

NOTES

1. *History of the Church*, 5:157.
2. Matthew 22:36–40; see also John 13:34–35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11–12; 2 John 1:5.
3. Mosiah 2:17.
4. Acts 10:34–35; see also D&C 38:16, 24–26.
5. Mosiah 4:14–15; see also Romans 12:18.
6. “In Humility, Our Savior,” *Hymns*, no. 172.
7. D&C 78:14.
8. See Articles of Faith 1:13.
9. Nehemiah 6:3.
10. D&C 38:40–41; see also D&C 88:81.
11. See Articles of Faith 1:12.
12. In Conference Report, Tahiti Area Conference 1976, p. 31.
13. 1 Peter 3:15; see also D&C 60:2.
14. Galatians 3:27–28.
15. Mosiah 18:21; see also Mosiah 23:15; 4 Nephi 1:13.
16. Matthew 21:12; see also Mark 11:15.
17. D&C 1:31.
18. Galatians 5:19–21.
19. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote.

20. D&C 109:56; see also v. 70.
21. See Proverbs 10:12.
22. D&C 109:20.
23. Alma 24:19.
24. See Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; Abraham 4:28; D&C 59:15–21.
25. “Church Exhorts Ethnic, Religious Tolerance,” *Church News*, 24 Oct. 1992, p. 4.

The choir sang “Know This, That Ev’ry Soul Is Free.”

President Hinckley

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us, and the choir has sung “Know This, That Ev’ry Soul Is Free.”

Following my remarks the choir will conclude by singing “The Lord Be with Us.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Augusto A. Lim of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

President Gordon B. Hinckley**The greatest miracle in human history**

My beloved brethren and sisters, I add my testimony to the testimony of my brethren this Easter morning. For all of Christendom, for all of mankind, today is observed as the anniversary of the greatest miracle in human history. It is the miracle that encompasses all who have lived upon the earth, all who now live upon the earth, and all who will yet live upon the earth. Nothing done before or since has so affected mankind as the atonement wrought by Jesus of Nazareth, who died on Calvary’s cross, was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and on the third day arose from the grave as the Living Son of the Living

God—the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

As mortals we all must die. Death is as much a part of eternal life as is birth. Looked at through mortal eyes, without comprehension of the eternal plan of God, death is a bleak, final, and unrelenting experience described by Shakespeare as “the undiscover’d country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns” (*Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, lines 79–80).

But our Eternal Father, whose children we are, made possible a far better thing through the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This had to be. Can anyone believe that the Great Creator would provide for life and growth and achievement only to snuff it

all into oblivion in the process of death? Reason says no. Justice demands a better answer. The God of heaven has given one. The Lord Jesus Christ provided it.

His was the ultimate sacrifice, His the sublime victory.

New Testament witnesses

Doubters there may be. But is there a more fully attested experience in the history of humankind than the resurrection of Jesus that first Easter morn? He spoke with Mary, who was first at the tomb. He spoke with the other women who ran to tell their brethren, two of whom came running. He appeared unto ten of His Apostles, Thomas being absent. And then He came again when Thomas was present. The doubter, upon seeing Him, declared, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). He talked with the two brethren on the way to Emmaus, and they said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" (Luke 24:32). And Paul declared that "after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once" (1 Corinthians 15:6). Then Paul adds that "last of all he was seen of me" (v. 8).

All of this and more is found in the New Testament. It has served as the foundation of the faith of uncounted millions across the world into whose hearts there has come the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is true. They have lived by this testimony, and they have died by it. When the dark shadow of death has crossed their paths, when hope normally would have fled, there has come the reassurance that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). In such hours of darkness there has shown forth a light, steady and certain, to sustain and comfort and bless.

Book of Mormon witnesses

But if that is not enough, there is another testament. This so-called Book

of Mormon, this scripture of the New World, is before us as an added witness of the divinity and reality of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the encompassing beneficence of His atonement, and of His coming forth from the darkness of the grave. Within these covers is found much of the sure word of prophecy concerning Him who should be born of a virgin, the Son of the Almighty God. There is a foretelling of His work among men as a living mortal. There is a declaration of His death, of the lamb without blemish who was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. And there is an account that is moving and inspiring and true of the visit of the resurrected Christ among living men and women in the western continent. The testimony is here to handle; it is here to be read; it is here to be pondered; it is here to be prayed over with a promise that he who prays shall know by the power of the Holy Ghost of its truth and validity (see Moroni 10:3-5).

Joseph Smith's witness

And again, if this is not enough, there is the testimony of a prophet, whose name was Joseph, who sealed with his blood the testimony of his Lord. Today we celebrate the anniversary of Easter. This year we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith. On the sultry afternoon of 27 June 1844, he and his brother Hyrum were killed by an armed mob, the members of which had painted their faces black to hide their identity. John Taylor, who was with them on that occasion and who was wounded, later wrote this appraisal:

"Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. . . . He lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people; and like most of the Lord's anointed in ancient times, has sealed his mission

and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. . . . Their innocent blood . . . is a witness to the truth of the everlasting gospel that all the world cannot impeach" (D&C 135:3, 7).

