

blessings. This is my humble prayer, and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ELDER MARVIN O. ASHTON

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I know of no one whom I would rather follow than Oscar Kirkham. I remarked to Bishop Wirthlin, who sat next to me tonight, as soon as I felt a little relaxation go through the audience a few moments ago, "There is a different feeling here tonight. We are not under such a strain when we are not 'on the air.'"

Much has been said today about prayer, including the last few remarks of Brother Kirkham's. I have never bragged about how much praying I do, but if there is any time I do pray, and pray fervently, it is during conference time—and you know why.

I thought President McKay had some inspiration when he used to announce the speaker, and then say who was to follow. As far as I am concerned, if he wanted to say who was on deck as the third one up, I would say he had still more inspiration. I do not know if anybody has had the courage to tell it to him, but I am telling it to him right now.

A TIME FOR FERVENT PRAYER

As one looks out of his window into the world today, he sees things to criticize, and if you please, persons to criticize as he never did before. It does not take very much intelligence to tell what is the matter with the world, here, there, and everywhere. Brother Kirkham has given you four rules of good procedure in life. I would like to give you two which I am sure will "dovetail" into his sound advice. First, *now* is the time when we ought to say our prayers fervently; second, *now* is the time to do our own thinking. I say that with as much fervor as I know how to say it.

Tonight as I speak I would like to feel perfectly free. I am going to speak as I would like to speak, and trust that I will be understood. It will be a kindness of you who are here if you will take what I say in the spirit it is given. I trust that what I say will be tempered with good judgment so that I will not be embarrassed, nor embarrass the good brethren I love.

"BOWLEGGED" THINKING

Someone who has been championing very fervently the Word of Wisdom—and I mean *championing*—made this remark the other day. I shall give you his exact words, "I wonder if it wouldn't be a good thing now for us to let up a little on the Word of Wisdom and preach *honesty*."

Now don't get excited; let's stay with the Word of Wisdom. As I go about the Church from stake to stake, if there is any-

thing for which I take off my coat and for which I unmercifully fight it is the Word of Wisdom. I won't say *let us let up* on the Word of Wisdom, but this observation relative to old-fashioned integrity sticks to me!

I suppose there never was a time when we gave more thought to our diet. We want it to be balanced. We want it to have the right calories. I suppose it is very important that our diet be well balanced, that in what we eat, there shall be the different elements to take care of the different needs of the body, for energy, heat, and tissue. If a person doesn't get a proper diet, he may die of partial starvation or what they choose to call it these days *malnutrition*. A person may stuff himself with potatoes, but if this were his only diet, he would soon be in bad shape.

I remember in Scotland when I was on a mission, I stood at the corner one day and saw one of their public schools let out for noon recess. I saw many a little child hobble along the streets with his little legs so bowed that a good-sized pig could run straight through without touching either leg. What was the trouble? *Partial starvation*. Tea and cookies and cookies and tea! Does our thinking, because it is not balanced properly, sometimes suffer in the same way? In plain American English—is our thinking bowlegged? Or to be more frank, do some of us get on the horse of tithing and ride it to death? Do some of us sit astride the *genealogy steed* and ride it till its tongue hangs out? Do some of us ride the *welfare pony* until it is covered with lather? Do some of us think of nothing but the Word of Wisdom, or prayer, and forget the other things necessary to make a real citizen and, if you please, a real Latter-day Saint? Brigham Young said at the time of the Indian wars, "Brethren, say your prayers, but keep your powder dry!" Could a good-sized pig run through our thinking without touching either leg? In other words, do we "strain at gnats and swallow camels": Do we think bowlegged?

If there is anything that the Lord has held important in our lives, it is that we be honest. Nothing in history has been awarded much greater punishment than dishonesty. To illustrate: The story of Ananias and Sapphira. Things were held in common. As a member of the Church would sell his property, he would turn in all the money to this common fund or storehouse. Ananias and Sapphira connived together that they would have the reputation of giving their all and yet would have the pleasure of retaining some of the money. When confronted by Peter, Ananias, as he put his cash on the counter, represented to Peter that was all. Well, the story was short. As a reprimand from the heavens, they carried him out a dead man. An hour or so later, Sapphira, not knowing what happened, did as good a job of lying as her husband. She was carried out a dead woman. Well, this was quite a lesson. Now, the thinking of Ananias and Sapphira wasn't bal-

anced. They were inconsistent. In other words, these good people were thinking *bowlegged*.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AGED

Probably there is nothing that illustrates what I am trying to emphasize better than the length to which people are going these days to get on the relief rolls. Now, I know I am treading on dangerous ground, especially if I get into the realm of the old-age pensions. I am going to observe very carefully and watch every step I make. A civilization is marked by its attitude toward the aged. May it never be said of me that I wasn't thoughtful of the old. You know, after all we are all going to be old some day or die in the attempt!

