

## ELDER MATTHEW COWLEY

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I think by now we are convinced, brothers and sisters, that the theme of this conference is repentance. We have been called to repentance in sermon and in prayer. For thirteen years I have spent much of my time among people who know how to repent. I have never seen such beautiful repentance in all my experiences as I have seen among the people of the South Pacific.

## SPEEDY REPENTANCE

And while I have been thinking about this principle of repentance, there has come to my mind one experience I had during the war years when our young men were going from New Zealand to the war. There came into my office one day two young Maori brothers. They were in uniform. They had volunteered. Natives of New Zealand are not drafted or conscripted in the military service; they have to volunteer. These two young men were about to embark for the Near East and when they came into my office, I detected the odor of liquor. But I was not surprised when they asked for a blessing, for I knew them well; I had lived at the home of their mother on my first mission. I said to them, "Do you deserve a blessing?" They knew what I meant, and they said, "We think we do now; we repented a few minutes ago." That's the speed with which a Polynesian repents.

Under ordinary conditions I think I wouldn't have given them a blessing at that time, but as I looked at them in the uniform of soldiers who had volunteered to give their lives that I might enjoy liberty, religious freedom, and all the other freedoms, the Spirit prompted me to bless them. In my blessing I called them to repentance and told them that the blessings were conditioned entirely upon repentance. I promised them that through their repentance and their righteous examples as soldiers in the theater of war to which they were going, they would return home. And how proud one of those young men was just a year ago when he came to me and said that he was counselor to the president of one of the branches in New Zealand, and that his brother was very active in the Church. From the minute they repented, coming to my office, up Queen Street in Auckland, New Zealand, they had not broken the Word of Wisdom.

## DISCERNMENT NEEDED

I think one of the great responsibilities we have, we who hold the priesthood, is the responsibility of acquiring a discernment, a spirit of discernment, so that we may really know when a man has repented.

I was walking along the street in one of our towns in New Zealand one day with my mission president during my first mission.

I had been staying at the home of one of our Church members, and that's all he was, just a member. He had been a heavy drinker for years, and I had seldom seen him without his pipe in his mouth. The president and I met him on the street. We walked up to him, and the president said, calling him by name, "I want you to get ready to take your wife and go to the temple of God and be sealed to each other." When I went back to New Zealand on my second mission, that man was the president of the best district we had in the New Zealand mission, and how I thrilled when I heard his testimony that from the minute he was asked to repent by the priesthood of God he had never broken the Word of Wisdom. And he not only came to the Hawaiian Temple, but he also came to this temple and received the blessings which God gives to all who properly repent.

#### UNDERSTANDING POLYNESIANS

I love the spirit of repentance in those people. And I am reminded now that this is the centennial year of the Hawaiian Mission, a mission made great by such missionaries as President George Q. Cannon, President Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, and many others. And as I have been laboring among those people, and as it has come to me to judge them even when their membership in the Church was involved, I have always said to myself, "What would Joseph F. Smith have done in this case? What would President George Q. Cannon have done in this particular instance?" I have spent much of my time in finding out or trying to find out what the attitude of those grand and noble men was toward the Polynesian Islanders, and I have yet to hear that President George Q. Cannon or President Joseph F. Smith ever uttered anything but words of love to those people, whether they were active or inactive in the Church. So also my heart has always gone out to them in great love.

They are different from us. They have to be treated differently. We have to understand them, but don't we have to understand ourselves, as well? And in this business of repenting and forgiving men and women of their sins, we must understand one another. We must try to see them as much from their own eyes and get their own viewpoint as we do from our own.

How we need to pray to God for the spirit of discernment! How we need to know that God is love, and that he forgives those who repent!

#### SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

Just yesterday I had copied from one of the sermons of President Joseph F. Smith a few words which he delivered from this pulpit at one of the general conferences. It was on the last day of the conference, and they were his last words to that great assembly. I would like to read them here. I think you will read

into these words the spirit of love, of forgiveness, which I know President Smith acquired from his association with those wonderful people in the Polynesian Islands. "Brethern and sisters, we want you to be united." We have heard that theme also in this conference, and many of us need to repent because we are not one; we are not as loyal as we should be.

We hope and pray that you will go from this conference to your homes feeling in your hearts and from the depths of your souls to forgive one another and never from this time forth to bear malice toward another fellow creature. I do not care whether he is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or not, whether he is a friend or a foe, whether he is good or bad. It is extremely hurtful for any man holding the priesthood and enjoying the gift of the Holy Ghost to harbor a spirit of envy, or malice, or retaliation, or intolerance toward or against his fellow man. We ought to say in our hearts, "Let God judge between me and thee, but as for me, I will forgive." I want to say to you that Latter-day Saints who harbor a feeling of unforgiveness in their souls are more censurable than the one who has sinned against them. Go home and dismiss envy and hatred from your hearts; dismiss the feeling of unforgiveness; and cultivate in your souls that spirit of Christ which cried out upon the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. This is the spirit that Latter-day Saints ought to possess all the day long. The man who has that spirit in his heart and keeps it there will never have any trouble with his neighbor; . . . but he will always be at peace with God. It is a good thing to be at peace with God. (*Conference Report*, October 1902, pp. 86-87.)

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right," let us strive, brothers and sisters, to finish this great work we are in, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER JOHN A. WIDTSOE

#### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My dear brethren and sisters, I am very happy to have this opportunity of mingling my testimony with yours concerning the truth of this great latter-day work.

I always marvel at conference time to see these great throngs assemble in the Tabernacle, and on the grounds surrounding it. Yet I have no real reason to marvel. Truth is always alive and vital. We have the truth. God be thanked for the gift of truth!

#### EUROPEAN MISSION CENTENNIAL

One hundred years ago at this conference, the brethren then in authority, Brigham Young and those who assisted him, sent out a small army of men into the world to preach the gospel. These were scattered far and wide. Some went into the non-English speaking parts of Europe and there founded missions which are celebrating this year the hundredth anniversary of their beginning. Rich harvests were gathered. Through the years since that