

FOURTH DAY

MORNING MEETING

On Wednesday morning, April 6, 1927, at 10 o'clock, the conference reconvened, with President Heber J. Grant presiding.

The choir and congregation sang, "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet."

The opening prayer was offered by Elder Heber Q. Hale, president of the Boise stake of Zion.

A mixed quartette sang, "An angel from on high."

ELDER SYLVESTER Q. CANNON

Presiding Bishop of the Church

I sense the responsibility, my brethren and sisters and friends, of occupying this position. I desire that I may have your faith, that I may be inspired to say those things that shall be profitable to all of us. I rejoice greatly in the testimonies and the instructions that have been given to us during this conference. I am sure they are calculated for the welfare, growth and development of the Latter-day Saints.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon the earth, and was teaching men the principles of life and truth, there were some who followed him, as we have heard, from among whom he selected his Twelve Apostles. But a time came when the question was asked whether or not they would continue to follow him, and Peter responded: "Whither shall we go, Lord, if we leave thee?" Where could they go to find anything to compare with that which he had presented unto them? I am reminded of the remark made by the Savior to some other followers of his. I would like to read a few words:

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed:

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

"They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

At a later time, when Jesus was about to be crucified, he was before Pilate, the Roman Governor, and Pilate asked him some questions, and, besides others, if he were a king. Jesus said:

"Thou sayest that I am a king: To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"

In the year 1837, when Heber C. Kimball and others of the apostles and elders were sent to England for the opening of the door of the gospel in that land, after arriving in Liverpool they traveled on to

Preston, as I remember it, and as they alighted from the coach, or the stage, at that place, they saw a banner before them, erected as a part of the celebration in honor of Queen Victoria, and on that banner the words, "Truth Will Prevail." These brethren were encouraged by the words on that banner. They proceeded diligently and faithfully in the prosecution of the work that they were called to perform; and the harvest which was reaped through the power and influence of the holy Spirit as a result of their labors was wonderful.

What is truth? We are told that it is the knowledge of things that have been, that are, and that are to be. The Latter-day Saints have accepted this gospel which we understand to be the truth. When the missionaries go out into the world to preach the gospel, they present these things which they declare have come from the Lord; and those to whom the message comes are invited to investigate carefully, to compare these things with those which were declared by Jesus and by his apostles, and with those things that are contained in the scriptures from the very beginning.

In every instance those who have accepted this message, after careful comparison and investigation, have become convinced that these principles are true, that the ordinances of the gospel conform exactly to those which were taught by the Savior and his apostles in the previous dispensations, and that the restoration of the gospel, as declared by the Latter-day Saints, is true. So we have come to accept these principles as being the truth, the everlasting truth. In other words, the gospel is "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The Latter-day Saints have been taught and have appreciated the fact that wherever truth is to be found it is a part of the gospel. It is for our welfare, our blessing, and our development.

In the world today there are many things that are in the nature of theories. The scientific method of investigation is to experiment, to establish a hypothesis or a theory and then to endeavor to prove whether or not that theory is correct. There are many theories in the world that some people accept as truth, and yet they are in a status of uncertainty. But things that are definitely and positively proved to be true are and should be accepted and lived up to. There are divine truths which are for the eternal welfare of men, and those divine truths are included and comprehended in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If men and women accept the truth, that is, the true gospel of Jesus Christ, then they shall be made free,—free from sin, from transgression, from superstition, and from all of those things that hinder men's progress.

I believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored in this latter day, in its purity and fulness, could not have been established and carried forward as it has been done in any other land than in this land of liberty. I am sure that the Lord had in his purposes the establishment of this land of liberty that the gospel might be restored here and go forth to all other lands, that men might hear it and, so far as they love truth, accept it. But even in this land there has been, and is to some extent today—fortunately not nearly so much as there was

formerly—a spirit of prejudice, of superstition and sometimes even of persecution against those who have accepted the truth.

When the Latter-day Saints received the message which came through the Prophet Joseph Smith, and undertook to live it, they were persecuted in those early days. I was recently reading a report of the Rochester Historical Society of New York, telling of the beginnings of "Mormonism;" and in that story, even today, they rehash old fables and falsehoods that were told against the Prophet Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Church in those early days. Even now they are continuing to spread misrepresentation by repeating those things which were used in a prejudicial way against the early Church leaders. Well, the Church, organized in New York state, moved westward, because the destiny of this work was westward. They established themselves at Kirtland, and they had difficulty there because of persecution and objection to the truth.

The Latter-day Saints have always undertaken to maintain a spirit of kindness and patience, endeavoring to promulgate the truth because they love it, and because they recognize it as a pearl of great price. Yet many people who ought to be willing to accept the gospel and receive the benefits and blessings which come from it, have opposed it and have undertaken to persecute those who have accepted it. The result was that in Kirtland there came a time when there were very dark days for the Church. There were those who, because of persecution, could not stand, nor retain their love of the truth. They were affected more by the persecution of men, and they fell away from the truth. This did not change or alter the truth itself, but it did affect their standing and blessings which they would have been entitled to receive if they had retained their courage and faith in the gospel.

