

President David O. McKay:

This is the concluding session of the One Hundred Twenty-second Semi-annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

These services are being broadcast in the Assembly Hall and in Barratt Hall, 60 North Main, over a loud-speaking system, and by television.

The proceedings will be broadcast also over Station KSL, Salt Lake City, and, by arrangement through KSL, over the stations named in the first session of this conference.

This session will also be televised over the KSL television station, channel 5.

The music is furnished by the Tabernacle Choir under the direction of J. Spencer Cornwall, conductor, and Alexander Schreiner at the organ.

We shall begin this service by the Tabernacle Choir singing: "O Praise Ye God."

The opening prayer will be offered by Elder Elias Peterson, Patriarch to the North Weber Stake.

Singing by the Choir, "O Praise Ye God."

Elias Peterson, Patriarch in the North Sevier Stake, offered the invocation.

The Tabernacle Choir sang the anthem, "Hear Our Prayer."

President David O. McKay:

Musical harmony and expression sublime!

Following Elder Joseph F. Merrill of the Council of the Twelve, who will now speak to us, will be Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of the Seventy.

ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Brethren, sisters, and radio listeners: During the few minutes allotted to me, I purpose talking about a few matters that I feel are important enough to justify my asking your attention to them. They are not new, but they are current and vitally concern us in our daily lives. They have been much discussed but are in need of more attention than they have yet received from many of us. They have to do with both our material and spiritual well-being. They are directed to our own Church people, but we invite all others to consider them.

The Apostle Paul wrote, as you know, these words:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. (1 Cor. 3:16-17.)

THE WORD OF WISDOM

As a means of preserving our bodies from certain types of defilement (destruction), the Lord gave to the Church in its very beginning, and to the human family generally, a revelation that has properly been called a law of health, better known among us as the Word of Wisdom, printed as section eighty-nine of the book of Doctrine and Covenants. Years ago I was present in a meeting where a prominent non-Mormon doctor of medicine referred to the Word of Wisdom as the Lord's Law of Health and said so far as he knew it was the best brief statement in the English language of the conditions that must be observed if good health continued. This is a truth related not only to the material world but to the spiritual realm as well, as has been said several times in this conference, quoting Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants. We get no blessing from God except by obeying the law upon which the blessing is predicated. I repeat, good health is continued only if we obey the laws of health.

In the revelation referred to, the Lord said liquor and tobacco are not good for man—truths that have since been abundantly confirmed by the observations and research work of highly-qualified investigators. However, in the revelation the Lord did not give reasons; it was unnecessary to do so. Some of them were already known. The Lord knew others would be discovered by his inquisitive children.

Let us summarize a few of the authoritative statements relative to the effects of liquor and tobacco. As to tobacco, it contains nicotine, one of the most deadly poisons known to the pharmacist. It affects injuriously the heart, the brain and mental powers, the nervous system, the kidneys and elimination organs, the muscular system, etc., thus weakening the body with the result that it is less resistant to various kinds of disease.

FACTS ABOUT TOBACCO

Dr. Irving Fisher of Yale University, long noted as a writer on matters relative to human health, wrote, among other things in the preface to Dr. Frank L. Wood's book *What You Should Know about Tobacco*, the following:

I have had unusual opportunities to become familiar with the many-sided tobacco problem. The evidence now exists sufficient to show that no one who smokes can achieve the best of which he or she is capable, whether this be a foot race, a prize fight, a golf game, a rifle score, writing, speaking, singing, acting, performing on violin, piano, or typewriter, attainment of health, strength, endurance, beauty, glamor, or any other

excellence on which men and women set their hearts. It is time that those ambitious in all other lines of work should also learn the truth that tobacco harms, never helps.

The use of tobacco shortens life. This fact was satisfactorily demonstrated to the scientific world by Dr. Raymond Pearl of Johns Hopkins University, who published fifteen years ago a research paper in which he showed that on an average heavy smokers die about ten years sooner than non-smokers and moderate smokers from three to five years sooner. Everybody knows that college athletic coaches do not permit their boys to smoke. Yes, the use of tobacco is injurious to man.

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

Now relative to alcohol: Some of the facts relative to the injurious effects of consumed alcohol are briefly stated by the eminent authority, Dr. Haven Emerson, as follows:

1. We have learned that alcohol, as commonly used today, causes more diseases, disability, and death than any other cause of ill health which is wholly in the power of the individual to prevent and avoid.

