

## DISCOURSE

BY

PRESIDENT GEO. Q. CANNON.

DELIVERED

In the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City,  
Sunday Afternoon, May 27, 1883.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

It is some weeks since I have had the opportunity of meeting with the Saints in this Tabernacle. Our time has been spent in visiting the various settlements north and south, and has been spent most agreeably in holding quarterly conferences. A great change has been effected in our Territory within the past few years in furnishing facilities for traveling to and fro and visiting the settlements which were once quite remote from this city. I have no doubt that these visits are appreciated by the people who are visited. They certainly are by those who make the visits. The growth and the development of the people, their increase in the knowledge of those principles that pertain to salvation as well as to this earthly existence, is so apparent that it is exceedingly gratifying to witness it. The Lord is very visibly working out His great designs and purposes in connection with this work with which we are identified. Every one who is connected with the work and who realizes its character does seek, as I believe by observation, more diligently to comprehend the nature of the duties and responsibilities which rest upon him or her. The various organizations in the shape of Primary Associations, of Sunday Schools, of Mutual Improvement Associations, of Relief Societies, as well as the meetings of the various quorums of the Priesthood, are all having a very marked effect, as I can observe myself, upon the people. I probably am in a better position than many to judge of the effect of these organizations; for the reason that it has not been my privilege to visit the settlements of late years so extensively as some of my brethren. I notice a great increase of zeal, of devotion, and above all, of knowledge concerning the work of the Lord and the labors connected therewith. And I am thankful that this is so, for certainly with the increase of the facilities to which I have referred in our Territory, there has been a corresponding increase of evils which have to be contended with and overcome, and knowledge and understanding and wisdom are necessary on the part of the Latter-day Saints to enable them to cope successfully with these evils. In our former condition of isolation it was not a matter of such great moment for the people to be trained as they now are. They were not exposed to the influences of an adverse and hostile character like they are to-day. With the change in circumstances there has come a corresponding change, it may be said, in strictness of organization, and, as I have remarked, I am happy to say a corresponding increase of knowledge. We have many things to cope with at the present time, which those who resided here 25 years ago knew little or nothing about. And it is an excellent feature of this system which God has established, that it is so admirably adapted to all the circumstances which may surround the children of men. God bestows wisdom according to the occasion and to the necessities of the case, and He gives strength and power to those who seek after them in the right spirit. He has done so from the beginning and He will do so until the end.

When the Elders of this Church have gone forth and preached the Gospel, calling upon the inhabitants of the earth to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and repent of their sins and to be baptized for the remission of them, those who submitted to these requirements received the strength and the grace necessary to enable them to contend with the difficulties which immediately surrounded them. God poured out His spirit upon them. God gave unto them a testimony concerning the truth of the work with which they had identified themselves. He gave unto them the strength necessary to overcome all the obstacles which laid in their pathway, and they were filled with joy and peace, and from that day until the present the man or the woman who has thus bowed in submission to the requirements of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has been sustained, upheld,

strengthened and delivered. The strength and the grace, the gifts and the blessings which God has promised have been abundantly bestowed and have made the individual who has received them equal to every emergency. And that which is true concerning individuals is true concerning this entire people in their collective capacity. As difficulties have increased, as obstacles have had to be overcome, and the condition of affairs has changed and seemingly grown more threatening, they have had strength and grace and power given unto them commensurate with the trials they have had to meet. And God's hand has thus been manifested in the most wonderful manner in the eyes of those who believe and who have had faith, and they have had causes for thanksgiving and praise to God every day that they have lived.

Now, the whole work from its inception until the present time is a marvel and a wonder. It may be termed phenomenal in the earth. It is unlike anything else that we know of. It differs from every other system that is extant among men. There are features connected with it which cannot be witnessed anywhere else. Human nature exhibits itself, it may be said, in new forms. Characteristics are developed in connection with this work which may truly be said to be unique. You cannot witness their exhibition among any other people, nor in any other land. And it is a remarkable thing that though the Latter-day Saints number so few, comparatively speaking, there is no topic to-day that can be broached in the hearing of any of the people of Christendom that excites the interest that "Mormonism" does. And yet if you ask men the reason of this it would be difficult for them to account for it. They only know that the fact exists; that to them and to the world at large it is a topic of unflagging interest. The "Mormons" are looked upon as a peculiar people. Let a "Mormon" travel anywhere in the United States or in Europe or in other lands, and it be known that he is a "Mormon," he will attract more attention than any other man. Why is this? Is it because the people are so numerous? Is it because they are so wealthy? Is it because they exercise such political power? Is it because they wield such influence in the affairs of the children of men? No, it cannot be said that any of these causes exist to any extent. The "Mormons" are not a numerous people. The "Mormons" are not a wealthy people. The "Mormons" do not wield political influence to any extent, nor influence of any other character outside of their own society. What, then, is it that constitutes this, I may say, attractiveness or this interest in men's minds concerning this organization? "Oh," says one, "it is because you marry more wives than one. You believe in plural marriage, and that excites interest and causes talk and attracts attention; it is that that makes you so noticeable."

