

President David O. McKay:

The invocation was just offered by Elder Lee Benson Valentine, formerly president of the Argentine Mission. The Relief Society Singing Mothers will now sing, "If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments." Music by Sister Florence Jepperson Madsen, who will now lead the Chorus in singing.

The Singing Mothers Chorus sang the selection, "If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments."

President David O. McKay:

Our first speaker this morning will be President Stephen L Richards of the First Presidency of the Church. He will be followed by Elder Antoine R. Ivins.

PRESIDENT STEPHEN L RICHARDS*First Counselor in the First Presidency*

My dear brethren and sisters and friends: I join in the welcome and greeting extended to you by President McKay. I respond humbly to the assignment to speak to you in the opening of our conference with unusual anxiety in the thought that many may expect the usual inspirational opening address by the President. I counsel those who are disappointed to be patient, because they will be amply rewarded in a later session.

I am taking the liberty of addressing my remarks in large measure to our friends who compliment us by listening to the conference over radio and television. The message I have for them I give with frankness, hoping that they will not misconstrue my frankness for disrespect of them and their beliefs. Only by being outspoken can I hope to make any contribution.

Some time ago a member of my family sent to me a critical article written by Mr. Edmund Fuller in a publication called *Saturday Review*. The criticism of the writer is directed against the effort made to satisfy what the author designates as "general religious hunger," with books, articles, and public appearances of nationally advertised individuals, carrying on a propaganda for what is characterized as (these are quoted) "the good life," "peace of mind," "positive thinking," and "successful" or "confident living." What the author objects to most strenuously is not so much that propaganda should be issued for the optimism of "peace of mind" and "positive thinking," but that this psychological optimism should be held out in any form as an interpreta-

tion of or a substitute for the real Christian religion.

He expresses deep concern in the situation, not so much because such propagandists are taking from an un-informed and unthinking public millions of dollars from the sale of their books and services, but that the uninformed victims of the propaganda are losing something far more important than their money—an intelligent and true concept of religion and Christianity.

Mr. Fuller, the critic, asks, "Where, in all the morass of false witness, whether in quests for successful living or in saccharine sentimentality—where are the great, historic central themes, subjects, words of Christianity through the ages? Where are considerations of the Trinity, incarnation, covenant, atonement, redemption, salvation, sin, offering, judgment, worship, sacrament, sacrifice, communion, and the idea of the Holy?"

In general, I find myself in agreement with this criticism. I think, however, that Mr. Fuller himself is only partially informed with reference to the true Christian religion, and I think, too, that the trends which he analyzes and criticizes have come about and are in part tolerated by people of the world because of inadequate understanding of the vital concepts of true religion.

Not infrequently do we see and hear the statement published that what the world needs is to come to Christ, and that only Christ can save the world. We subscribe, of course, to these statements, but we question with ample justification the interpretation of the

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Christ and his teachings which has been brought to the world these many years. I believe we are justified in ascribing many of these attempts to find substitute for the real Christian faith, and the failure of that faith to find true lodgment in the hearts of innumerable people, to this inadequate interpretation.

We criticize no honest soul in choosing his religion and living by it, but when the truth is available, we take the position that every individual, adequately to exercise his free agency and power of choice, should have and must have, wherever and whenever circumstances will permit, the truth about the Christian religion presented to him. We feel that he cannot be ultimately bound in the sight of God by the choice he makes unless he does have such opportunity. We agree with the critic, Mr. Fuller, that it is an intolerable imposition upon the unsuspecting and uninformed to offer to them what he calls "ersatz foods" to satisfy their religious hunger, but we go further. We believe it is likewise an imposition to foist upon the uninformed an incorrect and unwarranted interpretation of Christ and his gospel, and we believe that generation after generation over centuries of time have been held in darkness and denied the saving truths of the gospel because of such misinterpretations. Indeed, we ascribe the present condition of the world and the limited acceptance of the true Christian faith largely to ignorance of the true gospel.

How much of tolerance should be allowed for the mistakes in interpretation and practices of the past, as pertaining to the followers of Christ, we are not prepared to say. The Lord will judge, and his judgment will be righteous and merciful. We are constrained to deplore the results of these misinterpretations. The revelations predict the outcome which has literally come to pass. Isaiah foresaw both the conditions and results. You will recall this impressive and portentous statement:

"... Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and

their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: . . ." (Isaiah 29:13-14.)

This great statement is corroborated by the Savior in Matthew 15:8-9, and by revelations and prophecies of modern times. In March of 1831, less than a year after the organization of the Church, the Prophet Joseph Smith received from the Lord a comforting and encouraging assurance confirmatory of the predictions which had been made centuries before, which reads as follows:

"And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel." (D & C 45:28.)

