

Unity and Unchangeableness of the Gospel—New Revelation Needed—Spiritualism

Discourse by Elder George Q. Cannon, delivered in the Old Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Jan. 31st, 1869.

To those who are not familiar with the operations of the Gospel of Christ the spectacle which is to be witnessed in this Territory of a people congregating together from so many nations and united in their faith and worship is something that is very strange and must, of necessity, create considerable inquiry and remark. It is wonderful, and is without a parallel on the earth at present; and yet when viewed in the light of the Gospel which Jesus taught there ought to be nothing particularly wonderful about it, for that which we see in these valleys is what we might expect to see, from the teachings of Jesus and His apostles. Jesus taught His disciples the plan of salvation. He gave unto them the power and authority to go forth and proclaim that plan to every creature, commanding them to baptize, and promised them that they who bowed in obedience to their teachings should receive the Holy Ghost. One of the peculiarities of the Holy Ghost, as we read of its effects in the scriptures, was to unite the hearts of those who received it and to make them one.

We find no account in the history that is given unto us of the labors of the apostles, of there being any division of sentiment among them or among their disciples. Although Paul had not been brought into contact with Peter and the rest of the Twelve for some years, he informs us that when he went to Jerusalem to meet with them, he found that he taught the same principles and was as conversant with the doctrines of Jesus as they were; and so much was he impressed with the importance of him and his brethren and those who received the principles they taught, believing in one form of doctrine and one plan of salvation, that he left on record, to one of the Churches which he raised up, this sentiment—"though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you; let him be accursed." He endeavored to impress upon those with whom he had communication, and over whom he had influence, that the form of doctrine which he had delivered to them, and which, he says, he received by the Holy Ghost, was the only form of doctrine that could be preached to the inhabitants of the earth without the curse of Almighty God resting upon them who preached and propagated it. Hence, it is but reasonable to suppose that had the doctrine which Paul taught, which he received from Jesus, and the doctrine which was taught by Peter, James, John and Andrew, and the rest of the apostles, been preached and adhered to, by the whole of the inhabitants of the earth, we should see, today, through all the nations of the earth, that which is witnessed in Utah—one form of worship and one faith, and all the people, everywhere worshipping in the same temples and tabernacles, and being governed by the same principles.

It cannot be expected by any person who has any faith or confidence in the plan of salvation, or in the scriptures which contain an account of that plan, that the Holy Ghost would reveal unto man two different kinds of faith; that it would lead them to believe in different forms of doctrine, or that it would teach one class of men that one portion of the Gospel was necessary, and another portion unnecessary; or cause any portion of the people to believe that a certain item of the Gospel was essential to salvation, and cause another portion of the people to believe that the same item of the Gospel was nonessential. Such a view is irreconcilable with the teachings of Jesus and his apostles and of all that is left on record concerning the gifts and power of the Holy Ghost and its office among the children of men. On the contrary, all that is recorded leads us to suppose that if the Holy Ghost were to be bestowed upon an inhabitant of Europe, upon another person in Asia, another in Africa, and upon a fourth, in America, and again upon another on the islands of the sea, that these individuals were they to come together and converse upon the plan of salvation would entertain precisely similar views respecting that plan. To think otherwise would be to make God, our Heavenly Father, the author of strife and division.

If we will remember the prayer of Jesus, the last which He offered up, of which we have any account, before His arrest and betrayal, we shall find that He prayed that His apostles might be one, even as He and the Father were one. And said He, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou has sent me." This prayer, it is presumable, was recorded in Heaven; and it is also presumable that it was the design of God that it should be answered upon the heads of those in whose behalf it

was offered. This oneness did characterize the Church in those days; and, as I have already said, there is nothing left on record to prove to us that there was anything but oneness, harmony and union in the midst of the Church during the lives of the apostles. The prayer of Jesus was heard and answered, the Spirit of God was poured out upon the apostles, and not only upon them but upon those who believed in their words; and the world in looking on their union had an evidence that they could not controvert, that Jesus had been sent by the Father, and that he was indeed the very Christ. It may be supposed, therefore, that, this being the condition of things during the lives of the apostles, had the inhabitants of the earth continued to practice the principles which they taught, the same results would have followed, not only in the first century of the Christian era, but through every succeeding century down to our day. For it is recorded in the Scriptures, and none who believe in them can doubt the truth of the saying, that God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

He, Himself, says, "For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." This is the character of our Father and our God. At all times and under all circumstances in every age and generation, when men have bowed before Him and have sought Him in the way He has appointed, He has heard their prayers and granted to them the desires of their hearts, and has blessed them according to the faith they have exercised in Him.