Perhaps so. But it is not many years since we did not believe in this, since it was not a practice of this Church, and yet in those days a "Mormon" was as much an object of curiosity as he is to-day—that is, in proportion to the celebrity that attended the name. "Mormonism" was as much talked about according to the extent it was known as it is to-day. It excited as much curiosity. It aroused as much hatred. It called forth as much persecution, in fact, the most severe persecution that, as a people, we have ever endured we received prior to the announcement by our Church that we believed in this peculiar doctrine. I have no doubt that our espousal and advocacy of this doctrine has given us considerable notoriety. It has added to our celebrity. But our celebrity has not consisted alone in this. As I have remarked, our organization aroused as deep antipathies prior to the revelation of this doctrine as it has ever done since.

Now, we have our own method of accounting for this great interest that is taken in this work. It is admitted too freely for the truth that we are an illiterate people. It is said that we are under the control of impostors, shrewd men, who lead the masses and bend them to their will. This is said concerning us everywhere. To account for the ingathering of the people from the nations of the earth men have recourse to many theories, or to several at least, one of which is that our Elders go out to the ignorant and unlearned and the down-trodden and depict in glowing colors the

beauties of this land of ours and the blessings that they will receive if they will only gather here; and that by these glowing tales and by persuading them that they can have all the wives they want when they come here, they induce the ignorant hordes of Europe to come to this country. This is one of the popular methods of accounting for the ingathering of the people from the nations of the earth, and their adhesion to the "Mormon" cause.

Well, now, if this were true, I would consider it one of the greatest miracles ever wrought among men; for this reason, that people influenced by such notions could not be held together in a land like this. It would be an impossibility to bind people together in such bonds as exist among the Latter-day Saints in Utah Territory if they were people of this character. They would fall to pieces by their own corruptions. There would not be any cementing influence among them to hold them together one month if there were the influences which drew them here. But no observing man or woman who travels through this Territory and mingles with the people can be deceived by any such nonsense as this. They would see in a few days that there was some other influence, that there was some other power, that there was a principle of union among this people that could not originate in such a system as "Mormonism" is popularly represented.

What, then, is it that causes the Latter-day Saints to be so much noticed? What is it that has drawn them together from the various nations of the earth and produced this phenomenal condition of affairs that we witness here? Is it the shrewdness of men? Is it the power and authority of men? Then for God's sake and for the sake of suffering humanity let some men band themselves together and do, in the name of God and true religion, that which the Latter-day Saints are accused of doing in the name of imposture and false religion. Here is an opportunity for Christendom to test this matter. They have learning, they have wealth, they have ever, thing at their back—the popular sects, who claim to be orthodox and to worship God according to the Bible and to divine truth, have all these—if they can do, in the name of God and true religion, that which we are doing, as they say, in the name of a false religion and as impostors, let them go to work, unite themselves together, and accomplish something like this for the sake of suffering humanity. The Latter-day Saints are gathered from the nations of the earth—the poor, the unlearned, the ignorant. Our Elders preached the Gospel to them as they understood it, and under its influence and by its influence they are successful in gathering out a few. This Territory is being peopled by them. They are being taught how to live, how to better their earthly condition, how to improve their minds, how to acquire sound education and sound knowledge; they are being taught to live in love, in peace, to avoid litigation, to avoid strife, to avoid contention, to avoid everything of this character, and to love one another. How successful we are in this let those who travel through the Territory bear testimony. If we had our way there would be no drinking saloons from Franklin in the north to St. George in the south. If the courts would let us have our way we would banish drunkenness from our land, or rather we would keep it from our land as we did in the beginning, for there was a time when there was nothing of the kind to be witnessed. But, unfortunately for us, it seems, some of our charters were defective. We found we did not have the power that we thought we had. The courts ruled against us, against the exercise of such power as we wielded, and we were compelled to let down the bars. Hence in Ogden, in Salt Lake City, and perhaps in some other few places, there are drinking saloons. But if we had our way, as Latter-day Saints there would be no drinking saloons, there would be no houses of ill fame, there would be no gambling saloons, there would be nothing of this character permitted in our cities or in our settlements. We would not only be free from litigation and strife, as I have said we are as a people, but we would be free from those other evils, those other vices.

Now, we know very well that according to the word of God as it has come down to us in this sacred volume [the Bible] union and love were two of the great characteristics that attended the preaching of the Gos-

pel of Jesus Christ. "By this," says one of the Apostles, "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Jesus taught His disciples to be one. He prayed to the Father that they might be one as He and the Father were one, and not only that they might be one, but that those who should believe in their words might be one also. That prayer of the Savior was answered upon His disciples. They were distinguished everywhere for their oneness and for their love, and wherever they went preaching the Gospel that Jesus committed unto them, those who obeyed their teaching and submitted to the ordinances which they administered received the same spirit.

Now, it is a remarkable feature of this organization called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that the same effects follow the proclamation of its principles; not in one land, but in every land where it has been carried by the Elders of this Church.

