

## ELDER JOHN A. WIDTSOE

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles and President of the European Mission*

My dear brethren and sisters, I must confess that during the last few years I have thought with longing of you and these great assemblies, when the time of the General Conferences has arrived. The opportunity to mingle with you now, and to feel of your spirit, and this day to declare with you my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, fills my heart with gratitude.

## THE SAME SPIRIT AND PURPOSE

I am grateful for the testimony of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which has been given me—the greatest gift that I possess. I rejoice this day that the spirit which I have felt in these gatherings yesterday and today is quite the same spirit as that which I have felt in the small gatherings in the various European countries. The Latter-day Saints who live the Gospel of Jesus Christ speak and hear by the same spirit. They understand one another by that same spirit. This is one great church, whether in Salt Lake City or in the far distant branches of the missions, one people, with one understanding, with one purpose, with one holy desire to please the Almighty Father.

I think I am safe in saying that the work of the Lord is going forward satisfactorily in the European missions. Never before, because of the new inventions and discoveries for the dissemination of truth, has the testimony of the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ been so widely scattered, and made to reach so many people, as at this time.

## GREETINGS FROM THE EUROPEAN MISSIONS

I bring you greetings from the faithful, devoted, intelligent mission presidents who have charge of the affairs of the European missions. They and their wives are doing splendid work. Your sons are safe in their hands.

I bring you greetings from the Elders themselves, young men, but desirous of doing their work with all their might, and accomplishing a wonderful work, through the assistance of their Father in heaven.

And I bring you in particular greetings from the membership of the Church in the European lands, a body of faithful men and women, loving the Gospel just as we love it here; ready to sacrifice and to save, if they can, as President Nibley has suggested; ready to do whatever may be demanded of them, insofar as their strength permits. They live in the outposts of Zion, but they are ready and willing to labor there, and to help maintain and retain those outposts until such time as in the providences of the Lord we may have larger units of the Church, even in those far-distant countries.

## A NEW DAY

Opposition and oppression have very largely vanished from our

work in the European lands. A new day has dawned, and it seems to us, who labor there, that if the Lord will only bless our efforts it may be possible, in the near future, to bring a convincing message of the truth of this work to the hearts of thousands in those lands who are honest in heart.

#### SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENCE

We have many difficulties; there is no question about that; there are difficulties on every hand; the greatest difficulty, perhaps, that we have to contend with is the spiritual or religious indifference of the present day. It is an indifference which seems to cover the earth everywhere. It takes the form of a resentment or revulsion against organized religion—not so much a contempt for religion itself, for the principles of it, but rather a contempt or near-contempt for the organized forms of religion, for the churches themselves. Every man seems to be willing to do as best he can under the law, to live a wholesome and a proper life, but unwilling to conform to the regulations and practices of any church.

It is commonly said throughout the world that there is no need of a church today. In pondering upon this subject the thought has come to me and has lingered with me, that perhaps this rebuke of organized religion is a rebuke to the fundamental conception of religion as taught in the world today.

#### MAN-MADE GODS

Out of the thunderings of Sinai came the word of the Lord. The first commandment was: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Throughout the long ages after that command was given, men gradually forsook their graven images, their worship of stock and stone, and gradually Jehovah, the God of Israel, became the God of many, or perhaps most of the foremost people of the world. Gradually the simple conception of God as the father of humanity prevailed, or began to prevail upon the earth. Then, after the days of Jesus, when men should have known better, when the Christ, and God through him, had been revealed, men again departed from the truth, and made unto themselves gods, this time in an immaterial realm, but man-made just as truly as the man-made gods of wood and stone and iron of earlier ages.

I believe that the spiritual resentment in the world today has resulted from the idolatry which still lingers upon the earth, the attempt to force men to worship a God that is man-made, an incomprehensible God, an essence, one who is so far from us in understanding that men cannot bow down before him as they should, and pray to him as a child should pray to his father.

#### THE TRUE GOD

The Latter-day Saints are able to answer this great need of humanity and to define God properly. In the mission field, whether in Europe or elsewhere, it is the greatest message that the Church has to

give to the world today—the true definition and the true conception of God our Father, the maker of the heavens and the earth. He is a personage who is literally our father in a pre-existent state, to whom we can speak as sons or daughters speak to their father; with whom they can take counsel and be intimate; a God to whom we may express our inmost desires, and from whom we may expect answers from time to time to satisfy our hearts' inmost desires.

I pray in my heart and by word of mouth that the true conception and knowledge of the Father of us all, may, through our agency, be spread abroad among the nations, to make happy the many thousands, tens of thousands and millions of honest souls who today are lost in a modern type of idolatrous worship. It is perhaps a strong word to use, but a thought or conception may be as man-made as is a material thing.

We find, as we travel about in the European missions, that men respond to a correct doctrine concerning divinity. They are eager to learn the truth about their Maker. When the superstitions of the past and the crust of misunderstanding and false teaching are broken through, then men and women rejoice in the new understanding of man's relationship to the Maker of us all.

