

*“Go and Bring in Those
People Now on the Plains”
(We Are Our Brothers’ Keepers)*

VAUGHN J. FEATHERSTONE

The Prophet Joseph Smith went through many great trials in his life. One time, you may recall that, when he was in Kirtland, Brother Behunin came to him and said, “Brother Joseph, many of the brethren have left the Church, and not only have they left the Church, but they have turned against the Church and become some of our most bitter persecutors. I will never leave the Church, but if I do, I will move out in the country and buy a little farm somewhere, and I promise you that I will never turn against the Church.”

Joseph said something that was very prophetic. He said, “Brother Behunin, you do not know what you will do. When you join the Church of Jesus Christ, you leave neutral ground forever behind.”

Elder Packer said this in just a little different way. He said, “They leave the Church, but they can’t leave it alone.” I have thought about Joseph Smith and some of the great trials of the pioneers. One of the things that comes to mind is the time when George Q. Cannon, a convert, came up that Mississippi River and docked in Nauvoo. He was standing on the river boat looking down on the dock, and he said there were about 200 men waiting for the people who were on the boat to disembark. He said,

“If there had been a thousand men, I would have known which one was the Prophet Joseph.” And then later on, there were others who came in great numbers to Nauvoo. At one time, Joseph Smith, feeling that he ought to make sure they came for the right reason, put on his oldest tattered clothing, mounted his horse, and rode down to meet the *Maid of Iowa* as it came up the Mississippi with many immigrants from England. As they disembarked, he took aside one of the first ones and asked, “Why are you here?”

And the good brother said, “Well, because I have joined the Mormon Church, and I wanted to come and be in Zion with the Saints.”

Joseph Smith said to him, “What do you know about Joseph Smith?”

Very humbly this man said, “I know he is a prophet of God.”

Joseph said, “What if I told you I was Joseph Smith?”

Vaughn J. Featherstone was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 11 August 1981.

As the man looked at him in his tattered clothing, he said, "Then, sir, I know that you are a prophet of God."

It is interesting to look back on the life of the Prophet Joseph, and that leads into the things I would like to discuss this morning.

Drama of the Pioneers

Possibly no greater story can be told than the unfolding of the drama of the pioneers. Converts by the thousands seemed to be relentlessly pulled toward the great Salt Lake Valley (Zion as they supposed). The poor, the abandoned, the rich (leaving all worldly goods behind), the educated, and those with limited schooling all came forth. Their unwavering faith in Christ and their commitment to his cause led them on. I should like to share with you some of the experiences that I have studied that have humbled me to the earth. Those brave souls left us a legacy and a rich heritage. No amount of money could purchase what they freely gave. It cost life and limb. It cost great suffering and the most severe kind of heartache imaginable. Theirs was the noblest gift—that of love. The Savior said,

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. [John 15:13]

Rebecca Winters

There have been great stories of the pioneers who crossed the great plains and the Rocky Mountain passes to reach the Salt Lake Valley. On the fifteenth of August 1852 ten wagons under the leadership of Hiram Winters separated themselves from the main body of the eighteenth pioneer company, which was under the direction of Captain C. Snow. Rebecca Winters, the wife of Hiram, was dying of cholera. Her passing took place about noon. Sister Winters was one of more than 6,000 who were buried alongside the old Mormon Trail. Her husband and those in the other wagons laid her to rest in a deep grave. That evening

and into the night, a friend of the family, William Reynolds, using a chisel, inscribed on the outside surface of an iron tire, "Rebecca Winters, aged 50 years." This wheel rim was placed over the grave with her husband's remark that later proved prophetic, "That name will remain there forever." The following morning the pioneers pushed on, and the location of the grave seemed to be lost or forgotten to her family in Utah.

