

# SUPPLEMENT TO THE SAINTS' HERALD.

LAMONI, IOWA, JULY 8, 1893.

[Reported for the HERALD by Belle B. Robinson.]

## SERMON BY ELDER HEMAN C. SMITH,

DELIVERED AT

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE, LAMONI, IOWA, MONDAY, APRIL 10, 1893.

Subject, DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH.

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables." This is the expressed sentiment of the Apostle Peter, and as I look at the work that we are engaged in I think I can fully indorse that sentiment; can say that we have not followed cunningly devised fables. If there is one reason more than another which should convince us of that fact, it is the events that have transpired in connection with this work in the last sixty years. Laying aside all spiritual testimony in regard to the work, all manifestations of miraculous powers, it seems to me even then that the sober mind cannot fail to see that the work that we are engaged in is the work of a divine mind. It was stated in the beginning by one whom we believe spoke by the inspiration of God, that all creeds then existing were abominable in the sight of the Lord. I do not blame the people of those times for receiving that statement with criticism and with doubt. I believe that the people now, ourselves not excepted, would not receive a statement like that without seriously questioning it, though it might be true; but when the same individuals that questioned it then, or their successors in the work that they then represented, come forward after a half century has elapsed and declare that that statement is true, it awakens in the thoughtful mind the reflection that possibly the young man told the truth.

In all that I have ever heard from the representatives of this latter-day work (and I have heard some pretty severe statements made) I have never heard the creeds of that time so severely arraigned as the representatives of those creeds have arraigned

them in the last few years. And when we look upon the other side of the question and consider the work that was claimed at that time had its origin with God, when the light of the nineteenth century has been thrown upon it, as the world has been moving on, and men have been learning, and making rapid advances, when all this light of the age has been reflected upon the work of our fathers we have seen no reason why the creed (if it might be called a creed) should be revised. We see no reason to-day why it should be. While others are revising as light comes to them, as intelligence dawns upon their minds in regard to God and his work, we stand to-day where our fathers stood, and we are prouder of it the more we examine the foundation upon which they stood. I remark, if we lay aside all marvelous manifestations of the Spirit and not consider them at all, then the reflective mind cannot but see that there must have been a divine intelligence behind this great latter-day work that presented to the world in that time a system of religion that all the light that has since come has not shown any defects in.

But while this is true, my brethren, I am conscious of the fact that in this work in which we are engaged there is weakness, that is in its practical workings; and I do not wonder at it. I have learned to expect it, and looking from the standpoint from which I now view it I should be surprised, indeed, if I did not recognize, not only in our own time, but in the history of the past, that mistakes have been made. The work in which we are engaged we have been in the habit of

calling God's work. In some sense it is God's work; in another sense it is our work; it is your work; it is my work. A system of religion which seeks to reconcile man to God must represent both God and man. If it were all God, and we had no part in it, we might expect that in the practical workings of it we would find no evidence of weakness, no mistakes; but as it is a work that comprehends God and man, we may expect because of the material of which it is composed that mistakes will occur. The whole is weakened always by the weakness of its parts; if the parts are weak; if we are in any sense weak to-day; if those who preceded us have been weak, it has weakened in its practical operation the work in which we are, or they are engaged; and if when we consider this we see that the ranks are broken here and there, if we see that serious mistakes have been made, we can account for it by the fact that in this great latter-day work there is an element that is not perfect. And we may not expect that it shall become perfect suddenly; we may expect that if it shall ever become perfect, and all the parts of this grand work shall have grown into a perfect system or a perfect unity, that if they are to become fit to dwell with God and partake of his perfection, that it will be a hard struggle to attain to it.

I read in the revelations of the Apostle John that when he saw that innumerable company of the heavens above that it was told him that they were they who had come up through much tribulation and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. When I see a work like that commencing upon the foundation of truth, and yet because of the weakness of the elements of which it is composed that it struggles hard and sometimes it seems that the trials are almost sufficient to overwhelm it, I see an indication that this is the work of God. I have no confidence in that kind of religion that by it in an instant of time men grow from nature to grace and are placed in a position that they cannot sin before God. It does not agree with the Scriptures as I understand them. I

understand that the Scriptures teach that a man has to gradually come to that degree of perfection that will enable him to make his calling and election sure with God and prepare him for that reign of peace that men have been promised in future time.

