

THE LOVE OF A PROPHET

HOYT W. BREWSTER, JR.

Joseph Fielding Smith is a name that has been known to the Latter-day Saints for well over sixty years. His leadership and counsel have been manifest in the leading councils of the Church since his early youth. His powerful testimony of the gospel, borne with certain conviction, has reached all corners of the earth, affecting Saint and Gentile alike. He has been admired, respected, and even feared. He was no stranger. Yet, so often one has asked, "What was Joseph Fielding Smith really like?"

It seems that so many good men of public exposure either fail to communicate the personal side of their lives, or the public is not perceptive enough to catch the vision of human tenderness and warmth that is so often couched within the nature of a man of God. For over thirty-four years I had the privilege of knowing this personal side of President Joseph Fielding Smith, not only as a Church leader, but as a grandfather. Although I have been very much aware of the strict, self-controlled style of life which he lived, I also experienced the tenderness and compassion which he has shown to countless individuals during the course of his life. Perhaps his love and concern for others can be epitomized in an experience I had with him during the London Temple dedication.

When I left the Salt Lake train terminal, early one Sunday morning in the summer of 1958, I kissed my grandfather goodbye for what I feared might be the last time in this mortal life. I knew that he would reach his eighty-second birthday within the next few weeks, and that I would be in far-away Holland for the next two and one-half years serving a mission for the Lord. I suppose some of the pangs of loneliness which trembled through my body, leaving a slight lump as they passed through my throat, were in part due to a genuine touch of homesickness. Yet, the thought never quite escaped me that this beloved man of God, whose physical image rapidly disappeared from my view as the train rolled down the tracks, might not be there to greet me upon my arrival home.

I was overjoyed, therefore, when the missionaries of the Netherlands Mission were invited to attend the London Temple dedication in September, 1958, and to learn that my grandfather would be one of the General Authorities in attendance. Perhaps only one who has experienced a separation from a loved one can know the true happiness, or realize the great excitement with which I looked forward to our visit to England.

Upon arriving at the Temple site, and after spending about an hour visiting with many friends who were then serving in the British Mission, we were lined up into groups and ushered into the temple. It just so happened that the group I was with passed within about fifteen or twenty feet of the stand where President McKay and the other Brethren were seated. As I hastily scanned the row of men seated in the presiding chairs, anxiously looking for that familiar face, my heart gave a joyful leap as my gaze fell upon the then President of the Twelve, Joseph Fielding Smith. I halted my forward motion momentarily and briefly entertained the impulse to either call to my grandfather or quickly run over and speak to him. However, I felt that the solemnity of the occasion required that I go directly to my seat and endeavor to speak with him following

the services. Just as I was about to resume my pace, his eyes happened to focus upon me, whereupon he threw open his arms and motioned me toward him. I suppose that words are inadequate to express the feeling of love which I felt as he reached out and embraced me, kissing me as was his custom with his children and grandchildren.

There, in the sanctity of a house of God, Joseph Fielding Smith — the grandfather — was not concerned with whether or not it was proper protocol to greet me in such a fashion, especially in front of that room full of people. At that moment he was displaying the love and concern which he had for a grandson. I believe our Father in Heaven looked down with pleasure upon that moment, which to me, was as sacred as any moment I have spent on earth.

What kind of a man was Joseph Fielding Smith? A man of great compassion and warmth, and filled with a love for all of mankind. Just ask those who knew him best.

A CONVERT DISCOVERS A PROPHET

DENISE ST. SAUVEUR

When I encountered missionaries from the Church two years ago, they questioned me as to the need for prophets, both ancient and modern. At that time I was a student in a Catholic College preparing for the future. I was not quite ready to revert to the past and “Bible tales” whose validity I doubted. Believing in a modern prophet seemed an absurdity after studying a wide range of contemporary theologians and philosophers. To me there was no need for a prophet. Yet, three months later I bore testimony that Joseph Smith and his grand-nephew Joseph Fielding Smith were called to be prophets in our time.

Soon after I became a member, however, I discovered it was easy to take the Prophet for granted. I had never seen President Smith in person, and I came to wonder how a man of 94 years could understand me and my problems. As time passed the academic world came to encompass reality for me. Struggling to live the Gospel became as everyday as my class assignments. That President Smith had grown through some seventy-five more years of experience than I had did not relieve the apprehensions resulting from my new life in the Church. I did not know Elder Smith as a man, or as a man of God.

Two weeks before President Smith passed away, however, I met him. It was not the usual introduction; I sat far from him, but the spirit of that man filled the room and greeted me warmly. While attending June M.I.A. Conference I experienced an alteration of my feelings toward Brother Smith. He became a real person.

During that weekend I witnessed things that I have since tried to fashion into an image. Simply said, I beheld a living testimony of Jesus Christ. Before me sat a father with two righteous sons supporting him on either side. The filial devotion of the two younger men reflected the love, patience, and faith of a generous father. A father for the Church as well as his own family. As he presided over our first general meeting, it was as if I too became an adopted member of President Smith’s family. My spirit witnessed glimpses of godliness