

EXTRA B.

Vol. 4. JUNE, 1897. No. 2.

THE GOSPEL BANNER.

Subscription Price, 25c. Per Year.

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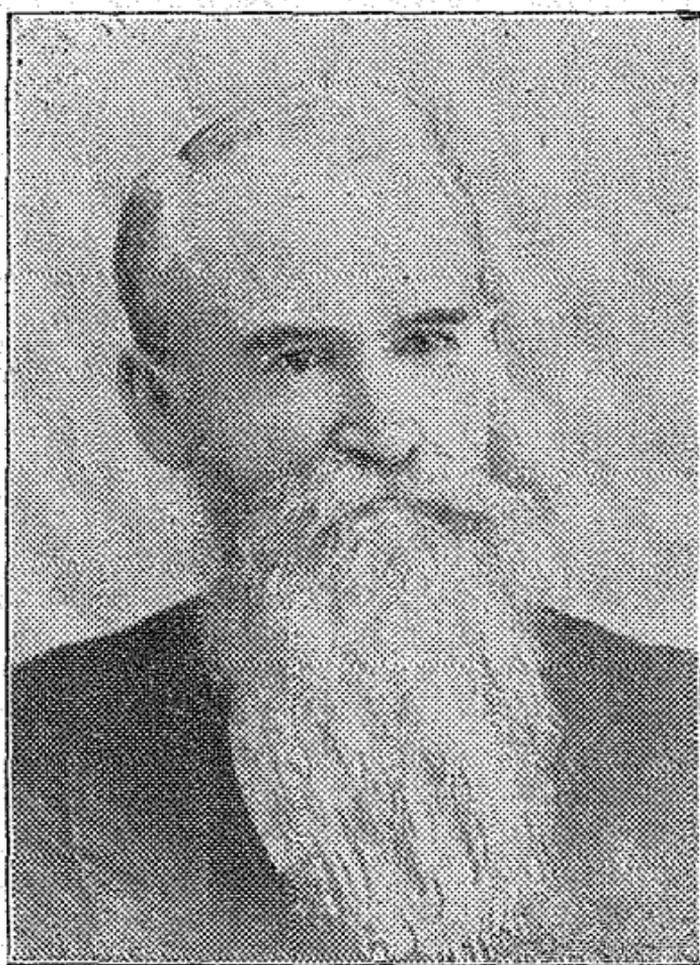
RETROSPECTIVE VIEW

Of the Reorganization.

BY ELDER E. C. BRIGGS.

Entered at the Independence, Mo., Post Office
as Second-Class Mail Matter

Issued Quarterly at the Ensign Publishing
House, Independence, Missouri.



ELDER E. C. BRIGGS.

A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE REORGANIZATION.

BY ELDER E. C. BRIGGS.

It is with no ordinary feelings that I am here with you tonight. Forty-five years ago I was in the first conference of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I understand this is the forty-fifth annual conference of this church which I have the honor of representing and being identified with. When I contrast the difference between this assembly and that which was held forty-five years ago, I can realize that there has been some advancement, great advancement. It is true that we had no house large enough to hold the audience that had there

assembled. It was in God's house, the temple, the grove. He made that house and it was the best house the Reorganized Church had in which to hold its first conference. It was a beautiful little grove about five and one-half miles west of Beloit, Wisconsin, in the town of Newark. The first text which I remember as being used on that occasion, and upon which there was considerable comment afterwards, was, "Let patience have its perfect work." The subject was upon the position of the church as it then stood in relation to its surroundings. It was after having passed the resolution in which the church denounced usurpation, and all of those who had risen up since the death of Joseph Smith, the martyr, the choice seer. These resolutions declared a denunciation of all those that had claimed to be the president of the church, since the cruel martyrdom of the choice seer; and in using the

term, "choice seer," I wish it to be understood and appreciated in this light, that among all the seers which God has permitted to grace this footstool, I believe the choice seer, Joseph, is one that is recognized of God among them all as the choicest. I don't mean to say by this, that he had higher endowments, greater advantages than all others that had ever been, save Jesus Christ, but that he left on record, and laid the foundation of that work to which all of the seers of the past looked down and prophesied of, anticipated its introduction and final triumph and consummation to all their expectations. It is represented that Enoch walked with God for three hundred and sixty-five years. We cannot suppose that such a man, having such a long life in comparison with the choice seer, may not have had many advantages, many endowments that the choice seer did not have. Sometimes I think it is unfortunate for us that he has

not left it on record, and that it has not been permitted to be handed down from father to son until the present time. What he said is locked up in the archives of heaven. So far as humanity is concerned, we have just a few words, in relation to that august person, left among the sons of men, but we have thousands and tens of thousands of words, that have fallen from the mouth of the choice seer who was instrumental in the hands of the Almighty God, of laying the foundation of the work, the marvelous work and a wonder, foreseen by ancient seers, that should bring in everlasting rest, and the consummation of all the hopes of all the prophets since the world began. Hence he is called the choice seer, among all the seers that ever graced the footstool of God.

