

ELDER DAVID O. MCKAY

An editorial in a local paper, last Sunday morning, referring to this great assembling of Latter-day Saints, contained the following comment:

A PEOPLE OF STRONG CONVICTIONS

"Those who attend this conference will see a host of sincere believers—in deed, they more than believe, they 'know' as many of them will assert. Naturally it took a people of strong convictions to stick it out in this valley when the pioneers came here in 1847. Quite as naturally a strong community would grow out of this beginning."

It is true, the Latter-day Saints are a people of strong convictions; and convictions—convictions of the truth—are the strongest, most potent factors in the world. It has been truly said that no historic event is so important as the advent of a conviction of a new truth. "The power of such conviction in the human soul is to build up institutions, to change the course of events, and to alter the tendencies of human affairs; and among all convictions there are none so strong, permanent, and unconquerable as religious convictions." "Ideas," says Paxton, "go booming through the world louder than cannon. Thoughts are mightier than armies."

TWO POTENT CONVICTIONS

If I were to couch in definite terms two of the most potent convictions in the hearts of the Latter-day Saints, I would name: First, *an abiding assurance that the gospel, as taught by the Redeemer when he lived among men and which was later modified, changed and corrupted by men, has been restored by the Redeemer in its purity and fullness*; and second, following naturally the first, a conviction in the heart of every member of this Church that the responsibility rests upon the membership of the Church to preach the restored gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. It is this second conviction of which I wish to speak this afternoon.

A DESIRE TO MAKE ALL PEOPLE CHRISTIANS

Springing out of this sense of responsibility to bear witness to all people, is the desire to Christianize the world. Some Protestant ministers do not like to consider "Mormons" Christians. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the paramount desire in every Latter-day Saint's heart is to make all people Christians, and that is a conviction second only in power and urgency to the testimony that God has spoken in this dispensation. "Go ye and teach all nations," said the Savior to his disciples. "This promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," said Peter on the day of Pentecost. "Proclaim these things to the world," said the Prophet Joseph, through inspiration in this age, "that faith might be increased in the world, that mine everlasting covenant might be established."

WHAT THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS ARE DOING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

I know of no other religious conviction that has affected the daily life of a people more potently than this desire to have every nation hear the message of this latter-day gospel of peace. Very few indeed are the homes in the Church that have not been influenced by it. At the present time the people are supporting over 2,000 of their sons and daughters in various parts of the world at a monetary sacrifice of approximately \$1,800,000 a year. To know just how keenly this responsibility is felt and how willingly discharged, I will ask you to recall individual cases: A young man was called from this city to go on a mission to the Pacific Islands. He responded and gave his message to the world as best he could. A few weeks ago he came into my office and said: "I have been home a year, and I have succeeded during that year in paying all but \$100 of the \$600 debt I had when I returned. In another two months I will have it all paid, and my tithing in full besides." "Well, was it worth it?" said I. "Twice as much," he promptly replied. "I would not have missed that experience for anything." I met a young man when I was coming home from the Eastern States mission who had spent all his earnings in that mission, and also several hundred dollars besides, which a banker in his home town had furnished him, merely upon the young man's promissory note. He has paid his note since coming home, and although he has been in ill health part of the time, he rejoices in his missionary service. I met a mother on the train whose son was then in the mission field. She said she was having a difficult time to pay the taxes and other expenses and to keep her son in the field, and sympathetically I suggested that perhaps he might better be released. She turned in her seat suddenly and said: "Brother McKay, I would rather work these fingers to the bone than to have my boy come home before his duty is performed." These illustrations show that this conviction to preach to the world is one which moves to action. It is truly powerful, permanent and we hope unconquerable.

I have said two thousand missionaries are now in the field. President Grant reported in his opening remarks that there have been approximately between 35,000 and 40,000 missionaries sent into service since 1837. One of the Presiding Bishopic, informed me the other day that if we include local missionaries the number will approximate 70,000. Suppose that we consider just for illustration, that there have been 35,000 foreign missionaries out. Crediting each missionary with an earning capacity of \$100 per month and his average expense in the mission field at \$40 a month, and assuming that each missionary has averaged two years in the field, this desire to Christianize the world has cost the members of the Church \$117,600,000. That is not including the amount of money spent by the Church for the return fares of the elders, nor the amount of money spent on chapels and halls in the mission fields. If you add merely the sum expended by the Church to that spent by the people during that time you will find that there has been expended by this Church for missionary purposes alone, approximately \$121,500,000, over three-fifths of the assessed valuation of Salt Lake City during 1926, and nearly one-sixth the total assessed valuation of

the State of Utah. In other words, the people have given in value, three-fifths of the city's assessed valuation in an expression of a desire to make the world believe in Christianity. I use that term in its proper sense—belief in 'Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. Evidently there is a force behind this conviction that the world needs Christianizing.

