



Type: General Conference

Elder George Albert Smith

Author(s): George Albert Smith

Source: *76th Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Published: Salt Lake City; The Deseret News, 1906

Page(s): 52-58

Abstract: The duty of sustaining- home industries and home institutions.—Incidents of the journey to Vermont and return —Remarkable interest and kindness manifest to President Smith and party.—Providential help in overcoming obstacles in erection of monument.—The finished structure a credit to the Church and to Junius P. Wells.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

"Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;

"Having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts."

A better description of the present condition of the world could scarcely be written. Whether or not this prediction had reference to a former or a latter day, we see a remarkable fulfillment of it in our own time. There are many who answer well this description, and it is this sort of men who have been prominent in persecuting the Saints, and who, in the last year or two, have crept into houses and led captive several millions of silly women.

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

My brethren and sisters the kingdom of God will triumph in spite of it all. Therefore, follow in the way of life; follow the directions of the servants of God; keep your feet in the straight way, and you shall be saved, and the world cannot prevent it. At the same time do your best to persuade, by love, kindness, consideration and instruction, all men to enter with you. God bless the Saints, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

A tenor solo, "He Leadeth Me," was sung by Elder Wm. D. Phillips of the Tabernacle choir.

ELDER GEORGE ALBERT SMITH.

The duty of sustaining home industries, and home institutions.—Incidents of the journey to Vermont and return.—Remarkable interest and kindness manifested to President Smith and party.—Providential help in overcoming obstacles in erection of monument.—The finished structure a credit to the Church, and to Junius F. Wells.

I desire that while I occupy this position this morning I may have the benefit of the same kind attention you have

given to previous speakers, and that the Spirit of the Lord may be present with me, that what I say may be profitable, that we may all be benefited and continue to enjoy the blessings that have been poured out upon us during this conference. This is the greatest gathering of the Latter-day Saints upon a Sabbath morning that it has been my privilege to witness. The necessity for an overflow meeting this morning evidences that the people are interested, and desire to be present when the servants of the Lord are called upon to instruct them. I am pleased to observe the cheerful manner in which the suggestion of President Smith has been complied with. It is customary for us, when instruction is given, to think that that instruction was meant for somebody else, but I noticed that the people who are sitting concluded that President Smith's advice was meant for them, and they have moved closer together, and some have changed places with those who were standing in the aisles. I say it pleases me, because I realize that we took the instruction to heart ourselves. If we will do that in all the discourses that are delivered, and keep our ears open for the sound of those truths which are declared unto us, we will be likely to conform our lives to the Gospel, correct mistakes we have already made, and try to do better. If we conclude that the instruction is meant only for somebody else, we are liable to continue in the same old way to the end of our days, and discover when it is too late that the advice was for us as well as for the other person.

I desire to emphasize an assertion that has been made during this conference, that the home industries in this state have languished; this applied to all of us. The disposition of the Latter-day Saints toward home industries has changed somewhat. To a certain degree we are responsible for the lack of employment that exists in some of our communities. Let us remedy this, and try to patronize home institutions more fully. We should purchase home manu-

factured products, for, when we do that, the means we pay out does not go to some distant land but is retained in our own community. In this way we may largely become independent and self-supporting. It should be our rule when we go to the store to inquire for and purchase articles that are manufactured or produced at home. Teach this to our families, and in that way we will assist in providing our own people with employment, build up the country, and encourage those who live among us to invest their money in enterprises in our own community.

I believe it may be interesting to this great congregation if I shall detail to you some of the circumstances connected with the recent visit made by President Smith and a number of members of the Church, to the state of Vermont, where a beautiful monument was dedicated to the memory of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

On the 18th day of December last there left this city, in a private car, 30 souls, 29 of whom had been invited by President Smith to accompany him to the dedication of the monument. I desire to say that we all, including President Smith, paid our own expenses. I have heard that some people were fearful we had received some special favor from the tithing fund of the Church. I had charge of the finances and the business management of that party, I therefore know what I am talking about. Not many Latter-day Saints have felt suspicious about this matter, but some who do not pay tithing seem unduly anxious for fear someone else shall benefit by the tithes other people pay.