I am thankful that I live in this age of the world, instead of any other age that has ever been since God walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden; and when I

remember the text that was used forty-five years ago on the 13th of June, in the first General Conference of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, I think that it is a befitting text which might have been, alike, used in the days of Adam, it was these words: "In patience possess ye your souls." "Let patience have its perfect work." Had our father Adam associated with his companion, contemplated the great work that lay before them? Certainly these words were quoted, "In our patience we must possess our souls." Long, long years; century after century must roll on, and on, and on, and eternity alone will end its history, the consummation of the work contemplated in this foundation of the human family that we are about to establish upon the face of the footstool of God. "In patience possess ye your souls." "Let patience have its perfect work."

The subject was presented forty-five years ago, recounting the condition of the work from its rise, when the Almighty, addressing the choice seer, with others, says:

“Therefore, thus saith the Lord unto you, with whom the priesthood hath continued through the lineage of your fathers, for ye are lawful heirs, according to the flesh, and have been hid from the world with Christ in God:—therefore your life and the priesthood hath remained, and must needs remain, through you and your lineage, until the restoration of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began. Therefore, blessed are ye if ye continue in my goodness, a light unto the Gentiles, and through this priesthood a savor unto my people Israel.”

These words were golden letters, let down from the throne of God, dazzling with all its glittering glory, to inspire the sons of men that God has established

his work for the last time, the dispensation of the fullness of time in which God would gather into one, all those things which are in heaven and which are on earth, and the prayer of our blessed Master shall have been answered in its fullness, in its grandeur and in its glory, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." These were the thoughts that permeated our souls forty-five years ago, in relation to the great work in which we are engaged. And we may here remark, that the few who were interested in this work at that time, were alive to its interest, like Ezekiel, Daniel and Hosea of old by the side of the rivers and still waters of the ancient European nation or Asiatic continent, we here in America discovered that God had spoken again to scattered latter day, rejected Israel, saying, "Fear not, my people, for I the Lord hath not changed, and Zion shall be re-inhabited and her people shall

know that the Lord is God, fear not, for I the Lord hold the reins in my own hands." Those who were the first champions of this great work in which we are engaged, were inspirationally moved to know that God is a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God, for by the ministration of his angels, and by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the sons of the saints, not a few of them, but all those who were associated for that time, and for the few years, that associated themselves with *this* great work, were thus made to know that God had again spoken to scattered latter day Israel. I may remark, also, in this connection, that we had opposition, and that opposition came from those, the most bitter enemies, calling themselves saints; they had gathered into many, many little nooks and corners, foreseen by the ancient prophets, and declared to be the land of salt, accursed of God where men should dwell, though

it had been a wilderness before and a desert and a salt land not inhabited, and should not know when good should come, also up to the little island in Lake Michigan, and in many other places these factions had gathered, each of them fulfilling the prophecies that are represented in the sacred volume; the young, the innocent, the pure in heart were wandering to and fro seeking the Lord, and when they had come to these places, supposed to be places of gathering for God's latter day Israel, they went home, empty, disappointed, not having found the word of the Lord. And we remember that the word of the Lord as declared by the ancient apostle, is not the gospel that is in word only. In the language of the apostle, "My gospel came not to you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." None of these scattered Latter Day Saints after the disaster that came upon the church in 1844,

among any of these factions, went and heard the gospel thus taught from the sacred rostrum. They had the word, it is true, written, but in the language of the apostle, it was dead, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, and in violation to the calling of the ministry which says in speaking of those who were sent to minister in word and doctrine. "If you receive not the Spirit you shall not teach." They had the letter which the apostle says, "that killeth" and it did kill, and the result was, that the members of the church, as a mass, grew cold, luke-warm, forgot their family altars, and were gone astray in by and forbidden paths, scattered upon the mountains, without a shepherd.

