

Sunday, April 3

First Day

of feeling that your intellectual opportunities have been better than many, but also that you may draw near enough to the Lord that you will feel his presence and the inspiration of his spirit while you teach the most precious of all his gifts to man, the sons and daughters who come into our homes. I feel to bless these men and women who are giving their time in the mission field and in the schools and among the auxiliary organizations outside of their regular ordinary work of life. I feel like blessing them and asking God to bless them for their faithfulness.

#### LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR

This is the Lord's house. We are his guests today. It is he who made it possible for us to be here, and now, while we are assembled together and while we are mingled during the conference, let us evidence by our conduct, by our gentleness, by our love, by our faith, that we do keep that great commandment that the Savior said was like unto the first great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

I can say to you, my brethren and sisters, the happiest people in this world are those who love their neighbors as themselves and manifest their appreciation of God's blessings by their conduct in life. May the Lord add his blessing, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President J. Reuben Clark, Jr.:

We have just listened to President George Albert Smith, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who has again addressed us with his admonitions that we should love our neighbors and share our blessings with them.

We shall now hear from President David O. McKay of the First Presidency.

#### PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

##### *Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15.)

Sensing keenly, brethren and sisters, the responsibility of this moment, facing this vast audience, seen and unseen, I ask for your sympathetic attitude and for your prayers.

I was just thinking how quickly time has passed since we met six months ago under similar circumstances. We could very ap-

propriately sing this morning that old hymn now eliminated from our hymn books ". . . how swift the months have passed away; 'tis conference again, and Zion's untold thousands come to sing the joyful strain."

#### PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH

With you I rejoice in the presence of President Smith at this conference. I am grateful with you for the progress of the Church. Its growth in the organized stakes and in the missions is most satisfactory. As President Smith has already indicated, among thinking men and women throughout the world, the purposes of the Church are now better understood with the resultant lessening of prejudice. Its means are more adequate for the promulgation throughout the world of the restored gospel of peace and love and universal brotherhood.

But the enemy is active also. He is cunning and wily and seeks every opportunity to undermine the foundations of this Church and strikes wherever it is possible to weaken or to destroy.

#### A WISE CHOICE

The scripture I read by way of introduction you will recognize as the avowed and unalterable resolution of Joshua whose nobility of character and outstanding leadership won for him the title "the servant of the Lord." Just before his death he called upon Israel "to put away the strange gods" that were among them, and to be faithful and obedient to the God of Israel. The people in Joshua's day evidently made a wise choice, for, we are told, that Israel

. . . served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua. . . . (Joshua 24:31.)

To every normal person God has given "the freedom of choice." Our moral and spiritual progress depends upon the use we make of that freedom.

#### THE REAL TEST

The real test of any church or religion is the kind of men it makes. I am very happy and deeply grateful for the high type of young manhood and womanhood being reared in the Church as indicated recently by a report of 6,556 prospective missionaries in their medical examination including serological tests preparatory to their going on missions.

In 1946 there were 2,263 so examined. In 1947, 2,134; likewise in 1948, 2,159, or a total, as I say, of 6,556, 6,554 showed negative tests; only one in 1946 and one in 1947 were positive—one in more than three thousand.

## FALSE IDEALS

But as I said, there are other reports which are more disquieting—reports of the influence of false ideals. I think it is what Joshua had in mind, in a way, when he spoke about false gods. False ideals, if accepted, are even more destructive of spirituality than was the worship of the Amorite gods.

These reports pertain to wild parties held by young people in the Church, of objectionable, not to say lewd clubs, organized among a certain group; of actions of girls whose parents permit them to come to the city unchaperoned to attend sport contests. Such reports lead us to believe that not a few parents and some of our young people need to be warned against enticing evil practices, indulgences in which end only in disillusionment and sorrow.

There can be little doubt that war and materialistic science have had a deadening effect upon the moral sensibilities of too many of our youth. One critic goes so far as to say: "Self-interest alone remains as a motive, and pleasure as the sole end of life."

I commend President Richard L. Evans in his excellent sermon over the air this morning about choosing the wrong way in seeking happiness.

It is the duty of parents and of the Church not only to teach but also to demonstrate to young people that living a life of truth and moral purity brings joy and happiness, while violations of moral and social laws result only in dissatisfaction, sorrow, and, when carried to extreme, in degradation.

## AN OLD STORY

There is an old story, which I think many of you read in a recent magazine, which told of the experience of a great artist who was engaged to paint a mural for the cathedral in a Sicilian town. The subject was the life of Christ. For many years the artist labored diligently, and finally the painting was finished except for the two most important figures, the Christ Child and Judas Iscariot. He searched far and wide for models for those two figures.

One day while walking in an old part of the city he came upon some children playing in the street. Among them was a twelve-year-old boy whose face stirred the painter's heart. It was the face of an angel—a very dirty one, perhaps, but the face he needed.

