

DISCOURSE

BY

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REPORTED BY GEO. F. GIBBS.

THERE is a sentence in the Book of Mormon, (p. 510) that has come to my mind, which I will read, "And whose receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these." This passage from the Book of Mormon is one that I do not remember having chosen as a foundation of any special remarks. It is one that applies directly to the present generation—the people that should live on the earth at the time that the Lord our God should bring forth this record, and affording them the opportunity of reading its contents. They were written by the prophet Moroni, who was the only man left of his nation—the Nephites, who were righteous; his nation having been destroyed a few years before he penned this sentence. It is true a few of his nation had deserted and gone over and joined the opposite nation—the Lamanites, and a few had fled at the general destruction; but they were hunted by the Lamanites, and were destroyed as a people. Moroni, being a prophet of God, would not join that nation in their wickedness and idolatry, and the only way he could preserve his life was to keep himself secreted and hidden from the knowledge of the Lamanites. While concealing himself from his enemies, he finished the record of the Book of Mormon. The latest date which he gives in the record is 420 years after the birth of Christ, according to the signs that were given on this American continent, concerning his birth. Thirty-six years prior to this time his nation was destroyed in what we term the State of New York, around about a hill, called by that people the Hill of Cumorah, when many hundreds of thousands of the Nephites—men, women and children, fell, during the greatest battle that they had had with the Lamanites. For 36 years this prophet of God kept himself hid, and wrote as he was prompted by the spirit of inspiration, and finally hid up the plates of gold, containing the records in the hill of Cumorah, with the promise which the Lord gave him, that these records should come to light in the last days, that He himself would bring them forth by his own wisdom and power. And he also tells us his object, namely, to benefit the Gentiles who should occupy this American continent—the Promised Land, as they term it; and also for the benefit of other nations of Gentiles to whom the book should afterwards be sent; and when they should reject it, the Lord would cause it to be published to the remnants of the Lamanites inhabiting this country, whom we call American Indians, which shall be the means of revealing to them the history of their forefathers, and also certain promises made to them as a branch of the house of Israel, setting forth that many of their descendants should believe the record when it should be made known to them, and that they should be instructed in the things of God, and that the curse, which has degenerated them to their present low condition, should be removed, and that they should lay down their weapons of war, and that they should cease to war and commit murders, and theft and robberies, and that they should become a peaceable, and also a white and delightsome people. These are the predictions given in the Book of Mormon as some of the objects of the bringing forth of that record in the last days. And among other objects that the Lord had in view was, that he might enlighten the minds of the people in regard to the gospel in all its plainness and fulness, with all its promises, blessings, gifts and ordinances; so that the people, the Gentiles, to whom this record should be sent, might have no excuse for rejecting it, and also that the gospel might be established in the earth in its purity, according to ancient prophecies. Another object was, that he might build up his church among the Gentiles if they should believe in this record and in the preaching of his servants when they should