Everything that we have on record from those who have had any acquaintance with His attributes or who have had familiar intercourse with Him confirms this view of His character. When men sought after Him in faith in the days of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the prophets, and then again in the days of Jesus and His apostles, the same results followed the exercise of their faith. All may not have had direct and personal intercourse with Him, but all received the blessings they sought, and the guidance of His unerring wisdom has been granted unto them. This is proved from the first record made by Moses, down to the last made by John the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos. We have no account of a generation, or of an individual, even, who served God and kept His commandments, that did not receive peculiar manifestations and blessings from Him. No one was left in doubt or darkness; no one had to be guided by tradition or by the teachings of others alone; but everyone, in every age and generation, received peculiar manifestations and blessings down to the time that John closed his record.

Seeing that this is the character of our Father in heaven and of the Gospel of His Son Jesus Christ, how is it that, today, there is opposition, strife and uncertainty among those who call themselves the disciples of Jesus, if He is, as the Scriptures say, "the same yesterday, today and for- ever?" This is an inquiry that every man, who professes any faith whatever, in Christ, should make, even if he does not endorse the idea that has been taught and testified to by the Latter-day Saints, viz., that God is a God of revelation, and that He has revealed Himself again in the latter days as He did in former days. For my part, with the view I now have respecting God, with the light that has been thrown upon my mind by the teachings of the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I could not be satisfied unless I had something more than the world say it is possible for men to obtain at the present time. I could not be satisfied with the records that we have in our midst containing the testimony of men who lived hundreds of years ago. I could not be satisfied to base my faith, and my hopes of salvation and future glory upon a testimony of what they realized any more than I could be satisfied when hungry by reading an account of a good meal partaken of by somebody else. I should want something more than this. I should want to know for myself that God is what others have said He is. I should want to know that He lives today, as He did 1,800 or 2,000 years ago, or as He did in the morning of creation. And if it were possible for men, by the exercise of faith, to obtain a knowledge for themselves, I would contend for that knowledge until I obtained it. But the Lord be praised, we are not in this condition. We know that God is the same that He was yesterday or in the days of Jesus. We know He is the same God that He was in the days of Noah, Moses, Abraham, and other prophets who lived previous to the coming of Jesus Christ. We know this because we have obeyed the form of doctrine taught anciently, which has been revealed again in our days, and we have received the same testimony that the people of God enjoyed anciently. We have repented of our sins, have been baptized for the remission of them by those having authority; have had hands laid upon us for the reception of the Holy Ghost, according to the practice of the apostles of Jesus in ancient times, and we have received the promised spirit and its gifts, which bear witness unto us that we are born of God, that He is pleased with our offering and has accepted us.

It is no wonder that we are united; it is no wonder that men from various nations who have come to the Territory of Utah are united. They have been alike in their obedience, and are alike in their faith and testimony. It is no wonder that for five hundred miles—from the extreme north to south of this Territory—settlements have been formed, whose inhabitants dwell together in unity and peace, worshiping God in the same manner, submitting to the same requirements and obeying the same ordinances. These are the results of obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These are the results which followed obedience to that Gospel anciently; and these results would have continued to the present day had that Gospel and the authority to preach it been preserved from the apostles downward.

There is no better evidence that new revelation is needed than is to be found today throughout so-called Christendom. Visit the cities of Christendom outside of this Territory, and what do you see? Confusion and division; the churches and meetinghouses of various denominations with their spires pointing heavenward, and people passing and repassing to fill these places of worship, all professing to worship the same God and to believe in Jesus Christ and the Bible, upon which they profess their faith is founded; and yet when you converse with them as to their form of doctrine, one will tell you that to believe in Jesus Christ and to repent from sin is all that is necessary to secure salvation; another will say that in addition to this you must be baptized, and that if you are baptized, having faith in Jesus Christ and repenting of your sins, you are sure of salvation if you continue. One will tell you that sprinkling constitutes baptism, and that a few drops of water sprinkled on your forehead is all that is necessary; another will contend that this alone is not sufficient, but that you must have water poured out upon you. Another says neither of these methods is right, but that you must be immersed in water; while still another will tell you it makes no difference whether you are sprinkled, immersed or have the water poured upon you, and that whether you obey any of these ordinances or not you are sure of salvation if you only come to the foot of the cross and cast your burden of sin there.

These are the kinds of faiths that exist in Christendom at the present time, and they are all, professedly, based upon the Scriptures, forgetting that portion of Paul's epistle which I quoted to you—"though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed;" also forgetting that Paul says, "there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism." Not two, half a dozen or a hundred faiths, nor two, three or four forms of baptism; but Paul actually says, "one Lord, one faith and one baptism." I say there is no better evidence to be found of the necessity of new revelation from heaven than the condition of the world at the present time in these respects.

