

## DISCOURSE

BY

PREST. GEORGE Q. CANNON,

DELIVERED

In the Salt Lake Assembly Hall,  
Sunday Afternoon, Nov. 20th,  
1881.

REPORTED BY JOHN IRVINE.

THERE is a passage in the Book of Mormon which has suggested itself to my mind, which I will read. It contains the words of Alma unto his son Helaman and were among the last words which he spoke unto him. They will be found recorded on page 388 of the new edition, namely:

And it came to pass that after Alma had said these things to Helaman, he blessed him, and also his other sons; and he also blessed the earth for the righteous' sake;

And he said, Thus saith the Lord God: Cursed shall be the land, yea, this land, unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, unto destruction, which do wickedly, when they are fully ripe; and as I have said so shall it be; for this is the cursing and the blessing of God upon the land, for the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.

And now when Alma had said these words he blessed the Church, yea, all those who should stand fast in the faith from that time henceforth.

President Cannon then continued: In rising to speak unto you this afternoon, my brethren and sisters, I do so with a desire in my heart that that which I may say may be prompted by the Spirit of God, and may be for your edification and comfort as well as my own. I am glad to have this opportunity of meeting with you—not so much for the privilege of speaking as of being here.

Some of us, as you know, have been traveling considerably of late, visiting the various settlements, and I believe Prest. Taylor and party, when they return to this city, will have completed the entire round of the Territory and of all the States outside of Arizona—that is so far as Utah and Idaho are concerned. We have found the people in a very prosperous condition and feeling exceedingly well. In almost every settlement the crops have been larger than they have been known to be before. And the people are prospering in their temporal circumstances and of course are feeling well, and I believe I do not overstate the matter when I say that they are as attentive to their duties generally as I have ever seen them. Good health has generally prevailed. I think probably we have had more sickness in this city and neighborhood than in any other part of the Territory. The people are increasing and spreading abroad, taking root in the land. In the southern part of the Territory they are not prospering to so great an extent as they are in the middle and northern part, owing to various causes. Still there is an excellent feeling throughout all these settlements, and they are looking hopefully to the future.

I have often thought in looking at the calmness and serenity of the people, and the peace which prevails in their hearts, and in their habitations and settlements, that it is not among the least wonderful features of this organization that a people, who are so much maligned, attacked and threatened as are the Latter-day Saints, should be found living so undisturbed by these things and apparently enjoying themselves as they do. There is scarcely a week passes, or has passed for years in which there have not been some threats uttered and circulated against us. "Terrible things going to be done with the Mormons; we are going to have them all disposed of now; we shall have this Mormon question all settled, and the problem so thoroughly solved that it will never require to be meddled with again."

Threats of this character have been in circulation now for years, and every time they have been alluded to it seemed to those who made them as though their plans would be likely to be successful. In the case of any other people it would repress all energy and development, it would frighten everybody, and, in fact, no one would want to live in a community that was in such constant jeopardy. But so far as my observation has extended the people, as I have remarked, are full of peace and quiet, undisturbed by the prospects for the future. In fact they feel quite happy and rejoice that they are counted worthy to have their names cast out as evil. It is one of the most remarkable features connected with this work that