Later travelers and finally settlers in the area did not forget, and when the cowboys found her marker, they gave her name to a nearby stream and a spring and later to a precinct in Scotts Bluff County and finally to a street in the city of Scottsbluff. In 1900, when the Chicago and Burlington Railroad was being surveyed up the north side of the Platte, their survey crew rediscovered the marker right in the center of the planned grade. Not wishing to disturb the grave, they backed up several miles and moved the line over a few feet so that the grave would be beside the tracks. The chief surveyor also sent a notice of his discovery to the *Deseret News*, and when an article was written about it, the grave came to the attention of Rebecca's descendants. One was Augusta Winters Grant, the wife of Heber J. Grant who served as the president of the Church for 27 years.

They provided that a "temple" granite marker (made of granite from the temple) be placed over her grave in 1902. Sometime after that, the Burlington Railroad had a small wrought iron fence placed around the burial plot. And then the section foreman, E. F. Despain, had a well dug to water the shrubs and lawn and the flowers that adorned the grave.

Rebecca Winters's grave still stands as a pillar in honor of all those noble and brave pioneers who died and were buried in unmarked and lost graves. And thus her monument, as Hiram Winters stated, "will remain there forever."

The Last Wagon

Around the time of the centennial, President J. Reuben Clark, who was in the First Presidency, gave one of the greatest pioneer talks ever delivered, I suppose, in the history of the Church. He entitled it *To Them of the Last Wagon*. Let me give you a small quote from that. He said:

But back in the last wagon, not always could they see the brethren way out in front and the blue heaven was often shut out from their sight by heavy, dense clouds of the dust of the earth. Yet day after day, they of the last wagon pressed forward, worn and tired, footsore, sometimes almost disheartened, born up by their faith that God loved them, that the Restored Gospel was true, and that the Lord led and directed the brethren out in front. [(Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947), p. 13]

Now here is a great principle. I believe that as we consider some of these other journeyings, we find that there is a faith, a purging, and a need to feel close to the Brethren and not compromise the standards.

Only God knows the sufferings of every soul who crossed or attempted to cross the plains. Surely these magnificent and faithful souls have stories to tell that would melt the hardest heart. Women nursing newborn babies at their breasts, children walking until their poor little feet would blister and bleed, fathers and mothers working together in a state of exhaustion, but always, always pushing onward.

The Handcart Companies

Perhaps the most touching of all stories are the various accounts of the handcart companies. As you know, the Emigrating Fund was organized to assist Saints to come to Zion. The financial strain on the emigrating company in 1855 (only eight years after the first Saints arrived in the valley) was almost impossible. President Brigham Young wrote a letter to Franklin D. Richards, who at that time was

president of the British Isles mission, and said something like this:

I have been thinking how we should operate another year. We cannot afford to purchase wagons and teams as in times past, I am consequently thrown back upon my old plan—to make hand-carts and let the emigration foot it, and draw upon them the necessary supplies, having a cow or two for every ten. They can come just as quick if not quicker, and much cheaper—can start earlier and escape the prevailing sickness which annually lays so many of our brethren in the dust. A great majority of them walk now even with the teams which are provided, and have a great deal more care and perplexity than they would have if they came without them. They will only need 90 days' rations from the time of their leaving the Missouri River, and as the settlements extend up the Platte, not that much. The carts can be made without a particle of iron, with wheels hooped, made strong and light, and one, or if the family be large, two of them will bring all that they will need upon the plains.

*If it is once tried you will find that it will become the favorite mode of crossing the plains; they will have nothing to do but come along, and I should not be surprised if a company of this kind should make the trip in sixty or seventy days. I do know that they can beat any ox train crossing the plains. I want to see it fairly tried and tested, at all events, and I think we might as well begin another year as any time and save this enormous expense of purchasing wagons and teams—indeed we will be obliged to pursue this course or suspend operations, for aught that I can see at the present. [Gustive O. Larson, *Mormon Handcart Story*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1956), pp. 7–8]*

