

Joseph Smith—The Prophet

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I am grateful for the honor and the privilege of participating with you in this devotional as we commence this wonderful week of education. I am particularly grateful for the theme of this conference: The Prophet Joseph Smith: “Whom I Did Call upon . . . to Bring Forth My Work” (D&C 136:37). My hope and prayers would be that from my message, above all else, you will understand that I have a great love for the Prophet and an unwavering testimony of his divine calling and mission.

A recent article from the *Washington Post* stated:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the fastest-growing denomination in the United States and ranks No. 4 among the country’s churches, according to membership figures compiled by the National Council of Churches. [“In Brief,” Metro, Washington Post, 19 February 2005, B09]

Imagine the Church’s humble beginnings of only six members just some 175 years ago—and now it is reportedly the fourth-largest Christian church in the United States, and growing.

While the accuracy of the study from the National Council of Churches may be questioned, there remains an interest as to why our Church has such strong growth in both membership and activity while other churches

reportedly are declining in both. When presented this question by those not of our faith, I have often answered this question thusly: Our Church grows rapidly because of our strong emphasis on the family. We believe in the eternal nature of the family—that we can live together after death, eternally, as a family. Or I might explain that one of the reasons our Church grows so rapidly is that we can tell you the purpose of your life on this earth. We can tell you why you are here; why you experience pain, sadness, tragedy, and suffering; and how you can find peace out of your trials and tribulations. And we can tell you what you might expect after death. I might answer the question by explaining that we have kept the doctrines of Jesus Christ pure. They are the same as when Jesus taught them when He was upon the earth. We have not altered the doctrines to fit the popular mores of the world. I might explain our strong youth programs or give other obvious and popular answers. But these are not the complete answers. They only lead into the real answer.

Richard C. Edgley was first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given on 16 August 2005 during Campus Education Week.

The reason this Church grows so rapidly is this: A young boy of only 14 years of age went into a grove of trees to petition his God in a simple matter of prayer. And in his innocence, and to his great surprise, the unimaginable happened. The heavens opened, God and Christ appeared, angels descended, and the true gospel of Jesus Christ, with its authority, doctrine, and ordinances, was restored to the earth in its simplicity and its purity. And because of a 14-year-old boy, we can tell you about eternal families, the purpose of life, and other doctrines as revealed by God. And any honest, seeking person can have a personal revelation from God about the truthfulness of this event. And that is why this Church grows so rapidly.

Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary explains that to *foreordain* means “appoint in advance” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. [2003], s.v. “foreordain”). In the book of Abraham, the Lord explained that His Son, Jesus Christ, was appointed before the world began (see Abraham 3:22, 24).

To the prophet Jeremiah the Lord explained, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

Lehi explained to his son Joseph that the Joseph who was sold into Egypt prophesied of yet another Joseph who would bring salvation to his people:

But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins. . . .

And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation. [2 Nephi 3:11, 15]

And so it was on December 23, 1805, after 1,800 years of confusion and spiritual dark-

ness, Lehi’s prophecy began to unfold with the birth of Joseph Smith, the son of Joseph Smith, Sr. Like so many of the great ones appointed before the foundation of the world, Joseph Smith began the fulfillment of his divine appointment.

Wilford Woodruff testified:

I believe that God Almighty reserved a certain class of men to carry on his word. They have been born into the world in this generation. I believe this was the case with Joseph Smith. I believe he was ordained to this work before he tabernacled in the flesh. He was a literal descendant of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, and the Lord called him and ordained him. He gave unto him the keys of the kingdom. He received the record of the stick of Joseph from the hands of Ephraim, to stand with the Bible, the stick of Judah. [The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, sel. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1946), 43]

Brigham Young stated:

It was decreed in the [councils] of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he [Joseph Smith] should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. [JD 7:289]

With this background I would like you to think of two prophecies received in the infancy of the Restoration. First, in the prophecy given by the angel Moroni on September 21, 1823, Joseph was advised by Moroni that his name “should be had for good and evil among all nations” (JS—H 1:33). The second prophecy comes from the Doctrine and Covenants as recorded in October 1831. This prophecy states: “From thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth” (D&C 65:2).

Imagine such incredible prophecies coming from an uneducated, obscure boy from an obscure village where he was known only to family, close friends, and the Lord. What boldness and impertinence to declare the unthinkable before the whole world!

As Joseph Smith walked out of the Sacred Grove declaring a marvelous revelation, his name was reviled. He has indeed been called a charlatan, uneducated, an egomaniac, and every other scornful name that can be expressed. And yet to those who knew him best through personal acquaintance or personal study or personal revelation, he is revered as one of the Lord's most beloved and choice servants.