That light, my brethren and sisters and friends, has come to the world. It is the light of revelation, and through revelation has come the true interpretation of the Christ, his mission, and his gospel. All men of all nations embraced within the family of the Eternal Father are entitled by his decree to receive the light and to receive an understanding of the true, revealed order of the kingdom of God. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, established under the direction of the Father and the Son, is the custodian of the revealed principles of the restored gospel and the authority to administer its ordinances under divine commission. I am aware that by many this will be regarded as an extreme and presumptuous statement. We make it only because we are constrained by the revelations so to do. I assure you it would be much easier to attempt to win a reputation for tolerance by modifying and ameliorating our position. If we did so, we and our message would be of little value to our brothers and sisters in the world, and we should be untrue to our commission.

Revelation is the foundation of our faith. We are not ashamed to declare that the Lord has spoken through his servants in modern times as he did in days of old. Why should men find so much difficulty in accepting revelation? I assume that it is because it seems to them unnatural that messages should

come from the unseen world, but certainly it is no more unnatural in the present day than in the past, and few would deny the need of God's guidance in the world of today.

I think that the Apostle Paul was inspired to foresee the conditions of the world when he gave his famous definition of the gospel: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; . . ." (Romans 1:16.) He must have foreseen that men, lacking in faith, would be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and particularly revelation, the seemingly unnatural process by which the Lord communicates with man.

Now, we assert that there is no true religion without revelation. Men may contrive all sorts of societies, associations, and establishments, but men of themselves cannot create the gospel of Christ and the kingdom of God. That is a divine function limited to divine power only.

I submit this conclusion in humility to my friends, hoping and praying that they may recognize the logic and truth of it, and muster sufficient faith to accept revelation as the basis for all true religion and the interpretation of the gospel. I assure all my friends who listen that this custody of the truth and divine commission is not a light assignment. It is heavy, weighted with a responsibility both institutional and personal, not exceeded, and I think not equalled, by responsibilities borne by any other people or cause. All of us within the restored Church of our Lord take this responsibility most seriously. The assumption of responsibility of membership in the Church often brings a radical change in living, behavior, and philosophy. The obligation felt by the membership to consecrate and dedicate themselves to the dissemination of what the revelations call "pure knowledge" among the inhabitants of the world becomes an obsession, not fanatical, but practical. In the concept of each member is the recognition of a debt—a debt to be paid not so much to the donor of the gift he has received, but a repayment in terms of conscious effort to give to others the light and

truth which someone has brought to him.

Many people have asked: "What is the sustaining philosophy behind your marvelous missionary system?" Well, I have just stated it. It is the recognition of a noble obligation and purpose to extend the knowledge of truth, born out of gratitude for blessings received.

This condition creates zest and enthusiasm for missionary work, and what to many is a very strange feature of it, is that the enthusiasm is not evanescent. It does not die periodically and then have to be revived. It persists. And why? First, I think, because of the absolute unquestioning conviction in the cause. And secondly, because of the love of humanity engendered by the gospel, that all are in reality of the family of God, and that such parentage makes all men brothers.

I wish I had some way of making all friends who listen appreciate the depth of conviction that actuates the members of the Church in carrying forth its great work in the world. Perhaps it is a little indelicate to cite a personal experience in the effort to give my friends understanding on this point. I hope, however, you will tolerate the recital of my experience.

More than fifty years ago I began the practice of law with a deep love for the profession, and a long-cherished ambition to succeed. I went through what is commonly called the starvation period, and after thirteen years achieved some modest success, at least sufficient to encourage me and build up my hopes for the future.

One day while sitting in my office I received a telephone call. I was advised that the President of the Church wished to see me immediately. I went as requested to a meeting in the temple, where the President of the Church, his Counselors, and the Council of the Twelve Apostles were in attendance. I was told by the President of the Church that I had been selected to become a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and then asked if I would accept this position. Obeying my concepts and convictions regarding the government of the Church, I accepted and was ordained to the position.

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Within the space of twenty minutes the whole course of my life had been changed. My professional career and ambitions were abandoned, and for more than forty years I have devoted myself to the ministry under my call, although I had had no previous preparation, as the churches of the world give, for this undertaking.

I cite this circumstance merely as an example of everyday occurrence in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. Of course apostles are not called every day, but so-called laymen are being called every day to serve in positions of trust and honor. These calls in numerous cases involve substantial change in occupations and professions, and in some instances, as in the callings of mission presidents and missionaries, complete abandonment for a period of years of all gainful occupation, and a personal assumption of considerable responsibility to fulfil the assignment.