I am told by the Psalmist David that the righteous shall flourish as a palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. How is that? So far as I have been able to observe, both these trees used as figures here, are of slow growth. We might think when we first read that statement that it indicates a rapid growth, "He shall flourish as a palm tree." But the palm tree is of remarkably slow growth. It has in it, like all the rest of the works of God and the creations of God, the germ of life, and God has ordained that through the law he has appointed it shall gather from the earth and air, from the conditions surrounding it, that material that will gradually bring it unto perfection. So with the cedar tree; and if the righteous shall flourish as the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon, I cannot but believe that the people who are the people of God must be surrounded with conditions from which they may gather that which will add to their spiritual strength and spiritual growth, and that like the palm tree or cedar, that growth may be a very gradual one, but the growth is there; if it continues in a healthy condition, it will grow as certainly as God lives.

There is no such thing as failure so long as it is in a condition of health. The Prophet Malachi tells us that which I believe to be in perfect harmony with the statement of the psalmist when he speaks of the righteous. He says, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." It is supposed that the calves of the stall grow more rapidly than those who are not taken care of, who do not receive special care, but are turned out to live or die. And so with the people of God. They must have the special care of God before they can grow. There is no such

thing as their getting to perfection in a moment of time; there is no such thing as their arriving at that degree that they are aiming at without an effort upon their part, without struggling against adverse circumstances, taking advantage of the things that are in their favor, gathering from the conditions surrounding them that which will cause them to grow and become strong. God does all his work in that way. He has never been known to create the tall cedar of the forest in a moment, but he plants within the little seed from which that tree must grow, the germ of life; and when it is placed in proper conditions, with the proper amount of warmth and dampness, it sprouts, and grows, and gathers strength from time to time to resist the efforts of the storm; naturally it grows until it becomes the mighty cedar, and so with everything else that God has created. He never did create the tall palm tree, or cedar, or any of his works of nature, in one moment, or even in a day or a year. That is the difference between God's work and man's work. We always do the very best we can. When we undertake to do anything we make it just as near perfect as we possibly can, and it is right we should because we know that when we leave that work, it will remain right where we left it. We haven't the power to put the germ of life into it, and let it grow and develop and become perfect afterwards, so it is necessary if we are going to do anything that we do it as near right and as near perfect as possible at first. God is not under that necessity. He doesn't need to make it just as perfect as it ought to be, because he has the power to place in it the germ of life and surround it with the means of development so it will become perfect afterwards.

What is true in regard to man's growth is true in regard to the growth of the kingdom of God. We do not expect that the kingdom of God shall spring into completeness in a day or a year, and perhaps not in the lifetime of the men who first helped to plant it by the inspiration of God. There is a fit representation of the work of God and the work of man found in the

dream of Nebuchadnezzar that the most of you are familiar with. We are told by the Prophet Daniel that the king dreamed a dream, and he said: "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces," etc. Now I call your attention to that, not for the purpose of preaching to you the old stereotyped sermon of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, but to point out to you the contrast between the work of God and the work of man. This great image represented the work of man. Its form was terrible; it was a magnificent sight, doubtless, to look upon, and if you had the privilege of looking upon it to-night, the light reflecting back the rays from the burnished gold, it would be a sight that you would look upon with admiration. If beside or near that image as it stood before you to-night there lay a little stone, you would never see it, probably. It would not attract your attention, as your eyes would be riveted upon that grand image that stood before you. That represents the work of man, just as grand as it could possibly be made by the intelligence of man; the other represents the work of God; the little stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands represented God's work. To look upon them even at the time that Daniel saw them, we would have been led to believe that the work of man is the superior.

Just so it is in regard to other things. When the works of man and the works of God, (so far as church building is concerned,) are presented to you side by side, the work of man is the more attractive; it attracts your eye, excites your admiration, and invites your attention, and the work of God is naturally lost sight of because of these little things. But as

we pursue the history of this work that we saw represented there, we discover that the work of man in all its glory, and perfection, and beauty to which it had arrived at that time,—so represented at least,—that it was then at the height of its glory, and afterwards went down. There was nothing in it to perpetuate it; there was no life in it, and as the years passed by it crumbled, it fell, and became as the dust of the summer's threshing floor. But that little stone, which if it had been before you to-night you probably would not have noticed, represented the work of God. In it was the element of strength, in it was life, and it began to grow and move on in majesty, and power, and dominion, until it filled the whole earth. That is God's work and man's work fitly contrasted; the one having in it the elements of growth, the other having in it the elements of destruction; and even in the very building of man's work they sow the seeds of dissolution that sooner or later will cause it to crumble and fall. That is the reason why I said in the beginning that I could indorse the sentiment of the Apostle Peter, that we have not followed cunningly devised fables.

