

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 5.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, JULY 16, 1898.

VOL. LVII.

DISCOURSE

Delivered at the Sixty-Eighth Annual Conference, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, Wednesday morning, April 6th, 1898, by

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON.

It is gratifying this morning to see so large an assemblage in this building, at the commencement of our Conference, and it is to be hoped that the interest that is manifested today by those who are present will be maintained during the Conference, that through that interest we may obtain a goodly decree of the Spirit of God, and may all feel, when this Conference closes, that it has been the best Conference we ever attended. This is the usual feeling which those who attend the Conference experience. At each Conference the blessings of God that are received appear to be greater than ever before, and of course this feeling is produced by the interest that each one has in attending the meetings and in listening to the instructions and drinking into the spirit of the Conference. It is most gratifying to all of us to see President Woodruff and to hear his voice. As he has said, he scarcely expected a few days ago to be able to attend this Conference, suffering as he did from a very severe attack of cold. But he is here with us, and it is a cause of great satisfaction and pleasure to all to see him and to hear his voice, even if it is only for a brief period.

As President Woodruff has said, the progress of the work is very gratifying. It is an important period in which we are living. A great change has taken place in relation to this work and its bearing upon the nations. No doubt the greater portion of this congregation will remember the promises that were made by the servant of God during the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple five years ago. Predictions were made then that seemed unlikely to be fulfilled, looking at affairs as men naturally look at them. But not a word was said concerning the progress of this work and the favor that it would find from that time forward that has not been literally fulfilled.

As I have said, a great change has taken place in relation to the work of the Lord. It occupies a different position, in many respects, to that which it has ever occupied before. It was a cause of consolation to the Saints, in the dark hours that we witnessed some ten or twelve years ago, to hear the Elders predict that a better day was about to dawn upon the people, and that we should emerge from the trials and difficulties and sorrows of those days with greater influence and more power, more respected as a people than we ever had been. It seemed highly improbable that those predictions would be fulfilled, because the bitterness entertained toward the Latter-day Saints and their religion was so widespread and deep-seated. But those predictions have been fulfilled.

We have often been surrounded by very difficult circumstances, and there

have been many times in our history when it seemed as though this work of God would be overthrown and all his purposes brought to naught. Those who have fought against this work have indulged in those anticipations. The measures which they undertook, and which they endeavored to carry out, had for their object the destruction of this organization and the breaking up of this people. They supposed these measures sufficient to accomplish the ends they had in view. If they had not felt sure of this, they would, without doubt, have tried other plans.

That which has sustained the Latter-day Saints during their times of trial has been the spirit of prophecy. The Lord has given to His Elders the spirit of prophecy. In the midst of the most terrible trials, when the people were broken up, driven out from their homes and possessions, in a state of utter destitution, without food, without proper clothing, without shelter, homeless wanderers, scattered by the ruthless hand of violence—in those dark hours the Lord gave unto His servants the spirit of prophecy. It rested upon them in power, and they predicted to the people that a better day would dawn upon them, and they would emerge from their trials stronger and better, more firmly rooted in the faith which the Lord had revealed to them, than they were before, more than once in the history of the Latter-day Saints have mobs driven them from their homes—the places the Lord had designated as places of gathering; and they were a scattered people, broken up, and without an abiding place. But under the inspiration of the Almighty, through the spirit of prophecy that He gave to His servants, and to the people themselves, they were drawn together and held by bonds that were invisible to human eyes. And though at times they were widely separated, they were drawn together to the new gathering place, which under the inspiration of the Almighty through His servants, and in which they themselves also shared, they knew to be the place for them once more to assemble. How numerous soever the temptations all around them to induce them to desert the cause of God, to leave a people who were so persecuted and who had to endure such trials, these invisible bonds of which I speak drew them together and prompted them to again attempt to build up cities and temples, where they could worship the Almighty according to the commandments which He had given unto them.

It is truly marvelous to look back upon the history of the Latter-day Saints; to see the power that had been manifested in holding them together as they have been. As I have said, those who framed plans against them, supposed they could not fail in destroying the organization of the Church and separating the people in such a way that they would never again be united. But the people did gather together again. It was the power of God that did this. It was the spirit of prophecy that rested upon the servants of

God, which encouraged the people, which told them that the Lord had revealed and established His Church on the earth, and that there was neither power on earth nor in hell that could destroy it, or that could thwart His purposes, as predicted by the mouths of His holy prophets. As in the past, so it has been of late years. That same spirit has rested upon the people. And there is this grand peculiarity connected with this work; it has not been those men alone who have been chosen by the Lord to lead who have had this spirit. They have not prophesied without a witness on the part of the faithful people themselves that that which they said was the truth and from the Almighty. For in the hearts of all the Latter-day Saints there has been a responsive echo to the words of hope, cheer and comfort and prophecy that have been given by those upon whom the spirit of prophecy has rested. The people have felt the spirit, they have been cheered and sustained by it. We have seen this so often that we know that that which the Lord has spoken concerning His work will be fulfilled.

It is astonishing, when we reflect upon it, what has been done in this respect. We have seen people driven out from their homes in utter destitution, crossing the plains, with improvised wagons, made in the rudest manner, out of the greenest material, with cows, or oxen, or ponies, or anything that could be hitched up to draw them; a few personal effects thrown into the wagon, with a small amount of food, many of the men, and the women, too, almost barefooted, and the children in the same condition—all inspired by one spirit, and that the Spirit of God. There was nothing in their circumstances, that could be seen by the natural eye to cheer or to sustain them. But they were full of hope, buoyant in their feelings, traveling with as much confidence and certainly as though they knew every step they had to take and that there was a good place ahead of them which they would reach and in the pleasures of which they could partake. We have seen this, I say, and it has been an astonishing illustration of what God can do for a people; of how He can sustain them, and inspire them to do the work that He requires at their hands.

When the Saints were in Iowa (then a territory), traveling through, and afterwards at Winter Quarters, the women, in many instances, took their feather beds, and sent them down to Missouri to sell, in order to get a little provision. All sorts of expedients were resorted to in order to get a little food. There was Missouri on the left, inviting the people—a good land, food in plenty, a land where they could live with comparative ease. But did the Saints swerve? Did they, during the dreadful days of Winter Quarters, think they must desert that place where so many died through exposure and the want of suitable food, and go where they could get some of the comforts and conveniences of life? Were such thoughts