

the Lord God gives to us through His Prophet.

May the Lord bless you, brethren and sisters; may he pour out His spirit upon us; may we never rebel, nor lose the faith; may we be willing to receive the counsel of the Lord through His Prophet whenever it is given to us. I ask it for Christ's sake. Amen.

ELDER MATTHIAS F. COWLEY.

Prophetic gift of Joseph Smith—Early manifestation of God and the ministrations of Angels—Opposition of the world—God guides His work by revelation.

My brethren and sisters, I am pleased to meet with you at this conference. I humbly ask you to pray for me, that the Holy Spirit may suggest what may be said.

I rejoice in the celebration of the natal day of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and in being a recipient of the blessings which are enjoyed by the members thereof, and which have come to us, to a very great extent, through the labors incident to the establishment of this Church and the tribulations which were encountered by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Whatever characterized a prophet in olden times characterized the great prophet of the last days. We point very frequently to the remarkable fulfillment of predictions which have been uttered in ancient times by the Jewish prophets as an evidence of the divine authority which they bore and of the remarkable work which was accomplished by them in the interest of humanity. We may point with equal joy and satisfaction to the remarkable utterances of the Prophet Joseph, to establish the divine authenticity of his claim. I have never heard of a prediction uttered by that man which has not been verified, so far as time has brought the prophecy due. I have never discovered any characteristic associated with any of the ancient prophets of God in the work which they accomplished, and which went to prove their divine mission, which cannot be pointed to in the Prophet Joseph Smith and his work. He came to the world announcing a new dispensation. He did not derive his information respecting religious matters from reading the

scriptures only. He did act upon the promise of the Apostle James, contained in the Bible, (and which is applicable to our young people in securing a testimony of the truth) where he says: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." The Prophet, in the confusion which came to his mind by listening to the conflicting sentiments of the various factions of Christianity, resorted to reading the scripture for himself, and he concluded to test this passage that I have quoted. He was inspired with the same faith that actuated the ancient Saints of God—the same faith that was taught by the Savior when He said, "Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He went into the woods to pray, and he besought the Lord to know which of all the factions of Christianity was acknowledged by the God of heaven. In answer to this prayer, he received a communication from God, the Eternal Father, in which the glory of heaven rested upon him, and in that glory there was presented before this young man two heavenly personages. When he had strength to ask the question which he desired to propound, one of these personages said unto him, "This is my beloved Son; hear him." The son informed the Prophet Joseph that He did not recognize any of the denominations. Among them were honest people, people who were doing the best they could with the light they had; but they had not been founded upon the revelations of God, and He commanded this young man that he should not identify himself with any denomination, and that if he would listen to this counsel the day would come when he should be instrumental in the hands of God in accomplishing a great and a mighty work in the earth. This young man was faithful to this injunction. He did not follow the ways of the world, and in due time he received another communication from God, in which a holy angel appeared unto him and revealed to him the existence of some sacred records, (from a translation of which Brother Rudger Clawson has read a few statements), containing a brief history of the inhabitants of this continent from a

period 600 years before Christ down to about 400 years after Christ; also a concise statement of a people who had come to this land from the Tower of Babel, when the languages were confounded. This angel of the Lord appeared to the Prophet Joseph three times during the night of the 21st of September, 1823. He met him next at the place where these sacred plates were deposited, and commanded him to meet him there on that day of the month each year for four years, when, if he was faithful in keeping the commandments of God, he should receive these sacred writings. He was faithful to this injunction, and on the 22nd of September, 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered these plates into the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith, who translated them by the use of the Urim and Thummin, as he was led by the spirit of revelation from God. Through this we have what is called the Book of Mormon.

In laying the foundation of this great work the Prophet Joseph was not sustained by the popular sentiment of mankind, nor by the hope of any worldly inducement; but he was actuated by the conviction and the understanding that he had received a revelation from God; that he had seen the Father and the Son; that he had received the ministration of holy angels. He endured the trials that the ancient prophets passed through; he suffered persecution, imprisonment and privation; he offered his life for the work, and he sealed his testimony with his blood. The Apostle Paul tells us that where there is a testament there is of necessity the death of the testator. He has offered to the world his testimony, the fulfilment of his prophecies, the verification of the promises made by him. Those who would listen to this voice of inspiration and receive the Gospel as revealed through him were promised that they should receive a witness for themselves. In the offering made by the Prophet Joseph Smith nothing was withheld that was offered by the ancient prophets of God and by the Savior himself. And I wish to bear testimony that I have received the witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Almighty. I have received the testimony that he

