

## ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My beloved brethren and sisters, I come before you with deep appreciation and gratitude for my association with you and for my fellowship in the Church. I stand before you in humility, praying that the spirit of the Holy Ghost will guide me while I speak, for I am a great convert to the statement of Nephi that when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men. In all my ministry in the Church, I want to speak and act under the influence of that spirit. Without it I think we are less than nothing in this service.

## PEACE IN THE MIDST OF TURMOIL

I am very grateful for the peace and quiet that prevail here in this meeting. It seems to me that we are sitting right in the center of a hurricane, as it were. You will remember the report that when the hurricane passed over New Orleans, it spread great havoc for a time, and then of a sudden a calm fell over the scene; the wind and the rain ceased; and the warm sunshine broke through the clearing clouds. For a few moments the city was in the "eye" of the hurricane.

In the world today there is strife and uncertainty all about. But here we enjoy peace. I thought this morning when President Smith was speaking, what a glorious thing it is to enjoy peace in the midst of the turmoil that the world now suffers. One of the reasons why we enjoy this great peace is a result of the attitude in which we come to conference. We did not come here to negotiate and maneuver for position, nor out of our own wisdom to evolve action policies of expediency. We came here to hear eternal principles of truth expounded by men whom God has endowed to expound them.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH

I am grateful that I know that in the gospel of Jesus Christ there are principles of eternal truth. They are the guide of my living, as I know they are the guide to your living. I am very grateful that the Lord saw fit to give us these principles. I recall, too, that the Lord gave to this great nation some principles which if followed would spare us from much of the confusion in our national councils and our international councils. Those great principles are set forth in two short documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

In the Constitution the Lord set out wise principles for the governing of this great nation. He stated in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith that he brought forth the Constitution of the United States through men whom he raised up for that very purpose.

Under it, a great representative form of government was set up, a republican form of government. If the principles set out in the Constitution of the United States were followed by all men who exercise authority in governments, we would have peace in the earth. This is true because by the inspiration of heaven that Constitution made provision for the best form of political government ever devised for the use of man.

### GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

Now the Lord has set up a form of government in the Church, too. I would like to tell you a little of what I understand that form of government to be. The Lord says that it is a "kingdom." I think he says in one of the revelations that we should pray that the kingdom of God might go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it and be prepared to meet the kingdom of heaven when it shall come with the Master at its head. The government of the Church in its operation is quite different from the government of the United States.

In the Church is a democratic principle known as the law of common consent. It was revealed before the Church was organized. I have here an excerpt from the first volume of the *Documentary History of the Church*, which was written by the Prophet Joseph Smith. He says that in 1829 in the home of Father Whitmer, which was in Seneca County, as you will remember,

. . . the word of the Lord came unto us in the chamber, commanding us that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ; and that he also should ordain me to the same office; and then to ordain others, as it should be made known unto us from time to time. We were, however, commanded to defer this our ordination until such times as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be baptized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our thus proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers or not. (*Documentary History of the Church*. vol. 1, pp. 60, 61.)

### PRINCIPLE OF COMMON CONSENT

The Church was not very old before the Lord gave the direction in a revelation that

No person is to be ordained to any office in this church, where there is a regularly organized branch of the same, without the vote of that church. (D. & C. 20:65.)

In the body of the Church there lies great power. No man can preside over any organized division of the Church without the consent of those over whom he is to preside. That is a power which God has vested in the membership of this Church. Sometimes I think when we raise our hands to sustain the General Authorities, we are not actively alive to that great principle. No one of us, I feel, has a right to raise our hand to sustain any man or woman in a position

in the Church if we know that that man or woman is unworthy of the position for which he or she is named.

But the Church membership, however, does not have the power to nominate men and women for office in the Church. That is a distinguishing feature between the civil government, its functioning, and the government of the Church. The authority and the power to propose men and women for office in the Church resides in the presiding authority. The power of approval resides in the membership of the Church.

God, our Eternal Father, appointed the Prophet Joseph Smith to be his prophet, and he was accountable to God, our Eternal Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to men. But even so, the membership of the Church could have rejected the Prophet Joseph Smith as the President of the Church. Had they done so, he could not have presided over them. They would, of course, have been apostate had they rejected him, because he never lost the approval of the Lord.

When a member of the Council of the Twelve is to be appointed, as I understand it, the power of nomination resides in the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The people have the right to sustain. That is the way it is, all down through the Church. When a stake is to be organized, the Presidency of this Church sends members of the General Authorities to select and propose to the people the man that is to be sustained, and the people can receive him or reject him by their own vote. That takes politics out of our Church. You never hear of a prospective stake president promising the people that if they will sustain him, he will make a certain man the bishop of a certain ward and another man the bishop of another ward, and this woman the president of Relief Society, and that one the president of the Mutual, and so forth.

