

THIRD DAY

AFTERNOON MEETING

The concluding session of the Conference convened at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, April 10.

President David O. McKay was present and presided. At his request President Hugh B. Brown, First Counselor in the First Presidency, conducted the services of the session.

The Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of Elder Richard P. Condie, furnished the choral music for this session. Elder Alexander Schreiner was organist.

President Hugh B. Brown:

Members of the Church are convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, in the concluding session of the 136th Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President David O. McKay is present this afternoon and is presiding at this session. He has asked me to conduct this meeting.

The proceedings of both sessions today will be re-broadcast to far-distant places by Radio Station KSL and KIRO Radio at Seattle on Monday, April 11, 1966, from 1 o'clock to 5 o'clock a.m.

We are glad to acknowledge receipt of a number of telegrams. We will not have time to read all of them. I shall read one as indicative of what all have said. From the British Mission, O. Preston Robinson: "Reception Saturday morning session strong, clear and spiritually gladdening. We have thrilled to your message, a testimony from a Prophet of God." Similar mes-

sages were received from the Chilean Mission, Carl J. Beecroft; the British South Mission, Don K. Archer; French East Mission, A. James Martin; Franco-Belgian Mission, Joseph P. Edmunds; the Finnish Mission, John M. Asplund; the Danish Mission, Earl Sorensen; Scottish Mission, David B. Haight; and the Brigham Young University First Stake; and to all of them we extend our love and blessing and gratitude for their thoughtfulness in sending these telegrams.

On Saturday evening we had an especially inspiring meeting of the Priesthood of the Church, held in the Tabernacle, but relayed by closed-circuit broadcast, to 425 separate locations in all parts of the United States and Canada. Approximately 85,000 holders of the Priesthood participated in this meeting.

President Hugh B. Brown:

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing, "Still, Still with Thee," conducted by Richard P. Condie.

After the singing, our first speaker this afternoon will be President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency.

After President Tanner speaks, we will ask Brother James A. Cullimore to say a few words in connection with his recent appointment as an Assistant to the Twelve, and he will be followed by Elder Franklin D. Richards, Assistant to the Twelve.

The Choir sang, "Still, Still With Thee."

PRESIDENT NATHAN E. TANNER*Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

President McKay, my beloved colleagues, brothers and sisters, and all who are listening in, it is with a deep

feeling of humility that I stand before you in this great conference today and participate with you as we com-

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memorate the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

The inspiring talks we have heard and the lovely music to which we have listened and the beautiful spirit that has pervaded this whole conference, I am sure, have touched our hearts and helped us to appreciate the great significance and sacredness of this occasion that we are commemorating today. The most important and most significant of all events that have happened in the history and life of mankind are the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten of God the Eternal Father.

Scriptures the source of knowledge of Him

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

The scriptures give us an accurate and dramatic account of how Christ went about doing good, healing the sick, making the blind to see and the lame to walk; how he was persecuted, tried, and sentenced to death; how he was betrayed; the agony he suffered before he was actually hanged on the cross. Yet in spite of all persecution and suffering, he said as he was hanged on the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.)

And his last words before he died were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. . . ." (Luke 23:46.)

As the women, through their love, came seeking Jesus at the tomb, the most glorious of all messages was given to them by the angel who said: "He is not here: for he is risen, as he said." (Matt. 28:6.)

Then we have the irrefutable testimonies of Peter and John and the other apostles and many others who saw him and talked to him after his resurrection and were instructed by him, both in the Old World and on this the American continent.

I say to the world as the late President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., said in his closing words to a large group of business leaders at a dinner given in his honor in New York City:

"For us Christians he is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Living God, the Creator under God, of the earth, the Redeemer of the world, our Savior, the First Fruits of the Resurrection, which comes to all born into this earth, believer and unbeliever alike, the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Behold the Lamb of God*, p. viii.)

We testify that He lives

Today, while we in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, together with millions of others throughout the world, believe in God the Eternal Father and in his Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, there are those who are trying to convince the world that God is dead. Some claim to be Christians, yet atheists, and claim that God died in Christ.

This theory is not new, but it is more serious and probably worthy of our attention because the argument is originating within Christendom and is being argued by intellectuals, theologians, teachers of the seminaries in universities, ministers, and bishops who preach it from the pulpit and perpetrate it in books and magazines.

The seriousness of the claim that God is dead is also emphasized by conditions in the colleges in America today. In Cornell University's Value Study, the researchers found *little or no evidence of absolute conviction or adherence*, and ended by calling *student belief "secular religion."*

In the *Weekly Religious Review*, we read: "It is a serious theological matter, though not without its comical aspects, all of a sudden seminary professors are popping up in every country, it seems, saying: 'We simply must stop believing in God.' Faith, they say, wagging their heads at their students, is no longer possible." (*Weekly Religious Review*, No. 266, November 19, 1965, p. 1.)

