

One father, a nonmember of the Church, said, when his son was ready for departure for his mission: "Son, I am very proud of you. Your life and your conduct have been an inspiration to your mother and me. Son, I want to be your first convert to the Church. Take hold of me. Don't let me turn back. I want to be your first convert."

For these lovely experiences for our youth, I humbly pray. There is much that can be said for the Latter-day Saint Church program. It has been blessed and inspired of the Lord. As you have listened this day, the day before, and the day before that, your meditations have been enriching. The Lord has been talking to you.

I have selected merely these two great teachings, which I feel are especially vital to the lives and happiness of our youth.

In a few days thousands of youth

from all parts of the United States will meet at Valley Forge, and then a few days later, thousands more will meet in London, England. They will come from all over the world. They are of many colors and races; I have camped with them; I know these men and boys; and if I may be bold to say, they have faith in God!

May the Lord bless us as we make more and more friends, as we mingle with people that we may give freely that which God has given us so abundantly, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Elder Oscar A. Kirkham, member of the First Council of Seventy. Elder Adam S. Bennion of the Council of the Twelve will now address us. He will be followed by Elder S. Dilworth Young.

ELDER ADAM S. BENNION

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

FOUR YEARS HAVE come and gone since I was called to this position, and they have been tremendous years: *Here with these devoted brethren, out in the stakes and wards with our wonderful people, in representative military camps from Canada to Germany, and in the mission fields with the inspiring devotion of our young men and women and the heart-warming response of the Saints.*

Together with these assignments have come opportunities to attend stimulating Religious Emphasis Weeks at representative universities of America. It is an intriguing experience to be invited to be a member of a team made up of a Catholic priest, an Episcopalian minister, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist, a Seventh Day Adventist, a Christian Scientist, a Jewish rabbi, and a Mormon elder.

To meet with faculties of those institutions and with students and then to spend the evening in joint sessions of fraternity members and sorority girls, attempting to answer the questions which they ask—and I think I have

never been asked so many questions in my life before, and I have never been so grateful for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and so proud of the program which it carries forward.

One of the most meaningful questions ever put to me was this one in one of the universities: "Mr. Bennion, what has your Church given to America that America didn't already have?" I have been thinking about that question ever since, and one day I hope to have a complete answer.

When it was first put to me, I offered five simple answers. Today I should like to do something I have not done in a conference here before. You good people who sit out there by your radios, I hope you have a pencil handy, because I am going to violate all the rules of psychology. The psychologists say we ought to limit ourselves to three ideas, or to five, at most. I am going to take you to a score of them today, and I am sure you cannot remember them all, but if you will jot them down, my thought is that it is a wonderful thing to get the whole scope of the gospel, to run it

Sunday, April 7

through in its entirety as best we can in these few minutes.

Well, I started out with my answer to "What has your Church given to America that America didn't already have?" and I said, first of all *A Welfare Plan*. A plan to insure against want, an assurance that no man, woman, or child shall ever be left in distress, a plan which is not a dole, a plan which does not involve beggary, a plan involving honest work and mutual helpfulness, a plan inspired of God for the blessing of his children.

Wherever this welfare plan has been explained, men have said, "Certainly that is a contribution to America."

The second thing I named was *A Great Pioneer Story*. I love to live over again the heroic experiences of our forebears when, driven out of their homes in Nauvoo in the dead of winter, they trudged across three hundred miles of snow and mud and muck to Winter Quarters, then to launch another trek of a thousand miles through an uninhabited wilderness to a haven characterized significantly by their prophet leader, Brigham Young, when he said:

We will go so far that our enemies will not choose to follow us and we will pick so unpromising a place that nobody will covet it. (Brigham Young to President James K. Polk, August 9, 1846.)

We love now to sing the song:

We'll find the place which God for us prepared,
Far away in the West;
Where none shall come to hurt or make afraid;
There the Saints will be blessed.