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS CHRISTIANIZING

But does the world need Christianizing? Our Protestant brethren say, "Why don't you send your elders out to the heathen, why go to Christian nations?" As I have said, our mission is to the whole world. We believe so-called Christian nations need the message as well as the so-called heathen lands, and Christian ministers by their own statements confirm this belief. For example: Recently in the *Literary Digest* under a glaring heading, "The crack of doom has sounded for Protestantism," one Reverend Herbert Parrish says that it is his conviction that "the sooner Protestantism disappears from American life the better. Its narrow sectarian spirit, fostering division, incapable of a large synthesis of values, of unity, unfits it to represent our national religious life. * * * As a moral guide it is superficial, depending on the exterior force of state legislation to effect the redemption of the race. As a mystical experience it is sentimental, without intelligence, and with narrow vision. As a teaching force it is vague, negative and uncertain. As an organization it is illogical and chaotic." That I consider a very severe arraignment of Protestantism by a Protestant pastor. I do not know him, nor do I know by what authority he speaks. But having this in mind yesterday, as I listened to President Grant quote a minister's prognostication as printed in the *Anaconda Standard*, I thought, well, here is another Pastor proving that minister's prognostication correct.

Probably a more trustworthy and authentic authority is Henry Emerson Fosdick, one of the leading thinkers in our nation today, who commenting on the need of modern religious leadership writes:

"No society ever has been healthy whose religious life was unhealthy. Even those who are impatient of contemporary formulations of faith, those who are outside the churches, and alienated from their denominational loyalty, should still be deeply concerned about the fortunes of religion. A society which, providing for the future, builds great factories, immense railroad systems, and even innumerable schools, but does not care whether the future has a wholesome religious life, is playing a fatally short-sighted game.

"In view of this fact the situation which we face is serious. *Much of our contemporary Christianity is not making people better, but worse. It accentuates bitterness, brings out meanness, sanctions ignorance and bigotry, divides those who might otherwise be brotherly, and lapses from its high possibilities into a force for spiritual deterioration and decay.*"

Are not these statements and others that might be given, sufficient answer regarding the need of working for the Christianizing of the world?

ARE THE SO-CALLED "MORMONS" CHRISTIANS?

However, a more important question for us today is this: "Are the so-called 'Mormons' true Christians and does the Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints contain the elements of a world-wide Christian religion?" It is my sincere belief and testimony that the Latter-day Saints commonly called "Mormons," are Christians in the truest and fullest sense of the term, and that this Church is world-wide in its comprehensiveness, in organization, and in its blessing and salvation of the human family. As true Christianity should and as it did in the days of the Savior, "Mormonism" combines the essential elements, in the teachings of Israel's prophets, priests and sages; and in accepting the Jehovah of the Old Testament as the Savior of mankind, it fulfils the noblest aspirations of the Hebrew race, thereby indicating a world-wide scope so far as Israel's people and Israel's God are concerned.

All that is "virtuous, lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy" in the teachings of all the great religious teachers of mankind—teachings that today are influencing hundreds of millions of God's children, are comprehended in the ethical teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ. What Charles Foster Kent says of the effect of true Christianity, is equally true of "Mormonism."

"It simply and satisfactorily unites religion and ethics by emphasizing religion and by giving to ethics the inspiration of a strong personal faith. It appeals to the individual will through both the reason and the emotions. Thereby it touches and completely commands the whole man: his intellect, his feelings, his faith and his acts. It sets before men a worthy goal; in the present life true happiness, won through self-denial and service, and preserved by faith that frees men from the harrassing fears and worries of life. For the future it holds out the sure promise of individual peace and joy and growth, since the object of its faith is the God of the living, whose beneficent rule is revealed in every phase of human experience."

"Mormonism" is an authoritative religion, yet at the same time the most thoroughly democratic Church on earth—a combination that is well worthy of serious thought. It emphasizes the universal bonds of human brotherhood. It seeks by training the individual conscience and will to establish a closely knit, world-wide fraternity. It glorifies humanity and all normal human relations. It is a spiritual force emanating from God himself.

At one time it grieved me to know that this Church was not numbered among Protestant churches. But now I realize that the Church of Christ is more than a protest against the errors and evils of Catholicism. This Church was established in the only way in which the Church of Christ can be established, by direct authority from God. Thus founded it invites the whole world to come to a Church recognized by God himself, and which offers every advantage that the human mind, the emotions and desires may contemplate in the fulfilling of the individual mission on this earth. "It is an ever-broadening wave of direct personal influence, destined ultimately to touch and transform all men, so that they like Jesus shall become Godlike." "Mormonism," as true Christianity, "subdues selfishness, regulates the passions, subordinates the appetites, quickens the intellect, exalts the affections. It promotes industry, honesty, truth, purity, kindness. It humbles the proud, exalts the lowly, upholds the law, favors liberty, is essential to it, and would unite men in one great brotherhood."

