

## ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY

No servant of the Lord should ever arise before a congregation and say, I have nothing upon my mind. A people who have been commanded of God to "seek for wisdom out of the best of books"—to "seek learning by study and also by faith," ought to have something upon their minds. I have something upon my mind, but I need the Spirit of the Lord to enable me to bring it forth, in such a way as to feed your souls with the bread of life and build you up in the faith of the everlasting gospel. That Spirit I now invoke.

## THE CONFERENCE KEYNOTE

The keynote of this conference, if I heard it aright, was struck by the president of the Church in his opening address yesterday morning, when he referred to the great and marvelous work in which the Latter-day Saints are taking part. I wish to elaborate that theme.

## A PROPHECY AND ITS FULFILMENT

It was about seven hundred years before the birth of the Savior, when a prophet of God upon the Eastern hemisphere predicted the coming forth of "a marvelous work and a wonder." The reason assigned for its coming was given in the language of the Lord, as follows:

"Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, \* \* \*

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."—Isa. 29:13, 14.

If you wish to know when and where this prophecy began to be fulfilled, follow me down the ages to the spring of the year 1820, and into the rural districts of New York State, where then dwelt a humble family by the name of Smith. One member of that family was a boy between fourteen and fifteen years of age. Anxious for his soul's salvation, young Joseph Smith went into the woods near his father's home, and inquired of the Lord which of all the churches then extant was the true Church of Christ, in order that he might join it. While praying he was seized upon by an evil power, which strove to destroy him; but he was delivered by a vision of light, in the midst of which stood two glorious personages, one of whom, pointing to the other, said: "This is my beloved Son—hear him."

In answer to his inquiry as to the churches, the boy was told, to his astonishment, that none of them was the true Church of Christ, and that he must not connect himself with any of them; but await the coming of the true Church, in the founding of which he was destined to play an important part. Said the Son of God, in relation to the churches then existing: "They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me;"—thus linking together the ancient prophecy pertaining to the "marvelous work and wonder" and the work inaugurated by Joseph Smith in this the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

## MARVELS AND WONDERS

And what a wonderful work it is! What could be more so? At a time when all over the Christian world—to say nothing of the heathen world—it was popularly supposed that the heavens were sealed, and the canon of Scripture full; that visions and revelations had ceased, and that angels no longer communicated with men—at that very time the heavens burst, and not only angels, but God himself comes down, and proclaims to a little fourteen-year-old boy the opening of a new gospel dispensation! Could anything be more marvelous?

Three years pass, and an angel appears to Joseph, giving his name as Moroni, and stating that in mortal life he was a prophet to an ancient people called Nephites, the civilized ancestors of the present-day American Indians. Among other things the youth was told that a record engraved upon gold plates, compiled by Moroni's father, another prophet named Mormon, would be found in a neighboring hill, where Moroni had concealed it centuries before. This record contained the fulness of the everlasting gospel, as delivered to the Nephites by the Savior, who claimed them as his "other sheep"—a branch of the House of Israel. (John 10:16; 3 Nephi 15:21.) That book, translated by Joseph Smith, reveals the wonderful past and the yet more wonderful future of America, the Land of Zion, otherwise known as the Land of Joseph, referred to by the Patriarch Jacob when blessing his twelve sons (Gen. 49:22-26), and by the Prophet Moses, in giving his farewell benediction to the tribes of Israel (Deut. 33:13-17.) America is shown to be the place of the New Jerusalem, a holy city to be built by a gathering of scattered Israel, prior to the glorious coming of the Lord.

Next came John the Baptist, another angel, who conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the Aaronic Priesthood, authorizing them to preach the gospel in its restored purity, and to baptize by immersion for the remission of sins. And this was followed by a visitation from three other heavenly messengers—namely, Peter, James and John, who ordained them to the Melchizedek Priesthood, thus empowering them to bestow upon their baptized converts the gift of the Holy Ghost. By virtue of these ordinations, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, April 6, 1830, at Fayette, Seneca county, New York. And thus was fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of the lifting up of the Ensign for the gathering of scattered Israel (Isa. 11:11-16.) This movement was authorized by Moses, who as an angel delivered to Joseph and Oliver the keys of the Gathering; that the dispersed of Judah and the outcasts of Israel—including the Lost Tribes in "the land of the North"—might assemble in fulfilment of prophecy—the Jews to Palestine, to rebuild the old Jerusalem; the other tribes to America, where the new Jerusalem is to rise.

