

ELDER JOHN A. WIDTSOE

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brethren and sisters, I pray that the Lord may guide me by his Holy Spirit so that my words may be edifying to all of us and in harmony with the Lord's desires.

AN OCCASION OF GREAT JOY

Despite the fact that I sense the tremendous responsibility of standing before this vast congregation I think there is no one here who is enjoying this conference more than I. Since my late boyhood I have sought to attend these conferences from year to year, and with considerable regularity I have been able to do so. Because of my absence in the mission field I have been able to attend only one of the last twelve general conferences of the Church; therefore I come to this conference hungry, hungry for the spirit that I feel comes to me from my fellow-believers, hungry for the word of God spoken from this pulpit.

I am grateful that I am a member of this Church, that I have a testimony of the truth of the restored Gospel, and I bear witness to the existence of God, the divine ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the divine, inspired mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

OUTPOURING OF SPIRIT IN MISSION FIELD

Do not misunderstand me. While I realize great joy in being present at this conference, I must say that in the small gatherings in the mission field we have similar outpourings of the Holy Spirit. At times it has seemed to me that the spirit that has moved upon those who have spoken and listened in the small gatherings in the mission field has been even stronger and more powerful, than we feel here at home. It often happens that, when far away from home, far from the sheltered protection of the temple, the tabernacle, and the stakes of Zion, we draw more heavily upon the spiritual forces about us. So, while I am glad to be here I bear witness to the splendid spirit that pervades the gatherings of the Saints in the mission field.

THOSE MAKING MISSIONARY SERVICE POSSIBLE

I have been thinking about the mission field during this conference. As I look back over the years spent there I seem to see first of all a group of people whom I scarcely know, the fathers and mothers, the brothers and sisters, other relatives and the friends who have made possible the service of the Elders in the field. There is no time, and here is perhaps not now the place, to tell of the rich incidents of sacrifice and love, almost divine love, that have led many of those whom I do not know—fathers and mothers and relatives—to give the necessary support to the Elders in the field. God bless them and be with them.

THE MISSIONARY—HIS DISCOVERIES AND GROWTH

When I think of the fine men and women missionaries with whom I

have labored, young, sturdy, honest, who desired to learn, and who learned to love God, I am proud of my association with them. I have seen them make the greatest discovery of all time. They have gone into the field largely uneducated in the things of the Church. I have seen them discover God. I have seen them discover Jesus Christ. I have seen them discover the Gospel, its virtue and truth. I have seen them discover their own place in the great plan of salvation, and I have seen them return to their homes matured in spirit and better able to carry on the great work that the Lord has established in these latter days.

THE SAINTS IN THE MISSION FIELDS

I think also of the Saints who constitute the membership of the missions in which I have labored—thirty thousand faithful men and women, trusting in God, bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel, feeling an assurance in their hearts that this is the truth, the great truth, the everlasting truth, the culminating truth of all the ages, who are making sacrifice in many ways to carry forward the work of the mission field. These brethren and sisters look upon us in the stakes of Zion as examples whom they should follow; and I trust that we are carrying that burden and accepting that responsibility, the challenge to be an example not only to the world but to our brethren and sisters who labor in behalf of the Lord's great cause far beyond the organized stakes and wards of Zion. I love those people as I love you here. They are battling for the truth on the outposts of Zion; they are extending the boundaries of Zion; they are fulfilling the prophecies under which we shall go forward until we cover the earth.

THE ETERNAL BATTLE

There is a new feeling towards us throughout the world. There is more tolerance, there is little persecution, as has been said by a number of speakers during this conference. Conditions have changed vitally, wonderfully, beyond the understanding of those who labored in the field a generation or two ago. But do not let us be deceived. It has been well pointed out here by other speakers that the eternal battle is still on between truth and error, between the Lord and the Evil One, the battle that will never end so long as men have their free agency, so long as error is possible, wherever there is truth. We have merely shifted our battle ground, we have merely changed our weapons. Three hundred years ago humanity fought with spears and shields. Today out of the sky poison gas and bombs are dropped on the unprotected cities below. Just so, in the mission field today, under the new conditions we must change our battle ground and the weapons that we use, but the battle goes forward.

