

Sunday, October 12

Third Day

Singing by the Choir, "Hear My Cry, O God."

Elder Nathan Eldon Tanner, president of the Calgary Stake, offered the opening prayer.

by Elder Nathan Eldon Tanner, president of the Calgary Stake. The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "The Lord Is My Shepherd," with Richard P. Condie conducting.

### President David O. McKay:

The opening prayer has been offered

The Choir sang, "The Lord Is My Shepherd."

## PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

My brethren and sisters, please believe me that never before have I felt so keenly the need of your sympathetic co-operation, and particularly the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord. I have in mind and in my heart the feeling that the religious influence, sincere religious influence in the heart, or the life of the individual, is the most refining influence in the world. That spirit has actuated each one, I am sure, who has spoken to us in previous sessions of this conference, and I should like to emphasize that with your help and the inspiration of the Lord in the few remarks that I make on this occasion.

It is a wonderful influence—to see this vast audience, to realize that the Assembly Hall and Barratt Hall are also crowded, and that tens of thousands are listening in by television and radio this morning.

Jesus, in a wonderful prayer—I think it must have been the most impressive ever offered in this world—said these words:

"And now I am no more in the world, but these [referring to the members of the Twelve who knelt with him] are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. . . ."

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (John 17:11, 15.)

A number of years ago, a stake president upon being honorably released from his position in which he had served well, made the remark: "Now I am reduced to just a humble member." Because he had been released, he felt that he had lost something. Well, he had. He had lost the privilege of serv-

ing the members of his stake as president, for to be a stake president, or to hold any other position in the Church, is an honor as well as a great responsibility. But to be a lay member is also a great obligation as well as a great opportunity.

Membership is obtained by baptism, which is at once a burial and a birth—a burial of the old person, with all his frailties, faults, and sins, if any, and a coming forth to walk in a newness of life. Backbiting, faultfinding, slander, profanity, uncontrolled temper, avarice, jealousy, hatred, intemperance, fornication, lying, cheating, are all buried. That is part of what baptism by immersion signifies. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," (*Ibid.*, 3:3) said Jesus to Nicodemus. He comes forth to walk in a newness of life, signifying that in the new life ahead there will be an effort to maintain honesty, loyalty, chastity, benevolence, and of doing good to all men.

Wordsworth once said of Milton: "Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart." That is what membership in the Church does to those who keep the ideals they profess.

James said that, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27.)

It is in this sense of keeping ourselves "unspotted" from the world that the lay members, as all officers, are obligated.

Speaking of the apostles, Jesus prayed, ". . . these are in the world, . . ."

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou

shouldest keep them from the evil." (John 17:11, 15.)

In the Book of Mormon, in the forty-second chapter of Alma, we are told why the children of God are here in the world—namely, to mingle with the sons of men, to gain an experience that will bring them back to God, but not to partake of the sins of the world. The Savior said to his apostles on the same evening that he offered that beautiful prayer: ". . . be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33.) Going soon to meet his Father, he admonished them to follow his example, praying that God should not take them out of the world, but should keep them from evil.

I have never met a member of the Church who would not express himself, and, if occasion arose, who did not so express himself as being willing to defend his membership if this Church were attacked. I have seen boys apparently indifferent to Church interest on occasions stand out and express defiance of an attack upon the Church. All very commendable, but perhaps at the very moment of that gallant defense there were encroachments upon their souls which weakened their power to defend the truth. Trees that can stand in the midst of the hurricane often yield to the destroying pests that can scarcely be seen with the microscope, and the greatest foes of humanity today are those unseen microscopic microbes that attack the body.

So there are influences at work in society which are undermining the manhood and womanhood of today. It is these unseen influences which come from the world that influence us when we are least prepared to defend ourselves. When we do not withstand the encroachments of these evil influences, we weaken the possibility of defending the Church of Jesus Christ. This is an individual work. What the individuals are, that the aggregate is. Jesus influenced individuals, knowing that if the individual is pure, strong, a thousand individuals would make a strong community, and a thousand communities would make a strong nation. Individual responsibility!

Some time ago, a party of friends were driving over a beautiful valley not far

from Salt Lake City. They passed a wheat field. It was an impressive sight to see that dry farm of wheat, and one of the party expressed his admiration at the luxuriant growth in the field, and looked at it in general. There it stood, apart from the sagebrush and barren surroundings. But another member of the party was not satisfied with looking at it in the aggregate. He asked the conveyance to stop. Getting out, he looked at the individual heads of wheat, and exclaimed: "What large heads!" He cut an individual stalk which gave him that impression. But that was not enough. He broke the head, shuffled it in his hands, blew the chaff away, and examined each kernel. "The kernels," continued he, "are plump and solid." After all, the test of that wheat field was the *individual* kernel of wheat, and so it is in a *community*—so it is in the *Church*.

The test of the efficiency of God's people, is an individual one.

