

However, there is one serious drawback to it all, and that is the indifference which prevails among the people. Since the war, particularly, there has been a noticeable change in the religious attitude of the people of Europe. Where they formerly believed in the Bible, in the church, in the observance of the Sabbath, and in those things that tend to build up and uplift humanity, they have gradually assumed an attitude of indifference to all these things. They no longer have much use for religion or for the churches. That spirit is growing, and I do not know just how we are going to meet it. It is one of the problems of missionary work today. Formerly you could approach the people with the Bible and sustain the principles of the Gospel from the "good book." But today too many pay little or no attention to the Bible. The approach therefore must be different. Our missionary methods and efforts will have to be changed somewhat in order to meet the changed situation. President Widtsoe is working along these lines, devoting a great deal of thought, time and energy to the development of other methods so as to meet the new conditions and get the people interested in the Gospel message.

I want to say in closing, my brethren and sisters, that I am very happy in the work of the Lord. It is the dearest thing on earth to me. It is fifty years this month since I was baptized into the Church; and out of that fifty years of experience in the Church I can testify to you today that I know this to be the work of the Lord. I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. And I know too that the Church is led by the inspiration of the Lord. The Lord has not forsaken it. He has not gone on a journey. He is guiding and directing the affairs of this Church. He is inspiring the leaders of the Church. For forty odd years I have been in close contact with them. I have seen their lives, and I am here to testify to you that in guiding the affairs of this Church they have been led by the inspiration of the Almighty. We need have no fears as to the future of the work of the Lord, for it is his work and will triumph and I bear testimony to it in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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Of the First Council of Seventy

St. Paul said:

"For though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

"For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but-if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."

He leaves rather unsaid what he means by that significant remark: "If I preach not the gospel, then a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me."

But undoubtedly he implies that a very serious consequence would rest upon him if he failed in this mission that had been granted unto him.

I think very likely the contemplation of another prophet, who had

also been commissioned of the Lord to carry a message unto Israel in Babylon, will throw some light upon the subject.

Some time after the Babylonian captivity began the Lord called Ezekiel and sent him to Babylon to convey to Israel his mind and will. So Ezekiel departed on that mission. When he arrived in Babylon he seemed loath to undertake the responsibility. We are told that he sat by the river that ran through the city, doubtless in deep contemplation of the work before him. The Lord, it would appear, felt that he was somewhat delinquent in discharging the tremendous responsibility given him, so he spoke unto the prophet to this effect:

"Son of man, I have placed thee upon the watchtower and given thee my word unto Israel."

"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood will I require at thine hand.*

"Yet if thou warn the wicked man, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; *but thou hast delivered thy soul.*"

I think that in all probability this quotation from Ezekiel helps us to explain in something like fulness the words of Paul upon the subject of responsibility of those who receive commission and a mission from the Lord to the world.

For the few minutes that I address you I would like to make a somewhat wider application of this same principle that we see operating here in the case of individual prophets. Let us remember that responsibility can rest upon a people, a nation, or a church in the same manner that it can rest upon an individual. Israel demonstrates the truth of that statement. I mean the experience of the Hebrew nation; which people, after God had delivered them from Egypt, were called to be his witness in the earth—witness of his being and the kind of being he was, his character, his attributes; and also to be witness of his law which he revealed to them through Moses. The conditions making them his witness to the world were such that in any event they would be his witnesses. If by observing his law, keeping his commandments, and honoring him, then by a realization of the highest blessings that God could confer upon a people; they would be strengthened and upheld as a people especially blessed of the Lord. In the event of their failure to live up to the requirements of his law, and do honor to him, then such calamities would fall upon them as would testify of God's displeasure upon those who ignore his laws and commandments. And the Hebrew nation under these conditions has been a witness for God, perhaps the most remarkable miracle in all history. I remember that Bishop Joseph Lightfoot, a Christian Bible scholar of high standing of the last century, declared that men could disbelieve every other miracle in the Bible and yet the Hebrew nation would be the outstanding miracle of all miracles that are mentioned. The experiences through which they had passed; and they, we know,

have chiefly been witnesses of God through the things which they suffered because of their disobedience unto the Lord.