In 1856, the first handcart companies were organized and commenced the journey. The handcarts were made out of Iowa hickory and oak. The wood was properly selected and seasoned. The box was constructed of Iowa hickory or oak and the shafts also. The axles were uniformly hickory. The length of the side

pieces and shafts was about 6 or 7 feet with three or four binding crossbars from the back part to the forepart of the body of the cart, and the lead space for a man to pull the cart was 2 or 3 feet. When necessary, the wife or the children or all of them would push. The handcarts could be loaded with 400 to 500 pounds of flour, bedding, extra clothing, cooking utensils, and a tent. Each individual was allowed seventeen pounds of clothing, and that meant clothing and bedding. Then they were allowed one pound of flour per person per day. And so if there were four in the family, they would have four pounds of flour times ninety days for the trip. That would be about 360 pounds of flour that they would put on the cart plus their 68 pounds of clothing (seventeen times the four members of the family), plus their cooking utensils and the tent and maybe a very special prized possession, what they would call an heirloom, something that they wanted to bring along, something they felt was worth bringing. (One woman had been given 18 ounces of soap and felt it was one of the most prized possessions she had at that day.) And so the total weight would be nearly 500 pounds.

The first three handcart companies left in June. The first one left on 9 June, the second one two days later, and the third one on 23 June. The first company arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on 26 September; and the second one had caught up, so they also arrived 26 September. The third arrived on 2 October. The first company suffered one death, the second company suffered seven deaths, and in the third company there were none who died on the way. This was no greater and oftentimes less than the regular covered wagon trains' mortality rates.

When the first two companies arrived, all three of the First Presidency, President Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel H. Wells, went up to the mouth of Emigration Canyon to welcome these marvelous, wonderful Latter-

day Saints. I want to share with you some of the feelings that an eye-witness wrote:

As they came down the bench you could scarcely see them for the dust. [I want to have you think about that.] When they entered the City the folks came running from every quarter to get a glimpse of the long looked-for hand-carts. . . . I shall never forget the feeling that ran through my whole system as I caught the first sight of them. The first hand-cart was drawn by a man and his wife. They had a little flag on it . . . [And may I say it may be time to raise this flag. There does come a time to raise a "title of liberty" flag, and this was that kind of flag. They had made that great journey of ninety days, pushing and pulling; I don't believe we can comprehend what they went through. And here was their little flag] They had a little flag on it, on which were the words, "Our president, may the unity of the Saints ever show the wisdom of his counsels." [May we have that same faith in President Kimball. There may be nothing more important that I'll say today than just quoting the faith of those people as they inscribed it on a little flag.]

The next hand-cart was drawn by three young women. . . . The tears ran down the cheeks of many a man who you would have thought would not, could not, shed a tear. [Larson, Handcart, p. 16]

The next two companies that followed after the first three were told, "You will go forward at your own risk." It was late in the season. The immigrants had just crossed the Missouri River and paused to recondition their handcarts at Florence, Nebraska. They were wholly ignorant of the country ahead, the rigors of camp life, the impending winter, and the Rocky Mountains. So anxious were they to reach Zion that they chose to commence the journey. The James G. Willie Company left Iowa city on 15 July 1856, with about 500 in the company. Thirteen days later the Edward Martin Handcart Company followed.

During July and August they made fairly good distances. But the handcarts were not well constructed, and they began to fall apart. There was much time lost in repairing them, but they did make fairly good time. Then fall came early, and the chill of winter brought frosty nights. The consciousness of threatening storms, decreased rations, and insufficient bedding and clothing dampened their spirits.

Day after day they pulled painfully forward. "We traveled on in misery and sorrow," wrote John Chislett of the Willie Company. "Sometimes we made a pretty good distance and other times we were only able to make a few miles of progress" (Larson, *Handcart*, p. 22).

