

President Hugh B. Brown

Of the First Presidency

My brothers and sisters who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and my brothers and sisters who are members of other churches, or of none; all who may be listening to the proceedings of this conference, I salute and welcome as my brothers and sisters because I believe in the universal Fatherhood of God and the consequent universal brotherhood of man.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is restored

I should like to support and bear witness to the claim that the gospel of Jesus Christ as it was taught by him and his apostles in the meridian of time was restored in the state of New York in 1830 by Jesus the Christ, and was organized under his direction through the Prophet Joseph Smith. I should like to give some reasons for this faith and attempt to justify my allegiance to the Church. Perhaps I can do this best by referring again to an interview I had in London, England, in 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II.

I had met a very prominent English gentleman, a member of the House of Commons and formerly one of the justices of the supreme court of Britain. In a series of conversations on various subjects, "vexations of the soul," he called them, we talked about business and law; about politics, international relations, and war; and we frequently discussed religion.

He called me on the phone one day and asked if I would meet him at his office and explain some phases of my faith. He said, "There is going to be a war, and you will have to return to America, and we may not meet again." His statement regarding the imminence of war and the possibility that we would not meet again proved to be prophetic.

When I went to his office, he said he had been intrigued by some things I had told about my church. He asked

me if I would prepare a brief on Mormonism and discuss it with him as I would discuss a legal problem. He said, "You have told me that you believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet and that you believe that God the Father and Jesus of Nazareth appeared to him in vision.

A "brief" for the restoration

"I cannot understand," he said, "how a barrister and solicitor from Canada, a man trained in logic and evidence and unemotional cold fact, could accept such absurd statements. What you tell me about Joseph Smith seems fantastic, but I wish you would take three days at least to prepare a brief and permit me to examine it and question you on it."

I suggested that, as I had been working on such a brief for more than 50 years, we proceed at once to have an examination for discovery, which is briefly a meeting of the opposing sides in a lawsuit where the plaintiff and defendant, with their attorneys, meet to examine each other's claims and see whether they can find some area of agreement and thus save the time of the court later on.

I said perhaps we could find some common ground from which we could discuss my "fantastic ideas." He agreed, and we proceeded with our "examination for discovery."

Because of time limitations, I can only give a condensed or abbreviated synopsis of the three-hour conversation that followed. I began by asking, "May I proceed, sir, on the assumption that you are a Christian?"

"I am."

"I assume that you believe in the Bible—the Old and New Testaments?"

"I do!"

"Do you believe in prayer?"

"I do!"

"You say that my belief that God spoke to a man in this age is fantastic and absurd?"

Sunday, October 1

Third Day

"To me it is."

"Do you believe that God ever did speak to anyone?"

"Certainly, all through the Bible we have evidence of that."

"Did he speak to Adam?"

"Yes."

"To Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jacob, and to others of the prophets?"

"I believe he spoke to each of them."

"Do you believe that contact between God and man ceased when Jesus appeared on the earth?"

"Certainly not. Such communication reached its climax, its apex at that time."

"Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God?"

"He was."

"Do you believe, sir, that after the resurrection of Christ, God ever spoke to any man?"

He thought for a moment and then said, "I remember one Saul of Tarsus who was going down to Damascus to persecute the saints and who had a vision, was stricken blind, in fact, and heard a voice."

"Whose voice did he hear?"

"Well," he said, "the voice said 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'"

"Do you believe that actually took place?"

"I do."

"Then, my Lord"—that is the way we address judges in the British commonwealth—"my Lord, I am submitting to you in all seriousness that it was standard procedure in Bible times for God to talk to men."

"I think I will admit that, but it stopped shortly after the first century of the Christian era."

"Why do you think it stopped?"

"I can't say."

"You think that God hasn't spoken since then?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"May I suggest some possible reasons why he has not spoken. Perhaps it is because he cannot. He has lost the power."

He said, "Of course that would be blasphemous."

"Well, then, if you don't accept that,

perhaps he doesn't speak to men because he doesn't love us anymore. He is no longer interested in the affairs of men."

"No," he said, "God loves all men, and he is no respecter of persons."

"Well, then, if you don't accept that he loves us, then the only other possible answer as I see it is that we don't need him. We have made such rapid strides in education and science that we don't need God any more."

Great need for the voice of God

And then he said, and his voice trembled as he thought of impending war, "Mr. Brown, there never was a time in the history of the world when the voice of God was needed as it is needed now. Perhaps you can tell me why he doesn't speak."

