

THIRD DAY

MORNING SESSION

On Tuesday morning, October 5, 1926, the conference re-convened. President Heber J. Grant presided.

The congregation sang the hymn, "O ye mountains high."

Prayer was offered by Elder Lewis R. Anderson, of the South Sanpete stake of Zion.

The congregation sang, "How firm a foundation."

ELDER BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS

Of the First Council of Seventy and President of the Eastern States Mission

Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a composite revelation, by which I mean that it is a revelation that was not written at one time on the part of the prophet who received it. It consists of a number of brief revelations, received at sundry times between the publication of the Book of Mormon and the organization of the Church on the 6th day of April, 1830. And these revelations were given, for the most part, in the upper chamber in the home of Father Peter Whitmer, at Fayette, Seneca county, New York state.

In the first part of this section is the following statement:

"After it was truly manifested unto this first elder," [meaning the prophet Joseph Smith] "that he had received a remission of his sins, he was entangled again in the vanities of the world;

"But after repenting, and humbling himself sincerely, through faith, God ministered unto him by an holy angel, whose countenance was as lightning, and whose garments were pure and white over all other whiteness;

"And gave unto him commandments which inspired him;

"And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon."

And, of course, under that inspiration, not only to translate the Book of Mormon, but also to send it forth into the world. By these same commandments, "which inspired him," he also obtained the restoration of the holy Priesthood; and by the same inspiration he organized the Church, and from time to time received communications and the visitation of angels which fed the inspiration that had come upon him through the commandments of God, until at last he achieved that magnificent work which we now know as the restoration of the gospel, and the establishment in the earth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with its divine mission and commission to proclaim the gospel in all the world, and bring salvation unto the children of men.

What I desire more especially to call your attention to this morning

is this statement: "*And gave unto him commandments which inspired him*"; and under which he achieved all this great work that I have briefly outlined. Latter-day Saints, you have these same commandments. Why may not we obtain, also, if not in the superlative degree, yet in rich degree, the same inspiration that the prophet of the Lord derived from these commandments? I would like to give an illustration of how these commandments and the visitation of heavenly beings—how the events, these fundamental events in which the Church of Christ had its origin—inspired the prophet; and perhaps we may learn from that illustration the lesson of catching the same inspiration. First, let me remark, however, concerning a great principle which statesmen recognize, for the principle is expressed in a number of our state constitutions, and quite prominently in the constitution of our own state, to the effect, that "a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles is essential to the maintenance of liberty"; and so, in like manner, a frequent recurrence to the commandments God has given, and the great events which have produced God's great latter-day work—frequent recurrence to those things cannot do otherwise than to give birth to a beautiful white light of inspiration in the souls of those who indulge in this recurrence to the commandments of God.

While the Prophet Joseph was in seclusion, in 1844, he issued letters of instruction to the Saints who were just beginning to carry on the work of redeeming the dead; and from his place of concealment he threw a flood of light upon the necessary steps to take in perfecting the operation of that great work which had but recently been introduced in practice to the Church. It is in section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants. I suggest you read all of it, I will only read part of it. In the course of writing that inspired instruction, the prophet gives an ecstatic review of some of the events out of which the Church grew into existence; and see what comes of it, I pray you:

"Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring glad tidings of good things, and that say unto Zion: Behold, thy God reigneth! As the dews of Carmel, so shall the knowledge of God descend upon them!

"And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book!

"The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom and of the dispensation of the fulness of times!

"And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael,

and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!

"Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory! Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad. Let the earth break forth into singing. Let the dead speak forth anthems of eternal praise to the King Immanuel, who hath ordained, before the world was, that which would enable us to redeem them out of their prison; for the prisoners shall go free.

"Let the mountains shout for joy, and all ye valleys cry aloud; and all ye seas and dry lands tell the wonders of your Eternal King! And ye rivers, and brooks, and rills, flow down with gladness. Let the woods and all the trees of the field praise the Lord; and ye solid rocks weep for joy! And let the sun, moon, and the morning stars sing together, and let all the sons of God shout for joy! And let the eternal creations declare his name forever and ever! And again I say, how glorious is the voice we hear from heaven, proclaiming in our ears, glory, and salvation, and honor, and immortality, and eternal life; kingdoms, principalities, and powers!"

David, in the Psalms, has not equalled that ecstasy. I know of no passage in human literature that rises to the grandeur and sublimity of these thoughts of our Prophet as he reviews the commandments of God and the great events in which the work, of which he was the prophet, seer and revelator, had its birth, and its growth, and its development. It is generally accorded that the imagery of our National Anthem, *America*, is splendid. A verse or two runs as follows:

"My native country, thee,
Land of the noble, free,
Thy name I love:
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills,
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake,
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong!"

