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DISCOURSE

Delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Sunday afternoon, May 8th, 1898 by
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I realize, my brethren and sisters, the responsibility of the position that one occupies who is called to be a teacher, even temporarily, to the Latter-day Saints, and I feel the need of depending upon God this afternoon for what I shall say. I pray for His Holy Spirit, that it may inspire the words which shall be spoken; that nothing may be said that ought not to be said, and that nothing may be left unsaid that should be spoken.

It is a great mission that rests upon men to be made teachers in the midst of their fellow men. I am now thinking of three great teachers whom God sent forth to teach His truths to mankind—truths that perhaps have become so familiar to us that they seem like an oft-told tale, but which were strange and startling to the generation to which they were first delivered. These three teachers I regard as probably the greatest that ever came forth from God. They are Moses, Jesus Christ, and Joseph Smith. An investigation of the truths they taught will fully warrant the declaration that I make concerning them.

There is no question among Christians as to the pre-eminence of the Great Teacher—the greatest of all—even Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is conceded by all who believe in Him that He spake as never man spake. And many there be who accord to the Prophet Moses greatness and eminence as a teacher. It is recognized that the Ten Commandments which God gave through him are the basis of modern jurisprudence. But when it comes to Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the last dispensation, a smile of incredulity, perhaps of scorn, wreathes many a face at the bare suggestion that he was a teacher, and a great teacher, come from God.

But let us judge the tree by its fruits. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. Jesus Christ laid this down as a principle by which all men might be tested: "By their fruits ye shall know them;" not by idle rumors, not by the slanders of their enemies, but by what the men themselves teach, by the truths, or errors, they bring forth, by the works they make manifest; for, said He, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits shall know them." We who are the disciples of Joseph Smith, or rather, the disciples of the Son of God through the teachings of Joseph Smith, are perfectly willing that his life and character, his teachings and his works should be submitted to this divine test. Judge Joseph Smith by the doctrines he enunciated, by the nobility of his character, by the sincerity of his life, by the earnestness and honesty of his heart, made manifest in his willingness to die for the sake of his convictions.

Do not judge him by idle tales and rumors. Look at the man himself; take his teachings and his works; and judge him and them by the light that lighteth every soul that God has sent into the world.

First, however, let us speak of Moses. In what consisted the greatness of his teachings? A glance at the condition of the world in his time is sufficient to show this. He it was who brought to man the knowledge of the true and living God. Men had been worshipping various deities in the nations round about. Away off in India they worshiped the god Brahma, and saw in all the forces of nature and all the passions of men, good and evil, so many separate and distinct manifestations of the one god, Brahma. God was in everything, and these manifestations of natural power were manifestations of deity—a doctrine that modern philosophy would call the "immanency of God," who

"Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars and blossoms in the trees;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent."

But was this a God that men could get very near to? Could they appreciate such a divinity and worship him in a satisfactory manner? Could the yearning soul of man, longing to draw near to its maker, feel that such a divinity as this was its Father in heaven? Down in Egypt they were worshipping beasts and reptiles—the ox, the goat, the crocodile, the beetle. These to the Egyptians were gods, or shrines which the gods inhabited, who had come down to the earth to watch mankind. Such was the reverence paid by these ancient people to these deities that when one of the animals died it was regarded as a national calamity and the goat or the ox was buried with costly and magnificent ceremonies. It is supposed that one of the secrets of the hatred of the Egyptians for the Israelites was because the latter were shepherds and at times slew the fattlings of their flocks. In Phoenicia, round about the land of Canaan, towards which Moses was about to lead the Children of Israel, who had just emerged from Egyptian bondage—they worshipped the sun as Baal, and the moon as Ashtoreth; they also worshipped the stars, the seasons and the forces of nature. Everything in sight was a god—for polytheism prevailed there—and they worshipped these divinities with all manner of licentiousness. You remember, the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth was the great seductive influence that prevailed at times against the Children of Israel and led them away from the worship of Jehovah.

Such were the ideas prevailing in these three centers of religious thought and philosophy when Moses the man of God, came forth. He proclaimed against these practices, this idolatry. He said in effect: You must not wor-

ship the sun, or the moon, or any object in nature. These are the creations of God, they are not the Creator. You must worship God in heaven, the invisible Jehovah, the Eternal Father, the Maker of heaven and of earth, who created man in His likeness, in His image, male and female. Lift your thoughts above the visible things of life. Walk not by sight, but walk by faith, and believe in God and trust in Him, although you do not see Him." This was the substance of the teaching of Moses regarding the personality of God. He taught them that the being they were to worship had created man in His own image. That was not the sun, nor the moon, nor the trees, nor the flowers. It meant that God was in the form of man; for if he had created man in His own image, He Himself must be in the image of man.

This was the great service that Moses rendered to mankind. It is an old song, an oft-told tale to us who have inherited this knowledge even by tradition from the earliest times, and have had it restored to us in these latter times. We cannot half appreciate, except by a great effort of imagination, the value of the service rendered by Moses, the Prophet of God, when he taught men whom they were to worship.

Jesus Christ taught the same truth. He had been speaking of the Father to His disciples, and Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and thou us." The Savior answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ was in the form of a man. Paul tells us that He was the express likeness of His Father's person. Here was a re-enunciation of the same principle taught by Moses, but which had become dim in the minds of men, as truth will ever become dim through the lapse of ages. If we do not take a course to keep the testimony thereof alive in our hearts, if we do not live near to God, practicing the principles He has revealed, and if we do not have among us inspired men to teach us and remind us continually of the truth.

Any fire will die out if it is not supplied with fuel. Any lamp will be extinguished if it is not replenished with oil. The testimony of the truth, however miraculously it may have been kindled in the human heart, however brightly it may burn for a time, will grow dim, will gradually die, and the living embers will become dead ashes, if the works that God has enjoined upon us be neglected, if we do not meet together often, as He has commanded, and hear His word taught, if we do not submit ourselves to the discipline that He has instituted for the purpose of renewing and keeping alive our faith, and if we do not have living prophets and oracles of God to guide us, to remind us, to admonish us, and to teach us anew the everlasting truth. These things come about very naturally, very gradually, but surely and inevitably, if