The artist took the child home with him, and day after day the boy sat patiently until the face of the Christ Child was finished.

But the painter failed to find a model for Judas. For years, haunted by the fear that his masterpiece would remain unfinished, he continued his search.

One afternoon, in a tavern, the painter saw a gaunt and tattered figure stagger across the threshold and fall to the floor, begging for a glass of wine. The painter lifted him up and looked into a face that startled him. It seemed to bear the marks of every sin of mankind.

"Come with me," the painter said, "I will give you wine, food, and clothing."

Here at last was his model for Judas. For many days and parts of many nights the painter worked feverishly to complete his masterpiece.

As the work went on, a change came over the model. A strange tension replaced the stuporous languor, and his bloodshot eyes were fixed with horror on the painted likeness of himself. One day, perceiving his subject's agitation, the painter paused in his work, saying, "My son, I'd like to help you. What troubles you so?"

The model sobbed and buried his face in his hands. After a long moment he lifted pleading eyes to the old painter's face.

"Do you not then remember me? Years ago I was your model for the Christ Child!"

Well, the story may be fact or fiction, but the lesson it teaches is true to life.

The dissipated man made a wrong choice in his youth, and in seeking gratification in indulgence sank ever lower and lower until he wallowed in the gutter.

Brothers and sisters, only recently I met this unfortunate man's counterpart—a man with bleary eyes and dissipated features whom I knew years ago as a brilliant, open-countenanced youth with a promising future.

#### DUAL NATURE OF MAN

Man has a dual nature; one, related to the earthly or animal life; the other, akin to the divine. Whether a man remains satisfied within what we designate the animal world, satisfied with what the animal world will give him, yielding without effort to the whim of his appetites and passions and slipping farther and farther into the realm of indulgence, or whether, through self-mastery, he rises toward intellectual, moral, and spiritual enjoyments depends upon the kind of choice he makes every day, nay, every hour of his life.

"Man has two creators," says William George Jordan, "his God and himself. This first creator furnishes him the raw material of his life—the laws in conformity with which he can make that life what he will. The second creator—himself—has marvelous powers he rarely realizes. It is what a man makes of himself that counts."

#### THE STRAIT GATE

We need not shut our eyes to the fact that too many of our young folk respond to the call of the physical, because it seems the easy and natural thing to do. Too many are vainly seeking shortcuts to happiness. It should always be kept in mind that that which is most worth while in life requires strenuous effort.

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13-14.)

As in the days of old, so there are today some who prefer to revel in what I have heard President George Albert Smith designate as "the devil's territory" rather than to strive for the higher and better things of life. Persons who condemn their will to the service of their appetites, suffer the penalties. In the words of Charles Wagner:

Let your needs rule you, pamper them—you will see them multiply like insects in the sun. The more you give them, the more they demand. He is senseless who seeks for happiness in material prosperity alone.

### THE BASER SIDE

It is said that one Roman emperor offered a reward to anybody who would invent a new pleasure. Nero set Rome on fire for the mere pleasure of a new form of diversion. Rome fell because of extravagance, luxury, and dissipation. In personal, as in national life, these are unfailing signs of decline and decay. Truly,

. . . he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (Gal. 6:8.)

In their yearning for a good time, young people are often tempted to indulge in the things which appeal only to the baser side of humanity, five of the most common of which are: First, vulgarity and obscenity; second, drinking and petting parties; third, unchastity; fourth, disloyalty; and fifth, irreverence.

### VULGARITY

Vulgarity is often the first step down the road to indulgence. To be vulgar is to give offense to good taste or refined feelings. A young man who would tell a vulgar joke in the presence of ladies discloses a nature leaning towards that which is low and coarse. A girl who would encourage it and laugh at it is taking a step toward that which is crude and unrefined.

Most of you have read David Starr Jordan's denunciation of this vice. He concludes it by saying:

We find the corrosion of vulgarity everywhere, and its poison enters every home. The billboards of our cities are covered with its evidence; our newspapers are redolent with it; our story books reek with it; our schools are tainted by it; and we cannot keep it out of our homes, or our churches, or our colleges.

It is only a step from vulgarity to obscenity. The executive secretary of a committee appointed to curtail the distribution of

obscene literature put on my desk only recently a most vile plaque, covertly cast reportedly here in our city, and sold to our young people at a nominal price. The best way to rid society of such baseness is for parents, businessmen, and especially every decent young person, to refuse to tolerate it and to report the vendors to the officers of the law.

#### DRINKING AND PETTING PARTIES

It is right, indeed essential, to the happiness of our young people that they meet in social parties, but it is an indication of low morals when for entertainment they must resort to physical stimulation and debasement. Such indulgence weakens your character; discredits your family name; robs your future wife or husband of a priceless treasure, and sows seed that may ripen into bitter fruit of marital suspicion, unhappiness, and divorce. A girl who sacrifices self-respect for social popularity debases true womanhood.

