

Sunday, April 5

Second Day

brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. 25:40.)

My brothers and sisters and my friends who are watching and listening to this program on the air, I bear you my solemn witness that God lives, that Jesus Christ is his Son who rose from the dead and heads this Church today. I bear my witness to you in love that these same principles of salvation apply not only to us, but to those who are dead, which testimony I bear in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

You have just listened to Elder Theo-

dore M. Burton, Assistant to the Twelve.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "Praise to God in the Highest," after which Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Twelve, will speak to us.

Singing by the Tabernacle Choir,
"Praise To God In The Highest."

President David O. McKay:

Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Twelve, will now speak to us.

ELDER ALVIN R. DYER

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I most humbly give respect and love to President McKay and all the General Authorities and to the Saints here and abroad and to all who are hearing and viewing this service.

While we are witnessing the turbulences of nature, as predicted, wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes in divers places, the sea leaping beyond its bounds, it is nevertheless in the simple walks of life that the nobility of man or a lack of it is found.

Conviction, A Modern Need

One of the great needs of our modern civilization, perhaps the most important of all, is a sense of conviction—conviction in a cause motivated by divine truth; a conviction that is greater than the mere physical knowledge it may contain.

Through conviction, God can speak to the soul of every individual, giving direction in all phases of life with spiritual and moral courage to meet any situation without surrendering ideals and objectives. Any other type of religion will be cluttered with the apathy and misconcepts of human wisdom. Here is a power that can lead to the highest pinnacle of achievement in mortality and to exaltation in immortality.

The world gropes today for that direction which the Apostle Paul called:

"... not ... the spirit of fear; but

of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7.)

Our civilization today is often referred to as a godless one, primarily because of the ascendancy of worldly learning and the diminishing influence of faith or conviction; but it is not a total loss of faith that we need fear, but rather a weakening of conviction, the watering down of devotion which is taking place.

"Philip E. Jacob, Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania and author of 'Changing Values in College,' says: 'The vast majority of today's college students profess belief in God. But there is a "ghostly quality" to their religion. It is divorced from present-day concerns, lacking in social responsibility.' Another survey, the Cornell University Values Study, found: '... little or no evidence of "absolute conviction or adherence" and ended by calling student belief "secular religion."' (This Week, James DeFoe, "God on the Campus," March 8, 1964, p. 6.)

"Tobacco is not good for man"

In February of 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith made a statement to the world which we believe was inspired of God. That statement concerned the harmful effects in the use of tobacco on the human body. His declaration was not made with any malice toward any-

one but simply as a benefit to mankind. Now, after 130 years, we in our present civilization have progressively reached a verdict concerning the deadly effect of this narcotic.

As a Prophet of God, Joseph Smith was led by divine inspiration and heavenly direction to make other statements, many of which are more far-reaching than the one referred to. All have been for the benefit of mankind.

One in particular, which is closely related with faith and conviction, he reiterated many times, as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church. In June of 1829, nearly four years before he made the statement concerning the deadly effect of tobacco, he proclaimed these words as they had been revealed to him from the Lord: "... the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance. . . ." (D&C 16:6.)

Recognizing Right and Wrong

This is the need of America! This is the need of the world! In the face of such urgency, it is timely to ask, how shall we face this problem? First, there is necessity for a changed attitude in recognizing the difference between right and wrong. If we cannot recognize this difference, then we cannot know what to repent of. To live in a society that does not recognize the volitional right of choice in two opposites, of choosing right over wrong, can only bring the masses to a state of decay. There seems no question that it is the will of the "evil one" that our choices in life or the exercise of agency shall be in behalf of one of two evils, rather than in right over wrong. I quote from a challenging editorial of a leading weekly magazine:

"... one of the leading newspapers in London—published on August 8 a remarkable editorial entitled 'The New Morality.' It was prompted by the sex and spy scandals which have stirred the indignation not only of the people of Great Britain, but also of the people of other countries. [Primarily because such modern behavior is not limited in its scope to these scandals.]

"What is significant, however, is the manner in which 'The Telegraph' ques-

tions the attitude among so many intellectuals toward right and wrong.

"In America today, for instance, we are being told that, if the end sought is good, it is not immoral to break the law." (By permission *U.S. News and World Report*, August 26, 1963, David Lawrence, p. 104.)

But Thomas Aquinas wrote that a good intention does not justify an evil. He said: "A man cannot rightly steal because he intends to use the money for a good purpose—to help the poor."

Exemplifying the modern trend, Canon Rhymes of England calls explicitly for a "new moral code" based upon sympathy for the different needs of individuals. These needs may require that individuals "may need to break all Ten Commandments." In turn, the old morality, as it is now being spoken of, would have condemned such needs; the new morality, says he, must respect in them its own essence.