That which we mete out to the old may sometime be meted out to us. We should be most concerned about our fathers and mothers, our grandfathers and our grandmothers. I often think of the story in the old reader of the grandfather who ate in a dark corner of the kitchen by himself while the rest of the family partook of the better food at a well-spread table. The young son about four or five years of age was seen whittling away on some boards. The father of the lad was inquisitive: "Johnnie, what are you doing?" came the question. The answer came quickly, "Dad, I am making a *trough* for you so when I get to be a man, it will be all ready!"

DISHONESTY IN PENSION MATTERS

When our legislature passed the old-age pension, they wanted to be kind and were probably justified in their action, but the point I am trying to emphasize is the misrepresentation that some of our people stoop to, even those over sixty-five, and for that matter, before they are sixty-five!—to get this free money. Some of them are downright dishonest. To put it plainly, they are eligible for membership in the "Ananias and Sapphira Club." Let me illustrate what I mean:

Sometime ago in an investigation we found seven people with rather sacred Church responsibilities, with compensation, where they were getting old-age pensions as well as the salary mentioned. They were hiding the facts from those who should know. Sometime ago we discovered a man working for us at our office getting the salary from us and an old-age pension at the same time, and yet that brother, I am sorry to say, had the gall to go to his quorum meeting Sunday mornings pretending to be a Saint! Sometime ago in visiting one of the stake conferences, I found people enjoying old-age pensions who had turned their property over to their son or sons in order to be eligible for old-age pension, and last year their farm produced \$10,000.00 worth of apples! I ask these people, whose thinking, I'm sure, is suffering from

malnutrition, what kind of God in heaven do they think they are worshiping who could look down and smile at all that? Years ago, as a boy, I remember father always went to the market to buy his hay by the wagon load. That is the way hay was sold, in the bulk. If a farmer were unscrupulous enough to add water to the hay before it was sold, he might get away with it. A farmer of this particular kind was heard to call out into the yard, "John, put another dozen buckets of water on the hay and come in to prayers." That poor fellow was not thinking straight. Neither are the members of our Church who get on these relief rolls under false pretenses! Bobby Burns, the Scotch poet, put it very aptly, "The man of independent mind looks and laughs at a' that."

"Consistency, thou art a jewel!" Yes, folks, while our missionaries are out in the world, trying to bring honest souls into the Church, some of us at home are doing this kind of thinking. While they are giving a good pail of milk, we, at home, are kicking it over! What do people think of the rest of us when we are so inconsistent?

HONESTY ENJOINED

Not too long ago I went to a stake consisting of six wards, where we found one hundred fifty families on relief, notwithstanding this was more of an agricultural area with business augmented by war industries—peaches, \$3.00 a bushel, other crops accordingly—this was the condition we found. It seems to us that often no consideration is given from where the money comes or how long the government can stand such a strain. The only thing in which they are interested is *self*, or in other words, "The government can go to the devil, but I am going to get mine!" Is this the stuff that built up America? Is this the mettle that killed the snakes and made the desert blossom as a rose?

It is a question oftentimes of degree—how far we should go into these things. Let us, as members of the Church, be fair to one another—to use the rough expression—let's not pass the buck! Let's face the truth if it kills us! The trouble is not alone with others as it is with ourselves. Let's be frank and diagnose our own case and we will get better that much quicker than we will by evading the truth. Sometime ago, in visiting a stake, I took occasion to read the reports showing how much hard liquor was consumed in that stake. A member of the stake presidency was indignant at the figures and refuted something like this: "We would have Brother Ashton understand that the only reason so much liquor is consumed in our stake is that we have so many hunters coming from Salt Lake." Brothers and sisters, let's not fool ourselves. If the shoe fits, let's wear it.

Sometimes we are like a horse that isn't bridle-wise, when we pull the left rein, the horse goes headlong to the left and if

we pull the right rein, he goes headlong to the right. One time, I had a little mare that tipped us over in the ditch because she wasn't bridle-wise. And the sad part of it is that men who hold public offices and should know better, even encourage this careless handling of the truth. When we find out what kind of fellows they are, if we would just kiss them good-bye, we would be wise.

If you think I am trying to talk politics tonight, you are sadly mistaken. I have enough to answer for without that. I thought Brother Bennion was very brave today. I would not be as brave as he, but he got away with it all right. I am not talking politics. I did not say a Democrat was honest, and a Republican was not, or vice versa. I am going to keep right out of that. What I am trying to do is to talk honesty. The sad part of it is that these fellows in office, whether it be now or two years ago, or four years hence, or whatever you wish to call it, pretend to be our friends, and they forget all about what honesty is. When you get a fellow like that kiss him good-bye, but do it as quickly as you possibly can.