So far during the years that have passed we have seen the work that we are engaged in move onward. If not as we desired to see it move, yet it has moved; and though the world has received light, and there has been thrown upon the work light from every direction, it stands where it stood then without the necessity of revision, while the others are acknowledged by their own advocates as abominable and corrupt, and the necessity to revise creeds is seen upon every hand, that they may be saved from ruin.

Christ, in all the parables that he used, always represented the kingdom of God as being a very little thing to begin with. He did not come to establish a church in its perfection and glory, as some would have had him do, and enlist his followers under his banner, and go forth and conquer the world by force, and establish his kingdom upon the ruins of the fallen empires of the world. No, sir. Just as

he has done in nature, so he did in this. He planted the seed that had the germ of life in it; he surrounded it with conditions from which it could gather strength; and as it gathered strength he knew that it would become stronger and stronger, and move right on, and accomplish the work that he intended it should do. Now, we could not do that. You know that when we leave our work it is done. As I said before, in nearly all the parables he used, he brought out this thought, that the kingdom of God would be very insignificant in the eyes of the world and not be noticed in its beginnings. In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew we are told that he spake many things unto them. He compared the kingdom of God unto the seed that was sown, a very little thing indeed. If it were surrounded with proper conditions, it brought forth fruit; if the conditions were not favorable, no fruit was borne. And he tells us further, in another parable in this same chapter, that "the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, . . . which is the least of all seeds." Now he compares, as I understand him, the kingdom of God with other kingdoms, in *this*; that as the mustard seed is smaller than other seeds, so the kingdom of God would be smaller than other kingdoms. Not that it should be completed or have the apparent strength of others; it was only necessary that it should be planted, and it would grow, and the conditions with which he surrounded it would give it the development necessary. Likened unto a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, and yet he says it grew, and became a great tree, and put forth branches, and the birds of the air came and lodged therein.

And again he says of the kingdom of heaven, that "it is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal." She hid it, it could not be seen; but there was in that leaven the material that affected the particles next to it, and kept on affecting others, until the whole was leavened. That is the kingdom of God. It has life, it has power, whether it is seen by us or not; it is at work.

In the fourth chapter of Mark you will read this language: "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." Now the kingdom of God is like a seed that a man planted in the ground. It grew, and he knew not how. We do not know how seed grows, we cannot tell anything about it, only we know it does grow. We have had experience enough, so we are not uneasy about it. We go out and plant the seed in the soil, and we are not anxious about the future. We know that there grain will grow, and if we wait and wait patiently, the harvest will come. If we undertake to tell how it grows we will make a failure. So is the kingdom of God; we do not know how it grows. And when I contemplate the work we are engaged in I see before me obstacles to overcome that I do not know how we are going to meet. Then when I look back it is just as much a mystery how we have overcome the things that are past. I do not know how we do it. We get over them some way, get past them; and the kingdom of God goes on. The Church of God has been moving on gradually, manifesting weakness in its operation, because, as I said before, it is composed largely of weak material; but I believe, on the other hand, there is such strength in the material of which it is composed that it will finally triumph, that is if the weak part of it keeps close to the part that is strong, that it may receive the strength of the strong, and that the whole may not be broken.

I expect, as I said before, to see these weaknesses manifested. I expect, further, to see mistakes made, even by inspired men; not because they are inspired, not as a result of their inspiration; but because they are not sufficiently inspired to make them infallible, because notwithstanding

their inspiration there still remains weakness, and that weakness will be made manifest; but I depend upon the strength that is in the kingdom of God, supplied by him who is a part of this great work, with whom we are made colaborers, to give it that strength and that stability that will cause it yet to overcome.

And now if the kingdom of God is to be likened unto seed that is planted in the ground, that grows we know not how, first the blade, and then the ear, and then the ripe corn in the ear, there is something worth thinking about. That *seed* that is sown represents the kingdom of God; that *blade* that springs from the earth represents the kingdom of God; but they do not look very much alike. They bear no resemblance to each other, and as that seed grows and the ear begins to form, it presents still another appearance that is not much like the second stage of its development; and by and by it is going to move on until the ripe corn appears, and then it is not going to look much like it did when the ear begins to appear.

Now when I am told, (as I have been told by some of the old time Saints,) that the church is not what it used to be, is not like it used to be, I feel in my heart to say, "Thank God for that!" If the kingdom of God in the first place is likened unto a grain of wheat that is buried in the ground, and it is always just the same thing, just like it used to be, we will have no blade, no ear, no ripe corn in the ear.

