

Announcer: We shall now hear on this Church of the Air service, Stephen L Richards, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In addition to his service as a religious leader, Stephen L Richards has distinguished himself as a lawyer, business administrator and educator. He has titled today's talk: *Kinship of Spirits*.

## ELDER STEPHEN L RICHARDS

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

The responsibility which comes to one who is invited to participate on Columbia's "Church of the Air" program is very considerable. This occasion is projected as a period of worship—an invitation to the whole nation, who will listen in, to pause in secular pursuits and contemplate the ways of God. To stimulate such spiritual reflection is a task I approach with the deepest humility for I am aware of the fact that it is the spirit in man, rather than the mind, which must be touched to bring divine worship into his soul.

#### ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

If you and I, my friends, were together in an assembly—not too large, the task would be easier. Our personalities would react on each other; we would say, "We could feel of each other's spirit," and perhaps a bond of common interest could be established among us. May it not be that this "feeling of each other's spirit" is of the very essence of our joint worship?

It is true that declaration of the Word and exhortation have their place,—an important place in religious services, but I doubt if there is anything which contributes more to our spiritual uplift, and our good resolutions too, than the stimulus of association of kindred spirits.

I believe God planned that it should be so. We are all His spirit children in antemortal life. We come to earth "to be tabernacled in the flesh." In earth life we are, in large measure, the creatures of our environment, but we never entirely lose our spiritual investitures. Perhaps Shakespeare had something of this in mind when he made one of his famous characters say, "There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."<sup>1</sup>

#### KINSHIP OF SPIRITS

We are told that the Spirit of God always strives with men, and it is the spirit in man which responds to the extent to which the sensitivity of the spirit has not been drugged or killed by ignorance or by infraction of His laws. It is doubtful, my brethren and sisters in the family of our Eternal Parent, that anything is more important

<sup>1</sup>Hamlet, Act 5, Scene 2

and vital to peaceful association in the world than a recognition and acceptance of this kinship in the spirits of men.

Herein lies a solid, understandable foundation for the spiritual brotherhood of the world. It has always seemed to me most difficult to establish fraternity without paternity. Surely those who acknowledge the Omnipotent God to be the Creator of the Universe, should find no difficulty in according to Him His place of distinction as the Father of all men—"Our Father who is in heaven." How else could He be "Our Father" except as the progenitor of our spirits, the begetter of that part of us which is deathless and immortal?

How regrettable it is that man, seemingly oblivious to this honorable and sacred relationship, should profane His holy name and blaspheme Christ. Do you think that a son can damn his father and love him?

#### FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Some may say this procreation of spirits is too realistic, involving an assumption of personality in the Father inconsonant with the ethereal nature sometimes ascribed to Him. Don't you think, my friends, that we can safely rely on the recorded words of His Son, our elder brother, and the prophets in the interpretation of this all-important relationship of man to God? To those acquainted with the Scriptures there is no need for quotations; they are filled with references to the veritable fatherhood of God and support for a divine personality which, in terms of human understanding, can be conceived only as one in whose image we are created.

It is doubtful if there are any people in the world today who retard more seriously the progress of humanity in finding solutions for the world's problems, particularly the one of living together in peace, than those who deny and teach denial of the personality of God and His fatherhood of the spirits of men.

By so doing, they rob brotherhood of its firmest prop, they rob man of the dignity of a noble lineage, and they take from him the most impelling incentives to live to be worthy of his inheritance and to come back again into the eternal presence of the author of his life. I do not see how it is possible for men of religion to do much for this sorry world unless they can establish and re-establish this fundamental doctrine of the veritable fatherhood of God.

#### SOVEREIGNTY OF SAVIOR

I grant that good may come, and does come, from teaching and extolling the attributes of Deity, and particularly the virtues emanating from the life and ministry of the Savior of the world. His incomparable teachings to be most effective, must be authentic. We cannot consistently worship at the shrine of the attributes and deny the sovereignty of the King. The Lord is a teacher, a persuader, and a guardian; but He is first of all a creator and a lawgiver, and the Supreme Judge of all. He is not only the exemplar of right; He is the author and the source of right. There is no right that is not

compatible with His law and His will. To know His mind and His will should be the quest of every life.