Now, my point is, and I think it ought to be clear to our friends, that men do not do these things without complete conversion and complete conviction as to the rightness of their course. I am aware that many may say that sincerity of belief is not proof of the truth, and I am not contending, as the old cliché has it, "that fifty million Frenchmen can't be wrong." There are, however, at least two legitimate and justifiable deductions that our friends may make from the circumstances I have mentioned. First, that the unmistakable evidence of conviction in the rightness of their cause and conduct are exceptional in a day of materialistic living and purpose, not readily duplicated in other causes; and the second point of appeal held out to our brothers and sisters in the world is that the circumstances warrant investigation. That is all our missionaries the world over are advised to request of the people they visit—investigate, discover for yourself. Use your own Bibles. Diminish none of your love for God and Christ and your fellow men, but study and investigate the Christian religion with the light which the restored gospel has brought to it. Why should any true searcher for truth have objection to these two elements—a demonstrated

sincerity and conviction on the part of the missionary, and an invitation to hear and investigate the message?

Now, I wish to extend my remarks to cover an additional aspect of this subject. I am of the definite opinion that the religious hunger of the people, as Mr. Fuller puts it, cannot be satisfied with the current interpretation of the Christ put forth by many professing Christianity. All proclaim him a great teacher. Most assert that he is Savior of mankind, and all invest him with the highest and noblest attributes. Altogether too many, however, worship at the shrine of his attributes, but deny the sovereignty of the King. In my humble opinion, what the world so urgently needs is a present realistic concept and recognition of the Christ as Lord of this earth, as Lawgiver and Judge. If he were recognized as the author and projector of all moral codes and righteousness, and if it were recognized that infraction of his law is sin, I am sure there would be less violation than we see today, and there would be far less tolerance for violation, which is today undermining the morality of nations. Christ will save the world when and only when men and women of the world put themselves in position to be saved. It is unthinkable that he can deviate from the inexorable laws of righteousness, which from the beginning to the end he has set for mankind. When men sin, there is no substitute for repentance to bring to them a restoration of blessings they have forfeited. So any interpretation of the Christ as Lord of the earth which would invest him with capricious and variable judgment founded on so-called grace and pity is harmful and not true. The true gospel is not a spiritual sedative. It is a challenge to the strength and will of mankind to enter into an everlasting covenant with injunctions and promises, the observance of which yields the reward of exaltation in the eternal presence. Christ is the author of mercy, but he himself said that he came to fulfil the law and not do away with it, and he declared that mercy shall not rob justice.

I am deeply concerned, too, with the tendency to invest the Lord our Savior

with a mystical character. I am not sure that I know just what is contemplated by "mystical." He is not mystical to me, nor to the great body of his followers with which I have the honor to be associated. It is true that he does not move about among us in the form in which he once presented himself to humanity, but he is real. He was resurrected in the form in which he was crucified, and he lives in the heavens he has described. He will return as he has promised, and in the meantime he has left an organization which he established through his commissioned servants, in fulfilment of prophecy, to build his kingdom and prepare the way for his coming. I hope that they who profess to love and adore him will not make him less than he himself said that he was—the Son of the Father, on the right hand of God, Lord, Lawgiver, and Judge of all men in the earth, invested with powers and authorities everlasting.

So, it is the worship of our Lord so interpreted, it is the acceptance of his revealed and restored gospel, and that alone, which will adequately and perpetually satisfy the "hunger for religion," which I sincerely hope pervades the world today. Christ has been seen in modern times. There are creditable witnesses whose testimony has never been successfully refuted to two such appearances—first, when he appeared to the young prophet, Joseph Smith, in answer to prayer, accompanying his Father, the Eternal God. This heavenly vision, without argument, brought to the world an irrefutable and true concept of the Father and the Son. Then he appeared to this same prophet with an associate when he was more mature

in a temple which had been erected to his name. This is the testimony of that appearance:

"And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God." (D & C 76:22-24.)

Every fiber of my being responds to that testimony. I am completely convinced that the men who bore the testimony told the truth. Every interpretative sense which I possess tells me without doubt or equivocation that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lives as a resurrected eternal being, and that he is my Lord and my Savior, and the Lord of all men. I could wish for no greater happiness, peace, and satisfaction to come to all our friends than that they should enjoy the blessing, the incomparable blessing, of this knowledge and assurance.

May the world come to peace and happiness through the recognition of the true Christ, I ask humbly in his name. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

President Stephen L Richards of the First Presidency of the Church has just spoken to us. Elder Antoine R. Ivins of the First Council of Seventy will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Gordon B. Hinckley.

ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

My brethren and sisters, I hope that the few words I attempt may be directed by the Spirit of God, and that perchance they may be helpful to us and give us courage in the efforts that we are making to carry forward the work of God.

I am happy to be here today and

listen to these fine sisters sing as they did Wednesday when I attended the meetings of the Relief Society, where I always gain a wonderful respect for the women of the Church, and the effort they are putting forth to further the work of God.

I want to bear my testimony to the