But in the year 1851 the voice of the Lord came to one of those scattered Latter Day Saints, confirming him that the Lord had not changed concerning Zion, and that in his own time he would call forth one of the seed of him to

whom the promises were made, and Israel should be gathered; and I may here remark, that it was fully appreciated and understood; the language that is found in the revelation of '41 where it says, "Let my servant Joseph and his house have place in that house from generation to generation, for as I said unto Abraham, so I say unto thee, Joseph, in thee and in thy seed shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed, and that your blessing shall be put upon the head of your posterity after you," or after Joseph, not after Brigham Young, James J. Strang, Brewster, Benemy, Glad-din Bishop, and a host of others we might mention, but "upon the head of your posterity after you." We see his blessing, right here, let us remark, that the choice seer was a prophet, a seer, a revelator, a translator, and was not yet a member of the church, neither did he have to receive ordination by the hand of an angel in order, that he might be a proph-

et; but when he had been ordained to the various offices that he occupied and filled, as the choice seer, we may here remark, that the pattern through which he must come, and the door, first, was baptism, consequently after having thus been ordained, according to the law of God to him, to the office of an elder, and the first elder of this church, we read that then, nearly two years afterwards, or in other words, on the 25th day of January, 1832, Joseph Smith was ordained at a conference at Amherst to the office of president of the Melchisedek priesthood, but he was a prophet before he had that ordination. The inquiry might at once be suggested, Who ordained him? I might here affirm the history states that he was ordained at a conference of high priest, elders, priests, teachers and deacons and then by law made the highest officer of this church when there was none who held that office.

Sometimes an inquiry arises in our minds, how can his successor be ordained? Why, he must come in, "as I have told you before." How did he tell us before?

He was appointed by revelation. He was chosen by the body, he was ordained by the direction of the High Council or the General Conference. That is the door, you can all see that. Then we can see readily how his successor may be installed in office in like manner, as was his predecessor, it does not need the prophet, the seer, the revelator, the translator to ordain him, because his father was not so ordained. Why, oh why, should he be called to this office? First, because it was so written in the sacred volume, away down in times of yore, when God conversed with Abraham, the father of the faithful, and after he was tried, oh so severely tried, when from all human expectations, and from every human standpoint, every promise had failed which God had given to

him, then the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, that "Ishmael shall not be thine heir but that Sarah shall have a child," and she laughed at it, it seemed so inconsistent from her standpoint, she was now old, and she denied that she did laugh, but the angel said, "Yes you did." Then says the angel, "Thou shalt have a son, his name shall be Isaac." Afterwards, God said to the faithful Abraham, "Offer up this son, thine only son Isaac, and he to whom the promise was made, that his seed should be as the stars of the firmament, or the sand upon the sea-shore, offer him up as a sacrifice." And I don't want you to think Abraham was in the dark when he did that; he was aware before that, that he who had given him that child, that promised child, was able to raise him up again if he should die. I do not wonder that it is so written that the graves shall disclose their dead, and no longer cover her slain, and see the

faith of Abraham, the father of the faithful, that when he had offered up his son, his hand was stayed, and then God swore by himself—there was no one greater to swear by—that in thee and in thy seed shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed.” Now, mark the thought. He doesn’t say in thy seed only, he says in thee, Abraham, and in thy seed, which is Jesus Christ, says Paul, shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed, whereas the promise is to Abraham, not only that he should have a son, and that son should be the Christ, but the promise was that Israel should be as numerous as the sand of the sea-shore or the stars of the heaven, yet they should become his people, should be recognized as his people, the repository of God’s will among the sons and daughters of men. That Israel is now in expectation everywhere throughout the length and breadth of the earth, that the promises made to Abraham shall

be literally fulfilled, her land shall again be re-inhabited, and among the Gentiles where Ephraim and Israel have been scattered as corn sifted in a sieve, not one grain shall be lost. Why, they are among the nations of the earth to fulfill the declaration of the ancient prophet when he said, "There shall be deliverance in the remnant whom the Lord our God shall call;" that remnant is scattered Latter Day Israel among the Gentiles, and now, in this Reorganization, gathering up the wheat from among the tares to fulfill the declaration of Joel, "When there should be deliverance in the remnant whom the Lord our God shall call, not only in Zion, the beautiful for situation, in the sides of the north, not only in Jerusalem, but in the remnant whom the Lord our God shall call; the sacred volume tells us of that remnant; their dominion shall be small because of the wickedness and abomination of the people, but they shall be scat-

tered among all the nations of the earth, and that in the day when they should exercise faith, that God would preserve them, if needs be, by fire. That remnant is none other than scattered Latter Day Saints in the day of God's vengeance, who are the salt of the earth, gathering the wheat into the garner here.

