

## ELDER HAROLD B. LEE

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

As another great conference of the Church draws near its closing session, it remains for each here in attendance at the conference or listening on the air to formulate for himself that which to him has been the cardinal teaching and central theme of the conference and then to apply it in his own practice. As I have sat here, I have tried to do that for myself. I would like to tell you what my feelings are about that which has transpired in this conference.

## INFLUENCE OF PRESIDENT RICHARDS

The first thing which has characterized it has been the feeling, particularly among the members of the Twelve and to some degree by all the General Authorities, and put into words by President McKay this morning, that this conference has been greatly influenced by President George F. Richards, and likewise, perhaps, in a degree, by all those who have departed this life as leaders of the Church. President George F. Richards was one of the noblest among them. I have felt his influence as President McKay has expressed our feelings.

## FALSE PROPHETS TO DECEIVE

The second thing, that to me has been the cardinal theme, is that we must prepare to meet that of which the Master warned when the disciples asked him how they would know that his coming again was nigh at hand. He said to them:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in his inspired version of that same scripture, added these significant words: "*who are the elect, according to the covenant.*" This is what has been said, in effect, in this conference: Unless every member of this Church gains for himself an unshakable testimony of the divinity of this Church, he will be among those who will be deceived in this day when the "elect according to the covenant" are going to be tried and tested. Only those will survive who have gained for themselves that testimony.

## CONCERN OF MISSIONARY

I heard from a young man up in the Northwestern States Mission, who had only been there a few months—a fine, stalwart, handsome young man—he had just received what he had interpreted to himself as a testimony. He told how he had been anxious in the circle where he had lived, because members of his own household and the circle of his friends had ridiculed oftentimes, after the con-

ference had ended, what had been said in those conferences, and he had been shocked about it. Then he said, as the tears filled his eyes after he had borne his own testimony, "If I could hear my own father and mother stand up and bear their own testimonies, it would be the greatest thrill of my life."

#### CRITICISM OF AUTHORITIES

The other day one of the bishops from the Big Horn country of Wyoming came to my office, and told me that frequently there came to their conferences visiting brethren who talked about those who criticize the General Authorities of the Church, and about the "isms" that are springing up in apostate groups. He said, "You know, Brother Lee, our people don't know what these brethren are talking about up there in our ward. We never hear these criticisms. They accept you brethren as the representatives of the Living God, and we don't hear what they say is happening elsewhere."

As I thought of that bishop's statement, I remembered the words of Brigham Young:

Were your faith concentrated upon the proper object, your confidence unshaken, your lives pure and holy, every one fulfilling the duty of his or her calling according to the priesthood and capacity bestowed upon you, you would be filled with the Holy Ghost, and it would be as impossible for any man to deceive and to lead you to destruction as for a feather to remain unconsumed in the midst of intense heat.

And then this:

I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are being led by him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give their leaders if they know for themselves by the revelations of Jesus Christ that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know by the whisperings of the Spirit of God to themselves whether their leaders are walking in the way the Lord dictates or not.

#### DIVINE APPOINTMENT OF LEADERS

To me, there is a tremendous truth. It is not alone sufficient for us as Latter-day Saints to follow our leaders and to accept their counsel, but we have the greater obligation to gain for ourselves the unshakable testimony of the divine appointment of these men and the witness that what they have told us is the will of our Heavenly Father.

I had a shock and a startling truth borne in upon me by an experience six months ago, when following April conference, the General Authorities and their wives met in a semi-annual party and dinner up at our Institute of Religion near the University of Utah. As a part of the program, the committee in charge had arranged

for a recital of the conferences a hundred years ago, from the preceding October. They read the minutes from the conference of 1849. They then brought quotations from the sermons delivered by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve in October 1899. Then they reproduced on the public address system quotations from the sermons of every one of the present Presidency and the Council of the Twelve. When they put into my hands the quotation from the one in that other Council fifty years ago, whose place I was now filling, I was startled, for I was to read the last recorded statement of a man who lost his standing in the Council and later his membership in the Church of Jesus Christ. And I was more startled when I read this statement from his last recorded sermon. This is what he had said:

I know that the children of men never were converted till they saw that the power of God rested upon his servants, and the spirit of God went down into their hearts like fire.

He knew, and he came to know by the bitter experience of his own apostasy that the thing which lost him his standing in the Church was that he lost his testimony of the divine appointment of the prophets of God, and that the fire which once burned in his heart had gone out. When I realized that one like him had failed, and that I was now sitting in the chair once occupied by him, it gave me a tremendous feeling of responsibility and a fear lest I might fall, by foolishness and because of the deceit and cunning which I have come to believe may overtake any of us. False prophets and christ, as foretold by the Savior, may come to deceive us not alone in the name of religion, but if we can believe the history of Italy and Germany and Russia, they may come under the label of politicians or of social planners or so-called economists, deceitful in their offerings of a kind of salvation which may come under such guise.

#### PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Five years ago, following the death and burial of President Heber J. Grant, the Council of the Twelve met in one of the most solemn meetings I have ever attended as one of the junior members of the Council, in one of the upper rooms in the Salt Lake Temple. They had met there to consider the appointment of a succeeding President of the Church. The chairs usually occupied by the First Presidency were vacant, and for hours the members of the Twelve, each in his turn, expressed his feelings fully on the matter of the new appointment. After the decision was made, President George Albert Smith took his place and called to his side President Clark and President McKay. There was something that happened to me in that meeting. I was willing then, as always, to listen to the brethren and to follow them, but as they took their places at the front of our council room, there came into my heart a testimony and an

assurance that these were the men who had been chosen by God's appointment, and I knew it because of the revelation of the Spirit to my own soul.

May I close with only this one thought taken from one of our own hymns:

Soon the earth will hear the warning,  
Then the judgments will descend!  
Oh! before the days of sorrow,  
Make the Lord of Hosts your friend.

Then, when dangers are around you,  
And the wicked are distressed,  
You, with all the Saints of Zion,  
Shall enjoy eternal rest.

From "See, the Mighty Angel Flying"

God help us to gain that divine, assuring testimony which I have in my soul. I know that God lives and know that this is his work. I know that these men are divinely appointed servants of God. And I bear you this testimony in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President George Albert Smith

We have a good many people come here, but not many have the privilege you have had of sitting and listening to men whose lives are devoted to the service of the Master.

Brother Harold B. Lee, of the Council of the Twelve, has just spoken to us and he will be our last speaker this morning.

I never come to this Tabernacle that I do not feel an unusual presence, when I think of how it was erected and how the people struggled to prepare a place for worship, and the temple to the east of us, the Assembly Hall, all these walls that hold these buildings—there is not anything in all the world like them. Many people would like to take down these walls. I want to say these walls are sacred to me because I have played around them ever since I was a child and I have seen hundreds of men come and go, working around here.

This morning we are in comfort. The houses that we are in, and the adjoining houses, are kept in order. The beautiful grounds with flowers and shrubs, hundreds of people remark they have never seen anything like it in all the world, and yet this has all been done by men, and some women, who desired to make the place where we worship our Heavenly Father as comfortable and delightful as possible.

By the way, that brings to my mind the fact that one of the most faithful workers we have had on this block, looking after this building and other things, Brother Ben Handley, is at home sick, unable to be with us. He has always been here, always been on hand,