

Destruction, hunger, and anxiety are on every hand. Many of our Saints are without home or country—refugees fleeing the terrible aftermath of war and the ravages of fiends in human form. In the midst of all this there is but one soul-satisfying refuge, the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Never has there been more heartfelt gratitude for membership in the Church than now. The sweetness of the gospel is appreciated more fully. The faith of the Saints is stronger than ever before.

Everywhere in war-torn Europe, the faithful members of the Church, bereft of earthly material positions, face the future with courage undaunted. This is in great contrast to the melancholy, suicides, and discouragement all around them. Members are volunteering to do missionary work. They are sustaining each other and are anxiously willing to give their all toward the establishment of the kingdom of God in the earth. In this and in all other activities in the interest of the Saints and the Church as a whole, our Latter-day Saint servicemen have and are rendering immeasurable service.

Nowhere in all the world do members love and sustain their Church leaders more wholeheartedly than here. Never have the songs of Zion and especially "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet," been sung with more soul-stirring fervor. Yes, the sweet assurances which come from burning personal testimonies of the truth are enjoyed by the thousands of Saints in Europe today. Never were there more sincere expressions of gratitude and such spirit in meetings as that witnessed in the services just completed in all the war-torn countries of Europe.

We all join in sending our deep love, assurance of our faith in the work and gratitude for its blessings. May God bless you all at home and prosper the cause of truth in all the earth.

(Signed) *Ezra Taft Benson*

### ELDER ALBERT E. BOWEN

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

In the last three days we have heard reference many times to the disturbed condition of the world. Brother Widtsoe put his finger on the nerve center of it all. He told us that it is due to a feeling of uncertainty that afflicts the minds of men. I believe that uncertainty is due to a breakdown of faith in the principles by which men have heretofore lived. They are not sure any more that those principles are valid, and having nothing in lieu thereof, they are adrift with no settled convictions. In such circumstances life cannot be stable, and instability means weakness and unrest. To be strong men we must have faith in the integrity of something. Collectively they must have such faith if they are to make strong communities or enduring nations. Because of the absence of deep conviction we have unrest and shifting and uncertainty, and that condi-

tion reflects itself in all the concerns of men, their political concerns, their moral concerns, and their religious concerns.

#### UNSTABLE CONDITIONS OF THE WORLD

It needs no proof that all the nations today are politically a seething mass of unrest and instability. Morally the situation is about the same, and for the same cause.

With beliefs gone, and nothing to take their place, many have indulged the presumption that all moral values are gone and that each is left to set his own standards and to live according to his own heart's desires. That means moral anarchy. That is a notion all too prevalent over the earth today.

Others subscribe to the fallacy that men can live by ethical codes and that the so-called Christian ethics can be separated from the Christian religion in which those ethics are founded. We see the result of following either of these fallacious notions. Evil and corruption are self-destroying. They contain in themselves the seeds of their own ruin. They debase, they destroy everything they touch. Ethical codes on their part must draw their strength from the religion in which they have been founded. To try to separate them from it is like separating the twig from the root whence it has drawn its nourishment. That is true of so-called Christian ethics which were spread and accepted and took root and bore fruit as a part of the religion which Christ established.

From the breakdown of faith with resultant uncertainty and shattering of conviction it is only a short step to a scoffing cynicism about all ideals. The way is made ready for the iconoclasts, and they have not been slow to seize their advantage.

#### GREAT MEN DESCREDITED BY CYNICS

Once in awhile only, a great man appears upon the stage of this world or of a nation. He renders a service so signal that after the curtain has rung down upon his life and he has receded far enough into the past for time to have softened some of the harshness and imperfections which revealed themselves while he performed his part, his grateful countrymen, or perhaps the world, set him up as a symbol of the ideals he portrayed, and do him homage. Perhaps they weave some legends about his name, but what does that matter, since he has become more of a symbol than a person anyway? As an ideal he becomes an inspiration to succeeding generations throughout time. We have had in this country two such men on the political scene. One of them is George Washington. He was human, therefore, he must have had faults, but they were dwarfed into nothingness by the overtowering majesty of his virtues, and his bequest to humanity. By soul-stirring steps, he passed progressively through various commanding positions to the high pinnacle, where he sits in stainless honor, the proper object of reverence by all men

who prize pure patriotism, love justice, and cherish liberty. But the cynics have been at work on him.