Joseph Smith and Governor Ford

Because this is the sesquicentennial year of that tragic event, I wish to say a few words about the leading character on each side of that equation at Carthage. On the one side was Joseph the prophet-martyr; on the other, Thomas Ford, governor of Illinois, whose broken pledge culminated in the tragedies of that day.

Joseph Smith and Thomas Ford were contemporaries. Governor Ford was born in Pennsylvania in 1800. Joseph Smith was born in Vermont in 1805. The governor was five years the Prophet's senior. My information concerning the Prophet comes from sources with which all of you are familiar. That which I have concerning the governor comes from his own writings and for the most part from a historical introduction to those writings written by M. M. Quaife, as well as an introduction by General James Shields to the first edition of Ford's *History of Illinois*. I am indebted to Mrs. Doris M. Davis of Peoria for research help. I give these details so that you may know that what I say comes from sources that may be regarded as reliable.

Joseph Smith died at the age of thirty-eight in 1844. He would have been thirty-nine the following December.

Governor Ford died in 1850, a month prior to his fiftieth birthday. He completed his term as governor in 1846, and moved to the farm of his wife's parents, where he wrote his *History of Illinois*.

In this history, he gives a rather detailed account of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. He concludes with this summary statement:

"Thus fell Joe Smith, the most successful impostor in modern times; a man who, though ignorant and coarse, had

some great natural parts which fitted him for temporary success, but which were so obscured and counteracted by the inherent corruption and vices of his nature that he never could succeed in establishing a system of policy which looked to permanent success in the future" (*A History of Illinois*, ed. Milo Milton Quaife, 2 vols. [Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1945-46], 2:213).

Such the appraisal of Joseph Smith by Thomas Ford.

Demise of Governor Ford and family

I wish not to be critical of Governor Ford. I feel sorry for him. I regard him as one who sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind.

In April of 1847, when our people began the long westward march from Winter Quarters on the Missouri to the valley of the Great Salt Lake, Governor Ford and his family moved to Peoria with the intent that he would there practice law. I now quote from Mr. Quaife:

"The story of his three-years' sojourn there is one of unrelieved poverty and defeat. Mrs. Ford, afflicted with cancer, died October 12, 1850 at the early age of thirty-eight. Three weeks later, on November 3, he followed her to the grave. Left behind were five orphaned children, penniless and of tender years, to face the world as best they might. To the credit of common humanity, all were taken in charge by considerate townsmen and reared in homes which were better than their own father could provide. In his closing weeks he had been an object of charity, and his funeral expenses were met by the gifts of a group of citizens" (*A History of Illinois*, 1:xxvi-xxvii).

Both he and his wife were buried in the Peoria City Cemetery. Their remains were later moved to the Springdale Cemetery, where the grave remained unmarked until 1896, when the legislature provided an appropriation of \$1,200 for

the monument that now marks the site of his burial.

I have stood before that monument and pondered the events and circumstances of which I speak.

After the governor's death and after his debts were paid, there remained the sum of \$148.06 for distribution among his five children as their inheritance.

In his introduction to Ford's *History*, General James Shields relates: "In 1850 while the author of this work was on his death-bed, he placed in my hands a manuscript, with the contents of which I was then wholly unacquainted, with the injunction that after his decease I should have it published for the benefit of his family. He soon after departed this life, leaving his orphan children in a destitute condition" (p. xlvii). The royalties from the sale of the book yielded \$750, making it possible for each of his five children to receive \$150 as their meager financial inheritance beyond the \$29.61 left each by their father.

The eldest daughter married; her husband died in 1878; she lived until 1910, the last few years cared for by others. The second daughter married, reared a family, and died in St. Louis. The younger daughter, born in 1841, died at the age of 21 of "consumption," and was buried with her parents. Concerning the two sons, I quote again from Mr. Quaife:

"In the autumn of 1872 Thomas [the youngest son] was hung as a horse thief near Caldwell, Kansas, by a lynching party. Two years later, in 1874, Seuel [his brother] and two other outlaws were hung from the same branch of a tree near Wellington, Kansas, by another lynching party" (*A History of Illinois*, 1:xxxii). They were buried in unmarked graves on the Kansas prairie.

I mention these things to say that there was tragedy on both sides of the Carthage problem. Joseph and Hyrum were murdered. Governor Thomas Ford, who had pledged the protection of the

state of Illinois, and failed to provide it, fell upon tragic and sorrowful circumstances, dying in abject poverty and leaving a destitute family who for the most part also lived with disappointment and died with much of misery.

Joseph's work lives on

While Governor Ford wrote his dismal appraisal of Joseph Smith, another contemporary, Parley P. Pratt, wrote one of his own. Speaking of Joseph Smith at that time, he said:

"His works will live to endless ages, and unnumbered millions yet unborn will mention his name with honor, as a noble instrument in the hands of God, who, during his short and youthful career, laid the foundation of that kingdom spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms and stand forever" (*Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975], p. 46).

Parley Pratt wrote with a surer sense of prophecy than did Tom Ford. He wrote out of a spirit of love, yes, but also with something of a vision of this great millennial movement.