2. Medical sciences have learned and found that alcohol is not a food, a stimulant, or harmful only in drunkenness. That was the former belief. The liver, stomach, and heart were supposed to suffer only from drunkenness. Those are the least of the damages alcohol causes. Deaths from alcoholism are the least of the harm that alcohol causes. It is the constant and severe interference with human relations, the disturbance of the conduct of people to each other, that is the major damage that alcohol does in our society today.

3. Alcohol is a depressant narcotic drug, not a stimulant. That cannot be too often repeated. The effects of alcohol are almost entirely, if not wholly, to be experienced by its toxic damage to the central nervous system, the brain, and spinal cord. It is upon those tissues that the action of alcohol shows most strikingly. The only thing that distinguishes man from the brute is his power of self-direction, self-control, judgment, discretion. Those things are the first qualities of man that are destroyed by alcohol, long before there is any obvious interference with the muscles and motor functions of the body.

4. Alcohol is not describable as a food which forms any part of a wholesome diet.

5. In recent times, it has been observed that the lifesaving reflexes of the body are all slowed from five to ten percent by amounts of alcohol too small to be socially appreciable, and in amounts far smaller than can ever be registered under the law or by the police as indicating intoxication. In amounts too small to be appreciated, alcohol slows the reflexes of the body, which we are endowed with to protect ourselves from destruction—the nervous reflex action of the eye, the ear, the muscles—which we depend on in this world of speed and power and uncontrolled human association. The evidence shows there is no form of human activity so far tested which does not show inferiority of performance as the invariable sequel of the absorption of alcohol in amounts smaller than would be recognized as of toxic significance.

6. Perhaps the most important of all is the positive statement that no evidence of improvement in human health has so far been found to result from the use of alcohol in the normal human being.

7. Alcohol, as used, causes many times more deaths than the infectious diseases.

CAUSE OF HIGHWAY ACCIDENTS

Thus writes Dr. Haven Emerson, a world-recognized authority on the effects of alcohol on the human body. Scientific observations and experiments absolutely prove that alcohol in amounts as small as only "a drink or two" causes a slowing of the reflexes of the body sufficient to result in many highway accidents. But the driver usually believes that this small amount makes him more alert—a safer driver after the drink than before. But this is not the case, as every traffic officer knows. Alcohol is a deceiver; it lies to the driver. Instead of making him more alert, it really makes him less alert and less safe in his driving. According to the estimates of the National Safety Council, and others qualified to give estimates, from twenty-five to forty percent of all highway accidents are due to drinking drivers—the majority of them having had, so they say, only "a drink or two." Such a driver is far more dangerous than the one who knows he is drunk.

This matter of traffic accidents in the United States is very important. It is said that they resulted last year in thirty-six thousand fatalities—more fatalities than we suffered during the same period in the Korean war.

SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL EFFECTS

So far I have spoken only of the effects of alcohol on the body of the drinker, but there are social and spiritual effects of far greater importance that result from his drinking.

It is perhaps not so important what the drinker does to himself—great as this is—as to what he does to others—how his drinking affects others. At the conference of the American Association of Industrial Physicians and Surgeons last April, it was said by the medical director of a large steel company that hang-overs cost factories one billion man-hours every year, a tremendous loss in goods and wages, thus affecting many more people than the drinkers.

FIRST PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

In a session of the October conference of the Church in 1942, President Clark presented a timely message of the First Presidency in which was written the following:

Over the earth, and it seems particularly in America, the demon drink is in control. Drunken with strong drink, men have lost their reason; their counsel has been destroyed; their judgment and vision are fled; they reel forward to destruction.

Drink brings cruelty into the home; it walks arm and arm with poverty; its companions are disease and plague; it puts chastity to flight; it knows neither honor nor fair dealing; it is a total stranger to truth; it drowns conscience; it is the bodyguard of evil; it curses all who touch it.

Drink has brought more woe and misery, broken more hearts, wrecked more homes, committed more crimes, filled more coffins, than all the wars the world has suffered.