Oliver Cowdery stated: "To sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom!" (JS—H 1:71, footnote).

While Joseph and his companions were confined to jail in Richmond, Missouri, and subjected to the most vile language and treatment, Joseph rebuked his tormentors. Joseph's reproof caused Elder Parley P. Pratt to recount: "Dignity and majesty have I seen but *once*, as it stood in chains, at midnight, in a dungeon in an obscure village of Missouri" (PPP, 1973, 211; emphasis in original).

Brigham Young testified: "Joseph Smith lived and died a prophet. . . . He lived a good man, and died a good man, and he was as good a man as ever lived" (notes from Thomas Bullock, quoted in Preston Nibley, *Brigham Young: The Man and His Work* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970], 147). Later, on October 6, 1855, Brigham Young declared, "I feel like shouting hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith" (JD 3:51).

Even respected, learned contemporaries saw the potential of the movement restored by the Prophet. Two years before the Martyrdom of Joseph, the New York *Herald* printed:

Joseph Smith is undoubtedly one of the greatest characters of the age. He indicates as much talent,

*originality and moral courage as Mahomet . . . or any of the great spirits that have hitherto produced the revolutions of past ages. . . . Joseph Smith is creating a spiritual system, combined also with morals and industry, that may change the destiny of the race. [New York Herald, 1842, quoted in George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958), 345]*

In 1844, Josiah Quincy, the distinguished American judge and congressman, declared:

*It is by no means improbable that some future textbook, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants. [Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past: From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 376; emphasis in original]*

Even as early as 1851, only seven years after the Prophet's Martyrdom, his name reached Europe. The London *Morning Chronicle* reported:

*It can not be denied that he [Joseph Smith] was one of the most extraordinary persons of his time, a man of rude genius, who accomplished a much greater work than he knew; and whose name, whatever he may have been whilst living, will take its place among the notabilities of the world. ["The Mormons," *Morning Chronicle*, London, England, June 1851; quoted in Cannon, *Life of Joseph*, 356–57]*

And the list goes on. Truly the bold prophecy of an uneducated, unknown boy has and continues to be fulfilled.

There were no religious scholars to teach Joseph the true doctrines and principles of the gospel. The most prestigious seminaries, the most renowned scholars had nothing to teach him. Thankfully Joseph did not need to rely upon the learning and traditions of man.

We read in the Book of Mormon:

- Nephi explained that “angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3).
- Jacob testified to Sherem that he “truly had seen angels, and they had ministered unto” him (Jacob 7:5).
- King Benjamin declared to his people: “And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God” (Mosiah 3:2).
- In answering Zeezrom as to how he knew the things of God, Amulek responded: “An angel hath made them known unto me” (Alma 11:31).
- Mormon explained in his final words to his son Moroni that angels have not “ceased to minister unto the children of men” (Moroni 7:29).

And so we see that the administration of angels was not a new privilege to those in the service of the Lord. As in times of old, the heavens were opened to Joseph and angels descended. The veil was pierced, heaven and earth were brought together, and angels ministered. Thus, line upon line, precept upon precept, Joseph was taught by the ministering of angels.

Joseph’s teaching from on high began in the secluded classroom of a grove of trees on that historic day in 1820 when the Father declared: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” As Joseph subsequently testified, “I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me” (JS—H 1:17, 25).

With this vision of the Father and the Son, Joseph already knew more about the personality and attributes of God than any man on earth. Joseph understood the personal nature of the Godhead and Their separateness—and that he was literally created in Their image and likeness. Joseph at 14 was already a religious scholar—unmatched by any. And with that vision the Restoration was started and the persecutions began. The stone rolled forward and Joseph’s name began to be known for good and evil.

Joseph endured well this all-too-common life of a prophet. We read in the fifth chapter of Acts that the early Apostles were taken before a council of Jewish high priests and tried for their lives for preaching Jesus Christ. After the Apostles had been beaten, judged for their lives, and threatened with death if they ever again preached Jesus Christ, we read:

And they [the Apostles] departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. [Acts 5:41–42]

And so it was with Joseph. As he recounted his marvelous vision, in his wonderment he stated:

How very strange it was that an obscure boy, of a little over fourteen years of age, and one, too, who was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, and in a manner to create in them a spirit of the most bitter persecution and reviling. . . .