"Come, Come, Ye Saints."

In that story is a tale to match Plymouth, a tale reminiscent of Israel on her way to the Promised Land. There are courage and devotion and sacrifice and faith triumphant over hardship, and I submit to you, as I have submitted to the universities of this country—there is a contribution.

In the third place, and the men of these universities are impressed with it, we have given to the world and to America *A Religious Literature*. Try naming a modern church which has given to America anything to match the

Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

I love to read to inquirers after truth those masterful and moving and inspired messages such as are found in the Doctrine and Covenants. May I commend to you when you go home from this conference, that you try in your family circle, reading aloud once more, sections 76 and 84 and 88 and 93 and 121 and 130.

The fourth thing we have given to America is *A Wonderful Concept of Deity*. If you will read representative descriptions of Deity popular a hundred and thirty-five years ago, with all their intangible vagaries, you will be grateful, as I am, for the Prophet Joseph Smith's forthright and simple declaration in his account of his glorious vision:

When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him! (J. S. 2:17.)

It will stir you to read again his final testimony as recorded in section 76.

The fifth thing that we have given to America is *The Priesthood*. It was similarly wonderful for the Prophet Joseph not only to announce the personalities of God the Father and the Son, but also to announce the return of John the Baptist to confer the Aaronic Priesthood, and the return of Peter, James, and John, bringing the Melchizedek Priesthood.

We declare to the world that the priesthood, long lost, has been restored in this the last great dispensation, the authority to act in the name of God given us through the laying on of hands by messengers out of heaven. And that is a contribution.

Other inquiries have prompted me to extend my analysis. Over and over again I have been asked throughout America and Europe to name the features that are distinctive of Mormonism. I can only name them here but taken together they set out a pattern which deserves the thoughtful consideration of men everywhere. I leave them with you in the hope that they might heighten your appreciation of a

wonderful program. I have given you five, and with a termerity that perhaps exceeds my good judgment, I want to add the list up to twenty-odd. And you will appreciate the fact that all I can do is to name them. You take them and fill them in. They make a wonderful study.

Item 6. *The Principle of Free Agency.* The glorious privilege of choosing what we shall believe, what we shall do, and what we shall become.

Item 7. *The Idea of Eternal Progression.* An everlasting becoming! As Professor Rugh once said: "Life can become the achievement of a perpetual triumph." I think the poet Browning had some such idea in mind when he penned the lines: "A man's aim should exceed his grasp—or what's a heaven for."

Item 8. *Tithing.* The key to the financing of the program of the Church, a returning to God of one-tenth in appreciation for the nine-tenths he so generously gives to us his children.

Item 9. *Temples and Temple Ordinances.* Try to name the modern church that builds temples for sacred ordinances, that teaches genealogical research, that does vicarious work for the honored dead of other generations.

Item 10. *Ward Teaching.* This was stressed so beautifully and effectively last night in our General Priesthood meeting by our beloved President. It is heartening to know that every family in the Church may receive an official call each month by a representative of a bishop to inquire in a friendly spirit into the health and well-being of the members of the family and to leave a stimulating gospel message for meditation during the month.

Item 11. *Lay Leadership.* Leadership inheres in the membership of the Church. Leaders are chosen from the ranks. The door is open for any worthy young man or young woman to enter upon the path that leads to presidency in the various organizations of the Church.

Item 12. *A Wonderful Organization.* The genius of that organization is reflected in the fact that in a typical ward—and it is interesting to call the roll as we did in this one ward, a ward of 600 members—236 men and women are

actually engaged in leadership responsibility, and the channels of activity are perfectly clear.

Item 13. *A Work-a-Day Program.* Mormonism is not merely a system of belief—it is a gospel of activity. It is not confined to church worship on the Sabbath Day—it reaches into the daily lives of its members every day in the week. As someone said happily in Europe: "The Church doesn't work its members to death—it works them to life."