Instead of getting up refreshed, vigorous, and prepared for a hard day of toil, the poor Saints were to be seen crawling out from their tents haggard, benumbed, and showing an utter lack of the vitality which was so necessary. When the first snowstorm came, scarcity of food, lassitude, and fatigue from overexertion soon produced their effects. Brother Willie described the situation, and I quote:

Our old and infirm people began to droop, and they no sooner lost spirit and courage than death's stamp could be traced upon their features. Life went out as smoothly as a lamp ceases to burn when the oil is gone. At first the deaths occurred slowly and irregularly, but in a few days at more frequent intervals, until we soon thought it unusual to leave a campground without burying one or more persons.

Death was not long confined in its ravages to the old and infirm, but the young and naturally strong were among its victims. . . . Many a father pulled his cart, with his little children on it, until the day preceding his death. I have seen some pull their carts in the morning, give out during the day, and die before next morning

Each death weakened our forces. In my hundred I could not raise enough men to pitch a tent when we camped, and now it was that I had to exert myself to the utmost. I wonder I did not die, as many did who were stronger than I was. When we

*pitched our camp in the evening of each day, I had to lift the sick from the wagon and carry them to the fire, and in the morning carry them again on my back to the wagon. When any in my hundred died I had to inter them; often helping to dig the grave myself. In performing these sad offices I always offered up a heartfelt prayer to that God who beheld our sufferings, and begged him to avert destruction from us and send us help. [LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion*, (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1960), pp. 102–3]*

They traveled on. The snowstorms came, and the shrill wind blew furiously about them. The snow was several inches deep, but they had to travel an additional sixteen miles to get wood for fire and water to drink. It was that way for the Willie Company, and the Martin Company was still two weeks further behind. The Willie Company recorded the snow over a foot deep after a storm. Five persons lay in the cold embrace of death. They camped and waited for aid to come.

Mrs. Jackson, in the Martin Company, recorded:

*My sister became sick. So severe was her affliction that she became deranged in her mind, and for several days she ate nothing but hard frozen snow. [Hafen, *Handcarts*, p. 112]*

Perhaps this good woman knew that the rations wouldn't last, and maybe this was her way of diverting her rations to someone else. She passed away soon. Continuing to quote from Mrs. Jackson:

A few days after the death of my husband the male members of the company had become reduced in number by death and those who remained were so weak and emaciated by sickness, that on reaching the camping place at night, there were not sufficient men with strength enough to raise the poles and pitch the tents. The result was that we camped out with nothing but the vault of Heaven for a roof and

the stars for companions. The snow lay several inches deep upon the ground. The night was bitterly cold. I sat down on a rock with one child in my lap and one on each side of me. In that condition I remained until morning. [Hafen, Handcarts, p. 112]

Deaths continued in the camp. Some died . . . lying side by side with hands entwined. In other cases, they were found as if they had just offered a fervent prayer and their spirit had taken flight while in the act. . . . Some died sitting by the fire; some were singing hymns or eating crusts of bread.

. . . Captain Martin [of the last handcart company] stood over the grave of the departed ones with shotgun in hand, firing at intervals to keep the crows and buzzards away from hovering around in mid air [until they could bury them].

Sister Sirman, whose husband was near death and whose two sons were suffering from frozen feet, appealed to Captain Martin, "Do you think that the relief party will come soon with food, clothing and shoes?"

. . . The Captain's answer was, "I almost wish God would close my eyes to the enormity of the sickness, hunger and death among the Saints. Yes, Sister Sirman, I am as confident as that I live that the President [Brigham Young] will and has dispatched [relief wagons]. [Hafen, Handcarts, p. 113]

Get Them Here

On 5 October 1856 at general conference, the commanding figure of Brigham Young, 55-year-old prophet of God, stood at the pulpit in the Tabernacle. Said he—and I'd like to have you think about our day, about the General Authorities who have their talks prepared—to the congregation:

I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak to-day and during the Conference, it is this, on the 5th day of October, 1856, many of our brethren and sisters are on the Plains with hand-carts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and

they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be—to get them here! I want the brethren who may speak to understand that their text is the people on the Plains, and the subject matter for this community is to send for them and bring them in before the winter sets in.

