

**PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.**  
*First Counselor in the First Presidency*

Elder Mark E. Petersen, the newly chosen member of the Council of the Twelve, has just spoken to us and borne testimony and pledged a fealty which has touched our hearts and will touch the hearts of the Church.

Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Council of the Twelve will be our next speaker.

**ELDER JOHN A. WIDTSOE**  
*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My dear brethren and fellow workers, this has been a very enjoyable conference to me, and I know to all of us. A spirit of peace has been here, and that is as it should be, for the head of this Church is the Prince of Peace.

That which has been said during these two days has been interesting, instructive and impressive. I have been built up in my testimony, as well as in my knowledge of the Gospel. I have felt to thank the Lord, time and again, as I have looked into the faces of you, my fellow workers, for the faith and devotion to truth and to the cause of the Lord, His truth, which I know abide in you.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE CHURCH REFLECT FAITH**

I am certain all of us were, shall I say, astonished, when we heard the report of the year's activities of the Church. Most of us had no idea, living in our little corners, doing our duty well in them, how great is the accumulation of service the Church is rendering. The twig planted by the Prophet Joseph Smith, under God's direction, on April 6, 1830, has grown into a mighty tree, bearing bountiful and good fruit.

The thing that impressed me, I think more than anything else, when the report was read, was that every dollar mentioned, every can of fruit reported, represented a spiritual value, greater than the dollars, better than the can itself or the fruit within it. The dollars and the cans reflected faith, faith in our hearts and in our actions. It reflected the nearness that the Church of God is building toward the Father of us all.

When I heard President Grant's eloquent, impressive address—and he gave us the spirit of the conference—it was evident again that this Church is built upon eternal realities. I thought as I heard the reading of his address of a statement frequently made in sacred writ, that "the course of God is one eternal round." The Gospel does not vary nor depart from truth. In every age, in every dispensation, in every day and in every hour, all that we can do is to live righteously before the Lord, and to make use of the eternal principles which have been handed down to us from the day we lived in the heavens, and which will continue to the very end.

My heart has been filled with gladness during this conference. I am

grateful for the calling into the service of Brother Mark E. Petersen, as I am for the other brethren who have come into the Council of the Twelve recently, and of course for all who have served longer. I have known Brother Petersen for some time. He is one of us, a faithful Latter-day Saint. We can trust him.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

In preparation for this conference, I have thought about the present perplexed and pitiful conditions of the world. I was led to turn back the pages of history. It is said that "history repeats itself," and so I thought that perhaps I might discover some solution for our present-day problems by reading history.

I turned, as I often do, to the Prophet Joseph Smith. I came into this Church from another Church, a man-made Church, one that is without the substance of truth, though filled with good people, deceived in their belief. When I found in this Church the true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, I fell in love with Joseph Smith. I have been in love with him ever since.

So I turned back to see if I might discover something that he had said that might help me in clearing my own thinking. If you are willing, let me take you back a hundred years.

A hundred years ago the Prophet Joseph Smith was living out the last twelve months of his life on earth. It must have been a terrible year for him. Enemies, and bitterness of feeling sprang up on every hand against the people and leaders of the Church. Lawsuits followed lawsuit. There was no peace, especially for Joseph and his brother, Hyrum. It would seem, as one reads the story of that year, that the events that transpired during those twelve months were too trying to be endured by ordinary mortal man.

Therefore, I was thrilled when I found the Prophet's own words as to how he felt in the midst of tribulation and persecution, when facing death, for he no doubt knew that eventually his enemies would destroy his life. He expressed a great calm of spirit. In the midst of the storm and stress of the day he was calm. There was a majesty of calmness about him as he said:

The Great Jehovah has ever been with me. The wisdom of God will direct me in the seventh hour. I feel in closer communion and better standing with God than I ever felt before.

In substance, that message has been given over and over again in this conference, for it is another way of stating the results of obedience to the great eternal, everlasting truths of the gospel. Would we not all like to be able to say that the great Jehovah has ever been with us, that the wisdom of God directs us in the seventh hour; and that we feel in closer communion and better standing with God than we had ever felt before?

As I read that message, I began to understand how he could walk as a king, in the midst of circumstances of distress and persecution which

marked the last year of his life, though not peculiar to that year, for he was ever persecuted, even feeling the attempts of the Evil One to destroy him and his work.

#### EXPERIENCES OF THE PROPHET'S LAST YEAR

The experiences of his last year came to a culmination in the great April conference of 1844. It began on Saturday, the 6th of April. It continued through until Tuesday—four days. The weather was good, almost perfect. More people attended that conference than had ever gathered before at any Latter-day Saint conference.

The Prophet was not feeling his best physically. He said on the first day that his lungs troubled him, and the sermon, which he had promised to deliver, he would give the next day. On Sunday he did give it. It is one of the most marvelous messages ever given to humanity, spoken by human lips.

That conference was remarkable in many ways. The Prophet's mind seemed to sweep, as it were, the horizons of eternity. He touched upon the things that are far beyond—the things of eternity. This sermon is known in our history as the "King Follett Sermon," a most remarkable document. I am glad that Elder Joseph Fielding Smith included it in his *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

He taught revealing doctrines never clearly told before, since Christ, or perhaps since Adam, of the nature of God, our Heavenly Father, and of the destiny of man. The doctrine as there taught has become incorporated into our thinking and writing, in our books and sermons, without knowing exactly when or how it was first stated.