It is significant to note that many of America's colleges were originally founded by religious groups for religious purposes. During most of the nineteenth century they were centers of religious activity, but in this century there has been a radical shift toward religious neutralism among academic leaders. Thus the student of traditional faith may discover that his cherished convictions are ignored, dismissed, and silenced or questioned by another standard of belief. Their decline in a secular environment, intellectually and morally, is rapid and not infrequently disastrous.

The Church's system of education

In order to help our students meet this trend, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the policy of establishing seminaries and institutes near every high school and university where there are sufficient of our students to justify it. I would encourage parents to have their children attend schools where these facilities are available. These people who profess and promote the "God is dead" theory say that it is old-fashioned to believe in God and warn that unless Christians bring their faith into line with modern knowledge, Christian faith itself will be abandoned. Can you think of anything more abhorrent than to claim that we should seek to make God acceptable to man rather than to try to bring man back to God?

"Seek Him and find Him"

The promise given by God to Israel as found in Deuteronomy is worthy of our very careful attention:

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

"When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

". . . he will not forsake thee." (Deut. 4:29-31.)

When you read the prayer offered by Jesus Christ in the Garden of Geth-

semane, as he left his three apostles, "and he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39), is there any doubt in your mind that he was talking to his Father, that he knew God lived?

Then as he reported to his Father in that beautiful prayer recorded in John 17: "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

"This is life eternal . . ."

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:1-5.)

Can anyone believe in Christ, accept his words, and doubt that God lives, that he stands ready to hear and answer prayers, and that he is the Father of Jesus Christ?

The testimony of the Prophet

Let us consider Joseph Smith's own words as he tells of his experience when he went to God in prayer after reading in James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (Jas. 1:5.)

Joseph says: "At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to ask of God, concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture.

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"So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt." (Joseph Smith 2:13-14.)

As a result of this earnest and sincere prayer, he had a visitation that gave further evidence in this dispensation of the reality of the Father and the Son. He records: "When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*" (Joseph Smith 2:17.)

In spite of all these examples of the force of prayer, much doubt seems to exist in the world today; therefore, it is evident that somewhere along the line the churches have lost touch with the twentieth century. Could this be because they have lost touch with God and have been led by blind guides? If so, there is good reason, as all seem to agree, why the old forms must be changed and for us to return to God.

Acknowledge God and return to Him

To help us understand how prevalent this need is and how important it is for all people individually to acknowledge and return to God, I should like to refer to one source of evidence that might be helpful.

Prayer and communion with Him

During the last decade, an average of about 10,000 young men have been acting full-time in a religious peace corps throughout the world. They are our Mormon missionaries. They spend a good part of every day in person to person contact with all the world's culture—the churching, the unchurched, the high and the low, the Christian and the non-Christian. They meet millions of people in their homes and in makeshift settings, at which time they discuss God and prayer.

As these missionaries kneel with their new-found friends in prayer and teach them to pray, they pour out their hearts to the Lord in all humility.

They find that prayer has become as meaningless to many people as the purpose of life has become meaningless. They find that few pray in any satisfying or in any effective way. They find that very few have any form of family prayer. It is appalling to find how few people feel that they are really praying to a living God or have any clear expectation of what the result might be. In fact, if they believe in God, they admit they believe in a kind of God and in a kind of religiosity, but to actually talk to God is foreign to them.

Many say: "Praying is listening to music or responding to nature."

Others say: "I have my own kind of prayer."

And still others say: "Prayer at its best is just silence—seeking nothing, expecting nothing."

The most difficult problem the missionaries have is to get the people whom they are trying to teach to kneel down and actually pray with them. This attitude toward prayer is clearly pointed out in a report of a recent survey of one of the outstanding centers of religion in the United States.

All of the students here are preparing either for teaching or ministerial careers in religion. The survey showed that only 9 percent of them reported having any significant prayer life. The others said "None" or "Almost none," yet all said they were deeply religious and cared to help others become so.

If these cases are typical, one must come to the conclusion that the world has reached the point at which they think of God, whatever God is, as a kind of being who makes prayer meaningless, or something to which one cannot go for guidance, strength, and comfort.

These Mormon missionaries of whom I spoke have had some very outstanding and encouraging experiences with those who have learned to pray to a living God. They have seen hundreds of thousands of them come alive to reality.