In 1852, these few Latter Day Saints in the bigness of their souls, and in the faith of their hearts, reached out and said that God had spoken to them, and that they were called to say in the own due time of the Lord, "Israel shall again receive its glory, and this Reorganization shall be fully established." I was a little lad at that time, but I learned the sense, the genius of our text, "In your patience possess ye your souls." "Let patience have its perfect work." I learned that before 1852. I did not have to wait until that year to learn it. Ten years prior to that I was but a little lad, of but a

few summers when this wonderful doctrine of Jesus Christ saluted my ears. I was hungry and thirsty when it came, and I drank deep into the well of salvation then, and I remembered that some of my first thoughts in this straight and narrow way was, that God changes not, that his ways are one eternal round, that his promises are yea and amen to the sons and daughters of men, and that he is no respecter of persons. I had mourned for three long years before that, that I might have lived in the days of God's Israel, when his prophets used to talk to the saints, and mother said there was no such thing nowadays. Mother said that, and she learned that from the pastor, her minister, that the Lord would not speak to the children of men any more. I grieved over it. Is it possible that he who changes not and whose love has not forsaken the world, has left them without a "Thus saith the Lord?"

In 1842 this work reached me with the gladsome sound of the gospel, in honor and in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, by virtue of which I was alive, electrified with the inspiration of this restoration, called the Latter Day Work. Thank God I have heard it. Not only that, but on my return from that meeting, and it was the third one, I heard the excellent voice from yonder heaven saying to me, "You will yet embrace this doctrine, be baptized, be ordained an elder and preach it to the sons and daughters of men." That information was plain. It scared me though. I was afraid somebody else heard it, for the Lord spoke to me and I looked around and wondered if anyone else heard it, but no one said a word and so I was comforted to think I was all alone. The question came, "Oh, how can I ever present it?" I wondered and thought over it often, again and

again. I never lisped it to a human soul all these times for years and years. I loved this work; I loved the martyr's name; and I used to think that sometime I would just ask father and mother that I might take a visit from home, and in the meantime, I would take a circuitous route around and go and behold the prophet of the most high God, and never say a word to father and mother about it: but to my astonishment, and to my great grief, that glorious light that shone among our brethren and sisters of the church, changed, oh, how changed it was! Everywhere upon every feature when the news came that the martyr, or Joseph the choice seer now lay cold in death, Mother said, "I don't believe it." Brother said so too, others said so, that had heard it often reported that he had been slain by his bitter enemies, and hence they did not believe it, but I did with all my heart. I knew it by

the voice of God that said to me, "That Joseph the son of Joseph is the prophet of the church," in 1844. Hence when the first *Times and Seasons* came dressed in mourning, it was the first time I ever saw a paper in mourning, and I asked mother what it meant, and she said, "Somebody is dead," and I was disappointed, for I expected to hear the next thing after the announcement of his death, that little Joseph was his father's successor; but instead of that, a blank, confusion, it seemed there didn't anybody know. I was alive to that great work then. Now, while I was made acquainted with the fact, I will tell you one reason why. I believe in the language of Jesus which says, "Seek and ye shall find, ask and ye shall receive, for my Father is more willing to give his Holy Spirit unto them that ask him, than an earthly parent is to give good gifts to his children. I prayed and sought that I might know the

truth, and not be deceived, and for the answer, God revealed to me the successor of the slain prophet of God. I was alive to that then, I knew it then, I appreciated it then, and when all of these parties arose claiming the presidency of the church, I knew they were false shepherds, not sent from God. I worried over the matter and I felt the condition of the church; and while thus meditating, praying and seeking to know the way of the Lord touching these matters, I found myself—I won't say how, whether it was a dream or an open vision—upon the prairies a little north and east of Nauvoo; I beheld those beautiful woods, while the underbrush was cleared and the beautiful houses painted white, and while I was looking, all at once I saw a cloud like crepe coming down the little incline, and it rested upon the houses and over the city of Nauvoo to the little curve in the river, I wondered what it meant,

with astonishment, and a person standing just a little back of me, said to me, "This is the spirit of whoredom poured out upon the church, and from the church it shall go to the entire world of mankind. The next moment I found myself in a house and I saw a beautiful room and its workmanship was exact and polished. I saw two ladies wringing their hands and sobbing and crying like babes, and like their hearts would break, and they cried in the agony of their soul, "My God, is that so?" and again one of them said, "If it was not for eternity I would not care," and while she spoke, I asked her what she meant. It seemed that something was being taught to them that affected them in eternity. And again this personage says to me, "They have been taught whoredom under a new name, to take away its reproach, and whoredom sat a queen over all manner of corruption." In a moment more

