

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

And now note particularly what he says:

... Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3.)

To that same John, who had written these words as moved upon by the Holy Ghost, the Lord said:

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (Rev. 21:7)

And then again:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (*Ibid.*, 3:21.)

These New Testament scriptures, and many others that could be cited, teach the doctrine of exaltation, a doctrine of

eternal life and eternal lives, a doctrine of joint heirship with Christ the Son. And this knowledge has been given again, with more particulars, by revelation in this day. We are taught that Christ received not of the fulness at the first but went from grace to grace, until he received a fulness, and that he finally received all power both in heaven and on earth. After having this truth recorded in the revelation, the Lord says that he is doing it so we may know what we worship and know how to worship, and that if we keep his commandments, we can go from grace to grace until, one in him as he is in the Father, we may inherit a fulness of all things.

Now the knowledge of God is the beginning of true religion. Without it there cannot be faith in God. The knowledge of God is the end of all true religion. If we have that knowledge and seek, as John says, to purify ourselves as he is pure, we can go on in eternal progression, having reached the blessings of peace and happiness here, and being assured of an eternal reward in the mansions that are prepared, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

MY BELOVED brethren and sisters, in humility I invoke the inspiration of the Lord and seek an interest in your faith and prayers as I stand for a few moments in this pulpit. I should like, if the Lord will bless me, to give vent to some thoughts that have been deeply impressed upon my mind for several weeks now. I hope I shall not be misunderstood. It seems to me that the day in which we live demands a frank and forthright consideration of some of the problems which face us, not only as a Church but also as a great Christian nation.

With you I thrilled at the opening address of our great leader, President McKay. As I have thought of his remarks regarding this land of America,

its achievements, and its needs, I have felt that I could characterize best what he said in two words: Spiritual Statesmanship. With you I love this land in which we live. I am proud of our heritage; I am grateful for the American tradition; I am thankful that the Lord has given through his prophets information regarding this great nation.

However, it seems to me that there are certain tendencies, trends, and practices which endanger very greatly our way of life and strike at the very foundation of much that we hold dear as a great Christian nation. Of course, the conditions of the world generally give us cause for concern. We seem to live in a world of conflict, insecurity, uncertainty, and almost bewilderment. We

Saturday, April 5

Second Day

appear to be groping blindly, aimlessly, unable to find the way. Were it not for our faith in the prophecies of God, I fear sometimes we would almost be tempted to give up.

We are in the midst of continuing international crises. The outlook for world peace and security is dark indeed. The gravity of the world situation, it appears, is increasing almost daily. The United Nations seems unable to settle the troubles of the world. In truth, we are faced with the hard fact that the United Nations, it seems, has largely failed in its purpose. Yes, the days ahead are sobering and challenging ones. We might well ask, America—what of the future?

I never travel across this great land and note its broad, fruitful farms, its humming factories and gleaming cities but what I am impressed with the marvels of this great nation. Yes, we have made unequaled material progress. We have become the greatest and the richest nation in all the world. This has been done on about 6% of the land area of the world by a relatively small group of people, only 7% of the world's population. Yet it is reported that this small group of people produce today approximately half of the world's total wealth in usable form to satisfy human needs. It is reported that in the year 1950 almost half of the food and fiber of the world was produced here in the United States. Our productivity has increased one-fifth every ten years since 1850. Through the use of machines, much of the drudgery and toil so common in many other nations has disappeared. Our engineers have estimated that the average worker today has the equivalent of 99 mechanical slaves working for him. The *Twentieth Century Fund* recently predicted that by 1960, 96% of all the energy going into physical work in America would be performed by machines, 1% by horses, and 3% by men. The average American worker has an output per hour six times his output in 1850. Yes, we have made unprecedented achievements in material things.

The prophets of God foreshadowed these achievements when they predicted that this would be a land choice above all other lands and that it would be preserved for a righteous people. Those who were to dwell here, if they served the God of the land, should be free from bondage and captivity. Lehi, who led the second colony which came to this great land, was told that he was leading that colony to a land of promise and that none should come here save those who would come here under the influence of heaven. This land would be consecrated unto those whom the Lord would guide here. It would be a land of liberty. Lehi's son, Jacob, said there should be no kings upon this land, that the God of heaven would be their king, that this land would be fortified against all other nations, and that he who would fight against Zion should perish.