I imagine that sometimes I see a man who becomes so thoroughly interested in this stalk of corn as it begins to grow that he comes along and examines the blade as it is just beginning to spring from the earth, and looks at it very particularly; even goes so far as to measure it and see how tall it is, notes its color, and all about it, and he goes away with the thought that if he ever sees a stalk of corn he will know what it is. After months have elapsed, he comes along by the same place and looks for his stalk of corn, and some say, "That is the same stalk of corn you saw before." He says, "I know better, it does not look like it in any way; it is not the

same thing, and I know it is not." I have found people just like that in my travels who were identified with the Church of God in the years past, men who have stopped right there, and have not kept up with the developments that have been going on in this the work of the Church of God. They have gone out somewhere, and stood aloof from it, and have not lived according to their spiritual privileges, and when you come and present to them this church, and tell them, "Here is the same thing that you embraced in early years," they say "It is not so; I have measured it and it doesn't measure like the other one did;" and they reject it.

Now there are also conditions that must surround the church in different stages of its existence that would not be proper in other stages. When the grain is planted in the ground it is necessary the soil shall cover it, it is necessary that it shall be shut out from the air and the sunlight to a certain extent; but when it begins to grow, and the blade appears, and the stalk of grain stretches heavenward, then you don't want it covered up, then you don't want the same conditions that you had before, the same surroundings that you had before; but you want the air and sunlight, or you will kill your corn. So with the kingdom of God. There are conditions surrounding it from time to time that are different. As the kingdom of God grows, and extends, and becomes stronger, thank God he has seen what the world would be, has looked forward and seen the development of this age, he has given his church material from which they could gather strength and be equal to the emergency, that in the day and in the hour that they were called upon to act they would be ahead of the world. Remain in the same condition all the time while the world moves on, and you will find the world ahead of you by and by.

The kingdom of God is likened unto the seed that is planted in the ground, having the germ of life in it, and the elements surrounding it that will cause its growth and development. I am glad of that. That is like God,

and when I am considering a thing whether it be of God or not, I ask the question among other questions, "Is it like God?" And I have determined that this work that we are engaged in has been like God. God begins everything in that way. He is not afraid to trust his power, and he is not anxious in regard to the result whenever he knows there is life in the thing planted, for it will grow. So just as he causes the flower to grow from the seed, as the tree springs up from the little atoms in which its germ is first placed, so the kingdom of God will grow; and so you, as individuals, will grow, my friends, if you have the life in you, if you have the germ of truth in you that is planted in you by the gospel of Jesus Christ, you will grow.

Not long ago I heard a brother say that he was discovering all the time as he went along that he had weaknesses that he did not realize he had before, and those weaknesses became so apparent, and were multiplying so upon him, that it discouraged him. I told him he ought to be encouraged over that; that the only reason why he had not seen those weaknesses before was because he did not know enough; they had certainly existed there, but now as he was getting strength, and light, and intelligence, they were made manifest to him. It was a certain indication that the man was growing. So it is when we see our weaknesses all the time becoming more and more apparent; it is evidence that we can see better than we did before, and we can remedy them. We could not remedy them before we saw them; it would have been impossible to do so. We did not know they were there. Now we can take steps and improve, and eradicate those things that were wrong.

I do not know, but it may surprise you a little when I tell you that I believe that when it was stated out in the valleys of the mountains that the church had outgrown the books, and that they were useless, that it was simply an extreme view of a correct principle. I believe that the church is growing, ought to be growing, and that they have outgrown some things;

but it is an extreme view to say that they have outgrown the books. There may have been some things in the books that they had outgrown; there might have been some commandments given under peculiar circumstances to provide for certain emergencies; there might have been local commandments given for certain purposes that they needed no longer because the emergency had ceased to exist; but the principles of truth reflected in the gospel of Jesus Christ were taught in those books, the very germ of life itself was contained therein, and when they flattered themselves that they had outgrown them, they made a mistake, and it is an evidence of decay rather than of growth. The principle that the church was growing, had outgrown some things, ought to have outgrown some things, I believe to have been correct; or it ought to have been so if it was not. There were conditions that surrounded the church at one time that undoubtedly called for certain things that no longer were needed, but they could no more live without the principles of life, the fundamental principles of the gospel contained in those books, than the plant that represents the kingdom of God could grow without the sunshine or the rain.