"What is each one doing," one should ask, "to foster the group known as the Church of Christ in the world? Is he living so that he is keeping unspotted from the evils of the world?" God wants us here. His plan of redemption, so far as we are concerned, is here, and we, my fellow workers in the Church of Christ, are carrying the responsibility of testifying to the world that God's truth has been revealed; that men and women can live in this world, free and uncontaminated from the sins thereof, following as nearly as humanly possible, Jesus as he walked about two and a half years in his day.

Now, what do we mean by the world? I take it that the world refers to the inhabitants who are alienated from the Saints of God. They are aliens to the Church, and it is the spirit of this alienation from which we should keep ourselves free. We are told by Paul not to conform to the fashions of the world. Timothy was warned not to partake of the evils of the world. One or two I quote:

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (II Timothy 2:22.) Zion is the pure in heart, we have been told, and the strength of this Church lies in

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the purity of the thoughts and lives of its workers. Then the testimony of Jesus abides in the soul, and strength comes to each individual to withstand the evils of the world.

Temptations come in our social gatherings. They come to us at our weddings. They come to us in our politics. They come to us in our business relations, on the farm, in the mercantile establishments, in our dealings in all affairs of life. In our home associations, we find these insidious influences working, and it is when they manifest themselves in the consciousness of each individual that the defense of truth should exert itself.

There may never come a great opportunity to defend the Church. We sing:

"It may not be  
On the mountain height,  
Or over the stormy sea;  
It may not be at the battle's front  
My Lord will have need of me;  
But if, by a still, small voice he calls  
To paths that I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand  
in thine:  
I'll go where you want me to go."

When that still, small voice calls us to the performance of duty, insignificant though it may seem, and its performance unknown to anyone save the individual and God, he who responds gains corresponding strength. Temptation often comes in the same quiet way. Perhaps yielding to it may not be known by anyone save the individual and his God, but if he does yield to it, he becomes to that extent weakened and spotted with the evil of the world.

Let me cite an instance: A young missionary was invited to a wedding in a foreign country, at which two of his acquaintances were joined together in bonds of matrimony, the ceremony being performed by a minister of another church. This young man was the only member of the Mormon Church present amidst the one hundred or more guests at the table in the hotel. By each plate was a wine cup, filled to the brim, and also a glass of water. After the ceremony, as the guests were all in their places, the minister arose and said: "Now I propose that the company drink

to the health of the newly married couple." They all arose. Now propriety suggested that this young man take up the wine in his wine cup. But he was a missionary. He belonged to a Church that preaches a Word of Wisdom. Science since has proved it to be indeed a Word of Wisdom. He was preaching that, and he was pretending to live it. Here was a time when he could indulge. No one would know—indeed, it seemed to be the act of propriety, but he resisted. Now was the opportunity to defend his Church, and that is what he did. He took the glass of water. Some of his immediate friends by him, dropping their wine cups, followed his example, and at least half a dozen wine glasses remained untouched. Others saw it, and the circumstance furnished an excellent opportunity to converse with those guests upon the Word of Wisdom.

Now, was he humiliated? No. He was strengthened. Were the guests embarrassed? No. Did they feel to condemn him? No. Condemnation was replaced by admiration, as it always is in the hearts of intelligent and God-fearing men and women.

Converts to the truth walk out of the waters of baptism with a glow upon their countenances, especially after confirmation which they have never had before. They realize that they have taken upon themselves the name of Christ, and covenant to walk in accordance with the ideals of his gospel. During Sunday School and Sacrament meetings they are permitted to make a covenant, as does every lay member. In the presence of his fellow members of the Church, he covenants before God that he is willing to take upon him the name of the Son, always to remember him and keep his commandments which he has given him, and by so doing to always have the Spirit of the Lord to be with him. That is true religion.

What a covenant for every lay member! Is he virtuous in thought and action? Is he dealing honestly with his neighbor in the horse and cattle trade, in the purchase of property, in any business transaction? If he believes in the covenants he has made, if he is true to the covenants he has made, if he believes in the efficacy of the Church to

which he belongs, he has obligated himself to do these things. If called to a prominent position, it is his duty to be true, and he is more obligated than ever to set an example to others. He may not be called, however, but his membership in the Church of Jesus Christ obligates him to these high ideals. Only in that way can religion become the most influential and potent power in life.

It is generally understood that every member of the Church should be a missionary. He is probably not authorized to go from house to house, but he is authorized, by virtue of his membership, to set a proper example as a good neighbor. Neighbors are watching him. Neighbors are watching his children. He is a light, and it is his duty not to have that light hidden under a bushel, but it should be set up on a hill that all men may be guided thereby.