By the kindness of the railroad companies, the car in which we journeyed was taken from place to place with great rapidity and without unnecessary delay. All along the road, from the time we left the depot at Salt Lake City until we arrived at South Royalton, Vermont, the railroad officials looked after the welfare of the party, and many general officers of the various railroads came aboard to see that every possible convenience and comfort were provided. We arrived at our des-

tinuation without difficulty, after a splendid journey across the continent. It was a great change for some members of our party, who had crossed the plains in early days with ox teams, and some with hand-carts, when it was dangerous to travel because of the Indians. Some had known the privations and difficulties of frontier life, having wended their way to this country during the pioneer peopling of the valleys. Now they were permitted to go over the same route on a great railroad, in a palatial car, with all the comforts and conveniences that could be furnished.

We had beautiful weather while going to our destination, until the evening of the 21st, when we encountered snow, the first we had seen since leaving home. We arrived at South Royalton, the railroad station at which we were to leave the train, on the morning of the 22nd. There we found that about five or six inches of snow had fallen during the night, and this provided excellent sleighing for the party, most of whom went to Tunbridge, which was the home of the grandfather of the Prophet Joseph Smith. We examined the town records there, and were treated with kindness by the people. I should have stated that, on arrival at South Royalton we were met by Elder Junius F. Wells, who had been in charge of the construction of the monument, and found that he had made all necessary arrangements for us at that end of the line. The people of South Royalton were waiting to make us welcome; they had decorated, festooned, and seated a comfortable hall, where we held meetings and gatherings and became acquainted with the people. We appreciated all this, and every member of the party was made to feel that we were in the hands of friends. President Smith and associate leaders were especially sought after and received most kindly welcome on every hand.

It was a singular thing that last season practically no snow had fallen in that section up to that time; the weather had been pleasant and mild. To

my mind it was an evidence of the blessing of our Heavenly Father on the erection of the monument to the memory of the man He chose to open this latter-day dispensation. On the afternoon of the 22nd, we met about thirty members of the Church, who had come from New York and Boston to participate in the dedicatory services. These visitors, with the company from Utah, and residents of South Royalton, assembled in the evening and were agreeably entertained by some of Zion's sweet singers, including Lulu Gates, Robert Easton and Ellen Thomas.

On the morning of the 23rd of December, the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the people of the surrounding country began to gather at the South Royalton hotel, where members of the party were stopping. Because of the thaw on the night of the 22nd, the snow had largely disappeared, and the result was that the people brought conveyances of various kinds—sleighs, wagons and carriages. We were informed by Brother Wells that these vehicles were furnished gratis by the citizens, to convey the Utah party and friends to the site of the monument. We were duly seated in the carriages, etc., and safely reached the place where the dedicatory services were to be held. Arriving there, we beheld a beautiful monument and a lovely cottage. We were astonished to see what had been wrought within the short time that had elapsed since Brother Wells had gone down there to supervise the work. The Church had purchased about 80 acres of the land surrounding the birthplace of the Prophet Joseph Smith, including the orchard, the old cellar, and the hearthstone of the home in which he was born. We found there had been built around and over the hearthstone, which retained the original place it had formerly occupied, a beautiful home, where will reside a care-taker of the property and of the monument. A peculiar feeling and influence came over us as we realized that we were standing on the ground where the Prophet first

beheld the light; an event that we may say, marks the beginning of "Mormonism;" and that this location is now the property of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our tears flowed freely, under the influence of the Spirit, every soul was humbled, every heart was melted, and we rejoiced in the blessings of our Heavenly Father.

The people began to gather, coming in wagons, or on horseback, or walking, until several hundred had assembled. The house would not hold them, so overflow services were held outside, while the dedicatory services that had been arranged for were being conducted in the house. The people rejoiced with us. They had appointed one of their number, Dr. Fish, to speak words of welcome, and he complimented the people of Utah, and the Church, for having completed in their locality a monument of such exquisite beauty. They were delighted and pleased, and desired us to understand that they would assist in protecting the property from vandalism, and that it would be safe in their community. He said they honored us for the work that had been done. Brother Junius F. Wells made a report of his labors during the course of the meeting. While he addressed us we were gladdened in our hearts to observe that he had warmed the feelings of that community towards him, and won their love and respect; they seemed to look upon him almost as one of their own. An account of the services has already been published, including the dedicatory prayer, and almost every thing pertaining to the occasion, but I will refer to some incidents that have not been printed, at least I have not seen them in print.

