

DISCOURSE

BY

PREST. GEORGE Q. CANNON,

DELIVERED

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,
Sunday Afternoon, Dec. 14, 1884.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

It is always an impressive sight to me to see a congregation numbering so many people as this does raise their hands before the Lord to sustain the names of men who are presented to them as holding office in the Church, and though we do this semi-annually in our general conferences for the General Authorities, and quarterly, that is, four times a year for the local authorities, it should not be in our feelings nor in our practice the performance of an empty form, but should be done in a spirit that will be acceptable unto our Father, and in consonance with the responsibility that devolves upon the men whom we sustain. For when we thus sustain these men it means more than the mere lifting of our hands, or at least should do so. It means the sustaining of these men by our faith and by our prayers, and so far as works are required, by our works, and when we thus vote and thus act, there is a power and an influence accompany such action as we have performed this afternoon that are felt by those in whose favor we vote: they feel strengthened, and God our Eternal Father seals His blessing or causes it to descend upon those who are voted for, and there is a spirit that rests down upon them from that time forward, so long as they are faithful and are thus sustained, that manifests itself unto all with whom they are brought in contact. Let this congregation lift up their hands to sever a man from the Church, and no matter how high he may be in authority, no matter what Priesthood he bears, no matter how great and mighty he may have been in the Church and in the ministry—let this congregation for just cause lift up their hands against any such man and how quickly the effect is felt, how quickly that man is stripped of his power and of his influence and of that spirit and those gifts which have been conspicuous in his labors previous to such action, or while he was in good standing and in fellowship with God and his brethren and sisters. We have seen numerous illustrations of this in our history. Name after name might be mentioned of men who have been bright stars in the firmament who have been stripped—by their own conduct to begin with, and afterwards by the action of the Saints of God upon their case—of that lustre, of that brightness, and of that glory that seemed to attend their ministrations. And while this is the case with those who have transgressed when the Saints of God act upon their cases, so it is, on the contrary, with those who are sustained in their ministry and in their Priesthood and in their calling by the united, uplifted hands of the Saints of God in conference assembled, as we have done this afternoon. Men may sneer at the Latter-day Saints and say this is but an empty form, and that it is all pre-arranged. Men may say what they please about this. It is pre-arranged according to the spirit and mind of God so far as that can be ascertained. When men are chosen for office the Spirit of God is sought for by those who have the right to select, and if there be doubt upon certain points men are not chosen; but when they are chosen and the mind of the Lord is sought for to know whether it will be agreeable to Him that they receive this office or that they should act in those positions, and when they are thus selected and thus submitted, as I have said, to the Conference, then if they themselves live so as to have the Spirit of God with them they will be clothed with it, and when they seek to magnify their office God will magnify them before the people and will show them and the people that they are indeed His chosen servants and that their ministrations are acceptable unto Him, that He confirms them by the outpouring of His spirit and the bestowal of His gifts. It is a remarkable fact in this age of unbelief, in this age of doubt, in this age of darkness, in this age when men pride themselves upon there being no revelation, and no knowledge from God—I say it is a remarkable fact that in this age such as we now live in and such as we are familiar with, God, in the history of this people, is accompanying His labors, and the labors to which He assigns His servants, with the ancient power, with the ancient manifestations, and with the ancient confirmation by gifts and by mighty signs and works that He causes His servants to accomplish.

When Moses was about to depart God required of him that he should lay his hands upon another man to take his place to act as the leader of the people of Israel. He laid his hands upon Joshua, and a portion of that spirit and power that had attended the ministrations of Moses in the midst of Israel was immediately manifested through Joshua, and God confirmed the selection and impressed upon the people by the signs and the mighty works which Joshua accomplished that he was indeed God's chosen servant. He magnified him in the midst of the people, he was enabled to perform mighty works, and the people, if they had had any doubts whatever had those doubts removed by these manifestations of