That is my religion; that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess, it is to save the people. . . . This is the salvation I am now seeking for, to save our brethren that would be apt to perish, or suffer extremely, if we do not send them assistance. [JD 4:113]

He then called on the bishops for sixty good mule teams, twelve or fifteen wagons, forty teamsters, twelve tons of flour, and other supplies; then he said:

I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the celestial kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. [And then I believe he must have said this with all the fervor of a prophet:] GO AND BRING IN THOSE PEOPLE NOW ON THE PLAINS. [JD 4:113]

At that time, Samuel and Margaret Pucell, husband and wife, were out on the plains with their two daughters: Maggie, 14, and Ellen, 10. Listen to their circumstances:

Margaret became ill, so had to ride in the handcart part of the way. [So Brother Pucell was then pulling not only the 500 pounds but also his wife who was on top of the handcart.] Her husband grew so weary and weakened from the lack of food that this additional burden caused him to slip and fall one day as he crossed the river. Having to travel in the cold, wintry weather with wet clothing he, too, became ill and died from hunger and exposure. His wife died five days later, leaving ten-year-old Ellen and fourteen-year-old Maggie orphans. . . . Many died and many others suffered from frozen limbs, among them the Pucell girls, both

having badly frozen feet and legs. . . . When shoes and stockings were removed from the girls' feet, the skin came off. Although Maggie's legs were frozen, she would not allow them to do more than scrape the flesh off the bones, but Ellen's were so bad they had to be amputated just below the knees. [Hafen, Handcarts, p. 138]

On 30 November, a Sunday (now think about the weather and the time and season and how cold it is—oftentimes we're skiing after Thanksgiving), the Saints were assembled in the Tabernacle again with President Brigham Young presiding. Having been apprised of the imminent arrival of the immigrants, the Martin Handcart Company, he spoke to the congregation:

When those persons arrive I do not want to see them put into houses by themselves; I want to have them distributed in the city among the families that have good and comfortable houses; and I wish all the sisters now before me, and all who know how and can, to nurse and wait upon the new comers and prudently administer medicine and food to them. To speak upon these things is a part of my religion, for it pertains to taking care of the Saints. . . .

As soon as this meeting is dismissed I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes, where their Bishops will call on them to take in some of this company; the Bishops will distribute them as the people can receive them. . . .

The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to go home and prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them up. You know that I would give more for a dish of pudding and milk, or a baked potato and salt, were I in the situation of those persons who have just come in, than I would for all your prayers, though you were to stay here all the afternoon and pray. Prayer is good, but when baked potatoes and pudding and milk are needed, prayer will not supply their place on this occasion; give every duty its proper time and place. . . .

Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles; some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted. . . . We want you to receive them as your own children, and to have the same feeling for them. [Hafen, Handcarts, p. 139]

Then in a way of the prophets, this great man, Brigham Young, told the bishops to send all of the immigrants for whom accommodations were lacking to his home. I believe that's exactly what President Kimball would do today if he were in a similar circumstance.

There were 66 deaths in the Willie Company and 135 deaths in the Martin Company.

“The Cart Began Pushing Me”

President David O. McKay, in an address given at an annual Relief Society Conference in 1947, the centennial year of the Saints' arrival in the valley, talked of the criticism given by a teacher conducting a class, who commented that it was very unwise to have even permitted the Saints to cross the plains under such circumstances, and they were talking about the Willie and Martin handcart companies who left later than they should have. President McKay said:

Some sharp criticism of the Church and its leaders was being indulged in for permitting any company of converts to venture across the plains with no more supplies or protection than a handcart caravan afforded.