My answer was, "He does speak, he has spoken; but men need faith to hear him."

Then we proceeded to examine what I may call a "profile of a prophet."

Characteristics of a prophet

We agreed that any man who claims to be a prophet should have at least the following characteristics:

1. He will boldly but humbly declare, "God has spoken to me."
2. His message will be dignified, intelligent, earnest, and honest, but he will not necessarily be a learned person.
3. There will be no spiritualistic claims of communion with the dead, no clairvoyance or legerdemain.
4. Generally he will be a young man such as Samuel; a man having good parentage and associates.
5. His message must be reasonable and scriptural.
6. He will be fearless and positive, unmindful of current opinion and the creeds of the day.
7. He will make no concessions to public opinion or the effect upon himself or his reputation or personal fortune.
8. His message must be current, unusual, but historically consistent.
9. He will simply but earnestly tell

what he has seen and heard.

10. His message, not himself, will be important to him.

11. He will boldly declare, "Thus saith the Lord!"

12. He will predict future events in the name of the Lord, events that he could not control, events that only God could bring to pass.

13. His message will be important not only for his generation but for all time, such as the messages of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah.

14. He will have courage, fortitude, and faith enough to endure persecution and, if necessary, to give his life for his testimony, and be willing to seal his testimony with his blood as did Peter and Paul.

15. He will denounce wickedness fearlessly and be rejected and ridiculed therefor.

16. He will do superhuman things, things that only a man inspired of God could do.

17. The consequence of his teachings will be convincing evidence of his prophetic calling: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

18. His word and message will live after him.

19. All of his teachings will be scriptural. In fact, his words, writings, and message will become scripture. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:21.)

Evidence that Joseph Smith is a prophet

I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God because he gave to this world some of the greatest revelations of all time. I believe that he was a prophet of God because he foretold many things that have come to pass, things that only God could bring to pass.

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, declared, ". . . the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10.) If Joseph Smith had the testimony of Jesus, he had the spirit of prophecy, and if he had the spirit of prophecy, he was a prophet. I submitted to my friend, that as much as any man who

ever lived, the Prophet Joseph had a testimony of Jesus, for, like the apostles of old, he saw him and heard him speak, and like them he gave his life for that testimony. I know of no one who has given more convincing evidence of the divine calling of Jesus Christ than did Joseph Smith.

The Book of Mormon

I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet because he did many superhuman things. One was translating the Book of Mormon, which is a history of the ancient inhabitants of America. Some people will not agree, but I submit that Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon did a superhuman work. I ask anyone to undertake to write the story of the ancient inhabitants of America, to write as he did without any source material. He must include in the story 54 chapters dealing with wars, 21 historical chapters, 55 chapters on visions and prophecies (and remember, when the writer begins to write on visions and prophecies, he must have the record agree meticulously with the Bible). He must write 71 chapters on doctrine and exhortation, and here too, he must check every statement with the scriptures or he will be proved to be a fraud. He must write 21 chapters on the ministry of Christ, and everything the writer claims Jesus said and did and every testimony he writes in the book about him must agree absolutely with the New Testament.

I ask, would anyone like to undertake such a task? I point out, too, that he must employ figures of speech, similes, metaphors, narration, exposition, description, oratory, epic, lyric, logic, and parables. I ask the writer to remember that the man who translated the Book of Mormon was a young man who had very little schooling, and yet he dictated that book in just a little over two months and made very few, if any, corrections. For over one hundred years, some of the best students and scholars of the world have been trying to prove from the Bible that the Book of Mormon is a fraud, but not one of them has been able to

prove that anything in it was contrary to the scriptures, the Bible, the word of God.

The purpose of the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon not only declares on the title page that its purpose is to convince Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, but this truth is also the burden of its message.

In Third Nephi it is recorded that multitudes of people testified, "We saw him, we felt of his hands and his side, we know he is the Christ. . . ." (See 3 Ne. 11:14-15.)

The organization of the Church

Joseph Smith undertook and accomplished other superhuman tasks. Among them I list the following: He organized the Church. (I call attention to the fact that no constitution effected by human ingenuity has survived one hundred years without modification or amendment, even the Constitution of the United States. The basic law or constitution of the Church has never been altered.) He undertook to carry the gospel message to all nations, which is a superhuman task and is still progressing with accelerated speed. He undertook, by divine command, to gather thousands of people to Zion. He instituted vicarious work for the dead and built temples for that purpose. He promised that certain signs should follow the believers. There are tens of thousands of witnesses who certify that this promise has been fulfilled.

