

Again, brothers and sisters, seeing Alma move from wanting to be a “trump” to being a humble “instrument” and from wanting to “shake the earth” to perhaps bringing “some soul to repentance” is a stunning transition! Furthermore, isn’t it wonderful that we are permitted to grow, whether that growth is expressed in the space of nine verses or in a lifetime?

Anna Jo’s allotment and faith

Colleen and I have a special granddaughter, Anna Josephine, who was born without a left hand. The other day a conversation was overheard between Anna Jo, almost five, and her cousin Talmage, three. Talmage said reassuringly as they played together, “Anna Jo, when you grow up you will have five fingers.” Anna Jo said, “No, Talmage, when I grow up I won’t have five fingers, but when I get to heaven I will have a hand.”

If Anna Jo, who has difficult days ahead, stays steady within what has been allotted to her, she will continue to be a great blessing to many people!

How blessed we are that Alma’s words have been preserved for all of us. May we liken Alma’s words to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23). I pray for this in the name of Him who counts all sparrows and all fingers and yet is the Lord of the universe, even Jesus Christ, amen!

President Monson

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

We will now hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He will be followed by Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi of the Seventy.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Elder Maxwell, we thank our Father in Heaven for the miraculous extension of your apostolic ministry. We are grateful that the declaration of your testimony has continued on into this beautiful new pavilion. We love you, and we pray for you.

And President Hinckley, on behalf of nearly 11 million members of this Church, may we thank the Lord for the extension of your ministry. I remember explicitly the groundbreaking service for this building you conducted just under three years ago. In his benediction at that service, President Boyd K. Packer asked for safety in construction, beauty in completion, and then one more favor of heaven. He asked, President, that you would be allowed to see this sight now before our eyes, preside at this pulpit, and declare your testimony here. We all thank heaven for you and for that answer to prayer.

As doves to the windows

These are surely some of the days which our faithful and farsighted ancestors saw in the earliest years of the Restoration. In a general conference of the Church in April 1844, the brethren recalled those first gatherings of 1830. One of them said:

“We [talked] about the kingdom of God as if we had the world at our command; we talked with great confidence, and talked big things, although we were not many [in number]; . . . we looked [and] if we did not see *this* [congregation], we saw by vision, the church of God, a thousand times larger [than it was then], although [at the time] we were not enough to well man a farm, or meet a woman with a milk pail. . . . All the members [of the Church] met in conference, in a room 20 feet square. . . . We talked

about . . . people coming as doves to the windows, that all nations should flock unto [the Church]. . . . If we had told the people what our eyes behold this day, we should not [have been] believed."¹

If this was their feeling in that fateful year of 1844, just prior to Joseph Smith's martyrdom, what must those same brethren and sisters see from their eternal home on a day like this! So much has happened since then for which they and we need to be grateful. And, of course, this is not the end. We have much work yet to do, in both the quality and quantity of our faithfulness and our service. George A. Smith, counselor in the First Presidency to President Brigham Young, once said by way of caution, "We may build temples, erect stately domes, magnificent spires [and] grand towers, in honor of our religion, but if we fail to live the principles of that religion . . . and to acknowledge God in all our thoughts, we shall fall short of the blessings which its practical exercise would ensure."² We must be humble and conscientious. The honor and the glory of all that is good goes to God, and there is much still ahead of us that will be refining, even difficult, as He leads us from strength to strength.

Our debt to our faithful forebears

In all of this my mind has turned to those early Saints who are too often lost to history, those who quietly and faithfully bore the kingdom forward through far more difficult days. So many of them seem almost nameless to us now. Most went unheralded to their graves—often early graves. Some few have made it into a line or two of Church history, but most have come and gone with neither high office nor history's regard. These folks, our collective ancestors, slipped into eternity as quietly and anonymously as they lived their religion. These are the silent Saints of whom President J. Reuben Clark once spoke when he thanked them all, "especially," he said, "the meekest

and lowliest of them, [largely] unknown [and] unremembered, [except] round the hearthstones of their children and their children's children who pass down from generation to generation the story of their faith."³

Whether longtime member or newest of converts, we are all the beneficiaries of such faithful forebears. In this beautiful new building and in this historic conference convened in it, I have sensed how much I owe to those who had so much less than I but who seem in virtually every case to have done more with it to build the kingdom than I have done.