The world is looking for that which we have to give them, though they know it not. I think that out of my experience in the mission field these last few years there comes as my deepest impression a feeling that the world is in sad need of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Men

walk in darkness, seeking for light, they desire righteousness, for a desire for light and truth is in the heart of every man. They walk in darkness, trying to find their way out, pleading often for help.

REFUSED ENTRANCE

I recall very distinctly the first experience I had as our ship touched British shores six years ago last December. The official of the British government who came on board to stamp our passports, to permit us to enter the country, when he came to me and my family and discovered what we were about, he refused us entrance. "I cannot permit you to enter; we do not want your kind of people in our country. We may tolerate the young Elders, but not you who are leaders." In the course of the conversation that followed—I must not take the time to detail it here—he said, "What do you intend to teach if I permit you to enter England?" I answered him, "We intend to teach the British people so far as we are able how to win happiness while they live on earth, and how to find happiness in the life to come. We intend to teach them the meaning of life, where they came from, why they are here, and where they are going."

VITAL QUESTIONS

Almost in a breath this official stamped the passports and said: "Now we are done with that. Let's talk about Mormonism. I belong to a church but I am dissatisfied with it. It does not answer the problems of my life. It does not answer the questions that lie within my soul. I want to hear your teachings. Can you really tell me whence I came? Can you tell me why I am here? Can you tell me where I am going, for I know that life upon earth will end?" He became a fast friend—a type of millions of people in the world today who walk in darkness, feeling the need of light. Our obligation is to these people the world over.

A PATHETIC CHAPTER

We seem to be writing today the most pathetic chapter in human history. We stand at the pinnacle of human achievement, every natural force is more or less under our control. We have the radio, the telephone, the electric light, types of a conquest undreamed of in the generations gone before; and yet we stand helpless from country to country, from ocean to ocean, before the means of supplying the common needs of mankind. We have harnessed the forces of nature but we are unable to apply them and use them to meet human needs. It is indeed a pathetic chapter that we are writing. As I have traveled among the nations I have become convinced that the trouble with the world is that it still relies upon man-made truth, man-made institutions, man-made methods of solving the problems of humanity.

ETHICS VERSUS RELIGION

We have had in the world throughout the ages two opposing types

of guides for human conduct. One we call ethics and the other we call religion. An ethical man is good because it pays him to be good; because it promotes the peace of the community. An ethical man is virtuous because otherwise he contracts disease, and disease, personal or community is not desirable. Such is ethics—calculating, selfish. Religion tells another story: I must be good because in the great economy of God, in the great program laid out for the salvation of humankind, in which I am involved with all my brethren and sisters, it is required that I must be righteous and virtuous. Obedience to the law leads to infinite results, both on earth and in the life to come. I must be virtuous, not merely because I protect myself, but because I live then in harmony with the greater law that proceeds from the author of law.

The world needs the flaming fire of religion to replace the dead husks of ethics with which the nations are attempting to rebuild the fallen structure of their governments. We have an N.R.A.; what we need is an S.R.A.—a spiritual recovery activity throughout the earth; and until we launch a campaign for spiritual recovery we shall not fully solve the problems that lie before us.

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION NECESSARY

This may seem far remote from the need of filling the mouths of hungry people; yet it is the only way by which we shall solve the problems of the world. The spiritual is ever greater than the material. The Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith: "All things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given you a law which was temporal." A study of the condition of the world today shows that we are depending upon temporal means and methods for restoring that which we have lost, for bringing to us that which we desire so much to achieve.

I stand here today with a simple message, an age-old message, which every speaker here has mentioned, that we must build from the foundation upward, upon a spiritual foundation which underlies everything that is beautiful, virtuous, and truthful.

THE COMMON MAN'S PROBLEM

Many men among us are hungry. The common man has decided that he shall have an equal opportunity with all other men so far as the common necessities of life are concerned. That is a real issue. The common man says, "I'll give my time, my strength, but in return I ask bread and shelter and clothing." The common man will win; but he can not wholly win until we get back to the spiritual background of the problem itself.

It is well enough to say that we will feed hungry people because thereby we shall be better off. That is ethics. However, the Lord has said: "Let every man esteem his neighbor as himself." That is quite a different proposition.