It is gratifying to reflect that this condition of things is likely soon to be ended, and that the same gifts, blessings and powers, as formerly existed, with the same results, so far as union, harmony and love are concerned, are restored, and are now in existence among the inhabitants of the earth. It ought to be a cause of thanksgiving, not only to the Latter-day Saints, but to every man who loves his fellow men, to witness that which is now being produced in the midst of the earth, the results of which we see in this Territory. I do not believe that a man who has any love for his fellow men can contemplate this condition of things without having his heart filled with joyous feelings. It is a source of wonder and gratitude to contemplate the fact that, a few years ago, a few apparently insignificant and illiterate men went forth bearing testimony that God had again spoken from the heavens, and had revealed the everlasting Gospel in its ancient purity and power, and that through this testimony thousands, from the various nations of the earth and the islands of the sea, have been gathered to these valleys, and are able to bear the same testimony. When I contemplate these facts my mind is swallowed up with admiration, and my heart is filled with gratitude and praise to our heavenly Father for the great work which He has founded and carried on successfully in the midst of the most determined opposition, and I feel that we, of all people now living, should thank and praise our Father and God that our lot has been cast upon the earth when these great events are in progress.

I know that the cry of "delusion" and "false prophets" is raised on every hand, and that the people, generally say, and have been saying for years, that "the Latter-day Saints are deceived, and that their organization will speedily come to an end." Yet, despite these sayings, the work of God still goes on and is making rapid strides towards the fulfillment of that high destiny which its Author has predicted concerning it. When you compare this work with the work that was done by Christ and His apostles you will find a great analogy between the two. If we are everywhere

spoken against and our names cast out as evil, they were served the same way; if we are hated, so were they; if we are despised and condemned, they were not considered worthy the society of their contemporaries, many of whom thought they were doing God service by killing them. If we were the first whose names have been cast out as evil, or if this generation were the first that had hated the truth, our case would be pitiable indeed; but in every age, from the days of Noah down to the age of the apostles, this has been invariably the case. Every man to whom the heavens have been opened and who has received revelations from God has been hated by his fellows; his life has been sought, and he has had no peace on the earth. No matter how numerous such persons have been they have been hunted and driven. So true is this that Stephen the martyr, when being stoned to death, taunted the Jews with their unbelief and the acts of their ancestors. Said he, "which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One."

Most of the prophets that ever lived on the earth, of whom we have any account, have suffered martyrdom. And not only has this been the case with the prophets, but also with Jesus himself, that Being who came to the earth clothed with the power and authority of the Godhead—although His glory was hid from men. He who spake as never man spake, and labored as never man labored in the midst of the children of men, performing mighty miracles and doing wonderful works, but what kind of treatment did He receive? He was hated, spit upon, cast out from among men, and finally killed; and His disciples and apostles after Him shared the same fate.

We have a glorious array of predecessors; and it is a source of consolation and encouragement that we do not stand alone in this respect, and that in former times, men have been hated and despised as we are hated and despised, today, and for no other cause than for preaching the truth in its purity and standing up in defense of holy and pure principles revealed from heaven. In fact the persecutions and hatred the Latter-day Saints have been called to pass through, instead of being an evidence against, are an evidence in favor of the truth of the work they are engaged in. Jesus says, "woe unto you when all men speak well of you." He warned His disciples of danger when their names were honored and when all men spoke well of them.

I have said that the Lord has blessed His servants in sending them forth to preach the Gospel. The same results have followed their preaching as followed the preaching of the Apostles of Jesus anciently. Those who obeyed their teachings were united, so are the Latter-day Saints. I have seen them, and so have you, coming from the four quarters of the earth, mingling together, not knowing each other's language, nor familiar with each other—baptized by men whom they had never before seen—men who had never gathered to Zion nor associated with the heads of the Church; but who, like Paul, had received it away from the Center Stake or place where the authorities resided; and yet they could all testify in their own languages, to one another, that they had received the Gospel of Jesus, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in consequence of their obedience to the form of doctrine taught unto them; and they are able to dwell together here in this Territory in peace, love and union, although, as I have said, brought up in different countries and trained in different creeds. What more could the Gospel have done when preached by the apostles? What more did it do when preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost? The results which Jesus prayed for have been fully realized in the day in which we live, and in the midst of the people to which we belong.

