

News. I think you will be interested in them.

The music for this session will be rendered by the Tabernacle Choir under the direction of Elder Cornwall, with Alexander Schreiner at the organ. We shall begin by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "For Unto us a Child is Born." The opening prayer will be offered by Elder Peter J. Ricks, president of the Southern States Mission.

The Choir sang the anthem, "For Unto Us a Child is Born."

President Peter J. Ricks of the Southern States Mission offered the opening prayer.

PRESIDENT STEPHEN L RICHARDS

First Counselor in the First Presidency

MY DEAR brethren and sisters, I rejoice with you in this great conference of the Church. I have been coming to conferences for a half century. I think I have seldom missed a session. I cannot remember of ever having attended a more enlightening and inspiring session than that of this morning. I feel certain that all who were present here or who heard the proceedings must have been deeply impressed.

Naturally, I have an earnest and a prayerful desire to make some little contribution to these proceedings, and I earnestly solicit your co-operation and sympathy and your prayers in an undertaking to that end. I am taking the liberty of addressing my remarks in large measure to our friends who pay us the courtesy and the honor to give some attention to these proceedings.

We are approximating the Easter time, as we were so well apprised this morning in the beautiful sermons of Brother Lee and Brother Brown. At this time the whole world may focus, in a measure at least, its attention upon Christianity, for I cannot think, even in countries of adverse philosophies, that attention will not be given to the progress of that we call Christianity, and I propose, if I may, to discuss some phases of that great theme—Christianity.

President David O. McKay:

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "Light in Darkness," under the direction of Brother J. Spencer Cornwall. After the singing President Stephen L Richards of the First Presidency will address us.

The Choir rendered a selection, "Light in Darkness."

President David O. McKay:

President Stephen L Richards of the First Presidency will be our first speaker this afternoon. He will be followed by Elder Eldred G. Smith.

Recently I heard a minister in an eloquent address over the radio define Christianity as "the Society of the Friends of Jesus." The dictionary defines Christianity as "the body of Christian believers." Is there a significant distinction between these two definitions? Is an adequate concept of Christianity available to us and to the world, and is it important? I have thought that matters pertaining to this subject might be worth our consideration for a short time.

"The Society of the Friends of Jesus" is a nice-sounding phrase. I had never heard it before. The use of the word *society* may be somewhat difficult of justification because *society* usually contemplates something more of an integrated unit of people with companionship and association, generally of a friendly character and common purpose. There is so much diversity of interpretation effort, and purpose in Christendom as to make questionable the application of the word *society*. However, that consideration might be regarded as somewhat technical, and I do not press it.

The more important difference in the two definitions I have quoted is the distinction between *friends* and *believers*.

I may be unduly apprehensive, but

Sunday, April 3

Second Day

I think I discern in this gracious use of the word *friends* a tendency which is supported by many of the circumstances which come to our attention to forsake and depart from the concept that no one may be classified as Christian except he "believe" in Jesus Christ and the principles for which he stands. All of us have friends with whom we are cordial, to whose principles of conduct and life we do not subscribe. A friend of the historical character, Jesus, may have esteem and admiration for his life, his teachings, and accomplishments, but he may not be a *Christian believer* as the old definition designates one to be counted in the body of Christianity.

I cannot bring myself to think that the Savior himself would be satisfied with this new definition, however well intended it may have been. The Lord used the term *friends* most impressively—not quite, I fear, in the same sense in which it is used in the definition. You all remember the great pronouncement to his disciples:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." (John 15:13-16.)

The essence of the friendship here set forth lies in belief and acceptance of the divinity of the Master. It is inconceivable that he should extend the friendship he so beautifully described to any others than those who were believers. We know of his compassion, his mercy, and concern for all our Father's children, but it should never be forgotten that he set forth in unequivocal language the eligibility of those admitted to the circle of his friendship.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (*Ibid.*, 15:14.)

If I could feel that the speaker to whom I listened had in mind such a quality of friendship as the Savior portrays, I would have little hesitancy in the acceptance of his definition, but I

heard nothing in his sermon to indicate that was his concept.

Now, my brethren and sisters, it may well seem to you that I have overplayed this matter of definitions, but the other aspect of the subject which I have mentioned I am sure cannot be too strongly emphasized. Is there available to mankind today an interpretation of Christianity and the definition of a Christian which may be safely accepted and relied upon? As a Christian believer I am assured that there is, and that all men may know, if they will to acquire the knowledge, who is a Christian acceptable to the author of Christianity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope you will bear in mind that I do not bring these matters forward with any assumption on my part that I have the right to judge of the Christian status of my fellow men. No one, under the declaration of the Savior, has the right of judgment of his fellows unless he be specifically commissioned so to do. Scarcely anyone fully conscious of the responsibility of exercising such judgment would ever seek it, for the Lord has said: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged. . . ." (Matt. 7:2.)

