

Father in heaven, and be found worthy before him and eventually have the privilege of coming into his presence, there to be crowned as sons and daughters of God, receiving the fulness of his kingdom.

The Lord bless you, my good brethren and sisters, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER ALVIN R. DYER

#### *Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My dear brothers and sisters, I feel it is a great privilege to be in your presence here today, in the presence of my Brethren, and to be under the inspiration and leadership of our Prophet and those who are associated with him in the Presidency of the Church, and I have felt here this day the power and the inspiration of the Spirit as it has been manifested in what has been said.

A number of years ago there was a noted historian sent to Salt Lake City, to study the customs and the way of living of the Latter-day Saints. He remained here many years among our people and published a book in the year of 1922 telling of his findings. I should like to read a paragraph or two from what he said about our people. He never knew the Prophet Joseph Smith. He could only tell of his work by the results as it was manifest among the people who were guided by the revelations from God which their prophet had received. I quote:

"Who can explain Joseph Smith? What are the 'revelations from God'? What is their test? Is it not beyond all reason that a lad, born of poor parents, devoid of any save the commonest education, too poor to buy books, should have accomplished what he did in less than forty years, unless there was some great reason for it?

"Let anyone, even a literary genius, after forty years of life, try to write a companion volume to the Book of Mormon, and then almost daily for a number of years give out 'revelations' that internally harmonize one with another, at the same time formulate a system of doctrine for a Church, introduce many new principles, resuscitate extinct priesthoods, and formulate a system of Church

President David O. McKay:

President Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us. He will be followed by Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Twelve. Brother Dyer will be followed by Elder Hanks.

government which has no superior upon earth . . . to deny such a man a wonderful power over the human heart and intellect is absurd. Only fanatical prejudice can ignore it. However, he may be accounted for by the reasoning mind, Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet, was one of the wonders of his time." (George Wharton James.)

One of the great distinguishing characteristics of the Latter-day Saint people is that they are governed by revelations from God, and whether people come into our midst, or whether we go out into the world, this characteristic remains a distinguishing factor.

I recall that some few years ago in one of the communities of Oklahoma a minister, in an effort to discredit the effects of our missionary work, in that area had an article placed in a daily newspaper, from which I quote a part. He said: "The first thing that you should know is that these missionaries are a part of a church that claims to have a revelation and a prophet."

How well he placed the facts. Yet it seems rather strange that a Christian minister would make such a statement in derision, for revelation and the prophets have ever been a part of God's plan to convey commandments and teachings of righteousness unto his children. There are others, like this minister, who feel that we have no right to receive revelation, but if we do not receive revelation for the guidance and direction of the true Church of Jesus Christ, then we do not have the oracles of God, and if we do not have the oracles of God, then we are not the people of God.

But this is not the fact, for over and over again God has revealed his will unto this, his people, through his serv-

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ants, the prophets. In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, which is a book of revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith unto the Latter-day Saints, the Lord has said:

"Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments." (D & C 1:17.)

These commandments are revelations from God which provide the laws and ordinances of the gospel, and by obedience to them will exalt man in the presence of our Heavenly Father. The Prophet Jacob, one of the Book of Mormon prophets, speaks of the need of revelation in this manner. He says:

"Behold, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord. How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God." (Jacob 4:8.)

Again Moroni, another Book of Mormon prophet, speaks of those who would deny revelation.

"And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healing, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues;

"Behold I say unto you, he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the scriptures; if so, he does not understand them.

"For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?" (Mormon 9:7-9.)

The revelations from God are a great expediency in leading man unto eternal life and exaltation. Yet in every age, where God's will has been expressed unto his people, there have been those who have failed to obey and who have in some instances rebelled against the revealed word of God.

This was true with the greatest of all prophets, Christ the Lord. Early in his ministry multitudes of people followed him everywhere, for he blessed them, raised their dead, and fed their hunger.

But, upon that occasion when he announced to them for the first time that he was the Son of God and that he would reveal unto them the mind and will of the Father, that he was the living bread sent down from heaven, they turned and walked no more with him, seeing the people turn from him because of revelation, he turned to his disciples and said, "Will ye go away also?"—but his nearest disciples led by Peter, did not leave him, for they accepted his revelations; gone, however, were the crowds of people who had followed him on the shores of Galilee and the hillsides of Judea. From that day forth, save for his closest disciples, he walked alone.

Unfortunately, in the early days of the Church not all of the Latter-day Saints accepted the revelations. I suppose that as each revelation was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and it was made known unto the people, just that many more of the weak Saints rebelled and turned away from the Church. This became one of the great problems to our people in the days of Kirtland and Missouri, for some of the members and leaders alike opposed and did all that they could to prevent the coming forth of further revelation, and the progress of the Church.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, speaking of this at Far West, had this to say: "Many men will say I will never forsake you, but will stand by you at all times, but the moment you teach them some of the revelations (mysteries) of the kingdom of God that are retained in the heavens and are to be revealed to the children of men when they are prepared for them, they will be the first to stone you and put you to death."

The Prophet continued in this very significant meeting to make this further statement: "Would to God, brethren, I could tell you who I am! would to God I could tell you what I know! but you would call it blasphemy, and there are men on this stand who would want to take my life." Continuing further, he said, "When God offers a blessing, or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned." Thus by the implied remarks of the Prophet, the rebellion of the weak Saints in the days of Kirtland and Missouri continued, yes, even unto the days of Nauvoo. They seemed, unfortunately, not

to understand the things of God, which had been revealed.

When the work of the Prophet Joseph Smith was completed, when he had received the keys, powers, and ordinances, and had conferred them upon the heads of the Quorum of the Twelve, when he realized and sensed that the time had come when he would give his life for his work, he seemed to speak, upon occasion, more emphatically than ever before with regard to the truth of the revelations which he received, indicating that there were those within the Church then who opposed and did not accept all the revelations which God had given through him. These were his words upon the memorable occasion of one of his last addresses to the Saints.