power. You remember how the Lord showed in the sight of all Israel that Joshua was His inspired and chosen servant, for under his direction the children of Israel crossed the river Jordan dry shod. It was at the time of high water in the river Jordan; but the Jordan was stayed in its onward course, its waters stopped running, and the whole hosts of Israel, by the direction of this servant of God, passed over dry shod. In this manner God showed unto His people that he had indeed chosen this man to be His servant. And so it has been in the entire history of God's dealings with His people. He has not left them without a testimony. He has not left them to proclaim His word unaccompanied by His power. They have not been left to argue for themselves, to plead for themselves, to protest in the ears of the people that they were the servants of God, and to constantly contend for their rights as leaders of the people of God. But in every instance when He chose a man to be His servant, He accompanied that choice by the manifestations of His power, by the outpouring of His spirit and His gifts, so that every honest soul, every humble man and woman who sought the Lord, might know for themselves that those men were His chosen ones. A most striking illustration of this suggests itself to my mind now. It occurred at the time the children of Israel desired a king. The Lord was displeased with them for this. Samuel also felt offended, for they had rejected him and his house. They had a good reason for desiring a king, at least they thought so. The surrounding nations had kings who went out and in before them to battle and were their leaders, and they desired to have a king, especially when the two sons of Samuel, whom he had chosen as Judges over Israel, were men who had turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. This Prophet of God, this mighty man of God, happened to have two sons who were unworthy of their father's reputation, unworthy of the Priesthood, unworthy of their position as Judges in Israel. In consequence of this the leaders of Israel gathered together and said unto Samuel: "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy way: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations?" Samuel was greatly offended with the thought. But the Lord said unto him: "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." In other words, the Lord had led them and chosen for them those who should lead them up to that time, and now He would give them a king. He designated to Samuel the kind of man he should be, who he should be, and told him he should visit him. The person designated was Saul, and Samuel anointed him king of Israel. After he was chosen king, it seems that he went about his ordinary business, and the next we hear of him he was following the herd, driving up the cattle, when the news came to him that Nahash, the Ammonite, would only be pacified towards the men of Jabesh-Gilead upon one condition, and that was that he might thrust their right eyes out, in token of their subjection and as a reproach upon all Israel. And then, at that time, when danger threatened Israel, when there was a necessity for a general, for a man to lead the hosts of Israel, the Spirit and power of Almighty God, and the anointing that he had received under the hands of the Prophet of God, descended upon that young man, Saul, and his anger was kindled at the insult that had been offered to his nation, and he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, "Whoever cometh not forth after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And great fear fell upon the people; they gathered out, and he organized his army, and they fell upon their enemies and cleaned them out."

Now, this is an illustration of the manner in which God operates upon His servants and upon His people. This young man was following peaceful pursuits. Though he had been chosen a king, he had not seemed to assume kingly dignity, he had gone about his business; but when the crisis arose, when there was a necessity for some one to step forward and take the leading position, then the spirit of that position to which he had been anointed, and to which he had been chosen by the voice of God, by the act of His Prophet, and by the approbation of the people, rested upon him, and he emerged from his obscurity and arose in their midst a king, a leader in very deed and in truth.

And so it was, you remember, in the case of Elisha. When Elijah was about to be taken to heaven, the spirit of prophecy seemed to rest upon all the prophets. The sons of the prophets came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?" And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace." At a former time he had been plowing in the field, with twelve yoke of oxen, when Elijah came along, and Elisha dropped his work and followed the prophet of God. Afterwards, when Elijah's departure drew near, he said unto Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of that spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so."

And sure enough, he beheld a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and he saw his master ascend in his sight to heaven, and undoubtedly that gift that he had asked for, and that Elijah said should be granted unto him if he beheld his departure, was given to this man of God, it rested upon him, and when he came to the Jordan, having Elijah's mantle which he had dropped, he smote the water in the power of God, and cried, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" so that the waters divided, and he passed over dryshod. God accompanied that man by His power wherever he went. A great and a mighty prophet was he; so great and so mighty, that it is related of him that after his death a band of Moabites came into the land. The people of Israel were burying a man. While in this act, they became frightened at seeing a band of men, and cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; "and when the man was let down and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet." He was a mighty prophet, and he received those gifts and this power from God, which He bestows upon all those who receive the everlasting Priesthood and who seek to magnify it in the spirit thereof.