Many people do not understand what a great task it was to get this monument in position. The shaft itself weighs somewhere near forty-three tons. It is erected upon high ground, and had to be carried five and a half miles from the railroad upon a specially prepared wagon, the wagon weighing eight tons, the tires of the wheels being twenty inches wide. The country road could not bear the great weight of the

immense blocks of stone of which the monument is constructed, and a track of oak planks was laid upon the ground and the big wagon was rolled upon that. When the first effort was made to haul it, twenty of the best horses in that country could not move the wagon. Afterwards, by means of block and tackle, it was successfully moved, although sometimes only a few yards, or a few rods a day, until the monument was gradually taken to its destination. The people of that country said to Brother Wells, "You will not be able to get it into position because of storms and snow; the roads will be so slippery that you cannot haul it." Brother Wells said to them (evidencing the faith of his lineage) "We will get there, the Lord will open the way." So the storms held off until the monument was in place, the cottage roofed, and the doors and windows roughed in, then it began to snow. The people of that country refer to this two months of pleasant weather, at a time when ordinarily they have snow, as Wells' weather, in compliment to the man who had faith in our Heavenly Father in carrying out the purpose undertaken. Another thing was called to our attention, which interested those who lived there, the railroad men were afraid to carry the heavy stone across the railroad bridge over White river, so it was unloaded from the railroad car onto the wagon, and then it was found the wagon bridge would have to be strengthened. Investigation showed that the bed of the stream was quicksand. Brother Wells, therefore, had planks placed on the quicksand to sustain the heavy timbers required to strengthen the bridge, and by that means they were able to accomplish what they desired. Thus roads and bridges were made, and the people cheerfully assisted in the work. The block and tackle referred to had to be fastened to trees along the road and those who lived in that section permitted their trees to be used for that purpose, although it either barked or uprooted them. One place on the road was an especially bad obstacle; it was

very marshy; and Brother Wells went to the Road Supervisor and asked if he could have it filled up. He smilingly replied that it was a noted landmark in the country, and it would be impossible to fix it, the oldest inhabitant unpleasantly remembers that disagreeable mudhole, "but," he said, "it is the only way you can go, and I am afraid we can not do anything to help you." The same evening they got there with the monument shaft, a hay-press sunk in the mire, and they could scarcely get it out. That night our Heavenly Father was petitioned to assist, for the great rock had to be taken over that bog next day. During the night the temperature dropped 30 degrees, the mud was frozen solid, and it proved to be about the best piece of road they encountered on the trip.

After the dedication services, which were attended by people who manifested great interest, considerable literature was distributed to those who seemed anxious to learn something about Mormonism. A meeting was held in the hall that had been prepared, on the night of the 23rd. Many gathered in from the surrounding towns and settlements, and we had a delightful time. The brethren proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ; told why we believed that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of the Lord, and testified to the divinity of his mission, and to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. After the meeting the people remained to shake hands and ask questions. We felt again that we were in the society of friends.

The monument stands in a beautiful location. The newspapers of that section made the statement that it is the greatest structure of its kind in the state of Vermont; indeed, it is the largest polished shaft in America, and is characteristic of almost everything else in the way of building that has been done by the Church since its organization.

On Sunday, the 24th, we went to Boston, where two meetings were held with the Saints. On Christmas day we visited the old home of Robert Smith,

the first ancestor of the Smith family in this country. We drank water out of the well that was, no doubt, dug by his own hands or by his family. We visited the home of Grandfather Asael Smith, who moved from the state of Massachusetts to the state of Vermont because he had been imprisoned and fined for entertaining the unpopular Quakers, evidencing the disposition of the man to do what he believed was right regardless of popular clamor. The records disclosed that Grandfather Smith was the first moderator of the Universalists' church in the town of Tunbridge. President Joseph F. Smith and some other members of the party were entertained in the home of one of the foremost men of the Universalists' Church in America, and ate Christmas dinner with him.