It may be asked why should not these results be realized by this people? I have told you that God is the same yesterday, today and forever; I have told you that the Spirit of God produces the same results and the same testimony all the world over. And why should it not? Is there anything strange about that? It would be strange if it did not do so. If there be anything strange, wonderful or worthy of remark it is that among those professing to be the followers of Christ and claiming to be His ministers, there is not that love, union and knowledge in these days which were possessed by those who believed in Him anciently. It is strange that men professing to be followers of Jesus today do not enjoy the same manifestations and blessings as they did who believed in Him anciently.

There is one thing worthy of note in this connection, and that is, that when Joseph Smith first proclaimed to the people that God had spoken from the heavens and sent His holy angels to minister to him, and bestowed upon him the knowledge and authority necessary to build up the Church, he met with opposition and ridicule on every hand. Scarcely a man whom he met would acknowledge that such a thing was possible or at all consistent with God's mode of dealing with the children of men in these days. It is true that he was successful in convincing a few that he

had the testimony of Jesus. They obeyed God's doctrine taught to them and received the testimony; but for years after he started out to make this proclamation he had this kind of opposition to contend with. But he said the time would come when there would be strong delusion and lying spirits permitted to come forth among the people. He declared that God had restored the priesthood to the earth, and the ordinances of the Gospel, and had established His Church in its purity; and that those who did not believe the testimony of the servants of God and obey it, would be given over to hardness of heart and become subject to evil influences that were known nothing of previous to the establishing of the Church and the restoration of the priesthood.

Years elapsed before this prediction was fulfilled, but it was eventually verified. I recollect very well the first time I got any intimation of it. I was on the Sandwich Islands on a mission; I had stepped into the house of a man who afterwards became a member of the Church. I happened to pick up a book, upon examining which, I found a good many things that struck me as being very strange. I thought, at first that it must be a work written by the Latter-day Saints; but I soon found that it was not. The argument of the writer was in favor of communication with the spirit world, through the ministering of angels, being as possible in these days as at former times. He used precisely similar arguments to those used by the Elders of this Church; and quoted largely from the Bible to prove that it had been quite common for men in ancient days to have such communications and to possess the gift of prophecy and the spirit of revelation, and he argued in favor of these modes of communication in these days. I was very much surprised at seeing such principles advocated by this book; but immediately, the recollection of Joseph's predictions flashed across my mind. I was but young at the time he made the remark, but I recollected it. I have had opportunities of watching the growth and development of this movement from that day to the present time. I have come in contact with many who profess to believe in spiritual communication; and in traveling through the United States at the present time you will find a great many individuals who entertain this belief. What has produced this change? Why, it is the very thing which Paul said would come. The people in his day would not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved, "therefore" said he, "for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." They would not believe the testimony of the servants of God, therefore they were given up to hardness of heart and spiritual blindness. When these things overtake them they are ready to fall in with any spirit or influence that will manifest itself amongst them in an extraordinary manner.

For years after the truth was revealed men would continue to ask for a sign. "If you are the men you profess to be," they would say, "give us some miracle—cause the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear, or the lame to walk, that we may know you are sent of God." How many thousands of times have the Elders been urged to give some exhibition of power that men might know they were sent of God. Thousands and thousands of times have professed ministers of the Gospel made this request of them. They would not believe the words of Jesus that "these signs shall follow them that believe;" but they wanted the Elders to give signs to prove that Jesus told the truth. You know what Jesus says respecting those who wanted signs—"It is a wicked and adulterous generation that seek a sign, but no sign shall be given them."

The Elders of this Church have proved the truth of the words of Jesus, that it is a wicked and adulterous generation that seek for a sign. You will generally find that they are wicked men who ask for this kind of evidence. A wicked man is not satisfied with the truth or with the testimony of the servants of God, nor with the calm, heavenly influence of the spirit of God which rests down upon those who receive the truth in honesty. No, such a man wants a sign; he wants to hear somebody speak in tongues, or to see the eyes of the blind opened, or the deaf made to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, or the dead raised to life. Something of this kind he must have; the testimony of the truth, though borne with angel's power, has no effect on such a heart. He wants something to convince his outward senses. Thousands of such have rejected the Gospel of life and salvation as they did in the days of Jesus. They then rejected the testimony of the servants of God, and they hardened their hearts against it. But as soon as something came along that gratified them in the way they wanted—something that could tip a table or give some other singular manifestation of power, such as feeling invisible hands laid upon them, or hearing music played by invisible performers, or something of this character, they were convinced immediately that it was possible for spiritual beings to communicate with mortals, and now the Spiritualists number their converts by millions; they probably number more than any other denomination, if they can be called a denomination. They

boast of their success.