In the light of these factual statements, forcibly and eloquently put by President Clark, how is it that any sane member of the Church believing in the divine call of Joseph Smith, would dare to indulge in drink? Does he not know the sin and the danger of indulgence? This action not only harms him in person, thus defiling his body, but it makes him a danger to his family, to his associates, to society, and an offender of God.

DANGER OF MODERATE DRINKING

But there are many people who protest that drinking in moderation is not harmful. Have I not pointed out that the most dangerous potential killer on the highway is the driver who has taken only "a drink or two"? Is it not through example that we yield our most potent influence? Drinking a single glass is likely far more strongly to influence others to drink than would drinking a jug. Yes, the example of participation in a cocktail party, of drinking in a convivial set, of taking a glass with a friend—any of these is likely to be taken as a license by the unwary to indulge.

There is a grave danger in alcohol of which the novice may not be aware—the danger of becoming an alcoholic—of becoming one who drinks to excess, unable to control his drinking. Mrs. Marty Mann, a recovered alcoholic, executive director, National Committee for Education on Alcoholism, said a few years ago in a national radio broadcast that the years of her acute chronic alcoholism were the most painful years of her life. "I suffered constantly," she said, "not just one kind of pain, but *all* kinds of pain. I suffered physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, and socially—in every department of my life. I tell you, honestly, and on behalf of those three million human beings (alcoholics) that alcoholism is *the most painful* disease known to man."

A careful study shows that about one of every sixteen persons who takes his first glass becomes an alcoholic. But whether this will be his fate cannot be determined in advance, strange as it may seem. Hence, safety demands a refusal to take the first drink.

But it is not always easy to say, "I do not drink." Natural curiosity to learn how the stuff tastes, the invitation of agreeable companions, the fear of being regarded as a sissy or of leaning over backwards, or of throwing a damper on a jolly group, memory of attractive advertisements seen or read—one or more of these and other temptations must be waved aside by a refusal. But the fact that it is "smarter not to drink" is a truth that will give the necessary courage to everyone who is accustomed to pray and to respect himself. The Lord helps him who worthily tries to help himself.

THE PROBLEM OF DRINK

The problem of drink looked at in the light of national interests is one of the most difficult and dangerous this country faces. The

custom of drinking prevails in all strata of American Society, among the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the educated and the ignorant, the strong and the weak, the official and the military. Drink is responsible, in part at least, for many of our existing difficulties. The per capita consumption in the District of Columbia is much the highest in the country—5.37 gallons in 1950, compared with 1.24 gallons for the whole United States, more than four times greater in Washington than the average. The consumption in Utah was 0.74 gallons, fourteen percent of that in Washington.

Does this great consumption in Washington have any significance? It was reported that at the conferences with Stalin at Teheran and Yalta during the war an abundance of liquor was in evidence. Did the presence of liquor have any influence on the harmful agreements (harmful to us) that were reached?

Crime in its many varieties is current in the United States, and the records show that nearly all criminals use liquor and tobacco. And as you know, many crimes are committed because the perpetrator is under the influence of liquor. As you also know, many destructive fires, causing loss of many lives and enormous losses of property, are due to the carelessness of smokers.

EVILS OF INDULGENCE

Indulgence in alcoholic beverages and tobacco is not only injurious to body, mind, and spirit—therefore hurtful to the consumer and greatly so to society—but it is very expensive, estimated to be about fifteen billion dollars annually in the United States—more than is spent for education, libraries, and charity. The picture is dismal indeed. Why is it, how is it, that intelligent, sensible human beings will persist in consuming liquor and tobacco in the light of the many, some dreadful, evils resulting from this consumption? Can it be that they are not well-informed of these effects? This is probably true in many cases, especially with the youth. Hence education is one of the means that should be employed intensively among all ill-informed persons. So many and great are the evils of indulgence that all feasible means should be employed to eliminate them. Certainly all schools should participate in this movement.

But as this movement is intensified, so will counter movements be, we may be assured; "conspiring men" will intensify their "evils and designs." Satan, the devil, is not asleep.

But Latter-day Saints—members of this Church—believing and knowing that God has spoken in modern times on the subject of liquor and tobacco, will you not be aroused, become converted and abstain from indulgence in the use of these things? Nothing less is expected of you by the Church and by non-members who know our teachings relative to them. Be wise, not foolish.

May the Lord help all of us to be sincerely obedient to his will, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.