

pillars of strength of this Church. The free agency of man is basic. We are committed to it, and corollary with it is our own individual initiative and willing cooperation in a great cause.

Now I have no concern as to the ability of our Father in heaven to accomplish his purposes in the earth. He could raise up children to Abraham from the very rocks. He could send armies of angels. He could take these and other shortcuts. He could no doubt do many things much more quickly, but he is interested in us, in our initiative, in our development, in our agency, in our voluntary willingness to cooperate one with another, and to move toward his purposes for our own soul's salvation as well as for the good of his work in the earth.

I pray that we may each of us sense our responsibility in the world and in the Church, and that we who have responsibility for any part of the work may learn to delegate detail as occasion requires and trust these men, our brethren, and these women, our sisters, to do their part in pushing forward the things that need to be done, and to feel a sense of responsibility as concerns carrying forward this work.

I should like to leave with you my conviction concerning the truthfulness and ultimate destiny of those things to which we are committed in this Church, which we earnestly accept as the Church of Jesus Christ, and I do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My beloved brothers and sisters: Six years ago at the October conference of the Church you sustained me as one of the General Authorities. In spite of my weaknesses and limitations, I stand here today to testify to you of the joy and the happiness which have been mine during those six glorious years. For four and one-half years of the six, I have had the opportunity of traveling among the stakes of Zion, meeting the stake presidencies, high councils, bishoprics, and Saints, and also visiting the missions of the Church and meeting the people there. It has been a priceless experience. In no other place in all the world can anyone be privileged to enjoy the association of such fine men and women as those who constitute the leadership of the stakes and wards of Zion and the missions and branches of the Church. I am deeply grateful for all your kindness.

As though this were not enough, I have had the glorious privilege of a close and intimate association with the leadership of the Church, the General Authorities. I have always loved them, but I have never loved them as much as I do today. Any one of them would give his all, including life itself, if necessary, for the establishment of this great work and the upbuilding of the kingdom. With all my heart, I sustain them and love them and commend to you, my brethren and sisters, their example and counsel.

Some few months ago following a general conference of the Church, I received a letter from a young man in this city. He had been impressed with something that had been said regarding missionary work. In his letter he asked the question—after indicating that he was not a member of the Church—"Why do you people of the Mormon faith send missionaries out into the world, particularly to Christian nations? Why do you not confine your program to the non-Christian people?"

If the Lord will bless me, I should like to attempt to answer that question, within the limits of the time available and my own personal limitations.

CHURCH ESTABLISHED BY CHRIST

It is a common belief of all sects professing Christianity that Jesus the Christ established his divine Church here on the earth during his ministry among men. He came during a period of comparative peace. The religious world was divided into two camps—the pagans of various sects and the Jews. The Jews alone were worshiping the true and Living God. Even they were divided among themselves, the principal groups being the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. There was also a mixture of the Jewish and pagan philosophies in the Samaritan group.

But Christ came with his message indicating that the law of Moses was fulfilled in him. He brought a higher law, a law of love, the gospel of love, and he established his Church. He selected officers. We read of the apostles, the seventies, bishops, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons, and one of the members of that body of leaders later said that these officers should remain in the Church for the purpose of

. . . the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith. (Eph. 4:12-13.)

The Master selected his Twelve. He named them; he sent them forth with the message, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They went to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and later, through divine direction, to the Gentiles as well. Others were called, and the seventy, following their first mission, came back rejoicing that even the devils had been subject to them in the name of Jesus Christ.

There was a spirit of unity among the members, a spirit of brotherhood; there was a spirit of oneness. They enjoyed rich spiritual gifts. Simple ordinances were performed by men who had authority and had been commissioned. The apostolic ministry was characterized by every evidence that those engaged in it had divine authority to carry the message of the gospel and to administer in the affairs of the kingdom. They went forth freely without pay, because the Master had said, "freely ye have re-

ceived, freely give." Peter, apparently the senior apostle, directed the activities of the Church.

In 44 A. D. a council of the Church membership was called in Jerusalem, with Peter presiding. According to the records, certain differences were adjusted at that conference, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Later the apostles scattered; persecution was heaped upon them; and so far as we know, they never met again in a general conference of the Church. The activities of Paul centered at Antioch, but during the period from 68 A. D. to 100 A. D., it appeared that most, if not all, of the original apostles, who had the authority to direct the kingdom—to direct the affairs of the Church—had passed from the earth.

BEGINNING OF APOSTASY

Waves of persecution continued, dissension crept in, political influence was in evidence. According to the writers of the second century, which are usually passed over in silence by many of the religious leaders of the world today, the teachings were orthodox to quite an extent during the first century and into the second century following the advent of the Master. But even during this period there was evidence that an apostasy was beginning. As Constantine came to the throne of the Roman empire, there was a spirit of tolerance shown toward all religious groups. Finally, tolerance increased toward the Christians until Constantine himself more or less espoused their cause.

