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Many thoughtful persons in these days are urging a return to the virtues and the way of life of former days. It is their contention that the worth-while things for which America stands are attributable in large measure to the concepts and stability of the founding fathers, and to the persistence of these concepts through the passing years.

A RETURN TO FUNDAMENTALS ESSENTIAL

Some of these students and observers, and they are the ones who arrest my attention and most command my admiration, go so far as to assert, and I think with deep conviction, that it is not only necessary to return to the original principles and ways of work and living, but that we must also recapture the spirit, the faith, and the reverential devotion of our forebears if we are to sustain the drive that will make America achieve her high and glorious destiny. Some are far-seeing and penetrating enough to realize that the principles of liberty and equity and justice incorporated into the institutional make-up of our country were but the expression of the deep-seated personal convictions and concepts of God-ordained righteousness, purity of life and fair dealing which characterized many of the most influential and contributive groups in our history. There are some among these observers, but not all, who are frank enough to accord to religion a major part in the formulation and maintenance of the salutary principles which support American spirit and enterprise. Some plead for more religion, but many are vague as to the method by which our spiritual and moral values may be restored.

I agree that a return to many fundamental principles and practices is essential. I am sure that it is an error to discard time-tested doctrines or procedure merely because they are old. I believe that the soundest growth and evolution come from building on solid and tested foundations. He is reckless who disregards the lessons of experience.

The evidence is abundant to show that we have strayed far from many fundamental conceptions of right and good. I refrain from mentioning governmental policies or tendencies because of political implications. I call attention to those moral and spiritual values which so deeply affect the happiness and welfare of the people and which, in my judgment, are vital to the attainment of true freedom and peace in the world.

A DECLINE IN SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE CONTRACT EVIDENT

Perhaps the first and most striking evidence of departure from time-honored traditions is in the deterioration of the American home. Much has been said on this subject and it is not necessary to go into detail. There is ample justification for the assertion that the marriage compact has in large measure ceased to be a holy sacrament, as it was once so generally regarded, and that it has been perverted and prostituted in millions of cases to selfish and unworthy purposes. Even among those who would

still retain a vestige of its sanctity there are thousands who have perverted the holy ceremony until it has become, as one New York clergyman of long experience characterized it, a "paganistic pageantry" completely overshadowing the spiritual and divine with an ostentatious display of wealth and vanity.

That the holding power in the marital contract is declining year by year is evidenced by the ever-increasing number of divorces, and that the home is fast ceasing to be an expression of high idealism and duty to God and society is manifest in the absence and fewness of children, particularly in those families which by reason of heritage and out of every sense of gratitude and obligation are definitely charged to perpetuate the race of men in whose bloodstream flows the purest concept of liberty to be found in this world. I don't know how it may be with others, but I feel outraged with the disgrace and stigma heaped upon our land by the prostitution of the holy covenant of marriage so widely advertised in the public press—four, five, six and seven marriages undertaken by so-called celebrities within the space of a few years.

These are not marriages within any decent interpretation of that honored and hallowed word. They are arrangements under the sanction of ill-considered laws for purposes which forbid description; yet these nefarious arrangements are publicized together with their salacious dis-solutions as well in glaring headlines all over the country for the edification of our youth, who in many instances have been attracted and allured by the glamour of these "celebrities." Is it any wonder that the problems and vexations of good parents are multiplied? One would think that an enlightened press with concern for the country's welfare would find other means of handling such questionable "news." There is a strong temptation to enlarge on the evidences of disintegration of our most basic institution, but I must pass to other trends.

PURITY OF LIFE DEFINED

From the large number of reports which have come to us in recent months indicating increased moral delinquency and from observations extending over a much longer period of time, I think we are safe in saying that purity of life is on the wane and this in spite of numerous scientific advances made in the preservation of health. Purity of life is something more than good diet and immunity from disease. It contemplates a wholesome and reverential respect for the body of man. It looks upon the physical equipment of man as an instrumentality for the achievement of high and noble purposes, not disassociated from the spiritual. It regards pollution of the body as an offense, not alone against health but against the sublime objective of bodily creation. The taking of poison in the form of narcotics and unnecessary stimulants and a wasting of bodily energy in unworthy pursuits all militate against the pure life.