a people so few in number, naturally so quiet and inoffensive, molesting no one, interfering with no one's peace or enjoyment, threatening no one, minding their own business, peacefully pursuing their varied pursuits, should create such a stir in the world as we are doing. It might be thought that the 150,000 people who live in the Territory of Utah would be such an insignificant people and so utterly beneath the notice—so far as the numerical strength is concerned—of the world at large, that they might be permitted to pursue the course which is marked out for them without interference and without so much agitation respecting them. But I was told yesterday by a federal official who had just returned from the east—and I suppose it is true—that there was no subject to-day that seemed to have the importance in men's minds that Utah had, and that wherever he went, when it was known that he was from Utah, everybody wanted to talk with him about its affairs and its people. Newspaper reporters were after him to find out what he could tell them about us, and I am informed that members of Congress and other leading men are making the "Mormon question" a special study. I hope they will thoroughly investigate it while they are at it; I think the investigation will prove profitable to them, if it is only done in the right spirit; but the object, I suppose, in making it a special study is to do something, to deal with its imaginary evils, to devise some plan that will reach this system that appears to be so hateful. Well, now, I call this a remarkable feature of this work. I think it is exceedingly wonderful that so small a people—a people whom every one must admit who visits this country, are peaceful—should create such a disturbance in the earth and be the cause of so much thought, so much writing and speech making. And it has not been the case in Utah alone, that is, since the Latter-day Saints came to Utah, but it has been a peculiarity of this work—the work of God—from the day of its inception in these last days until the present. And what is still more remarkable, it was predicted that this would be the case about it when it first started and before it, in fact, had an organization.

Doubtless the most of you remember that when Joseph Smith was visited by an angel of God when he was quite a youth, it was said to him by the angel that his name should be known for good and evil throughout the earth, and most wonderfully has that statement been fulfilled in his case and in the case of all those who have embraced the everlasting Gospel. This was said before the Church was organized; it was published directly after the organization.

Doubtless you are all familiar—or most of you are—with the letters of Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, in which this was published among the earliest writings that were sent forth by this Church, and when to all human appearances there was not the least probability of it being fulfilled, except a man should have the spirit of revelation to discern the future. But when the Church was organized it created a sensation in the neighborhood, it attracted attention, men's minds were drawn towards it. As it increased the excitement spread, and among the earliest predictions that I remember hearing, connected with this work, was that it had called forth the attention of townships and of counties and of States, and it was said of it, that it should spread until it would attract the attention of the United States and of the world. This was one of the earliest predictions that was uttered connected with the work, and it was also predicted concerning it that its missionaries should go to every land and to every people and carry the glad tidings of salvation, and should be the means of gathering out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people, the honest in heart, who should gather together in one place, and should be known by the name of Zion. I often think of this. The wonderful manner this people called Latter-day Saints dwelling in Utah have been gathered together is a subject of never-ceasing interest to me.

Before the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith received revelations which he said were revelations from God. They are now embodied in this book, which we call the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and among the earliest of these revelations is found a statement given by the Lord Jesus

Christ, through Joseph Smith, to the effect that he intended to bring forth and establish Zion, and that He would gather together the people who would obey His Gospel. This prediction is particularly noteworthy because at the time when the first of these revelations was given, there was no such organization as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints upon the earth; it did not have an existence; and in the September following its organization—that is five months afterwards—another revelation was given, in which it was stated still more plainly who were to be gathered, and the purposes for which they were to be gathered, and this, too, before there was a place designated as a place of gathering. I have often said that if the Prophet Joseph Smith had no other evidence to show to the world of the divinity of his mission, and of his prophetic office, than that revelation alone, it was sufficient in and of itself to establish it; for this reason: that at the time it was uttered, as I have said, there was no organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; there was no gathering place; no person had ever witnessed such a proceeding as a people belonging to one church gathering together and dwelling together in one organization. There was nothing of the kind known; there was no organization among the children of men that could have given a hint of the possibility or probability of such a great event taking place. If other churches had done the same, then it might have been thought that the prophet Joseph Smith could easily have predicted that the people that he would be the means of gathering together might do so also. But there was no accessible record extant of the gathering together of any people in this manner at the time that Joseph proclaimed this principle. Yet he, inspired of God, dared to make this statement to the world, and to publish it, and to-day, we who are here are living witnesses of its fulfillment—not of its complete fulfillment sufficiently to make it one of the strangest events that has ever been witnessed among men. There have been many circumstances surrounding the people which have been of such a character as to operate against their gathering. It is not long since a Secretary of State issued a circular to the nations of Europe to check this very business of gathering. I do not suppose that he knew that Joseph Smith had made such a prediction, or that God had inspired him to give such a revelation, or that he ever imagined for a moment that the word of God was recorded upon this subject; but he thought it would be a good thing to stop the immigration of "Mormons." Mobs have also done their part to accomplish the same end, by endeavoring to break up the community and scatter its members and frighten those who had not gathered, so that they might be deterred from coming. But notwithstanding all these influences which have been operating from the beginning—commencing as I said in a township, then spreading to a county, afterwards to a State, and to States, and then the Secretary of State of our nation taking the matter in hand—notwithstanding all these influences which have been operating to check the gathering of the people together, they have gathered as we see them to-day, and are still gathering, because God has said they should, and there is no earthly power that can prevent their gathering together, though it need not surprise you if more thorough measures than ever have been should be taken to prevent the Saints from obeying this command.