Item 14. *A Philosophy of Grace and Works.* So often in discussions men get lost as between faith and grace and works. It is clear that our redemption is made possible by the grace of our Lord and Savior, but it is inconceivable that the greatest gift of God to man can be realized without effort. Such an idea runs counter to the scripture and to every experience we have in life. It squares with reason that when we have done all that we can in and of ourselves, then God sublimates our efforts through his mercy.

Item 15. *The Word of Wisdom.* In the interest of health and spiritual power, it is good to know that we have section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants for our guidance.

Item 16. *The Great Missionary System.* One of the finest evidences of the vitality and selflessness of Mormonism is the fact that regularly some 5,000 of her choice youth, at their own expense, go out into almost all the corners of the globe and for two years devote themselves to proclaiming the truths of the restored gospel for the blessing of their fellow men.

Item 17. *A Great Program for Youth.* A good friend of mine out of New York recently said he wished he could have his own children to live in Utah, to come under the benedictions of our program for young folk. I feel sure there is no element of boasting in proclaiming that in the matter of a well-rounded program for the development of the talent of youth through recreation, scouting, dramatics, public speaking, athletics, social leadership, and religious study and contemplation, the Church offers some of the finest training in the world.

Sunday, April 7

Third Day

Item 18. *Continuing Revelation.* It seems so reasonable to believe that the God who created the world and all of us, should still reach out in love toward us and guide our destinies. The thought of retirement for God seems repugnant to an intelligent evaluation of his purposes. Certainly the world is in need of direction quite as much today as it was in the days of Moses.

Item 19. *A Precious Fellowship through Service.* One of the most satisfying rewards for working in the Church is the privilege of coming to know fully how wonderful a companionship grows out of the mutual devotion to volunteer service in the interest of our fellow men. There is a rare joy in joining hands with friends in the service of our Father in heaven.

Item 20. *Intellectual Liberty Coupled with Intellectual Responsibility.* The basic belief, "the glory of God is intelligence," puts a premium on the search for truth. Men are encouraged to reach out for enlightenment wherever it is worthily to be found. But they are also charged with the responsibility of proofreading their thinking against good common sense and against the revealed word of God.

Item 21. (I marvel at your patience—I shall run out of numbers soon. But as I turn them through, the gospel seems so complete. I have wanted to do this once.) *Dedicated Home Membership.* Latter-day Saints honor the home as the foundation of civilization in keeping with two great scriptural declarations:

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: . . .

As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.

ELDER S. DILWORTH YOUNG *Of the First Council of the Seventy*

I CANNOT remember the time when I have not heard the story, quoted by Brother Bennion, concerning the coming of the Father and the Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith. I am convinced as I grow older and become proportionately wiser that if boys and girls in our

Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:3-5.)

And then that wonderful declaration to Latter-day Saint parents everywhere—*Doctrine and Covenants 68:25*—on our responsibility in the training of children, coupled with the wonderful suggestions offered in this conference; we bid parents accept their full responsibility to the spirits that have been entrusted to their keeping here in mortality.

Item 22. *The Anchor of Testimony.* The strength of the Church inheres in a mingling of two influences: revelation from God on high and individual testimonies in the hearts of men and women. Testimony is the stability of those people.

And finally, item 23. *The Assurance of Eternal Life and Exaltation.* Through keeping the faith and through keeping the commandments of God, confidence is born in the reality of a literal resurrection through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

IN HUMBLE gratitude I give you my witness that in these twenty-three distinctive features we have the completest program for life—here and hereafter—that I have been able to discover.

May the Lord inspire us to live worthy of it, I pray in his name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

You have just listened to Elder Adam S. Bennion, member of the Council of the Twelve. Elder S. Dilworth Young of the First Council of Seventy will now address us.

Church could keep that story uppermost in their hearts, believing it, having a testimony of it, much of the ills of our youth which President Richards so graphically portrayed this morning would not be.

I am concerned however with one