

ELDER JOSEPH W. McMURRIN

(Of the First Council of Seventy and President of the California Mission)

I have been impressed, my brethren and sisters, during this conference, in the same manner that a good brother was impressed that I heard make a report in one of the stakes of Zion a few years ago. He had just returned from Salt Lake City, where he had been in attendance at the general conference. He was one of the presidency of the stake where he resided, and while talking in one of the meetings of the stake conference he made a statement to this effect: his family had inquired of him on his return from Salt Lake City how he had enjoyed the general conference, and his answer was: "It was the best conference I ever attended in my life." And then he said: "The family smiled, and the children said: 'Why, father, we have heard you make that statement after every conference as long as we can remember.'" He informed the congregation that he had been attending general conference regularly for fifty-two years. I was very greatly impressed with his statement that after being in attendance at the general conferences of the Church on more than one hundred occasions he could return home and in truth say the last one attended "was the best conference I ever attended." A similar feeling of satisfaction has been in my soul during this conference. From the opening remarks that were made by President Heber J. Grant, when he presented in so strong and inspired a manner the feelings of his soul in regard to the great work that God has established, I felt the Spirit of the Lord was present directing him and that an enjoyable time would be had in the conference meetings. As I have listened to the brethren who have occupied this position and who have borne testimony concerning the truth of the gospel, that feeling has increased in my soul.

I praise God today, with my brethren, for the wonderful work that has been revealed by the Lord our God. I feel in my whole being that it has been established among men for the salvation of the human family. It seems marvelous to me, my brethren and sisters, that I should enjoy the privilege that I enjoy here today of speaking in this great conference which is commemorative of the prophet's first vision one hundred years ago. I praise the Lord for the privilege of bearing testimony concerning the work of God this day.

I have been thinking, while sitting on the stand looking at this great congregation, of the coming of my parents from abroad, about sixty-three years ago. The message of the gospel was sounded in the ears of my parents in a far-off land, and they yielded obedience to the teachings of the servants of God a little more than sixty-five years ago. About sixty-three years ago they entered this valley in the same distressed condition that a great many other people entered the valley after they had passed through a very trying experience in crossing the plains. They landed here worn out by the long journey and in comparative poverty, and afterwards passed through the experiences common to those early pioneers who came into this inter-mountain region a long time ago, when there was little of an inviting appear-

ance to be seen in this great desert valley. I thank God today that the principles of "Mormonism" had taken a firm hold of the affections of my father and mother, and that to those principles they remained true through their lives, and that to their family they faithfully taught the truth of the everlasting gospel, and bore unswerving record by word of mouth, and by example, that the work of God had indeed been restored to the inhabitants of the earth. To them I am indebted for the great privilege I this day enjoy. I believe in this restoration and in the necessity for the opening of the heavens, that the promises of holy prophets of old might be fulfilled, as has been declared by practically all of the speakers who have given instructions during this conference.

I have here a little item that I will read that has impressed me upon various occasions. It was not written by one of our people; it was written by a convert, in fact, a priest of the Catholic Church. I feel sure it will be quite appropriate to read these words in this congregation. While visiting a great cathedral in Europe, I picked up a pamphlet many years ago at the time I was doing missionary service in the European mission. The booklet was entitled: "Why I am a Roman Catholic." The title impressed me. I thought I would like to know from a Roman Catholic point of view why an individual should be connected with the Roman Catholic Church. I had discovered from my own experiences, as no doubt many of you have, that when men who were out of the "Mormon" faith attempted to expound "Mormonism" they oftentimes presented malicious, and also grotesque ideas in regard to the "Mormon" faith. I have never in my life, so far as I remember, read from the pen of any non-"Mormon" writer a correct representation of the faith and doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As I read the views of this priest in relation to his reasons for being a Roman Catholic, I was very greatly impressed with the following words:

And again when Luther, Calvin, Henry the Eighth, and their followers, were starting in their mad career, either the true religion was then in the world or it was not. If it was, they committed grievous crimes in making new religions to oppose it. If it was not, they were powerless to create it. It takes a Christ, not a Luther, to create a Christianity. On either supposition, therefore, Protestantism is not the true religion of Jesus Christ.

