

Sunday, April 7

of Jesus Christ was regarded as one of the foundation doctrines of the early church and was taught to all converts "first of all."

One of the best authenticated writings in the New Testament is the First General Epistle of Peter in which he confirms the statements of Paul. We can add the testimony of two other apostles, Matthew and John, and in a lesser degree, Luke and Mark gave accumulative evidence.

Some critics point out what appears to be discrepancies in the testimony of some of these witnesses. Luke and John relate the presence of two angels at the tomb while Matthew and Mark mention only one. The first three gospels indicate the angels were seen by the women, but according to John, by Mary Magdalene alone. Luke and Matthew state the women brought the news that the tomb was empty, while Mark states "they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid." One of the fundamental rules of evidence is that the disagreement of the witnesses in matters of detail does not invalidate their testimony as to the principal facts to which they agree. The question then to be resolved is whether or not the testimony contains such variance in the material facts as to discredit the main issue.

It would make no difference if there was one angel or two angels at the tomb. The fact that he was arisen would not be changed by whether the women did or didn't bring the news concerning the resurrection itself.

The testimony of those who saw him as a living person after his death has never been contradicted. He appeared at least ten or eleven times: to Mary Magdalene and the other women in the garden, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to Peter at Jerusalem, to the apostles when Thomas was absent and again when he was present, to the apostles at the Sea of Galilee, and on a mountain to over 500 brethren at once, to James the brother of the Lord, and to the apostles at the time of the ascension.

We can come to only one conclusion, the resurrection is a historical fact amply proved by authenticated documentary evidence and the testimony of competent witnesses. The man-made theories devised to discredit are without substantiation, and any discrepancies in the narrative are too slight to be given weight.

The walled city still stands on the hill, silently reminding the Christian world of the reality of the resurrection. I bear witness that Jesus is the Christ, the resurrection and the life, and he that believeth in him, though he were dead, shall live, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Howard W. Hunter of the Council of the Twelve.

We shall now hear from Elder Boyd K. Packer, Assistant to the Twelve.

ELDER BOYD K. PACKER

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

In 1833 a revelation was given by the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith known as the Word of Wisdom, given as a principle with a promise. This principle has not been neglected by the leaders of the Church nor abandoned by them. It has been reaffirmed vigorously as one theme of this conference, for we have learned that however much a generation of people learn a truth, it must be rediscovered by each succeeding generation.

It is to the young people of our generation that I speak. Some may regard as trivial the assignment to speak to young people. I consider it otherwise and sense the meaning of an appeal made by the late President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in speaking to the teachers of the Church. "May he," President Clark said, "give you entrance to the hearts of those you teach and then make you know that as you enter there you stand in holy places."

Some young people, not members of the Church, may not be acquainted with the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom. It is simply this, a law of temperance. In it we are counseled by the Lord to refrain from: the use of alcoholic beverages—any of them, tobacco in any form, and from hot drinks—understood by the Church to mean those with habit-forming potential, specifically coffee and tea.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are expected to live this principle.

The Lord has directed that observance of this principle is a condition of membership for one seeking baptism into his Church. For the member of the Church, compliance with this law is a prerequisite for the bestowal of the priesthood, for a call to missionary service, for temple endowments or temple marriage.

You who are young members of the Church full well know that preliminary to such a call you will be interviewed, and the question will be put to you directly, "Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?" If you must confess that you do not, and if there is reasonable doubt that you can honor a commitment to live the principle, your opportunity may be withheld from you.

You may have difficulty, my young friends, understanding why the Lord should require his servants to hold so steadfastly to this rule, particularly when the use of alcohol, tobacco, and hot drinks is practised so commonly in the world, and when we seem to run the risk of driving many fine young people from activity in the Church. Some say we are too persistent in stressing this principle—that indeed it has been overstressed.

A principle with a promise such as this could hardly be overstressed. It may well have been stressed in a negative way, emphasizing only the "Don't."

A father, censuring his little son for some mischief, demanded an explanation from the boy. "Why," he said with exasperation, "did you *do* such a thing?" The little lad was thoughtful

for a moment, then, "If I'd had a 'why,' Daddy, I wouldn't have done it."

It isn't always easy to give you a "why" for everything. But we owe it to you of the coming generation to do more than just say, "Don't!" There are several "whys" for the Word of Wisdom.

The first "why" concerns the effect upon your body. The case against tobacco as the killer in lung cancer, and the indictment for accident, death, and moral mischief returned against alcohol are so well substantiated that hardly anyone would wish to act as attorney for the defense when these two malefactors are brought to trial.

The Word of Wisdom offers protection to your body. Part of the promise reads: "And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones;

"And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint." (D&C 89:18, 20.)

But the greatest loss in failing to observe the Word of Wisdom is not what may happen to your lungs or to your brain or to your co-ordination. There is another "why" much more important even than this.

No doubt you have noticed that some, who have achieved so-called success, have not kept the Word of Wisdom; for instance, you may know a businessman who provides generously for his family, and you know that he does not. Or you may know of a political figure who seems to command the vote of the people in spite of known intemperance. You could hardly escape the example of the movie queen—fair in face and figure—who makes no effort to hide her dissipation. Or the athlete who has run up impressive records, yet openly endorses one brand or another of these injurious agents.

