

his inspiration to write the Declaration of Independence from the Holy Scriptures, and that he was familiar with the life of Jesus Christ as told in the New Testament.

May God bless you. May He bless this Church. May He prosper the cause of truth in all the earth, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

### ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My dear brethren and sisters: It is a great relief when one's name is announced. The Prophet Joseph Smith once said that "There is no pain so awful as that of suspense." I quoted that to President Clark once and he answered in substance, "Well, you ought to be pretty well purified by now, then." But if being held in suspense will help to purify a person then I do not object to being so held.

I want to qualify under the teachings of the Apostle John, who—when explaining that when the Lord should appear "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is"—said, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1st John 3:2-3)

#### A TESTIMONY BRINGS RESPONSIBILITY

I am grateful beyond my power to express, for the confidence of the Brethren and the great mercy and blessings of the Lord to me, and I appreciate the opportunity to bear my testimony to you from this stand for I know, with you, that God lives; that Adam fell that man might be; that Jesus Christ was and is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world; that by suffering in a manner beyond our power to understand, He wrought out the great atonement, thereby paying for the sin of Adam unconditionally and for the sins of all men upon condition of their individual repentance; and that by reason thereof all men shall be resurrected and stand before the judgment bar of God to be judged upon their individual records made during their life upon this earth; that when all the excuses, explanations and protestations are made and brushed aside, the final all-important question for every one of us to measure ourselves against will be, "How nearly did I in the living of my life upon the earth conform to the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." I know, too, that a righteous judgment will be made, and that if through righteous living we have brought ourselves within reach of the great plan of mercy, then we shall, through the atoning blood of the Savior, be washed clean and received into the mansions of our Father. We all know these things and we each have a testimony of the divinity of the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and a knowledge that through him the Lord restored the Gospel in these last days and again organized His Church upon the earth; that the men who now stand at the head of the Church hold the keys of the holy Priesthood and that they have been chosen by the Lord to lead His people and are sustained and upheld by Him in

their ministry. It is the knowledge of these things that makes us brothers and sisters.

#### THE TRUE MEANING OF BROTHERHOOD

There are many people who admire the activities and accomplishments of the Church; who, when they see the results obtained through, and by the Church, think that fellowship with such an organization would be desirable, but who have no idea of what binds us together. Even among us, as members of the Church, there are those desiring to be known as members and willing to take some part in our activities, who as yet do not know wherein lies the power which sustains this people. Therefore, they do not care to be known as a *peculiar people*. They accept and fellowship with the Church so long as their standing in the world is not interfered with. They are our brothers and sisters, in fact all people are, but not in the same peculiar sense as are those who have the testimony and knowledge of which we have spoken.

#### ALMA'S EXPERIENCE

Mormon speaks of Alma and the sons of Mosiah as still being "brethren in the Lord" after having been separated for fourteen years. Let us recall for a moment their experience to determine what it was that made them "brethren in the Lord." As young men, they "went about to destroy the Church of God" and "to lead astray the people of the Lord." As they pursued their evil course, an angel of the Lord appeared unto them, his voice shook the earth; he questioned, and instructed Alma about many things. But the last words which Alma heard and the most impressive were, "And now I say unto thee, Alma, go thy way, and seek to destroy the Church no more . . . and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off." The angel spoke other words which Alma did not hear because he was overcome with fear. His soul was racked with eternal torment and he wandered through much tribulation. Repenting nigh unto death, he remembered all his sins and of this experience he says:

So great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.

And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. (Alma 36:14-18.)

He was then granted forgiveness, his pain left and he was harrowed up by the memory of his sins no more. The light of the Gospel broke in upon his vision and joy entered his soul. His statement to those who stood around him was,

I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the spirit.

And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. (Mosiah 27:24, 25, 26.)

From the time of this experience to the end of their lives Alma and the sons of Mosiah not only refrained from their former evil activities, but never again could they remain passive toward the progress of the truth.

Alma near the close of his life, recounting this experience to his son Helaman, said,

But behold, my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet, and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God.

Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. (Alma 36:23-24.)