was commanded of God to found this work and to organize the Church after the primitive pattern; that he received revelation and was guided by it all the days of his life, from the inception of the work until the hour when his life was sacrificed in Carthage jail for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God. The Saints of God, in all the trying ordeals through which they passed under the administration of the Prophet Joseph Smith, were sustained and preserved. In the establishment of this work it was designed of the Father that the same spirit and power should continue with the Church down to the latest period of time; and I wish to bear my testimony—and I wish my brethren and sisters to remember it and to instill it into the hearts of their children—that the prophets who have stood at the head of his Church since the death of the Prophet Joseph have been guided by the spirit of revelation. I am reminded of a statement made by the Prophet Amos, in his 3rd chapter and 7th verse:

“Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”

In view of this, we may say that when He did not have a prophet upon the earth He was not doing anything, so far as the great plan of salvation is concerned; that is, the ordinances of that plan were not being administered, and He was not communicating His will to His children respecting the plan of redemption. However, His hand was manifest in the progress and in the enlightenment of the world, and in the extension of human liberty. Where there has been no prophet of God the people have not received the light of revelation to the extent that they could understand and apply the ordinances of salvation. As Solomon says, in Proverb 29: 18: “Where there is no vision, the people perish;” and Hosea said that the Lord had spoken by prophets, and had multiplied visions and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets. “By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.” And I want to say to the Latter-day Saints that Israel in modern times have been preserved by the same means. Those who listened to the voice of the in-

spired Prophet in the commencement, no matter what sacrifice it cost them, were sustained by the power of God. This is true also respecting the administration of President Brigham Young. What a wonderful work he accomplished, building upon the foundation laid by God through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and carrying out the plan which had been predicted by the Prophet Joseph! In leading the Latter-day Saints to these mountains and establishing their feet here, he was but carrying out the great plan that had been revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who had prophesied on the 6th of August, 1843, that some of the people would die of persecution, some would die of trial and hardship, but some, he said, would live to go beyond the Rocky Mountains and see the Latter-day Saints become a mighty people in that region of country. This prophecy has been fulfilled as well as other predictions he uttered in connection with this work, as established in these mountain valleys. The Latter-day Saints are safe as long as they listen to the voice of inspiration. I rejoice that we have President Lorenzo Snow with us today. I rejoice that the Lord has spared his life. He is now eighty-five years of age; he is in the possession of all his faculties, bright, clear and active; and God has sustained him in his administrations, and brought him to stand at our head at this present period of time. I am reminded of what was said of the Prophet Moses, that notwithstanding his age his eye waxed not dim, neither did his natural force abate. The Lord has done this for those who have presided over His Church in the last days. He has sustained them in body and in mind: He has preserved their lives, that we might profit by their vast experience. I rejoice in this fact, and I wish to express my gratitude before God and before this congregation that the Lord has preserved President Snow to administer unto us and to us the benefit of his great experience in this latter day work.

I trust, my brethren and sisters, that during our conference we shall be fed with the bread of life, that we shall

receive here a little and there a little, and that from what is said by the speakers each and every one of us may find something applicable to ourselves, which we can take home and carry out in our daily lives. I trust also that we may have the spirit of the business that may be transacted at this conference, whatever it may be. There is a very great responsibility resting upon the authorities of the Church. I feel that it is an immense responsibility to be a servant of God. I feel my unworthiness in occupying such a position among the Saints of God, and I cannot occupy it unless I am sustained by the Almighty. But while there is a great responsibility resting upon the Presidency and the general authorities of this Church, there is a corresponding responsibility resting upon every man and every woman in the Church. We are not alone in bearing the holy priesthood, we are not the only ones that have received the testimony of the Holy Ghost. We all have received this testimony who have been brought into communion with God. Hence there is a responsibility of a weighty character resting upon all of us, in every avenue of life and in all the interests of this work. And the interests of this work are varied. They are not all what is called spiritual; if they were, we would die temporally. They are not all temporal; if they were, we would die spiritually. But it is all spiritual unto God. He designs that the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion, and that in all things we shall be actuated by the spirit of God, so that all we do may be sanctified to His honor and glory and to the accomplishment of His great work upon the earth.

May the Lord bless you, my brethren and sisters; and when we leave this conference, may we leave it renewed in strength, in faith and in a determination to keep the commandments of God and walk in the paths of life. This is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The choir sang the hymn commencing.

How are thy servants blest! O Lord,
How sure is their defense!

Benediction was pronounced by Patriarch John Smith.