When Joseph Smith in his youth had revealed to him that God was about to restore the old Gospel in its ancient power and simplicity, and accompanied by its ancient gifts, and was told that the authority to administer its ordinances should also be restored, it seemed, I suppose, to look at it naturally at that time, as though it would be an impossible thing to accomplish. The earth was full of religion, so called. There were any number of men professing to be followers of Jesus Christ, any number of men professing to be His ministers, professing to have the power and authority to administer the ordinances of His Church, until men were actually confused and distracted in their thoughts—and especially when they came to select the form of doctrine that they wanted to espouse—by the multiplicity of sects, each one claiming to be the true church of Christ. But Joseph Smith was told that this would be the effect when God would reveal His Gospel. It was foreshadowed to him in the plainest possible manner that which we now behold. The effect of the preaching of the true Gospel would be that persecution would be aroused. He was shown the hatred he would have to contend with, and all the adverse influences that have had to be overcome from that day until the present. Joseph Smith was told that there was no authority upon the face of the earth to administer the ordinances of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He was told that there was no church which God recognized as His own, while there were many that had parts of the truth, portions of the Gospel. There was no church which God acknowledged amid the multiplicity of sects as His. He was told to wait until the Lord should give the power, until the Lord should communicate the authority. Now, though he had received this communication from heavenly messengers, Joseph Smith did not presume to take one step towards organizing a church because of the fact that he had received communications of this character. According to popular ideas, if a man had received a communication of this kind from heaven it would have been sufficient justification to him to have gone to work and organized a church. But he did not do this. He waited, and a heavenly messenger, as he testifies, came and laid his hands upon his head and ordained him to the authority that was necessary for man to hold in order to baptize his fellow men in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. When he received that authority he commenced to baptize, and not till then. But there was still a power lacking. The Apostles had a power beyond that which John the Baptist exercised. John said "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire"—referring to the Savior. And when He came He came in the authority of the Melchisedec Priesthood, as it is termed. John held merely the authority to baptize for remission of sins. But he could not lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. And when, on one occasion after the death of the Savior, Philip went and preached the Gospel to Samaria, and people were converted and baptized, he did baptize them, but he did not lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. He did not have, apparently, the authority to do so. But when the Apostles heard that people in Samaria had received the Gospel, they sent unto them

Peter and John, who, when they came, laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost. In like manner Joseph Smith received the authority by divine or heavenly administration to baptize men for the remission of their sins, but he had not then the authority to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. He afterwards did receive it, as he testifies, through the administration of the three Apostles, who presided over the Twelve in the days that they lived upon the earth, namely, Peter, James and John; they came to him and laid their hands upon him and ordained him to the Apostleship, the same authority that they themselves bore, and authorized him to go forth and to build up the Church of Christ. It was built up in the ancient way and then having baptized people, he commenced to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost.

"But," says one, "I do not believe in the administration of angels. I think that angels have ceased to come. While I believe that angels are the servants of God, I do not believe that they have ceased to administer, and when I hear people say that they have not, it always creates in my mind a feeling of disgust, and I think anybody who is in possession of his senses should not believe in the administration of angels in these days."

Perhaps so. But suppose that statement that Joseph Smith made to him showing that there was no church recognized as His and who in His acknowledged—suppose these were true, and that from the Catholic Church down to the last church that was organized there was no church that held the authority of its primitive power and purity—pose this were so, how in the world can the authority be restored unto heavenly messengers as coming from heaven? If the power, the authority, power, the gifts of the Priesthood were taken from the earth and taken back to heaven, how can man ever receive it again unless some beings from the heavenly world come and restore to man again? You can readily see that if you grant one proposition, the other must necessarily follow. There must be divine communication from heaven or the authority could not be restored. But how shall we know that it is restored—by what signs? What are the evidences by which we can judge of the restoration of this divine power?

Joseph Smith went forth and ordained other men to the Gospel, gave them the authority, and they being commanded of God to impart this authority to others, were suitable, on the same principle that Moses imparted the authority to Aaron, "being called of God," was Aaron. And they went forth and called upon the people to believe in Jesus and to repent of their sins and to be baptized for the remission of them, and they promised that if they would believe in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins and be baptized in His name for a remission of them, they should receive the Holy Ghost, and it should produce the same effects upon them in many days that it did upon those who received it anciently. Now, here was a promise that no man then knew anything about was authorized to give aside from him. In the churches of which we have knowledge, there has yet to be had the promise made by one of the Apostles to the humble believer who submits to its ordinances, that he shall receive the Holy Ghost, that they did in ancient days, with accompanying gifts and blessings and powers. But Joseph Smith made this promise. The world and the opportunity of testing it, I repeat did not receive the Holy Ghost, then he was an impostor. If he did receive it, then his promise was sealed by the power of God. It was indisputable. The best possible means was given to the world of testing his claims and his statements. He was either an impostor, trying to deceive the people, or he was a man of God, for if he was not supposed that heaven would lend itself to an imposture, or that heaven would aid in any manner in fostering a deception. But when ever the Elders of this Church have gone preaching this Gospel, and have laid upon the people these things, there have been men and women who have come forward and submitted to the ordinances which they administered, and who testified in the name of Jesus Christ, that they did receive the promised blessings; and they have gathered