Great changes were now in evidence. Some would have us believe that the bishop of Rome, about this time, became the head of the Church. There were many bishops presiding over local congregations—churches as they were called—but none of them had authority, as had been given to the Twelve, to direct Church affairs. In fact, the records indicate that at least two of the bishops of Rome died while John, the Apostle was still known among men. Evidently, one was living when John received his last great revelation recorded in the Book of Revelation. None of these had the authority, nor assumed authority, to direct the church established by Christ and his apostles.

In the council called by Constantine, the emperor, in 325 A.D. (Council of Nicaea), which was apparently the first conference called subsequent to the one that was held in Jerusalem in 44 A.D., we are told that only about one-sixth of the bishops were in attendance, and that the bishop of Rome was absent from that important meeting. The emperor directed the council although he was not even baptized. According to the records we have, there was evidently no unity and no inspiration of the Spirit present at the meeting, but force and intrigue were used in an effort to bring political unity for political purposes. In fact, our best authorities seem to indicate that it must have been approximately 354 A. D. before Peter, the Apostle, was ever referred to as a bishop.

PRINCIPLES AND ORDINANCES CHANGED

But long before this time, evidences of apostasy had set in. The corrupting of the simple principles of the gospel, the introduction of pagan philosophies, the unwarranted and unauthorized addition of certain man-made ceremonies, changes in organization and in government—all these and more were in evidence.

There isn't time to go into a detailed discussion of the changes made, but we may take as an example the simple ordinance of baptism, performed by immersion, by those having authority, following which hands of the priesthood were laid upon the heads of the baptized members and the Holy Ghost conferred. Shortly after the passing of the apostles, this ordinance was greatly modified. The mode of baptism was changed. There came a time when baptism was recognized whether or not men held or even claimed authority. They even went to the point of indicating that authority was not necessary. The baptism of infants was introduced. Adults who were baptized were treated as infants and fed on milk and honey for a period. The use of oil was introduced into the ordinance.

The sacred ordinance of the sacrament was changed, that simple and impressive ordinance introduced by the Master. The doctrine of transubstantiation was taught and actual idolatry and the worship of the emblems introduced. A change was made in the selection of officers. Nominations had been made by the Apostles who had that authority. No longer was the principle of common consent, which had been a part of the early Church, practised and followed. Members of the Church were forbidden to read the scriptures, although the Master had said, "Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life." (John 5.39.)

ABOMINABLE PRACTICES INTRODUCED

Many other practices were introduced, one of the most serious, and I am sure one of the most abominable in the sight of God, was the selling of indulgences. This practice was based on the false theory that there was a treasure of merit—that certain of the saints and others through their works had performed more than was required for their salvation—and therefore, there was a treasure available upon which others might draw, who through their unrighteous lives may be short of the requirements for salvation. The doctrine of infallibility, the worship of relics, the introduction of pomp, ceremony, and mysteries, the use of incense, the worship of martyrs, applause to show the relative popularity of speakers in the Church, and even the purchase of office were approved and practised. Rivalry, strife, and disunity were rampant, probably reaching a climax when the bishop of Rome excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople and the patriarch in turn excommunicated the bishop.

There remained then, only human churches, without authority, which had excommunicated each other. Surely the apostasy was now complete.

APOSTASY PREDICTED

As the restored Church, we affirm that with the passing of the apostolic age, the Church drifted into a condition of apostasy, that succession in the priesthood was broken, and that the Church, as an earthly organization operating under divine direction and having authority to officiate in spiritual ordinances, ceased to exist. This is attested by history. We affirm also that all this was foreseen and predicted by the apostles when they were living, yea, and by the Master in his day. The apostasy had started during the days of the Apostles, and was referred to frequently by them.

You are acquainted with the quotation in Paul's reference to the situation as he met with the elders of Ephesus for the last time when he said,

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (Acts 20:29.)

Then his letter to the Thessalonians,

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come
—the Second Coming of the Master—

except there come a falling away first. (II Thessalonians 2:3.)

To the Galatians Paul referred to the apostasy already under way, and marveled that they were so soon removed from him that had called them, into another gospel. He chastised them for so doing, and pointed out that there was only one gospel plan. (Gal. 1:6-8.)

Peter spoke of

... false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies . . . and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (II Peter 2:1.)

In fact, in the great vision given to John while on the Isle of Patmos, he refers to the few churches worthy of his note as being "neither cold nor hot." (Rev. 3:15.) In reference to the restoration of the gospel, the passage often quoted (Rev. 14:6-7) is a clear evidence that the apostasy was to be complete, for when John received this revelation, indicating a condition of the future, he saw an angel flying through the midst of heaven, "having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth."

Even in the Old Testament, prophets had prophesied in a similar manner. Isaiah indicated that the earth would be

defiled under the inhabitants thereof because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. (Isaiah 24:5.)

Nowhere is the law of Moses referred to as an everlasting covenant. The everlasting covenant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amos had spoken of a famine that should come in the land for "hearing the words of the Lord" and that people would "run to and fro to seek the work of the Lord, and shall not find it." (Amos 8:11.)