My purpose in pointing out some of the attributes of a Christian is to enable each man to determine for himself the state of his worthiness of this honorable designation.

I believe that no man can count himself Christian who is not concerned about religion, who does not have regard for things divine, and for his own standing in relation thereto. Irrespective of what his antecedents and his affiliations may have been and are, it is most difficult to understand how he can be justified in the designation of Christian if he has lost or never had vital interest in religion.

I am sorry to say there may be very large numbers in such a category. Many do not resent their classification as Christians. Many welcome, and some seek, the reputation for practising Christian virtues. I know of few, if any, men who are not pleased to be called "a Christian gentleman," although there has never been evident, in many cases,

any interest or activity in the Christian religion.

There are two significant articles in a recent issue of a popular magazine. One article is entitled, "What Are We Worried About?" and the caption of the other article is, "64,000,000 Americans Do Not Go to Church. What Do They Believe?"

I mention concern about religion as an essential element in the Christian faith. According to the first article, about five thousand persons in many walks of life and different localities were interviewed on the question, "What kinds of things do you worry about most?" The report is that "An overwhelming majority answered solely in terms of personal or family problems (health, finances, employment, children's welfare, etc.)—43% were worried about family finances, wages, expenses, etc. 30% mentioned personal problems such as marriage difficulties, children's welfare, and so on. 24% were worried about health—their own or of someone in the family. Only 8% were worried about world problems, occasioned chiefly by the possibility of being drafted."

The article does not state that the matter of religion was ruled out, but it appears from the report that no one who answered was worried about religion in any form. It may be that a subsequent article which is promised may give attention to that subject.

Now if worry contemplates anxiety and deep concern, is it not significant that no one of this great number interviewed expressed any anxiety or fearful concern about things religious? If this poll may justifiably be interpreted (and perhaps its authors would not approve such an interpretation) as further gravitation of the people of our country toward materialism, then I think it carries serious import for all of us.

I think I speak for this entire congregation who listens to these services, and I know that I speak for myself, when I say that there is no matter fraught with more anxiety and deep concern among all the problems that confront us than the religious welfare of ourselves, our families, and our fellow men. I firmly believe that this is an essential characteristic of a Christian,

and I earnestly appeal to every man who discovers within himself a growing tendency to shrug off religious thinking and participation to stop and consider the effect of his spiritual lethargy on himself, his family, his friends, and his standing as a Christian.

I mentioned another article in the magazine which has some relevance to the measure which a man may apply to his own standing as a Christian. I cannot see how anyone can logically and consistently take on the designation of *Christian* unless he accepts the divinity of the Christ according to the scriptural record of the Christ. Without the record, of course, there would be for us no Christ. Christ is our Lord of the Gospels, as President Clark has so aptly designated him in his book. If the Gospels constitute the record and the history, how can we without building up an artificial and imaginary record fail to accept the divinity of the Father and the Son and still call ourselves *Christians*?

The article asserts that the 64,000,000 Americans who do not go to Church are not necessarily irreligious; that many have a profound faith in God but do not believe that any existing organized religion is a satisfactory expression of God's will. I do not attempt to controvert this statement, although I believe that we will all agree that going to Church and worship are evidences of one's acceptance of a Supreme Being and are calculated to foster and develop that acceptance.

It is further pointed out in this article that the great Lincoln never affiliated himself with any church, but of course there would be no warrant for any statement that he was not a believing, Christian man. There are many things in his life and utterances to support the conclusion that he was a man of faith and prayer who would have resented a charge that he was not a Christian believer.

It seems to me that in the present state of world affairs it is particularly important that men should examine the state of their inner feelings about this matter. It is frequently stated from many different sources that the present overshadowing conflict in the world is

Sunday, April 3

essentially between that which is Christian and that which is anti-Christ. I recognize that there may be many not religiously inclined who would not accept this generalization. Many would probably prefer to define the issues as drawn between the political concepts and systems of the so-called free world and the ideologies of statism and communism. However the issue may be defined, I am personally convinced that the cause of the free world may be immeasurably promoted and furthered by an enlarged acceptance of the Christian concept. That concept, better than anything else, it seems to me, furnishes the fundamental understanding of man's inherent right to freedom. However much illustrations from the past may serve to justify the eternal quest and struggle for liberty, there is nothing in all history which so thoroughly supports the struggle as does the knowledge and understanding of the nature and origin of man himself.

Where may we find that all-essential explanation? I think I may answer for all Christian believers, in the Christian theology, where man is given a dignity and majesty of birth and purpose transcending any sphere which may be created for him by the imaginative rationalization of man. This man of Christian origin is as a matter of divine right a free man, invested with the power of choice, without restraint, except that necessarily imposed to give all his fellows the same measure of freedom and liberty.

