

PRESIDENT GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

I wonder if anyone else here feels as weak and humble as the man who stands before you. I have been coming to this house since my infancy. I have seen all the Presidents of the Church since that time sustained by the congregation here, as their names have been presented from this stand. I have seen the Church continue to grow in numbers, and have realized throughout all my years that the Church of Jesus Christ is what its name implies. We who are members of this Church are indeed fortunate to have found the light and to have accepted the truth.

GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

In the year 1830, the Church was organized with six members. The adversary of all righteousness has from that day to the present sought to impede its progress and destroy it. I wonder if that great man, Joseph Smith, who gave his life that the Church might be organized and carried on as the Lord intended, can see the Church as it exists today, with its branches established in all parts of the world, and realize that each day since he was martyred, since he laid down his life and sealed his testimony with his blood, the Church has become stronger than the day before.

From this stand addresses have been delivered by some of the great teachers of the world. Some of the greatest students of the scriptures have explained the gospel from this stand, and men and women from everywhere have worshiped here. Yesterday, this house was apparently as full of the membership of the Women's Relief Society of the Church as it is today with both men and women together. Through that great organization, the Relief Society, begun by the Prophet Joseph, was given to womankind the dispensation of representing the Lord in their way as daughters, as wives, as mothers, and as representatives of their kind in all the world.

THE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL

We have had sustained here today various of the quorums of the priesthood, each one directed in its organization by our Heavenly Father. It was not a matter of personal wisdom on the part of individuals. In each case there was necessity for group organization, and as the Church grew and multiplied in numbers, the quorums have correspondingly increased until today in all parts of the world there are men divinely appointed, set apart, and endowed with divine authority, who state positively that they know whereof they speak when they testify that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, who died that we might all live. The Church that he organized in his day represented his Father and himself in all the parts of the world where it was established. In our day, by the direction of Jesus Christ our Lord, this Church was organized. It wasn't organized from just the

imagination of men and women. There came a necessity that the priesthood of the living God be restored. A youth was selected to begin the work. When he was less than fifteen years of age, Joseph Smith lived at or near Palmyra, New York state, on a little farm. He was confused about what he should do, or which church he should join. The various denominations in that community were holding revival meetings and one group was saying, "This is the way," and another, "This is the way," until he, being of a naturally religious turn of mind, having lived in a home where the Bible, the holy scripture, was read, found in one passage of James:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (James 1:5.)

THE COMING FORTH OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Although a boy fourteen years of age, he went into the woods near his home, into one of God's first temples, bowed down upon the ground, and asked the Lord in his confusion, "Which of these churches shall I join?" I have no doubt he was surprised when the answer came to him, "Join none of them." And then he was told that if he would obey the direction of our Heavenly Father, an important mission would be given for him to perform under divine direction. That was not the idea of a man who desired to deceive; it was the humble, simple faith of a boy. So he continued following the inspiration of the Lord. He continued carrying out the directions that were given to him by holy beings, the result of which was the uncovering in the Hill Cumorah of the golden plates from which the Book of Mormon, the history of the ancestors of the American Indians, was translated and published. Since then that book has been carried to the ends of the world, having been published in many languages. He was only a young man when that occurred. When the time came for its publication, he was ridiculed. People derided him and called him a money digger because he worked for a living and had to earn that living part of the time digging in the earth. But they didn't look upon him as a servant of the Lord; neither did the majority of the people in the days of the Savior accept Jesus Christ of Nazareth as a servant of the Lord. The great majority rejected Christ and rejected each of his followers who became members of the quorum of the Twelve.

Joseph Smith persisted in his work; and when the Book of Mormon was finally about to come from the press, after having been translated through the gift and power of God, for it was in a language unknown to him, the people in the neighborhood of Palmyra agreed that they would not buy it, thinking that they would thwart the bringing forth of the book. They supposed that their refusal to purchase it would make impossible the completion of its publication.

There had been written in that book at the time of its compilation the statement that the book would be received by many people. Joseph Smith didn't eliminate that statement when it came to publication.