Four or five years ago an unknown man wrote what he calls a history. It is reported that he is a teacher in a college and so can prescribe his book as a text and insure its being read. He has discovered that Washington was a vain, glory-seeking mediocrity, affecting a modesty which was merely a pose for effect, without military capacity or the least trace of statesmanship. He says that Washington "never had any clear conception of the dynamic force of ideas," and "he never formulated coherent theories of government."

This newcomer in the firmament has also turned his cold and luminous eye on Abraham Lincoln. He has pierced him through, with his gimlet gaze, and has found no substance there. With one dexterous twist of his wrist, he has torn off the mantle from "honest Abe" and has left him standing bare, exposed to the cruel public gaze. His big, understanding, humanitarian heart shrivels, and he is left with only intellect enough to supply the needs of a yokel. For our new genius finds that the Lincoln-Douglas debates were "dull," and "Lincoln himself disingenuous, shifting, self-contradictory, evasive, opportunistic, deceptive; with a peasant brand of intellect, unable to grasp a complicated economic or constitutional problem; without capacity ever to understand the forces behind the party he represented; whose prose was lucid and beautiful, but charmed by its style rather than its content, whose conclusions were indefensible *non sequiturs*." Thus summarily is disposed of the man of whom a colleague, looking on his still form in its casket said: "Now he belongs to the ages."

I know of nothing quite so fit to apply here as the observation of President Coolidge. Angry men demanded that he do something to stop the defamers of Washington. Looking through his window to where the graceful shaft pierced the blue, President Coolidge said simply: "I see the monument still stands."

#### IRRELIGION BEING TAUGHT

So will it ever be with reputations founded on the rock.

But bold as this historian is, he shrinks to small size by comparison with the ambition of another who does not hesitate to reach up and pull God himself down from off his throne. This one tells us that "a new world must be born out of the dead world of the past." He wants just one all-encompassing world state, set up by social contract, which is to take complete charge of human lives, and in which parents, teachers, and church are to be mere agents to carry out the supreme will of the state, where the "myth of God, of the Bible and of Jesus Christ is to be replaced by the fact of brotherhood by social contract." Did anybody ever hear anybody complain about authoritarianism in religion?

Yet another one of them tells us that:

The things of highest value for individual experience and for the ethical standards in America will not be found out so long as intellectual leaders maintain a sensitivity over the supernatural significance of Christian mythology, or a sentimental personal attachment to the character of Jesus. It may as well be frankly recognized by American educators that the days of Christian cultural solidarity in America are over.

Now we know the worst. America is no longer to be a Christian nation.

This is all of a piece with the action of a teacher who, evidently determined to do his part about getting rid of the "myth of God," under the guise of giving what he called a "maturity test," submitted two questions: first, "Do you believe in a supreme being?" second, "Do you rely upon him for aid?" The student answered "yes" to both, and the teacher promptly marked him down as woefully immature. This same teacher, no doubt, would be very explosive if anyone taught religion in the school, but he does not have enough respect for the law, whether written or resting in a code of honor, to refrain from violating the spirit of it himself, by teaching irreligion even to the extent of disbelief in Deity.

He cannot prove that the student was wrong, yet unhesitatingly he marks him so, and so declares. Then some people complain about authoritarianism in religion. That teacher is not very smart either, for, dependent upon his caprice for graduation, the student soon learns what kind of answer the teacher wants, and gives it to him, even though he does not believe a word of it.

Now, lest anybody think that this is intended as a wholesale charge against teachers, I at once file my disclaimer. I know that in the schools are many of the most highly honorable and punctilious, who revere God and practice true religion, but the occasional ones, such as I have instanced, show what forces the church and the home and society have to meet, if they desire to preserve the stabilizing power of religious faith. Parents, at least, should know the task that is cut out for them.

#### CHURCH FOUNDED IN THE TRANSCENDENTAL

For two thousand years now, men have regulated their lives by the teachings of Jesus. They hold sway among five hundred millions of civilized people. Do you suppose that five hundred millions of civilized people have been held together and their lives ordered by a myth? Imposters do not make history. The transcendental may be beyond our full grasp, but no man who has lived his life in this world can shut his eyes to the fact that daily we have to accept many, many things that we cannot explain. The fact that a proposition does not admit of analysis, and taking apart and examination and setting up in its parts, does not prove that it is not a reality.

