

ELDER DAVID A. SMITH

Of the Presiding Bishopric

I rejoice, my brethren and sisters, in having the privilege of meeting with you.

Yesterday I appeared in the tabernacle in the uniform of an officer of the United States army, and many wondered why I should be about my official Church duties so attired. In explanation, let me say that as a reserve officer of the United States army, I was under orders yesterday to go to the station and meet General Charles T. Summerall, Chief of Staff of the United States army. His program had been arranged before he reached here, but in conference with the officers at Fort Douglas and the reserve officers in charge here, the suggestion was made that it might be interesting for the General to look upon a congregation of Latter-day Saints in conference session. Accordingly, we planned for it, with the permission of the Presidency of the Church, and yesterday morning as General Summerall arrived in the city an invitation was extended to him to attend and address the congregation. In order that he might do this, it was necessary to shorten his inspection tour at Fort Douglas and the University of Utah. Upon leaving the tabernacle, he expressed his appreciation for the privilege he had of sitting upon the stand and looking upon that vast congregation, and for the music, and for the privilege of saying a few words from the pulpit of that wonderful building. He left yesterday afternoon to continue his inspection tour of the army posts of the United States. One of the great outstanding features of his tour will be, I am sure, his visit with us.

While mentioning this, perhaps it will be proper for me to say that after the World War, I was offered a commission and refused to accept it, feeling that there was no further need of my serving in that capacity, knowing that my Church work was all I could possibly expect to do. Finally request was made of President Nibley, who at that time was Presiding Bishop. He authorized my enlistment. I was called before a board, and a commission with the rank of Major in the reserve corps was given to me. I have since been called to the Presidio of San Francisco and for two years have been a member of the Ninth Corps Area Conference Committee. This work I found to be very interesting, for it gave me an opportunity to study army life in all its phases.

One little experience I had there may be interesting to you. As members of the Conference Committee, we were lined up waiting to take conveyances to go on a tour of inspection, when the officer in charge called my name and stated that I was to ride with the Commanding General. I hardly knew what to expect of it. I was almost the junior officer, and as I stepped out of line, my companion from Utah, who was standing near, and who is not a member of this Church, said: "Now, bishop, cut out that Church influence." I did not realize that it was Church influence for the moment. I was somewhat bewildered,

but I had the privilege that day of riding with the Commanding General, stepping ahead of men who held higher offices; men of greater service and experience. It was not until a few days later that I found out what this Church influence really consisted of, that it was not I who was being honored; it was you. It was your sons, your brothers, your fathers. And I, as your representative, was receiving the reward for your service and activity.

As a member of that committee it was my privilege and duty to visit all departments of army work. It was my privilege to go into any office, of any department, of any officer, from the Chief of Staff down, to find, if possible, conditions that could be improved. In this work I discovered why I had been so honored. I found in all activities that Utah stands at the head. I found that the University of Utah as a R. O. T. C. school stands in the first rank. That our high schools—the Ogden, the East High and the West High, were outstanding in their work. I was proud of them. I found that in all our war work, whenever we have been called into service, every demand made by the war department had been met, and met admirably. Then I fully realized that it was not I who was being honored, but you, this people.

Last March I was called to attend a conference in Washington. With nearly three hundred men we stood out in front of the Interior building for the purpose of having a picture taken. I was standing about four rows back, where my rank required that I should be. My name was called, and I was requested to step down to the front. As I did so, all eyes were turned upon me, for they wondered what was going to happen and I wondered also. General Summerall, who addressed us yesterday, was standing in front of that group. I was requested to take my place at his side. And there I stood while pictures of the group were taken. I realized this time that it was not I who was being honored. I have met with high ranking officers many times, I have been a dinner guest in the homes of many, I have had an opportunity of finding out what these officers were doing, trying to do and hoping to do; of knowing what they thought of you as a people and of your sons, and they do appreciate every helpful service.

