

DISCOURSE BY ELDER JOHN MORGAN,

IN THE
Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday
Afternoon, May 23d, 1880.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

I am pleased to have once more the privilege of meeting with the Latter-day Saints, and I trust that while I shall endeavor to address you I shall have an interest in your faith and prayers, that what I may say may be in accordance with the mind and will of our Father in heaven and for our mutual good and benefit.

To an elder returning home from missionary labors the privilege of meeting with the assemblies of the Saints in their Sabbath day meetings is one that is very highly prized. We feel to rejoice in the privilege of returning to these peaceful valleys of the mountains, and of listening to the voice of the servants of God teaching the principles of the kingdom of God, and explaining the mind and will of our common Father and God in the heavens. I have often thought and meditated in regard to this privilege when away from home traveling in the midst of strangers, that when here we scarcely prize and realize the value of it. And doubtless this is true in regard to very many of the great and glorious principles of the gospel. We must see the opposite, come in contact with the opposite; we have to taste the bitter before we can appreciate the sweet; we have to see and experience the condition in which the world is to-day to appreciate the situation the Latter-day Saints are in.

During the past year, since last I had the privilege of meeting with you here, I have been engaged in preaching the principles of the gospel in the United States, more particularly in the Southern States. Our labors there have, to a greater or less extent, been crowned with success. The Lord has opened up our way. We have been enabled to reach many of the honest in heart, and the principles of the gospel have been spread by the preaching of the elders, and by the distribution of books and pamphlets, until many thousands of people in that section of the country to-day are becoming acquainted with the principles of the gospel, who, twelve months ago, although possibly aware that there was such a people as the Latter-day Saints in the valleys of the mountains, were ignorant in regard to the doctrines that they professed to believe in. I find that within the past twelve months quite a change has taken place in the sentiments and minds of the people in the Southern States relative to the principles that we promulgate. I form my judgment in regard to this from their actions, and it is said they speak louder than words. Something like twelve months ago a spirit of persecution and mobocracy was prevalent throughout a great portion of the South, brought about, to a great extent, by inflammatory articles in the newspapers, misrepresenting us and our objects, and by the denunciations hurled at us from the pulpit and from almost all directions, which resulted in the mobbing of a number of the Elders and the driving from their homes of quite a number of families who had embraced the gospel in their own native land. In one particular instance an entire branch of the Church was driven from their homes, lost their property and their means and were forced to rely upon the generosity of the Latter-day Saints already gathered to the valleys of the mountains here to enable them to emigrate to where they could live in peace and safety. This character of opposition was very violent, very unpleasant to meet with, very unpleasant to have to deal with, but by the blessing of God and the perseverance of the Elders, the obstacles were overcome, our work was pushed forward, and very many right thinking, honorable men and women, while not conceding with us in a religious sense, came out and refuse to endorse the action of men who were using violence, came out in the press, in private conversation, in public speech, and stated that while the Latter-day Saints might be wrong, the course that was being taken was undoubtedly wrong, that whatever the nature and character of their doctrines might be mob violence, persecution, and unauthorized, illegal prosecution was not a proper

means of overcoming the difficulty. Even the editors of many of the Southern papers conceded that the course that was being pursued was most unwise, and would have a tendency to bring dozens of converts to the "Mormon" doctrines where there had been one before, which proved true, as our labors have continually increased and grown, our numbers have been added to, and the spirit of emigration to gather out to where they could be protected in their religious belief has grown stronger day by day, until we scarcely need to preach in the Southern States the principle of emigration, so anxious are the people to escape from their surroundings.

The Elders who have been engaged in the Southern States mission have, almost without exception, proven themselves worthy of the trust that was reposed in them. They have endeavored to perform the duties devolving upon them as men and as the servants of God, not counting privation, slander, exposure, contumely as anything in comparison to the great work in which they were engaged.