With a deterioration of the pure life, self-control, one of the vital components of character has weakened. Resistance to temptation and to the urge of the passions is growing noticeably less. Self-indulgence and

the craving of new means for such indulgence have become dominating motives with altogether too many of the people. This has frequently resulted in the enervation of the rich and the dismay of the poor. The struggles and deprivations incident to the war effort may have done something to retard the advance of these tendencies, but one cannot help but feel that with the removal of the deterrent the old urges for self-gratification would return with increased intensity.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE WANING

It has long been pointed out that religion as a motivating force has declined. In many decades a smaller and smaller proportion of the people are even exposed to religious influence. Churches and Sunday Schools throughout the nation have gradually but constantly decreased in attendance proportionate to the growth of population. The schools have been so completely divorced not only from religious control but from all religious and spiritual influence that they never even have prayer in any of their exercises except for graduation. Just why they see fit to call for divine favor at graduation and not for any other occasions I have never been quite able to understand.

Humanism, skepticism, and atheism have probably grown with the years, although I do believe that in recent times they have not had the comfort and encouragement from science that they were once supposed to receive. Modernists, cults and societies, seeking to explain the phenomena of life, man and the universe in every way other than the plain and simple way in which the Author of the universe explains it, have sprung up in such numbers and with such varied philosophies as utterly to confuse the youth of the land and all others who do not have the good fortune to have their feet planted on the solid ground of truth.

I have mentioned but a few of the many symptoms of society which indicate to the thoughtful observers a great need for a reappraisal of the values in life and for the reestablishment of the verities which have served as guiding posts in human progress. I do not know what proportion of the students of our society think that a return to tested principles is the vital need but I do know that whatever their proportion may be I agree with them. It may seem strange but it is nevertheless true that the only department of research and scientific endeavor in which man has made little or no progress during the past several centuries has been in the realm of human relations. Certainly, as one author puts it, he is just as much or more disposed to fight with his neighbors today as he was three hundred years ago. Present conditions are a most persuasive and cruel attestation of that fact. I believe that some of those who urge a return to fundamentals do so largely because they have despaired of finding anything new that is better than the old.

SAFE LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

Now, my brethren, I have presented these observations to you because I want to ask a question. This is the question. If it is necessary to

revert to such fundamental concepts, principles, and ways of life as were once upheld and practiced by the founders of our country and the builders of our nation in order to continue its progress and to achieve its most worthy ambitions; if it is necessary to go back in order to go forward, who, I ask, who is to lead the way? Whom have we in America who are most thoroughly converted to the concepts and institutions that have made for her greatness? Who have the firmest convictions of the sanctity and function of the home and of the perpetuity of the marriage compact, not only as the source of domestic felicity here in this life, but for enduring happiness in the life to come? Whose doctrines are best fitted for the qualification of parents and for the nurture and equipment of children? What group in our society have striven most for the attainment of the pure life and demonstrated most effectively their belief in the sanctity of the body as the tabernacle of the spirit? Who have stood most adamantly against the incursion of immorality and a double standard of living among men and women? Who in our country have the most enlarged and authentic vision of her destiny? Is there a leadership available in America who knows without guessing what her destiny is and precisely how it is to be achieved? I know and you know, my brethren, where that leadership exists, and we know that leadership is divinely charged to direct men in our own country and elsewhere to the principles of truth and rectitude which alone can make for happiness in the earth.

I say it with some hesitation because I am loathe to give offense to anyone, but I am convinced that there is no other leadership in this entire country, nor in this world which is adequate to bring people everywhere to God, righteousness and truth. This is so, not because the personalities which comprise this leadership have greater inherited or acquired intelligence, nor more secular knowledge, nor more wealth, influence, and talent than their fellows in the citizenry of the world, nor is it because of the power of their numbers. This leadership comes through two circumstances, first from the revelation of pure knowledge about man and the universe, and secondly, from divine commission to guide men to the truth.

There is no time today even to review the concepts, interpretations, and principles revealed with the restored gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which provides leadership for the world. Suffice it to say that they cover and make provision for every aspect of human life and endeavor. They amplify, confirm, and revitalize the principles of life taught by the Savior of the world in His ministry among men. They define with a clarity never before available the nature of the fatherhood of God and the sonship of man and the brotherhood of humanity. They resolve the issues of authority. They expound the true principles of government; they glorify learning; they debase ignorance; they extol wisdom; and they extend the vision of man to the most glorious destiny finite understanding has ever conceived. They give to man the dignity, the majesty, and the divine status that furnish the foundation for the most exalted conceptions of liberty and freedom that the world has known.