When the people said, "We'll not read it," he did not take it out and say, "Well, I can't fulfil this." If he had been writing the book himself, he probably would have changed the script, but it was not his script, and so it went to the world. I was present a few years ago when the Smith farm near the Hill Cumorah was purchased, and as I went through the neighborhood I found only one copy of the Book of Mormon. That was owned by a man named Pliny T. Sexton, who was chancellor of the University of New York and the banker at Palmyra. He had a copy of the first edition of the Book of Mormon as it came from the press. The leaves had never been cut, and he kept it in the safe in the bank. I asked him, "Is there any place here where I can find another copy of the Book of Mormon?" He said, "I do not know." I then began to inquire among the people and found that the people of Palmyra had kept their word. They had neither bought nor would they read it. At that time Palmyra was a village and is still a village, but the Book of Mormon that was discredited then has since been read and accepted by people in all parts of the earth, people from many nations, numbering hundreds of thousands, and the work is still going forward, fulfilling the prediction that it was to be made

. . . known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved. (1 Nephi 13:40.)

THE SAINTS MOVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE

Men may conspire to prevent the work of the Lord, as they have done when they are prompted by the adversary, but his work has continued to grow from that day until the present time. As the Church grew, the people were compelled to move from their smaller places. Palmyra became too small, and they moved to Kirtland, Ohio. That became undesirable, so they moved into Missouri, from which state they were banished by the edict of the governor, and many of them laid down their lives as martyrs to the cause. The people then passed across the Mississippi River into the state of Illinois. In fewer than seven years that group of people, led by the youthful Prophet who had now grown to be a man, erected buildings and a magnificent temple which was the finest building in its day in the state of Illinois. In less than seven years Nauvoo became the largest city in the state, regardless of persecution and everything that was done to prevent the growth of the gospel of Jesus Christ that the adversary could inspire, including murder and every other wrong that goes with it.

PROPHECY REGARDING SETTLEMENT IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

At that time Springfield was a city of about twelve thousand and Chicago had a population of about five thousand. The Prophet of the Lord prophesied one day:

. . . the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains; many would apostatize; others would be put to death by our persecutors, or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some of them would live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 85.)

Think of such a prediction at that time. The Saints were then four or five hundred miles east from where Omaha now is, and Omaha is approximately a thousand miles from the Salt Lake Valley. For the Prophet of God to say that they would be driven from there and go fifteen hundred miles into the wilderness, and there become a mighty people was a remarkable statement indeed. Has that prophecy been fulfilled? Our presence here today attests that it has.

REVELATION ON THE WORD OF WISDOM

I could, if I had time, open to you the Doctrine and Covenants containing the prophecies, the revelations of God to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and show that one by one they have been fulfilled, not by Joseph Smith's power but by the power of God. In referring to the advice and counsel contained in the eighty-ninth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord made this promise:

And all saints who remember to keep and do these things, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures. . . . (D. & C. 89:18-19.)

While Joseph Smith might write those words, he couldn't fulfil that promise. I stand here today as one of the humblest among you, as the result of the observance of the requirements of that revelation and other commandments that God has given. Observance of that commandment has placed the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the tops of these everlasting mountains in a class by themselves. Not only do we have the lowest death rate of any people in all the world, but we also have a high birth rate as well. That was the promise that was given by the Lord in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Lord said that the destroying angels should pass by us and not slay us if we kept his counsel. What has been another result? The age of men and women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has increased until the average term of life among us is longer than among any other people in the world.

Another promise: The Lord said that he would give to those who would keep this word of wisdom, "great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures." I refer you to the February, 1944, number of *The Improvement Era* wherein was published a graph showing the relative position of the states of the Union as to the number of scientists born in those states in proportion to population. Strange as it may seem, if you began at the lower corner of that graph and followed up state

by state, you would come to the state of Massachusetts next to the highest on the graph, yet you would not have reached the state of Utah. You have to go twenty percent points higher up the graph to find Utah, the state that has produced more scientists born within its borders per capita than any other state in the American Union. That wasn't an accident; it was a fulfilment of the promise of God as a result of observance of the Lord's commandments. And so I call attention this morning to the fact that when we do represent our Heavenly Father in the way that he has desired, these blessings follow and are not an accident. They are the direct fulfilment of God's promises through his Prophet.