Joseph Smith, a witness for Christ

I said to my friend, "My Lord, I cannot understand your saying to me that my claims are fantastic. Nor can I understand why Christians who claim to believe in Christ would persecute and put to death a man whose whole purpose was to prove the truth of the things they themselves were teaching, namely, that Jesus is the Christ. I could understand their persecuting Joseph if he had said, 'I am Christ,' or if he had said, 'There is no Christ,'

or if he had said someone else is Christ; then Christians believing in Christ would be justified in opposing him.

"But what he said was, 'Him whom ye claim to believe in, declare I unto you.' Paraphrasing what Paul said in Athens, 'Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.' (Acts 17:23.) Joseph said to the Christians of his day, 'You claim to believe in Jesus Christ. I testify that I saw him and I talked with him. He is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. Why persecute me for that?'"

"When Joseph came out of the woods where he had this vision, he had learned at least four fundamental truths, and he announced them to the world: first, that the Father and the Son are separate and distinct individuals; second, that the canon of scripture is not complete; third, that man was actually created in the image of God; and fourth, that the channel of communication between earth and heaven is open, and revelation is continuous."

"Greatest message since the time of Christ"

The judge sat and listened intently. He asked some very pointed and searching questions, and at the end of the interview he said, "Mr. Brown, I wonder if your people appreciate the import of your message. Do you?" He said, "If what you have told me is true, it is the greatest message that has come to earth since the angels announced the birth of Christ."

This was a learned judge speaking, a great statesman, an intelligent man. He threw out the challenge, "Do you appreciate the import of what you say?" He added: "I wish it were true. I hope it may be true. God knows it ought to be true. I would to God," he said, his voice trembling, "that some man would appear on the earth and authoritatively say, 'Thus saith the Lord.'"

As I intimated, we did not meet again. I have mentioned very briefly some of the reasons why I believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

But undergirding and overarching all that, I say from the very center of my heart that by the revelations of the Holy Ghost I know, and you may know, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. While the evidences I have mentioned and many others that could be cited may have the effect of giving one an intellectual conviction, only by the whisperings of the Holy Spirit can one come to know the things of God. By those whisperings I say I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. I thank God for that knowledge. I pray that you may in humility ask him whether it be true, and I promise you that he will respond and that you will know from the warmth in your heart that what I have said this morning is God's eternal truth, to which I humbly

bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

The Tabernacle Choir will sing, "O Divine Redeemer."

"O Divine Redeemer," was sung by the Choir.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Many stations have just tuned in on this conference, and we wish to extend to them and our new listening audience a hearty welcome.

President Joseph Fielding Smith, a counselor in the First Presidency and president of the Quorum of the Twelve, will now address us.

President Joseph Fielding Smith

President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and
Counselor in the First Presidency

My dear brethren and sisters, I made a few notes and thought I would present them here on this occasion, but I have changed my mind after what we have heard, and I hope the Lord will help me.

The singing of the choir has called my attention to the fact that there is a divine Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. When Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, he was in the presence of God our Eternal Father. He talked with the Father and the Father with him. But something happened, and it had to happen: Adam partook of certain fruit. My Bible, the King James version, says in the margin, speaking of Adam's fall, "Man's shameful fall." Well, it wasn't a shameful fall at all.

Adam came to bring mortality

Adam came here to bring mortality upon the earth, and that resulted in the shutting out from the presence of the Eternal Father of both Adam and Eve and their posterity. The Son of God comes upon the scene from that time henceforth as our Redeemer, as

we have just heard in the song this choir has sung. It is the Savior who stands between mankind and our Heavenly Father. We don't pray to God, except through the Son. The Son is the mediator between mankind and the Eternal Father. You seldom hear a prayer that isn't offered to our Heavenly Father in the name of his beloved Son, and that's right. Christ came into this world to represent his Father. He came into this world to teach mankind who his Father is, why we should worship him, how we should worship him. He performed the greatest work that was ever performed in this mortal world by the shedding of his blood, which paid a debt that mankind owes to the Eternal Father, and which debt we inherited after the fall of Adam.

Adam did only what he had to do. He partook of that fruit for one good reason, and that was to open the door to bring you and me and everyone else into this world, for Adam and Eve could have remained in the Garden of Eden; they could have been there to this day, if Eve hadn't done something.