That is regarded as very splendid imagery, poetry. I wish sometimes our congregations in this house would sing it more frequently, in our conferences. While this is regarded as fine imagery, how tame in comparison with that more splendid imagery that stirred and inspired the soul of our Prophet when he contemplated the commandments of God and the facts in which this work had its origin and which I have just read to you. Well, Joseph Smith drew inspiration from that contemplation and from the commandments of God he received. And it is important that from time to time we gather in these conferences

and have our minds refreshed with these things, because in these general conferences we do make frequent references to these things—we have frequent recurrence to fundamental facts in which our Church had its origin. There is something real in this frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, just as real are they as when we partake of the holy Sacrament, the symbols of our salvation; the broken bread and the water representing the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord. By partaking of these symbols in remembrance of him, though they are material things, this bread and this water, although they are but words that make up that most splendid prayer of consecration, yet they evoke in the soul a spiritual power that is as palpably food to the spirit of man as is the material food that he partakes of to strengthen his body from day to day. So it is in contemplating these commandments of God and the great events in which our Church had its origin. They do impart a spiritual uplift; they do give impetus to the spiritual forces, and raise to higher levels the ideals of the Saints. They lift the Saints above the normal, and draw them close into fellowship with God. The volume and quality of faith are renewed, and are made to blaze forth with a clearer light, with greater warmth, that carries the Saints through the trying affairs of life, over all the disappointments of it, and makes faith triumphant in their souls.

I rejoice that we may have access to these sources of inspiration.

By the way, many of you doubtless have read Victor Hugo's account of the street gamin, Gavroche, I think, was the name. He was with a band of insurgents attempting a revolution in Paris, and chancing to overhear that the ammunition of the insurgents was giving out, he took a soldier's haversack, crept over the breastworks of the insurgents, and under the screen of the smoke in the streets, went from corpse to corpse of the soldiery whom the insurgents had shot down, and whom their comrades had left dead in the street, gathering the unfired cartridges from their belts. As he went he sang his defiance to those who were firing at the barricade, and at him. Sometimes a bullet would strike a dead man with a cold thud. "Ah," he would say, "they are killing my dead for me;" Then again a bullet would strike fire from the pavement, but there was nothing that could daunt the young gamin. He went from corpse to corpse, gathering ammunition and singing his defiance. Presently a bullet truck him and he fell to the pavement, but not to remain there. The touch of the pavement seemed to give the gamin life, and he arose to renew his defiance. The touch of the pavement seemed to give the inspiration of life to him, as touch of the earth seemed to give vigor and strength to Antaeus, the wrestler of old mythology, who was invincible so long as he could keep contact with the earth. So with Hugo's gamin and the pavement—touch of it seemed to renew his life. So let it be with us when we touch the commandments of God, may they impart to us light and power and inspiration that shall renew our strength. As the aerie to the eagle; as the bugle to the war horse; as sight of the flag

to the patriot, and the drum-beat to the soldier, so let frequent recurrence to the commandments of God, and to the great events in which our Church had its origin give inspiration and spirit life to us.

I rejoice that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is gradually gathering into its control the sacred places where great historical events happened. I am sure that it will tend to intensify our remembrance of those events. I remember the effect the general conference of the Eastern States mission had upon our young missionaries—the conference that was held at the Hill Cumorah in 1923, celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the revealed existence of the Book of Mormon. I noticed the effect on a group of missionaries only a few days ago of a visit to the Memorial Cottage and the monument that mark the birthplace of our Prophet. It seemed to inspire them with confidence and faith in what they had heard of him. I rejoice that we have these places. I rejoice that we have the Joseph Smith Farm, the farm on which the prophet toiled in his boyhood, and where some of the important revelations of God were given to him. I never visit that place but what I feel that I am living in the atmosphere of the great events that took place there. The most uplifting, sanctifying and glorifying inspiration that I have ever experienced has been in the Sacred Grove where the Lord appeared unto him who was to become the New Witness for God in the dispensation of the fulness of times. I am happy in the opportunity of visiting that place and of receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper there, from time to time. I rejoice that recently, acting under instructions from the First Presidency, we were able to secure the place where the Church was born, the house in which, as I now believe, the Church was organized. I know that that is disputed, and that a house is referred to about one hundred feet or more from the house that now stands, that was destroyed, and is said to be the old Whitmer home and occupied by the prosperous Whitmer family during the time that the Prophet Joseph was a guest at their home, and in which he organized the Church. We now have a complete abstract of title with the name of every man and woman through whom the title has passed; and I think we shall be able to patiently investigate the matter until we arrive at the absolute truth as to whether or not the house now standing there is the old Peter Whitmer home. If that is not the house, we don't want to hold forth to the world that it is; but if it is really the home of the Whitmer family, where these revelations in section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants were given at sundry times, and where the Church was organized—if really we have that house, what a treasure it is! And what an inspiration it will be to the Church to be conscious of the fact that we do possess it. It was to this home that the Prophet Joseph, his wife Emma and Oliver Cowdery were brought by David Whitmer from Harmony, Pennsylvania, and were received as guests; and where the Prophet completed the translation of the Book of Mormon. As soon as it was completed, the

