

Saturday, April 8

Second Day

story of Christ's work in ancient America is beautifully told in the Book of Mormon, and so that record proclaims the greatest event that ever occurred anciently on the Western Hemisphere.

I bear testimony that through the power of the Holy Ghost I know that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world, your Savior, and my Savior, and as he claimed, the God of the entire world. I know that he died for your sins and my sins. I witness that he broke the bands of death and brought about a universal resurrection. I testify that he restored his gospel in this dis-

persation, and if you and I will keep his commandments, someday we shall return into his presence and receive a blessed exaltation.

May God bless us to this end, I humbly pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us. Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr., Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us.

ELDER WILLIAM J. CRITCHLOW, JR.

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

To many of my stake conference assignments I am air-borne. Such transportation I call air flights.

Yesterday, while this conference was in recess, I employed a flight of imagination to take me back through years of time and miles of space to attend, in fancy, a session of a general conference of the Church held in Nauvoo, on April 7, 1844, exactly 117 years ago yesterday. The proceedings of that conference made noteworthy history. This conference is history in the making.

I made this fanciful flight to see the Prophet Joseph Smith whose life and personality excite my deepest veneration. I wanted, too, to see the temple and to locate the store which my great-grandmother helped her first husband establish in that city. My traveling companions were books which revealed the life of the Prophet. They made excellent guides as well as delightful companions.

I knew in 1844 that horses, even oxen and wagons, were de luxe means of transportation, but I chose for my vehicle of transportation on this imaginary flight a large overstuffed armchair. It was comfortable and roomy enough to allow me to curl up in it, so I took a refreshing thirty winks or more en route.

My fanciful flight deposited me, purposefully, in the business district of Nauvoo shortly before 10:00 am. Business places were closed: April 7 was

Sunday. My guides could not find the store I sought. I paused to read an editorial in the *Times and Seasons* paper which I found posted in the area. It reported in part: ". . . commercial business has been somewhat dull; . . . preparations are being made by the farmers in the vicinity for the cultivation of land; . . .

"And a word we would say to the Saints abroad, which is, that the temple is being built in compliance with a special commandment of God not to a few individuals, but to all. Therefore we sincerely hope you will contribute of your means as liberally as your circumstances will allow . . ." etc. (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, pp. 265-266.)

From a distance, I observed the temple. Its walls were up; windows and roof were lacking. I wanted to make a closer inspection, but I was startled suddenly by a burst of sound—voices in song and in such volume as I have never heard coming from any meetinghouse. Surely, I thought, the walls of the building just won't stand the vibration. In my excitement I completely forgot the temple. That meetinghouse I just had to see. It could not be far away, a block or so, I guessed, as I hurried in the direction of the sound. The distance lengthened into two, three, possibly four blocks, and then around a corner I came to a grove of trees, and there in a clearing I beheld a vast multitude of people.

I stood amazed and out of breath. Now it was I, not the walls that vibrated. There were no walls. There never were any walls. The great canopy of heaven was the roof; the floor, like the foundation, was the damp terra firma—it had rained the afternoon before. The place had good ventilation—the air was fresh, clean, and warm. The bright sun was an excellent heating unit.

My guide advised me that this was the largest assembly of people in the brief history of Nauvoo. Twenty thousand, sitting and standing, faced an elevated stand upon which the leaders were seated. From my position in the fringes of the crowd, I could neither see nor hear well. Sidney Rigdon was the morning speaker. He reviewed the history of the Church.

At noon the conference recessed until 2 pm. When some of those down front left for lunch, I quickly moved into a place where I could see and hear the afternoon speakers.

My guide identified the first speaker of the afternoon as the Patriarch. "You must be mistaken," I thought. "The patriarch is the Prophet's father and is a much older man." My face must have turned red when I was informed that the Prophet's father was dead and that Hyrum the Prophet's brother was the succeeding Patriarch and the speaker. For nearly an hour he pleaded with the congregation to bring ". . . provisions, money, boards, planks, and anything that is good; we don't want any more old guns or watches" he said. "I give a privilege to anyone to pay a cent a week . . . I want it by next fall to buy nails and glass.

". . . I want to get the roof on this season . . . the windows in, . . . so that we may dedicate the House of the Lord by this time next year, if nothing more than one room." (Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 298.)