Not only by history, which is quite conclusive, but through prophecy also we have been informed definitely that there was and there would be a complete apostasy from the truth. Many of the early reformers recognized this fact as they struck out against the false teachings and practises of their day. Wesley, the founder of Methodism, lamented that the "Christians had turned heathen again and had only a dead form left." Even here in America, Roger Williams, head of the oldest Baptist congregation in the land, recognized, as he quit the ministry, that there was no divinely constituted authority or church upon the face of the earth, nor would there be such a church until one arose having apostles and other officers as found in the church established in the Meridian of Time.

APOSTASY ATTESTED FACT

It is an attested fact that as Joseph Smith, a humble boy, went into the woods to pray on that beautiful spring morning in 1820, the world—Christian and otherwise—was in a sad state of apostasy. The answer given to him is to me the greatest evidence we have in all the world that there had been an apostasy from the truth. When he beheld those two glorious beings, the one pointed to the other and said, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him." And after Joseph had asked the question, "which of all the sects was right," what was the answer that he received? These are his words:

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong: . . . they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.

He [the Son] again forbade me to join with any of them. (P. of G. P., Joseph Smith 2:19-20.)

TRUE CHURCH RE-ESTABLISHED

Later, the Prophet Joseph was commanded to go forth as an instrument in the hands of God and organize the Church, to publish to the world as an added testimony to the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon which was taken from the sacred records. The Church was organized, and through revelation its name, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was given, as referred to earlier by President Smith. Then after a few months had elapsed, while the elders were in special conference considering the matter of the publication of the revelations that had been received up to that time, the Lord spoke through the Prophet and gave a very significant revelation and indicated that it should be the preface to the Lord's Book of Commandments. In that revela-

tion we find these significant words, referring to the Lord's servants who would have the responsibility of carrying the message to the world and establishing the kingdom. Said the Lord:

And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, *the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually—(D. & C. 1:30; Italics author's.)*

These are not our words. These are words of him who established his Church anciently, and through whose ministry it has been re-established and restored in the day and age in which we live.

A MESSAGE FOR THE WORLD

Now, my brothers and sisters, that is why we send missionaries out into the world, because this message is a world message. It is the truth restored. The Lord indicated this fact in that same revelation, in the opening verse, in which he said:

Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; . . . (D. & C. 1:1-2.)

This restoration of the gospel, the bringing back of light and truth, is intended for the benefit and blessing of all God's children. And so, humbly and gratefully, our missionaries go out into the world to proclaim that there has been an apostasy from the truth, but that through the goodness of God the heavens have again been opened and the gospel revealed unto man through Joseph Smith, the Prophet.

I am grateful for this knowledge. To me it is the most precious thing in all the world. I would to God that all within the sound of my voice, and all God's children everywhere, could know of the sweetness of the gospel and what it means to hold the priesthood and to feel the fellowship and brotherhood which we have in the Church—yes, to know of the security that comes to the heart of man as a testimony of the truth is borne in upon his soul.

TESTIMONY

I testify to you this day that these things are true, that this is the work of God. I bear this testimony knowing full well that eventually I must stand before the judgment seat of God, as you my brethren and sisters will be required to do. I testify in all humility that God has again spoken from the heavens, following

a long period of apostasy, that he has raised up a prophet, that Joseph Smith was the instrument in his hands in restoring again to the earth the Holy Priesthood, the true Church organization with all the blessings enjoyed in former days, and even more, because this is the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. I bear this testimony to you in all humility and with gratitude in my heart, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President George Albert Smith:

The Relief Society Singing Mothers will sing as a concluding number, "How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings." The closing prayer will be offered by President Wendell B. Mendenhall of the San Joaquin Stake in California.

After these things have been accomplished this conference will be adjourned until 2 o'clock this afternoon.

The afternoon session will be broadcast over KSL at Salt Lake City and by arrangement with KSL over the other stations to which you are now listening. The conference will also be broadcast over the television station of KSL, channel 5.

The audience should be seated not later than ten minutes before the hour.

Any important messages and calls that have come to us for persons supposed to be in attendance at the conference will be announced at the dismissal of the meeting over the loud-speaking system on the grounds. Everyone would do well to listen carefully to such announcements.

The choir music for this session has been furnished by the Relief Society Singing Mothers of the Jordan Valley Region and the four Provo stakes with Sister Florence Jepperson Madsen conducting and Elder Frank W. Asper at the organ.

Now, brethren and sisters, there are many people on these streets. Automobiles in many cases are being operated by people who do not know just exactly how dangerous they are, but you ought to know, so I am going to suggest to you that when you leave these grounds you watch carefully if you go into the street at all and wherever you go during this conference protect yourself from accident as far as you possibly can and if you do that I am sure our Heavenly Father will do the rest.

We will now hear the choir after which Brother Mendenhall will offer the benediction.

Singing by the Relief Society Singing Mothers. "How Lovely Are Thy Dwellings."

The closing prayer was offered by President Wendell B. Mendenhall of the San Joaquin Stake.

Conference adjourned until 2 p.m.