A PROMISE MADE AS A REWARD FOR LOYALTY

And so today, my brethren, standing here in humility before you, I would like to express to you my gratitude that you have seen fit to promise that you will help the humble man who has been called to preside over this Church as he strives to carry on by the inspiration of the Almighty. For this promise I am grateful, and I thank you that you have offered to do the same thing with regard to the two men who stand by my side as counselors, loyal and true and devoted Latter-day Saints, who have done everything to make my responsibility easier for me to carry. You voted to sustain the Quorum of the Twelve, the quorum that I belonged to for so many years that I felt like a stranger, almost, when I walked out of it to occupy the position as President of the Church.

And so I might go on with all these quorums. You have held up your hands in the presence of God to sustain this body of men in the leadership of the Church. I assure you that if you will fulfil your promise, the blessings of our Heavenly Father will abide with you and in your homes and with your loved ones, and Zion will continue to grow and spread abroad, and the truth will be carried to every land and clime and the power of the priesthood will be made manifest among our Father's children in many places where it has never yet even been heard. You men who are here, or who hold the priesthood, have that responsibility, and as one of the number, I would like to say, we can't let our own personal affairs stand in the way. If the call comes for us to divide the gospel of Jesus Christ with our Father's other children, it will be our privilege as well as our duty to put our own affairs in order, and like Joseph Smith and the men who began with the Church in the early days, go where we may be called to go. One of our departed brethren, Melvin J. Ballard, used to sing so beautifully, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord; I'll be what you want me to be." That's the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Great is the joy that comes into the hearts of the men and the women who devote themselves to doing what our Heavenly Father desires them to do.

PRAISE FOR THE WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

I would like to say to this great body of priesthood, you are fortunate men if you have been blessed with a good wife, a daughter of God, to stand by your side. And I want to say to you that God loves her just as much as he loves you. If you would have his blessings, you will treat her with love and kindness and tenderness and helpfulness. She will then be able to carry on under the responsibilities that come to her to bring children into the world and nurture and care for them and teach them the plan of life and salvation. And so I plead with you, my brethren, let your homes be the abiding place of love, and the authority that you bear should magnify that love in your soul and in the lives of your wives and your children.

Yesterday this house was filled with the daughters of Zion, and I say without hesitation that you could find no more beautiful picture of womankind in all the world than was here yesterday afternoon. These faithful wives, these faithful daughters, assume their portion of the burden and carry it on. They make their homes a heaven when sometimes without them the homes would be anything but heaven.

So today, my brethren, I feel to say to you, grateful am I for membership in this Church. Thankful am I that I have lived among this people. I want to express my gratitude to hundreds of you who are here today for the courtesies and the hospitality that many of you have extended to me. I realize that it is not because of the man that you have extended these courtesies, but because he represented the Lord as his humble servant. You have earned your blessing and will continue to have it for all your kind deeds extended to his servants.

WORK OF EARLY DAY LEADERS

Now, as I stand here I realize that those who gave their lives in the early rise of the Church, including Joseph Smith and Hyrum, his brother, could have run away from the danger that threatened them. They knew, however, that that was not the thing their Heavenly Father desired. So they remained behind, after having finished their work; and under the leadership and direction of the Prophet, who by the way was the younger of the two brothers, builded a temple to God on the banks of the mighty Mississippi River in the beautiful city of Nauvoo, and they built it to completion far enough so that the ordinances of the Holy Priesthood were administered, and marriage for eternity was consummated therein. And since the erection of the Nauvoo Temple, the same blessings given there have followed in the other temples to the number of nine. Think of it, my brethren. Beginning only a comparatively few years ago with six members, day by day the work of God has gone forward among the children of men. No longer are the Latter-day Saints despised as they used to be, because the adversary had misrepresented them, but they are now respected by great and good men everywhere because of what has

been accomplished. We could not have made these achievements except that our Heavenly Father had made it possible for us to do it. So, we ought to be thankful this day.