When the Elders of this Church first went out, they went out without the ordinary advantages that men who call themselves ministers possess. They were men selected from the various avocations of life. Joseph Smith himself was a farmer. He was not a man that was schooled for the ministry. He had had no education to fit and qualify him as men are ordinarily supposed to be qualified in these days who teach their fellow men what is called the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He did not go to a theological seminary. But inspired of God, having been ordained of God to the everlasting Priesthood (that authority that had been withdrawn from the earth in consequence of the wickedness of men; and been restored to the earth and bestowed upon him by an angel agency) he stood up in the midst of his fellow men and proclaimed the truth, and by the power of God he was the means of bringing many to

its knowledge; and, as I have said, inspired of God, he selected others and laid his hands upon them, that being the ordination necessary to qualify them to preach the word of God. They were taken from the plow, they were taken from the blacksmith's shop, from the mechanic's bench, from the counting room, and from all the vocations of life in which they were found; they were taken and were thus ordained and sent out to preach the Gospel, without purse and scrip, without salary, without that which the world had considered necessary—an education, an education suited to the calling. In this way they went forth and preached the Gospel—not in men's wisdom, not in their own strength, but calling upon God in the name of Jesus to bestow His Holy Spirit upon the people and to carry their words by that spirit to their hearts, and to help them find the honest, the meek, and the humble. This is the way in which they went. They could not glory in man. They could not take glory to themselves, for there was nothing about them in which they could glory. And the result was that wherever they went they met honest-hearted people, people who were waiting to receive their message; and these people as soon as they were baptized were seized with a desire to gather together with the people of God, without knowing what God had said upon the subject.

Now, when God does a work He does it in His own way, and He is determined—He always was apparently from all we read—to have the glory of that work. If a man were to go forth qualified by education and preached by the power of education and of learning, who is it that gets the glory? Why, you will find it everywhere that man is glorified. If there is a fluent preacher, if there is a successful orator in what is called the Christian Church, he gets the glory of it, and he gets a salary in proportion to it. Commencing, as some of them have done, to preach in humble places, the fame of their oratory has spread, and they have had calls to the ministry from other places, such calls being accompanied by an increase of salary, and a man goes from one place to another according to the addition he receives in his salary until he becomes noted as many are to-day. The fame of their oratory goes throughout the United States. Who is it that gets the glory for this? Why, it is the men themselves, and they get the salary, too. They not only get the glory of men, but they get their pay. Man's education is praised, the college where he received it receives credit for it according to the ability that he may display, and God is very little thought about in the matter, and certainly the Holy Ghost gets no credit, for it is supposed that the Holy Ghost has nothing to do with it. Well, now, God has taken a different method in our day, and He is showing forth His power. He is taking the meek and the lowly and the humble men who are desirous to keep His commandments, and He is making them mighty through His power. But they cannot give any glory to any one but the Almighty for this. Let a man attempt to travel without purse and scrip, as the Elders of this Church have done, and as the ancient Apostles did, and if he is successful he is successful through faith, through his reliance upon God through keeping His commandments, through being humble, meek and lowly of heart, and if he reaches the hearts of the honest, the only way he can hope to do it is by having the Spirit of God and having that power accompanying his words. He cannot do it in any other way. And who is there in this Church that gives Joseph Smith the glory of this work? Yet it is the most wonderful organization ever beheld among men. There is nothing like it. There is no limit to the power connected with it; there is no limit to the union connected with it; there is no limit to the capacity for expansion connected with it. You may expand it and make it as wide and broad as you please, and the organization is equal to it. If it only consisted of six members it answered the purpose; if it consisted of six thousand it answered the purpose; if it were to consist of six millions it would answer the purpose; if it should embrace the whole world it would be found equal to the necessity. No man can look upon the organization of this Church and examine it in its details without being wonderfully impressed—if he be a man who does not give glory to God—with the ability of the man