Here is a good example of how a lay member may preach by example:

Over a hundred years ago a man in his early forties who had already won distinction as a great writer heard of a company of Mormons who would be sailing from the docks in London on a certain day in June 1861. In charge of those Mormons was Elder George Q. Cannon. It was an emigrant ship. This great writer, Charles Dickens, was then writing what afterwards became known as *The Uncommercial Traveller*. He took his pad and paper, walked down to the docks. You who have read this book will remember how he describes those docks and the various characters around them. He got permission from the captain to go aboard the vessel which had been chartered to carry eight hundred Mormons across the sea on their journey to Great Salt Lake.

He recognized the passengers as some coming from Wales, some from Scotland, some from Yorkshire, and others from near London. He listened to the inspector call their names—Jesse Jobson, Sophronia Jobson—lay members of the Church. Next group: Susanna Cleverly, William Cleverly, etc.—layman after layman passed on board the vessel. Dickens went down to the lower deck and then he came up on the higher deck to investigate. He studied each

group and each individual carefully. Among other things he said:

"Nobody is in an ill temper. Nobody is the worse for drink. Nobody swears an oath or uses a coarse word. Nobody appears depressed. Nobody is weeping, and down upon the deck in every corner where it is possible to find a few square feet to kneel, crouch, or lie in, people in every unsuitable attitude for writing letters, are writing letters." Then he says: "Now I have seen emigrant ships before this day in June, and these people are so strikingly different from all other people I have seen in like circumstances whom I have ever seen that I wonder aloud, 'What would a stranger suppose these emigrants to be?'" Then he adds: "What is in store for the poor people on the shores of the Great Salt Lake? What happy delusions they are laboring under now. On what miserable blindness their eyes may be opened then, I do not pretend to say. But I went on board their ship to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would. To my great astonishment, they did not deserve it; and my predispositions and tendencies must not affect me as an honest witness. I went over the *Amazon's* side feeling it impossible to deny that so far some remarkable influence had produced a remarkable result, which better known influences have often missed."

My dear fellow workers, lay members of the Church of Jesus Christ, what would have happened to this one hundred-year-old testimony by a world-renowned author if those members of the Church, Brother Jobson, Sister Jobson, and those other humble people from Wales, had not observed the principles of good conduct in the Church? What would have happened if they had taken the Lord's name in vain? If they had taken an oath? If Charles Dickens had seen them quarreling? Instead, not an oath did he hear. He saw no quarreling, heard no bickering. He was compelled to say: "Some remarkable influence had produced a remarkable result in the lives of these English people, which better known influences have often missed."

In other words, some influence had changed men's lives and made women

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and children better than they had ever been before. That is the mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ—to make evil-minded men and women good, and to make good men and women better; in other words, to change men's lives, to change human nature.

Beverley Nichols (and I repeat what I have said before), author of *The Fool Hath Said*, writes impressively on changing of human nature: "You can change human nature. No man who has felt in him the Spirit of Christ, even for half a minute, can deny this truth, the one great truth in a world of little lies. You do change human nature, your own human nature, if you surrender it to him. To deny this is only to proclaim yourself as an uneducated fool.

"Human nature can be changed, here and now.

"Human nature has been changed, in the past.

"Human nature must be changed, on an enormous scale, in the future, unless the world is to be drowned in its own blood.

"And only Christ can change it. . . .

"Twelve men did quite a lot to change the world nineteen hundred years ago. Twelve simple men, with only the wind to bear them over the seas, with only a few pence in their pockets, and a shining faith in their hearts! They fell far short of their ideal; their words were twisted and mocked; and false temples were built over their bones, in praise of a Christ they would have rejected. And yet, by the light of their inspiration, many of the world's loveliest things were created, and many of the world's finest minds inspired.

"If twelve men did that nineteen

hundred years ago, what might not twelve men do today? For God has now given us the power of whispering across space, of transmitting our thoughts from one end of the earth to another. What shall we whisper—what shall we think? That is the question!"

To be just a lay member of the Church means that every man is a Christian gentleman, that every husband is true to the ideals of chastity, that every young boy and every young girl refrains from indulgence in tobacco, in strong drink, and keeps himself or herself free from the sins of the world. That is what Mormonism means in daily life. If you are called upon to render service in any position, render it. If you are released, you will accept your release, always remembering that the Church is established for your benefit, and the benefit and happiness of your children and your children's children. If you will live in accordance with those humble principles under the covenants you made at the water's edge, and since that time in Sacrament meetings, and many of you in the House of God, you will fill a noble mission, and God will reward you.

May every member of the Church experience this transformation in this life, and so live that others, seeing his good deeds, may be led to glorify our Father in heaven, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Marion G. Romney of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

### ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

#### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends: I have sought earnestly to prepare myself for this occasion and now that it has come my hope and prayer, in which I ask you to join, is that we may continue to enjoy the sweet influence we have felt while listening to the great message of President McKay.

As I stand before you this morning I

realize that many of you, unseen by me, are listening in on radio and television. You are most welcome. Indeed, we feel complimented by your participation with us. As I speak I shall have you in mind, particularly you who may not be members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

If you have been with us during the