#### LEADERSHIP INSPIRED

The Lord has set up a perfectly safe procedure in placing the power of nomination in the presiding officers, because back of the government of the Church in the earth is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. I believe that when the Presidency of this Church nominates a person for an office, it is not a personal nomination. I have that confidence in the Presidency and that testimony of the divinity of this Church. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to them through the spirit of the Holy Ghost the men they should name to office, and I believe that same spirit will inspire and direct the presidents of stakes and the bishops of wards and the heads of other organizations in this Church, if they will live for such inspiration, so that when they name people for office they will name them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In addition to the inspiration of the Lord which every person is entitled to, according to his calling, we have revealed and written down in the Doctrine and Covenants and the other Church works, eternal principles of truth to guide us through the world. I think



we ought to remember that we have these principles, for this is a day when the doctrine of opportunism is abroad in the world, and when men and women generally act on the principle of expediency. So acting, they move further and further into confusion. In the Church, on the other hand, so long as we follow the principles of the gospel and the proper Church organization procedure, we move into peace, prosperity, and happiness.

I feel that we ought to study these eternal principles. I know that the Lord said we should study all things. We should become learned in the things of this world, study about nations, histories, sciences, and all other things; but the eternal principles of truth by which we are to guide our lives, we are not to learn by the study of things taught by men without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Remember what the Lord said to the missionaries when he sent them out. He said he did not send them out to be taught; he sent them out to teach the children of men the things which he had put into their hands by the power of his spirit. They were to learn of those things from on high.

#### MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS ACTS

Now, I think sometimes we get away from these eternal principles of truth. The other day I was in a conference where a man presented in a priesthood meeting the doctrine that the evils of adultery were to be measured by their effect upon the whole group, and that the individual adulterer should not bear the burden of his own act. Some time before that, I heard the doctrine presented that one who lives the Word of Wisdom should not look for an individual blessing according to the promise the Lord gave that "all saints who remember to keep and to do these sayings, . . . shall receive health in their navel" and so forth, but that the probability that the individual would receive such blessings would be increased because of his membership in a group whose standards were higher. Now, I believe that every man will be judged on his own record, and that the adulterer will have to bear personally the judgment for his act, and he will be rewarded according to his act, and I believe as the Lord promised in the first verse of the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me [God], and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am."

I would like to find, when I read the lessons that are to be presented in the classes of the organizations of this Church, an assurance that what is in them was written against the background of the knowledge and understanding of the eternal principles of the gospel, unaffected by the learning and philosophies of men. I think we cannot explain the teachings of Jesus, as they are recorded in the New Testament, in the absence of the light of what the Redeemer himself has said about those teachings in the modern revelations, and I think we need to hold close to these eternal principles. We

must learn what they are. If we would spend just a portion of the time we spend reading uninspired writings of men in studying the gospel of Jesus Christ as it is written in the revelations, we would not be deceived as we sometimes are.

God bless us that we may understand who we are and that we have in the gospel eternal principles of truth. May he give us courage and strength to live by them, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER HENRY D. MOYLE

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

My brethren and sisters, it is with humility that I stand before you to occupy a few moments of your valuable time. At this season of the year and in the year such as we now enjoy, we might very well look back upon our immediate past and ask ourselves the question whether or not the counsel and advice that was given from this stand eleven and a half years ago has yet become a cardinal principle of our lives and of our activities. Have we, all of us, in our homes today a year's supply of the necessities of life? Have we all up-to-date accounted to the Lord for our tithing? Have we fasted during the year and accounted to the bishop for the savings thus effected? Have we contributed as liberally as we might to the fulfilment of the 1947 welfare budget? These are important questions in our lives today, as important, and maybe more so than ever before, and if we have not done this, then we certainly lack the faith and the courage to do what our great leaders have suggested.

#### TESTIMONY OF WELFARE PROGRAM

I've often had occasion to say as I traveled through the Church in the welfare work that President Grant, when he called me to the general welfare committee, did not ask me if I was converted to this great principle of the Church taking care of its own; he simply told me that I had been called to this work and was expected to go forth and do those things which were necessary to build up this plan among our people. I felt very much impressed this morning with what President Smith said to us about what we see and hear. That is not the important thing. The important thing to you and to me is the thing that we feel, and I am here to tell you today, brethren and sisters, in all humility that there has never been a moment in my life since President Grant called me to this welfare work that I haven't felt well in it and felt that I was doing something that the Lord desired should be done. And so governed by the standards that our prophet has set us here today, it gives me pleasure to bear my testimony to you that there is still great need in the world today and in this Church for this great welfare program.