be sent forth in the last days among them, testifying to its truthfulness. In speaking of this work which the Lord is doing in the earth, we sometimes call it the Church of God, and we also speak of it as the kingdom of God. It is both, God himself being the king; not a civil power, not a civil government in the earth, for we already have established here upon this choice land a government wherein all classes of religious people may worship God, as they please; but the Lord intended that among these various religions and ecclesiastic denominations, to have a peculiar denomination, a peculiar people, a peculiar church, which he denominates his kingdom, and himself as the great Lawgiver in this kingdom. Another object was that men might have more faith than what they had been in possession of in the former generations, of apostasy and wickedness, and that the faith which the ancient saints exercised might again dwell in the hearts of the children of men. For instance, a power of faith, through our repentance and through our obedience to the ordinances of baptism, to receive that greater and miraculous baptism of the Holy Ghost. And that this gift, this baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, which should be given to all the members of the Church of God, should put them in possession of certain gifts, which no other people on the face of the whole earth should have or know anything about, providing the members of the church were worthy to possess them. I will name, in short, the various gifts that the Lord intended to be given to this people. In the latter days, when this record should be brought forth, he intended, in the first place, to raise up a great and mighty prophet, to translate the divine Book. This was fulfilled before the rise of the Church—about 50 years ago. This prophet who was raised up to perform this work was permitted to take these records out of the hill where Moroni had deposited them some 420 years after Christ. This prophet was spoken of in the records, and the work that he should perform was also spoken of. And notwithstanding his youth and inexperience in regard to the learning and wisdom of the world, he proved himself a great and mighty man of God; he not only was the instrument in the hands of God of bringing to light the Book of Mormon, but also received numerous other revelations which are contained in this book called the Doctrine and Covenants, a book that contains nearly as much reading matter as the Book of Mormon; and besides these you will find that many of the revelations were given by him which are found in what is called the new edition of the Pearl of Great Price, published by the Deseret News Office, which give a knowledge of things that took place in the creation much more fully than what is described in the book of Genesis, giving an account of a great many occurrences and events that transpired before the flood, also giving us much information of the gospel that was taught in those early ages, and giving us some very important prophecies, reaching down to the present period of the world, and also prophecies that reach down still further, from the present day to the end of the world. These are not the only revelations given through this great modern prophet. The Lord brought to light sacred records from the Catacombs of Egypt. After several hundred men had wrought and toiled for many months in digging down one of these vast structures, they entered into its interior; they found a great number of mummies—the bodies of persons that had been preserved since the catacomb was built, and some eleven of these mummies, well preserved, were taken out by these men, and they finally fell into the hands of a person named M. H. Chandler. They were sent from Egypt to Ireland, where it was supposed he resided, but learning that he resided in America, they were sent to him. After receiving the mummies he began to take off some of the ancient covering or wrapping, and to his astonishment he found upon the breast of one of these mummies a record written upon ancient papyrus in plain characters, written both in black and red inks, or stains, or colors. And the mummies and the records were exhibited by Mr. Chandler in New York, Philadelphia, and many of the eastern states of our Union; and

thousands of people saw them, and among them many learned men; and these characters were presented to them, and not unfrequently was Mr. Chandler referred to "Joe" Smith, as they used to term him, who they said, pretended to have translated some records that he found in the western part of New York, and that if Mr. Chandler would go and see him perhaps he would translate those ancient characters. Many of these references were made with the intention of ridiculing Mr. Smith; but it so happened that in traveling through the country, he visited Kirtland, Ohio, where the Prophet Joseph Smith resided, bringing the mummies and the ancient papyrus writings with him. Mr. C. had also obtained from learned men the best translation he could of some few characters, which however, was not a translation, but more in the shape of their ideas with regard to it, their acquaintance with the language not being sufficient to enable them to translate it literally. After some conversation with the Prophet Joseph, Mr. Chandler presented to him the ancient characters, asking him if he could translate them. The prophet took them and repaired to his room and inquired of the Lord concerning them. The Lord told him they were sacred records, containing the inspired writings of Abraham when he was in Egypt, and also those of Joseph, while he was in Egypt; and that they had been deposited, with these mummies, which had been exhumed. And he also enquired of the Lord concerning some few characters which Mr. Chandler gave him by way of a test, to see if he could translate them. The Prophet Joseph translated these characters and returned them, with the translation to Mr. Chandler; and who, in comparing it with the translation of the same few characters by learned men, that he had before obtained, found the two to agree. The prophet Joseph having learned the value of these ancient writings was very anxious to obtain them, and expressed himself wishful to purchase them. But Mr. Chandler told him that he would not sell the writings unless he could sell the mummies, for it would detract from the curiosity of his exhibition. Mr. Smith inquired of him the price, which was a considerable sum, and finally purchased the mummies and the writings, all of which he retained in his possession for many years; and they were seen by all the Church that saw proper to visit the house of the Prophet Joseph, and also by hundreds of strangers.

