

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

Of the First Council of Seventy

I have been very greatly impressed during the meetings of this conference with the wonderful drama that has been enacted on the stage of this earth upon which we dwell. It has been said by a Latin scholar that history is the witness of time (*Historia testis temporum est*), and it seems to me that there is nothing that is more indelibly imprinted upon the history of the human race than the purposes of the Almighty, that there is a Providence over all, and he is guiding and directing the destinies of his children. I think it has been made plain that this history, if we are to properly understand it, begins before the foundations of this earth were laid; that we who dwell upon the face of the earth today, counted as we are by many hundreds of millions, and those who were before us, even from the very beginning of time, have at one time dwelt in that primeval world in the presence of our Father in heaven as his children; and the scenes that are now being enacted are in pursuance of the great plan that was evolved by him in the very beginning, in that primeval state that we read about in the holy scriptures, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Then and in that pre-existent state, as it is now, there were differences among the children of God, there were some who were noble and great and good; there were some who were evil and had many weaknesses, and fell far short of doing the things that were necessary for their own progress and exaltation. But in the midst of all the children of God, when the plan was announced, there were some who fulfilled their first estate, not all in equal degree, but they were different, some of them were great and noble and were chosen to be the rulers among men. There were some who were choice, though in lesser degree, who were worthy of some distinction, and still others who were not so worthy, yet all of them having fulfilled their first estate were permitted to dwell in mortal life upon the earth, and they were known of the Almighty and he was interested in the welfare of them all.

Among the great ones, as we have been told, was Abraham. Abraham was a man whom God loved; and he, too, loved the Lord, and the Lord knew him. He knew that he would keep his statutes, that he would obey his commandments, and not only that but he would teach his own children after him. It is through that lineage that we today have the knowledge of the true and living God. It is through that lineage that a record has been preserved among the children of men, giving a history of the dealings of God with his children. Those that were more favored because of their faithfulness in that pre-existent world were the ones that were to come through the lineage of Abraham, for the Lord blessed Abraham and promised him that in him and his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. Those who were faithful to a marked degree in

that pre-existent state were privileged to come in due course of time through that lineage, the children of Abraham. What greater privilege could a child of God desire than to be numbered among those whom God permitted to come through that lineage, that should bring into this world and preserve among the children of men a knowledge of the true and living God that they might be taught in his ways?

In the progress of this human drama the Lord delivered his chosen people out of their bondage in the land of Egypt, directed and guided by a great prophet of God, Moses. He brought them out into the wilderness and endeavored to eradicate from among them the idolatrous ideas they had imbibed in the land of Egypt. And the Lord took his servant, the Prophet Moses, up into the mountain and delivered unto him the word of the Lord regarding the plan of life and salvation. The tablets upon which it was written, when he came down from the mount and saw them worshipping the golden calf, were broken into pieces in the anger of that mighty man of God. He was called again up into the mount and brought back with him the law of carnal commandments, that men might repent of their sins and avoid the evils of the world and be schooled that they might disseminate among the inhabitants of the world a knowledge of those principles that had within them the power of God unto salvation.

And in further process of time, after having sent so many prophets, whom they stoned and persecuted, came the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, to restore anew that great law, the law of grace, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the world might not be without it and the children of God might be saved, and might be brought to repentance and prepare themselves for that eternal glory that was thought out and planned from the very beginning. Notwithstanding the rebellious spirit that manifested itself throughout all these ages, there has been committed to that lineage a knowledge of the things of God, and of him who was indeed the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Great promises were made unto that lineage, and I am going to read just a little from the scriptures, to be found in the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, whom the Lord named Israel, who became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel; and that great and mighty man, when his days began to draw to a close, called around him his twelve sons and bestowed upon each in their order his blessing, to be fulfilled upon their heads, and to Joseph he gave this blessing:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall."

And later in that same blessing said he:

"Even by the God of my father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under."

I have oftentimes thought, what can these references mean?