At about 3 pm the Prophet came upon the stand. I recognized him immediately. A great hush came over the multitude when he arose to speak. He began by saying he would preach a sermon for his friend King Follett whose funeral, held a few days before, he did not attend because of illness. For a few moments I missed his words, I was too

engrossed in the process of appraising and admiring his personality.

He was a commanding figure—tall and well-proportioned.

He looked strong. My guide said he weighed 212 pounds at the time.

His shoulders were broad.

His head, one might call, a very oblong oval.

His brow was high, white, and smooth.

His cheeks were full, free from hair, a bit pale, I thought, but clear.

His blue eyes were his most remarkable feature, not very large nor very deeply set, but at times almost veiled by the longest, thickest, light lashes you ever saw belonging to a man.

His nose was prominent—straight and thin.

His lips were thin, too.

His wavy, fine, long, light-brown hair was parted faintly on the left and was combed back on top in a high roll which made it full in back, and it protruded in full waves above, behind, and in front of his ears, almost obscuring them.

His hands were small.*

He spoke powerfully. He spoke like a Prophet. He looked like a Prophet. He was a Prophet.

He said—and these are mere excerpts from his sermon:

"God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by His power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with Him, as one man talks and communes with another. . . .

". . . it is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with Him as one man

*For description details see:

Joseph Smith the Man and the Seer—Hyrum L. Andrus, Chapters 1 & 2.

Life of Joseph Smith—George Q. Cannon, p. 321.

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converses with another, and that He was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ Himself did. . . .

“. . . Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead. . . .

“. . . What did Jesus do? Why, I do the things I saw my Father do when worlds came rolling into existence. My Father worked out His kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father, so that He may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt Him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. . . .

“When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world. . . .

“. . . learned men . . . say that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. . . .

“And they infer, from the word create, that it must have been made out of nothing. Now, the word create . . . does not mean to create out of nothing; it means to organize; the same as a man would organize materials and build a ship. Hence we infer that God had materials to organize the world out of chaos—chaotic matter, which is element. . . . Element had an existence from the time He had . . . they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning, and can have no end. . . .

“. . . The intelligence of spirits had

no beginning, neither will it have an end. . . . There never was a time when there were not spirits; for they are co-equal [co-eternal] with our Father in heaven. . . .

“The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. . . .

“The contention in heaven was—Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the devil said he would save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him. . . .

“I have a father, brothers, children, and friends who have gone to a world of spirits. They are only absent for a moment. They are in the spirit, and we shall soon meet again. The time will soon arrive when the trumpet shall sound. When we depart, we shall hail our mothers, fathers, friends, and all whom we love, who have fallen asleep in Jesus. . . .

“. . . The baptism of water, without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it, is of no use; they are necessarily and inseparably connected. An individual must be born of water and the Spirit in order to get into the kingdom of God. . . .

“Hear it, all ye ends of the earth—all ye priests, all ye sinners, and all men. Repent! repent! Obey the gospel. Turn to God. . . .

“I have intended my remarks for all, both rich and poor, bond and free, great and small. I have no enmity against any man. I love you all; but I hate some of your deeds. . . .

“. . . You don't know me; you never knew my heart. No man knows my history. I cannot tell it: I shall never undertake it. . . .

“. . . When I am called by the trumpet of the archangel and weighed in the balance, you will all know me then. . . . God bless you all. Amen.” (*History of the Church* 6:302-317; also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, pp. 342-362.)

The Prophet spoke for 3½ hours. My guides said it was the longest, the most powerful, and the most eloquent

address he ever gave, and he gave it without notes before the largest crowd ever assembled in Nauvoo. They also said that he depended upon the Holy Ghost rather than upon notes to guide him. "I do not have time to prepare my sermons," he said.

My visit to Nauvoo, April 7, 1844, was as I said, fanciful. The conference and the Prophet's sermon were factual. Factual too was the visit one month later of one Joseph Quincy son of the president of Harvard and himself later mayor of Boston who in his appraisal of the Prophet wrote:

"It is by no means improbable that some future text-book, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants . . . The man who established a religion in this age of free debate, who was and is to-day accepted by hundreds of thousands as a direct emissary from the Most High,—such a rare human being is not to be disposed of by pelting his memory with unsavory epithets."

