

ELDER THEODORE M. BURTON

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My dear brothers and sisters, I am truly grateful for the privilege I have of being here this day and for the opportunity I have of bearing my testimony to you of the divinity of this work. It has been a great privilege to go back again to Europe and to work again with the people that I love so much. I have had already many wonderful experiences and have been impressed again by the strength of the people in those lands.

Very recently I read an article in *Der Abendpost*, one of the German newspapers in Frankfurt, Germany. On Friday, March 16, this paper published a letter from Dr. Martin Niemoeller. He is the president of the Lutheran Church in Germany, which is there known as the "Evangelische Kirche." In the paper he defended a statement he had made previously that eighty percent of those of his church who paid taxes to the church and therefore could be considered nominal members are atheists who do not believe in God. Dr. Niemoeller stated in a letter to the paper that he had based his announcement on his memory of a questionnaire which had been compiled and published in a German newspaper during the past year.

One of the questions asked by the newspaper was whether the receiver of the questionnaire believed in the existence of God. The published result was that eighty percent had answered that question in the questionnaire with a clear and emphatic "no." Dr. Niemoeller said that he had not made the statement to wake up the atheistic eighty percent to a belief in God, but to show the one hundred percent of the people who lived in that area, who were members of his church, that they were now co-existing in an atheistic society and that the so-called western nations could not use the excuse that those in the west were Christians while those in the communist nations were atheistic. His thesis, simply, was this, that the western nations were just as atheistic as the communist countries.

The missionary effort of our Church,

which has established many missions in that area and has sent literally thousands of missionaries there to bear testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ in that land, is clearly justified. The action of the Church in bearing witness in that area is absolutely necessary. Therefore, I am glad that I have had the privilege of again being a missionary in that area and that we have such missions of our Church in Europe.

I am grateful to report that the work is progressing in Europe. The Church is growing rapidly in numbers of members, and spirituality among our people there is increasing. One of the astounding things which has pleased me tremendously has been the increase in leadership among our people. I do not think that anything could be made more clear as to this leadership than something which happened during the month of February.

In February of this year we had a terrible storm which crashed down upon northern Europe. The wind blowing in from the North Sea drove the water up the rivers, and we had a terrible flood in the area around Hamburg. We were very concerned. I happened to be touring the North German mission at that particular time with President Maycock. On Friday evening when we left Altona and drove through Hamburg on our way to Bremen, we passed along the levee and noticed that the water was rising. Some of the cars were already partially under water, and not much more than ten minutes after we passed the water came in and flowed over the very road that we had been traveling. At that time we did not realize how serious conditions were. Although we knew that the water was high, we spent the night in Bremen, held our missionary conference there the next day, and as soon as I returned to Frankfurt by air I telephoned to find out how things were, for I heard that President Maycock could not get back to Hamburg because the roads were under water.

I had reports from that area on Sat-

urday night, and the president of the stake said they had things in hand and were working to care for the people but were concerned about some of the members. The amazing thing was the way our wonderful brethren there immediately sprang into action and took care of their own people. The president of that stake and his counselors with some of the members of the high council visited the bishops, checked on the Saints, found what was needed, and took care of them. They located and helped flood victims, for many of our people lost all their belongings. They lost their furniture, they lost their clothes, even the wallpaper was washed off the walls, and the homes were filled with slime from the floods, but miraculously all their lives were saved.

Some very remarkable things happened. President Panitsch told me that he was concerned about one elderly sister who was bedridden. He was afraid that the flood which covered much of Wilhelmsburg might have taken her life, because she could not move. However, the night before the flood came, she became a little more ill and was taken to a hospital and so was saved.

One of our sisters was concerned because in the middle of this flood, as the waters came rushing in, her children, which she had held by the hand, were swept away from her by the floods, so she lost them and despaired of their lives. She was rescued and came in tears to her bishop wanting to know what she could do for her children. But the children had been miraculously saved. They had clung to trees the whole night and had been rescued the following morning and were restored to her again frightened, but safe.

So you see, the local Saints helped one another. When the call went out to gather food and clothing, they brought so much material into the Altona branch house that the bishops had to tell the people, "We have enough. Don't bring any more." The sisters spent their time sorting the clothing (it was good clothing that was brought in) and making sure that all the people who received clothing had proper fit and suitable attire.

The local Saints helped one another. And the greatest testimony of unity for me, brothers and sisters, was to see how the presidents of the other German-speaking stakes sprang to the rescue. Berlin telephoned over and asked if they could help, and Switzerland and Stuttgart, without even bothering to telephone, started up their relief action and gathered sums of money which to us were really large in terms of German marks, and sent that money to President Panitsch, offered food and clothing, and telephoned to ask if they could give more help.