From the classroom, from some Christian pulpits, and from the politician's platform we are hearing today—"all is right" or rather whatever is done must be right. We see the manifest evidence of this tirelessly endorsing whatever actually occurs. Lord Silkin, for instance, apparently distressed at the number of "irregular marriages," recently sought to remedy the situation by calling them *regular*. A Ministry of Education's medical officer describes *unchastity* as not in his view "*unchaste*."

Thus this supposedly new-found morality in our modern day destroys the efficacy of good over bad or of right over wrong. The immutable law of God that man becomes like unto him in knowing the difference between right and wrong or good and evil is lost in the subterfuge of man's unwillingness to repent.

In this regard, William Hard writes of a "split personality" in America. I quote:

"Clearly we have achieved a split personality. We are having a religious revival and a moral decline.

"I think it clear that we have not succeeded adequately in fusing 'worship' and 'the world.' We have not succeeded adequately in fusing ritual and righteousness.

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"If a nation would achieve righteousness," challenges William Hard, "let it first achieve repentance." (*Reader's Digest*, William Hard, "How Law Abiding Are We—Really?" May 1959, pp. 39-41.)

In a washed-down type of conviction, we see the image of the unrepentant church member spoken of by Samuel Miller, Dean of the Harvard Divinity School:

"Men who want to be sure that their goodness pays or that there will be a newspaper notice of their heroism, or that there is some profit in believing in God, simply do not know what faith is." (*Look*, Samuel Miller, "What Can I Believe," Dec. 19, 1961, p. 90.)

What then is the greatest need of our present day? Is it not what a prophet of God has proclaimed it to be, that the thing that will be of the greatest worth unto us in this modern day is to recognize and appropriate the principle of repentance?

In the areas of mental illness, O. Hobart Mowrer of the University of Illinois makes this statement concerning the benefit derived from repentance on persons that are emotionally frustrated. He says when a person "begins to accept his guilt and his sinfulness, the possibility of radical reformation opens up; and with this, the individual may legitimately, though not without pain and effort, pass from deep, pervasive self-rejection and self-torture to a new freedom, of self-respect and peace." (*The American Psychologist*, O. Hobart Mowrer, "Sin: the Lesser of Two Evils," p. 304.)

First Principles; First Ordinances

One of our Articles of Faith, the content of which establishes the first principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, reads as follows:

"We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Fourth article of faith. Italics added.)

May we concern ourselves briefly with that phase of this article which the

Prophet Joseph Smith has declared repeatedly to be of the most worth unto us, that of repentance, which is the forerunner of conviction.

The agency of man is not a power to be left dormant or itself to be moved upon solely by exterior forces for good or evil. Man, if we understand the true meaning and purpose of agency, is to be an agent unto himself, assuming the prerogative of acting as a result of his own volition. Speaking of this the Lord has said:

"For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things; for he that is compelled . . . the same is . . . not a wise servant. . . .

"Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will; . . .

"For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves." (D&C 58:26-28.)

For man to know good and evil, which characterizes him as being in the way to become like unto God, and then by virtue of choice or agency choose the good rather than the evil, he experiences the crowning achievement of inward mastery. In the exercise of true repentance, we vindicate unto ourselves the calling and work of Jesus Christ, for without repentance there is no real purpose to his mission. Here lies the measuring stick of achievement in earth life probation.

Repentance, Basic Principle of Growth

Repentance, therefore, is a basic principle of our Christian faith; for, if a man has a desire in his heart to know the truth, the normal and positive reaction causes him to know that he has participated in acts that are wrong and therefore sinful. In this respect, all are in need of repentance. The Apostle James says that if we say we have no need of repentance, we are liars, and the truth is not in us. It can be our misfortune if we fail to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

Repentance leads to conviction, but is also unalterably connected with forgiveness; and when forgiveness flows into our consciousness, we experience a feeling of great joy, a release of tension and frustration. The Lord has

supplied the simple panacea to happiness through repentance.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them." (D&C 58:43. Italics added.)

There should be no discrimination against that man or woman who may have done wrong in his or her life. Wrong as it may be, unless it is the unpardonable sin, is not always the tragedy. The real tragedy is when one fails to rise above a weakness—to expose that weakness to the light so that emotional stress and the dishonor of sin may be banished forever. The unhappiest people in the world are those who try to hide their sins and then stubbornly will not repent and forsake their ways of wrong.