The southern people are naturally a kind-hearted, hospitable, noble class of people, with the finer instincts of nature more fully developed than possibly among some other classes of people. They recognize the labors of our Elders, and while they might not coincide with our views, yet they give us credit for the determination with which we press forward and the earnestness and zeal displayed by our young Elders in preaching the principles of the gospel. Especially was this noteworthy in connection with the very many young Elders who had never been upon missions before,—young men who had been called from the various mutual improvement associations, unlearned in regard to the condition of the world, unacquainted with its customs, manners and habits—especially with this class was a deep impression made upon the minds of the people. That feeling of kindness, which is characteristic of the people there, seemed to feel after those boys, headless boys as they were, as they stood up in their places, where they they could obtain a church or a school-house, to preach, and where they could not obtain a place, in the open air, by the road side, or wherever they found a man ready to stop and listen to them in proclaiming the things they had been sent to proclaim. It made a deep impression on the minds of the people, and in a number of instances, while the violent feelings of men were raised against them, there were those who said, "We have boys of our own, and if our boys were in the place of these, separated from their homes and their kindred by thousands of miles, and there were those seeking to do them violence, we would feel to bless the hand that protected them." And as a general thing, there came a division, and the two contending parties were left to get through the struggle as best they could.

The Southern States mission at the present time is divided into conferences with a president over each conference, and traveling elders at appointed places laboring in the districts. Yet with all that we can do there are localities in the Southern States to-day that have been asking for elders for some considerable length of time, which we have not yet been able to supply owing to a deficiency in our numbers, which is possibly all well enough as it is not best at times that the work should go too fast. I discover in coming in contact with the people of the United States that, notwithstanding the nation numbers forty millions of people, a vast innumerable multitude almost, compared to the Latter-day Saints who dwell in these distant valleys of the mountains, yet if a company of eight, ten, twelve or fifteen elders should happen to pass through any of the large cities en route to their fields of labor, they are visited by reporters, they are interviewed, and the interview is published far and near, causing considerable excitement in regard to this small company of elders going to their fields of labor; in fact two elders going into a locality where the people are unacquainted with the teachings of the Latter-day Saints and announcing themselves as Mormon elders will create a really more genuine sensation than almost any other incident that could happen, and it is doubtless well that some of us who are possibly a little more zealous than wise should be restrained in regard to our anxiety to push the work forward. There is, however, an abundance of room for elders to labor throughout the en-

tire Southern States. We scarcely ever preached in a place where we could not obtain a hearing. We scarcely ever visited a neighborhood—I do not recollect of any now—in the Southern States where I desired a hearing but what I could both obtain a place to preach in, and in addition to that a good sized audience to hear what I had to say. Many of the leading men of the Southern States, having visited Salt Lake City, and been treated kindly by our people, having observed the thrift, enterprise, and peacefulness of our homes, extended to us many kindnesses and many courtesies, notwithstanding that with the mass of the people it was quite unpopular to do so. The governor of one of the leading States of the South offered the use of the senate chamber, the representative halls of his State, to preach in if I was prepared to use it, extending any courtesy I desired. Their leading papers freely noticed our meetings and published thousands of handbills to be distributed among the people and refused any compensation whatever. Many of these incidents that come to my mind in regard to the courtesy and kindness of the people that we have been preaching the gospel to, warm our hearts as Elders of Israel, and we feel to do them good, to bless them and benefit them all that we can.

During the past year a little over 400 Saints have been gathered from the Southern States mission. The principal part of these have emigrated to the neighboring State of Colorado, in San Luis Valley, 250 miles south and a little to the west of Denver, where the Saints have found a good valley, most excellent land and timber, water, grass, and all that is necessary to enable them to build up a settlement and locate themselves. I had the privilege of visiting them in their homes a number of times, and while they have had the privations that are incident to the formation of a new settlement everywhere, yet they have been blessed and prospered. The people of the State of Colorado have, as a rule, treated them kindly, have welcomed them to their borders, have endeavored to benefit them, and assisted them in forming their settlements all they could. The railroad that has been in process of construction for the past two years runs down the centre of the valley, within three to five miles of our line of settlement, so that we have easy railroad communication. Our rates for emigration are exceedingly low. The railroad companies have extended to us many courtesies and kindnesses, and have sought to do what they could—apparently being moved upon by the right spirit—to enable us to gather those who were unable to gather themselves, and to assist those that were but little able to gather. In the location of the settlement in the State of Colorado, there are now, I believe, 500 Latter-day Saints from the Southern States, which will possibly be augmented by 300 more this season, if deemed prudent to do so. In the first town that was located, all the lots have been taken up. Another location of similar dimensions is being occupied, and still another will be occupied some few miles distant from the first two in the course of the next two or three months.