The full passage by Bishop Lightfoot is as follows:

"You may question, if you will, every single prophecy in the Old Testament, but the whole history of the Jews is one continuous prophecy more distinct and articulate than all. You may deny, if you will, every successive miracle which is recorded therein; but again, the history of the Jews is from first to last one stupendous miracle, more wonderful and convincing than all." (*Quarterly Review*, April, 1886).

But I want to apply this principle, introduced by Paul's statement, to a Church, more especially to our Church, in which the ends of the earth are met, being the Church of the new dispensation, the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, which shall include within it all previous dispensations, for in it shall be realized that refreshing that was promised by St. Peter when he said, the heavens would receive and retain Jesus Christ until the times of refreshing should come from the presence of the Lord, and Jesus Christ should be again revealed from heaven, made known to the people; and all things spoken by the mouths of the prophets from the beginning of the world should be gathered together into one, and be established in this great forth-coming dispensation (Acts 3:19-22).

This is the Church we are supremely interested in, this Church of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. God has committed to this Church his Gospel, his law. He has commissioned men and given unto the Church its organization wherein is his divine authority. He has commissioned this Church to preach the Gospel to every nation and kindred and tongue and people. And in a remarkable way he has made this Church the means through which he will instruct the world and administer to all men the ordinances of the Gospel. By reason of this large commission this Church extends its interests from the first dispensation to this last dispensation, from Adam until the present time. God has made it all inclusive. It therefore becomes the official exponent of the whole scheme of life and salvation that God has designed for the world, the advocacy of the truth; and the defense especially of God's revealed truth, is lodged with this organization together with the tremendous responsibility that goes with this divine commission.

Moreover, the Lord has given special instruction for our guidance, the guidance of his priesthood—how we may acquit ourselves and become efficiently instructed and prepared to discharge these high responsibilities. I want to call your attention to that.

Ninety-eight years ago a group of elders had assembled in Kirtland—they were waiting the coming on of a conference at which they were expected to receive organization and instructions to go out with the message of the Lord to the people in the country round about. Most of them had come in from missions. While thus in waiting they inquired of the Prophet for the word of the Lord respecting them and their future labors. It was on this occasion that the Lord gave

what to me is one of the most wonderful, as it is also one of the most beautiful, of our revelations. It seems that the Prophet was inclined to regard it somewhat in this light, for he named it "The Olive Leaf," because it was intended, in certain parts of it, to make reconciliation of differences that had sprung up between the elders down at Independence, Missouri, and the elders of the Church in Kirtland. Coming to that part of it which was to be instruction to this group of Elders, the Lord said to them:

"I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.

"And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another in the doctrine of the kingdom.

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory—"

They did not disregard theory. Some people are disposed to sneer at theoretical things, but the Lord required that these Elders should be instructed more perfectly in theory—

"—in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand.

"Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—"

And now observe this, I pray you. First, hold in your consciousness the width and length and height and depth of this great field of knowledge in relation to things of the past and the future; things to come; things of a national character; things in the earth itself, and under the earth. It seems to me that an effort was made to circumscribe the whole field of knowledge, human and divine; historical and philosophical. It is a tremendous designation of the field to be scored for knowledge of the things that are. And now, as I was about to say, mark the purpose of the instruction, for the paragraph continues:

"That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you."

And then later, by the way, I ought not to omit that, the Lord said:

"Verily I say unto you, my friends, call your solemn assembly, as I have commanded you.

"And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning even by study and also by faith."

You will observe that there are two sources mentioned here from which men may obtain learning and wisdom. One is through access to the treasures of knowledge by faith; but as all do not have that gift of obtaining knowledge by faith, then "seek ye wisdom from the

best books;" and of course there can be no possible objection to men thus instructed of the Lord obtaining wisdom both by faith and also by research in experimentation, and by becoming familiar with the great truths that are taught in the best books.

