

THE USE OF TRUTH

Another fact that I should like to speak of in passing is that there is no assurance of superiority so far as I know, to any person or to any people, except on the basis of a superior performance. I know of no assured blessings except on conditions of obedience, and I hope we shan't take undue pride in the mere possession of truth. Our pride should come, if indeed it should come at all, and our gratitude likewise, in the use of truth, and not merely in its possession.

I am reminded of a story that President Grant frequently told, quoting from old Bishop Hunter: "Don't get the bighead. The bighead has ruined more people in this Church than any one thing—except sin." There is no more virtue in the mere possession of truth than there is in the mere possession of food. Neither will save a man unless he uses it, and uses it wisely, and I earnestly pray that we may, as a people, with the knowledge that we have, demonstrate that we know what to do with it by living a superior way of life, individually and as a group.

I earnestly hope, in closing, that our young people may be encouraged as they go forth to live their lives. I repeat that I have great faith in the future and in the ultimate purposes of our Father in heaven and in the future accomplishments of our young people. As Thomas Carlyle wrote one time: "The crash of the whole solar and stellar systems could only kill you once"—but we certainly don't want to sit around waiting for it to happen!

I hope that our young people will go forth and prepare and plan and live their lives and make their homes and rear their families with faith in God and with faith in the future. No doubt men will make more trouble (to paraphrase an old saying, "People are more trouble than anyone"), but no doubt also, we will gain much always by living our lives, by building on a solid basis, and keeping our houses in order and preparing solidly for all future events; and whatever the eventualities are, we can accept them with faith and confidence in the promises and purposes of our Father in heaven.

May God help us so to do, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Brethren, sisters, and radio listeners: It is unlikely that any of you listening to addresses made in this conference expect to hear any new doctrine announced at this time; yet we do teach that God "will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Ninth Article of Faith) when it suits his purpose. We already have doctrines, principles, and policies enough to challenge the best and ablest among us to learn and live in harmony with them.

But we need to be reminded of them frequently and encouraged to be more diligent in implementing them in our lives. The Lord well knew this need when he required us to attend sacrament meetings frequently and renew our covenants. I pray that the Lord will help me in an effort to stir us up to remembrance.

CHARACTERISTIC DOCTRINES

As is generally known, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is set off from all other churches—Christian and non-Christian alike—by many characteristic doctrines and teachings. We hold firmly to the doctrine that the Holy Trinity is made up of three separate and distinct personal Beings—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in whose image we ourselves are created, as declared in Genesis 1:27. Notwithstanding the vast majority of civilized people, including nearly all Christians, reject the teaching that God is a personal Being, the truth of the matter is not in the least affected by this rejection.

In the fifteenth century the world believed the earth was flat, Columbus, that it was round. Who was right? The claim that Joseph Smith, a fourteen-year-old boy actually saw and heard two glorious personal Beings—the Father and the Son, who appeared in answer to his humble prayer for wisdom—is a basic truth in Mormonism, the validity of which is not affected even though disbelieved by the vast majority of civilized men. Can any unbiased, intelligent mind, untouched in the matter by the teachings of others, reading the Bible from cover to cover, get any other idea of God than that he is a personal Being in the image of which we ourselves were created? Yet I quote the following from a book that aims to teach a worldwide accepted view:

God is spirit, or the creative energy which is the cause of all visible things. God as spirit is the invisible life and intelligence underlying all physical things. . . . God is not a being or person having life, intelligence, love power. God is that invisible, intangible, something we call life. . . . Childlike, untrained minds say God is a personal being. The statement that God is principle chills them, and in terror they cry out, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him!" Broader and more learned minds are always cramped by the thought of God as a person, for personality limits to place and time. God is the name we give to that unchangeable, inexorable principle at the source of all existence. (*Lessons in Truth*, H. Emilie Cady.)