THE ONLY SOLUTION

There will be no solution to the disturbing problems now racking

the world until men learn to esteem their neighbors as themselves. It is a tremendous demand upon mankind. We of this Church must lead out in this as in other righteous matters. The revelations given by God to his people in these latter days must be taken at their face value. Our destiny is world leadership. There is much suffering among us, as I have discovered in the few months I have been home. I regret it, yet why should we not suffer? I was trained in chemistry in my young manhood and I still remember that to purify gold and other noble metals greater heat was necessary than to purify the ignoble metals. Perhaps we will have to go through a more fiery furnace because we are destined for leadership in the solution of the world's problems.

There is much to be said, but there are several speakers yet to come and my time is just about over. The present day offers great challenging subjects. This Church looks forward, builds upon the past, invades the future, builds here and builds there, upon eternal verities, upon spiritual foundations which God has revealed through his children.

GREATER THAN TRUTH

The Lord has given us an example that all the world can follow. A boy not quite fifteen years of age was troubled in his soul concerning the truth. He had a quality which redeemed him above many men. He had a surpassing love of truth in his heart. Perhaps I may not be misunderstood if I say that there is one thing in the world even greater than truth, and that is the love of truth. Without the love of truth men cannot prosper even in the possession of truth, and in fact never shall men possess truth fully, without the love of truth. This boy went into a grove to plead with Divinity for eternal truth, and God spoke to him, and also the Son of God spoke to him, and the foundations of the latter day work of salvation were laid. The authority of the Priesthood was restored. The wonderful gifts and blessings that the whole world is beginning to recognize as belonging to this people, were given through that initial act on the part of Joseph Smith.

EVERY MAN MAY KNOW FOR HIMSELF

In a conversation with one of my brethren a short time ago he said: "Well, Joseph Smith had a mighty vision, but it cannot be duplicated. I wish I could have it."

I stand here to declare to you, and there are thousands in this building who can voice the same declaration from their own experience, that every one of us, every human soul, may obtain the same testimony and the same conviction that came to the Prophet Joseph Smith as he knelt upon his knees praying in the sacred grove for light and truth. God may not come in person, but God has agents. His Holy Spirit has powers beyond our understanding, and it is possible for every man and woman to satisfy his and her mind and soul and being, every part of them, of the truth of this work. When men will do so within this Church, will seek to obtain this transcendent testimony, then this Church will assume

its rightful leadership. Indeed, it is already assuming the right to lead, modest and humble as the Church may be. When the world approaches upon its knees the Author of Truth with full love of truth in its heart, then shall humanity be able to build toward the perfection of which humanity dreams. There is no other way.

I bear you my testimony that this latter-day work is the truth, the eternal truth, and that only through this truth can man's happiness be won on earth or in heaven. May God help us to retain the truth in our hearts, to win it more completely, to live in accordance with it, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

An anthem, "And then shall the Light break forth," was sung by the Choir.

ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

My beloved brethren and sisters, I stand before you this afternoon to add my testimony to the testimonies that have already been given from this stand. It has been my pleasure during the last two and a half years to mingle my voice together with the voices of the other mission presidents who are sitting on the lower stand this afternoon, in promulgating the Gospel in the nations of the earth. We have taken your sons and daughters and with their aid have undertaken to introduce to the people who are not acquainted with us the principles and truths of the Gospel.

I wish to congratulate you upon the excellent material you have sent us in the mission field. They are wonderful young men and women. They come to us usually well established in the faith. However, occasionally there are men and women who come who might have been better prepared before leaving home. And we would appreciate it wonderfully if all these young people could be taught somewhat in the fundamental routine that they have to follow when they go into the field. It is a rare thing indeed, but it sometimes happens, that we have to teach these young men how to pray properly, how to ask a blessing on the food, and to do such simple things as they should be taught at home. If you would take that care and pains with your young men, all of them, I have no doubt but that it would establish them in the faith in such a way that when they come to us they would be all ready for service. It would help them wonderfully in the beginning of their mission.

Without exception it has been my experience that these men round to and leave their missions with strong and living testimonies, having done wonderful work. It has been one of the greatest experiences of my life to labor with these young people, and it is with somewhat of a reluctant spirit that I have surrendered the reins of the Mexican Mission to President Pratt who addressed you yesterday. However, we go and we come; when the President of the Church says go, we go; when he says come, we come, with equal good will. I trust that in the new labors