

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 6.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, JULY 25, 1896.

VOL. LIII.

DISCOURSE

Delivered at the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday, July 5th, 1896, by

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I will read a portion of the 42nd section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, commencing at the 40th paragraph.

[The speaker read paragraphs 40-54, 61-64, 78 to the end of the section; also paragraph 5 of section 41.]

I have read these extracts from a revelation that was given some ten months after the organization of the Church. I believe it is the second published revelation the Lord gave to the Church after the authorities of the Church had moved from New York to Kirtland, Ohio. It is a very interesting and instructive revelation from the Lord to the people called Latter-day Saints, and is a law by which the Church shall be governed. In my missionary labors I have often stated there is nothing the Lord has revealed to the Latter-day Saints through His servants to which the least exception can be taken by any man or woman who believes in Jesus Christ, or in the Bible, or in strict morality. Every word, every sentence contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants in the shape of commandment, has an elevating tendency. These commandments have an elevating effect upon all who receive them and put them in practice in their daily lives.

I was impressed by the prayer that was offered this afternoon by Brother W. W. Riter, in which he asked the Lord that He would help us to live up to the duties required of us and to rise above ourselves. We need to offer such prayers. We need to exercise this kind of faith. The Lord has laid upon us a great mission. Our religion is not a holiday religion; it is not a Sabbath day religion alone. Of course, we worship the Lord on the Sabbath day. We come together and we join in prayer and thanksgiving, and during the day we partake, in our ward meetings, of the sacrament, thereby witnessing unto our Father in Heaven that we remember our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and His death and sufferings for us. But the exercise of our religion is not confined to the Sabbath. Where it is lived as it should be, it is exercised every day of the week, and every hour of the day. It enters into every transaction of life, into all our dealings and associations with one another, and in the management of our family affairs. This is the religion that the Lord has revealed to us, and

that He requires us to practice. Our religion would be of very little value to us if it were confined to religious exercises on set days, such as the Sabbath. In fact, no religion can be of value to a human being that does not become an integral part of his life.

The Lord has been very kind to us as a people in giving us commandments direct in which He shows unto us the kind of life that He desires us to live. He holds up high standards for us to attain to; and in connection with these high standards He has made exceedingly great promises unto us. The history of the Latter-day Saints proves, too, that He has not only made these promises, but that He has thus far fulfilled them to the very letter. Those who have been faithful know for themselves that this has been the case. They have received individually the fulfillment of the promises which the Lord has made. The Church also, as an aggregation of men and women, has received the fulfillment of the promises which the Lord has made to the Church. This is a distinction that exists between us and probably every other denomination. I grant you that there are members of various denominations who may have the same faith and hopes concerning the Lord hearing and answering prayer that we have; but, speaking of denominations generally, they do not entertain or exercise the faith that we do—that God the Eternal Father hears the prayers of those who go to Him, and that He answers them directly, according to the faith that they exercise in Him and the necessity there may be for those prayers to be answered. In the world generally the feeling prevails that the Lord has ceased to interpose by any special providence in behalf of mankind; that the universe is governed by immutable and inflexible laws. In other words, many imagine that it is necessary, if God does interpose, that there should be a suspension of law, and this they consider unnatural and entirely wrong; hence they appear to believe that God has left mankind to themselves, and that the earth and the inhabitants thereof are subject to and governed by only those general laws which I have referred to. The feeling no doubt arises from the fact that all the religious teachers, with scarcely an exception, have been impressing upon the minds of men now for a great number of generations the idea that God has ceased to speak from the heavens, that He has withdrawn himself from men, that He no longer sends angels, that He no longer exerts miraculous power, that He no longer gives commandments and the gifts and graces that they had in ancient days—that all this has ceased, and that God has withdrawn himself, so to speak, from

the earth and the inhabitants of the earth. I have no doubt that this is the cause, to a very great extent at least, of the general unbelief that prevails concerning God not interposing by any special providence in favor of the children of men.

Now, the Latter-day Saints have been taught from the very beginning that it was their privilege as well as their duty to seek unto God and to obtain answers from Him. I suppose every missionary that has gone from our midst to preach the Gospel has endeavored to impress upon the minds of all with whom he has been brought in contact that it was the privilege of all who would listen to him to go to the Father, in the name of Jesus, and ask that they might have knowledge given to them concerning the doctrine that he (the missionary) taught. I have done it all through my life in my ministerial labors. I have endeavored to arouse within the minds of men the faith that God would listen to them, and that He would not only listen to them but would answer their prayers and tell them whether I was an impostor or a servant of His, and whether the doctrine that I taught was His doctrine or was of men. That has been one of the chief labors I have thought it my duty to perform in my ministry among the nations of the earth; for I knew that if I could only arouse within them a disposition to seek unto God and a faith that God would hear and answer them, my mission, so far as they were concerned, would be accomplished—I knew that if they were honest they would get a testimony from God concerning the doctrine that I taught and my right and authority to teach it.

In this respect we differ from every other religious organization that I know of upon the face of the earth. We do not appeal to antiquity. We do not appeal to an uninterrupted descent of the Priesthood to us. We do not appeal to ancient history to make a connection between our Church and something that has existed anterior to us. But we do appeal to the God of heaven. We say to the people, Go to Him, and obtain knowledge from Him, and then you will not be deceived; you will know then whether you are being taught false or true doctrine. The result of this has been that there have been gathered together in the various branches that have been organized throughout the nations of the earth people whose faith has been based upon a knowledge derived from God in answer to prayer. They have prayed to God earnestly, because in the most of instances it has been a very serious thing for them to espouse the doctrines that we have taught. The espousal of