

the President of a branch, or a traveling Elder. Several of the branch Presidents, who were local Elders, held that they were superior in authority to the Elders from Zion, and claimed that some former President of the mission had so decided many years before. I answered that, while that might be the case—though they brought no record in proof of it—that I knew it to be a fact that Apostle John Henry Smith, who was then the presiding authority over the British mission, had said that the traveling Elders should be deferred to as higher in authority than the branch Presidents, and that to me the voice of the living oracle had precedence of the tradition of the past.

Yesterday in our Stake Priesthood meeting, President George Q. Cannon explained this principle very clearly and forcibly, declaring that while God is an unchangeable being, and the principles of truth eternal, that circumstances are continually changing, and that regulations must change to keep pace with the progress of the Lord's work and be applicable to the ever varying condition of the people.

Another incident. When the Temple at Kirtland was built no font for baptisms was put in it. This was because the great principle of baptism for the dead had not then been revealed. But when the Temple at Nauvoo was projected the Prophet Joseph ordered that a font be put in the basement, and that it be made of wood. Later on, President Young, after Joseph's death, ordered that font to be made of stone. The reason for the change was, I suppose, that stone had become cheaper, and the people were better able to afford it than when the Prophet Joseph had ordered the font made of wood. Yet this little incident, it is said, created quite a breeze, and President Young was accused by some of tampering with sacred things and changing an established principle, because a change in the circumstances of the people had made it advisable to use stone instead of wood in the construction of a portion of the Temple.

Isaiah says, in relation to the building up of the kingdom of God in the last days:

"For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron. * * A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

These words indicate change, progress, growth, development, the going on to perfection, and show that we are not to be bound down by the effete past, nor the imperfect present. Were this work to stop where it now is, it would be a failure of the fulness of God's design in relation to it. It would be the dwarfing of the plant when only half developed; the abandonment of the building just as its foundation were beginning to peer above the ground. Truth is eternal. Truth goeth onward; it cannot come to naught; it can have no end. Says the poet:

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers;
While error, wounded, writhes with pain,
And dies amid his worshippers."

But the works of God are gradual. He "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and the revelations of His mighty will to the comprehension and capacity of His children. Joseph Smith says: "If God offers a gift or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned." Hence, in God's wisdom and mercy the revelation of truth is made gradual. The work of God builds up by degrees, and His word comes little by little "line upon line, precept upon precept;" like the work of the coral insect which through the stillness of ages builds up the reef which becomes an island, and then a continent, rearing its proud crest above the angry waves.

This work in which we are taking part is but the winding up of a work which God began ages and ages ago, and which He has sought every opportunity to advance in every dispensation, so far as He safely might do, according to the weak and brittle condition of mankind. Joseph Smith declares this to be the dispensation of the fulness of times into which will flow, like rills and rivers mingling with their ocean, all other dispensations; and that it is necessary that "a welding together of all dispensations and keys and powers and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time." Moreover, that "those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this the dispensation of the fulness of times." Does this sound as if there were to be no future for this people, and no progress? The Apocalypse to-day is a sealed book to men, and yet its full meaning is some day to be made known. The opening of "the seven seals," descriptive of "the secret acts of men during the seven thousand years of the earth's temporal history," is yet to come. The Bible is only an abridgment. The known history of the world is but a fragment. Had not the Book of Mormon come forth what would we know today about the history of the Jaredites and the Nephites who built up a civilization on this ancient continent that would have caused the glory of the kingdoms of the East to pale away. Yet that book and the others that God has revealed to us, are but a beginning to the revelations God designs to give His Church and children in this dispensation. Joseph Smith declared that were he to tell the people what God had revealed to him, "one half they would reject through prejudice and ignorance." And doubtless he died with unspoken secrets in his breast, treasures of truth of which the world was not then worthy. If this generation will accept what God has already revealed, the greater things will be given which are "not had among men because of unbelief." But if they repudiate the simpler things, the greater things will be withheld to their condemnation. So saith Jesus Christ through the Prophet Moroni:

"And he that will contend against

the word of the Lord, let him be accursed; and he that shall deny these things, let him be accursed; for unto them will I show no greater things, saith Jesus Christ, for I am He who speaketh."

Cannot we see the necessity for living oracles? Can we safely tie ourselves down to any book and say, I want no more than this? Will we ever see the day when we will not need prophets, seers and revelators in our midst, to declare unto us the things of God as fast as we are able to receive them? No; we will never see the time when there will not stand at the head of this Church a man having power to communicate to its members the revelations of God for the guidance and government of His Church. Heber C. Kimball says that the Prophet Joseph told him that the first step to apostasy was losing confidence in the leaders of the Church, and that the man who is filled with fault-finding and murmuring could not at the same time have the Spirit of the Lord. The priesthood is an eternal chain reaching from heaven to earth, and when a man holding it speaks by the power of God and is acting in the spirit of his calling, the whole Priesthood on earth and in heaven are bound to back him up and make good his words. But he who rebels against rightful authority and fights against God, severs himself from the chain and becomes a detached or broken link until he repents and turns again in obedience unto righteousness.

There are some who think that matters now are going all wrong, that the Church is falling to pieces. But there are times, we must remember, when victory wears the aspect of defeat and even success may look like failure. The death of our Savior was looked upon as a great calamity by His own disciples. They forgot that He had told them that His death and sufferings were the pathway to their redemption, and that he must drink of the bitter cup that His Father had prepared for Him. They thought that the work of God had come to nought, that He whom they "trusted would redeem Israel" had failed, until in His resurrected body He appeared unto them, encouraged and instructed them, and sent them into all the world with power to preach the Gospel to every creature.

So it is in this day. The work of God may seem to go backward, or stand still, but such a thing can never really happen. When we shoot an arrow from a bow we do not hold it still and expect it to fly forward to the target; but we draw back the arrow to its head and then, loosing it, we see it speed onward with force and celerity to the mark. When a man would clear a gulf with a mighty leap, he does not stand upon the brink and sprig, but he moves back a little and then runs forward more swiftly in order to gain force and momentum for the bound. I testify in the name of Jesus Christ that this work of our God, which, to the weak in faith, may seem to be breaking in pieces, or going backward, is preparing to take the