An old man in the corner [and this was written by President William Palmer, who was present] sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it, then he arose and said things that no person who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

In substance the father above mentioned said, “I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper

interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Handcart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have cited was there, too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church, because everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.

"I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it." [And a wife with a baby in her arms by his side!] "I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there.

"Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay, and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Handcart Company." ["Pioneer Women," Relief Society Magazine, January 1948, p. 8]

Chief Joseph and His People

Nor was the cross any easier to bear for our beloved Lamanites. Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Indian tribe was told by his father as a young man:

When I am gone, think of your country. You are the chief of these people. They look to you to guide them. Always remember that your father never sold his country. You must stop your ears whenever you are asked to sign a treaty selling your home. A few years more, and the white men will be all around you. They have their eyes on this land. My son, never forget my dying words. This country holds

your father's body. Never sell the bones of your father and your mother. [Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., Chief Joseph's People and Their War, Yellowstone Library and Museum Association, 1964, p. 2]

Chief Joseph kept his commitment to his father. He would not sign the treaties that other chiefs signed consigning their people to reservations. Finally, a commission of five men was sent to speak with Chief Joseph and to make a final settlement.

Why, they asked him, did he refuse to give up the Wallowa? He answered by referring to the land as the Mother of the Indians, something that could not be sold or given away. "We love the land," he said, "It is our home."

But, they persisted, Lawyer had signed it away in 1863.

Joseph had a ready reply that embarrassed them. "I believe the old treaty has never been correctly reported," he said. "If we ever owned the land we own it still, for we never sold it. In the treaty councils the commissioners have claimed that our country has been sold to the government. Suppose a white man should come to me and say, 'Joseph, I like your horses, and I want to buy them.' Then he goes to my neighbor, and says to him, 'Joseph has some good horses. I want to buy them but he refuses to sell.' My neighbor answers, 'Pay me the money, and I will sell you Joseph's horses.' The white man returns to me and says, 'Joseph, I have bought your horses and you must let me have them.' If we sold our lands to the government, this is the way they were bought." [Josephy, Chief Joseph's People, pp. 3–4]

It was determined later that Chief Joseph and his people would be placed on the reservation by force. General Howard was assigned to the task. The Nez Perce made one of the greatest retreats and attack strategies in all of open war. And mind you, they had every squaw and child and infant in addition to the warriors, and they retreated. They went into the Salmon River country, crossing and recrossing the river.

(I don't know if you have floated the middle fork of the Salmon or the main Salmon, but that would not be an easy task.) Oftentimes General Howard's soldiers could not get across and were delayed, but somehow the Indians crossed. They battled the army of men and won at every turn. They made a march and forced journey from Oregon into Washington, over into Idaho and the Salmon River country, all the way across the 1,300 miles to Wyoming, and then into Montana. Finally, they camped near the Bear Paw Mountains, some 17 miles from the Canadian border where they felt that after they'd crossed the border, they would be safe. Troops were sent. A siege took place that lasted several days. Finally, Joseph mounted his horse and, followed by several men, rode up the hill from the camp and across to the army lines where Generals Howard and Miles waited for him. He dismounted, handed Miles his rifle, adjusted his blanket to leave his right arm free, and, addressing Miles, began one of the most touching and beautiful surrenders ever made:

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before I have in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead. Toohoolhoolzote is dead. The old men are all dead. It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led the young men is dead. It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food; no one knows where they are — perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired; my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever. [Joseph, Chief Joseph's People p. 19]

Your Brother's Keeper

Now, the application of these things to our generation: Winston Churchill said, "We have not made this journey across centuries, across oceans, across mountains, across prairies

because we are made of sugar candy" (*Reader's Digest Treasury of Modern Quotations* [Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Press: 1975], p. 719). James Bond Stockdale, vice admiral retired, spent eight years as a prisoner of war in Viet Nam prisons. His philosophy and the principles he learned may help make all I have said today relevant. Said he, "Pressurized experiences have a way of giving us an overload of dilemmas that can't wait for a waffled solution" (*Vital Speeches of the Day*, vol. 57, no. 18, 1 July 1981, p. 546). He also says, "A sort of transformation takes place under pressure" (p. 546). And, "Prisons have been crucibles of both degradation and creative impulse throughout history" (p. 547), and were they not indeed for Joseph Smith?

