PART 2 DESERET EVENING NEWS. 9 TO 12

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1896, SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.

# DISCOURSE

Delivered at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle Salt Lake City, Thursday, October 6th, 1896, by

## PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON.

(REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.)

Our Conference thus far has been one of exceeding interest to me, and I presume it has been to all who have shared in its proceedings. I do not know that I ever heard our brethren of the Twelve Apostles speak with greater power than they have during this Conference. I do not know that I ever felt more edified myself by the remarks which have been made; and I have felt very thankful for the measure of the Spirit of God that has rested down upon President Wilford Woodruff. He has been greatly blessed of the Lord in speaking to us. And so with President Lorenzo Snow. I have no doubt that the Latter-day Saints will go from this Conference instructed upon many points, and with their minds enlightened concerning many things that perhaps have been, to some extent, hidden from them. From the which I have heard, it is evident that a great many surmises have been indulged in, and perhaps ill-natured and unfounded reports made concerning the authorities of the Church over some of their recent actions. I was, therefore, exceedingly thankful that the Spirit of God rested upon President Woodruff and the other brethren to address the Conference upon the subject that they spoke upon. I believe it is the duty of the authorities of this Church to explain as far as possible the motives for their actions and for their expressions; for we are a united body, and that which interests one is called to load the Church interests all the members of the Church. Moreover, to have a perfect harmony, and to prevent the adversary from taking advantage, it is necessary that sometimes explanations be made which men naturally shrink from making, especially in public. This has been the case with the authorities of the Church; it has been so with President Woodruff and also with the rest of the brethren. Then again, the situation of things has been very peculiar, especially because of politics having received so much attention, and causing feelings among the people, and in some instances among the leading men, in consequence of this, the brethren have felt to hold their peace, and to say nothing about affairs that really needed ventilating. We have been reticent, because we felt that we were likely to be misunderstood, and to have misconceptions of our motives. For this reason we have permitted ourselves to be exposed to misunderstanding and censure, and, in some instances, condemnation. Of course, you can understand why the brethren should feel delicate. Anxiety for peace was the dominant feeling in their breasts.

But that which has transpired and the explanations that were made yesterday ought to be a solemn warning to Latter-day Saints to not be hasty in their conclusions, nor in their misunderstandings and censures, nor to say their condemnation of the men whom God has placed to preside over the Church. I believe that a great amount of sin has been committed on this point, that the Spirit of God has been grieved, and that darkness has come to many minds, because men and women have indulged in condemnation without understanding all the circumstances surrounding the case which was under discussion here yesterday. Only a few days ago a letter came to hand containing the most severe strictures concerning my conduct. It was written by a man who was formerly a President of a Seventy and a Sunday School superintendent. He expressed himself in a manner to lead to who read the letter to conclude that he gave voice to the feelings of a great many others also. This man said we should well-convicted of having violated a law of the Church, and he called upon us to repent and make amends for our conduct. Now, when a man who professes to have the cause of Zion and to respect the authorities of the Church will put his thoughts on paper in this form, and send them to us, it furnishes an index of how numerous and of what may not have as good opportunity even as he had to know the truth. It is very significant that such a letter should be written and sent. While it is only a little matter in itself, it is an indication of how hundreds of others may feel.

In the remarks that I make here I would like to bring this home to the minds of the members of this Church. There is one thing that the Lord has warned us about from the beginning, and that is, not to speak evil of the Lord's anointed. He has told us that anyone who of the Church who indulged in this is liable to incur the wrath of God and go into darkness. The Prophet Joseph said time and again that it was one of the first and strongest symptoms of apostacy. Have we not proved this? How are his words upon this subject been fulfilled to the very letter? No man can do this without incurring the displeasure of the Lord. It is a most strange, in this age of irreverence and unrestraint, to talk in this way. Nevertheless, this is the truth. God has chosen His servants. He claims it as His prerogative to condemn them, if they need condemnation. He has not given it to us individually to censure and condemn them. No man, however strong he may be in the faith, however high in the priesthood, can speak evil of the Lord's anointed and God bade with God's authority on the earth without incurring His displeasure. The Holy Ghost will withdraw itself from such a man, and he will go into darkness. This being the case, do you not see how important it is that we should be careful? How difficult it may be for us to understand the reasons for any action of the authorities of the Church, we should not too hastily call their acts in question and pronounce them wrong. Perhaps never since the days of the great apostasy in Kirtland has there been such a spirit to do this that I am speaking of as there has been of late years. Why, some of us have felt as though we scarcely dare go to conference in some places, we have heard such an arrangement of our business and such a condemnation of our actions. This is a strange thing to me, yet it is true, and many persons here know it is true.