. . . I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true. . . . For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and

I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation.
[JS—H 1:23, 25]

And so, like the Apostles of old, Joseph Smith rejoiced in suffering shame for Jesus Christ, “and daily in the temple, and in every house, [he] ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

While the intensity and frequency of the persecutions picked up, it did not slow the work. The ministering of angels was proliferating, and the circle of participants was expanding. In summary, the Father and Son appeared to Joseph. The angel Moroni appeared to Joseph in his bedroom in 1823. And then he appeared again, and then again. And then he appeared to Joseph the next day at the fence in the orchard. The angel Moroni appeared at the site of the plates on the Hill Cumorah. Then one year later he appeared again, and then again, and then again. John the Baptist conferred the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Peter, James, and John appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, restoring the Melchizedek Priesthood. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon saw the Father and the Son in Hiram, Ohio (see D&C 76:11, 14, 20, 23). A heavenly messenger appeared to Joseph Smith to instruct him regarding the use of the bread and water for the sacrament (see D&C 27). Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to Joseph and Oliver Cowdery and committed the keys of “the gathering of Israel.”

Moroni appeared to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, testifying to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The plates, as evidence of the administration of an angelic work, were shown to eight additional witnesses: Christian Whitmer; Jacob Whitmer; Peter Whitmer, Jr.; John Whitmer; Hiram Page; Joseph Smith, Sr.; Hyrum Smith; and Samuel H. Smith (see “The Testimony of Eight

Witnesses,” Book of Mormon). In addition, David Whitmer’s mother was privileged to see the plates, and Emma had the opportunity to handle the plates on many occasions. The administration of angels was not an isolated or infrequent event given to a very narrow group of participants. This was not a one-man show. It was a congregation of respectable participants, both heavenly and earthly. Indeed, the floodgates of heaven were opened.

Joseph not only lived like a prophet, but he revealed as prophets reveal. As a result of these many visitations from heavenly messengers, Joseph revealed, among other things:

- The true nature of God
- The need for a Restoration
- The Aaronic Priesthood
- The Melchizedek Priesthood
- The gathering of Israel
- The turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children
- The fullness of the gospel through the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price
- The necessity of the temple
- The charge to preach the gospel to every nation, kindred, and people

Joseph’s teachings were new, inspiring, and, in the truest sense, revelatory. Among the many original teachings were the following:

- “The glory of God is intelligence” and whatever intelligence a man “attain[s] unto in this life . . . will rise with [him] in the resurrection” (D&C 93:36, 130:18).
- The priesthood is the power and authority of God. It is the power by which the kingdom is organized and governed and a power that all worthy men may hold. But Joseph, the revelator, warned against the abuse of such power in section 121 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned. [D&C 121:39–41]

- All men are children of a righteous God, and there is a continuity and eternal nature of life. We are literally the spirit sons and daughters of God. And this gives new meaning to the sacred words, “Our Father, which art in heaven.”
- We are taught tolerance for all men of every race, religion, and station in life: “And he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33).

In the midst of his terrible persecutions, Joseph declared:

If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a “Mormon,” I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination. [HC 5:498]

- We are taught the majesty of the Atonement—that the Atonement was infinite and eternal in nature. Joseph taught that in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus not only bore our sins but He assumed our personal suffering, pains, infirmities, trials, and tragedies. And through His great sacrifice we can have hope, and that hope can bring peace to all who will come unto Christ.

But history would indicate that the greater the manifestation from heaven and the more glorious the teachings, the more active and determined Satan will be. Thus while angels were befriending the Prophet, the floodgates of hell continued to widen and the devil’s angels continued their attempts at destruction. Perhaps the most difficult times were when a beloved associate turned against Joseph. Yet some closest to him returned and remained valiant in their testimonies. Martin Harris and Oliver Cowdery were rebaptized. David Whitmer expressed a desire to return but was never able to rejoin the Saints.

And some who once spoke evil of the Prophet later trumpeted his name for good throughout the world. William W. Phelps, a close friend of the Prophet who later turned against him, was the cause of much persecution. But, like the prodigal son, he asked for forgiveness and was welcomed back with a letter from the Prophet:

Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal. . . .

*“Come on, dear brother, since the war is past,
For friends at first, are friends again at last.”
[HC 4:163–64]*

Among the many hymns in our hymnbook that were written by William W. Phelps is the stirring song with these words:

*Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!
Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensation,
Kings shall extol him, and nations revere.
[“Praise to the Man,” Hymns, 1985, no. 27]*

What a profound prophecy sung throughout the world!

