

A prophet to the whole earth

By such power the Spirit of God moves among men, and so now I must tell you, realizing that what I say may be reaching many tens of thousands of people, that Spencer W. Kimball, now in the place of Joseph Fielding Smith and other prophets who have died, is a prophet of God. I can say this because when he was presented to the Church to become our president a year ago, the Spirit of the Lord said distinctly and almost audibly, "He is speaking as a prophet of God."

I know that as I tell you this the Spirit of the Lord also tells you that it is the truth. He is not merely the prophet of God to the members of this Church; he is God's prophet to the whole earth. And he has for us all the words of eternal life as he tells us again that the gospel has been restored and that we are in the work of building God's kingdom in the last days so that mankind need not be wasted and destroyed by the calamities and the destructions that have been predicted and will surely come to pass unless we repent and turn unto him.

I do testify to the truth of these

things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just listened to Elder William Grant Bangerter, who was sustained yesterday as a new Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

The congregation and Choir will now join in singing, "Redeemer of Israel."

After the singing, Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve Apostles, will address us.

The Tabernacle Choir and congregation sang the hymn, "Redeemer of Israel."

President Kimball

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Robert D. Hales, who was also sustained yesterday as a new Assistant to the Twelve.

Elder Sterling W. Sill

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

Tomorrow, April 6, 1975, will be the 145th anniversary of the establishment of the Church upon the earth in this greatest and final of all the dispensations. By direct revelation we have been informed that tomorrow will also be the 1,975th anniversary of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea.

Birth

But this is also the Easter season. Last Sunday we commemorated the anniversary of the initiation upon this earth of the universal resurrection. This is also the springtime of the year, when

all of nature is being reawakened into a newness of life. And I thought that inasmuch as this is a season of so many new beginnings I would like to talk to you about birth. However, I don't mean the birth of Jesus, nor the resurrection, nor the reawakening of nature. I mean your own birth and the great possibilities involved in our own human reawakenings.

Henry David Thoreau, an early American philosopher, once said that we should thank God every day of our lives for the privilege of having been born. And then he went on to speculate on the rather unique supposition of

what it might have been like if we had not been born. Just suppose that you had never been born or that your parents or your brothers and sisters or your children or your friends had never been born. Just think of all the excitement and blessings that we would have missed as a consequence. But what Mr. Thoreau may not have known was that one-third of all the children of God never were born and never can be born because they failed to pass the requirements of their first estate.

We remember the unembodied spirits who appeared to Jesus in his day who preferred the bodies of swine rather than to have no bodies at all. (See Matt. 8:28-32; Mark 5:11-13.) And I am very sure that if we could go today while we walk by faith and stand where we once stood when we walked by sight that we would be willing to crawl on our hands and knees through life for this tremendous opportunity which we presently enjoy.

William Wordsworth said that our birth is a sleep and forgetting. There is one distinguishing characteristic about the moment of birth in that it is an unconscious moment; that is, no one ever realizes while he is being born that that event is actually taking place. Sometimes we don't discover that we have been born until quite a long time afterward. Sometimes we never do find out that we have been born.

I heard one man say about his friend, "He doesn't know he is alive." Frequently that strikes very close to the truth. That is, sometimes we don't know why we were born. We don't know where we came from. We don't know the purpose of life. We haven't any very definite program for just what we are going to do about our eternal destiny.

Born of goodly parents

The greatest accomplishment of my life is that I was successful in getting myself born, and I am just awfully pleased about that. There just isn't

anything that I would rather have had happen to me than to have been born.

After I had been around for a little while, I made the discovery that one of the significant facts about my having been born is that I had inherited two very wonderful people to be my parents. They were parents who were interested in teaching me the principles of the gospel and helping me to make as much as possible out of my life. I am everlastingly grateful for my parents. They were pretty poor financially and we had a little trouble getting along, but sometimes that is all to the good. Somebody has said that one of the most serious disadvantages that anyone can have in life is to have too many advantages. One of the most outstanding advantages of my life is my parents. And I always think of my mother when I read those stimulating lines saying:

*You may have riches and wealth
untold*

*With baskets of jewels and caskets
of gold*

*But richer than I you will never be
For I had a mother who read to me.*

Strickland W. Gillilan, "The Reading Mother," *Best Loved Poems of the American People*, comp. Hazel Felleman (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1936), p. 376

Born of water and spirit

As I approached the eighth anniversary of my birth, I learned something else about being born. I was instructed by my parents and by my Church teachers in the philosophy of Jesus that one birth is not enough, and that everyone should be born twice.