#### SPIRITUAL NATURES

It is ordained that man should have joy. Joy and happiness are truly achieved where living conforms to law,—divine law. Divine law is spiritual in origin and application; its constraints and rewards are likewise of a spiritual nature. That is why, if we are to have joyful living, we should be ever conscious of our spiritual natures and our lineage with the Father.

We keep alive this consciousness in prayer and spiritual exercise. Spiritual association is of immeasurable value in spiritual growth. Not infrequently you hear a man say, "I don't need to go to church. I can worship in nature and in the works of creation."

Such a man discounts the value of religious association, the commingling of spirits and the interaction of personalities. I believe that man has divine attributes emanating from divine lineage. The Spirit of the Father is distributed through the Universe, and influences all life and all things.

There is a spirit in man which, within the limitations of his contacts in life, radiates from him and touches the lives and things about him. This spirit may be called personality. Whatever it is called, it exists and it is a potent force. When once set in motion it cannot well be controlled, but fortunately it is within our power to determine the characteristics which go into the structure of our lives and thus determine the influences and radiations which come from us. Our living will mold these characteristics into our lives.

I am well aware that these are commonplace statements. There is no novelty in them. Where, my friends, is there novelty in the Word of God? The only place I have been able to discover any failure in the Word is in the novelty of man's interpretations. The Word of God is not difficult to understand. It is the words of men about God that perplex us.

#### RESPECT FOR DIVINE LAW

The greatest of all knowledge is to know God, and the greatest achievement of all life is to so live that the Father can bestow His highest blessings on us. The spiritual laws of the Universe are just as inexorable as are the laws of Nature. Every blessing is predicated on obedience to the law.

This applies to a nation as well as to an individual. There can be no spiritual growth in a nation which does not respect divine law, and all nations will die without spiritual growth. Material prosperity alone will not suffice and will not endure. The measure and manifestation of spiritual growth is goodness. So, my good friends, the worship of this hour, and all true worship, is rededication of self and life to goodness.

We all know how much the world needs that dedication today,

but I know of no way of carrying forth the process of spiritual regeneration except that which seems a painfully slow method of each person touching the spirit of another with the radiation of his own innate goodness. The only thing that our country has to fear is spiritual disintegration within ourselves.

#### ABSENCE OF SPIRITUAL KINSHIP

I had a striking example of the absence of and the need for the recognition of spiritual kinship in man a few months ago as I traveled through the countries of Lebanon, Syria, and Trans Jordan to Arab Jerusalem. I have never seen before, except perhaps in East Berlin, such suspicion, distrust, and enmity written on the faces of men. To an American accustomed to cordial greetings and friendly smiling faces, although sometimes a bit clouded with aloofness and pretended snobbish indifference (I say pretended because I believe that at heart all Americans are friendly and cordial), it was a distinct shock to see human nature so perverted in the relations which men in the Lord's providence bear to each other.

This perversion was particularly noticeable and regrettable in Jerusalem, the very land where the Savior spent much of His earthly life and performed His transcendent mission. The intense and cruel animosities built up between the peoples of this so-called Holy Land were a most painful refutation of everything that was taught and practiced by the Prince of Peace. I could not discover even a vestige of adherence to His marvelous doctrine which He left with His disciples in that loving declaration, "Except ye are one ye are not mine."

#### REMEDY FOR SICK WORLD

Do you think, my friends, that such a sickly spiritual world can be cured by the mere external application of economic salves? I know we all wish and pray that the underprivileged and distressed peoples of the world might have food, raiment, and shelter; and I believe that most of us are willing to sacrifice to that end.

I saw the dire need for relief in the terrible conditions prevailing in the camps of Palestinian refugees around the big cities of the Near East, but I am just as sure as that I speak to you this day that there is one, and only one remedy which can bring complete recovery—and that remedy is of the spirit. I give first place in such remedy to the teachings of the Lord, some of which I have tried, very inadequately, to outline for you today.

The Lord keep us humble, free from arrogance and self-sufficiency. May we never forget that He is the Father of our spirits, that our lineage is noble, that life is not cheap, and that the kinship of spirits is the foundation of brotherhood. We long for peace; we pray for the enduring peace of goodness in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(Choir: "Come, O Thou King of Kings" by Parley P. Pratt, arr. Cornwall, 2 verses.)