Joseph was a father and a husband, and he loved his wife and children dearly. Emma

was indeed his faithful companion in the Restoration. She was unwavering in her devotion to the Prophet and her commitment to the work. She was there assisting in the translation of the Book of Mormon. She was there as her beloved husband was torn from her bosom and family time and again. She was there to cleanse his wounds, remove the tar, and comfort his soul. And she was there to lay his body in a hidden, unmarked grave. And Joseph loved her like we love our spouses, and he loved his children like we love our children. And for that reason, perhaps no greater suffering took place than that of being torn away time and again from his loving family to be falsely imprisoned.

Governor Lilburn W. Boggs issued his infamous extermination order on October 27, 1838: “The Mormons must be treated as enemies and must be exterminated or driven from the state” (HC 3:175; emphasis in original). Shortly thereafter, Joseph, Hyrum, Amasa Lyman, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt, Lyman Wight, and George W. Robinson found themselves chained together in an old log house in Richmond, Missouri, under heavy guard. The charges were treason, murder, arson, burglary, larceny, and stealing. The human emotion emerging from these heart-wrenching separations from his family are perhaps best illustrated by his personal letters.

On November 12, 1838, he wrote his beloved Emma:

*My Dear Emma,
We are prisoners in chains, and under strong guards, for Christ’s sake and for no other cause. . . . I received your letter, which I read over and over again; it was a sweet morsel to me. Oh, God grant that I may have the privilege of seeing once more my lovely family in the enjoyment of the sweets of liberty and social life. To press them to my bosom and kiss their lovely cheeks would fill my heart with unspeakable gratitude. [The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, comp. Dean C. Jessee*

(Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 367–68; text modernized]

On December 1, approximately three weeks later, the prisoners were taken to the hostile dungeon known as Liberty Jail to suffer a cold, damp winter. On March 21, 1839, Joseph wrote:

*Affectionate Wife,
My dear Emma, I very well know your toils and sympathize with you. If God will spare my life once more to have the privilege of taking care of you, I will ease your care and endeavor to comfort your heart. [Personal Writings, 408; text modernized]*

Again, on April 4, 1839:

*Dear and Affectionate Wife,
Thursday night I set down just as the sun is going down, as we peek through the grates of this lonesome prison to write to you that I may make known to you my situation. It is, I believe, now about five months and six days since I have been under the grimace of a guard night and day, and within the walls, grates, and screeking iron doors of a lonesome, dark, dirty prison. With emotions known only to God do I write this letter. The contemplations of the mind under these circumstances defies the pen, or tongue, or angels, to describe, or paint to the human being who never experienced what we experience. . . . My dear Emma, I think of you and the children continually. . . . And as to yourself, if you want to know how much I want to see you, examine your feelings, . . . I would gladly walk from here to you barefoot, and bareheaded, and half naked to see you and think it great pleasure and never count it toil. [Personal Writings, 425–26; text modernized]*

And here is Joseph’s letter to God on March 20, 1839: “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?” (D&C 121:1).

And then comes God’s answering letter to Joseph:

My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes. [D&C 121:7–8]

It was approximately three years later, amidst continued persecution, that the Prophet declared in the famous Wentworth letter:

No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done. [HC 4:540]

Then, approximately two years later, on June 23, 1844, Joseph Smith turned himself in to the militia under the control and promised protection of Governor Ford. Joseph’s statement to his friends was: “If my life is of no value to my friends it is of none to myself” (HC 6:549). As he rode out of Nauvoo, the Prophet added, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter” (D&C 135:4).

Here is Joseph’s last letter to Emma, started one day before his Martyrdom and dated June 27, 1844:

Dear Emma:
I am very much resigned to my lot, knowing I am justified and have done the best that could be done. Give my love to the children and all my friends, Mr. Brower, and all who inquire after me. And as for treason, I know that I have not committed any, and they cannot prove one appearance of anything of the kind. So you need not have any fears that any harm can happen to us on that score. May God bless you all, amen. [Personal Writings, 611; text modernized]

Joseph Smith lived the life of a prophet. He suffered the life of a prophet. He died the death of a prophet. Out of persecution, suffering, and the shedding of innocent blood, the stone carved out of a mountain without hands rolls forward. The words of John Taylor continue to ring with increasing power and clarity: “The Book of Mormon, and this book of Doctrine and Covenants of the church, cost the best blood of the nineteenth century to bring them forth for the salvation of a ruined world” (D&C 135:6).

John Taylor also said: “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” (D&C 135:3).