Read, too, of the transformation that occurred when Jesus laid His hands upon His apostles. The lowly, the ignorant, and the unlettered fishermen were transformed into mighty men, men of power, men of influence, men who had communication with the heavens, unto whom God revealed His mind and will, and through whom He performed mighty works. These men previously were obscure men, men of humble lives, fishermen, probably one of the lowest occupations that men followed in those days, as it is in our day. It is a lowly occupation is that of a fisherman. It is not one that brings great wealth; it does not bring men into public notice; it gives them no opportunity for distinction; but these men were men whose lives were hid with God. These were Princes in disguise, men who had been chosen, like their Lord and Master, according to my view, before the foundations of the earth were laid, to be His companions in the flesh, and like Him they were born in lowly and obscure circumstances. But when He chose them, when their hearts were touched by the great truths He taught, and they came forward, in obedience to His authority, to cast their lot with Him, then the power of God descended upon them, they performed mighty works, and while they lived upon the earth the Holy Ghost was their companion, and their fame has come down to us embalmed, it may be said, through the ages that have transpired, through the ignorance, and the gloom, and the darkness, and the apostasy that have since taken place—their names have come down to us from our ancestors, and the most glorious edifices and structures that the world know anything of are dedicated to their memories. God made them mighty in the midst of the children of men. And so it was with all the prophets. When God made promises unto them they received them. But they did not receive these things without exertion on their part, without their seeking industriously to magnify that Priesthood which had been bestowed upon them. The spirit and power of God will rest upon a man if he listens to it. It will impel him to action. If he cherishes it, it will be his constant companion. It will be with him in times when he will need it, and when he does need it, if he magnifies his calling, the spirit and power of the Almighty—that spirit and power and those gifts which belong to his particular office—will rest upon him, and he will be made equal to every emergency, to every trial, and will come off victorious.

How was it with the Prophet Joseph Smith? Whose origin could be more lowly in a land like ours than his, springing from the humblest ranks of life, of parents that were not distinguished, or of any family that was known particularly, bearing a name more common than any other name in our language. Yet this man, because God had chosen him, manifested extraordinary power. Those who saw him, those who listened to him, those who witnessed his acts, know how mighty he was in the midst of his fellow men, and how mightily God wrought through him. God chose and ordained him. He gave unto him His everlasting Priesthood. He gave unto him the full authority to organize His Church. He did so—organized this Church, the most glorious fabric that ever was established upon the face of the earth; because it is God's Church; it is the Church of Jesus Christ, unparalleled by anything else. No other organization approaches to it in perfection; nothing lacking, every detail, beautiful, harmonious, symmetrical, leaving nothing to be desired. Such is the Church and such the organization that the Prophet Joseph was the means in the hands of God of restoring once more to the earth. The plan, the pattern, had been lost entirely. The officers that formerly filled the church were withdrawn. The Priesthood that they held was taken back to God, and the men who bore it also were taken from the earth. There had, therefore, to be a complete restoration. It could only come from the God of heaven, and Joseph, inspired of God, was the means through which the restoration was made—Joseph, a youth, obscure, illiterate in some respects—that is, he was not what men would call learned, but afterwards, through industry and perseverance, became learned, and if he had lived, he would undoubtedly have become one of the most learned of men through the gifts God gave him. The

progress he made when he did live was very remarkable. By his faith, and inspired of God, he laid the foundation of this work, and not only did this, but he laid his hands upon other men and they partook of the same spirit and influence that rested upon him. They were able to drink at the same fountain, that fountain which God through him had opened up for them to drink at. They could go to that fountain and partake of its holy influence, and their eyes were opened and their minds were illuminated by the power of God. They were able also to go forth in the power which He had restored, and thus once more among men was witnessed the mighty gifts that were characteristic of bygone ages, when God had a Priesthood on the earth, when He had prophets and apostles and mighty men whom He clothed with a portion of His spirit and power.