THE WORLD OUR FIELD OF ACTIVITY

Most earnestly do I hope that we shall never lose the great conviction that the world is our field of activity. Can you think of anything more potent in moving a people to action?

THIS ENTAILS GREAT RESPONSIBILITY ON US AT HOME

But what a responsibility this entails of leading good men and good women all over this world to know God, and to know what their mission is on earth! Fathers and mothers, fellow workers, do you fully realize today what it means to assume the responsibility of carrying the message of peace and good will to all men? The base of our operations must be here at home. Neglect your duty here and all you undertake abroad will be compromised, because people can rightfully ask: What do you do at home? What life are you living at home? "What you are," says Emerson, "sounds so loud in my ears I cannot hear what you say." Every elder therefore who goes abroad to preach this gospel must first live the gospel to the best of his ability, and have a conviction in his heart that he is preaching the truth. True, at first this testimony may be somewhat indefinite; but all our children have it to some extent. They breathe it as they breathe the mountain air, but they often neglect to define it, to express it in the plane of consciousness. It is the duty of presidents of stakes, bishops of wards, to make definite in the minds of missionaries this testimony of the truth. Through study, service, humility and prayer, this testimony will increase.

QUALIFICATIONS OF MISSIONARIES AND THE HOME

Another qualification is this: Every elder should be a Christian gentleman always. A gentleman—who is he? "Whoever is open"—nothing to hide, no downcast look because of the consciousness of guilt; "whoever is loyal"—loyal to the truth, to virtue, to the Word of Wisdom—"true, of humane and affable demeanor, honorable himself and in his judgment of others, faithful to his word as to law, and faithful alike to God and to man—such a man is a true gentleman," and such a man the elder of this Church should be who goes out to Christianize the world.

Brethren, it is a wonderful school to which we send our young men and women—the best in all the world. I weigh that sentence carefully—the best school in all the world! But it must never be considered a reform school for those who are the instructors therein. Keep young men who need reforming at home until they attain that degree of leadership which this Church requires.

In conclusion, then, with the abiding assurance in our hearts that God has restored the true gospel of Christ; with the unshakable conviction that he desires all mankind to hear this gospel, and that upon the Church rests the responsibility of proclaiming it to the world; let us first conform our own lives to gospel standards, first set in order our own homes, our own states, and then continue to Christianize the world; for

“Now the whole world hears,
Or shall hear,—surely shall hear at the last,
Though men delay, and doubt, and faint and fall,—
That promise faithful:—‘Fear not, little flock!
It is your Father’s will and joy to give
To you the Kingdom!’”

Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

I feel very keenly the responsibility that is upon me this moment, and yet I am glad to add a few words to those already spoken. We have assembled here to be instructed, and I suppose it is true in the case of each of the other speakers, as I know it is with me, that it is impossible to express all the thoughts that arise in the mind as we listen to these services.

PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

I take it for granted that the purpose of these conferences is that we who assemble here may hear instruction. Moreover that the instruction may be as seed planted in our souls, taking root and growing, causing reflections in our minds. No doubt when we return to our homes we enlarge upon the things we have heard, and through faith and study gain greater knowledge, and thus draw nearer to our heavenly Father in the truth. If we do not, then we are not obtaining the full benefit of the meetings and the instructions given by the brethren. It is our privilege and duty, therefore, to study and enlarge upon the things that here are spoken.

THE FAITH OF YOUNG LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Reference has been made by some of the speakers to sentiments uttered by those not of our faith, and who are not kindly disposed towards the Church and its members, to the effect that the youth of “Mormonism”—and I place that word in quotation marks—are not walking in the footsteps of their fathers, and, that in time the children will depart from the faith and accept the teachings of the so-called “Christian” sects of the world. As one of the fifth generation in the Church I testify that I know this is not true, and that there is faith in Israel among the young people.

The gospel is, as the Savior said, like a net cast in the sea, which gathers of all kinds, and naturally there will be some that will have to be cast out because they are not good. Without a doubt there are those who come into the Church with ulterior motives, and some who are always weak in the faith. These latter may become discouraged and depart from the Church because they have not understood the truth. Again, we know it to be a fact that the unrepentant transgressor will deny the faith and turn away in a spirit of bitterness. However, I am assured, and I have that assurance in my heart through the teachings I have received from the Spirit of the Lord and from the inspiration