

PRESIDENT HUGH B. BROWN

Counselor in the First Presidency

I am sure we all respond from the depths of our being to that glorious rendition, "Crown Him Lord of All," rendered as only the Tabernacle Choir, I think, could sing it.

My brothers and sisters, and in that salutation I should like to include all who are listening regardless of their church affiliation, because we are convinced that we are brothers and sisters. We believe in the universal brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.

As this is the first conference since my change of status in the Church, I should like to take this opportunity to express publicly to President McKay and his associates my sincere appreciation for the confidence which prompted them to submit my name for your approval, and I wish to thank you members of the Church for your confidence in their judgment. I pledge only that I shall do my level best to make that judgment good and to that end humbly invoke divine guidance and your indulgence. I shall need your prayers of faith.

But we are speaking this morning not alone to Church members. We are advised that perhaps more than fifty percent of those attending in person or through the use of modern media are friends of the Church who are visiting us. We appreciate your interest—we extend to you a hearty welcome. Your attendance seems to indicate that you have heard something about the Mormons and perhaps would like to know more. We should like to respond briefly to your implied inquiry about the Church. We shall avoid dogmatism, for that ordinarily brings antagonism. We simply invite you, our friends, this morning to, as Isaiah said, "Come, and let us reason together." (Isaiah 1:18.)

We respect all men in their religious beliefs, but the divergent beliefs and multiplicity of creeds have, through the centuries, been the cause of much confusion and concern. The condition of the world religiously is stated in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, from which I quote the following:

"A Babel of religious organizations all proclaim themselves to be the Church of Christ. Their doctrines are contradictory and precisely in so far as one of them regards the doctrine which it teaches as vital, it declares those of rival bodies to be misleading and pernicious."

Now, while we do not agree that the beliefs of others are necessarily pernicious, we do think it regrettable that the original Church of Jesus Christ, as outlined in the New Testament, has been broken up into so many creeds. We believe the Lord's house should be a house of order, not divided against itself.

The question is often asked, what are some of the distinguishing characteristics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? What, if anything, has this Church to offer which is new? Would it be worthwhile to take a closer look at Mormonism?

Though there are many fundamental differences between this Church and others, we must today be content to mention—and that only briefly—just one of them. We refer to our faith in continued revelation from God to men. It seems somewhat paradoxical that this fundamental doctrine of the Church should make it unique or distinguish it from others, inasmuch as in all dispensations of the gospel current revelation has been the sustaining power, the vivifying spirit of the divine Church.

In a concrete statement of beliefs known as the Articles of Faith, we declare our faith in all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and we believe that he will yet reveal many great and important things.

History proves that when the spirit or gift of revelation is withdrawn from the Church there is nothing but a dead form left and men are prone to worship God with their lips and honor him with their mouths, but, because there is no communication and therefore no understanding, their hearts are far from him.

The things of God can only be understood by the Spirit of God and the

Spirit of God is a revealing spirit. The Master promised before he left the earth to send another Comforter which would lead men into all truth. Divine revelation has always been a characteristic of the living Church—it is absolutely essential to its continued existence in an organized state on the earth.

You remember the Prophet Amos said, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.)

And in Proverbs we read, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: . . ." (Prov. 29:18.)

We have ample scriptural authority for our declaration that a man must be called of God by prophecy and by the laying on of hands by men of authority to preach the gospel and administer its ordinances. The Apostle Paul said, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (Hebrew 5:4.) And Aaron was called by direct revelation through Moses. When revelation ceases, people dwindle in unbelief, and not only the people but also the Church apostatizes in the absence of inspired leadership.

That is exactly what happened in the primitive church, and that situation was a harbinger of a universal apostasy, of which the Church of England speaks in its "Homily against Peril of Idolatry," as follows: "So that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sects, and degrees of men, women, and children of whole Christendom—an horrible and most dreadful thing to think—have been at once drowned in abominable idolatry; of all other vices most detested of God and most damnable to man; and that by the space of eight hundred years and more."

Without continued revelation there can be no authorized ministry on the earth, and without authorized officers there can be no Church of Christ. If some say there is no revelation and will not be further revelation from God, we ask, "Why not? Has God lost the power to reveal his mind and will to men?" Of course, to so state is tantamount to blasphemy. Do we not need revelation or word from God? I ask you to consider the condition of the world and

note the dire need of the world for some divine guidance and direction.