Forgiveness

I recall several years ago, in line with my responsibilities as a bishop of the Church, of counseling with a middle-aged married couple. Their lives were not happy ones. They wanted to go forward in the Church, but something seemed to mar the way. I finally concluded to talk with each one separately. After a short while, with great difficulty, the wife told me of a transgression in her life which took place during the first week of her marriage. After this terrible mistake, she resolutely tried to save her marriage by hiding her sin, and these many years had not told a soul of this single instance. She succeeded in keeping their marriage, largely because of the sterling worth of her fine husband; but there had built up inside of her, because of the sin she had kept hidden, such an emotional stress that she could not find happiness.

Here then, I determined, was the cause for the lack of complete happiness. What was she to do? I said to her that when she felt up to it she should confide completely in her husband and seek his forgiveness. At first she exclaimed, "I could never do that!" But somehow she got up the courage to do it after biding her time. The husband, of course, was shocked; but he forgave her; and this brought peace and happiness to that home.

Later this woman sought me out to

express her gratitude. She said, as I recall, "I have never been so peaceful and happy in my life." And the husband, how did he feel? Well, I do not know fully; but I do recall his words to me upon a later occasion, when he said:

"The thing that provokes me is that she did not tell me this years ago. I would have forgiven her then, just the same as I do now."

I have always been impressed with the fine sensitivity of right that existed in a man that I knew, who, upon his deathbed, sought not to face his Maker with a lie on his lips even though that falsehood which he had perpetrated against a friend was in his youth. This wrong had stayed with him all his life.

When sins are committed, emotional stress is the result. The inward machinery is thrown out of calibration. There is only one way to get a release from it—and *this is through repentance*. True repentance, may I repeat, is "When a man repenteth . . . behold, he will confess [his sins], and forsake them." (D&C 58:43. Italics added.)

"I will remember them no more"

Under these circumstances, where the forsaking element is positive and sure, the Lord has said: "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, [and forsaken them] the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more." (*Ibid.*, 58:42.)

Conviction of Truth

To conclude my remarks let me say, what men need today is conviction—yes, conviction in a cause of truth. This we can attain through the doorway of repentance, which leads to the noble life. That person who cannot recognize right over wrong and then by agency choose the right will not see the face of God our Heavenly Father.

Edward Martin wrote a poem which could help us to make the decision. He called it, "My Name Is Legion."

"Within my earthly temple there's a crowd;

There's one of us that's humble, one that's proud,

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There's one that's broken-hearted for his
sins,
There's one that unrepentant sits and
grins;
There's one that loves his neighbor as
himself,
And one that cares for naught but fame
and pelf.
From much corroding care I should be
free
If I could once determine which is me."

(*Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, New York, Harper Brothers, 1948, p. 274.)

Walter Malone in speaking of hope, which could be the ever-present opportunity of knowing the difference between good and evil and then to seek with positive desire to choose the good, has said:

"They do me wrong who say I come
no more
When once I knock and fail to find
you in;
. . . Each night I burn the records of
the day,
At sunrise every soul is born again!"

("Opportunity," *A Book of Living Poems*, New York: Albert Whitman, 1934, p. 55. Italics added.)

This is a message which The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has for the world. Our missionaries from the earliest time, following the sacred consultation which God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ had with Joseph Smith the Prophet in the Sacred Grove near Palmyra, New York, have proclaimed the need of repentance. This they have done and are doing today in nearly every country in the world by the power of conviction and the voice of testimony.

It is to be hoped and prayed for that civilization today will heed this call, and that 130 years more will not be needed to render a verdict in its behalf.

I have spoken today of but one phase of the fourth article of faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"We believe . . . in repentance . . ."

as it is associated with faith and baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

I bear my testimony of the need of strong convictions and of positive action in forsaking ways of error, of recognizing the issue of right and wrong, and then, through repentance, of choosing the right. And I do this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Alvin R. Dyer, Assistant to the Twelve, has been our concluding speaker.

We shall conclude this fourth session of the one hundred and thirty-fourth Annual Conference of the Church with the Tabernacle Choir singing, "Beautiful Savior, Lord of Nations." Following the singing the benediction will be offered by Elder A. Gideon Omer, formerly president of the Swedish Mission. This Conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

We express our thanks and appreciation to the General Authorities who have spoken to us, and to the wonderful Choir for their inspiring singing.

We are also grateful to the owners and managers of the many television and radio stations who have offered their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to millions throughout South America, South Africa, and in many other areas of the world. Just think how different the audience of this annual conference is to what it was fifty years ago! We cannot adequately express how much the Lord has blessed us.

"Beautiful Savior, Lord of Nations." And the benediction will be offered by A. Gideon Omer.

An anthem, "Beautiful Savior—Lord Of The Nations," was sung by the Choir, following which the benediction was offered by Elder A. Gideon Omer, formerly President of the Netherlands Mission.

Conference adjourned until 2:00 p.m.