"This Joe Smith," another contemporary writer on the *New York Sun* said, "must be set down as an extraordinary character, a prophet-hero as Carlyle might call him. He is one of the greatest men of the age and in the future will rank with those who in one way or another, have stamped their impression strongly on society." (*Stories about Joseph Smith the Prophet* by Edwin F. Parry, pp. 13-14.)

The poet, John Greenleaf Whittier wrote:

"Once in the world's history we were to have a Yankee prophet, and we have had him in Joe Smith. For good or evil, he has left his track on the great pathway of life; or, to use the words of Horne, 'knocked out for himself a window in the wall of the nineteenth century, whence his rude, bold, good-

humored face will peer out upon the generations to come.'" (*Howitts Journal as quoted in Millennial Star*, October 1, 1848, p. 303.)

His associates in the Church said:

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great . . . and . . . has sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; . . ." (D&C 135:3.)

My guide bore this fervent testimony:

"Here is a man who was born in the stark hills of Vermont; who was reared in the backwoods of New York; who never looked inside a college or high school; who lived in six states, no one of which would own him during his lifetime; who spent months in the vile prisons of the period; who, even when he had his freedom, was hounded like a fugitive; who was covered once with a coat of tar and feathers, and left for dead; who, with his following, was driven by irate neighbors from New York to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri, and from Missouri to Illinois; and who, at the unripe age of thirty-eight, was shot to death by a mob with painted faces.

"Yet this man became mayor of the biggest town in Illinois and the state's most prominent citizen, the commander of the largest body of trained soldiers in the nation outside the Federal army, the founder of cities and of a university, and aspired to become President of the United States.

"He wrote a book which has baffled the literary critics for a hundred years and which is today more widely read than any other volume save the Bible. On the threshold of an organizing age he established the most nearly perfect social mechanism in the modern world, and developed a religious philosophy that challenges anything of the kind in history, for completeness and cohesion. And he set up the machinery for an economic system that would take the brood of fears out of the heart of man—the fear of want through sickness, old age unemployment, and poverty.

"In thirty nations are men and women who look upon him as a greater leader

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than Moses and a greater prophet than Isaiah. . . ." (*Joseph Smith An American Prophet* by John Henry Evans, foreword.)

To these may I add my testimony;

I believe—I know Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God; that he was visited by heavenly messengers. Among them were John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John; Moses, Elias, Elijah; and one Moroni who led him to some hidden golden plates, the characters on which he translated and thus produced the Book of Mormon. I also believe—yes, I know, that he was visited by the Father and by the Son and was instructed by the Son. This testimony I bear humbly in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder William J. Critchlow, Jr., As-

sistant to the Twelve. The combined Choirs of the Utah State University and the congregation will now join in singing, "How Firm A Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord," conducted by James L. Bradley. Elder Alma Sonne will be the speaker after the singing.

The Combined Choirs and the congregation joined in singing the hymn, "How Firm A Foundation, Ye Saints Of The Lord."

President David O. McKay:

Elder Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Bishop Thorpe B. Isaacson.

ELDER ALMA SONNE

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brethren and sisters, there were power and inspiration in the song which we have just sung. I appreciate the good singing by the various choirs who have appeared during this conference. I am especially grateful for the singing of the choir this morning, coming as it did from the Logan Institute and from the Utah State University. I am very happy that the program of this great Church provides for the development of choirs and choral groups.

For a few minutes I would like to say something about our missionary effort in the world. This is a missionary Church, and when one becomes a member of it, he is also a missionary. As an introduction I want to read from the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, which is also a preface, or an introduction, to the revelations which follow.

Said the Lord: "For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

"And the voice of warning shall be

unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

"And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them." (D&C 1:2, 4-5.)

The Savior's great commission to his chosen apostles prior to his ascension is similar in all respects to what I have read. Said he: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16.)

Under those solemn injunctions God's work has gone forward in the earth. Neither persecution, ridicule, nor bigotry have been able to stop it from progressing.

When I visited the Canadian Mission a few months ago, I was told that Elder Orson Hyde opened the mission in 1833. The Church was then three years old, after having been organized by six humble men. In the same year Joseph Smith the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon strengthened the mission by their personal ministry. Their first meeting was