who framed it; but if he be disposed to give glory to God, he cannot examine it without praising God in his heart for giving so wonderful and so simple an organization on the earth for a church. But though this is the case, who is there that gives any glory to Joseph Smith? Who is there that gives any glory to Brigham Young? I have been told repeatedly that we do not honor our men enough, we do not give them praise enough; but it is a fact, the people look behind the instrument. Joseph Smith was a man; yet we have been falsely accused of worshipping Joseph Smith in the place of the Saviour, and the same has also been said of Brigham Young. But the true feeling is to look behind Joseph Smith and Brigham Young to the Power who raised them up, to that Being who gave them all their gifts and endowments, who inspired them and who made them perform the work that they did. And when Elders in this Church are successful there is very little disposition to give them the glory or the praise therefor. The praise is given to God, who is the author of these blessings and of the gathering of this people together. The world say it was the shrewdness of Joseph Smith that first suggested this, and that it was the executive ability that Brigham Young had that carried it out. They do not recognize God in it; it was Brigham Young. But, my brethren and sisters, you know who it was. You know that it was no power of man that could have touched your hearts and made you desire to leave your homes and come to Zion. This makes every man and woman in this Church, who comes from the nations of the earth, a living witness for himself and for herself, not depending upon the Elders, for the Elders could not do this, they could not offer the inducements, but every man and every woman becomes an interested person, a witness himself and herself to the truth of these things, and especially to the doctrine of gathering. Why the desire is so strong and has been in the hearts of the people that if were necessary they would walk on foot any distance to join the gathered Saints. If they could walk on the water they would do it. They would push hand-carts across the plains if they could not come across in any other way, carrying their packs on their backs. Why? Because the Spirit of God was poured out upon them, and it filled their hearts with this desire that I said is irrepressible. They could not be content to stay away.

In this way God has built up this Church. It did not, as we have often heard, depend upon one man. Men thought if they killed Joseph Smith they would destroy the key-stone; that his existence was the means of upholding the work and giving it solidity. But he was killed, and still the work prospered, and it will prosper if every man that is now in position in the Church should be killed or should die. The testimony of Jesus is in the hearts of the people. You travel throughout the Territory, and call the people together and ask them: "What influence brought you here?" Every one who is an adult, and has retained the faith, will tell you that it was the Spirit and power of God. No other influence nor power could have done this; but that. Well, now, men will fight it, men are fighting it. It is strange to-day to see people who call themselves religious advocating all manner of means to be brought against this people to destroy them. To shed their blood is thought to be justifiable—the killing of people in order to destroy an organization that they think is so full of men-ice; and yet we are told in the Bible—and we have been taught it from childhood—that the righteous never persecute the wicked, but it has always been the case that the wicked persecuted the righteous; and we are told by the Savior Himself that His followers should be hated of all men, and that men in seeking to kill them would think they were doing God's service. It was not the Apostles of Jesus who persecuted the wicked, it was not the righteous who hated them and who sought their destruction. There were no petitions went out from the humble followers of Christ against the Pharisees and against the religious sects of that day to have them destroyed, to have governmental aid to assist them in extirpating their heresies; nothing of this kind has ever been witnessed but here we find to-day the professedly righteous, the ministers, advo-