So you see, they are working together, and those wonderful German and Swiss Saints in our European stakes held together as one people. It is a thrill to see such unity. I thought to myself, truly these stakes now are places of refuge and safety. Zion is where the pure in heart dwell, and these are true stakes of Zion. My heart swelled with pride for our Saints in Europe.

Since I arrived there on the tenth of January, I have had the privilege of visiting all twelve missions and of holding missionary conferences with all the missionaries in the European Mission. I have spoken to numerous congregations in Germany, in Denmark, in Norway, and in Finland. I have been twice behind the Iron Curtain and have spoken with our Saints there. I have found strength, determination, and enthusiasm everywhere and wonderful leadership.

I visited 1,710 missionaries, and I am proud of them and their spirit of devotion. There is a good spirit among them, and they have an *esprit de corps* which is uniting them in spirit. They are catching the great vision of the work which they have to do. They are beginning to realize now who they are. This concept of knowing who you are is a very important concept, and I would just like to tell you a little story that was told to me by John Bennion, one of my missionaries, which I think illustrates this principle very well. It is a story about a salesman who came into a rather isolated valley on a selling campaign. He had some selling to do, and as he looked around for a place to stay that night, he found no hotel,

*Saturday, April 7**Second Day*

no rooming house, no boardinghouse, no place where he could stay. So he did what all good salesmen do when caught in a predicament of this kind. He looked around for the finest house that he could see in this valley, went up, and knocked on the door. When a man came to the door, he introduced himself and said, "I am sorry to bother you, but I am looking for a place to stay tonight, and I can find neither hotel nor rooms available. Would it be possible for you to put me up tonight?" The man opened the door in true western hospitality and said, "Stranger, come on in and make yourself at home."

So the man came in and made himself at home, and they had a very, very pleasant evening together—such a very pleasant evening that in the morning, he decided he would get up and help his new-found friend with his chores. He took up a bucket of grain and went out to the back of the house to the chicken yard to feed the chickens. As he started to feed the chickens, all of a sudden he called excitedly to the man, "Hey, mister, come quick. There's an eagle in your chicken yard."

"Oh," the rancher said, "don't worry about that."

He said, "You don't understand. That's a vicious bird. If you don't get him out of your chicken yard, he'll kill all your chickens!"

"Oh," the rancher said, "don't worry about it."

"But that's a golden eagle!" he cried.

Then the rancher said, "Let me tell you the story, and then you'll understand. Last year some of my boys went with me up into the mountains, and there on a cliff below us we found an eagle's nest. In that eagle's nest were three eggs, and so we let one of the boys down the cliff with a lasso, and he picked up two of those eggs from the eagle's nest and brought them back up with him. When we got home, we put them under a brooding hen. One of those eggs hatched out. That's that eagle. You see, that mother hen was his mother, and all the rest of those chickens are his brothers and sisters. That's no eagle. That's a chicken!"

The salesman looked over into the chicken yard and sure enough, there was

the eagle scratching around in the chicken yard with all of the rest of the chickens and picking up grains of corn just like a chicken would. Then he said to the rancher, "Do you mind if I perform an experiment on that bird?" The rancher said, "Go ahead, he can't lay any eggs." So he walked over and picked up that eagle in his hand, looked him right in the eye and said, "Thou art an eagle. Take to thy wings and fly!" But the eagle just blinked at him with those big yellow eagle eyes, ruffled up his feathers and turned his head sideways and looked him up and down. Then he hopped down to the ground and started to scratch in the dirt after grains of corn. The rancher laughed at the salesman and said, "See, I told you he was just a chicken."

The salesman shook his head and he said, "It just isn't right." Then he went out on his selling campaign, but did not finish, so he returned that night and said, "I am sorry to bother you again, but could I stay another night?" The rancher said, "Look, you stay just as long as you have a mind to. You will always be welcome here." So he spent another very pleasant evening and the next morning got up, picked up his bucket of grain and went out to feed those chickens again. After he had fed the chickens he looked at that eagle. He went over and picked him up, raised him on his hand, and looked him right in the eye and said, "Thou art an eagle. Take to thy wings and fly!" But the eagle just blinked at him with those big yellow eagle eyes, ruffled up his feathers, cocked his head, and looked him up and down, then hopped to the ground and started to scratch for grains of corn again.

The rancher laughed again and said, "It's hopeless. Give it up." Well, the salesman went out to sell another day, but he still did not finish, so he stayed a third night, and that third morning went out to feed those chickens again. He fed them and then looked at that eagle. It was very early in the morning, and the sun was just coming up over the mountain as he reached down and lifted up that eagle and turned him this time so that he had to look right at the sun. Then he said, "Thou art a golden

eagle. Take to thy wings and fly!" But the eagle just blinked at him with those big yellow eagle eyes, ruffled up his feathers, cocked his head, and looked at him again. But as he did so, the sun got in his eyes, so he raised his head to look at the sun, and all of a sudden he began to tremble. Then he spread those great wings and off he flew, and that was the last that was ever seen of that eagle.

