die, their bodies do not leave this planet. Our spirits leave here, not being created out of the elements of this planet, but if these spirits of ours are subject to the Spirit of God and are controlled by its influence, and our tabernacles have been subject to the law of God, they will be redeemed, exalted and glorified. Every law of God that we obey tends to our exaltation. The spirit that we have here will be the spirit that will animate us in the resurrection. If it is a spirit of evil it will have power over us; if it is one of truth and righteousness it will direct us. All the progress we make here will be to our advantage in the next life. The intelligence acquired here will not be lost. We will keep adding to it, and the more we seek understanding the greater will be our endowment of knowledge. Fidelity, industry and all the other good qualities exhibited on earth will be manifested in heaven.

Many persons doubt the existence of God because they cannot recognize the providence of Deity in the various conditions which surround men on the