NEW REVELATION GIVEN

Between this idea of God and that taught by Joseph Smith, there is the wide difference that exists between fancy and fact, between the false and the true. And because the modern world was engulfed in this stupefying fancy and falsehood, it was absolutely necessary that God should give a new revelation of himself that his children here

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in mortality might have a true and solid basis for their faith in him. But why did he not give this revelation through some world-renowned scholar instead of an obscure, worldly-ignorant fourteen-year-old boy—to one whom the world would accept rather than reject? Was there such a scholar who could qualify as to the statement of the Apostle James which says:

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him?

However, there was a condition attached:

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

For let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord. (James 1:5-7.)

The humble, unspoiled boy Joseph, could qualify. What renowned scholar could? The Lord said to Joseph:

... I raised you up, that I might show forth my wisdom through the weak things of the earth." (D. & C. 124:1.)

Yes, as I have formerly said in this pulpit, in answer to his humble prayer, Joseph Smith received, so far as the records indicate, the most glorious vision ever given to man in mortality. For, looking up in the pillar of light enveloping him, he both saw and heard the Father and the Son, two highly glorious Personages, in the very image in which we are created. This is a fact; this is the truth, the world to the contrary notwithstanding. In great humility and extreme thankfulness we accept of these things and testify most sincerely of their reality.

KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH

But how may we know? the doubter may ask. When in answer to the Master's question, Peter replied, "... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," what did Jesus say?

... Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 16:16-17.)

And Moroni wrote in the last chapter of the Book of Mormon:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:4-5; see also I Cor. 2:11-13.)

It is by the power of the Holy Ghost that great multitudes of

Church members testify that they really know that God lives. And I am one of that number. Did not Jesus have this method of knowing in mind when he said:

... My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.
If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. (John 7:16-17.)

SATAN THE DEVIL

Now there is another personality of which I desire to speak, one that the world calls by a name, but in whose reality as a personal Being it does not believe and that person is Satan, the Devil. But according to our understanding and teaching, Satan is a person with a spirit body, in form like that of all other men. He is a spirit brother of ours and of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Elder Brother in the spirit world. The earth was in course of development for the abode of man in mortality. A Redeemer was to be sent down and make it possible for the Father's children to return to him. Lucifer, a son of the morning, a bright and certainly very ambitious individual, said to the Father:

... here I am, send me ... and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost ... ; wherefore give me time honor [power].

Lucifer's offer was rejected; it involved taking from man his God-given free agency which is granted to everyone born into mortality. Jesus said to the Father, send me,

... thy will be done and the glory be thine forever. (Moses 4:1-2.)

And Jesus became our Redeemer. Lucifer, his name was changed to Satan, the Devil, and his sympathizers rebelled and were cast out down to earth where they have been ever since. (See Rev. 12:7-9.)

Now, the means Lucifer proposed to use to get all the Father's children returned to him—force—has been the means he has used ever since, whenever he has had the power. But of course he operates through those whom he can influence. An Omaha evening paper carried a lead editorial in its issue, of the last Saturday in August, 1941, entitled "Hitler, the Devil Incarnate." Hitler, as all the world now know, taught and believed in the use of power whenever it was necessary to reach his objectives. Satan, through his agents, has always done and is doing the same thing today. We see it being done in many different places and in various ways—locally, nationally, and internationally. Struggles for power and staying in positions of power are everywhere in evidence. And when power is obtained it is commonly used to force obedience to unrighteous, if not positively wicked, demands. Needless to specify, for we see cases in evidence somewhere every day, in this country, as well as abroad. But wherever they exist they will generally be found on close examina-