It was at that conference that the land of Zion was defined. The people who had joined the Church—ordinary people like ourselves—had perhaps thought of Kirtland or Missouri, as the land of Zion. But at this conference the Prophet said that the land of Zion is all of America—North America and South America. As we read this account, our minds go back to the days soon after Christ, when Peter himself was inclined to believe that the gospel was for a limited few, in a limited place, until God himself, by revelation, taught Peter that God's work is for all the world and all who dwell upon it, who have dwelt upon it, and who shall dwell upon it.

It was at this conference that the Prophet—(I wonder sometimes if he foresaw that in three months he would be martyred)—bore down on the people to finish the temple, and to secure their endowments, as among the most important things for them to do.

At this conference, missionary work was also stressed. Brigham Young and Hyrum Smith both discoursed earnestly on missionary work.

As I read the minutes of the conference, I said to myself: "These teachings are like those of 1944—the same subjects, objectives, and requirements, and the same obligations, and the same eternal truths to guide us in our work."

It was in this conference that the revelation came relative to stakes.

Stakes of Zion had been organized before, but the Prophet said on this occasion:

"I have received instructions from the Lord that henceforth wherever the elders of Israel shall build up Churches and branches unto the Lord throughout the states, there shall be a stake of Zion organized."

He mentioned specifically that in course of time stakes should be organized in New York City and in Boston. Part of that prediction is already fulfilled, for we have a stake in New York.

It was a great conference. But, the Latter-day Saints have ever been willing to apply eternal truths to everyday needs. You recall that Elder Lee said that we are a practical people. We believe that the great things of life begin here, today, and that we have the right to enjoyment and happiness, today, as in the great day to come.

So, the Prophet, during his last year, spoke frequently upon practical matters. I have not the time to discuss his views relative to the building of a commonwealth, the relationship between industry, agriculture, and manufacturing. That which he said is good reading today, and might be read with profit by the empire-makers of today.

One thing which he said, as he looked into the future, refers to us, I believe. He said:

"I prophesy, in the name of the God of Israel, anguish, and wrath, and desolation, and the withdrawing of the spirit of God await this generation until they are visited with utter desolation."

#### THE PROPHET'S SOLUTION OF PRESENT TROUBLES

Can you pick up a paper today, reporting great cities destroyed, countrysides laid barren, without feeling that the Prophet spoke as a prophet? He not only looked into the next day, but into the years to come, and into the ages that lie before.

But in the spirit of the gospel, he set about at once to find a solution, for coming distress. This is what I found. I found three principles that appeared to be a solution of the world's troubles, but specifically and particularly pertaining to the United States. He was thinking about the United States—they were living in the United States at that time; they had problems within the States.

First, the Prophet laid down certain foundation principles.

"It is our purpose to build up and establish the principles of righteousness, and not to break down or destroy." That had a tremendous meaning. We seek to establish righteousness—yes; but we are not destroyers; we are builders. We accept all good, that has come down through the years.

And he continues:

"And I proclaim, in the name of the Lord God Almighty, that I will fellowship nothing in this Church but virtue, integrity, and uprightness."

To a man seeking for Mormonism in a nutshell, perhaps these two statements would be a good offering. Upon such a platform the Prophet,

in the midst of persecution, could be calm, unruffled, and could carry forward steadily the work of the Lord.

Second, he declared the necessity for full conformity with the Constitution of the United States. If we desire prosperity, we of this land must conform to the principles that lie imbedded in the Constitution of the United States. For, he said, through such conformity we shall win liberty of conscience, and protection for the weak and for the oppressed. Without the preservation of this right and protection, there is no true freedom. The Church has ever fought for the untrammelled conscience. The great welfare program is but the working out of the principle inherent in the Gospel; that the weak and the oppressed shall be protected. These principles embody the very spirit of the Church.

Third, he laid down a principle which comes home to us this year. Brother Kirkham barely mentioned it. It so happened that in 1844 there would be a presidential election the following fall, and the Prophet and others spoke about the problems of that election. Hyrum Smith, the fellow-martyr of the Prophet, delivered an impassioned sermon, giving no quarter whatever. I shall read a passage or two:

We engage in the election, the same as any other principle; you are to vote for good men, and if you do not do this, it is a sin: to vote for wicked men would be a sin. Choose the good and refuse the evil. Men of false principles have preyed upon us like wolves upon helpless lambs. Damn the rod of tyranny; curse it. Let every man use his liberties according to the Constitution; . . . we want a president of the United States, not a party president, but a president of the whole people, for a party president disfranchises the opposite party. Have a president who will maintain every man in his rights.

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Our concluding song will be "Praise to the Man," words by William W. Phelps. (Song folder No. 20, L. D. S. Hymns No. 167, Hymn Book No. 282).

President Daniel J. Ronnow of the Uvada Stake, will offer the closing prayer, after which the Conference will adjourn until 7:00 o'clock this evening. That meeting will not be broadcast. There will be no general session of the Conference tomorrow, Saturday, April 8, although there will be a Bishops' meeting tomorrow evening at 8:00 p.m. The Conference will resume Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m.

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The congregation sang the hymn, "Praise To The Man"—Words by William W. Phelps (L.D.S. Hymns No. 167).

Elder Daniel J. Ronnow, President of the Uvada Stake, offered the benediction.

Conference adjourned until 7 p.m.