The health of the saints has not been as good as could have been desired, principally owing to the fact that in emigrating from the Southern States, a malarious district, to those high, dry altitudes, the changes thus brought to bear upon them were calculated to produce sickness to a greater or less extent. The scourge of measles passed through the settlement in the month of April; some 160 cases. Our neighbors at a railroad town near by where there were about an equal number of inhabitants that we had, with all the appliances of physicians and drug stores, lost quite a large percentage of their cases of sickness. In the town of Alamosa, some 20 miles distant from our settlement, where there were almost an equal number of cases, there was quite a large percentage of deaths. In about 165 to 170 cases that occurred in our settlement, I think there were but three or four deaths from measles. When I was talking to the Mayor of Alamosa, he called my attention to the disparity of deaths in that town in comparison with those that had occurred in our settlement, and asked me if I thought the location of the town of Alamosa unhealthy. I replied I thought not, that it was equally healthy with our settlement. He asked me to what I attributed the number of deaths. I replied that

I believed they were attributable to the number of drug stores and physicians they had in it, that that was the cause, as I earnestly believed, to a greater or less extent, of the disparity of the number of deaths. With some 500 inhabitants in our settlement with quite a number of cases, some of them very serious, there has never been a physician called to prescribe one single prescription to any of these people, and I have an idea that if we were to look at them to-day we would find them equally healthy with those of the adjacent town where there are several physicians with two drug stores to draw their supplies from.

The people in the settlements are satisfied with their location. I heard but very little complaints, and what complaints I did here were, I thought, almost entirely due to the inconvenience incident to emigration, to breaking up their homes, to disposing of their property, to riding long distances upon railroads, landing at their destination wearied, to not being so carefully housed and protected for a limited length of time after their arrival, and to their being unacquainted with the country. I believe, however, that out of the 500 souls emigrated there have been but four turned back from the work and returned to their former homes. I heard no expression of a desire to return on the part of any one when I was there. Wishing to test this as I was returning back to the States, I publicly made the offer that if there were any persons who desired to return back to their old homes, to lay down the principles of the gospel and forego the gathering, I would see and accompany them back, and if there were any unable to go back with their own means a fund would be raised for the purpose if desired. I received no applications, hence I was led to believe that the people as a rule were satisfied with their situation and surroundings.

Adjacent to our settlement there are a large number of Mexicans who live in plazas, as they term them, which are capable of accommodating from ten to fifty families in a plaza. These people have had rather an unpleasant and chequered history in their locations and settlements in the Territory of New Mexico and the State of Colorado. They have been looked upon to a certain extent as legal and lawful prey by their Christian surroundings, who have, to a greater or less degree, taken advantage of their innocence and of their ignorance in regard to the rules of business. To illustrate this, one man, a merchant with whom we deal, a man that I have always looked upon as in every sense trustworthy, made this statement to me. In speaking of the Mexican people, said he: "We cannot trade with them as we do with other people. They have been deceived and cheated until they come here and ask how many pounds of sugar we give for a dollar. We would not dare to tell them the exact number of pounds. If it is six, we have to tell them ten." "Well," I said, "do you weigh out the ten pounds?" "Not much; we weigh them six or five and a half pounds, as the case may be." Such is the character of the dealings the Mexican people have had to contend with, until to-day they have no confidence whatever in the white people by whom they are surrounded, and it is something almost unknown in their history, it is something strange for them to be placed in a position whereby they would be dealt with honorably and uprightly by white people. Said one of their leading citizens to me, Mr. Valdez, who was formerly a Judge in Old Mexico, a leading citizen in the State of Colorado, a Representative in the Legislature, and a man of considerable ability—said he to me, "The white people we have come in contact with heretofore have endeavored to take every advantage of us, and when your people came here we expected they would treat us the same way. Last season we could have furnished you land to plow, teams and seed; but we were afraid that you would repeat the history of some other portions of our possessions, where we have furnished seed, land, teams and plows, and rented these things upon shares to people who came into our midst, and when the fall season came, they not only claimed the land and crops, but our teams and plows, and we have failed to obtain any redress whatever; consequently we were afraid of your people." But after some short acquaintance with us, after coming in contact with us a limited length of time, they learned to think better of us, and by their votes elected one of our brethren magistrate over a considerable portion of the county

