

right—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them.” (JS—H, 1:18-19.)

For a period of ten years Joseph, the Prophet, was taught by resurrected beings, by ancient prophets who returned, and by angels from beyond the veil. Then, 150 years ago, he was instructed by the Savior to formally organize His Church: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Subsequently, the Prophet had other mighty visions of the Master, the resurrected Redeemer. Listen to his description of one such manifestation:

“The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

“We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, . . . saying:

“I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.” (D&C 110:1-4.) The Prophet who wrote that description knew the Shepherd.

The Prophet Joseph Smith met a martyr’s death. He died for his testi-

mony, sealing his witness with his blood. We pay tribute to him as the first prophet of this dispensation and the most important prophet of all dispensations of time. He “has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived” (D&C 135:3). We honor Joseph Smith this 150th anniversary year of the founding of the Church as a prophet who knew the Shepherd intimately.

Strive to know the Savior

We should each ask, “Am I loving enough, am I studying enough, am I serving enough to *know* the Shepherd? May we all come to know the Savior, through obeying his commandments, that when we meet him face to face, we each can say, “I know thee; thou art my Shepherd.” This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, our loving Shepherd, amen.

President Marion G. Romney

Elder Robert E. Wells, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us.

Following Elder Maxwell, we shall hear from Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Fellowshipping and friendship

Brothers and sisters, we must be more ready than we now are to receive the hundreds of thousands of individuals “of every kind” who are gathered into the gospel net from nearly every culture and circumstance (see Matt. 13:47).

A few of these have said to their behavioral Babylons, “We bid thee farewell,” having learned the hard way that without the Decalogue there is decadence.

Other newcomers have ceased trying to live “without God in the world,” a condition “contrary to the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:11).

They have seen how a mortal life so lived is "no more than a night in a second-class hotel" (Saint Teresa of Avila, as quoted by Malcolm Muggeridge, "The Great Liberal Death Wish," *Imprimis*, May 1979, Hillsdale College, Michigan).

Some will even come out of the kingdom of the devil, which the Lord has promised to shake in order to stir some therein to repentance (see 2 Ne. 28:19). These souls, bruised but believing, will have fought their way through guerrilla territory, searching for spiritual liberty even as forces in the world seek "to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries" (Ether 8:25).

New arrivals are not asked to renounce their country or that which is good in their culture. All must, however, let go of the things which injure the soul, and there are some such things in every life and in every culture.

Many will come into the Church whose lives have been consistently righteous. They will have rejoicing without the wrenching. When all these individuals have come from so great a distance, surely we can go a second mile in friendship and fellowshiping them! If with quiet heroism they can make their way across the border into belief, surely we can cross a crowded foyer to extend the hand of fellowship. Has it been so long that we have forgotten our first anxious day at a new school or our timidity in a new neighborhood? In the city of Zion, there are constantly new kids on the block!

Since priesthood leaders have determined that the newcomers' visas are in order, let us greet them genuinely—not with frowns and skepticism. It will be our job to lift them up—not to size them up. They will have known much rejection; now let them know much acceptance.

The workers who come to the Lord's vineyard in the last hour will receive the same wages as the "old-

timers," who should, by the way, speak less of the good old days and work to bring about even better days (see Matt. 20:1-16).

The story is told of the first two marines ever—in the American revolutionary war. One boarded a ship mere minutes ahead of the other. When the second man came on board, all enthused about being a marine, the earlier arrival scornfully said, "You should have been here in the old outfit!"

Paul said we should not expect the social register to enter the Church en masse (see 1 Cor. 1:26). Besides, a *Who's Who* is not needed in a church which teaches us all our real identity and which features a democracy of dress in the holy temples.

Arrives will come into the Church as its leaders are cruelly caricatured by some in the world. For perspective, imagine how television's six o'clock news would have portrayed Noah as he worked on his ark day by day. Besides, attention from the Adversary is merely a cruel form of commendation, if we can but stand the "praise."

Newcomers, you may even see a few leave the Church who cannot then leave the Church alone. Let these few departees take their brief bows in the secular spotlight; someday they will bow deeply before the throne of the Almighty, confessing that Jesus is the Christ and that this is his work. Meanwhile, be unsurprised if, as the little stone seen by Daniel rolls relentlessly forth, some seek to chip away at it (see Dan. 2).

Church is for perfecting the Saints

Happily, mingled among the hundreds of thousands of "recruits" will be precious returnees who, like the prodigal son, have come to their senses (see Luke 15:11-32). Filled with tender resolve, they, too, need a warm welcome. Let us emulate the father of the prodigal son, who ran to

greet his son while the son was still a great distance away, rather than waiting passively and then skeptically asking the son if he had merely come home to pick up his things!