Here is a family, a lineage, a seed scattered among the children of men, by which all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. That was the blessing that was given to Abraham, and the Lord gave him a promise, and led Moses into the promised land, which was to be the land of their inheritance, the land of Palestine, the land of Judea, the Holy Land. This was the land that was given unto the seed of Abraham to be an everlasting inheritance unto them. But here we have him pronouncing the blessing upon the head of Joseph: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." What did it mean? Did it not mean that this blessing was being realized when father Lehi left the shores of old Arabia and crossed the great waters, even the mighty Pacific Ocean, and landed probably on the western coast of Chile in South America, in Valparaiso? One would almost think that father Lehi and his family had suggested the name, for that was the valley of Paradise. Surely they felt that under the guidance they had received they had come to the paradise of God, Valparaiso, the valley of Paradise. Here then, it seems to me, although vaguely stated, might be a fulfillment of this promise unto Joseph, whose branches, but not all of the house of Joseph, ran over the wall. Rather vague, perhaps, but let me read another paragraph following, wherein it says:

"Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and the Almighty, who shall bless thee with the blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under."

Here then is another inference. What else could it have referred to than the land of America, standing as he was at that time in Egypt, saying that his branches should run over the wall, and that the blessings of heaven above and of the deep that lieth under should be given him. He seemed to have understood at that time that the world was round, and that that part (which is now America) that lieth under was to be the land of Joseph. Even this may be considered a somewhat vague reference. But let us read on. It would seem that there was a determination to banish all doubt from our minds when we read these words pronounced upon the head of Joseph, for it says here: "The blessings of thy father," (that was Jacob, called Israel) "have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors." Who were they? Abraham, and Isaac, the blessings that were pronounced upon them, and the giving to them of that land of promise,—Palestine, Judea,—to be an eternal inheritance to the seed of Abraham. But here was something above and beyond pronounced upon the head of Joseph. Said he:

"The blessings of thy father (Jacob) have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills."

O, how plain it would seem; the vagueness disappears; But that pertained to the house of Joseph: Let us read on:

"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, and they shall be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

And here we are in the land of Joseph; and through the interposition of the Almighty, his purposes are written in the pages of history, wherein he has sent the seed of Abraham all over the world, that all the nations of the world are to be blessed in his seed. The Jews are to return to the land of their inheritance, but Joseph must be gathered upon the land of Joseph, which is North and South America. And so we are gathering them from the countries of Europe. Those who came with father Lehi were mostly the children of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, but most of those who have been scattered in the different nations of the earth are the children of Joseph through his son Ephraim, and these are they who hear the voice of the good Shepherd and are being gathered to the land of Joseph through the ministrations of the elders of Israel in these days, and in whose veins flows the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of Joseph; for they belong to the tribe of Joseph. Have our patriarchs not prophesied upon our heads, O ye children of Israel, ye sons and daughters of Zion, have we not been told that we were the children of Abraham through Joseph and Ephraim? And so, I say, the children of Ephraim are being gathered upon the land of Joseph, a choice land above all other lands, extending from the north pole to the south pole in this great western hemisphere.

I rejoice therefore in having the opportunity of doing my little part in the bringing about of this great work, in carrying the message to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and in gathering into the fold the children of Abraham, by bearing the message of life and salvation, searching them out wherever they may be. I accept, as Elder Ballard did, the call that has come to me, and I rejoice in having the opportunity of playing a small part at least in the opening up of that great work in the southern hemisphere among the children of Lehi, and I hope and sincerely pray that the Lord will qualify me for that mission. I rejoice in the companionship that we have in Elder Ballard, an apostle of the Lord, a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. How I feel to uphold and sustain him, and will endeavor to assist him with all my might that he may be able to accomplish all that the Lord would have him do in this great mission. I rejoice in the companionship of Elder Rey L. Pratt, whom I have learned to love as my fellow laborer in the Council to which I belong, and in my association with him. With the help of the Lord I desire to go and discharge myself of the duty that now lies incumbent upon me; and in this labor I hope and pray that we may have the faith and prayers of the Latter-day Saints, that the purposes of the Almighty may be furthered, and that in that continent where the gospel has not yet found a foothold, there may be an opening, that the children of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, the descendants of father Lehi, may be brought to a knowledge of the truth and rejoice in the blessings of the gospel of our Master, and I pray for this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.