the door opened and two elders, dressed in shining black, came in side by side; unlike these ladies who were sobbing and mourning like their hearts would break, they were all aglee, happy, social, friendly, and the ladies again said, "My God, is that so?" And immediately I repeated in the agony of my heart, "My God, what does that mean?" This personage came to one of these elders, took up his coat like this (lifting his coat), and showed me wherever there was a seam, it was lined with blood, every seam on each side of the arm, and all around, and the three seams in the back of that coat, I saw was lined with blood. Then said the heavenly messenger, "That is murder, and murder is a sister of the queen, and sits with the queen, and presides over all manner of corruption that flesh is heir to." I was surprised, astonished, oh, so astonished, I didn't know what it meant, what the words meant, let alone the

idea. I thought about it weeks and weeks, and sometimes I used to think, "I'll go and ask my mother what those words mean, and I started to the house one day, and then I feared and went back again; I thought it was an awful thing, and while I was meditating upon this, the voice of God again said, that "Whoredom was the besetting sin of the ancient kings and prophets of Israel," I didn't know what that was, I never heard the word before. A little while afterwards, I was all in expectation of hearing and seeing some elder from Nauvoo, and one of our neighbors came to us and said, "There are a couple of elders at our house, and they are coming over here in a few minutes," and I watched for them, and a carriage came over the road and up to the gate, and they alighted and came upto the door, I got about a third of the way down to meet them and the Spirit rested upon me, and these

men looked black as negroes. My brother followed right along after me, he went on past me, and I heard one of them saying, "I haven't come with a guess so, but with a know so," and it seemed to me that I could not refrain from speaking out loud, "You lie, and you know you lie." They passed by me, I thought, I won't be a coward, I will go in after them, and I went into the house and don't remember a word they said that afternoon, but they were all a-glee, happy, laughing, frivolous, light-minded, nothing like I had ever seen before. Sobriety and meekness did not seem to cross their minds. I went to bed feeling sad. The next morning while they sat there, wild, frivolous, light-minded and happy, seemingly, my brother says, "That would be bigamy." "No," says Lyman Stoddard, "that would be polygamy." That was the first time I ever heard that word in my life, I did not know what it meant.

But the voice of God says, "That is the queen that you saw, full of all the corruption that flesh is heir to." The other elder says, "Well, you come down to Nauvoo and we will tell you then, something else." The Spirit then said to me, "That is murder, the sister of the queen that sits over all manner of corruption that flesh is heir to, that was seen by you in the vision." Oh these things are plain to me now, plain as though that vision now was before me. That was in 1844.

When this Reorganization began, it began with these scattered Latter Day Saints, and I was soon made acquainted with all of its claims, its propositions; they were meek, they were humble, and lowly, seeking the Lord by day and by night, by fasting and prayer; and the result was that our elders were greatly blessed. Sometimes I was ashamed to tell how many elders there were. How many do you suppose? I never used to tell

them. There were those who had gone now and then a few days, and back again, but in 1856 I was sent out; I took my satchel in 1857 and traveled all the time here and there by rail, not on the cars, but between the ties, carrying my satchel with me, and they used to ask me how many elders we had in the field, and when they would press it, I was the only one. "Well," they said, "you won't be apt to turn the world upside down very soon." "No," I said "it don't look that way." I used to wish I looked a good deal older than I did, I looked very young for my years, but I used to present these doctrines, and tell them, again and again, hundreds of times, "Thus saith the Lord, in the own due time of him who created and established this work, he'll call forth Joseph, the son of Joseph, to be the successor of his father." I loved to say it, and I want to say to you that the brothers and sisters that

took hold of this work were alive to its interests. We had every opposition you can think of to contend with, from every quarter—they were not afraid then to meet us, as they now are. They used to meet us in discussion in western Iowa and in Wisconsin and Illinois and in different places we used to meet these men, until they are swept off from the face of the earth long ago, and there is only one left and that one is scared every time they meet our elders. In the year 1863 I was sent by the providence of God and by the revelation of Jesus Christ to me to that people in Utah, and when I was inquired of by President Young, “What is the object of your mission, what will be the result?” All the information I gave them was, that “My object is to show this people their sin and iniquities, and point them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, but I never introduce the subject of