We boarded the train on Christmas night and were taken westward. On the morning of the 26th, we arrived at the little station of Palmyra. There we found carriages awaiting us, and we began a tour of that section of the country, visiting places of much interest to the Latter-day Saints. We went to the former home of the father of the Prophet Joseph Smith, where Joseph came with the plates after he had received them from the hand of Moroni, and where, it is said, he received the manifestations of the angel, who appeared to him three times in one night. We went into the grove where Joseph had knelt down and asked the Lord to inform him which one of the churches he should join. We were impressed to sing, in that hallowed place, the beautiful Mormon Sunday school hymn, "Joseph Smith's First Prayer." Mr. Chapman, who owns that property, and who accorded us every possible courtesy, informed us that the grove we went into never had a tree cut down. The property had fallen into the hands of his father after our people had moved away, and he had held those woods sacred, and they took their timber from other groves around there. We were taken inside the house and shown the room where a part of the Book of Mormon

had been translated. We drank water out of the well that was supposed to have been dug by the father of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The house was built by his brother Alvin. Every kindness and consideration possible was extended to us by Mr. W. Avery Chapman, who now owns the property. In the stream of water in the pasture, near the house, is a place that had evidently been dug out, making a pool sufficiently large for baptisms, and we were informed that some of the first baptisms of the Church, after those in Seneca Lake, were performed in that little pool. It has been left as it was, and they have never straightened up the ditch bank.

We visited the Hill Cumorah and were accorded the courtesy of going thereon by the wife of Mr. George Sampson, a brother of Admiral Wm. Sampson, who before his death owned the property. When we went up there and looked around, we felt that we were standing on holy ground. The brethren located, as near as they thought was possible, the place from which the plates of the Book of Mormon were taken by the Prophet. We were delighted to be there. Looking over the surrounding country we remembered that two great races of people had wound up their existence in the vicinity, had fought their last fight, and that hundreds of thousands had been slain within sight of that hill. Evidence of the great battles that have been fought there in days gone by are manifest in the numerous spear and arrow-heads that have been found by farmers while plowing in that neighborhood. We were fortunate enough to obtain a few of the arrowheads. Upon the hill, near a little grove of timber, the party stood and sang that glorious hymn:

An angel from on high
The long, long silence broke;
Descending from the sky,
These gracious words he spoke:
Lo! in Cumorah's lonely hill,
A sacred record lies concealed.

And then, under the inspiration of the Lord, President Smith offered one of

the most profound and beautiful prayers I have ever listened to. Everyone present was melted to tears. We felt the presence of the Spirit of our Father; and all who were there can testify that it was one of the most supremely happy moments of their lives. After that memorable experience we returned in the carriages to Palmyra and were entertained by some of the prominent citizens of that town. We were shown by Pliny T. Sexton a full set of the original sheets of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. We saw the old printing press upon which it was printed; and were received with much kindness and courtesy by everybody whom we met.

That night we took train and resumed the journey westward, arriving the next morning in the city of Cleveland, from whence we went by street car to Willoughby, and proceeded by other conveyances from there to Kirtland, the old home of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Coming in sight of the town the first thing that greeted our vision was the beautiful temple of Kirtland, and as we beheld it we felt that there was one sacred building that had passed from the hands of the Latter-day Saints. I hope the day will come, if it be the will of our Father, that it will again be possessed by the Church that built it. It was there that the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon saw the Savior upon the breastwork of the pulpit. It was there that Moses committed to them the keys of the gathering of Israel; and that Elias and Elijah came in the power and majesty of their great callings, and delivered the keys that had been committed to their care in the days of their ministry on the earth.

We were received very kindly by Mr. U. S. Green, one of the apostles of the Reorganized Church. He took us through the various rooms of the building, and many of us were made to feel in our hearts grateful to the Lord that we were permitted to stand upon what had indeed been holy ground. When we realized that the building was constructed by people in extreme poverty, how courageous men

worked during the day to lay the foundations and build the walls of that structure, and then at night stood and defended it with weapons against those who had sworn that the building should never be completed, we could not help but feel that it was no wonder the Lord received their offerings and blessed them as few people have been blest upon the earth. We saw the little town of Kirtland and some of the houses that were built in early days by the men who lived there, among others the home where the Prophet resided, and where the Patriarch had lived. The old home of Sidney Rigdon, and some others are still standing, but are fast going to decay. Practically no new structures are being erected, and it is only a little village, while the people who moved from that section of country out into the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains have builded a commonwealth, and have taught hundreds and thousands of our Father's children to honor and glorify His name.

