

DESERET NEWS:

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TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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DECEASE OF PRESIDENT GEORGE A. SMITH.

THE announcement that President GEORGE A. SMITH, First Counsellor to Pres. Brigham Young, departed this life at eight o'clock and forty minutes this morning (Sept. 1), will fall with telling force upon the Latter-day Saints in these mountains and throughout the world. All have doubtless heard of his lengthy sickness and all have exercised their faith for his recovery. If the people had the power, and were to be governed by their own natural feelings without reference to the will of God, such men as Brother GEORGE A. SMITH would never die.

His sickness originated in what appeared to be a severe cold, with which he was attacked early last Spring about the time of his return from St. George, where he had spent the Winter. At the General Conference in April he was so unwell that he was compelled, much to his regret, to refrain from speaking to the people. Subsequently one of the most painful features of his disease was an inability to sleep. From this he has almost constantly suffered during the Summer. It was not that he did not have the inclination to sleep, but frequently, when he did sleep, his lungs would cease to act and he would awake gasping for breath. For the greater part of the time of his sickness he has been compelled to get the most of his sleep while partly reclining in a chair. It can be imagined that his sufferings have at times been severe; but he has endured them with admirable patience and fortitude, and no complaint ever escaped from his lips. For months it has seemed that nothing but his own strong will and determination not to yield to death, backed by the faith of the Saints, has kept him alive. At the very worst times of his sickness he would take his exercise in the open air in a carriage, frequently riding for miles, and no longer ago than last evening he was out riding as usual. His desire for life was strong, for the sole purpose of promoting the Kingdom of God upon the earth. He felt that if it was the Lord's will he could yet render considerable aid in fighting the battle of truth. In conversation last evening with President Young, Elder John Taylor, Dr. J. M. Bernhisel and others, he remarked that if it was the Lord's will he was willing to stay and fight the battles of Zion with President Young and his brethren, but if he was wanted on the other side of the veil, he was perfectly willing to go, as he had endeavored during his entire career to properly discharge every duty that had devolved upon him, had nothing for which to reproach himself, and felt that he had a good record on this and the other side of the veil.

For a few days past he has seemed to be more impressed with the idea that he would not be permitted to stay, and in conversation with his family has alluded to his probable decease. A night or two ago he requested his son, John Henry, who has recently returned from England to be with his father in his sickness, to take the Bible and read the 23rd verse of the 19th chapter of Job. He did so, and continued reading until he had completed the 27th verse, when he stopped him. The words are—

"Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall

stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me."

A most appropriate expression of his own feelings, and a dying testimony in favor of the grand and consoling doctrine of the resurrection of the body!

During last night he was very restless, and was up and down many times, alternately lying on the bed and sitting in a chair. In fact there has been no time since he was taken sick that he has not been able to get up and dress himself and move about from room to room. He conversed freely during the night, and in the morning dressed himself and walked out of his bed-room into the front sitting-room. When Brother Seymour B. Young, who has been his faithful physician and attendant during his sickness, called upon him he described to him his feelings. He was sitting in a chair at the time. Death came upon him suddenly. No struggling, no contortions; two long-drawn breaths and the straightening up of his body were all that gave his family and attendant any intimation of his departure, his head fell into the arms of his wife, and life had fled. He passed away at twenty minutes to nine o'clock this, Wednesday, morning, September the first.

Thus has left this mortal sphere one of the noblest and purest men, through obedience to the Spirit of God, that ever lived, a man of so faithful and upright a character that, though a public man from his boyhood, there is not a word or action of his which his children and friends cannot reflect upon with pleasure. He was remarkable in boyhood for his grasp of mind, his wonderful powers of memory and his fearlessness in advocating and defending the truth. Under any circumstances he would have been a man of mark; but under the influence of the Gospel, and the circumstances which surrounded its believers, the best powers of his nature were called into full exercise. He was not quite seventeen years of age when he left Kirtland to go to Missouri in the Camp of Zion, yet even then among men who themselves were no common-place characters, he was distinguished for the precocity of his mind. His early ripeness of intellect and manly courage and strength, with the blessing and power of God which attended him, will be better appreciated when it is remembered that in the days of difficulty and trial, just as the Saints were being driven from the State of Missouri, when he was chosen to be one of the Twelve Apostles, he was not quite twenty-two years of age! In his subsequent labors, though a comparative boy in years, he did the work of a fully developed, judicious and experienced man. Whatever work was assigned to Brother George A., no one who knew him ever had the least doubt of his willingness and capacity to thoroughly perform it; they knew beforehand that it would be well done according to the best of his knowledge. Yet his physical health was far from being good at all times. His integrity and devotion to the cause of God, his zeal and public spirit, his frank, genial and unassuming manners inspired the Saints with love for and confidence in him; they took delight in listening to his discourses and addresses, which were models of terseness and brevity. President Young, in speaking of his beloved counsellor and friend this morning, said: "I have known Brother George A. Smith for forty-two years, have traveled and labored in the ministry with him for many years and have believed him to be a faithful boy and man as ever loved, and in my opinion had a good record on this and the other side of the veil as any man. I never knew of his neglecting or overdoing a duty; he was a man of sterling integrity, a cabinet of history and always true to his friends."