And when Joseph was taken, how was it then? Were the people left without some man or men to stand up in their midst to declare to them the counsel of their Almighty Father? No, the Lord did not leave His people without a shepherd. He had anticipated the dreadful tragedy which would rob us of His anointed one; rob us, the Church of Christ, of our Prophet and Patriarch. He had anticipated this, and previous to this horrid tragedy, He inspired His servant Joseph to call other men, upon whom he bestowed all the keys, all the authority, all the blessings, all the knowledge so far as endowments were concerned, so far as the power to go unto God and ask Him in the name of Jesus and obtain His mind and will was concerned. He bestowed upon these men the same gifts, and blessings and graces he had received; so that there was a body of men with all the authority, a body of prophets with all the gifts of seers and revelators—a body of men left instead of one man—a body of men were endowed with this power when Joseph was taken, and the earth was not robbed of that Priesthood which God had sent His angels from heaven to restore once more to the children of men, and to act on the earth in the plenitude of its power. There was no more need, therefore, for angelic visitation to restore it. It was not taken back to God by the slaying of the Prophet and Patriarch, but remained with mortal man here on the earth. And, then, when the question arose as to who should lead Israel, notwithstanding Sidney Rigdon stood up in the congregation of the Saints and pleaded for the leadership of the people, the spirit and power of the Almighty descended upon the man whom God had chosen to hold the keys. In the midst of all Israel, in the face of the entire congregation of believers and unbelievers, God clothed His servant with such power and in such a manner that every man that had the least portion of the spirit of God, and every woman, knew by the manifestations of that spirit, and by the outpouring of the gift of God upon that man, that he was the chosen one, and that upon him rested the authority and the power and the gifts that had been borne by the Prophet Joseph during his lifetime. No more plainly was the power of God manifested in behalf of Elisha, after the taking away of Elijah, than it was manifested in behalf of President Brigham Young when the Prophet Joseph was taken from the earth, and from that day, while he lived on the earth until he died, the Lord magnified him in the eyes of the people and blessed those who listened to his counsel.

When he departed there was no contention, there was no strife as to who should be the leader. The men of God had learned by experience concerning the Priesthood and as to who should bear the keys. There was, therefore, no contention among the leaders nor among the people. There was no special necessity for any particular manifestation. But I appeal to you, my brethren and sisters, to-day in this conference assembled—has not God accompanied the President of His Church who succeeded Brigham Young—has He not accompanied him, has He not accompanied his acts, his counsels and his leadership of the people by every sign, by every blessing, by every gift, by every manifestation of power necessary to confirm in the hearts of Israel the truth that he is indeed the man whom God had designated, whom God had chosen, and whom God desired to lead His people Israel? I have no doubt of it, never had any. I knew it before anything was heard or anything was said. I knew it by the revelations of Almighty God to me, that God had chosen His servant John Taylor to preside over this Church; I know it to-day; I rejoice in this knowledge, and I rejoice that God still continues to manifest His power through His anointed one, and through the channel of the Holy Priesthood, having but one man at a time on the earth unto whom He gives the keys to preside over the Church, and to give revelations to the entire Church, as a church and as a people. He has chosen him from among the prophets, apostles, seers and revelators to bear the keys of the everlasting Priesthood upon the earth in the flesh, he having the power and authority to act for the entire people, and to receive the mind and will of God for the entire people. And thus God up the present time has confirmed His work by signs following: every man in his place, enjoying the spirit of God and the gifts of his office—the President of the Twelve in his office and in his calling; blessing the Apostles who act as the council of the Twelve; blessing the Presidents of Stakes with the spirit and power and gifts of that calling—blessing their counsels and filling them with the power

necessary to magnify the Priesthood to which they are called; blessing the Presiding Bishop and his Counselors; blessing the Bishops and their counselors; blessing the High Councils; blessing the Seventies, High Priests, Elders and Lesser Priesthood; every man in his place and station receiving his portion of the gifts and blessings and power of God according to his faith and diligence and his obedience to the commands of God, and also according to the office and position that he holds in the Priesthood of the Son of God.