Perhaps it has always been so down through the dispensations. Jesus once reminded His disciples that they were reaping in fields wherein they had bestowed no labor.⁴ Moses had said to his people earlier:

"The Lord thy God shall [bring] thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, . . . to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

"And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not."⁵

Sacrifices to build the Kirtland Temple

My mind goes back 167 years to a little handful of women, older men, and those children that could labor who were left to keep construction going on the Kirtland Temple while virtually every man well enough to do so had undertaken a relief march of 1,000 miles to aid the Saints in Missouri. The records indicate that quite literally every woman in Kirtland was engaged in knitting and spinning in order to clothe the men and boys laboring on the temple.

Elder Heber C. Kimball wrote, "The Lord only knows the scenes of poverty, tribulation, and distress which we passed through in order to accomplish this." It was recorded that one leader of the day, looking upon the suffering and poverty

of the Church, frequently went upon the walls of that building by day and by night, weeping and crying aloud to the Almighty to send means whereby they might finish that building.⁶

Peter Neilson's example of sacrifice

It was not any easier when the Saints moved west and began to settle in these valleys. As a young man of Primary and Aaronic Priesthood age, I attended church in the grand old St. George Tabernacle, construction for which had begun in 1863. During very lengthy sermons I would amuse myself by gazing about the building, admiring the marvelous pioneer craftsmanship that had built that striking facility. Did you know, by the way, that there are 184 clusters of grapes carved into the ceiling cornice of that building? (Some of those sermons were *really* long!) But most of all I enjoyed counting the window panes—2,244 of them—because I grew up on the story of Peter Neilson, one of those little-noted and now-forgotten Saints of whom we have been speaking.

In the course of constructing that tabernacle, the local brethren ordered the glass for the windows from New York and had it shipped around the cape to California. But a bill of \$800 was due and payable before the panes could be picked up and delivered to St. George. Brother David H. Cannon, later to preside over the St. George Temple being built at the same time, was charged with the responsibility of raising the needed funds. After painstaking effort, the entire community, giving virtually everything they had to these two monumental building projects, had been able to come up with only \$200 cash. On sheer faith Brother Cannon committed a team of freighters to prepare to leave for California to get the glass. He continued to pray that the enormous balance of \$600 would somehow be forthcoming before their departure.

Living in nearby Washington, Utah, was Peter Neilson, a Danish immigrant who had been saving for years to add on to his modest two-room adobe home. On the eve of the freighters' departure for California, Peter spent a sleepless night in that tiny little house. He thought of his conversion in far-off Denmark and his subsequent gathering with the Saints in America. After coming west he had settled and struggled to make a living in Sanpete. And then, just as some prosperity seemed imminent there, he answered the call to uproot and go to the Cotton Mission, bolstering the pathetic and sagging efforts of the alkali-soiled, malaria-plagued, flood-bedeveled settlers of Dixie. As he lay in bed that night contemplating his years in the Church, he weighed the sacrifices asked of him against the wonderful blessings he had received. Somewhere in those private hours he made a decision.

Some say it was a dream, others say an impression, still others simply a call to duty. However the direction came, Peter Neilson arose before dawn on the morning the teams were to leave for California. With only a candle and the light of the gospel to aid him, Peter brought out of a secret hiding place \$600 in gold coins—half eagles, eagles, and double eagles. His wife, Karen, aroused by the predawn bustle, asked why he was up so early. He said only that he had to walk quickly the seven miles to St. George to give \$600 to Brother David H. Cannon.

As the first light of morning fell on the beautiful red cliffs of southern Utah, a knock came at Brother Cannon's door. There stood Peter Neilson, holding a red bandanna which sagged under the weight it carried. "Good morning, David," said Peter. "I hope I am not too late. You will know what to do with this money."

With that he turned on his heel and retraced his steps back to Washington, back to a faithful and unquestioning wife, and back to a small two-room adobe

house that remained just two rooms for the rest of his life.⁷

John R. Moyle's example of commitment

One other account from those early, faithful builders of modern Zion. John R. Moyle lived in Alpine, Utah, about 22 miles as the crow flies to the Salt Lake Temple, where he was the chief superintendent of masonry during its construction. To make certain he was always at work by 8:00, Brother Moyle would start walking about 2:00 A.M. on Monday mornings. He would finish his work week at 5:00 P.M. on Friday and then start the walk home, arriving there shortly before midnight. Each week he would repeat that schedule for the entire time he served on the construction of the temple.