I think, my brethren and sisters and my friends, and I hope many heard this morning, that no better exposition of the fundamental Christian concept of family, the foundation of society, and the essentials involving and underlying our freedom, has ever been brought before us and the world than came from that inspiring, comprehensive and powerful discourse of President McKay this morning. Would that all men all over this world might have heard it.

This man of the Christian concept is not only free to act for himself, but he is also designed to live in a free society, operating under the ennobling and exalted concept that all men are brothers in the family of a divine parent. In the

battle for the freedom of men is there a satisfactory and promising substitute for this Christian concept? I think there is not, and I doubt that on serious consideration there will be many in the free world who will contend that there is.

Facing the problems that confront the world under the stress of the anxieties of the threat of a devastating and annihilating war, is it going too far to ask men and women in this land which has come to be the leader in the cause of freedom to subject themselves, their lives, and their feelings to their own scrutiny to answer to their consciences whether they are truly Christian in belief and purpose? All who can so conscientiously classify themselves are in a position to make a contribution to the noble cause our country espouses, which I am sure can come from no other source in equal measure.

I am content for this occasion to leave the matter of Christian definition with this comment: I would be willing to accept the minister's statement that "Christianity is the Society of the Friends of Jesus," if friends could be interpreted as the Savior pronounced:

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." (John 15:14.)

I owe it to myself and to my fellow members in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to make an additional statement, particularly for the benefit of those not of our number who may listen to these proceedings. We would like all to know that additional evidences for the divinity of the Christ, and for the support of the Christian concept have providentially come to the world in these latter days, and that a fulness of the Lord's gospel, and the authority and power to administer it have been restored to the earth through his chosen servant for the enlightenment and blessing of all mankind; and further, that this enlarged understanding of the true nature of Christianity is available to all who will sincerely and humbly seek to know it; and that knowledge of it, the adoption of the restored gospel as a way of life, will immeasurably enhance the prospect of the triumph of the forces of freedom over their opponents. I extend to all an

earnest invitation to investigate for themselves.

In conclusion, I leave this parting word. I have deep respect, esteem, and love in my heart for all men and women everywhere who may be rightly counted Christian. I have regard for all who practise the Christian virtues. I know that the Christ loves those who love him, and who serve him, even with limited knowledge of his real nature and his true gospel.

God bless Christianity, "the body of

Christian believers," and true friends of Jesus, I ask humbly in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

You have just heard President Stephen L. Richards of the First Presidency of the Church. We will now hear from Elder Eldred G. Smith, Patriarch to the Church. He will be followed by Bishop Isaacson.

ELDER ELDRED G. SMITH

Patriarch to the Church

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, I seek an interest in your faith and prayers. This is a humbling experience, and I hope that I will always appreciate the honors and the blessings that have been given to me and that I shall always appreciate the blessings of the Lord.

The other night a cartoon appeared in *The Deseret News* which showed Uncle Sam deluged in the overflowing contents of a large horn of plenty. The title read, "Isn't it time we count our blessings?" These cartoonists have a gift of catching the essence of a situation and portraying it very graphically. We live in a land blessed above all other nations—not only a choice land, but also a choice generation. In addition to all the luxuries of modern living, we have the blessings of the fulness of the gospel. Today we do not have the physical opposition of hardship and persecution that we had in the earlier days.

The Church is growing very rapidly, and our missionaries are having amazing success. The people of the world are impressed with the accomplishments of the Church. But, brothers and sisters, if we learn anything from history—and history is our greatest teacher—we learn that our present favorable conditions may have a hidden danger. Some of these dangers were referred to by President McKay this morning. Do you remember what happened so often in the Book of Mormon? When the people were righteous, they enjoyed pros-

perity. With prosperity came a feeling of self-sufficiency and pride. They forgot to acknowledge the Lord as the Giver of all their blessings. They lost their humility. Not until they were chastened and humbled did righteousness and prosperity return.

Let us enjoy the prosperity in which we live, with humble gratitude in our hearts, expressing our thanks to the Lord. Let us be humble in all our prayers. Beware of lip service. Remember how the Lord criticized the hypocrites who prayed openly for the glory of men. He said,

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. (Matt. 6:5.)

It is not always the words we use in prayer that count so much as the spirit in which they are said. If we are truly humble, we will acknowledge the hand of the Lord in all our righteous endeavors. Praying without humility is praying without faith. You just cannot have true faith without humility. What better example do we have than the simple, humble prayer of a child?

President George Albert Smith has told a story which I think will bear repeating.

It was about a nine-year-old boy who was to undergo a serious operation. As they prepared to give him the anesthetic, he asked those attending him to pray for him. When they told him they could not, he said, "If you can't pray