We brethren of quorums ought to have the effect to make those persons who have indulged in these censorious remarks and in this condemnation feel so ashamed of themselves as to cause them, if they have any love for the truth and any desire to keep the commandments of God, to humble themselves in sackcloth and ashes and beseech the Lord to forgive them for the sin they have committed. For they have condemned innocent men. They have said that which is not true about the servants of God, and no man has the right to do this about anybody, much less about men who are set in place to do all they can for the work of God. If these men and women do not repent, they are likely to apostatize.

I had a daughter in this congregation yesterday, and she overheard one sister remark to another, "Why, I thought it was only one or two in the First Presidency that had these feelings, and that this was some personal difficulty with one of them. Why, it is the whole of the Twelve as well." It is not confined to one or two of the First Presidency, or to the three, but it is also the Twelve."

This shows the ignorance that has prevailed concerning the situation of affairs, and it shows how we have been exposed to these unjust and cruel remarks. It has seemed as though many of our people have taken their inspiration and their views concerning the transactions of the authorities of the Church from articles in the newspapers, the writers of which have no more about that which was going on than an entire stranger.

I speak in this strain to impress upon you, if possible, the folly of indulging in a spirit of this kind, and dictating as though it was somebody else's delight. God has spoken so plainly to us concerning the many influences that are abroad that we ought to have a clear understanding concerning them. President Woodruff yesterday dwelt upon the many evil influences that have prevailed among the world. We have known good men and women, sincerely desirous of doing right, who have been brought into subjection to these evil influences, and they have not known it themselves, because they had not discernment enough to distinguish between the true and the false. It is the case with a great many Latter-day Saints. Yet there is this about the Latter-day Saints: they do know the voice of the true shepherd; they are able to distinguish between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. There is a great deal of the spirit of discernment in this people, and they are a hard people to deceive; but they do get deceived occasionally. Cunning men endeed and deceive them, and wicked spirits get possession of them. The spirit of falsehood is abroad, and it frequently attributes to the best of men conduct that is vile and false. It did it to the Lord Jesus Christ; it did it to the Prophet Joseph Smith; it did it to all the prophets that have lived. The aim is to destroy them, and what better way can you get to accomplish this operation that will destroy a man than to blacken his character and tell lies enough to make him appear as a devil incarnate? That is what Satan tries to do. These have been his tactics from the very beginning. He would make out the servants of God to be devils in human form. And he will decieve, if possible, the very elect by his lies and misrepresentations. The only thing for men of God to do is to trust in Him. You cannot meet these falsehoods. They are manufactured faster than they can be exposed. No man can defend himself against this. His protestations amount to nothing, because they are not believed.

In my early life, in publishing, I was always on hand to combat every lie that was published against me. I thought it my duty to do it, and I do not know but it was. My mission was to publish the truth and to oppose falsehood. But as I grew older, there was such a volume of lies that I found it hopeless to reply to them. I have not done so for years, except in one instance, and then I did it at the request of my brethren. If Satan lets loose a stream of falsehood, it is useless for a man to attempt to stem it; you may as well let it flow on. It is reserved for vindication to the Lord. And so with us as a people. We have been lied about until there is no crime we are charged with that we have not been accused of. But we are outliving them, and we will leave them behind. The adversary, however, still lives. He still continues to use his tools and his agents who are willing to propagate them; and he finds them among the Latter-day Saints, too. I have heard the most abominable falsehoods told about the First Presidency of the Church by those who call themselves Latter-day Saints. What will be the result of this? If these people do not repent, they will lose the Spirit of God, if they have not lost it already; they will go into darkness, and will lose their standing in the Church. When a man loses the Spirit of God, the fact that he has been in the Church is severed; and he wonders what is the matter. He never could have thought as he once did concerning it.

My brethren and sisters, I would like to impress you this afternoon with the importance of retaining the Spirit of God, and not allowing other spirits to take possession of you. You should love so that the Spirit of God will reign within you, and that when an evil spirit seeks to take possession of you, you will feel it so sensibly and it will make such an impression upon you as the disturbing of a smooth pond of water. Our minds should be in such an unruffled condition and so free from any disturbing influence that when anything comes to us in the form of the Lord we will be enter into us we will realize it as quickly as does the point of water when it is disturbed. When anything comes along, that is of a light, we will not stop to question ourselves. We should not allow a wrong spirit into our hearts, nor think evil of anyone. There is too much of it in the world—falling into evil men and women, and women into character them, in nine cases out of ten we find they are not true. There may have been element of truth in them; but truth can be distorted into a falsehood. We as a people should seek, above all people, to love the truth.