In this manner the nations of the earth are being subjected to strong delusions; and you will find that as the kingdom of God increases, and as the work spreads abroad and the priesthood gains power and influence in the earth, these systems will gain power and influence, and that strong delusion will increase and spread among the inhabitants of the earth. They did not make their appearance until this Church was organized and the testimony of its truth had been borne; but as soon as the genuine priesthood was restored the bogus or counterfeit made its appearance; and as this work increases in strength and potency in the earth, so will these delusions of which I speak, until those who reject the truth will be bound up in a strong delusion and delivered over to hardness of heart. It is written that "the spirit of God will not always strive with man," and when the truth is offered to men and they reject it, that spirit will be withdrawn and another influence and spirit will take possession of them, and they will be led captive by the Adversary.

But this is not the case with the work of God; the testimony of those who have embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ is different in this respect. It is as it was of old—"line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little." God has revealed to His people according to their strength to receive. He has given to them knowledge just as wise parents give it to their children. He has not bestowed upon them something that would destroy them; but He has given to them light upon light and knowledge upon knowledge in order to lead them along and train them in the path of righteousness which will ultimately lead them back into His presence. What joy, peace, love and union have been bestowed upon those who have embraced the Gospel of Jesus Christ! What light has been shed upon their minds in relation to the Scriptures! No sooner have they gone forth into the waters of baptism for the remission of their sins and had hands laid upon them for the Holy Ghost than it has seemed as though a heavenly peace has taken possession of them. Who, that can recollect anything about the time they entered the Church and their subsequent experience, cannot say that they felt unspeakable gratitude to God for the blessings they received? It has been "like the dew from heaven descending." It has descended upon the people and filled them with peace, and has knit their hearts together in love, and they have rejoiced in the power which God has manifested in their behalf. But they have not had these wonderful manifestations of which we read among the Spiritualists; there has been no necessity for them.

There is something remarkable in the growth and development of Spiritualism. When Joseph declared that angels had come from heaven and had manifested themselves to him in bodily presence, and had laid their hands upon him, his testimony was rejected, the people declaring him to be an impostor, a false prophet, and not worthy to live; and they were not satisfied until they had killed him. But how changed has all become since then! What advancement the world has made in beliefs of this kind! You may tell almost anything about spiritual manifestations, and the people are ready to believe it—that is, if it is outside of the priesthood and does not come from the Latter-day Saints; their statements are received with as much incredulity and scorn as ever.

Well, the difference between the two systems is apparent. The Latter-day Saints are united, just as Jesus Christ prayed that His followers might be. It is true that we are not yet one as the Father and the Son are one; but we are approximating thereto. The principle of oneness is in our midst and is continually growing. But how is it with those who are the base imitators of the servants of God? Why a thousand vagaries are indulged in by them. There is no form of belief in which they unite; there is no union amongst them. They are divided and separated into thousands of fragments, all having their own peculiar ideas and views. Is the work of God rolled forth by them? Are the inhabitants of the earth benefited by them? Is the earth made better, more beautiful or lovely by their labors, or by the revelations they receive? No, there are no fruits of this kind to be witnessed among them; but all is division, confusion and chaos. There is nothing to cement them together or make them one. But the work God has established is rolling forth with giant strides and accomplishing great results. It is bringing thousands of the poor and ignorant from the nations of the earth and emancipating them from the poverty, thralldom and bondage under which they and their fathers before them have groaned for generations; and it is revealing to them the Gospel of peace, the plan of salvation and planting them in a land of freedom, and bestowing upon them every blessing which the heart of man desires. In addition to this it is producing mental results of a wonderful and elevating character. It bestows upon those who obey its precepts heavenly knowledge, makes them wise in all things,

causing them to become an infinitely better people than they were before. Who cannot see, if he will open his eyes to the evidence that God has caused to accomplish His work, which is God's work and which is the Adversary's?

In speaking in this strain I am speaking of what I know. I am not telling you what John, Peter or Paul said 1,800 years ago, and what Moses left on record. I stand here as a witness, corroborating what they have written. I know for myself that God has spoken from the heavens and restored the everlasting Gospel in its purity to the earth; that He has ordained His servants and given them the power and authority which were held and enjoyed in ancient days. I know that He has restored to the earth the ordinances of the Gospel and the Holy Ghost with its gifts and blessings. These things I have received and have enjoyed them myself, hence I know they are true. I know God is the same yesterday, today and for ever, and bestows His blessings upon all who will humble themselves before Him, and seek unto Him in the name of Jesus.

May God help us all to live so as to secure and preserve this testimony is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.