Well, then, if God could reveal, and we need revelation, is the fault with man? Have we lost the gift or the faith or the understanding that will enable us to receive revelation? Certainly it would be more modest of us to admit the fault in ourselves than to blame God for not speaking, if he does not speak. Or perhaps there may be some jamming of the messages by the enemy, as a result of which some have been led to believe that there is no power that can transmit. We ask, in radio or television language, "Has the broadcasting station gone out of business or broken down, or are there no receiving sets?"

So long as men believe there can be no revelation, they will make no attempt to tune in. They will lose their faith and will no longer look up and listen. Some even deny there is need for revelation, but the daily press challenges that statement. In this imperiled, divided, and chaotic world the need for God's help was never more apparent and urgent.

An English divine recently said, "Oh, that some man would arise who could authoritatively say to the world, 'Thus saith the Lord!'"

Is it possible, our friends, that religion is the one department of human interest, investigation, and research where progress is impossible? Would any professor say to his class in chemistry, astronomy, physics, or geology, that no further discovery or revelation of scientific truth is possible? Is religion the only human interest which is static and quiescent? Did Christ leave his Church leaderless and intend it to continue so to be?

For ourselves, because of our faith in the universal and unchangeable love and justice of God, we cannot believe that his Church in one dispensation would be blessed and led by what in television parlance might be termed "live" revelation and in another dispensation leave a distraught and imperiled world with only the recorded messages of ancient prophets, some of which messages were for specific purposes and under special circumstances. We believe that revela-

tion both "live" and recorded is now and will continue to be available to men. Whenever the Lord has recognized his Church, he has given through his prophets messages of warning, instruction and hope.

When we say that we believe all that God has revealed, we declare our faith in the scriptures. We believe the Bible to be a repository of divine truth and that it is authoritative, though not beyond the need for interpretation and proper translation and, therefore, we say, when we declare our faith in the Bible, "as far as it is translated correctly." When we declare that we believe that God does now reveal, that he still speaks through his prophets, and that his word is scripture whenever and wherever given, when we make this statement we are simply teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and declaring as true the Judeo-Christian religion.

We sometimes meet with skepticism when we say that he still reveals, but let us paraphrase the words of Paul for a moment. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God will do what he has promised to do? If time would permit we could take you through the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation and show the promises of God with respect to the latter days. Why should it be thought incredible not only that he would keep his promise but that he would continue to do what he has done through all the dispensations of the gospel from the beginning?

The Church of Jesus Christ was established and is now directed by revelation, and that fact is largely responsible for the appeal which this new Church makes, and when I say "new," I wish to emphasize that to us it is not new but a restoration of that which was. The true Church of Christ is not a blind alley, it is an open thoroughfare, where men may confidently pursue truth in the light of revelation. That the Church is progressive and responsive to revealed truth is evidenced by our further declaration that we believe that God will yet reveal many great and important things.

This Church, our friends, is not committed to any formal or inflexible creed, but its members are taught to believe in

and live by the revelations of the past and present and thus prepare themselves for the revelations yet to come. Our concepts and even our faith must be held subject to new light. The present and urgent need for continued revelation in this age of communism, atheism, godlessness, the spirit of the anti-Christ become more apparent when we realize that revelation gives us our most conclusive proof that there is a Divine Being—and how the world needs to know of him!

In an age when hundreds of millions of people are being systematically indoctrinated with the abominable doctrines of communism which are that there is no God, religion is an opiate, Christ is a myth; surely in the midst of such determined, persistent, and relentless attacks from the enemy, we may expect from God our Father some direction, and for that direction we constantly pray.

But our message is this, our friends, God has spoken from the heavens; communication between heaven and earth is still possible; the lines are open! That is the challenging message of Mormonism, it is an ensign to the nations, a message of hope to an imperiled world. If we are to exercise saving faith and accompany it with works and, of course, "faith without works is dead," we must know something of him, of his existence, his personality, his laws, his purposes with respect to man, and realize that we are, in fact, his children, related to him. He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

We do not say that God is immaterial and incomprehensible and without a body. Rather we say he is approachable as our Father. Now, revelation may come through dreams or visions, the visitation of angels, or, on occasion such as with Moses, by face-to-face communication with the Lord. You remember the Lord spoke to Adam, not only while he was in the Garden of Eden, but after he was cast out. He spoke to other patriarchs and prophets through the ages. He spoke to Enoch, who was called "The Seventh from Adam," and it is said that he was translated because

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he was especially favored with the presence of the Lord. The record reads, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24.)

The Lord by revelation warned Noah of the coming flood. He talked with Abraham and told him to leave his country and go into a new land and gave him some promises with respect to his posterity. By revelation he commissioned Moses to go into Egypt, and under God's personal direction he released the children of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians.