Reference has been made by President Young to the coming of Columbus. The scriptures tell us that the Spirit wrought upon Columbus, and upon those who followed him, and that they came here under the inspiration of heaven. Nephi predicted that when they arrived, they would humble themselves before God, that the power of the Lord would be with them, and that they would prosper. Our history clearly records that the early peoples who did come were humble, God-fearing men and women. Bradford records that their first act upon arriving here upon American soil was to go upon their knees in humble prayer and bless the God of heaven.

The impelling force in their hearts, it seems to me, was a love for basic ideals and principles, which were dearer to them than life itself. Among these were their love of God, faith in his divine purposes, their love of freedom, industry, thrift, decency, and honor. Yes, this nation had its beginning in a high-minded manner. The rules of conduct established by the early colonists and our founding fathers were taken from the scriptures. They were embodied in the Decalogue and in the gospel. The Sabbath was set aside as

a sacred day. Profanity and other vices were condemned, and gambling was forbidden. People were encouraged to keep good company and to repeat no grievances. They emphasized the spiritual virtues.

Washington but echoed the general feeling of the early colonists when he acknowledged God's direction and emphasized the importance of spirituality, honor, and moral courage. He said:

No people can be found to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

Then as to the place of religion and morality, the Father of our country stated:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. . . . Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

His successors spoke in similar vein. Lincoln emphasized the same thought when he acknowledged that "God rules this world," and that "It is the duty of nations as well as men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow. . . ." and then quoting from the scriptures, "and to recognize the sublime truth that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord." Yes, my brethren and sisters, they spoke of self-evident truths—inalienable rights.

When the Prophet Joseph came upon the scene to open a new gospel dispensation, he shed even further light upon the establishment of this great nation and the coming forth of the Constitution, which he stated was a glorious standard, founded in the wisdom of God. Through revelation the Lord said to him, as was quoted by Brother Moyle yesterday,

Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another.

And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood. (D. & C. 101:79-80.)

We have enjoyed divine favor through much of our history, but what of the future? It seems to me, my brethren and sisters, that the lessons of history, many of them very sobering, ought to be turned to during this hour of our great achievement because I feel in my own heart that during the hour of our success is our greatest danger. I feel firmly that even during the hour of great prosperity, a nation may sow the seeds of its own destruction. This may happen even during a period of great income, relatively full employment, and high business activity. History reveals that rarely is a great civilization conquered from without until it has weakened or destroyed itself within.

I read recently volume three of that monumental work by Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*. This volume, entitled *Caesar and Christ*, covers the rise and fall of the Roman Empire and the coming forth of Christianity. It covers a period of 1125 years, from 800 B.C. to 325 A.D. At the end of this six-hundred-page volume, the author writes an epilogue under the caption "Why Rome Fell." It is generally agreed that not infrequently history repeats itself. The author lists the major causes why this great civilization fell apart. I wonder if there is anything in what he says for us to take note of today. As a read this volume, I was caused to reflect on the similarity of conditions and practices then and now. May I give you briefly his summary:

The first group of causes he termed biological, and no doubt most fundamental. They had to do with the limitation of families, the deferment and avoidance of marriage, the refusal of men and women to shoulder the great responsibilities, God-ordained, of honorable parenthood. He mentioned that sexual excesses were indulged in

Saturday, April 5

Second Day

commonly, both in and outside the marriage covenant. The operation of contraception and abortion was common. This, together with other things, resulted in reduced fertility. Sex ran riot, and moral decay resulted.

He mentioned as another cause of Rome's decay, the waste of natural resources in mining, deforestation, erosion; the neglect of irrigation canals, but most important of all, the negligence of harassed and discouraged men, the failure to teach high moral principles so necessary for the building of real character.

Then he lists with great emphasis the rising costs of government because of armies, doles, public works, expanding bureaucracy, a parasitic court, depreciation of currency, absorption of investment capital by confiscatory taxation.

Is there anything suggestive in this summary?

May I give you the following figures on this last grouping particularly, taken from what seem to be reliable sources? According to projected estimates, our federal government will spend during the coming fiscal years, 1952-53, more than the total income of all the people west of the Mississippi River—22 states. The federal payroll in 1952 will top 22 billion—4 billion above last year and 16 times the 1929 total. Nearly one out of every four adult Americans is receiving regularly federal checks. At the present rate, by 1953 the government will be spending approximately 38% of the national income. During only three of the last twenty years has our federal budget been balanced. It requires today approximately 2½ million civilians to staff the federal bureaucracy.