I ask that the Lord may take us to our homes when we have finished our labors with this conference, and that each of us will go back to the roof that shelters us, wherever it may be, with the renewed determination that God, being our helper, we will prove worthy of him in whose image we have been created. If we will do that, there will radiate from our very presence, wherever we go, a power of righteousness, and the communities in which we live will be blessed thereby.

GRATITUDE FOR BLESSINGS

I am grateful to these wonderful organizations, without naming them, that have carried their part of the responsibility. You voted for the leadership of these here today. I am grateful for the Tabernacle choir and the other glorious choirs that we have throughout the Church. This marvelous Tabernacle choir and organ that hold forth every Sabbath day have preached the gospel to the ends of the earth, because its program has been carried everywhere. And then we have the Singing Mothers of the Relief Society. They not only do what the Lord desires them to do in their lives, but they sing praises to him and teach others to do the same.

How blessed we are in this house, sanctified to God by the teachings that have been given here by righteous men and women. Here we are today, not as a conglomerate community, but as a band of brothers and sisters, worshipping at the same shrine, praying to the same God, living the same gospel, keeping our homes under the supervision of the same spirit. I don't know how any one of us can enjoy these blessings without having his feelings exalted and from the depths of his soul thank him who bestows upon us all our blessings.

I pray that our Heavenly Father may continue his favor; that peace, comfort, and satisfaction may abide in your homes; that these men who are in the various mission fields of the earth, may be magnified before the people and exercise the authority that has been conferred upon them to build, not destroy, but to build a better world that our Heavenly Father will be delighted to honor and to bless because of its righteousness. The Lord bless you in your missionary fields of labor, and all of you men in your various callings, all you women in your homes and abiding places, and the organizations with which you are identified. May the Lord bestow every blessing, and I pray that his spirit may continue with us today, henceforth and forever; and when the time comes that we shall stand before the Great Judge, where we all will report some day, that we will find our record of such a character that the Lord will say to us,

. . . Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. (Matt. 25:23.)

I pray that this may be our blessing and the blessing of every soul that we can influence by lives of righteousness and worthy example, all of which I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS

President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I feel very humble in undertaking to address this large congregation, but I have the assurance by your vote that you are my friends. If I have any enemies, I do not know of them. If I have done anything to injure any person, I am very sorry for it. If anybody has done anything in an effort to injure me, I cheerfully forgive him and pray God's blessings upon him. If any of us have done any wrong, I trust that we will discover it and repent of our sins and receive that Spirit from the Lord, the Holy Ghost, which brings peace to our souls, notwithstanding what may be going on about us.

EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

For thirty-nine and a half years, brethren and sisters, you have been sustaining me as a member of the Council of the Twelve in your semi-annual and annual general conferences and in your quarterly conferences in the stakes. I appreciate this, of course. Great kindness has been extended unto me and now today you have expressed your willingness still to sustain me as a member of the Council and President of the Council of the Twelve. I appreciate this greatly.

I am thankful with you for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, for its restoration to the earth in these last days and for membership in the Church and for the blessings that we have received under the gospel. Everything is offered unto us that our Father in heaven has to give, if only we will be faithful as we have covenanted to do when we entered the waters of baptism into this Church.

TITHING A TEST OF FAITHFULNESS

I had thought that I might be privileged to speak at this conference, and I have thought to speak about a very important subject pertaining to the gospel of Jesus Christ, one that is dear to the hearts of faithful Latter-day Saints. I refer to the law of the tithe, which is the revenue law of the Church. When a member of the Church pays a full tithing, he has the satisfaction of knowing that he is in the favor of the Lord. It is an opportunity to us, brethren and sisters, to show to the Lord that we are willing to make sacrifices for the accomplishment of his mighty purposes in the earth, the saving of the souls of the children of men, for the tithes of the Church are a potent means of accomplishing that end. Those of us who have paid our tithing in full have done our full share in all that has been accomplished by the use of the tithing of the Church. Tithing is a test of the faith of