"Oh! I beseech you go forward and make your calling and election sure—when did I ever teach anything wrong from this stand? When was I ever confounded? I want to triumph in Israel before I depart hence and am no more seen. I never told you I was perfect—but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught." (May 12, 1844.)

I have mentioned these things, my brethren and sisters, only in reflection to bring it down to us today. Can we say, with regard to revelation, in a similar sense, that those who fail in the Church today to accept and live fully the revelations given are somewhat rebellious perhaps not in the same antagonistic manner which was manifest in the early days, but nevertheless rebel within themselves against the word of the Lord. There are some who perhaps sense the great value of these God-given truths, yet fail in their appropriation. They will not let go for fear of losing something greatly worth while, but still hold back when it comes to fully accepting the revelations from God.

May I consider with you for a few moments some of the vital revelations given through the Prophet Joseph Smith and perhaps as we go back to our homes from this great conference of the Church we can regenerate in our own thinking the desire to conform more closely to the commandments which the Lord has required of us through these revealed writings. I refer to a revelation with regard to the magnifying of the priesthood found in section 84 and section 121, given at Kirtland, Ohio, in 1832,

and at Liberty, Missouri, in 1839, and when we find that perhaps two thirds of the elders who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, are found not to be in their priesthood meetings each Sunday morning, we realize the need of greater adherence to this instruction. Would we say that those who are not fully living in accordance with this revelation are perhaps opposing the divine will of our Heavenly Father as it is expressed through his prophets?

There is the revelation given on tithing and offerings at Far West, Missouri, in 1838. Would you say, my brethren and sisters, that a man, especially one who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood, and who does not pay an honest tithing is rebelling against the revelations of God?

What about attendance at Sacrament meeting? I remember as a young man being placed in a bishopric, and of being told we ought to achieve twenty percent attendance at Sacrament meeting. Today the current average attendance is thirty-three percent, and yet each Sunday finds sixty-seven out of one hundred of our people not attending their Sacrament meeting. Would you say that this failure to attend, on the part of some, is something of a rebellion against this revelation given at Jackson County, Missouri, in 1831?

Then what about the revelation on virtue and the receiving of the Holy Ghost, given in Liberty Prison in 1839, when the Prophet revealed to us that if we would have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, our lives must be virtuous and we must live constantly under that influence? Would you say that those who have evil thoughts and would permit unclean practices to come into their lives are opposing the will and the revelations of God on purity of life?

There are still other revelations—the reiteration of the Ten Commandments at Kirtland, Ohio, in section 42; the great principle of righteous dominion, in section 121, wherein we are to live with our fellow men in kindness, in long-suffering, in meekness, and love unfeigned, in the true spirit of brotherhood as becomes a Latter-day Saint; the revelations on temple work in sections 124, 127, and 128, given in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1841 and 1842.

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Are we doing all that we can in accordance with these revelations, and if we are not are we inwardly opposing them? My brothers and sisters, you be the ones to answer that for yourselves.

Then there is this last one I will refer to, the revelation on harmful indulgences—the Word of Wisdom—and we see the manifest desire of many within the Church to twist the meaning of this great revelation, and those who do this, are they rebelling against the will of God as they did in the earlier days?

I bear record to you, my brethren and sisters, that these revelations have been given to us for our enlightenment, for our growth, that we may return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. They are a distinguishing characteristic of the Latter-day Saints. We are to use them

for our upbuilding and growth within the kingdom of God.

Would it not be profitable to re-view the revelations—to learn afresh—to “know our duty” and then where needful adjust our lives *fully* to the laws and commandments of God?

I bear record to the truthfulness of the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, has just spoken to us. Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of Seventy will now address us. He will be followed by Elder John Longden.

### ELDER MARION D. HANKS

#### *Of the First Council of the Seventy*

I seek only to be able to speak the truth, to merit the Spirit of the Lord which will direct me and bless me in so doing. I appreciate the wonderful sermons which have been delivered here from the first through Brother Dyer's.

I sat thinking a moment ago of my sainted father who left his little family and departed this earth more than thirty-five years ago, how he went into the missionary field at the call of the Lord through the Brethren, in his late 'teens, carrying copies of the Book of Mormon with testimony and conviction, expressing his deepest assurance of the validity of the work he represented and yet without adequate knowledge, perhaps, because he was but a boy and because much knowledge now available was not had, to defend his viewpoint in the eyes of the world. He had but his testimony, his faith, and the Book.

As President Smith spoke I marveled that we have lived long enough and that we live in a time, you and I, when the wise men, the honest men of the world, are coming to understand some of the things the Lord has taught us through all the years since the establishment of the Church.

As President Smith referred to the age of eight and his faith that a youngster at that age can know, I thought of my

little children and then of a book published recently, written by two of the most accepted, and I think effective, child psychologists of the day, commenting on the age “eight” in the lives of the young.

“Eight seems to be an age when much that was not comprehended before is often easily understood. At that age it is almost as though a new dimension has been added to the child's understanding.”

It is remarkable that qualified and earnest seekers after truth should discover that at age eight a new dimension enters into the life of the child. The Lord assured us of this when he talked of the age of accountability long ago.

Of one thing implicit in both President Smith's and Brother Dyer's remarks, I would speak for just a few moments.

A thoughtful friend phoned this morning to tell me of a book he had just received—I had not seen a copy nor is it available in our bookstores yet—a book called, *I Found God in Soviet Russia*, in which a man tells of his own experiences as a prisoner in a concentration camp in Siberia.

He talks of the religious faith that permitted people to endure and survive.