And so on August 27, 1911, I was born of the water and of the spirit in exactly the meaning of that great command as given by the Savior of the world. And I came forth in a newness of life with a new set of possibilities. I had hands laid upon my head and a prayer was offered in my behalf for the recep-

tion of the Holy Ghost, and I was confirmed by my father as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and from that moment until this I have had the direction of those great principles of righteousness and the promptings of the Holy Spirit to help me make of my life something approaching what the Lord would like to have me make of it.

Many births

But since that time, I have discovered some other important things about being born. One of them is that no one is limited to merely two births, that we can be born again as many times as we please. And each time we can be born better.

In 1932, Walter Pitkin wrote a great book entitled *Life Begins at Forty*. But that is ridiculous. Life begins when we begin, and we may begin a new and better life every morning.

Someone once asked Phillips Brooks when he was born, and he said that it was one Sunday afternoon about 3:30 when he was 25 years of age, just after he had finished reading a great book. Just think how many thrilling, exciting rebirths we can have as we study the holy scriptures and as we fill our minds with the word of the Lord and get the spirit of righteousness into our hearts.

Walter Malone gave us a kind of poetic formula for rebirth when he said:

*Art thou an idler, then rouse thee from
thy spell;
Art thou a sinner, sin may be forgiven.
Each morning gives thee wings to flee
from hell.
Each night a star to guide thy soul to
heaven.*

Adapted from "Opportunity," *Best Loved Poems of the American People*, p. 101.

But we have not only been given a star to guide us to heaven, we have also been given every one of the great prin-

ciples of the gospel. The Church has been established upon the earth in our dispensation. We have been given a prophet "to guide us in these latter days." We have been given the Spirit of our Heavenly Father himself to direct and inspire us. And not the least among all of these, we have been given the tremendous resources of our own souls. William Wordsworth said:

*The soul that rises with us, our life's
star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we
come
From God, who is our home.*

"Ode: Intimations of Immortality, from
Recollections of Early Childhood"

Returning to God

And to inspire us for the return trip to God's presence, I would like to share with you some stimulating lines that were written a number of years ago by a young man by the name of John Gillespie Magee. John Gillespie Magee was an American fighter pilot connected with the Royal Canadian Air Force who was shot down over London in the battle for Britain in the first part of the Second World War.

Before going into the service, John Gillespie Magee had done the usual things that 17-year-olds do. Then after his basic training had been completed, he felt for the first time in his hands the controls of those powerful engines capable of sending his aircraft through space at stupendous speeds. And then feeling the exhilaration that came from doing well his part of the work of the world, he wrote his great poem entitled "High Flight," which is now found in the Library of Congress under the title of *Poems of Faith and Freedom*. And I share this with you now because you are also engaged in a "High Flight." You

are engaged in the greatest "High Flight" of faith and freedom ever known in the world.

John Gillespie Magee said:

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds—and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of—wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence, hov'ring there.
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew—
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.*

"High Flight," *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, ed. James Dalton Morrison, (New

York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1948), pp. 73-74

Purpose of life

And that is the purpose of our lives, that by keeping His commandments the offspring of God may become even as their eternal parents. The greatest good fortune of our lives, my brothers and sisters, is that we have been created in his image and have been endowed with a set of his attributes and potentialities. And if we live as we should, then on some future Easter morning, we may be born again into his presence to live with him in the celestial kingdom throughout eternity. And that it may be so with each one of us, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, has just addressed us.

Elder Robert D. Hales, who was sustained yesterday as a new Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us. He will be followed by Elder Bernard P. Brockbank, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

My brothers and sisters, this is indeed an occasion for me and my family. I would like to say to Brother Sill that I have listened to him all my life, and this is one time I wish he had never stopped.

Free agency

I would like to tell you an event in my life which I think typifies what is going through my mind and has gone through my mind the last few weeks. The event started with a phone call from a Mr. Marion T. Romney. My secretary came to me in a meeting, and

she said, "A Marion T. Romney wants to talk to you."

I said, "I think that's Marion G. Romney."

"He said you would leave this meeting if I told you that he was calling you."

I said, "He's right."

I think my secretary would like to have told his secretary that I would call back. But I went to the phone, and Brother Romney asked me five questions. He asked me if I would go on a mission; he asked me if I was worthy; he was concerned about my 17-year-old son, my finances, and my health.