This church is founded in the transcendental; so was the early

Christian Church. Jesus was the Messiah proclaimed. He was resurrected from the dead. No man can explain that. Paul had a vision on the way to Damascus. I have read where it is said that it was a spiritual vision, but he heard a voice, too. What was that?

Whether it was spiritual or some other form of vision makes not the slightest difference to me. He had a vision! And this Church rests in the declaration that Joseph Smith had a vision from heaven, that celestial beings attended him and taught him, and on the basis of their teaching, he established this Church. It has approximately a million members. Hundreds of thousands of others have died. Perhaps in the course of time, nearly two million members have adhered to a belief in the verity of his statements. That kind of thing does not come out of imposture. Men can be wrong, may be deceived, but out of insincerity this Church could not grow.

#### - UNFOUNDED ATTACKS ON PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

Over the last half century, perhaps half a dozen writers have cited a court record, supposed to show that Joseph Smith made admissions which show his insincerity and his imposture. And the whole case for that is built upon that alleged court record. When you come to examine it, there is no court record at all produced. What is produced is an article in an encyclopedia, written by nobody knows whom, and obviously full of poison, or by an author full of poison, and including what purports to be a court record. Why doesn't anybody who hangs a case on a record of the court produce the record? Even that encyclopedia deleted that part of the article consisting of the alleged court record in a later publication, presumably because there was not good enough foundation for it.

There is another peculiar thing about that alleged record. It purports to be a record of a justice of the peace court. Everybody who knows anything about courts knows that justices' courts are not courts of record. They do not usually take, nor preserve as part of the record, the testimony of witnesses. There are certain essential things. It should show the charge. It should show that witnesses were sworn. It should show the findings and the sentence. This alleged record contains everything but what it ought to contain. It contains a statement of charge that is subject to objection because it states two offences, or attempts to do so. It is well-known that no man in a case has to testify against himself. No man charged criminally has to testify until a case has been made against him, but this alleged record starts out with Joseph Smith, the first witness, testifying for himself, before anybody has testified against him.

There is no record that any witness was sworn. There is the announcement that he was found guilty, but of which of the charges it is not said, and there is no sentence. That record could not have been made of the alleged trial as it proceeded. The order of occurrences prohibits it. It rests on no better foundation than the worthless affidavits which it is dragged out to support, and so we could go

down the line and bit by bit tear to shreds the threads of evidence by which the alleged imposture is said to have been perpetrated.

Let's get over the idea of thinking that everything must be true because it is written in a book. It derives no sanctity from being reduced to print. It has no higher validity than the honesty of thought behind it.

I apologize for this imposition upon your time, and pray the blessings of God upon you, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### PRESIDENT GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

It is just five minutes to three—in San Francisco. (Laughter.)

This has been a very delightful experience for me to be at this conference, notwithstanding the fact that some of the dearest friends I have ever had, who were here a year ago, are not here today. We have listened to the members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and I realize that for every one now in that quorum, a very dear friend of mine and member of that group has passed away. Their places have been well filled. These brethren are really servants of the Lord, but I miss the men who are gone. Aunt Augusta Grant has sat through this conference attending most of the meetings. That blessed woman sat by the side of President Grant, helped him rear his family, and blessed this community. I am grateful to see her here today. I am sure that quite a number of elderly people are here that some of us do not know about. I mention Aunt Augusta Grant because President Grant stood here not long ago. Aunt Mary, wife of President Joseph F. Smith, is here also and is always at our meetings, and many others whom we love. I am sure they are blessed by being here, and we are blessed by their presence. It will not be long before many of us will pass on. We will not all leave as fine a record as some of those I have referred to, probably, but it is a wonderful thing to have that kind of companionship throughout life.

Just to look into your faces and see the earnestness of your lives is a joy, because that earnestness is written in your faces. I want to say to many of you that I know personally, I can never repay your kindness and helpfulness to me in many ways. I say never—I'll say I can't do it in this life, but I believe that we are living eternal lives, and perhaps some of these failures here may be remedied hereafter.

### LASTING GREATNESS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

Much has been said in this conference about the Prophet Joseph Smith. There isn't much that I could say, except that which is good. Many of the benefits and blessings that have come to me have come through that man who gave his life for the gospel of Jesus Christ. There have been some who have belittled him, but I would like to say that those who have done so will be forgotten and their remains will go back to mother earth, if they have not already gone, and the odor of their infamy will never die, while the glory and honor and