I am not a prophet, and I have no right to prophesy in the name of the living God, but, as his servant I am entitled to the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and if I am faithful in keeping his commandments, I should understand the whisperings of that Spirit and know how to act and when to act. I remember before we got into the World War, (I had been called to render service for my country before that time), that on the way to a priesthood meeting held in this building, I mentioned to my father, Joseph F. Smith, who was then president of this Church, that I thought something should be said to the men who were assembled as to how they should conduct themselves in case we should be called upon to defend and uphold the spirit of freedom and liberty. During that meeting, father turned to me and requested that I make the statement I thought necessary. Briefly it was this, that (at that

time) I could not see how we could possibly avoid getting into war, for the principles upon which our nation was founded obligated us to assist in the cause of peace and freedom. I was concerned for our boys, and I advised that they immediately fill up the organizations of our state troops, that they join the national guard, which afterward became the 145th, that they get in, then, before final enlistments and drives should come. Nothing had been said of a draft at that time. And many of you bishops and presidents of stakes and fathers went home and, realizing the situation, advised your boys to enlist in their local units, where they could have the companionship of one another, where they could have in a measure, that spirit under which they grew and developed, to be with them during their enlistment, and their war experience, if such experiences should come to them. And finally they were mobilized and ordered to the Coast, and after a period of training were brought home and encamped at Fort Douglas. Then orders came to move on. For some days these boys were seen lined up at the Beehive House or Church offices, awaiting a blessing. Day after day it was my pleasure to be with my father as he gave blessings to those boys—your boys—going out to serve their country in a righteous cause. And in every case, as I recall, the blessing pronounced upon their head, gave them the promise that if they would keep themselves clean, obey the laws of the land, remember their God, say their prayers in faith and humility, and keep the commandments of the Lord, they would go and return uninjured. As I heard father pronounce those words time and again on those boys, and as I saw them leave, not knowing what minute they would be on their way, yet with joy in their souls because of the comforting promise, I paused to wonder! One day in the lull, I turned to father and asked, "What is there that impresses you to make this promise? When we read of the great slaughter and destruction on the other side, it seems to me the only possible thing that can cause your promise to come true will be the termination of the war before the boys get there." He answered: "I do not know whether they shall be called to go into battle or not, but this I do know, for the Lord has given me to understand and know; that promise is made to these young men through their faithfulness, and if they abide the commandments of God, they shall return." Well, the rest of the story you know. They served and met every requirement and returned home again to engage in their pursuits of life uninjured.

I am reminded of them by General Summerall's having been here. Perhaps it is not just proper to mention these things at this time, but I do it because I want you to know that we as a people are looked upon by the men who are responsible for our country's defense, as being outstanding in our willingness to serve. May I mention one more incident which goes to show their feeling toward us.

At the close of the conference I attended in Washington last March, General Cheatham, the presiding officer, stood up to give the closing address. He made this statement. "We have in this body today, an

officer who has traveled a great distance. You know very little of the district from which he comes. I am going to take the opportunity of asking him to address us at this time." He called upon me to address that conference. And I did so—but not upon military affairs alone. I bore testimony to them of the goodness of God to this people. I told them that we believed God had established this nation and that it should be a land of liberty forever, and that we believed it was our duty to defend it against evil and designing people. When I had finished and sat down, that body of men arose as one man, and I was somewhat bewildered. General Cheatham stood up and said, "I am on the program to deliver the final address of this conference, but I feel that anything I should say would only detract from the remarks which we have just listened to. I am going to let the remarks of Major Smith stand as the closing remarks of this conference. You are adjourned."

I stood there, as men crowded around me wanting to know something more. They questioned me on the way to the hotel. Some followed me to the station, and even to the train. One of those men shook my hand as I was standing upon the step of the car as it was moving off and said, "I am going home, and I am going to say to my dear old father-in-law that I have at last found a man who is willing to stand up under any conditions and circumstances and say that he knows that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ;" for I had borne that testimony to them. Now I am beginning to realize why Bishop—now President—Nibley sanctioned my going into that work. I am a peace-loving person, and I have discovered in my association with these men that they are not warlike; the men who are directing the affairs of the Army of the United States, are not seeking war, they are putting their time and best thoughts and energies to devising means of preventing war and establishing peace.

The theme of this conference has been, obey the law. Some of us know enough to obey the law, for we appreciate that through obedience to law we are blessed. There are others who feel that it is proper to obey the law when there is danger in breaking the law of being caught and punished; some who obey the law when it is convenient; for that reason, it is necessary that we should have peace officers to protect those who are peace-loving, just and honest. When men cultivate the Spirit of God, when they learn to love God, when they can put out of their souls and their very lives, the spirit of selfishness, covetousness and envy, then will the need of peace officers be lessened and perhaps done away. But as long as individuals are seeking their own ends, regardless of the effect of their actions upon the peace and safety of others, we cannot hope for that condition which God has promised to come through our obedience to his laws. As long as that condition exists, it will be necessary to have peace officers and armies.