The prophet translated the part of these writings which, as I have said, are contained in the Pearl of Great Price, and known as the Book of Abraham. Thus you see one of the first gifts bestowed by the Lord for the benefit of his people, was that of revelation—the gift to translate, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, the gift of bringing to light old and ancient records. Have any of the other denominations got this gift among them? Go and enquire through all of Christendom and do not miss one denomination. Go and ask the oldest Christian associations that are extant; go to Italy, headquarters, and ask the man that holds the greatest power and authority in the Romish Church, "Can you translate ancient records written in a language that is lost to the knowledge of man?" "No," he would say, "we cannot, it is out of my power to do it." Go to Russia inquire of the heads of the church of the Greek Catholics, if they can do this; and they will give you, substantially, the same answer. Then try the later, the present day denominations, inquire of every one of them, beginning with the Lutherans, and the Calvinists, and the Church of England, and then put the same question to all of the branches that have sprung from them, as well as to those that have come into existence by other means; and the universal reply of the Christian denominations, numbering some 400,000,000, would be that they have not the power to do it. Ask them if they pretend to possess supernatural power from God, to accomplish a work of this nature; and they will all tell you that God has never bestowed such power upon any of their ministers. And then, if it were possible, ask the 400,000,000 millions of Christians, scattered throughout Asia, Europe, America, and the islands of the seas, if a man can be found among them endowed, as ancient seers were, with the gift to see, or

as ancient revelators were who told future events, what should befall men and nations and their final destiny; and the universal reply will be, O, no, such things are all done away. Here then the very first gift that the Lord set in his church, is a peculiar gift so far as the religions of the world are concerned, not peculiar so far as the Church of Christ is concerned, but so far as the religious world in the four quarters of the earth is concerned, we have something which they have not got, and something that is in accordance with the Bible. What man, I would ask further, among all the religions of the earth, for the last seventeen centuries, that has possessed the Urim and Thummim, the gift that would constitute him a seer and a revelator? There may have been some seventeen thousand million of people that have passed off from our globe without such gifts being among them; and they were gifts given to the people of God before the advent of the Savior, and that were enjoyed by his servants that lived contemporary with him and with those who lived after he had performed his mission to the earth, and ascended to heaven. Then, in speaking to strangers, I would say, you must give us credit of at least professing to have these great and important gifts, gifts which all the other religions of the world do not even profess to be in possession of. Let me candidly enquire, which is the most pleasing in the sight of God, for people to obtain the great and precious things which come through the operation of the Holy Ghost? or for people to have no information, no instruction for some seventeen hundred years, only what they could glean out of the writings of some of the ancient seers, or prophets, or revelators, or apostles, who have lived and who have died centuries ago? Perhaps strangers might claim that they have the writings of those favored men of God, and that they need no more, and that all the generations of men since the days that such men of God fell asleep needed no further instruction than that which was given to former-day Saints. The strangers present will readily concede this to be the sentiment, the belief and testimony of all, or nearly all the religious people upon the face of the whole earth. You also know if you have read the history of Christendom for seven centuries past, that their belief and testimony, in this respect have been similar to those entertained by Christianity of to-day. Now, I ask again, which is the more Godlike, which is the more in accordance with the Bible, for a people to enjoy the same gifts that were enjoyed by the people of God in earlier dispensations, or to be obliged to depend upon some one else's gift who has long ago passed away? Now, any consistent religious man will give his testimony on religious affairs independent of the traditions of his fathers, and would say in his own mind, it is more consistent for us to have revelators, prophets, seers and translators inspired from heaven in our church, it is more in accordance with the Bible to be in possession of those gifts ourselves, than to depend upon revelators and seers of former ages. I do not suppose for a moment that there is any consistent person but that, if left to his own reasoning, would say that this is certainly the more reasonable and the more consistent; and especially when the Bible is referred to, in which there is nothing limiting the generations that have lived upon the earth for seventeen centuries in regard to these gifts. It is more consistent than when God should raise up a church he should have prophets, seers and revelators in that church, inspired men, men that can receive the word of the living God, upon all subjects that should come before them which might concern the people. How many millions of questions and matters of more or less magnitude might be cited for which no instruction could be found in the Bible that would be at all suitable to the circumstances. Take any one individual among the many of the human family, and you could find thousands of things, pertaining to his individual welfare and temporal circumstances, that he could never learn out of the Bible. The Lord guides and directs the temporal as well as the spiritual affairs of his people; he always has done so. How many thousands of things does a single head of a family need to know, in regard to his own temporal circumstances, what course he