I trust that as a church we may live near enough to God, that as a people we may be so mindful of our privileges that in every hour of need as the church moves on, as I trust it will move, we may receive light, we may receive intelligence, we may receive wisdom sufficient for the hour, sufficient for the emergencies that arise from time to time; and while I thank God that the church is not as it used to be, that as the plant that represents it changes in appearance, so the church changes in its growth as it becomes nearer maturity, — so I thank God for the hope that I have that the church will not always be what it is now. I believe that the time will come when those who follow after us will tread upon heights where now we dare not step, and with a firm hand will there unfurl the banner of truth and

invite people to come up higher than we have ever been. Unless this church has been standing still all the time, unless it has had no element of growth in it, it is to-day in a better condition than it was in years that are past and the rays of truth, reflected from the divine mind are guiding it; so it need not look backward but onward. I would hate to think that it is where it used to be; I would hate to think that we needed to be surrounded with exactly the same conditions and provided with exactly the same provisions that they were provided with when under the emergencies which they had to meet. I believe the kingdom of God is progressing and will progress until these weaker elements that help to compose it shall have emerged into a oneness in Christ, and until they shall have overcome every weakness, when the triumphant kingdom of God shall take the place of this now broken and straggling force that composes the kingdom of God militant; that God's people will go on and on until they shall be given the kingdom under the whole heavens, and take it and possess it forever and ever.

We have not followed cunningly devised fables, and the time will come if we follow on, looking forward and not backward, that we will see the kingdom of God arise in its glory, and majesty, and power. I believe in this latter-day work if there is weakness manifest in it. It is my all. In it I have my only hope, and I hope to see it become stronger and greater, and I believe the time is not far distant—it may be nearer than we expect—when it will arise in greater strength than it has hitherto done, and move on to victory and light, and stand nearer to God than it has ever done before; when the light of the past will be eclipsed by the grander light of Zion's future glory.

My whole soul yearns for a closer walk and a deeper communion with God; for more light, more intelligence, more wisdom than we have ever possessed before. And May God grant to bestow it upon us!

## NEEDS POSITIVE MEN.

THE Rev. James G. K. McClure, Acting President of Lake Forest University, preached his baccalaureate sermon before a large congregation of students and alumni at the First Presbyterian church, Lake Forest, yesterday morning. He made an eloquent plea to the graduating class to cultivate a constructive method in their life-work. He spoke substantially as follows:—

The loftiest of all human lives was constructive rather than destructive. The characteristic of Christ was his emphasis on the affirmative. The negative was never his means or his creed. He entered the world to build up, not to pull down. The positive was what he continually and earnestly offered mankind.

Two methods of action open before every human soul that would be earnest—the constructive and the destructive. Shall the soul choose the destructive, which aims to slaughter all the evils of life, or the constructive, which aims to build up the good everywhere? Surely evil should not be allowed to go unnoticed. Faults are not to be uncorrected. Dens of infamy are to be torn down. There is opportunity for chivalric indignation against wrongs. We dwell upon them till our blood tingles with eagerness for the fray, and we say with what seems to be like holy zeal “These things must not and shall not be.”

Christ's espousal of the constructive method creates a presumption in its favor as the wiser and better. It is not an alluring method in itself. There is too much drudgery, results are too far away, while opportunity for the spicy word, the keen criticism, the eloquent denunciation is immediately at hand. To point out faults in humanity is an easy field to be essayed.

The constructive method of life is the one which thoughtful and wise natures will choose. To remove an evil and not put a good in its stead is to leave the evil free to come back. Cynics may assure the world of its follies, but not one human being is helped and set right by their criticisms. It is not difficult to point out spots in the sun, nor difficult to show the weaknesses of human life, but to make a spotless sun or a mighty humanity is another thing. No special divine afflatus is needed to tell the world it is all wrong, but such an afflatus is needed to set it right. Power in the human soul lies in its sympathy, love, and patience. What sweetness, what tenderness, what humility must be in the heart that seeks to overcome evil with good. We may make the world richer by giving it ideas, deeds, and examples. The benefactors of mankind have always held that the night existed for the day, not the day for the night.

The constructive character puts itself down to the level of men to lift them, not to keep above them. A man must also vow himself to unflinching adherence to known truth. Agnosticism as to general duty in human helpfulness has never existed. All vows will be as nothing unless they come from a heart that means to love fellow-men. Service, faith, persistence in constructive work grow only where love nurtures them.

Christ came never to destroy men but to save them, and it is love sitting to-day triumphant on the throne of the universe that seeks and will ever seek to construct a holy people out of a lost race. It is love on which humanity's welfare rests and from which humanity's glory will be built.