Elias also appeared and committed to Joseph and Oliver "the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham." These men were descendants of the great Hebrew patriarch, and were to begin a work having as its object the eternal welfare of Abraham's posterity. Then Elijah came,

"to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers," that the dead as well as the living might share in the blessings of the Final Dispensation, wherein, pursuantly to divine purpose, all things that are Christ's, both in heaven and on earth, will be brought together in one.

In preaching the gospel to the world and gathering Israel from the nations, the Latter-day Saints—children of Ephraim—are helping to fulfil the covenant made by Jehovah with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." So runs the ancient promise—fulfilled by Jehovah himself in coming through the lineage of those patriarchs as the Savior of the world; and further fulfilled by the dispersion of Israel among the nations, blessed by this racial admixture and by the gathering that has begun.

These are some of the marvels connected with the mighty work in which we are taking part—the wonderful work of Almighty God, in this the last and greatest of the gospel dispensations. What can compare with it? Is there anything half so wonderful?

#### ALMOST AS WONDERFUL

Yes, there is something almost as wonderful—and that is, that the wise men of this world do not see in it anything worthy of their special care or attention. "Mormonism," to its devotees, is the most glorious thing in existence—the sublimest poem that was ever written, the profoundest system of philosophy that the world has ever known. But the "wise" and "prudent" pass it by as a thing of naught, or stand at a distance, sneering at it and pelting it with unsavory epithets. Why is it?

#### LINCOLN AND GREELEY

Why couldn't Abraham Lincoln, that good and great man, see in "Mormonism" what we see in it, and what it really is—the Everlasting Gospel? He and Joseph Smith lived almost within a stone's throw of each other in Illinois. Why did not the future president recognize in the prophet of God what the Latter-day Saints recognize in him—the most remarkable human being that has walked this earth in two thousand years? Why couldn't Lincoln see it? The great emancipator was no enemy to the "Mormon" people. When asked, after his election as president, how he intended to treat the "Mormon" question—which was bothering the politicians as well as the priests—he answered in his quaint, characteristic way: "I intend to treat it as a farmer on the frontier would treat an old water-soaked elm log lying upon his land—too heavy to move, too knotty to split, and too wet to burn. I'm going to plow round it." And he did.

Horace Greeley, another great character, the founder and editor of the *New York Tribune*, a man whose utterances were more potent in his day than those of the president of the United States—he came out to Utah in early times when the fastest means of travel between the Missouri river and the Pacific Coast, was the ox-team, the pack-

mule, or Ben Holliday's stage line. Greeley came by stage, and on his way to California, tarried certain days in Salt Lake City. He had repeated interviews with President Brigham Young, and in a book afterwards written and published he paid high compliment to the pioneers and early settlers of these mountain solitudes. He didn't believe the "Mormons" were robbers and murderers, as he had been told, and he spoke of them as honest and industrious people. But that was all. Brigham Young's views on marriage and slavery interested the great editor, but the "Mormon" religion in its sublimest phases was a sealed book to him. Why?

#### OUTSIDE AND INSIDE AUXILIARIES

Well, doubtless there were good reasons for it; and I will venture to advance one. Perhaps the Lord needs such men on the outside of his Church, to help it along. They are among its auxiliaries, and can do more good for the cause where the Lord has placed them, than anywhere else. And the same is true of the priesthood and its auxiliaries inside the Church. Hence, some are drawn into the fold and receive a testimony of the Truth; while others remain unconverted—for the present; the beauties and glories of the gospel being veiled temporarily from their view, for a wise purpose. The Lord will open their eyes in his own due time.

#### ISRAEL AND THE GENTILES

God is using more than one people for the accomplishment of his great and marvelous work. The Latter-day Saints cannot do it all. It is too vast, too arduous, for any one people. Our part in it is the greatest. We have the gospel and the priesthood, with a mission to gather Israel, build the New Jerusalem, and prepare the way for the advent of the King of kings. And this duty has been laid upon us because we belong to the house of Israel. It is the God of Israel who is coming to reign and we are the right people to prepare the way before him.

But we don't own the steamships and the railroads and other means of rapid transit and communication, whereby the Lord's people are being gathered out from the nations—flying "upon the shoulders of the Philistines," as Isaiah predicted. The risen Savior, when he appeared to the Nephites and spoke of the glorious future, said that the Gentiles would assist his people in gathering to their promised lands. And are they not doing this? Is it not the ships and railroads of the Gentiles—"the shoulders of the Philistines"—that are bringing the children of Ephraim to this Land of Joseph, and carrying the children of Judah to their ancient homeland—dedicated for their return by direction of the Prophet of Ephraim—Joseph Smith?