#### JOSEPH SMITH'S FIRST VISION

I rejoice in the glorious first vision given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the greatest of the visions and teachings of these latter days. On that occasion God himself and his Son Jesus Christ stood before the boy, kneeling in humble, earnest prayer, in the little grove in New York State. Joseph then held converse with God. In humility and simplicity he dared to state his heart's need, and God spoke to him, and commissioned his Son to speak yet further to him, so that the lad might understand and might be prepared for the great work for which he had been chosen before the foundations of the earth were laid.

This is a glorious gift of these latter days, and we must stand upon it firmly, without yielding. We must teach forever and to all people the truth of the fatherhood of God, of the sonship of man, of the eternal relationship of God and man. Then we shall be blessed, and God will look down upon us in mercy and give us strength to do the things that we are required to do, that we may win full salvation on this earth and in the life to come.

#### AUTHORITATIVE LEADERSHIP

Men ask for more than a knowledge of God. Men do not know the truth of themselves. Men are suffering, hungering for authoritative leadership. Men have been led by men so long, churches have been made by man so often, things have come through human agencies for so many years, that in this day of high intelligence, of the greatest knowledge of the world, men resent the thought that when they deal with the greatest of all realities, religion and all that pertains to it, they must follow man-made leadership—leadership that is of one type in one church, of another type in another church; leadership that may

be subject to parliamentary debate and rule, that may be determined by the voice of a community.

The world is hungering and reaching out for authoritative leadership. Mankind has long followed the prophets of old, which indeed have been of human service, but today men say: "Moses was a great prophet; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, were all great prophets, but they belong to the past. We live today. We want the same authoritative leadership today that was enjoyed by the people of the past."

The world is asking for a living prophet, one who can interpret the prophets of old to the people and generations of this day. We have this very offering to make to the world. We are able to give humanity what they need in the way of authoritative leadership; for we declare in all solemnity, without hesitation, that God not only spoke to the Prophet Joseph Smith, but conferred upon him the power and authority of the eternal, everlasting, unchangeable, indestructible Priesthood of Almighty God, the power by which the heavens were made, and the earth was made, and all the things we know were made. By that power, or the portion that was given to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the work that the Lord intended for the salvation of mankind will be established and conducted and continued until the purposes of the Lord have been completed.

#### TEACHERS OF THE WORLD

The world is looking for such authority. We must stand upon our feet as men and as women possessing the true knowledge and authority of God, and teach it without hesitation to all the world. We are not to be taught of the world. We are the teachers of the world. We must be as interpreters, as men and women who, with full knowledge and authority, fit the knowledge of the world into the great scheme of salvation.

The Lord said to the Church through the Prophet Joseph Smith in the early days of the Church:

"Again I say, hearken, ye elders of my church, whom I have appointed: Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit.

"And ye are to be taught from on high. Sanctify yourselves and ye shall be endowed with power, that ye may give even as I have spoken."

This is a wonderful message to all Latter-day Saints, to the Elders of Israel, who preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not here to be taught; we are here to teach. Whatever offering of good the world may make to us, we must use in declaring faith and repentance and the other principles of the Gospel, and the consummation of the purposes of the Lord. We are not to be taught by the world. We are the teachers of the world.

At the head of this Church stands a living prophet, one who speaks with authority. He is the mouth-piece of God to this generation. He is a man, it is true, as every prophet who has spoken, but a man who possesses the authority of the prophetic power, and who has the right,

in this day, to interpret the things of humanity for the good of the cause of the Lord.

We have the authority of the priesthood. We are teachers to all the world. As we magnify our commission and rise to the full possibilities of world teachers, we shall be blessed and made powerful. Joy will fill our hearts; power will come to our hands, and the things that need to be done we shall be able to do.

So run my thoughts as I consider the work that has been done in European lands during the last few years. I am happy that I have had the privilege of laboring in those lands. I am grateful to President Grant and his associates for that great privilege.

#### THE SEARCH FOR ETERNAL TRUTH

Men seek a religion that may be used in daily life, but they want that practical religion tinged, suffused, mingled and mixed with eternal truth. They want everything in terms of the truth which has accumulated throughout the ages, and the truth which God has in his keeping to give to his children in the future.

The purpose of man's life is happiness and joy. "Men are that they might have joy." A simple purpose, but difficult to attain, so the history of the world has shown. Yet, if we take eternal truth as the woof of the pattern, and human experience as the warp, just as we make a pattern of linen or of cotton, making truth go this way, and human experience the other way, then we shall weave into it that thing which we call human happiness, a joyful life—the desire of man since the world began.

I pray the Lord to bless the Latter-day Saints, to bless each one of us within his own home, in his own place of residence, within his own field of labor, that we may rise to the authority, understanding and sacrifice that should be practiced by the people of this Church. May we all be messengers of joy to the people of the world, to assist in their redemption, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY

##### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

#### THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

In what I am about to say, I hope I shall have the Spirit of the Lord. It is all-important that we should possess that Spirit, whether we preach or sing or pray. Prayers unprompted by it do not ascend to Heaven; sermons uninspired by it fail to touch the heart of the hearer; and the songs that are sung in our worshiping assemblies, if not in tune with it, are but discords in the ear of Deity.

#### GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

The Savior, when instructing his disciples regarding the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, told them to partake of it in remembrance