He was aged 58 years, 2 months and 5 days.

The following written wish of President George A. Smith respecting his funeral will be interesting to the Saints, as showing his dislike of show and parade. It was written in November, 1873—

"While executing my will of date

the 14th Oct., 1872, I inserted the following clause—

"I wish to be buried in a coffin much larger than my natural size. The expenses of an unostentatious funeral to be paid out of my undivided estate; the slab which designates my resting place shall not cost over one hundred dollars."

"A coffin, made of red pine or other mountain wood, plain but well made, large enough to give ample room for the body to swell, with no unnecessary ornaments about it, and three half-inch holes bored in the bottom, will be sufficient."

"At the funeral I should like to have either the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians, or the vision in the book of Covenants, or an appropriate extract from the Book of Mormon, read. A few remarks by the Bishop of the Ward, or some of the Elders, exhorting the audience to faith and good works, such as would be calculated to impress my children and friends with the importance of keeping the commandments of God, and such as would extend comfort and consolation to the minds of the living, would be in accordance with my wishes. Let those who attend the funeral do so in clean attire, such as they would wear to meeting on other occasions."

The following incidents of his life we briefly extract from his History—

George Albert Smith was born on the 26th of June, 1817, in Potsdam, St. Lawrence Co., New York. His father, John Smith, was the sixth son of Asael and Mary, and was born on the 16th day of July, 1781. He married Clarissa Lyman, on the 11th of September, 1815.

His grandfather, Asael Smith, was the second son of Samuel Smith, the second, and Priscilla, and was born in Topsfield, Massachusetts, March 7th, 1744, and married Mary Duty, Feb. 12, 1767.

His great-grandfather, the second Samuel Smith, was the son of the first Samuel Smith and Rebecca Curtis, and was born on the 26th January, 1714, in Topsfield, Essex County, Massachusetts, and married Priscilla Gould, 27th May, 1734. His father, Samuel Smith the first, was the son of Robert and Mary Smith, who came from England; he was born on the 26th January, 1666, in Topsfield, Essex County, Massachusetts, and was married to Rebecca Curtis, daughter of John Curtis, on the 5th of January, 1707.

His mother, Clarissa Lyman, was the daughter of Richard Lyman. His grandmother's maiden name was Philomela Loomace.

He was the cousin of Joseph Smith, the great prophet of the last dispensation.

He was baptized on Sept. 10th, 1832. May 1, 1833, he, in connection with his father's family, started for Kirtland, Ohio, where he arrived on the 25th of May.

May 5th, 1834, he started with Zion's camp for the western borders of Missouri, and returned again to Kirtland in the summer, walking on foot nearly two thousand miles.

March 1, 1835, he was ordained into the First Quorum of the Seventies.

June 5, 1835, he started on a mission, traveled on foot about two thousand miles, without purse or scrip; held about eighty meetings in the States of Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York; baptized eight, and returned to Kirtland, where he arrived the 5th of October.

In the Spring of 1836 he received his endowments in the Kirtland temple, after which he performed a mission in Ohio, traveling on foot about twelve hundred miles.

In the Spring of 1837, he commenced a mission in Ohio and Virginia, which continued about one year, traveling about 2500 miles; nearly half of his journeyings were on foot.

In 1838, he emigrated with his father's family to Davies county, Missouri. On the 28th June, 1838, he was ordained a High Counsellor. In the autumn, he was sent on a mission to Kentucky and Tennessee, traveling some 800 miles on foot and about seven hundred by water, including the return journey. After his return, he removed his father's family to Illinois.

In 1839, he returned to Far West, in Missouri. On the morning of the 26th of April, he was ordained one of the Twelve Apostles, on the south-east corner stone of the intended Temple. He returned to Illinois. Sept. 21st he started for England on a mission, arriving

in Liverpool on the 6th of April, 1840. He labored for over one year with much success, and returned to Nauvoo, Illinois, where he arrived July 5, 1841. On the 25th of the same month he married Bathsheba W. Bigler.

In the Fall of 1842, he preached in the principal places in Illinois, and returned to Nauvoo November 4th.

In the Summer and Fall of 1843, he traveled about 6,000 miles, preaching in the middle and eastern States.

In the Spring of 1844 he attended conferences and preached in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan, and was in the last named State when he heard of the death of the Prophet and Patriarch of the Church. He immediately returned to Nauvoo and took an active part in the councils and deliberations consequent upon that sad event.

Sept. 17th he was elected quartermaster of the Nauvoo Legion, was also elected a Trustee of the Nauvoo House Association and labored actively in forwarding the erection of that building. He continued these labors until the mob commenced its outrages upon the Saints in the Fall of 1845, from which period he was active in counseling, fervent in his labors on the Temple and in making preparations for the exodus of the Saints from Nauvoo.