He seems to run without fainting, you reason, and bewildered you may wonder "Why?" How can this principle be so intensely important when so many people—some of them who have been taught otherwise—abuse the principle and yet seem immune from any penalties? You, my young friends,

Sunday, April 7

Third Day

have a greater calling than that in the business world, or as a political figure, or as an athlete. Your opportunity is not so much in what you will contribute materially but in the influence that you may have spiritually.

To those who keep the Word of Wisdom the promise is given of ". . . wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 89:19.) Our spiritual senses are more delicately balanced than any of our physical senses. Like a fine radio receiver with a sensitive tuning mechanism, they can easily be thrown off channel or even jammed by corrosive influences introduced into our minds and bodies.

You, my young friends, can be sensitive to inspiration and spiritual guidance. To do this you need the wisdom and treasures of knowledge—they constitute a spiritual confirmation, your testimony of the truth. To have this witness fulfils the promise of the Lord. To be denied it is the penalty.

There is yet another "why"—perhaps the most important of all. In the fourth verse of the revelation we read: "Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation—" (*Ibid.*, 89:4.) This is a solemn—even frightening warning. But in the promise we are offered protection. To understand, we turn in the Old Testament to the account of the ten plagues of Egypt.

Moses and Aaron were negotiating for the release of the Israelites from bondage. Nine plagues were called forth upon Egypt, but none of them softened the Pharaoh's heart. The Lord said then unto Moses: ". . . Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: . . ."

"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, . . . and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord." (Ex. 11:1; 12:12.)

Under a strange requirement, Israel

was to escape this judgment. They were instructed to take a lamb, a male of the first year, without blemish. It was to be slain and prepared as a feast. They were instructed to take of the blood of the lamb and strike it upon the doorposts of the houses, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, . . ." (*Ibid.*, 12:13.) And it is recorded that the plague of death was visited upon Egypt from ". . . the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; . . ." (*Ibid.*, 12:29.) But Israel, because of the blood of the lamb, was spared, for the plague of death passed over them and did not slay them.

Remarkable, is it not, that in addition to the other promises offered to those who observe the Word of Wisdom, we find in the last verses of the revelation this additional promise: "And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. . ." (D&C 89:21.)

Can you understand now, my young friends, why we stress so strongly this principle? It is not, certainly not, to drive any of you from activity in the Church, but that your blessings may be full. Some have said of you who are young that you are attracted to the low standard, to the easy course, to the careless way. I say they who would sell youth so cheaply do not know you.

Some of you who are young, and many perhaps who are older, have unwittingly been tampering with, or have become addicted to, the use of alcohol, tobacco, or hot drinks. Probably you feel estranged, even rejected, by the Lord and by his Church.

If you only knew how he yearns to open the flood gates of blessings. How he cries for you as did David for Absalom, ". . . my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:33.)

We make no apologies for holding to a standard that the Lord has set. In this ominous day when spiritual strength is so desperately needed, we invite all youth to come where a

standard is kept, where the challenge is great, where much is required, where the gospel is lived.

I bear witness that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that he is the Lamb of God, crucified that men might live. Though we suffer mortal death, through the blood of the Lamb we have amnesty from spiritual death if we keep the commandments of the Lord, for it shall pass over us and not slay us. This witness may come to you even in your youth. On the basis of this personal testimony I commend to you the Word of Wisdom, which is not only a code of health, but quite as much a key to spiritual wisdom—a principle with a promise—in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Elder Boyd K. Packer, Assistant to the Twelve.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "For The Beauty Of The Earth." After the singing we shall hear from Elder Ezra Taft Benson.

Selection by the Choir, "For The Beauty Of The Earth."

President David O. McKay:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of Twelve will be the concluding speaker.

ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: . . ." (Prov. 14:34.) This statement of eternal truth from Proverbs appeared on the flyleaf and the last page of a booklet at each plate at the President's Prayer Breakfast in the Grand Ballroom of the Mayflower Hotel, February 7, 1963 in Washington, DC. This annual breakfast is sponsored jointly by the US Senate and House of Representatives Prayer Breakfast Groups and the International Christian Leadership Conference.

As I listened to the prayers, readings from the Old and New Testaments, and messages from government and non-government leaders, I reviewed hurriedly our spiritual background as a nation and today's spiritual needs.

For, truly, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (*Idem.*)

The beautiful old print which hangs in Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia, came to mind. It is captioned "The First Prayer in Congress, September 1774." It depicts most of the members of that Congress on their knees with our first President as leader.

I recalled the terrible winter at Valley Forge and General George Washington on his knees in the snow, praying for

divine aid. I thought of the words of Lincoln during another time of crisis as he said humbly: "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."

George Washington acknowledged God's direction and stated: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. . . . Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." (Washington's Farewell Address.)

Lincoln knew that God rules in the affairs of men and nations. He solemnly declared: "God rules this world—It is the duty of nations as well as men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow . . . and to recognize the sublime truth that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

The founding fathers knew that ". . . where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. 3:17.) The United States of America began and lives as a result of faith in God. The