So the people moved again westward to Missouri—the place that the Lord had designated as the center stake—and there they undertook to live the gospel. It is true that they had some failings and weaknesses, but nothing to compare with the men who persecuted them. It was because they were a strange people—a peculiar people—who undertook to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ, the truth, into their every-day lives that they were persecuted and driven. There came a time when conditions in the Church apparently were in a very desperate status, because of the terrible persecutions. Joseph Smith and other leaders of the Church were imprisoned, and their very lives were in danger. The people were driven and persecuted in every way and some were massacred. Brigham Young and others who were not imprisoned were doing everything in their power to remove the Saints from Missouri, and to find a resting place for them. There were those among them who could not retain the truth, whereby they could be free, and endure persecution and trial and trouble.

Finally the Saints were established in Illinois, and there they built a beautiful city—the finest city in the state of Illinois. They established a wonderful community. Then again persecution followed, and those who ought to have been able to acknowledge and understand the truth of the gospel were the ones who were bitterly persecuting and

opposing this work. So, after all that effort, the leaders of the Church, Joseph and Hyrum Smith, were cruelly martyred, and others of the authorities of the Church were in danger of their lives, and the people themselves were finally driven out again and had to find another resting place.

So they came westward to this land. There were those, even then, who could not retain the truth, who could not continue in faith, who could not appreciate the fact that this gospel is the means whereby they could be free and overcome the bondage of sin, transgression, superstition and those other things which are the result of the error that is abroad in the world. The Latter-day Saints who still retained and lived the truth came to this land, established themselves and began anew to build a community, where they could live in faith, unity and love, and promulgate the gospel abroad. Notwithstanding these different crises that have occurred, the work has gone steadily forward. After they had become established here those opposed to the truth were not satisfied. Because of the fact that they were growing, that the truth was becoming established and was prevailing, persecution began again later on and continued for a time.

There have been, therefore, at various periods in the history of this people the various tests that have come to the Latter-day Saints to prove their devotion to the truth, and their willingness to maintain it. The gospel of Jesus Christ remains the truth. It is, as stated, the whole truth, it is divine truth, it is the will of the Lord. When the Lord speaks to man, through his prophets, as he has done, as recorded in the scripture, it becomes his word and his will; it becomes scripture; it becomes the truth to mankind. While social and political conditions may vary at different periods of the world's history, the fundamental truths of the gospel remain. Those precepts that are essential to man's salvation endure. So these necessary principles of the gospel, restored in these days, remain as fundamental truths. They are unchangeable and invariable.

The Latter-day Saints who have been loyal have accepted and retained these principles, and they will always retain them, for they are true. There may be those who will fall away from the truth, whether it be as a result of persecution or whether it be because of the pleasures of the world. Whether it be the luxuries or the wealth that comes to men, there are those who cannot endure the conditions necessary to observe the plain, simple, divine truths which make for salvation and for the blessing of mankind. But their failure does not alter the truth, nor stay its progress.

Fortunately, at the present time, there is very little persecution of the Latter-day Saints anywhere; but there are influences of the world among us in this community, and, in fact, influences in the world everywhere, that tend to draw men and women away from the truths of the gospel of Christ. We recognize the fact that while the Latter-day Saints claim to possess the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness, and are endeavoring to live in accordance therewith, there are many other people in the world who are living in accordance with principles of truth that

form a part of the gospel. These are essential for the welfare, growth and development of mankind, in the promotion of ideals and the practices that shall enable them to accomplish the greatest good in life, and at the same time prepare themselves for eternity.

There are, however, efforts and influences abroad in the world which tend to draw people away from the truth, and from these principles which make for growth and development. Such influences are at work among us here. There is a growing tendency toward a spirit of vulgarity, of profanity, and of obscenity, that is most disgusting in its nature. If we go, for instance, to the theatres today, we find the use of profanity,—the taking of the name of the Lord in vain—a most common and offensive practice. It is also noticeable in many of the magazines that are widely circulated. Also, the jokes, stories and actions on the stage, and in magazines, are, in too many instances, so vulgar and even obscene as to be revolting, to say the least. They are having their influence upon many people, particularly the young people. So, these deceptive efforts are abroad, and their purpose undeniably is to draw boys and girls, and men and women, away from the truth.

My brethren and sisters, and especially my brethren who bear the Priesthood, who carry responsibility as presidencies of stakes, as bishops of wards, and all who have received this Priesthood, our responsibility and our opportunity—and also primarily the responsibility of fathers and mothers—is to endeavor to teach our children to restrain themselves in those thoughts, practices or habits that will tend to degenerate them, or tend to reduce their will-power, or their mastery of themselves. It is our business to train them, and forewarn them that if such habits are cultivated, or if they are allowed to grow in their minds, or any other habits of like character, they will tend to lead them away from this everlasting truth.

I pray that the Lord may bless every one of us, that we may recognize these signs and these dangers. We realize that there are influences abroad that are just as insidious, just as dangerous for the maintenance of the standing and the faith of the Latter-day Saints as there were in the days when persecution prevailed. At the same time, we as a people should recognize the great heritage that has come to us from our fathers through their stability, of faith, devotion, and love of the truth; and measure up to that responsibility by training our children and those under our care, through example and good counsel, to resist these habits and tendencies that will lead them away from the truth and into error, and cause them sadness and sorrow. The gospel is a great ideal, a great set of principles, that makes for growth and development, for happiness and peace. It will prevail and triumph, whether or not any of us, individually, shall be able to endure in faith.

May the Lord help and bless us that we may measure up to these opportunities and responsibilities, that we may be able to stem this tide and these influences that are abroad, to maintain those plain and simple standards of truth and of righteousness that shall make for happiness, peace, joy, and finally for salvation, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.