

Elder Alvin R. Dyer

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

● According to the reckoning of man, we are living in the year of 1970 in the twentieth century. According to the prophets who have been given revelation from God on the subject, we are living in that period of time designated as the last dispensation, also referred to as the "dispensation of the fulness of times."

The importance of this period of time, which will be the "finishing or end thereof," can be judged by the words of the Lord unto the Prophet Joseph Smith on the subject, part of which I shall quote:

"... for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world. . . ." (D&C 128:18.)

Truths of salvation restored

Some who are not of our conviction ask the question, "If, as you say, we are living in the last dispensation, what has transpired to bring this period of time upon us?"

The answer primarily concerns a restoration of the truths of salvation. It is now 150 years since the initial event connected with the unfolding of this period transpired.

In the spring of 1820, God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared in a grove of trees near the home of Joseph Smith at Palmyra, New York. This sacred interview revealed the following:

1. The truth about the nature, character, personality, and identity of God the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ.
2. That he, Joseph Smith, had been chosen and foreordained to be the instrument of God to establish the last

dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. That the professed Christian churches then upon the earth did not have the truths in them that were about to be restored.

4. That the professors, or ministers thereof, were not in possession of the divine truths of redemption and therefore could not teach them.

5. That the people, though claiming membership in Christ's church, drew near to the Lord with their lips but their hearts were far from him, meaning that the sealing ordinances were not known of.

6. That the so-called Christian churches taught for doctrine the commandments of men.

7. That they had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof.

No vindictive reprisal

Each of the declarations which the Lord made to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove has far-reaching meaning and is to have full effect upon the plan of salvation in this final dispensation of the gospel. The answers which the Lord gave were not a disparagement of the existing Christian bodies who had departed from the truth, though, as announced by him, they were all wrong in teachings and practices intended to redeem mankind. There was no vindictive reprisal announced by the Lord against Christian societies who were using his name, some no doubt sincerely, but who were fully unaware of the truth of his person and real mission pertaining to the plan of salvation as contained in his gospel.

Truly, among these very societies of Christian believers were many noble spirits who, upon hearing the truths of the restoration, were to accept them and abide by the commandments and teachings related to this important period of the restitution of all things. Many of them would themselves become leaders and promul-

gators of the cause of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

Glory of last dispensation

As this sacred interview unfolded on that beautiful spring morning of 1820, the glory of the last dispensation of mortal time was inaugurated. The truth about the personage of God and his Son Jesus Christ and their glorious plan of redemption was once again placed upon the threshold of human understanding. Like unto other great prophets of ages past, in the pattern of God's way, there awaited this earnest young prophet, as also upon subsequent divinely appointed occasions, the revelation of eternal truths from God necessary for man's salvation and exaltation.

The appearance of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ to Joseph Smith, while giving answer to his simple faith and prayer, proved to be of far greater significance than that which he could possibly have anticipated, for the time had come to usher in the final period of preparation in the culmination of God's work for his children here upon the earth. Joseph Smith was chosen and had been foreordained to be a prophet and instrument through whom God would establish his kingdom here upon the earth as it had been in former intermittent dispensations. But this final one was to be characterized by even greater truth, for it is the dispensation of the fulness of times. It is the depository period when all truths, all laws, all covenants, all promises made by God our Heavenly Father in the premortal period of earth-life preparation, and revealed in part to man at various times in mortality for the redemption and glorification of his spirit children, are now to be fully revealed and made available to mankind. The Lord had thus spoken unto the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The same God yesterday, today and forever

At the end of a ten-year period of instruction, commandment, and revelation, together with the conferment of

all necessary keys and powers for the establishment of Christ's church upon the earth, the Lord proclaimed the following revelation to Joseph Smith as preparations were made for the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, at Fayette, Seneca County, New York:

"And gave unto him commandments which inspired him;

"And gave him power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon;

"Which contains a record of a fallen people, and the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also;

"Which was given by inspiration, and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them—

"Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old;

"Thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. Amen.

"Therefore, having so great witnesses, by them shall the world be judged, even as many as shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this work.

"And those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life;

"But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation." (D&C 20:7-15.)

Evil forces at work

As the holy scriptures have so abundantly attested to, the period of time in which we now live is beset with influences and movements intended by the forces of evil to frustrate and to interfere with the forces of good and enlightenment that are associated with a dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and especially this one since it is the last one.

It is not difficult to detect these evil forces at work and to observe their centralization in the human behavioral

Saturday, April 4

First Day

areas, such activities which destroy moral and spiritual values. Human behavior can be noble and lofty, following the patterns which God has given us, but when these patterns are mutated by perspectives of evil that are aimed at the destruction of the fundamental right of agency and spiritual freedom, the result will be as it ever has been, that of decay and retrogression.

The conditions of worldwide turbulence and the unrest of today are but preliminary to the time of devastation which the Master, whose glorious resurrection we particularly recall at this time of year, himself declared will transpire in the sequence of the Lord's time, and according to the density of men's wickedness upon the earth.

God's work moves forward

We are to be assured that even in the midst of turmoil and strife, the loss of faith and hope by many, the acceleration of evil among the masses, the plan of God moves relentlessly forward. The plan of redemption for those who will accept and live by it is operative today upon the earth. The way remains open for the repentant and seekers of truth; the gospel plan with all its persuasive power can save and redeem.

The work of God in this crucial period is going forward in seeking out the righteous and honest in heart throughout the world. Concerning its ultimate victory, the Lord directed this compelling statement to the Prophet Joseph Smith, with the quoting of which I shall conclude my remarks.

"The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught.

"For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

"Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men." (D&C 3:1-3.)

I bear testimony of the power of the

priesthood that is upon the earth, of the prophet of God who is upon the earth who sits upon this stand, and of the work that is going forth in this the last dispensation of time, and I do it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President Harold B. Lee

The President has asked me to make the closing statement if I may.

Over seventy radio stations will broadcast the conference in Spanish Sunday morning to major cities of Mexico and Central America, and by satellite to countries of South America, together with Spanish programming stations in this country to a potential Latin American audience of 42 million people.

Radio stations in Brazil will broadcast Conference in Portuguese, also by means of satellite, to a potential Brazilian audience of 14 million people.

For the first time translation in Japanese will be carried by satellite and heard over radio stations in Japan and Okinawa.

Arrangements are made for the morning sessions of Saturday and Sunday to be carried from the Tabernacle over direct oceanic cables to a large number of Saints assembled in many chapels throughout Great Britain, Germany, France and Austria on Sunday. Direct circuits will also carry these sessions to Saints assembled in chapels throughout eastern Canada.

The CBS Radio Network Tabernacle Choir Broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:35 to 10:00 a.m. Those desiring to attend this broadcast must be in their seats no later than 9:15 a.m.

The singing for this session has been furnished by the Cedar City Institute of Religion Chorus under the direction of J. Phillip Hanks and Blaine Johnson, with Robert Cundick at the organ.

On behalf of all who have listened to the singing during this session of the General Conference we express appreciation and our sincere thanks to these young students for the beautiful