

## ELDER STEPHEN L RICHARDS

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou didst visit him?

For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his foot:

## MAN'S PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

Such is the tribute of the psalmist to the dignity, the nobility, the power, and the station of man in the universe.

How came man to this glorious place of distinction and majesty among all God's creations? The answer is in the delineation of his origin and history. Man, with Christ, was "also in the beginning with the Father." In his first estate, that is, before he came to this earth, his spirit was the literal child of God. "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee," declared the Lord to the Prophet Jeremiah. And in his second estate, which is mortality, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female, created he them." "And the Lord God created man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." Thus the eternal spirit of man became housed in a tabernacle of flesh in the likeness of the Father, and the sons of God began life upon the earth.

They were not menial nor of low or servile nature. They were of high estate, of the noblest lineage, endowed with the God-given gift of intelligence or the light of truth, the sublime and supreme investiture of both God and man, the eternal verity which "was not created or made, neither indeed can be." This intelligence not only gave man superiority over all other creations but, even more importantly, it brought him consciousness of his relationship to God and the world and envisaged for him the purpose and destiny of his life.

## POWER OF CHOICE A GIFT FROM GOD

With intelligence came a concomitant heritage equally essential to the eternal progress and development of man,—that of free agency, or the power of choice. For, "the Lord gave unto man that he should act for himself, wherefore men are free according to the flesh; \* \* \* they are free to choose liberty and eternal life through the great mediation of all men or to choose captivity and death according to the captivity and power of the devil." This power of choice is essential to our very existence for "it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men or they could not be agents unto themselves, for if they never should have bitter, they could not know the sweet." (Members of the Church will recognize these quotations.)

This theological doctrine of free agency which has been proclaimed

by our Church from its very beginning, this glorious concept of man's intelligence and his incomparable status in the universe, upon which more light and clearer explanation have come through the latter-day revelations of our Prophet than from any other source whatsoever, lie at the very foundation of, and indeed constitute the essence of the most discussed, the most contested, and the most priceless thing in the world today,—human liberty. It is as a premise to a few observations on this important subject that I have cited some of our doctrine.

#### LIBERTY ESSENTIAL TO MAN

Perhaps I should define liberty, but I do not propose to do so. I have heard many definitions but I need not choose among them. For our purposes here, everyone knows sufficiently well what liberty means. Every man senses it, which is infinitely more important than being able to formulate a definition. The more vital and less academic question is how to secure, defend, and preserve the liberty of mankind.

Now I maintain, simple and naive as it may sound to some, that the first and prime necessity in the accomplishment of this all important task is a definite and conscious understanding of two things: First, what is this man for whom liberty is so essential?—and second, what does one do with liberty when once acquired? With reference to the first item I believe I have given a summary of our doctrine from which it may be logically deduced that man is vastly greater and more important than anything else in the universe; that all other creations are designed primarily to serve his needs and purposes; that all institutions, ecclesiastical, civic, and social are but adjuncts and contributory to his progress and welfare; and that no government, no science, no art, no philosophy, and no order of society is greater than the intelligence and personality who invents, devises, executes, and maintains them. Even the Church, which is set up under decree of God, is not greater than man, for it is established merely to conserve the progress and welfare of man.

#### OPINION OF A NOTED AUTHOR

In this connection, I have read nothing more stimulating in a long time than Dr. Link's new book entitled, *The Rediscovery of Man*. I wish that everyone could read particularly the first chapter in which he decries that modern philosophy rampant throughout the world in the last several decades which has debased the noble concept of man as a son of God, the master of things and himself.

He begins by pronouncing Harvard University's Tercentenary Conference of Arts and Sciences held in 1936 the greatest tragedy of the age. Here the outstanding scholars of the world in profound deliberation reached the conclusion that while science had made great contributions to man's physical progress, "the automobile, the x-ray, insulin, and thousands of other things, but that the social studies \* \* \* had contributed little or nothing to man's understanding of himself," that the sciences "had given man a miraculous control over his physical environment" but

Thursday, April 6

First Day

"they had added practically nothing to his control of his personal and social behavior," and that "individuals were more at war with themselves, nations more liable to internal strife, and the world farther from international peace than before." "This," says Dr. Link, "was the gist of Harvard's celebration of its 300th year. \* \* \* Add to this the fact that Harvard was founded, like most of our historically great universities, by the religious leaders of the time to prepare students 'for public employment both in church and in state' and the tragedy is complete. Three hundred years of science and education, of emancipation from religion, and to what end?"

He answers his own question: "to the end that the true values of personality and character have been almost completely buried; that our educational system has become the most elaborate plan ever devised for obscuring the obvious and homely facts of life, to the end that we have created a complex system of ideas which, instead of helping mankind, threatens like a parasitic growth to kill the very civilization which it has produced." "A scientist like Alexis Carrel can write a book on *Man, the Unknown*—not because man is unknown, but because science has dismembered him almost beyond recognition."

Now my friends, these are the comments and conclusions of a scientist, a psychologist of great distinction with long years of training and a vast experience with individuals. Is it not time that there be reconstructed for the world the noble concept of man that makes him something more than a mere chemical automaton in a mechanistic universe with a defeatist philosophy that robs him of the highest incentives, the finer virtues, and self-control? I believe with Dr. Link that it is high time, and I thank God that there is an institution in the earth prepared and ordained to do just that thing for humanity. Only when it is done will the first sure foundation for liberty be laid.