Then we resumed our journey homeward again, receiving everywhere on our return trip the same courtesies as we had before. At Chicago we were met by people from Kenosha and taken in a special train to large manufacturing establishments in that town, and in Racine. Everybody extended to President Smith the right hand of fellowship, and kindness without stint were extended to him and to his party wherever we went. After holding a delightful meeting with the Saints in the city of Chicago, we continued westward. I must tell you that every night before we retired, from the time we left until we returned, President Smith gathered his little family around him (he treated us as such), the hymns of Zion were sung as we sped across the plains, or through the cities, and prayer was offered before we retired to our beds. The last night on our return journey, as the old year was passing away and the new year being ushered in, we crossed a section of country where our people had wandered many weary steps. We were called together by President Smith, and after singing several of the songs of Zion, each

member of the party was permitted to testify of the goodness and mercy of our Father unto us. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us, and we shed tears of joy and happiness. We thanked God that we had been permitted to go upon this journey. Only one regret entered into our hearts, and that was, that more of the sons and daughters of Israel had not been able to avail themselves of the same blessed privilege. On the morning of the first day of January, 1906, after a journey of two weeks without sickness, accident or delay, with no unkind word, and with nothing but brotherly love from our Father's children wherever we met them, we were welcomed home by our families, and ate our New Year's dinner with them.

I say to you, my brethren and sisters, that the work that was done in the erection of that monument is a credit to Junius F. Wells; and the completed structure is a credit to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many of our Father's children will receive the testimony of the work of the Lord from meeting those who will labor and minister in that section of country. What has been done there is a beginning of the building up the waste places of Zion. In New York, Chicago, Denver, Chattanooga, Milwaukee, Independence, and many other places, there will be mission homes reared for the Latter-day Saints, and places for the worship of the Lord. Zion will be redeemed, and the world, which now misunderstands the work of "Mormonism," will live to know that it is the power of God unto salvation to those who will keep the commandments of our Father. My testimony is that the work grows apace, and that the children of men are receiving "Mormonism" in their souls; that it is the work of our Father. We may be puny and weak of ourselves, but if we will be virtuous and pure in our lives, if we will do what we know to be right, men and women will be raised to continue the work of the Lord, until our Father's work will have been done in the way that He desires. Those who misunderstand us now will know us better.

Those who believe we have selfish motives will be undeceived, and our brothers and sisters of the world, who desire the truth and wish to know what the Lord wants of them, will be pricked in their hearts and accept the Gospel. Zion will rise and shine, and will become the glory of the whole earth, the Lord God of Israel has so decreed. May God bless you. Amen.

The choir sang the anthem, "In Our Redeemer's Name."

Benediction was pronounced by Elder Solomon Hale.

Conference was adjourned till 2 p. m.

OVERFLOW MEETING.

An overflow session was held in the Assembly hall, commencing at 10:30 a. m. The presiding officer was Elder Rudger Clawson, and Prof. Charles J. Thomas conducted the singing, assisted by the Temple choir.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn commencing, "How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord."

Prayer by Elder Bryant S. Hinckley.

Singing by choir and congregation, "Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation."

ELDER JOSEPH A. McRAE.

(President of Colorado Mission.)

My brethren and sisters, I rejoice this morning with you in meeting in this assembly hall, in continuation of the great conference we have been holding, and I rejoice in the remarks that have been made during the meetings that have passed. I am gratified in the report that has been made by the Prophet of the Lord, showing the great prosperity that the people are enjoying at the present time. While I have been at this conference, I have had many evidences that prove to me that what President Smith said at the opening meeting is true. I could not help but remark this when I looked upon the faces of those children that furnished the music for the afternoon session yesterday. Zion is assuredly prospering and growing. I heard a