God in His marvellous kindness and mercy has organized His Church in perfection, and has given to every man that bears a portion of the Holy Priesthood, if he will magnify the same, the gifts and graces necessary thereto; given to every woman and to every child who is faithful in the Church of God, the spirit that belongs to the position of each, according to the faith and necessities of each. And thus it is that heaven is moved on our behalf; thus it is that the power of God is manifested from time to time; thus it is that the people are led and guided as they are and as they have been from the beginning until the present time, and thus it will be until the end, until the Church shall be as a bride prepared for the coming of the bridegroom, for the coming of the Lord Jesus, who is our head, and who will preside over us and over the Church and Kingdom that will be organized upon the earth.

Oh, my brethren and sisters, God is not working in vain in our midst. He is not working in hidden places. He is not concealing His hand and His power. He is ready to bless every man in His Church who will magnify his office and calling. He is ready to bestow the gifts and qualifications of that office upon every man according to his diligence and faithfulness before Him. But the idle man, the slothful man, the man that shirks his responsibility, the man that avoids duty, the duty of a Deacon, Teacher, Priest, or Bishop, Elder, Seventy, High Priest, or an Apostle, or one of the First Presidency—every man that does this God will take from him His gifts and His blessings; He will withdraw them and give them to the faithful one. He will clothe His faithful servants with the power that belongs to the Priesthood in proportion to the diligence and faithfulness in seeking to magnify their calling and to live near unto their God. Mark this, and let it bear with weight upon your mind, for I tell you it is so. You may ordain a man to be an apostle, but if he does not seek to magnify that office and priesthood the gifts of it will not be with him as they would be with a man who does seek to magnify his calling; no matter how great his ability, the power of God will not accompany him unless he seeks for it, for God will be sought after and God will be pleased with for His gifts and graces and for revelation and knowledge; He will be sought after by His children, and then when He is sought after, He will bestow.

Now, when I speak about one who has a right to give revelations to the Church, I do not mean by that to say that others shall not receive revelation, for this is a day of revelation. We know the sentiment of Moses when Joshua became jealous of two of the Seventy Elders prophesying. The Seventy were gathered round about the tabernacle to receive the words of the Lord from Moses, when the Spirit rested upon them, as also upon two of the men who had remained in the camp. Joshua was jealous for the honor of his master, and asked Moses to forbid them prophesying. But, no, Moses replied: "Would God that all the Lord's people were Prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." He had no jealousy about prophecy. He desired that every man in the whole camp of Israel might have the spirit of prophecy, and he gave utterance to that beautiful, glorious expression which I have just quoted. So with the Elders of Israel to-day. Would to God all the Lord's people were Prophets. Would to God that every man in Israel had the spirit and power and gift of prophecy resting upon him. Would to God that every woman had the spirit of prophecy resting upon her, and every child. Would to God that all the hosts of Israel, those of the Church of God, had the Holy Ghost and its gifts resting in power upon them. There is no room for jealousy in regard to the possession of this gift in the breast of a servant of God. The only feeling that it ought to produce in the breast of a faithful man is one of thankfulness, one of thanksgiving to God that others share in this blessing, that others can partake of this power, that others have received of this glorious gift from our Father in Heaven. There is no room for jealousy, therefore, in such cases. Let every man press forward humbly and obediently in the path of exaltation, in the path that leads to God. Let every man press forward. He need not be afraid that any Latter-day Saint will impede his progress. Let every man speak and act and do as though he were a servant of God, as he is, as a son of God; let him do this and rejoice in it. At the same time let him be careful not to be lifted up in pride, not forgetting who he is, but obedient to constituted authority, that authority which God has placed in His Church, and, then, if he do not forget these things, there is nothing to prevent his onward progress. If he be an Elder, if he should have the gifts and power that an Apostle should have, who will be jealous? Certainly no servant of God. If he be a Deacon, and he has gifts from God, through faithfulness,