polygamy until they pressed it upon me. I would talk the gospel of the Reorganized Church, the authority of the government, showed that God established this work, that he then rejected it, and the result was, it was disorganized, and again he reorganized it, and set over it the choice seer's posterity, to lead the house of Israel. And when the western people presented to me their peculiar institution, I handled them plainly, and showed them from the books of God, the Bible first, that I was prepared to show one thing, as recorded in the sacred volume, in favor of the accursed institution of polygamy, that it took its rise, its characteristics, after the character of Lamech the first polygamist, that this record gives any account of, who himself admits, that he deserved seventy fold more punishment than his father Cain; and he stamped the accursed institution of polygamy, and no man that ever lived from

that time on, as I said to Orson Pratt in western Iowa once, when he asked me the question what I believed about it, I told him these words. He says, "Who do you believe introduced this?" I answered him "Brigham Young, a few of the twelve, not all of them—a few of the high priests—not all of them—and a few women in the secret closet, in the secret chamber." "Don't you tell anybody about it," and I says, "Orson Pratt, you know about it, and no man that ever introduced that practice from Lamech, down to the house of Israel, with Abraham the father of the faithful, Jacob and David and Solomon, but shall go down to the uttermost depths of hell, from whence the damnable doctrine originated, except they repent in dust and ashes, saith the Lord."

This is the presentation of this great work as we went with it, and we were prepared to show the people in Utah, and every-

where else, that there is not a single sentence found in the word of God in favor of that institution. It is an institution of corruption that had its rise, and was inspired by his Satanic majesty; and when we think that we are going to make a great ingathering there, to me it is a rebuke to good common sense. Is it possible that when the Lord says, "The rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim," and "the rebellious shall be cut off." They are more like the Gadiantons in the fastness of the mountains, and we may still open our eyes to the case and meet this institution. And I want to say in conclusion, I am in this work; I have loved this work with all my heart since 1852. It is my meat and drink. I hoped for one, to see these forty-five years of the Reorganized Church triumph from one minister to hundreds of them now, bless God, and bless these, my brethren. I hail you with joy; I thank God that he has

raised up such faithful, grand champions to defend and bear off this work, onward, and onward to victory. I want to say to you, in my heart I never had a breath of jealousy towards my brethren, I have never, never, so help me God. I love to see my brethren prospering and whenever God pours out upon them a measure of his inspiration, I feel to say, "Bless the Lord," I love to see his servant inspired wherever they are, and his handmaidens too.

May the Lord help us to be of one heart, do not get discouraged because things do not work just like we would prefer to see them. Away back in 1852-3-4-5-6, we had all of these things that have disturbed the people from time to time since then, and I learned then, that God held the reins. I don't believe that an argument can be introduced today against the Reorganization that was not introduced then in 1856, and these arguments which those enemies

introduced were manfully combatted and the Reorganization planted upon the rock Christ Jesus and his sacred word. I love this work, I love these brothers and sisters, and I want to say to you, that whenever I see or hear of any benefit coming to you in any field, I feel pleased, I feel grateful to God, and I love the Lord, and love his great work, and these brothers and sisters that the Lord has raised up, and he is not raising you up alone friends, for he is raising up a great many that are not in the church. Just one illustration of this. Out in my mission I met with a student where there are several thousand that are now attending the school of science, learning and lettres, and by the providence of God I was permitted in their chapel to speak again and again; and there was one gentleman there, who is studying for the ministry and is now reading theology, and he made my acquaintance after I had spoken

several times, and talked with me, and one night we talked until nearly three o'clock in the morning, and he says, "Why, our people do not know anything about the Bible, you have spoiled me now for the ministry which I have been calculating for, though I know I am called of God." Bless his heart, so he is. He says, "I'd like to go to conference. What do you think of it?" That was the last time I was there. He says, "I have had a little experience since that time, and somebody has volunteered to pay my way next term." I told him he had better stay there and think and act for himself, and he says, "The day will soon come to me, sir, when I shall reject everything that comes to me that is not stamped, "Thus saith the Lord;" and as the book called the stick of Joseph says, that his Spirit is resting upon the people everywhere, operating with a class of men, gathering the wheat from among the tares; and I want

to say to you, the day is near at hand when these young men, many of them, who are of tender years, who have been taught of God, will stand hand to hand, shoulder to shoulder with me, and you, in this great work, bearing off this work, when we receive that endowment which is promised. Do you know what that endowment is?

Let us be Zion here, and there, and everywhere, and as soon as we are Zion—the pure in heart—the Lord will say, “The city is prepared; enter in.” Thank you.