The authorities of the Church have known concerning this that was spoken of yesterday, and we have been satisfied as to the course that would have to be taken unless there was a change. But we did not want to expose this matter to the public, and to weaken the confidence of the people. We are willing to exercise their faith. But it is necessary that something should be said to the Church, that the people may not go on building in strange influences and indulging in remarks and feelings contrary to the spirit of the Lord.

Now, I ask you, if any of you have indulged in this spirit of condemnation and censure, to repent with all your hearts, and ask the Lord to forgive you. Where you have said wrong things publicly, go and retract them. If you have spoken evil about your neighbors, go and confess it to them and ask their forgiveness. Apply the principles of the Gospel to your every day lives. Let not that which is not true about the servants of God, and no man has the right to do this about anybody, much less about men who are set in place to do all they can for the work of God. If these men and women do not repent, they are likely to apostatize.

I felt a daughter in this congregation yesterday, and she overheard one sister remark to another, "Why, I thought it was only one or two in the First Presidency that had these feelings, and that this was some personal difficulty with one of them. Why, it is the whole of the Twelve as well." It is not confined to one or two of the First Presidency, or to the three, but it is also the Twelve."

This shows the ignorance that has prevailed concerning the situation of affairs, and it shows how we have been exposed to these unjust and cruel remarks. It has seemed as though many of our people have taken their inspiration and their views concerning the transactions of the authorities of the Church from articles in the newspapers, the writers of which knew no more about that which was going on than an entire stranger.

I speak in this strain to impress upon you, if possible, the folly of indulging in a spirit of this kind, and dictating as though it was somebody else's delight. God has spoken so plainly to us concerning the many influences that are abroad that we ought to have a clear understanding concerning them. President Woodruff yesterday dwelt upon the many evil influences that have prevailed among the world. We have known good men and women, sincerely desirous of doing right, who have been brought into subjection to these evil influences, and they have not known it themselves, because they had not discernment enough to distinguish between the true and the false. It is the case with a great many Latter-day Saints. Yet there is this about the Latter-day Saints: they do know the voice of the true shepherd; they are able to distinguish between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. There is a great deal of the spirit of discernment in this people, and they are a hard people to deceive; but they do get deceived occasionally. Cunning men endeed and deceive them, and wicked spirits get possession of them. The spirit of falsehood is abroad, and it frequently attributes to the best of men conduct that is vile and false. It did it to the Lord Jesus Christ; it did it to the Prophet Joseph Smith; it did it to all the prophets that have lived. The aim is to destroy them, and what better way can you get to accomplish this operation that will destroy a man than to blacken his character and tell lies enough to make him appear as a devil incarnate? That is what Satan tries to do. These have been his tactics from the very beginning. He would make out the servants of God to be devils in human form. And he will decieve, if possible, the very elect by his lies and misrepresentations. The only thing for men of God to do is to trust in Him. You cannot meet these falsehoods. They are manufactured faster than they can be exposed. No man can defend himself against this. His protestations amount to nothing, because they are not believed.

In my early life, in publishing, I was always on hand to combat every lie that was published against me. I thought it my duty to do it, and I do not know but it was. My mission was to publish the truth and to oppose falsehood. But as I grew older, there was such a volume of lies that I found it hopeless to reply to them. I have not done so for years, except in one instance, and then I did it at the request of my brethren. If Satan lets loose a stream of falsehood, it is useless for a man to attempt to stem it; you may as well let it flow on. It is reserved for vindication to the Lord. And so with us as a people. We have been lied about until there is no crime we are charged with that we have not been accused of. But we are outliving them, and we will leave them behind. The adversary, however, still lives. He still continues to use his tools and his agents who are willing to propagate them; and he finds them among the Latter-day Saints, too. I have heard the most abominable falsehoods told about the First Presidency of the Church by those who call themselves Latter-day Saints. What will be the result of this? If these people do not repent, they will lose the Spirit of God, if they have not lost it already; they will go into darkness, and will lose their standing in the Church. When a man loses the Spirit of God, the fact that he has been in the Church is severed; and he wonders what is the matter. He never could have thought as he once did concerning it.

My brethren and sisters, I would like to impress you this afternoon with the importance of retaining the Spirit of God, and not allowing other spirits to take possession of you. You should love so that the Spirit of God will reign within you, and that when an evil spirit seeks to take possession of you, you will feel it so sensibly and it will make such an impression upon you as the disturbing of a smooth pond of water. Our minds should be in such an unruffled condition and so free from any disturbing influence that when anything comes to us in the form of the Lord we will