And so I say, I am grateful to have had the privilege of becoming acquainted with these men, to go into the very details of their work, not to know merely theoretically what they are doing, but, through the

records and their plans, to know just what they are looking for in the future. I find they are men of high ideals, men untrammelled by the course of politics. Army officers receive their position through appointment, upon merit. They go on year after year, and, as in the priesthood, if I may make a comparison, though not for a moment do I think there is an equality between the two, but only a similarity, for purpose of comparison. We hold the Priesthood, and under that Priesthood we are blessed as we honor it. We grow in intelligence and power to serve as we serve. One of our brethren has said during this conference, one thing that we want in this Church is more thought to the gospel doctrine, to the teachings of God. Let me add to that, and more real service, which permits us to apply that gospel and doctrine through actually doing the things of God; for it is not alone through the study of the work that we are to gain salvation, but through doing the things of God which actually require service. The army of the United States is built upon the same principle. Men develop as they serve and have ability to serve, and their knowledge enables them to go on, step by step. They are not there subject to any senator or politician. Unless because of misconduct, there is no power that can remove them other than the President of the United States, who is the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United States. That gives to them a freedom which enables them to speak from their heart that which they think. General Summerall, because of his position, is familiar with the record we have made as a people, which gave him foundation for the statement he made. As President Grant has said, "Thank the Lord he has said it, and thank the Lord he could truthfully say it."

Now, my brethren and sisters, I should not talk longer. I have not said what I intended to say. I wanted to say something about the Word of Wisdom and our missionary work. We have sitting over there in the tabernacle, 53 elders and nine lady missionaries. I wish you could have been with us last Wednesday night. We had been in session since early morning and when the time for dismissal came, they were not ready to go. They were full of questions. They put question after question. And it was 8:30 p. m. before we finally dismissed our little meeting. And yet in that group called to be missionaries, only eleven out of the 53 elders had assisted in baptisms, not one has ever confirmed a person a member of the Church, five have assisted in administering to the sick, three have assisted in consecrating oil, five have not assisted in the blessing of the bread or the water. Speaking of service, these are just every day things that should come to them at home and all of which will be required of them when they get into the missionfield. They are not at fault for not having had the privilege of performing these ordinances. We should see to it that these experiences come to them. This opportunity for service should come to them before they go into the missionfield. Many of them come here without a testimony of the gospel. Let me remind you, that a testimony

of the gospel comes only through work. President Young said that more men gain a testimony of this gospel while upon their feet than while upon their knees. We can pray from now to the end of our days, and prayer alone may not bring a testimony of this work. But through prayer and actual service, we do get a testimony.

Don't you know that every individual that comes into this world with the promise of the new and everlasting covenant, has embodied in his very soul a testimony of this gospel? That testimony we may liken to the parable of the Savior regarding the sower; some of the seed, when sown, falls upon stony ground, where it is picked up by the birds and devoured; some in shallow soil, where it sprouts and grows for a little season and withers and dies; some in soil where it grows up with the weeds, and the weeds choke it and prevent its growth; and some in good soil, where it grows and develops and brings forth fruit in abundance. That is the condition of our boys and our girls, and it is our duty as Latter-day Saints, as men holding the Priesthood, as mothers and fathers in Israel, not to wait until our boys get into the missionfield before that seed is watered and cultivated and cared for, that it may grow into a testimony and into service. That should be developed at home. From the moment of birth, the home, the parents, are responsible. The bishops of the wards are responsible with the parents for providing a means for development for these young men.

Now, my brethren and sisters, I must not talk longer. I rejoice in this privilege I have of being with you. I pray God to bless you. I rejoice in the fact that I have fellowship with you in this Church! I take a pride in it. I have found that it is for me a condition of honor wherever I go; for the people of the world are beginning to look upon your works, your faith, your lives, and your teachings as an example to be followed. To be one with you, to partake of these blessings, to partake of these privileges, is indeed a most wonderful opportunity, and I thank God for that blessing and that privilege. May his blessings continue with us. May we always be found serving in faith, that we may be entitled to his promised blessings, I pray; in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The choir sang the anthem: "A prayer of thanksgiving."

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Don Carlos Young.

SECOND OVERFLOW MEETING

At 2 o'clock p. m., October 9, 1927, a second overflow meeting was held in the Assembly Hall.

Elder John Wells, of the Presiding Bishopric, presided.

The music and song were given by the Ensign ward choir, Wallace Bennett, conductor; Tracy Y. Cannon at the organ.

The choir sang, "Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation."

The opening prayer was by Elder Charles B. Felt.

An anthem, "Send out thy light," was sung by the choir.