Early in February he crossed the Mississippi with his family on his way to find an asylum in the far west from the rage of mobs and the persecutions of bigoted professors of religion. The ensuing Winter he tarried with the main camp at Winter Quarters.

In 1847 he accompanied Pres. Young and the Pioneer Company in their unexampled journey to the valley of the Great Salt Lake, and after actively assisting in the councils and labors incident to the settlement of these valleys, he returned the same season to Winter Quarters, where he arrived October 31st. In 1848 he moved to near Kaneshville and opened a farm, and on the 4th July, 1849, again started for the Great Basin. He reached Salt Lake City, with his family, October 27.

He was elected a member of the Senate of the provisional State of Deseret, and among other labors reported a bill in relation to building a railroad across the Continent.

In December, 1850, he raised a company of 118 volunteers, traveled 265 miles south of Salt Lake City, organized Iron County, and formed a settlement, since called Parowan.

At the first Territorial election in August, 1851, he was elected a member of the Council of the Legislative Assembly, and on the 25th of November was commissioned a Colonel of Cavalry in the Iron military district. He was admitted to the Bar and successfully practised law for about a year.

In 1852 he left Iron county, and was appointed to preside over the affairs of the church in Utah county. He traveled and preached much in all the settlements over which he had the watchcare.

At the annual conference of the Church in 1854, he was elected Historian and General Church Recorder, and immediately entered upon the duties of that office.

On February 2nd, 1855, he was admitted a member of the Bar of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Utah.

On March 26th, 1856, he was elected one of the delegates to present to Congress the constitution of the proposed State of Deseret and the memorials asking the admission of Utah into the Union.

In 1856-7, during a sojourn of about eleven months in the States, in addition to his duties as delegate, he preached in the States of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri.

April 11, 1866, he received from Gov. Durkee the commission of Brigadier General and was appointed aide-de-camp to the Lieut. General of the Nauvoo Legion.

At the October Conference in 1868 he was appointed to succeed the late President Heber C. Kimball, as first counsellor to President Brigham Young.

From the first session of the Territorial Legislature in 1851 until 1864, except one session when absent in the States, he served as a member of the Council, and from 1864 until 1870, as President of the Council.

On October 14, 1872, he started on a mission and visit to the various European nations and to Jerusalem, from whence he returned June 18th, 1873.

During his absence on this mission he was appointed Trustee-in-Trust for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the April Conference, 1873, which office he held until his death.

Obsequies of President George A. Smith.

THE obsequies of the late President George A. Smith were conducted on Sunday at the New Tabernacle. At 8 o'clock the building was opened to those of the public who desired to view the remains, which were in the coffin, directly in front of the stand. From the hour mentioned up to ten o'clock a stream of people passed by and gazed upon the face of the good man who had taken his departure from this sphere to another. The expression left upon the countenance was one of serenity, the mouth being rather more firmly compressed than in life.

The space immediately surrounding the coffin was occupied by the near relatives of the deceased. Shortly after ten o'clock the immense building was packed with a dense multitude of people, the assemblage being so large that a considerable number were unable to gain admittance, and they stood around the entrances. On the stand were—

Of the First Presidency, Brigham Young and D. H. Wells.

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, C. C. Rich, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Geo. Q. Cannon, and Brigham Young, Jr.

There were likewise the presiding Bishop and Counsel, the presidency of this Stake of Zion, and many leading Elders from all parts of the Territory. The assemblage also was not only composed of the people of this City, but those who had flocked from various parts of the Territory to pay a last tribute of respect to the esteemed dead.

At fifteen minutes past ten the lid was placed upon the coffin, which was covered with wreaths of natural flowers.

The vast concourse of people was called to order by President Brigham Young, and the choir sang the hymn on page 357, commencing—

Thou dost not weep, to weep alone,
The broad bereavement seems to fall
Unheeded and unfelt by none;
He was beloved, beloved by all.

The opening prayer was offered by Elder John Taylor, and the choir sang the hymn on page 193—

"Hark! from afar a funeral knell
Moves on the breeze, its echoes swell
The chorus of the dead."

The music for this hymn was composed specially for the occasion by Brother George Careless, and was very effective and appropriate.

Elder George Q. Cannon arose and stated that President George A. Smith had, in November, 1873, recorded a request that certain portions of the Bible, Book of Mormon and Book of Doctrine and Covenants should be read at his funeral, and in accordance with this request he read the 15th chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, then a portion of Alma's instructions to his son Corianton, in the 19th chapter of the Book of Alma, Book of Mormon, and also the Vision, commencing on page 264 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants.

The assemblage was addressed by the following—

ELDER ORSON HYDE.

The occasion which has called us together is a very solemn one—to pay our last respects to the remains of a noble man of God, whose testimony lives in the hearts of the faithful, and will live there forever.

Who can listen to the instructions given us in the Vision that has been read, and hear the glorious and powerful truths therein enunciated, without deep emotion. The sentiment expressed in that Vision is pregnant, not only with meaning, but with weight and with power, to every individual possessing a common grade of intelligence and understanding. Puny is the arm that fights against it! The Lord Almighty will vindicate his