Once when he was home on the weekend, one of his cows bolted during milking and kicked Brother Moyle in the leg, shattering the bone just below the knee. With no better medical help than they had in such rural circumstances, his family and friends took a door off the hinges and strapped him onto that make-shift operating table. They then took the bucksaw they had been using to cut branches from a nearby tree and amputated his leg just a few inches below the knee.

When against all medical likelihood the leg finally started to heal, Brother Moyle took a piece of wood and carved an artificial leg. First he walked in the house. Then he walked around the yard. Finally he ventured out about his property. When he felt he could stand the pain, he strapped on his leg, walked the 22 miles to the Salt Lake Temple, climbed the scaffolding, and with a chisel in his hand hammered out the declaration "Holiness to the Lord."⁸

Be a holy people unto the Lord

With the faith of our fathers and mothers so evident on every side today,

may I close with the remainder of the passage I cited at the outset of my remarks. It seems particularly relevant in our wonderful circumstances today. After Moses had told that earlier generation of the blessings they enjoyed because of the faithfulness of those who had gone before them, he said:

"Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth. . . .

"Ye shall not go after other gods, . . . the gods of the people which are round about you. . . .

"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: [he] hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself. . . .

"[He] did not . . . choose you, because ye were more in number than any [other] people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

"But because [he] loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers. . . .

"Know therefore that the Lord . . . is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."⁹

We are still being blessed by that love from God and by the faithfulness of our spiritual and literal progenitors down through a thousand generations. May we do as much with the blessings we have been given as they did out of the deprivations so many of them faced. In such abundance may we never "forget the Lord" nor "go after other gods," but always be "an holy people unto the Lord." If we do so, those who hunger and thirst for the word of the Lord will continue to come "as doves to [our] windows." They will come seeking peace and growth and salvation. If we live our religion, they will find all of that and more.

An overwhelming debt of gratitude

We are a blessed people. In such a marvelous time as this, I feel an overwhelming debt of gratitude. I thank my

Father in Heaven for blessings unnumbered and incalculable, first and foremost being the gift of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, our Savior and King. I testify that Christ's perfect life and loving sacrifice constituted literally a King's ransom, an atonement willingly paid, to lead us not only from death's prison but also the prisons of sorrow and sin and self-indulgence.

I know that Joseph Smith beheld the Father and the Son and that this day is a direct extension of that day. I owe much for the precious knowledge of which I testify here. I owe much for the priceless heritage that has been given to me. Indeed I owe everything, and I pledge the rest of my life in giving it—in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons*, 1 May 1844, 522–23; see also *History of the Church*, 6:288–89.

2. *Deseret News* (weekly), 17 July 1872, 348.
3. In Conference Report, Oct. 1947, 155; or "To Them of the Last Wagon," *Ensign*, July 1997, 35–36.
4. See John 4:38.
5. Deuteronomy 6:10–11.
6. "Extracts from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Times and Seasons*, 15 Apr. 1845, 867; see also Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 2nd ed. (1945), 67–68.
7. See Andrew Karl Larson, *The Red Hills of November* (1957), 311–13.
8. See Theodore Moyle Burton, "Two Traditions of John Rowe Moyle," in *Biographies and Reminiscences*, ed. Gene A. Sessions (1974), 202–3, from the James Henry Moyle Collection, Historical Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; see also Vaughn J. Featherstone, *Man of Holiness* (1998), 140–41.
9. Deuteronomy 6:12, 14; 7:6–9.

Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi

Teaching the gospel on an airplane

A few years ago, right before Christmas, I had a stake conference assignment in California. On the flight back to Utah, I decided to take a short nap. My seat was C, near the aisle. Just before the cabin door closed, a beautiful lady in her mid-70s stood beside me and said, "May I have my seat?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." That was the end of my nap. She loved to talk.

She said, "I don't know why I should have to fly to a cold place like Utah at Christmastime to visit my grandchildren. I hate to leave sunny California."

She went on to say, "Besides, there are strange and weird people in Utah. They call themselves 'Mormons.' My daughter married one of them."

I said, "I am sorry, but before you go any further, I should tell you that I am one of them."

Then she said, "I am sorry—I didn't mean that."

I said, "Oh, you really meant that, didn't you?"

Our conversation went on until we were above Provo. We knew we would soon be landing in Salt Lake.

"Patti"—that's her name—"you have been talking for most of the flight. I feel like I have known you from the pre-earth life. Before we land in Salt Lake City, I'd like to ask you a few questions if I may."¹

I asked her sincerely,² "Patti, your deceased husband—do you know you can see him again?"

She said, "Oh, is that possible?"