prophet, by messenger, sent the glad word to his parents living at their home in Manchester township, and they with Martin Harris immediately repaired to the Whitmer home, where the prophet took the step necessary to obtain the testimony of the Three Witnesses. That testimony was received in a grove that then existed either on or near the Whitmer farm. They had prayer in the morning at the Whitmer home, for the Whitmer family were devout Christian people. Old father Peter Whitmer was a member of that strictest of sects, the Presbyterians. He was a sincere and good Presbyterian and followed the practice of prayer at his family altar. The day after the arrival of the prophet's father and mother and Martin Harris, as they completed prayer that morning, the Prophet Joseph walked across the room, and speaking directly to Martin Harris, he said in effect: Martin Harris, you must repent. You must humble yourself before the Lord this day as you have never done before, and get a forgiveness of your sins; and if you will do this you shall, with Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, obtain a view of the plates from which the Book of Mormon is translated.

Shortly after breakfast the four named went out into the woods, as I have said, and there supplicated the Lord with the result that they beheld the plates and the engravings thereon, and they heard the voice of God proclaim that the translation was true and he commanded them to bear witness of it to all the world.

In my interview with David Whitmer, in 1884, as he went over this ground, led by my questions, when we came to this part of it he said to me that in the progress of turning the leaves, or having them turned by Moroni, and looking upon the engravings, Moroni looked directly at him and said: "David, blessed is he that endureth to the end." When David Whitmer made that remark it seemed to me rather a peculiar thing that he should thus be singled out for such a remark, and I remember reporting it as such to President John Morgan, then president of the Southern States mission. I stated to him the peculiar feelings I had when I learned that from the lips of David Whitmer; but the subsequent history of these three witnesses led me to conclude that there was indeed a hidden warning in the words of the angel to David, "Blessed is he that endureth to the end." And it is rather a sad reflection that of these three witnesses he was the only one who died outside of membership in the Church. I wonder if Moroni was not trying to sound a warning to this stubborn man, that perhaps whatever his experiences and trials might be, that at the last he, too, might have been brought into the fold, and might have died within the pale of the Church.

Well, the foregoing mentioned incidents are the sacred associations connected with the Whitmer Farm in addition to the fact that it was the place where the Church of Jesus Christ was organized, and the First President of the Church sustained under the title of the first Elder of the Church, with Oliver Cowdery as the second Elder in

the Church. I feel satisfied that we are going to get added inspiration from the fact that we own our birthplace and our cradle. I would like to point out some other things, but time will not permit, except to say this: There are those who undertake to say that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet, and that in the latter years of his life he marred his mission, and that he was a fallen prophet. A fallen prophet! What? And yet, give a sunburst of inspiration like that which I have read to you here from the Doctrine and Covenants, given in 1842? Out upon it! It could not be true. He who voiced that reverence for God, and had that exalted spirit awakened within him by contemplating the early scenes of his mission—as I have read to you—is no fallen prophet. His life ended *en crescendo*. It grew richer, it grew greater as it neared its close. His nearness to God was emphasized more in the closing years of his life than ever before. The revelations that he gave increased in power and magnificence. And so, too, in his discourses, they grew in magnificence and power as he proclaimed God's great and mighty truths in the last few months of his life. The Saints of God who witnessed the inspiration of God upon him, come to us with testimonies of his increasing power as a Prophet of God in the latter years of his life. Joseph Smith was no fallen prophet, nor could he be and give such evidence of inspiration both in the revelations he received, and in the great sermons that he delivered near the close of his life, such as the King Follett sermon, and other great discourses. I rejoice in this evidence of the inspiration of our prophet, the grandeur of his work and the evidence that we gather of the truth of it from these things we have considered. Amen.

ELDER J. GOLDEN KIMBALL

Of the First Council of Seventy

It has been a number of years since I have followed Elder Roberts in the pulpit. The first time I ever saw President Roberts was in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The first time I ever heard him preach the gospel was in Burk's Garden. I confess, at that time and for a considerable length of time afterwards, I was always awe-struck, and almost beaten into silence when asked to follow him in his public addresses. But I am thankful to the Lord that I have gotten over it, that I no longer feel that way. It has been a fight all my life to follow men who have great ability and who were greatly blessed as public speakers. My lesson came to me in this way, that I discovered that no man was ever created that could reach all the people at one time, and I figured that there must be some poor soul with bowed head who was discouraged and disheartened to whom I might, through the blessings of the Lord, and under the influence of his holy Spirit, give a word of cheer; and it has proved to be true, for I think now of several occasions—three distinct places, I remember at the present moment, at different times when persons met me on the street disheartened.