In the matter of the depreciation of the currency, it is reported that the present dollar is worth only 38 cents compared to the 1913 dollar, and that the dollar today will purchase only about half as much as it did in 1935-39.

As to taxation, the federal government took in taxes during all past administra-

tions up to six years ago—156 years—248 billion dollars. In the last six years we have taken in taxes 260 billion, and still we seem not to have enough to pay our current bills. With a debt of over one-quarter of a trillion dollars, the annual interest payment is 6 billion dollars plus, more than all government expenditures in 1933.

Now, my brethren and sisters, this author lists other causes. Political causes, he says, were rooted in one fact, that through centralized control and the increasing despotism of the state, the citizens' civic sense was destroyed and dried up, thus destroying statesmanship at its source. Men felt powerless to express themselves and lost interest in government. Yet, I presume, Rome has had no equal in the art of government. She achieved a democracy of free men and then destroyed it with corruption and violence.

With you, I love this great land in which we live. I pray for the chief executive and his cabinet and the legislative and judicial branches, the officials of our states and our cities. But I wonder sometimes, my brethren and sisters, what our founding fathers, our pioneer fathers, would do and say if they were here today. I'm sure they would give serious reflection to present conditions. I wonder if they would not recognize that our liberties have already been abridged, that there has been too much of a tendency for us to call upon our federal government every time we felt the need for the accomplishment of any particular objective. I wonder if we haven't had a tendency to call for help for those things which our forefathers would have done willingly for themselves. Yes, I presume as a people we are to blame, but I feel that if they were here today, they would apply some very definite tests before any new service or new program were approved. May I just mention three:

First, I think they would ask the question: Can this service, assuming it is needed, be done more efficiently, more effectively by our federal government, or should we do it ourselves on the

local level? They believed that government is best which governs least. Government seems to be inherently wasteful and inefficient. Possibly it is because the profit motive and competition—the very life of private enterprise—are largely absent.

Second, How will it affect the morale and the character of the people? This seems to me to be of great importance. They were interested in the building of character. They recognized that character, not wealth or power or position, is of prime consideration.

Third, they would possibly ask: How will it affect our free institutions—the church, the school, the home, and our local form of government?

I believe if they were here, they would look for the answers to the decline of public morals. As they looked searchingly for the answers, they would probably observe evidence of weak and vacillating leadership in many places, not confined to one group or one party. They would find a tendency for men in high places to place political expediency ahead of principle. They would be concerned with the alarming growth of a something-for-nothing philosophy, a failure of people to stand on their own feet. They would probably find bad examples by unscrupulous politicians and by delinquent parents, and possibly a weakening of religious training, and the substitution thereof of a faith-destroying materialism.

I think, my brethren and sisters, as Latter-day Saints, and as American citizens, we need to rouse ourselves to the problems that confront us as a great Christian nation. We need to recognize that these fundamental, basic principles, moral and spiritual, lay at the very foundation of our achievements in the past. If we are to continue to enjoy our present blessings, we must have a return to these basic and fundamental principles. Economics and morals are both parts of one inseparable body of truth, and they must be in harmony. We need to square our actions and our policies with these eternal principles.

I wonder if we have forgotten the counsel of the prophets, the founding fathers, and our great statesmen. Surely we need a nationwide return to these fundamentals. We need a nationwide repentance to rid this land of corruption. We must return to the fundamental virtues that have made this nation great. There is a force in the universe which no mortal can alter. This nation does have a spiritual foundation. It has been established in keeping with great spiritual and moral principles, but there seems to be a tendency for us to lose our sense of uprightness and to do wilfully those things which we must know to be wrong. This cannot be done with impunity.

God help us to raise our sights beyond the dollar sign, beyond material things. May we have the courage to stand up and be counted, to stand for principle, for those principles and ideals which guided the founding fathers in the establishment of this great land. Thank God for the promises that have been made regarding the future of America. I hope and pray we shall realize the fulfilment of these promises because we merit their fulfilment. I am grateful that the Lord has said through his prophets that this nation unto the righteous shall be blessed forever, and that he will be a light unto them forever that hear his words.

God help us that we may not drift farther from the principles of faith and honor established by those noble founding fathers and the pioneers who settled these valleys. We need this faith, we need a close adherence to these basic principles. It is my conviction, my brethren and sisters, that this nation or no other nation will be saved materially unless in some way it is strengthened, redeemed, and regenerated spiritually. God bless us in that redemption, that we may go forward and live the principles that have been so basic and so fundamental in bringing this great nation to its present standing in the world, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.