I think that is a true representation. If the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ was had among men in the period spoken of as the Reformation, then the men that were referred to as reformers were guilty of grievous sin in attempting to establish new religions. This statement is in harmony with the word of God. It is the teaching of the holy Scriptures, as we can read in the epistle of the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Galatians, I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: "which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." The apostle then bore record in the most positive and solemn manner that if they received any

other religion, or if either men or angels taught any other religion or doctrine than the religion that had been expounded to the people by the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, then they were to be accursed. So that whenever men, in any dispensation, attempt to introduce new religions, that differ from the gospel of the Redeemer, they are not doing the things that God, our Father in heaven, would have them do. I think we can all accept the teachings of the priest as presented in the words that I have read in your hearing. If the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ did not exist among men in the sixteenth century, it is a solemn truth that Martin Luther had no power to bring back the lost gospel and his fellow reformers were just as powerless. We have great respect for Martin Luther, and other good men among the reformers. I would not leave any wrong impression upon any mind. We believe that those reformers accomplished a splendid work in paving the way for that religious liberty that has come to so many of the children of men. But if the divine authority, the power to administer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ had been lost from among men, it is a truth that Martin Luther, no matter how good his motives might have been, or how good the desires of his associates, they were powerless to restore the authority and the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior being the author of true religion was the only source of authority. If the plan of salvation was taken away from the earth, there was only one way by which it could be given to men again; and that is clearly set forth in the words I have read to you. The Redeemer holding all power was the only being who could bring back to earth the lost gospel, which ever has been the power of God unto salvation.

I rejoice with all my soul that at the opening of this dispensation the story of "Mormonism" is just as it is. Joseph Smith in the strong desire that was upon him to know the right path sought the Lord our God in humble prayer, that he might be directed aright; and inasmuch as there was no man upon the earth exercising the authority of our Father in heaven, the story of the boy is in every way logical, when he declares that God himself made his appearance, with our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, and gave him the instructions that have been referred to in the discourses that have been delivered during this conference. There is no other way by which the authority that had indeed been lost from among the children of men could be restored. Holy beings, who held this divine authority, and who had been ordained to the Priesthood as mortal men, had been given the power to speak and act and minister in the name of the Redeemer of the world. These very men were sent again to earth and gave to Joseph Smith every key of authority they possessed. Let the world think what it may, and say what it will, that authority, in the manner portrayed in the words of Joseph Smith, was restored by the Lord our God, and in the restoration of authority the promises of the holy prophets have been fulfilled; and the great work of the living God that was not only spoken of by our Father in heaven in the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, but that was spoken of by the ancient prophets

as "a marvelous work and a wonder" has indeed been established in this dispensation, and is the dispensation of the fulness of times. This work has been understood and comprehended more or less, by the prophets in all dispensations. It has now been revealed according to the promise of the Lord God of heaven for the last time. It has been established by his wisdom and by his will, with the promise that it shall endure forever and forever, and so it shall be, as the Lord God Almighty lives.

May our Father in heaven help us who are privileged today to assist in the establishment of that marvelous work, to be faithful, and steadfast, and determined, that we may bring to pass the purpose of God, and work out our own salvation, I humbly pray, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ELDER HYRUM G. SMITH

(Presiding Patriarch of the Church)

My brethren and sisters, in one respect I have not enjoyed this conference very much, because I have sat here with fear and trembling throughout every session of the conference. In other respects, I praise the Lord for his Spirit that has been with my brethren who have addressed this conference, for I testify that their words have been directed by the Spirit of God for the strengthening of the faith of the Latter-day Saints and for the advancement of God's work upon the earth.

I have in my heart a desire that all the faithful in Israel today shall be blessed of the Lord. I have in my heart a blessing for the Saints of God who have come to this conference and have so faithfully remained in such goodly number, even to this last session, and I pray God to bless you, sustain you, strengthen your faith, provide for your necessities and help you, as my brethren and sisters in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, to carry out his purposes in the earth, to fulfil the wonderful work and mission which have been themes of this conference.

I also desire to remind my brethren and sisters that the eyes of the world are upon us, upon you and upon this work, that we have been called upon to perform. Therefore, we should be as near to what we profess to be as it is possible for us to be. And although the adversary made an attempt to thwart the purposes of the Lord when Joseph Smith went into the woods to pray, he was overcome and his plan was set aside by the powers of the Father and of the Son, who came in glory and dispelled the agents of darkness and the very evil one himself. That evil influence still exists in the world, that battle between light and darkness is still going on. The adversary has not given up the fight. He is still sniping here and there and carrying on other plans to thwart the purposes of the Lord. In a revelation to the prophet, we are given counsel, advice and instruction which, if we obey, will help us to triumph in this battle for the truth and for the right.