A spotless character, founded upon the ability to say no in the presence of those who mock and jeer, wins the respect and love of men and women whose opinion is most worth while. Drinking and petting parties form an environment in which the moral sense becomes dulled, and unbridled passion holds sway. It then becomes easy to take the final step downward in moral disgrace.

#### CHASTITY

The test of true womanhood comes when woman stands innocent at the court of chastity. All qualities are crowned by this most precious virtue of beautiful womanhood. It is the most vital part of the foundation of a happy married life. There is a general idea throughout the world that young men may sow their wild oats, but that young women should be chaperoned and guarded. But even in this matter of chaperonage, there is too much laxity on the part of parents, if recent reports are to be relied upon.

In the Church of Jesus Christ there is but one standard of morality. No young man has any more right to sow his wild oats in youth than has a young girl. He who comes to his bishop to ask for a recommend to take a pure girl to the altar is expected to give the same purity that he hopes to receive.

A woman crowned with virtue is the "highest, holiest, most precious gift to man," excepting only salvation offered in the gospel, and that forms part of it. But a woman who barter her virtue "is not one of the least of man's shames."

#### DISLOYALTY

When, instead of high moral principles, a life of immoral indulgence is chosen, and man or woman gets far down in the scale of

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degeneracy, disloyalty is an inevitable part of his or her nature. Loyalty to parents becomes quenched; obedience to their teachings and ideals abandoned; loyalty to wife and children smothered in base gratification; loyalty to Church impossible, and is often supplanted by sneers at its teachings, and that means the perpetrator is "left to himself to kick against the pricks and to fight against God."

At this stage, irreverence is an inevitable consequence, a pretty sure sign of moral weakness. No man will rise high who jeers at sacred things. It is said that when Mr. Melville D. Landon (Eli Perkins) was preparing his volume on *Kings of the Platform and Pulpit*, he wrote to Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll for a copy of his most famous lecture. In a letter which accompanied the manuscript, Mr. Ingersoll said:

Whatever you do, do not put anything into the book against Christ. I may have said silly things about him when a boy in Peoria, Illinois, but I now regard him as the one Perfect Man.

#### IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUALITY

I said in the beginning that man is a dual being—a physical and spiritual entity, but his spiritual side is the all-important part. The real tragedy of following false ideals is that by so doing we stifle and sometimes choke out spirituality completely. Rudolph Eucken truly asserts that without a consciousness of a spiritual relation to the Infinite—note this—that without a consciousness of a spiritual relation

No true civilization is possible. A civilization declining all contact with a supernatural life and refusing to establish those mysterious inner relations, gradually degenerates into a mere human civilization, and becomes a parody of civilization.

The body with its five or more senses, with its appetites and passions, is essential to life and happiness, but in the ultimate analysis it is only a means to a higher end. When man makes its gratification an end in itself, he frustrates the purpose and descends to sensuality. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve."

John P. Altgeld expresses more than mere imagination when he says:

Young man, life is before you. Two voices are calling you—one coming out from the swamps of selfishness and force, where success means death; and the other from the hilltops of justice and progress, where even failure brings glory. . . . Two ways lie open to you—one leading to an ever lower and lower plain, where are heard the cries of despair and the curses of the poor, where manhood shrivels and possession rots down the possessor; and the other leading to the highlands of the morning, where are heard the glad shouts of humanity and where honest effort is rewarded with immortality.

## EXPANDING THE SOUL

Brethren and sisters, spirituality is the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite. Spirituality impels one to conquer difficulties and acquire more and more strength. To feel one's faculties unfolding and truth expanding the soul is one of life's sublimest experiences.

Being "honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men," are attributes which contribute to spirituality, the highest acquisition of the soul. It is "the divine in man, the supreme, crowning gift that makes him king of all created things, the one final quality that makes him tower above all other animals.

Divine is that admonition and promise given to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"... let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly;"—a wonderful statement—

... then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. (D. & C. 121:45-46.)

God help us to keep that admonition and to follow the ideals of the Church of Jesus Christ established by direct revelation in this day, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Tabernacle Choir and the congregation joined in singing the hymn: "Come, O Thou King of Kings," Elder Richard P. Condie conducting.

## ELDER LEVI EDGAR YOUNG

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

The young men and women in our schools and colleges are confronted with many conflicting ideas concerning religion and life. They become unsettled in their minds as they study our present-day problems. Attacks are made on their religious beliefs which have been held sacred by them ever since they were children in their homes. They often come to wonder about the teachings of the Holy Bible, particularly the belief in God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. They often become indifferent to what is right in their daily living. They have just cause to wonder! The fires of revolution are burning everywhere—I fear even at our very doors. In America, and of course in the whole world, we are in need of a spiritual awakening,