From this eight-year experience I distilled one all-purpose idea, plus a few corollaries. [And mind you, he was in Viet Nam in a prison for eight years without seeing one other living soul. Robby Reisner said that he remembered the little corner where they had a hole that they would use for their urinal. He put his head down through that and saw one blade of grass, and, knowing that something was living, he kept contact with reality that way. They went year after year without seeing anyone. And James Stockdale came up with one idea.] It is a simple idea, an idea as old as the scriptures, an idea that is the epitome of high mindedness, an idea that naturally and spontaneously comes to men under pressure. If the pressure is intense enough or of long enough duration, this idea spreads without the need even for its enunciation. It just takes root naturally. It is an idea that in this big easy world of yackety-yack seems to violate the rules of game theory if not of reason. It violates the ideas of Adam Smith's invisible hand, our ideas of human nature, and probably the second law of thermodynamics. That idea is: "You Are Your Brother's Keeper." [pp. 547–58]

Eight years in a prison camp, and Admiral Stockdale tells us that an idea that is the

epitome of high mindedness is, "You Are Your Brother's Keeper." When he is asked, "What kept you going? What was your highest value?" he answers, "The man next door." Eight years, and he said that patriotism didn't bring him through, as much as he loved the country. They punished him too greatly and severely. But he said that knowing there were other prisoners, that he was his brothers' keeper and, for their sake, had to continue on, kept him going.

We have read and been moved by the Prophet Joseph's experiences in Liberty Jail. Joseph understood this same principle: "If my life is of no use to my friends it is of none to myself" (*HC* 6:549). Willard Richards stated, "Joseph, if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free" (*HC* 6:616). Brigham said, "Go and bring in those people now on the plains."

We, all of us, are our brothers' keepers. When we are endowed with charity and love from on high, then the eternal welfare of our neighbor, our brother, our son, our daughter becomes more important than life itself. Ours is a generation of "hunters and fishers of men." We cannot, we must not, isolate ourselves from the world. We must go among them and declare "glad tidings" from Zion. We must give them hope. We must go out on the plains after each of them; we must respond because we have seen "something in his eye that won my love; I knew not why." And when our scanty meal is spread, we must be there to give him our crust, to let him drink and quench his thirst with the water in the stream. We must, in a very real sense, welcome the stranger and lay

him on our couch to rest. And we must be there to rouse his pulse, bring back his breath, revive his spirit, and then the time may come when we must decide whether we are willing to give our lives for the Martin cause. When we do, the sweet words that will and have come to those great pioneers are, "Fear not, Joseph, Brigham, the Martin Handcart Company, the Willie Handcart Company, Rebecca Winters, and all others, thou didst all these things unto me" (Adapted from "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief," *Hymns*, no. 153).

Now, I suppose the things that I prize most dearly in my life are those that relate to the prophets and the leaders of this kingdom. I love them with all my heart and soul. I believe that I may qualify, as George Q. Cannon said, "There will come a generation who will follow the prophets out of sheer obedience's sake."

I believe I qualify. I don't question when they speak; I simply honor them and love them and follow them to the grave if necessary. Of course, Christ is the supreme example of all that I hold precious and dear. I love him, I love you, and I love his prophet; and I commit my soul to his work and to the work of being my brother's keeper. I would rather have my children come across the plains and suffer and even die with a testimony, being faithful, never leaving the Church, having the angels walk with them and push the handcarts, than to have all the comforts of life and lose their faith. That is my testimony. I love the Lord, and I intend to follow the prophet and obey his counsel in unity with the other Brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.