should take most pleasing to the Almighty, whether to pursue this course or that branch of business, or whether to pursue some other branch of business, wherein he might do the most good; and wherein he could glorify God most; and which would be the greatest blessing for his household and family; and wherein he could please the Lord and live more uprightly, and more godly, and more consistently and honestly, by pursuing one branch of business rather than that of another. All these things concern every head of a family; therefore, if he had the spirit of revelation, if he could go and inquire of the Lord, if he found it to be the whisperings of his spirit which course to pursue in temporal matters, what a great blessing it would be for him; and then not for that one person only, but for all his sons as they grow up, and for his wives, if he have a number of wives. The Lord used to give revelation not only to the head of a family, but also to a man's wives. Read, for instance, what the Lord revealed to the wives of Jacob; how he used to reveal a great many things to Rachel, a great many things to Leah, a great many things to Bilhah, and a great many things to Zilpah. These four wives were revelators; they were prophetesses; they were individuals that could inquire of the Lord, and obtain an answer from him; and we have their revelations recorded in the Scriptures. We call their revelations the Word of God to them. What a benefit it would be for a man who had three or four or half a dozen wives, who could receive the word of the Lord in relation to their several duties; how calculated it would be to produce peace, and union, and salvation in the family and household. And what great comfort it would be for a man if he had several wives, and knew by the spirit of revelation how to deal in relation to all his domestic and temporal affairs, according to the mind and will of God. Again, how great would be the benefit to a body of people—to say nothing of households and families—located for instance, in one region of the country, a people who were united together according to the law of God, desiring to advance each others' welfare and happiness, and each man was required to love his neighbor as himself; a people who knew how to so conduct their temporal affairs that each man's neighbor might be benefitted as well as himself; and each one looking not only for his own welfare or that of his own household, but for the welfare of the whole community, with whom he was associated, producing at last that unity and oneness which the Lord requires in the numerous revelations which he has given.

It requires revelation then; it requires revelation for one single branch of the church located in one region of the country; how much more necessary, when there are numerous branches, and that those branches should know their duties in regard to one another, that they might not work against one another's interest in any way or manner, but, on the contrary, labor for the mutual benefit of all the branches of the Church and Kingdom of God, and thus preserve means, even as Joseph did in Egypt. Joseph was a man that sought after riches, he advised King Pharaoh to seek after riches, by building storehouses, and procuring as much of the surplus grain as he could, during the seven years of plentiful harvests which he foretold, and to store it away for future use. Some people might have supposed, if they had lived in that day, that Joseph was a great speculator, and wanted to take advantage of the people, getting rich himself at their expense. But the Lord directed this; he gave a revelation, clearly showing what would be necessary for the salvation of the Egyptian nation, and also the children of Israel who were sojourning in the land. Hence we perceive it was necessary to get revelation in regard to temporal matters, and that without it the famine would have come upon them unawares and destroyed hundreds of thousands of people, and they would have perished over all the land. Hence by a few words of revelation given through a prophet of God that lived in their midst, millions of people were saved alive.

If we trace the history of the people of God we shall find it a history of revelations of God to man, given for the purpose of directing them as individuals, as families, as neighborhoods, as tribes and as peoples, di-