APT ILLUSTRATIONS

Years ago a contractor told me a story, along this line, that I shall never forget. It may have its application right here. The assets of a ranger were largely his sheep. The old gentleman had three sons, one of whom was supposed to be one of those fellows who were not too bright. The rancher died, and the thing now to do was to divide the estate which, as stated, was largely sheep. The two older boys connived together. They would abide by the wishes of their father before his death, and yet very decidedly they wanted the best of the bargain and pooled their interests against their simple young brother. As the sheep were to be divided, they thought they would make three pens, putting in each pen a third of the sheep. By the way, this little fellow who was thought not to be too bright had a pet sheep that, like Mary's little lamb, its fleece was white as snow and every where the boy went, this lamb was sure to go. He loved it very dearly. He thought so much of it that he decorated it with a blue ribbon. He fondled it and caressed it. Now, the two older boys thought they would capitalize on the love of the boy for the animal. They proceeded accordingly. Into the center pen of these three pens they had constructed, with the dividing of the sheep, they put all the gummers, all the runts and all the shabby sheep. Of course, they watched that the number was the same in each pen, but into this pen of the culls, they put the pet lamb with the blue ribbon around his neck. Now, it doesn't take much reasoning to follow the philosophy of such a wonderful division of the father's assets. Now, they said to their weak-minded brother, "Willie, you may take your pick." Willie did just exactly what they thought—

he made a bee-line for the pen wherein bleated the pride of his heart—his pet lamb. He opened the gate, rushed in, put his arms around his pet lamb and said something like this, "My dear little lamb, we have been friends a long while. I have called and you have come and because of my affection for you, I have put a blue ribbon around your neck. I loved no one of the fold as I loved you, but," he added, "my dear, when you associate with a bunch like this, this is where we must say good-bye." Yes, if we would say good-bye to some of these fellows who are supposed to be our pets, we would make this a better America!

Some of our citizens are hanging on to what they can get like bloodsuckers! It isn't a question of "what should I give to my country," but "how much can I bleed her?" "The other fellow is getting his, I am going to get mine!"

Let us teach our children *honesty!*

When Abraham Lincoln found that damaged book in the crevice of the logs, he did not need to run to the owner and say, "I will make that up in split rails," but he *did!* When he found a shortage of tea, he did not have to walk five or ten miles to make it right, to be forgiven, but he *did!* When he was a lad of nine or ten, his mother put her arms around him and said, "Abe, leave that stuff alone"—*whiskey*. When he was elected President of the United States, he could have had champagne, but he put a big pitcher of water — Adam's ale — on the table as much as to say, "If you don't like that, you can lump it." In other words, the seeds of his mother's teachings bore good fruit.

CHILDREN TO BE TAUGHT EARLY IN LIFE

Let us start early. The python egg is as innocent looking as an hen's egg, but out of it comes the reptile that grows as big as your leg and hangs from the first tree and strangles its victim, whether it be man or beast. *Let's crush the egg of dishonesty before it hatches!*

Now, I just want to say this in closing. Bishop Richards was very frank today in telling what some of our young people are doing. It comes to me from many directions that sometimes young people think that so long as they do not drink tea or coffee, nor smoke, they can get away with anything. Some of the soldier boys say some of them will not do some of these things, but "we can get what we want." That is a bad situation. Am I too frank? I am going to say what I have said before: I do not want my children to drink tea nor coffee, but I would rather have them take a bath three times a day in coffee and lap it up as they swim in it than to *lie!* To repeat, the Lord expressed himself along this line very emphatically. The occasion I have mentioned: He was in favor of a double funeral in the Ananias family. You cannot do very much with a liar. The Lord won't have him, and if I were

the devil I would not have him either, because I would be afraid of being double-crossed.

May the Lord help us to be consistent. May he help us to think straight. Let's remember that "an honest man is the noblest work of God." The closing remarks of President Grant's message to us at this conference pleaded with us to think soundly. May the Lord help us to be consistent in our thinking, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH F. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church

Inasmuch as this is a priesthood meeting, and inasmuch as at our last semi-annual conference I spoke at the priesthood meeting, this was the one session at which I expected to be comfortable. I have learned another lesson in jumping at conclusions.

Since this is a priesthood meeting, if I may have the assistance of my Father in heaven, I should like to attempt, at least, to make a few observations that may answer some queries you have, and I feel safe in assuming that some of these queries are common, because of the frequency with which they have been put to me.

THE NECESSITY FOR WITNESSES

Oliver Cowdery occupied a unique position in the Church. He was called to be a special witness, and that is according to law. The Lord has said time and again that his word is to be established in the mouths of two or three witnesses. It is significant that the Prophet Joseph Smith did not receive the priesthood by himself, but he, together with Oliver Cowdery, received the priesthood, and it was Oliver Cowdery's calling to bear witness to these things.

The Savior himself, according to the law, required a witness, and his Father in person, bore witness to the divinity of his Son. Together they appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith. You will find ample Biblical support for the necessity of witnesses.

Oliver Cowdery did not remain faithful, and his position was given to Hyrum Smith.

And again, verily I say unto you, let my servant William be appointed, ordained, and anointed, as a counselor unto my servant Joseph, in the room of my servant Hyrum, that my servant Hyrum may take the office of Priesthood and Patriarch, which was appointed unto him by his father, by blessing and also by right; That from henceforth he shall hold the keys of the patriarchal blessings upon the heads of all my people. That whoever he blesses shall be blessed, and whoever he curses shall be cursed; that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Doc. & Cov. 124:91-93.)