Through trial and affliction Joseph brought together all the elements of the gospel, fitted together like a beautiful puzzle. The true nature of God has been restored. The priesthood is upon the earth. Baptisms can be performed with authority. Temple covenants bind families together forever. The Atonement and the Resurrection are meaningful events affecting the lives of millions. And living prophets today bring divine light to a troubled world. Without the Prophet Joseph Smith, with all his trials, sufferings, and even death:

- The priesthood of God could not be found upon the earth.
- Temple ordinances and covenants would not be found; hope would be replaced with loneliness, confusion, and despair.
- The ordinances of baptism, confirmation, and endowment would have no efficacy.
- The concept of God would remain the great mystery of an impersonal force that cannot be explained or understood.
- The knowledge and understanding of the plan of salvation and the Atonement of Christ would be replaced with ignorance and superstition.

- The prophets would indeed be dead, and revelation would be a thing of the past.

Without the Prophet Joseph Smith, spiritual darkness would continue to reign and hope would continue to wane.

The Lord promised, “If thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes” (D&C 121:8).

In his 1998 Christmas devotional, President Gordon B. Hinckley declared:

No one has borne more certain knowledge of the Son of God, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, than has this great prophet of this the dispensation of the fulness of times. Praise to his name. Honor to his memory. Reverence to him as an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in bringing to pass the restoration of His work in our time. [Gordon B. Hinckley, First Presidency Christmas devotional delivered at the Tabernacle on Temple Square, Salt Lake City, 6 December 1998]

Joseph declared the Book of Mormon to be the keystone of our religion. Truly it has brought us the fullness of the everlasting gospel with clarity and meaning. I declare Joseph the Prophet to be the keystone of my testimony of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Because of my testimony of Joseph Smith, I know that God and Christ are personal Beings in whose image I am created.
- Because of my testimony of Joseph Smith, I know that I am indeed a child of God with a spark of divinity that surpasses even my most lofty hopes and expectations.
- Because of my testimony of Joseph Smith, I know that out of trials and tribulations can emerge a triumphant and victorious self.
- Because of my testimony of Joseph Smith, I know that the divine authority of God reigns upon the earth.

- Because of my testimony of Joseph Smith, I know that I am privileged to receive ordinances and covenants that, if lived, will bring everlasting glory to me and my family with our Father in Heaven.
- Because of my testimony of Joseph Smith, I know who I am and what I can become.
- And, most important, because of my testimony of Joseph Smith, I have a more complete understanding of the magnitude of Christ’s Atonement and a more sacred relationship with my Lord.

I love the Prophet Joseph Smith. I love him for what he taught. I love him for what he restored. I love him for what he endured. I love him for how he lived.

And so, in conclusion, we return to where we started: two prophecies. Because of what he taught, because of what he restored, because of what he endured, and because of what he lived, Joseph’s name should be known for “good and evil . . . among all nations” (JS—H 1:33). And second, “From thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth” (D&C 65:2). The persecution, the ridicule, and the attacks remain even today. You just have to witness the demonstrations during general conferences or the picketing at any temple open house. However, to the thinking and honest, the question of Joseph Smith has moved from ridiculing him and trying to disprove him to wonderment and awe.

Some 150 years ago Joseph traveled to Washington, D.C., to ask for redress from President Martin Van Buren for the suffering of the Saints. Joseph was advised that while his cause was just, the president could do nothing for him (see *HC* 4:80). Now just this last May, a symposium held by noted historians in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., paid tribute to the life and works of Joseph Smith. In June a similar symposium was held in New South Wales, Australia, honoring the Prophet Joseph Smith. There was no criticizing,

defaming of his name, or attacking the Prophet. Rather, these learned scholars stand in awe and wonderment at his influence and accomplishments. Oh, the good his name invokes throughout the world today! “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20).

In our own day Yale professor Harold Bloom declared:

Nothing else in all of American history strikes me as . . . equal to . . . Joseph Smith . . . and the men and women who were [his] followers and friends. . . .

. . . I also do not find it possible to doubt that Joseph Smith was an authentic prophet. Where in all of American history can we find his match? . . .

*. . . Joseph Smith did not excel as a writer or as a theologian, let alone as psychologist and philosopher. But he was an authentic religious genius. [Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 79, 95, 96]*

As to the gospel rolling forth to the ends of the earth, in 1834 a priesthood meeting was held in Kirtland, Ohio. All of the priesthood in Kirtland met in a small log building approximately 14 feet by 14 feet. In this meeting Joseph prophesied:

I want to say to you before the Lord that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap. You don’t comprehend it. . . . It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world. [Quoted by Wilford Woodruff in CR, April 1898, 57; spelling modernized]

His was a name for “good and evil,” and “from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth” (D&C 65:2). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.