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REMARKS

Made at the General Conference on the afternoon of Monday, October 5, 1896, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

PRESIDENT WILFORD WOODRUFF.

I did not intend to occupy any more time in this conference, but there is a subject or two that I feel in duty bound to talk upon, and I hope the Saints will give me their prayers and faith, that I may be enabled to do my duty. In order to arrive at the principles and subject I wish to speak of, I feel disposed to deviate from my general course of testimony in some respects.

There are two powers on the earth and in the midst of the inhabitants of the earth—the power of God and the power of the devil. In our history we have had some very peculiar experiences. When God has had a people on the earth, it matters not in what age, Lucifer, the son of the morning, and the millions of fallen spirits that were cast out of heaven, have warred against God, against Christ, against the work of God, and against the people of God. And they are not backward in doing it in our day and generation. Whenever the Lord set His hand to perform any work, those powers labored to overthrow it. I have a little experience in this direction that I want to refer to. Many of you probably have read the history of the first proclamation of the Gospel in England, under the presidency of Heber C. Kimball, in 1837. Just previous to that I crossed Lake Ontario with a man by the name of Russell, from Canada into the United States. That man walked the steamer almost day and night, moaning and groaning. What was the matter? He had a class of spirits that stayed with him night and day, distressing him. What he had done that they had power over him I do not know. When a man does his duty and keeps the commandments of God, those spirits have no power over him, although he may be distressed in a measure from their operation. This man went to England, and those spirits went with him. He was with the Apostles there, and while they were holding a conference there he was so troubled with those spirits that Brother Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde and the brethren who were there laid hands upon him and cast those evil spirits out of him. When they left him they seized upon Brother Hyde, and he fell to the floor as though he had been knocked on the head with a club. Brother Kimball and the brethren immediately laid hands upon him, and the evil spirits left

him. They then fell upon Brother Kimball and tried to overcome him. But the vision of his mind was open and he saw them in the room. They gnashed their teeth at him; but did they overcome him? Brother Kimball held the Apostleship and he stood at the head of that Mission, and God gave him power over those spirits, and they were rebuked and left him. This was the beginning of their labors there. In 1840, when the Apostles were sent to England, we had a similar experience. The history of my travels in Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire is published and known to the Church. After laboring there some eight months, Brothers Heber C. Kimball and George A. Smith invited me to go to London. You all know what kind of men Brothers Kimball and Smith were. They had power and brought a great many into the Church. We three went into the City of London to undertake to open doors in that great city. The first man who opened his doors to receive us was a man by the name of Morgan. The very day we entered that house it was filled with evil spirits, who sought to destroy us. We felt their power day after day. They did not particularly injure us at that time, but we knew they were with us. The incident that I am going to refer to now occurred after Brother Kimball had returned to Manchester. Brother George A. Smith and myself were left there. We sat up one night till about 11 o'clock, talking about the Gospel of Christ, and then went to bed. The room in which we slept was small; there was about three and a half feet between our cots. Those spirits were gathered together in that room and sought to destroy us. They fell upon us with the determination to take our lives. The distress, the suffering and the horror that rested upon me I never experienced before nor since. While in this condition a spirit said to me, "Pray to the Lord." Well, a man in that kind of warfare, when he is choking almost to death, in a peculiar position to pray. Nevertheless I went to praying with all the power I had. I knew we would die unless God opened some door for our deliverance, because we were being choked to death, and I prayed the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, to preserve our lives. While I was praying, the door opened and three messengers entered, and the room was filled with light equal to the blazing light of the sun at mid-day. Those messengers were all dressed in the robes of immortal beings. Who they were I know not. They laid hands upon me and my companion, and rebuked those evil powers, and we were saved. From that hour to this day, not only our lives were saved, but those

powers were rebuked by the angels of God so that no Elder since has been tormented with them in London.

I name this because there is a principle in it. From the day that the Prophet Joseph Smith was called upon by the angel of God and the plates of the Book of Mormon given into his hands, these evil spirits labored for his death, and finally his blood was shed by the power of the devil. You know about that. It is before the heavens and the earth, and has got to be settled for. Those spirits are wherever the Saints of God are, and they will follow this up until He who holds the keys of death and hell binds that old serpent, sets a seal upon him, and shuts him up for a thousand years. These evil spirits are all around us. They follow every Elder of Israel at home and abroad. They tempt me; they tempt you, and will as long as we dwell in the flesh and they have their agency and power. Why? Because they know the Priesthood is here; they know the power of God is here; they know the authority is here to seal blessings upon the heads of the children of men, and to preach the Gospel to the nations of the earth, that they may be prepared for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowing this, if they can get any power over you and me they will exercise it.

There has been some talk here about myself, and my counselors, and the Twelve Apostles, and the position we hold as leaders of the people. I have been in the Apostleship for fifty seven years. I have been through all the apostasies in this Church, if I may be allowed to use that expression, from the day of the organization of the Twelve Apostles. On one occasion two Apostles came to me while I was in Kirtland, and told me that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet, and that they wanted to put another man in his place—Oliver Cowdery. They wanted to know what I would do about it. Said I, "Every man that lifts his hand against the Prophet of God will go to hell, unless he repents of his sins." Well, about half of them did repent; the others did not, and they lost their crown and glory, and other men have taken their places.

My brethren and sisters, there is something pressing upon my mind that I want to say. We have arrived at a point here with regard to circumstances that it is my duty to take up as the President of the Church. The First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles were never more united as a body than they are today. Our spirits are united. We believe together, we work together, we pray together; and we believe in each other, because we are all trying to do the will of God. This is the case with all of us, with one exception. That exception is