Well, that I think discloses somewhat the responsibility of the Church to become efficient as teachers of those truths which God has revealed, and also as to all truth, because I recognize the fact that the Lord from time to time has granted through his prophets, especially, great flashes of light that men call philosophical truth, as well as moral and spiritual truth and admonition. And I regard it the duty of the Church to represent and uphold and sustain in the exercise of the mission given to her of God the so-called philosophical truths of the revelations of God, as well as the important doctrinal truth and ordinances of the Gospel that he has restored. It is binding upon the Church, from my viewpoint, that she shall weave into beautiful harmony, as I believe it can be woven, the truth that God has revealed, and also those undoubted truths which men, and especially in this wonderful age, have been developing by their profound research and experimentations. A new world has opened to the knowledge of men in these last thirty years. It is called in their literature upon the subject, a New Renaissance, and that renaissance of knowledge has brought to the scientific and intellectual world and the philosophical world new conceptions in relation to the structure of the universe, and also its immensity, its almost unbelievable greatness. For now, whereas in past times we have spoken of the "solar system," we speak of that galaxy which we regard as constituting our universe—consisting of more than one billion blazing suns, and many thoughtful writers are ready to concede the possibility at least of these suns being the centers of opaque, circling planets, as is the case with our own sun, for our sun is like the other billions of suns that make up the galaxy. Now they burn holes into space by improved telescopes, supplemented by the great "photographic eye of science," the photograph-telescope, until a multiplicity of galaxies of blazing suns equal perhaps to our own galaxy, are to be found out in the depths of space, beyond the galaxy to which our solar system belongs.

And so this larger view of the universe, together with other discoveries in geology, the science of earth structure; and biology, the science of life; and in chemistry as well as in astronomy,—the ideas of men in the last thirty years have undergone a complete revolution you may say.

I am sorry to call attention to the fact, but I must needs do so, that while there are a few exceptions to the notion among scientific men, it is safe to say that the trend of intellectual thought and scientific investigation and deduction holds out the idea of the coming of a dead universe, and also it denies—this trend of thought—even the possibility or the desirability of individual immortality, even the immortality of the race. Of course if the universe is headed towards a complete universal deadness, all forms of life go into that universe;

and that is the trend, I wish to say, of scientific thought. Others, however, and some of them the most prominent in the intellectual life of our times, hold to the fact that as these blazing suns and many worlds that may attend upon them are wasting away, matter being annihilated, —contrary to the old philosophy—matter being annihilated, radiant energy is being developed in its stead. There are those who believe that radiant energy reaches a point at which it undergoes reconstruction, and that there is a building up of the universe, as well as a tearing down of it; but that is not the trend of scientific thought.

Now, in relation to these things, I can only say at this time that the prophet of God of this New Dispensation has announced this great principle as to the eternity of the universe, the immortality of individual men, as well as of races—he has given the world to understand through our Book of Mormon that there is a God in heaven who has created all things, things to act and things to be acted upon; and all the researches of the scientists bring us at last only to those two things the positive and negative, out of which the unexhaustive matter of the space depths is brought into tangible being and reality, and the great drama of creation goes on though there be disintegration of worlds and integration of them.

And so the Lord has made known unto his Church these great truths. It is my belief that the Church is the custodian of those great philosophical and scientific truths, and it is for us to be champions of those things and to harmonize them with the truths which men have discovered, that the truths of God may be vindicated.

This is our new field of labor, you may say, at the commencement of this second century of the existence of the Church. I believe it is up to us to fortify the youth of our people and our missionaries that they shall go out into the world with a knowledge of these things that are in fact included in that great commandment which God gave to his servant ninety-eight years ago, that they may go out efficient to meet the world in respect to all the truths that God has revealed, and the reasonable implications that grow out of them.

I pray you do not regard this as any attempt on my part to make any adequate statement of the development of the new knowledge of the world of the last thirty years. It is not so. I merely call your attention to this vast new field in which we ought to put our feet as far forward as any other people in the world, because we can do it with the assurance that God has revealed great truths in relation to these matters. So regard this, my brethren, as merely a mentioning of this broad field of which the ministry of the Church and the educational department of the Church should take notice.

May the Lord bless us, we men of the second century in the Church. May we discharge our duties and responsibilities as faithfully and as successfully as did the men of the first century. If we do that we shall stand without reproach, a light given of God to the world. May the Lord bless us to that end, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.