

President David O. McKay:

Our first speaker this morning will be

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the

Twelve.

### ELDER STERLING W. SILL

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My brothers and sisters, I appreciate very much this privilege of participating with you in this great general conference of the Church. As a kind of text I would like to borrow a little from the philosophy of Rudyard Kipling. Kipling was an English writer born in 1865. He lived in that period when England was the world's leading naval power. He saw much of the change-over from the old sailing ship to the use of steam as a means of ocean navigation. Kipling preserved for us some interesting ideas about this transition in his poem entitled, "M'Andrew's Hymn."

The dictionary says that a hymn is a song of praise or adoration, having a religious significance. Kipling's M'Andrew was the captain of an early steamship in the days when 98 percent of the land-based work of the world was done by the muscle power of men and animals. And even though M'Andrew's engines were very primitive, he praised God for the use of this gigantic new power that had been placed in his hands, and he looked forward to the time when his ship might attain a speed of 30 miles per hour.

M'Andrew sang:

"From coupler-flange to spindle-guide  
I see Thy hand, O God—  
Predestination in the stride o'yon connectin'-rod."

Then standing alone at night as he guided his ship home from its long journey abroad, he said:

"I cannot get my sleep to-night; old bones are hard to please;  
I'll stand the middle watch up here—  
alone wi' God an' these  
My engines, after ninety days o'race an' rack an' strain  
Through all the seas of all Thy world,  
slam-bangin' too home again.  
Slam-bang too much—they knock a wee—the cross-head gibs are loose,

But thirty-thousand miles o' sea does give them fair excuse."

Then while reflecting upon the beginning and contemplating the future of the machine, he said:

"Ten pounds was all the pressure then with which a man could drive;  
An' here, our workin' gauges given 165!  
We're creepin' up wi' each new rig—less weight an' larger power;  
There'll be the loco-boiler next an' thirty mile an hour!  
Thirty an' more. What I ha' seen since ocean-steam began  
Leaves me no doubt for the machine:  
but what about the man?"

Then for a while M'Andrew focuses his meditation upon some of the blemishes of the men who run the machines. Frequently his sailors debased themselves and put ugly scars upon their souls. The fires of sin blackened their lives even as the flames blackened the ship's furnaces. M'Andrew pointed out that in traveling a million miles of sea some of his sailors had traveled an even greater distance away from God and the purposes for which they were created. But M'Andrew knew that the most important question must always be, "what about the man?" He says:

"'Tis the man that counts, wi' all his runs, o'er a million miles o' sea:  
Four times the span from earth to moon . . . But how far, O Lord, from Thee?"

Then thinking about the machine of the future M'Andrew said:

"In spite of knock and scale, of friction waste and slip  
By thy great light, now mark my word  
We'll build a perfect ship.

I'll never last to judge her lines  
Or take her curve, not I.  
But I have lived, and I have worked  
Thanks be to Thee Most High."

From M'Andrew's day till now we have continued to perfect our machines until we have far surpassed M'Andrew's dream of "a perfect ship." The early steamship could hardly carry enough coal to provide the means of propelling itself across the ocean. But the new atomic ships now being launched can carry a full cargo around the earth twenty times or more without ever a thought of refueling.

Our machines not only carry us across the oceans and take us under the polar icecap, but they plow our ground, cook our food, refrigerate our homes, make our clothes, balance our books, carry our messages, build our roads, and move our mountains. Some pictures were recently published showing the construction of the Suez Canal in the 1860's. They showed the dirt being removed in baskets, strapped to the backs of human beings. Then less than a hundred years later a single giant earth-moving machine could do the work previously done by thousands of men.

We have electronic brains equally as capable in the mental field. There are a great many physical and mental jobs which we can no longer afford to have done by "manpower" inasmuch as "machine power" is so much cheaper and more effective. If M'Andrew praised God for the machines of his day, what would he think of those of our time, capable of carrying us through the stratosphere at many times the speed of sound, or what would he think of our \$20,000,000,000 project to put a man on the moon? If M'Andrew lived among us, he would be sure to commend us for our machines and equally sure to inquire, "What about the man?"

We just hope that when man finally does arrive on the moon, he will not create the sorry state of affairs there that presently trouble the earth. But whether here or on the moon, our most serious question will always be, "What about the man?" What about his honor, what about his faith, what about his future? How much personal improve-

ment will we make this year? An investment that pays five percent interest will more than double itself in fifteen years. How much personal doubling have we done in that time? It is wonderful for us to be able to stand flapping our wings in preparation for our flight into space, but in the process are we getting any closer to God and our own eternal life? Captain M'Andrew dreamed of building a perfect ship, yet he said, "It's the man that counts." What our world needs is more perfect men.

For more than nineteen centuries now we have held up before our minds the example of a perfect man, and his greatest message was, "Follow me." With all of our great ability, how well are we following him in his faith? How well are we following him in his works, or in the development of real character qualities in ourselves? As the high point in the most important sermon ever given, the greatest man who ever lived said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) Our Father in heaven is the most perfect, and the most intelligent Being in the universe. He is a member of the highest order in existence. He has the greatest sense of values. He is God. But what about the man? Man's eternal spirit is the literal offspring of God, and according to the natural laws of the universe, the offspring may someday hope to become like the parent. There is everything in remembering our heritage and constantly reaffirming it by the perfection of our own lives.

But generally we are not thinking very much about perfection in men. We live in the age of machines. We occupy ourselves with armament races, astronauts to the moon, and contests for supremacy in material things. What a wonderful world we could have if we could make an improvement in ourselves to match the improvement in the machines we operate!