#### FREE AGENCY EXERCISED THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

What, I ask again, are we to do with our liberty when once acquired and how shall we preserve it? Here, too, the answer comes from an adequate understanding of theological doctrines. Free agency is the inherent right of man. Through it he may exalt or condemn himself. He can exercise his power of choice intelligently and wisely only when he has knowledge of truth, because truth is the criterion by which his elections become good or bad, helpful or harmful to himself and his progress.

What is truth? Here I must give you an inspired definition, a definition that came from an unsophisticated boy-prophet, but one which rivals the definitions of the greatest scholars and of all time. "Truth," says Joseph Smith, "is the knowledge of things as they are and as they were, and as they are to come." How is such knowledge to be obtained? Through science and education? Yes, in part, but not wholly. And why not completely? Because most of the knowledge of things "as they were" and things that "are to come" are without the realm and province of science, as well as much knowledge of "things as they are." Science,

then, can give us but fragments of truth, not the whole truth. And the whole truth is necessary if we are to be provided with proper criteria by which to do our choosing.

#### FAITH THE KEY TO KNOWLEDGE

How, then, is the whole truth to be secured? The key is to be found in another revelation, "the spirit of truth is of God." That being so, we must, of necessity have God's aid in the acquisition of truth. His aid comes through faith and prayer. Faith contemplates the acceptance of the spiritual reality of a world outside the domain of science. It involves methods and processes different from those of scientific research. It postulates humility and dependence on divine power, the antipathies of egotism and self-sufficiency. A contrite heart is the fertile field for planting the seeds of truth. In such a field they come to fruition in a knowledge, understanding, and conviction of the great concepts of life which defy the reason and philosophy of the arrogant, and self-sufficient, who will not stoop to the methods of the humble.

#### TRUTH AND LIBERTY

What, then, has truth to do with liberty? Jesus gave the answer when he said to his disciples, "and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Free from what? Free from all unrighteousness and every sort of bondage that inhibits the growth and progress of the race. It requires but a moment's consideration for any sane, logical person to reach the conclusion that there is no freedom and no liberty worth striving for and preserving that does not contemplate the exercise of free agency in truth, in virtue, and in righteousness. Any other hypothesis would mean complete frustration and ruin. This is the second foundation for liberty.

What then is the application of these doctrines to conditions in the world today? I believe it to be this: that no nation under heaven can successfully preserve this great boon of liberty and freedom unless the people of that nation have a truthful conception of the status of man in the earth and also an adequate understanding of the exercise of the options and powers of free agency in conformity with the standards of righteousness. So surely as either of these concepts shall vanish, will bondage ensue. And this applies with equal force to the enlightened of the world as to those in darkness, as witness the countries of Europe today. Philosophies are more potent than armies in the progress of civilization. "As a man thinketh, so is he," and a nation is but an aggregation of men. Too often we think we think enmasse,—but we don't,—there is no mass mind,—only that of the individual. That is why personal-ity is so important to the happiness and peace of the world. You just have to make enough good men, and society and nations are good.

#### TRUE LIBERTY AND INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT

Now I scarcely need say that having great concepts in the abstract is sufficient. As a matter of fact, great concepts are really not acquired in

the abstract. True philosophy comes out of life and living, and truth becomes part of us only as it is incorporated in our habits. Individual strength to acquire the truth is what every man needs. No one can do it for another. It is so with liberty. We usually speak of it as a heritage from the fathers,—something handed down to us. It is more accurate to say that the opportunity to acquire liberty is passed on to us, for true liberty is a personal achievement, as I have tried to point out to you.

I am sure that it is regrettable and a point of real hazard to individual liberty that in many countries, even to some extent in our own beloved America, there is a clearly discernible tendency to relieve people of responsibilities which they have long been accustomed to bear and to extend paternalistic solicitude and care to vast portions of the population. However well intentioned such policies, I am confident they are destined to result in weakening of moral fiber, increased dependencies, and, more importantly and worse than all, eventually, a destruction of the fundamental concepts and philosophies that have been responsible for the progress of humanity in the world.

#### THE MISSION OF THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS

What, then, shall we do about it? I think our mission is clear. We are to go forth, not boastfully, but confidently, to deliver our message of truth to our fellowmen. To give the message, we must live it and we must truly love those to whom we are sent.

Let us never forget that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Leader and Exemplar. There must be no bitterness in our hearts and no harsh judgment for any of our Father's children. Mercy, kindness, tolerance, and love are the passwords that shall open our way into the hearts of men. Of this I am confident: if we love them enough, they will receive us. When they do and when we become qualified to deliver the truth in the spirit of Christ, then will peace and righteousness and liberty be secure. God grant this happy consummation, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

An anthem, "O Morn of Beauty" (Sibelius) was sung by the *Singing Mothers* (Soloist, Mrs. Margaret Marchant).

#### ELDER LeGRAND RICHARDS

##### *Presiding Bishop of the Church*

My brethren and sisters: For a number of years it has been my privilege to appear before you in these conference meetings as a mission president of the Church. In that assignment, and the fulfilment of the duties and obligations in connection therewith, I found exceeding great joy. I love the missionary work of the Church and the privilege it affords of bearing testimony of the restoration of the Gospel, and of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the accomplishments of this great organization.