Recruits and returnees should be counseled by the wise lyrics of the hymn "Think not, when ye gather to Zion" that all "your troubles and trials are through, . . . that all will be holy and pure, . . . and confidence wholly secure, . . . [that] the Saints . . . have nothing to do . . . but to look to your personal welfare, and always be comforting you" (*Hymns*, no. 21).

The Church is for the perfecting of the Saints, hence new arrivals are entitled to expect instant community but not instant sainthood—either in themselves or in others. It takes time and truth working patiently together to produce the latter in all of us.

Meanwhile, as we work together, we notice each other's weaknesses. Hence all are urged to "succor the weak, [to] lift up the hands which hang down, and [to] strengthen the feeble knees" (D&C 81:5).

Involve new members

Involve newcomers quickly in the Lord's work. They have been called to his vineyard not just to admire but to perspire—not to "ooh" and "aah" but to "hoe and saw." Let us make of them friends—not celebrities; colleagues—not competitors. Let us use their precious enthusiasm to beckon still others to come within.

Let us listen lovingly and encouragingly as all newcomers utter their first halting public prayers and give their first tender talks, feeling unready and unworthy—but so glad to belong. We can tell them, by the way, that the sense of inadequacy never seems to go away.

However, what we now are as a people is clearly not enough, for

"Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness" (D&C 82:14). As in the time of Alma, the bad conduct of a few members slows the work (see Alma 39:11). Indeed, Zion will not be fully redeemed until after we have been first chastened (see D&C 100:13). Let us, therefore, not be too long-suffering with our own shortcomings. And when we are given thorns in the flesh, let us not demand to see the rose garden (see 2 Cor. 12:7)!

Let us participate in the rigorous calisthenics of daily improvement, and not just in the classroom rhetoric of eternal progression!

Let all gospel instruction in the home or classroom be a genuine experience in learning—not merely doctrinal Ping-Pong. Let us all understand, too, that those very doctrines and duties which may seem the most puzzling or the least attractive may well be those we now most need.

A "mighty change" in heart

Whether old-timers, returnees, or recruits, we must all finally make that "mighty change" in our hearts, and this requires more than a slight change in our schedules (see Mosiah 5:2).

If there are disappointments, let us not turn away but turn to, remembering Peter's immortal interrogative of the Savior, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (John 6:68). There is, my brothers and sisters, no other "plan of happiness" (see Alma 42:8), only multiple-choice misery.

Let all of us be filled with quiet wonder, but also with quiet determination concerning the marvelous things we have been called to do in such stress-filled times, "for the Lord shall comfort Zion. . . . Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody." (2 Ne. 8:3.)

Building a holier Zion

As we build a holier Zion, with "the voice of melody" we will sing those lyrics—"All is well, all is well" ("Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 13)—but sometimes as a reassuring sob as well as a song, awaiting the promised day when "sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10).

With Paul, we can say, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8-9)—perhaps adding, "We are confronted, but not surprised; we are falsely accused, but pray for our accusers; we are reviled, but respond with Christian service." Brothers and sisters, we can be walking witnesses and standing sermons to which objective onlookers can say a quiet amen.

The Savior has told us that just as when the fig tree puts forth its leaves, we may know that summer is nigh, so it will be with his second coming (see Luke 21:28-30). The foreseen summer of circumstances is now upon us. Let us not, therefore, complain of the heat!

The Savior will be in our midst saying, "Fear not, little flock" (see D&C 6:34), urging us to "do good" even as we are badly done by until divine intervention mercifully halts human deterioration, for then "all flesh shall see [him] together" (D&C 101:23), and "all nations shall tremble at [his] presence" (D&C 133:42) as his coming makes "a full

end of all nations" (D&C 87:6) and as there are no laws but his laws (see D&C 38:22).

There will be no more questions then about the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. For the faithful "of every kind," gladly gathered into his gospel net, there never was any question—only answers!

Meanwhile, may God help us to receive more effectively all newcomers and returnees to Zion—even as God has so mercifully received us into his Church. There will be one more regal reception at the gate, where Jesus is the sole gatekeeper. He awaits us there, not only to certify us, but because his divine love brings him to welcome us. Hence he "employeth no servant there" (2 Ne. 9:41). May we be ready to be so received, as he leads us with his "kindly light," I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Following Elder Maxwell's address, the Choir sang "Lead, Kindly Light" without announcement.

President Marion G. Romney

The Tabernacle Choir has sung "Lead, Kindly Light."

We welcome those who have just joined us on television or radio for this, the first general session of the 150th Semiannual Conference of the Church.

Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder Mark E. Petersen

On a warm summer day I visited the land of Adam-ondi-Ahman in the state of Missouri. I had looked forward to this visit with keen anticipation, for I had never been there

before.

The place was beautiful: The fields were green, the hills were rolling, the entire landscape was something to remember.