We have no quarrel with the Gentiles. They are our partners in a certain sense. The name Gentile is not with us a term of reproach. It comes from *Gentilis*, meaning, of a nation, a family or a people not of Israel—that is all. "Mormon" is a nickname for Latter-day Saint,

but "Gentile" is not a nickname. It simply means, with us, one who does not belong to the Church. We need the Gentiles, and they need us, but they don't know it, and we do. They are wiser than we are in material things—the things of Earth and Time. But when it comes to spiritual things—the things of Heaven and Eternity, we can teach them. We need their wealth and worldly wisdom, their wonderful skill in managing and manipulating temporalities. And they need the Gospel and the Priesthood. They need us, for we hold in our hands the Key to their eternal salvation.

Again I say, the Lord's Work has need of auxiliaries outside as well as inside, to help it along. Because of their worldly influence—which would depart if they connected themselves with the Church—many are kept where they are, where the Lord has placed them, and can best use them for the good of all.

#### THE WISE AND PRUDENT

Many years ago I had an interesting conversation with a man who was a member of the Roman Catholic church. He was a great scholar; he must have had a dozen languages at his tongue's end, and seemed to know all about history, science, law, philosophy, and all the rest of it. We were frank and friendly with each other, and one day he said to me:

"You 'Mormons' are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position. It is so strong that there is only one other position tenable in the whole Christian world, and that is the position of the Roman Catholic church. The issue is between 'Mormonism' and Catholicism. If you are right, we are wrong. If we are right, you are wrong, and that's all there is to it. These Protestant sects haven't a leg to stand on; for if we are right, we cut them off long ago, as apostates; and if we are wrong, they are wrong with us, for they were a part of us and came out of us. If we have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there was no need of Joseph Smith and 'Mormonism;' but if we have not that apostolic succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and 'Mormonism's' position is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the Gospel from ancient times or the restoration of the Gospel in latter days."

"Doctor," said I, "that is a very clear and concise statement, and I agree with it in almost every particular. But don't deceive yourself with the notion that we 'Mormons' don't know the strength of our own position. We know it better than you do. We know it better than any other people can know it. We haven't all been to college, we can't all speak the dead languages, and we may be ignoramuses as you say; but we know we are right, and we know you are wrong." I was just as frank with him as he had been with me.

Now what was this great scholar's viewpoint? With all his learning, he could not see into the heart of "Mormonism." He recognized the strength of its position; but he supposed that to be an accident.

He thought Joseph Smith had stumbled upon something of which he did not know the true value. He was wise in worldly wisdom; but his wisdom perished in the presence of this mighty and marvelous problem.

Another instance and I am done. A learned gentleman named Riley applied for a doctor's degree at Yale University, and as the basis of his application, he wrote a thesis entitled "Joseph Smith, the Founder of Mormonism." And what did he bring forth? Simply this: That Joseph Smith was an epileptic, who fell in a fit and imagined that he saw the Father and the Son; imagined that Moroni revealed to him the Book of Mormon; that John the Baptist conferred upon him the Aaronic Priesthood, and Peter, James and John the Melchizedek Priesthood; that Moses restored the keys of the gathering, and that Elias and Elijah also appeared to him. All imagination, said Mr. Riley.

But this wise man overlooked one important fact: A tree is known by its fruit; a fountain, by the stream that issues from it. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as a system of government, challenges the admiration of intelligent men all over the world. It is conceded to be a wonderful organization. And the doctrines of "Mormonism" are replete with poetry and philosophy—are beautiful, glorious and sublime. Joseph Smith declared that these things were revealed to him—that they came right down from God out of heaven; but Mr. Riley would have us believe that they all sprang from the diseased brain of a fourteen-year-old boy who had fallen in an epileptic fit!

There are some things that do not need answering, and this one of them. Well was it said in days of old, with reference to the days in which we live: "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

#### ONLY ONE WAY

There is but one way to understand "Mormonism"—and that is God's way, not man's. Books and schools cannot give a testimony of the Truth. Those who sneer at the Everlasting Gospel, and pelt it with nicknames, will never understand it—unless they repent, and are baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost, whereby the things of God are made manifest. What Peter said to the multitude in his great Pentecostal sermon, is just as true today as when it was first spoken. The Gospel does not change; it is the same yesterday, today and forever; and what was necessary to save a soul two thousand years ago, is necessary to save one now. Amen.

#### ELDER JOHN M. KNIGHT

##### *Retiring President of the Western States Mission*

During the few moments at my disposal I pray that I may have the spirit of this occasion.

For nearly nine years it has been my good fortune to labor as a missionary of the Church, proclaiming to the world the marvelous work