It was this being born again, as explained by Alma, which made them "brethren in the Lord."

The experience of each individual who is really born again is similar to this experience of Alma and the sons of Mosiah, although it may not be so dramatic. The effect upon each person's life is likewise similar. No person whose soul is illuminated by the burning Spirit of God can in this world of sin and dense darkness remain passive. He is driven by an irresistible urge to fit himself to be an active agent of God in furthering righteousness and in freeing the lives and minds of men from the bondage of sin.

#### CHANGE WROUGHT ON PETER BY THE HOLY GHOST

Consider for a moment the experience of Peter. On the night of the Master's trial, he denied thrice that he was one of the disciples of Jesus; and after the crucifixion, he with other disciples returned to his fishing. Then came the day of Pentecost, and Peter was born again. He never thereafter denied being a disciple of Jesus. Henceforth, his whole energy was devoted to the building of the kingdom. The change wrought in his heart is apparent when we contrast his words and actions on the night of the trial with his words and actions shortly thereafter when, through his and John's administration, the lame man had been healed and because

of the interest aroused thereby, Peter and John were called before the Jewish High Priests "and commanded . . . not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus."

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (Acts 4:18-20.)

#### AN EXPRESSION BY PARLEY P. PRATT

Parley P. Pratt gives expression to the feelings of those who in our time have really been born again, in these words:

If I had been set to turn the world over, to dig down a mountain, to go to the ends of the earth, or traverse the deserts of Arabia, it would have been easier than to have undertaken to rest, while the priesthood was upon me. I have received the holy anointing, and I can never rest till the last enemy is conquered, death destroyed, and truth reigns triumphant.

From the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it is apparent that every member of the Church should have something of this same spirit, for he said, "Let the Saints remember that great things depend on their individual exertion, and that they are called to be co-workers with us and the Holy Spirit in accomplishing the great work of the last days."

One of the great tasks before us this day is to bring the unconverted within our ranks to a testimony and knowledge of the divinity of the work in which we are engaged. For to every individual, whether in the Church or out of the Church, this testimony must come if they are to become brethren and sisters in the Lord; if they are to be "born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming His sons and daughters."

#### TRUE CONVERSION COMES THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

To the accomplishment of this conversion are directed all the activities of the Church. The great Welfare Program has within it the possibilities of reaching multitudes of men and women and of leading them to this rebirth. The spirit of the Welfare Program is to bring both the receiver and the giver to the common ground on which the Spirit of God can meet them. For after all a testimony is received and a rebirth is experienced only by the Spirit.

Now the way to obtain this rebirth, after all we can do, is to call upon the Father in the name of Jesus. Soon after burying our baby I once talked to a fellow workman on a construction job who had recently lost his wife. He said to me, in substance, "I would wade through the Great Salt Lake on my knees if I could have the assurance of meeting my wife again." That is not the way to obtain a witness from the Lord. Moroni gave the key when he said of the *Book of Mormon*,

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these

things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:4, 5.)

Alma's experience also points the way. Listen to him again:

And it came to pass that as I was racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. (Alma 36:17, 18.)

The course Alma took, that is, *to cry unto the Lord in sincere repentance*—is the way for all men. And until this course is followed by men and nations, no rebirth will come to men, nor relief to nations.

#### STEADFASTNESS BRINGS GROWTH AND POWER

Not only must we all have the experience which first makes us brethren and sisters in the Lord, but having obtained this we must continue day by day through the years to maintain, and build upon it, as did Alma and the sons of Mosiah. They did it by studying the scriptures and by prayer and fasting. Of them it is written:

Now these sons of Mosiah were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren; and what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.

But this is not all; They had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God. (Alma 17:2, 3)

God help all honest men to be born again and come to be of sound understanding and to know the word of God and maintain the spirit thereof by study, fasting, prayer, and work, that we may be blessed with His power and authority, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

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

My dear brethren and sisters, I seek your faith and prayers as I stand here to speak to you, for I desire to say nothing but that which the Spirit of the Lord would lead me to say. I have no set theme.

The theme of this Conference seems to be obedience. I know of