Many years ago Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote an interesting book entitled, *On Being a Real Person*. He detailed some of the items necessary if one desired to develop himself into a truly outstanding individual. And that is something we should work at a great deal harder than we do. But in the

Holy Scriptures God has given his own specifications for developing life's highest values. It was intended that by following his formula every child of God should become "a magnificent human being" and eventually become even as God. But first we must get rid of the dishonesties, the disloyalties, and the immoralities that destroy so many of our lives and put perfection forever beyond our reach.

In an absolute sense, perfection in this life may be an impossibility. But in many ways a state of near perfection is a reasonable goal for us; for example, we can all be perfect in abstaining from tea and coffee. We can be perfect in freeing ourselves from the use of tobacco and alcohol. We can be perfect in the payment of our tithing. We can be perfect in our attendance at Sacrament meeting. We can be perfectly honest and perfectly dependable and perfectly moral, and this with much less effort than we spend in developing perfection in our machines.

The book of Genesis says that Noah was a righteous man and perfect in his generation. Enoch was also a perfect man, and under his teachings, his people so perfected themselves that the entire city was translated. The scripture says, "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for God took him." (Gen. 5:24.) If the people living in the city of Enoch could be perfect, then the people living in your city and the people living in my city can be perfect also.

There are some people who maintain that it is very difficult to live the religion of Christ, and for some people any righteous effort is difficult. But what kind of person would you expect to be most severely tempted by dishonesty or immorality or profanity? Or what kind of person would you expect to have the most difficulty in abstaining from drunkenness or from betraying his country? The ones suffering the strongest temptations from evil would likely be those living closest to evil. It has been pointed out that no one ever fell into a mud puddle who didn't first go too close to it. We are not necessarily complimenting ourselves when we boast of the difficulty we have in living our religion, just as we would not be complimenting our-

selves to confess difficulty in restraining ourselves from being thieves and murderers.

It is not difficult to live the religion of Christ if that is what we really want to do. That is, it is just as easy for an honest man to be honest as it is for a dishonest man to be dishonest. It is just as easy for a faithful man to be faithful as it is for an unfaithful man to be unfaithful. In fact, it has been said that one can get to heaven on half the effort that we usually burn up in going to hell.

We become godly or moral or obedient, just as we become anything else, by practice. And only as we live the principles of the gospel can we really know of their truthfulness and value. It is the person who pays his tithing who believes in tithing. It is the one who observes the Word of Wisdom who knows the truth of the Word of Wisdom. It is the person who keeps the Sabbath day holy who champions it. And it is only the person who gives service who knows the joys of serving.

Jesus said, "He that doeth my will shall know of the doctrine." (See John 7:17.) And Emerson said, "Do the thing and you shall have the power." If we can live one gospel principle perfectly today, we can live two gospel principles perfectly tomorrow. Perfection in one thing will act as a stepping-stone to perfection in something else, and soon we may approach perfection in all things.

In announcing his famous "as if" principle, William James said that if you want a quality, act "as if" you already had it. If you want to be friendly, act "as if" you are already friendly. If you want to be courageous, don't go around talking fear and indulging in negative, un-Christian thinking. If you want to be faithful, act "as if" you are already faithful. Do the things that faithful people do. Go to church, say your prayers, love God, refrain from evil, study the scriptures, be honest with yourself, and everyone else. And if you would like to be perfect, act "as if" you were already perfect. Don't go around glorying in your sins and weaknesses. We can come very close to perfection if we really get the spirit of it in our hearts.

If we really want to obey God, we should act "as if" we were already obedient. We should think obedience, love obedience, practise obedience, and we should allow no exceptions to obedience. The fewer the exceptions to perfection, the nearer we get to perfection.

During the Golden Age of Greece, Pericles said that no one had a right to fill an important office until he had first filled some smaller offices with distinction. Too frequently we want to do some great thing before we have practised perfection in doing little things well.

If we want to be great souls in heaven, we should practise being great souls here. If we believe that honor is better than dishonor, then we should immediately begin practising honor, not just in big things, but in all things.

There is no question about the fact that our machines of the future will become more and more efficient. Our standard of living will probably go on increasing; our land will become more and more productive; our cities will become bigger and more beautiful. Recently there was unveiled in this city a master plan for our second century of development. Certainly in the future thousands of people will come here to admire our wide streets, our beautiful parks, and our useful buildings. But far the most important part of what our visitors will want to know is, "What about the man?" They will want to know how well we are living this new revelation of the gospel. M'Andrew may well join with Edwin Markham and sing:

"We are all blind until we see  
That in the human plan,  
Nothing is worth the building  
That does not build the man.

"Why build these cities glorious,  
If man unbuilt goes.  
In vain we build the world,  
Unless the builder also grows."

I am sure of this, that the greatest waste there is in the world is not our blighted cities, nor the erosion of our soils, nor the depletion of our natural resources. It isn't the devastation of our wars nor the cost of our crime. The greatest waste there is in the world is that human beings, you and I, live so far below the level of our possibilities; compared with what we might be, we are only half alive. The most important part of any second century plan would be to constitute our lives as a hymn of praise to our Heavenly Father, not only for the inestimable privilege of building a perfect ship and building a perfect city and building a perfect national community, but we should also build into our lives a perfect devotion to God's perfect plan designed to bring about our perfection and eternal glory. May each of us be able to find God's own answer to M'Andrew's question, in my prayer, which I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder Sterling W. Sill, Assistant to the Twelve, has just spoken to us. The Tabernacle Choir, following a brief interlude, will sing "Fierce Raged The Tempest."

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Following an organ prelude the Choir sang "Fierce Raged The Tempest."

**President David O. McKay:**

We welcome those who have joined us in this session of the One Hundred Thirty-Second Semi-Annual Conference of the Church, convened on Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

We shall now hear from President Hugh B. Brown, Second Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church.