And with these lofty concepts and enlightening principles has come the divine delegation of Christ's power to administer his gospel among those who accept him. This investiture of authority is carefully and fully defined. It becomes effective in those only who subscribe to the high principles upon which it is founded. Being a principle of truth it flows through those vessels only whose lives conform to truth. This power is mightiest in the humblest, like the Savior who bestowed it. Its possessor must be the servant of all.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST THE NEED OF THE WORLD

Now, you and I know that, stripped of all circuitous and evasive verbiage, the return which our country needs to make to reacquire faith, courage, and integrity to carry forward is a return to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know that this nation was conceived in Christian righteousness, and we know that our troubles will pass only as and when we consciously adopt as the criteria for all our acts, national and individual, principles of truth enunciated in the gospel of our Lord.

I am trying to believe that when our fellow citizens, as well as countless others in the world, perceive the efficacy of true Christian principles as they are adopted in the lives and living of individuals and communities, many will be persuaded by such a demonstration to yield their lives to the truth of Christ. In our own country there are many thousands of thoroughly good men and women who are watching closely what they regard as our experiment. Many know what we teach and what we say. They are waiting to see whether or not our deeds accord with our professions.

It will not be necessary to have an election to determine who takes moral and spiritual leadership of our country. Our own living and righteous accomplishments will decide that matter. God has called us and set us apart for a purpose. We need never fear that when our solidarity, our virtue, our knowledge, and our goodness are sufficient that there will be provided the means and facilities to advertise our accomplishments and our principles to the world. That will bring leadership.

Today mankind, as probably never before, needs the gifts of the Gospel—wisdom, discernment, vision, and comfort. These precious things come only from good living and prayerful hearts. If, as a nation, we cannot maintain faith, there is little hope for us. We had a lecturer in our city a few weeks ago who held out the view that the world is fast approaching a gigantic competition—a competition that will eventually envelop all nations and peoples—a competition of ideologies which in essence resolves itself into an issue between the liberty of democracy and the power of the totalitarian state. He thought that America would inevitably be the supreme exponent of individual freedom, but he cautioned that in this great contest we should have a poor chance to win the favor and allegiance of the many nations who are expected in the future under the right of self-determination to choose their forms of government if we did not demonstrate more adequately than we have done in the im-

mediate past the virtues and efficacy of democracy. He urged a speedy return to the faith of our fathers and to the restraint and disciplines which a righteous self-control imposes upon us.

When lawlessness is advertised as our national characteristic and the nudity of Hollywood is a pictorial representation of America in the battle camps of the world, it is not too likely that the serious-minded people of the earth will choose us as their prototype of good government and a sound society. God grant that the return to wisdom and righteousness through national repentance for which Lincoln and Washington so earnestly pleaded shall come quickly before it is too late, and God grant that the leadership which He has chosen may be prepared to show the way I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.

First Counselor in the First Presidency

To you, brethren and sisters, and friends, who are listening in on the air, I would like to say: We who are privileged to assemble in this house sincerely pray that the peace of spirit, the spiritual uplift, which has been with us here, has, in measure at least, gone out over the wires to enhearten, to uplift, and to encourage all of the membership of the Church.

The congregation sang the hymn, "O Ye Mountains High"—Words by Charles W. Penrose (L.D.S. Hymns No. 338).

Elder John B. Matheson, President of the Riverside Stake, offered the closing prayer.

Conference adjourned until 2 o'clock p.m.

SECOND DAY

AFTERNOON MEETING

The fourth session of the great Conference was held in the Tabernacle Friday afternoon, April 7, at 2 o'clock.

President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., who was conducting the meeting announced that the services would begin by the congregation singing the hymn, "Do What Is Right" (L.D.S. Hymns No. 185).

Elder Richard P. Condie conducted the singing. Elder Wade N. Stephens was at the organ.

Elder William S. Erekson, President of the Cottonwood Stake, offered the opening prayer.

The congregation then sang the hymn, "God Moves In A Mysterious Way,"—Words by William Cowper (L.D.S. Hymns No. 49).