The shadow of the events of June 1844 has now lengthened over a century and a half. That shadow has reached across a substantial part of the world. The history is clear, and it is wonderful to survey. It is a poignant and tremendous story, an epic without parallel. Two years after the martyrdom, while the governor was writing his history, most of our people left Nauvoo, their beloved city on the Mississippi. They left behind their beautiful and comfortable homes. They left their magnificent temple. Their exodus began in February of 1846 in the cold of winter, so cold that the Mississippi froze and some were able to cross on the ice. They did not leave out of a desire to go. They had to leave, driven by the bitter and unrelenting hatred of vicious mobs.

They threaded their way across the Iowa prairie to the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, then named Kaneshville. On the west side of the river they established their Winter Quarters. The next spring they moved up the Elkhorn River and along the Platte, across what is now Nebraska and Wyoming, and on to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. Death marched beside them. Some six thousand were buried along that trail before completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Here in the valleys of the mountains they grubbed sagebrush, they fought crickets, they brought water from the canyon streams to make the desert blossom.

Praise to the man

From that time until this, the work has spread over the earth until today congregations in more than 165 different tongues and more than 140 nations sing of Joseph Smith the tribute given by W. W. Phelps:

Praise to the man who communed
with Jehovah!
Jesus anointed that Prophet and
Seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensa-
tion,
Kings shall extol him, and nations
revere.
["Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27]

[The following text includes a segment prepared for delivery but deleted due to time constraints.]

Growth and reconciliation

Church membership is now approaching nine million. Last year alone, more than 4.5 million copies of the Book of Mormon were printed and distributed as "Another Testament of Jesus Christ." Thousands of meetinghouses, with more than 21,000 congregations, and scores of beautiful temples carry

the name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Governor Ford could not see the virtues of this man whose blood stained the floor of the little jail in Carthage. But an angel from heaven years earlier had spoken the destiny of the boy Joseph. Said Moroni: "Your name shall be known among the nations, for the work which the Lord will perform by your hands shall cause the righteous to rejoice and the wicked to rage: with the one it shall be had in honor, and with the other in reproach; yet, with these it shall be a terror because of the great and marvelous work which shall follow the coming forth of this fulness of my gospel" (in Oliver Cowdery, "Rise of the Church," *Times and Seasons*, 1 May 1841, pp. 394-95).

One hundred and fifty years have now passed. We are grateful for the reconciliation which has come. We thank God our Eternal Father for a more tolerant day and greater understanding. Gone are the days of burnings and forced marches. The sunshine of goodwill is upon our people. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now owns the scene of the martyrdom, the Carthage Jail with the block on which it stands. It has been made beautiful and attractive for the tens of thousands who visit from many nations. Nauvoo is a place of goodwill, a remnant of a remarkable history. The site of the once-beautiful temple has become a scene of reverent curiosity. Today there is a stake of Zion which carries the name Nauvoo. And north of Chicago is a magnificently beautiful temple in which are administered ordinances of salvation to benefit the sons and daughters of God of all generations, a work which has come through the priesthood revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, a work which extends to the generations of the past the wondrous opportunities afforded by the atonement of the Savior of mankind.

The ends of the earth shall inquire

On another occasion Joseph had been incarcerated in another jail, that in Liberty, Missouri. In the misery of that foul place he cried out, "O God, where art thou?" (D&C 121:1).

In answer to that prayer came this remarkable promise:

"The ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name, and fools shall have thee in derision, and hell shall rage against thee;

"While the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under thy hand.

"And thy people shall never be turned against thee by the testimony of traitors" (D&C 122:1-3).

You and I are witnesses to the fulfillment of these remarkable and prophetic words. As I speak today I am heard in thousands of halls across this and other nations. This is but a small token of the fulfillment of that promise. And what we see today, I am certain, is but a foreshadowing of what the future holds.

Joseph Smith's testimony of the Savior

Joseph Smith lived as an instrument in the hands of the Lord for the establishment of His restored work in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. He died in testimony of the Savior of mankind. The Church which was established through him carries the name of the Redeemer of the world. Out of a vision wondrous and beautiful, experienced in the prime and vigor of his life, the Prophet Joseph wrote these words, which confirm the truth of that first Easter morning and the glory of Him from whom he drew all of his inspiration

as the Prophet of this great latter-day dispensation. Said he:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:22-24).

Our personal testimony

And so, on this Easter Sabbath, we bear testimony of the Redeemer of the world, He who was born the Only Begotten of the Father, He who went about doing good in the exercise of His divine power, He who died on Calvary's hill, and He who rose to become the first-fruits of the Resurrection. We testify to the truth of the words of the Apostles and other witnesses of old. We further confirm the truth of the testimony of the great seer and revelator of this dispensation, the Prophet Joseph Smith, who 150 years ago gave his life as a witness of the Risen Redeemer. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, we give our personal testimony that He who was slain on Calvary's hill rose from the dead, our Savior, whose sacrifice made possible the gift of eternal life to all who will keep His commandments. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, amen.

The choir sang "The Lord Be with Us."

Elder Augusto A. Lim offered the benediction.