Now, he was no longer a chicken. He was an eagle, the king of the air, in the element where he belonged. He was free. A golden eagle, the king of the birds!

I am convinced that there are too many golden eagles among us who are convinced that they are chickens. This is no time for us ever to be chickens. This is a time for us as well as a time for our missionaries to realize who we are.

It reminds me of a passage in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 63, verses 58 to 64, where the Lord said: "For this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words. For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in the last days.

"Behold, I am from above, and my power lieth beneath. I am over all, and in all, and through all, and search all things, and the day cometh that all things shall be subject unto me.

"Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ.

"Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—

"For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority."

Now, he was speaking of me and of you who bear testimony and witness of some of these sacred things, for he goes on to say: "Wherefore, let the church repent of their sins, and I, the Lord, will own them; otherwise they shall be cut off.

"Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit; and in this there is no condemnation, and ye receive the Spirit through prayer; wherefore, without this there remaineth condemnation." (D&C 63:58-64.)

Thus we learn to teach, yes, we must

teach and preach by the Spirit, and to use those testimonies which God has given us in a sacred and a solemn manner. We must not speak lightheartedly of these sacred things, but when we bear testimony we must bear that testimony from the depths of our heart. I told our missionaries this, that when they teach, they must teach by the spirit of truth out of the fulness of their hearts, for as the Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"And if it be by some other way it is not of God." (*Ibid.*, 50:17-18.)

And it is true that he who receives the word must receive it in the same way that it is given. He must open up his heart and must receive the message by the spirit of truth, for the Lord goes on to say: "And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

"If it be some other way it is not of God." (*Ibid.*, 50:19-20.)

Thus the spirit of truth is a bridge which reaches between honest people everywhere. It is a bridge of honesty. It is a bridge of sincerity. It is a bridge of brotherly love.

As the Lord goes on to say in that same section in the following verse: "Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

"Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.

"And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

"That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day." (*Ibid.*, 50:21-24.)

So knowing the personal responsibility that today rests upon me, I bear my solemn witness to you, by the spirit of truth and by the power of the Holy Ghost, that I know from deep within my soul that Jesus lives, that Jesus is

Saturday, April 7

Second Day

the living Christ, a resurrected being, and a personal God of flesh and bones, who truly did appear and spoke to Joseph Smith, taught him, instructed him, and now guides this Church and reveals his will to us today through a choice and living prophet, David O. McKay, as others have testified before me. I bear you this testimony by virtue of my calling as a special witness, for I know the truth of these things in my heart and ask honest men everywhere to listen and to believe and to search and to know for themselves by the same spirit of truth that these things which we have preached are true. I bear this testimony to you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is

Elder Theodore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve and President of the European Mission.

The Ricks College Choir will now favor us with "Achieved Is the Glorious Work," conducted by Richard W. Robison. The benediction will be offered by Elder Burtis F. Robbins, formerly president of the North German Mission, following which this Conference will be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon. The Ricks College Choir will again be with us this afternoon.

The Ricks College Choir sang "Achieved Is The Glorious Work."

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Burtis F. Robbins, former president of the North German Mission.

Conference adjourned until 2:00 p.m.

SECOND DAY

AFTERNOON MEETING

The Saturday afternoon session of the Conference was held at 2 o'clock. President David O. McKay presided and conducted the services.

The choral music for this meeting was furnished by the Ricks College Choir, conducted by Richard W. Robison; Frank W. Asper, organist.

President McKay made the following introductory remarks:

President David O. McKay:

For the information of those listening in over the radio or looking at television, we are pleased to announce that we are assembled in the great Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City in the fourth session of the 132nd Annual Conference of the Church. To those who are unable to obtain seats here in the Tabernacle, we announce that overflow meetings are held in the Assembly Hall and in Barratt Hall where these services are being broadcast by television.

This session of the Conference will be broadcast as a public service over television and radio stations throughout

the intermountain west. The names of these stations were announced prior to the beginning of this meeting. Again, we express our sincere appreciation for the service that is being rendered by these stations.

We are pleased to note the attendance this afternoon of special guests, prominent in national, state, and city affairs, and also leaders in educational circles. You always have our hearty welcome. We are pleased to welcome our stake, ward, and temple authorities, and general auxiliary officers of the Church.

To the radio and television audiences, and to all who are gathered here in this historic building, we want you to feel our heart-felt welcome.

The singing for the afternoon session will be furnished by the Ricks College Choir, conducted by Richard W. Robison, with Frank W. Asper at the organ. We shall begin these services by the Ricks College Choir singing, "What Was Witnessed In The Heavens." The invocation will be offered by Elder Joseph Young Toronto, president of the Spanish Fork Stake.