tion to stem from sources where selfish, greedy, and unrighteous motives dominate—to sources, therefore, that are Satan inspired. And the agencies operating under this wicked influence are steadily growing more numerous and more powerful, making the future of America more dark and precarious. Unless this rapidly developing tendency changes for the better, the time is probably not far away when the America of the fathers, the America where free enterprise with all its associated blessings of personal freedom and liberty for its citizens, will have been relegated to the pages of history. And is it not strange, very strange, from the standpoint of reason and logic, that the means and the conditions by which and under which America has grown to be the greatest, the most powerful, and the most prosperous nation on earth have become odious to vast numbers of our people, who therefore are scheming, planning, working, hoping, even praying, for changes that would put an end to America as "the land of the free and the home of the brave"? Among all the unrighteous organized agencies now working in the world to further the cause of Satan, perhaps the largest and most wicked are those given to the cause of communism. Communism is organized wickedness and crime of the blackest type. Harsh terms, certainly! Its objectives are confiscation of property, robbery of those who have, slavery of its productive workers, and death to its opponents. Its beneficiaries are ne'er-do-wells, those who own nothing, but want everything, especially power and its emoluments.

SATAN'S PURPOSE

What is the explanation of all this? I think that it lies in the fact that Satan has more influence and power in the world today than ever before. And Satan's purpose is to overcome righteousness, to entice God's children into ways of sin, misery, and suffering, to handicap those who would do good, and to darken the minds of those who would like to know what is best in the great confusion of conflicting ideas. And so struggles and conflicts multiply with the result that men's hearts are failing them. Selfishness is growing. Demands are increasing for more and more for less and less—more pay, less work—for more privileges, but fewer responsibilities. Merit as a condition for reward is disappearing and Satan is riding high.

Now Latter-day Saints, what shall we do, conditions being what they are? Shall we compromise our principles and standards, give up the struggle against sin and evil and let life move on more smoothly in this sinful world? No, never. Our faith is immovably based upon truth and reality—a living, personal God, who through Joseph Smith and his associates, set up his Church, gave it principles, laws, standards, and his priesthood (authority to act for him), thus qualifying it to work for him and his righteous ways for the good, benefit, and blessing of his children. But we need more faith in these realities, more devotion to the cause which we are privileged to repre-

sent, stronger wills to resist the allurements of evil, and more persistent, unselfish efforts to live righteously every day. I repeat, our religion is a very practical thing, for it must enter into every phase of our daily lives if we would live in harmony with its teachings and receive the rewards of obedience. And failing to do this, we more or less forfeit God's promise of blessings; for he has said:

I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise. (D. & C. 82:10.)

MORAL STANDARDS

We must ever keep in mind the moral standards of the Church as expressed in articles eleven, twelve, and thirteen of our faith which require us to be tolerant (Article 11), loyal to the country under the flag of which we live, to obey, honor, and sustain the law (Article 12), and to be

... honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men. (Article 13.)

Indeed the moral standards of the Church require us to set up the Golden Rule as an ideal which we should diligently try to live in all of our relations with our fellow men. These are not things of which we just talk on Sunday, but things we are required to implement in our daily lives.

Now I warn again that Satan, a personal being, is very alert and with a mighty host of his angels—spirit relatives of ours—in trying to overcome us and all others who would serve God and live righteously. As examples of yielding to evil influences, we have desecration of the Sabbath day, the use of harmful narcotics, failure to live sexual moral standards and indulgence in other wicked ways—all on the increase among us. Latter-day Saints may not go on Sunday to movies, to baseball, football, or basketball games, or to any other kind of commercial entertainments, or engage in avoidable commercial activities, or go hunting, fishing, golfing, or skiing on this day without violating the holiness of the Sabbath. Who said so? The First Presidency of the Church. They said so in an editorial published in *The Deseret News*, September 1, 1928. And when the First Presidency speak unitedly on any question of our religious doctrines, or how we should live in harmony with these doctrines, that is the voice of the Church, the voice of authority. To loyal Latter-day Saints, it is, in a sense, the voice of God; for he has said "if ye are not one ye are not mine." (D. & C. 38:27.)

Brethren and sisters, let us be honest with ourselves and with our God and strive with more determination and persistence to do his will that life may be more full and happy, with righteous living more in evidence. I pray that God will help us to do these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.