So we may trace the line of revelators, men who have stood, each in his time, as the medium through whom God speaks to his people, from Moses to Joshua, through the Judges, on to David and Solomon and down to Zachariah and Malachi. Christ, himself, came to this world to reveal God to men, and he himself was led and directed by revelation from his Father while he dwelt on this earth.

The Lord, as you know, revealed to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, what was to happen, and you remember what happened to Zacharias because of his lack of belief. The Lord revealed to Mary that she was blessed among women, that she should bring forth a son and call his name Jesus. (Luke 1:28, 31.) Christ himself said: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

"And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the father said unto me, so I speak." (John 12:49-50.)

The apostles in the Meridian of Time were in touch with the heavens by revelation. Note what Paul says:

"But God hath revealed them [divine truths] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10-11.)

You remember John, on the Isle of Patmos, wrote the book of Revelation,

and, incidentally, this is sometimes called the Apocalypse, and that means in Greek "revelation." This is what he wrote in the first chapter of his book—it was not written of his own wisdom:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him [speaking of himself], to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:" (Revelation 1:1.)

The scriptures, then, are not only replete with evidence, but conclusive in proving that God does and always has, whenever there has been a dispensation of the gospel upon the earth, been in touch with his people.

Remember Paul said this, and he is speaking now of our time:

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth; even in him: . . ." (Ephesians 1:10.)

From the scriptures cited and many others, it seems evident that revelation from God to man has been a vital characteristic, and standard procedure in all dispensations of the gospel. All the prophets and leaders of ancient times were led, directed, chosen, inspired by God himself through revelation.

Eusebius records what happened after the apostles had been slain and when no authoritative answers could be given. He writes, "When the sacred choir of apostles became extinct and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom had passed away, then also the combinations of impious error arose by the fraud and delusions of false teachers. These, as there were none of the apostles left, henceforth attempted without shame to preach their doctrine against the Gospel of truth."

And Mosheim reminds us that both Jews and heathens were accustomed to a vast variety of pompous and magnificent ceremonies in their religious service. All the records of the second century mention the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the Christian Church. "But," you ask, "were these the times that have been?" Some of you

may say, "We can believe in revelation in Adam's day and in the days of Moses, in the days of Christ, in the days of the apostles, but not now."

Is there any indication that we might, with reason, expect some word from God? Hear John's testimony as he spoke of things that were to come in the latter days. He said:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him: for the hour of his judgment is come: . . ." (Revelation 14:6-7.)

That, my dear friends, is a prophetic promise of revelation in our time. The Church today is founded on the rock of revelation as securely as it was in the days of Peter when Christ said to him, after Peter had spoken of his knowledge of him,

" . . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18.)

We think we are justified in anticipating future revelation, and we believe that it will be surpassing in importance and glorious fulness anything that has yet been revealed. We believe that he will continue to reveal himself as long as man continues his probation here on earth.

Now, you friends of ours probably ask, "What particular revelation is the one on which you found your Church?" Time will not permit, of course, a complete answer to that, but humbly, and from the very center of my heart, I say to you, our friends, and to you members of the Church, God has restored the gospel of Jesus Christ and there was a great revelation, one of the greatest of all time, when the Father and the Son, anticipating our very day and the events of these times, appeared to a man. They were personal Beings; they were separate and distinct; they were in form like man, thus proving the first scrip-

ture in Genesis, "So God created man in his own image, . . ." (Gen. 1:27.) They spoke to him. Other revelations followed. The whole message of Mormonism centers around the life and mission of Jesus the Christ, and we proclaim to the world in contradiction to the hellish doctrine of communism, God does live. He still speaks to men. There are prophets on the earth.

If that statement is true, it is the greatest message that has come to this earth since Christ ascended into heaven because it is a message of his coming, and if it is true, all of you should know it. That it is true we humbly testify.

We ask you to listen, to read, to pray—ask God for guidance—and we promise you, paraphrasing the Prophet Moroni, that if you will ask of God in faith in the name of Jesus Christ, whether what we declare is true, he will reveal the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We believe this is the message for which the world has been waiting. We declare it is the very truth of God, and for my own self I bear witness to that effect and say to you in humility, but without any equivocation, by the same power and authority with which Peter spoke, I say, with him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16.) I know this to be true, and I plead with men everywhere to hearken; for it is a message from the heavens, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

President Hugh B. Brown, Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, has just spoken to us. We hope that all the television sets and radios that were tuned in along the West Coast, in the Northwest, and throughout the nation, heard President Brown's address.

Bishop Carl W. Buehner will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Henry D. Taylor.