of Conejas, in which they lived. This brother told me he had been magistrate for eight months, had gained the confidence of the people, until to-day people outside of the precinct where he lives will bring their cases to him to arbitrate and adjudicate upon, and the people almost universally are willing to submit to his decisions. There is a kindly feeling between them and the Latter-day Saints. They are naturally a kind-hearted people. I noticed when our people were living in their plazas, as some of them did for a season, that when any of them took sick, the Mexicans were on hand to nurse them and to do what they could for their comfort. The Saints rejoice at the privilege of gathering where they can live in peace and quietness, and receive the instructions of the Elders, and have their children taught. I believe about the first thing they did in the first town they started was to build a comfortable schoolhouse, and during the past winter they have had a school in session the entire winter, expecting that as soon as circumstances would permit a summer school would be commenced. A Sabbath School is in session regularly each Sabbath, and some six home missionaries visit the surrounding country where the Latter-day Saints are located, and instruct the Mexicans who desire to hear the principles of the gospel.

In laboring in the States, we can see that there is a rapid change taking place. It may not be observable by the masses of the people. However, this change can be seen on the right hand and on the left. We hear men remark in regard to the change that is occurring politically, religiously and socially. We cannot blind our eyes to the fact that affairs in the United States are traveling at a rapid rate. We sometimes hear an Elder, on returning home from his mission, ask one of the brethren, "How is everything moving?" His reply is, "very slow." He does not see with the eyes of the Elder who is abroad preaching the gospel. To my mind, the seeds of dissolution have been sown in the midst of the people, and they are springing up to an abundant growth. Men are fulfilling the scriptures—"their hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are coming upon them." The people of the United States are in doubt in regard to what is in store for our government. We hear quite loud expressions every hour of the day by men of all classes—governors, senators, congressmen and clergymen. I think one of the most eloquent sermons—eloquent for the sound of its words, not particularly for the principle it contained, but more particularly for its sound of words—I ever heard, was one in which the minister portrayed the condition of the United States, the fearful condition in which the government was to-day, the condition in which political affairs were, and strange as it may seem, after telling the people that there was not a political party in the United States that would receive Jesus of Nazareth. After telling the people of St. Louis (the city in which this sermon was preached) that if Jesus were to come to one of their wards and run for Alderman, they would outvote him by a large majority—after telling them all these things, he then commenced upon the other hand to portray the glorious spread of Christianity! It sounded strange to my ears, for one was a direct contradiction of the other; if one was true the other was false. Certainly Christianity could not grow and increase and spread and be ingrafted into the minds of the people, and at the same time he who stood at the head of Christianity be rejected from the head to the foot of the whole body.

The situation to my mind as I have observed it—and I have tried to do so calmly and deliberately and without prejudice—is anything but agreeable. Men have ceased to try to hide this; and the present political contest that is waged so hotly even for the nomination of the man who shall fill the presidential chair is stirring up the people as I have never seen an election stir them up before. It seems as though they are not content with dividing into parties but these parties are divided into fragments, the one contending against the other. A few years ago it was the Democratic party on the one side and the Republican party on the other. To day it has changed and materially altered in the Republican party. It is the anti-third term men, the Blaine men, Sherman men &c., struggling the one against the other in their own party until it seems as if the shadow is cast, of the time when every man's hand shall