One outstanding businessman, when asked how he happened to become in-

terested in the Church, said to me personally: "When I knelt with those boys and heard them pray, I knew that they knew to whom they were speaking." He went on to say that as he became interested, he too began to pray to a living God and proved without doubt the statement of Moroni wherein he said:

"And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost." (Moro. 10:4.)

Nothing can bring a greater feeling of joy and peace and satisfaction and security to us than to know that God is present and interested in us. This changes the outlook and the lives of the people when they have discovered or rediscovered that prayer is a vital, vibrant link. Then their lives become meaningful, and the change is evident to all.

As these people who now know through prayer that God lives try to explain their attitude toward prayer before they met the missionaries, it brings us to one conclusion, and that is that men were deadened toward God, and not that God is dead. Until they are conscious of a living God to whom they can go, the gospel means very little to them.

The issue, then, becomes quite clear; that it is not what kind of God man can believe in, but what kind of man does the living God reach. One able theologian makes this profound statement:

"It may be that the funeral that is now being held in some churches is not for a God who had died, but for a God who was never alive, whom it was blasphemy to worship, and is now folly to mourn. Before such a God one can pray himself to death—in vain."

Worship Him

For those who have been worshipping an unknown God, or idols of some

kind or other, the crumbling of these gods or idols may be a good thing, providing the worshipers can see beyond the idols. It may be that our cultures in the twentieth century are so sick and tired of false prophets that many are not interested in or capable of listening to true ones and, in fact, not capable of acknowledging that there ever were true prophets. Therefore, they feel no relationship to God and no need of calling on him. This in itself is a most serious situation indeed.

There surely can be no real comfort in what is called an atheistic religion. Imagine a religion in which one can only think of a God who is formless, faceless, and heartless, who makes no demands, who has no consequences, who takes no role in any of the real battles of life except (as some kind of metaphysical Atlas) to provide the ground of battle.

What can a man expect of God, or how can he expect God to reach him, if he is convinced that the only proof of God's reality is his total absence or if he has a hundred reasons why divine revelation, if it came, would not be divine and not be revelation?

In referring to these conditions in the world today, the eloquent Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel says:

"I speak as a person who is often afraid and terribly alarmed lest God has turned away from us in disgust and even deprived us of the power to understand his word. Some of us are like patients in the state of final agony, who scream in delirium: The doctor is dead! The doctor is dead!" (*Union Theological Seminary Quarterly*, January 1966.)

In order for life to have a purpose, and for us to know where we came from and why we are here and what our future might hold, it is necessary that we be willing to admit the possibility that God does exist, that his absence is not his will, but our lack of will or our unwillingness to reach, to listen, and to respond.

All down through the ages the prophets have borne testimony that they have talked with God, that they

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have received instructions and been led by him. This applies to prophets in varying conditions, in different countries, and at different times, including our own. Also, hundreds of thousands of individuals scattered throughout the world today can and do bear testimony that their prayers have been answered in many ways.

Family worship in the home

What a beautiful sight and experience and what a great privilege and blessing it is for a family to kneel down together in family prayer and talk to God, knowing that he is there, that he will hear and answer their prayers. The value of such a prayer and the influence it has on the individuals who kneel in that prayer, from the father and mother to the youngest child, cannot be measured.

I remember so well as we knelt in family prayer how Father used to talk to the Lord as one man would talk to another, how he expressed his gratitude for his blessings, and how he prayed for the welfare of his family, and how he pled for wisdom and knowledge and courage and strength for all of us to do the right.

He who made us wants us to succeed and stands ready to answer the call. As the Lord said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. . . ." (Matt. 7:7.)

But as President McKay said at October conference, you must knock, you must ask, and you must seek. The question as to whom can the Lord reach may be answered in the following description given by a young man of a prayer offered by another man. He said:

"I had heard men and women pray [before] . . . from the most ignorant, both as to letters and intellect, to the most learned and eloquent, but never until then had I heard a man address his Maker as though He was present listening as a kind father would listen to the sorrows of a dutiful child. [He] was at that time unlearned, but that prayer, . . . to my humble mind, partook of the learning and eloquence of

heaven. There was no ostentation, no raising of the voice as by enthusiasm, but a plain conversational tone, as a man would address a present friend. It appeared to me as though, in case the veil were taken away, I could see the Lord standing facing His humblest of all servants I had ever seen. Whether this was really the case I cannot say; but one thing I can say, it was the crowning, so to speak, of all the prayers I ever heard."

This is a description of Joseph Smith by Daniel Tyler, then in his teens, on hearing Joseph, age 30, in Kirtland, Ohio. (*The Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 27, pp.127-8.)

Believe all who testify of Him

Prophets, whether in ancient or modern times, prayed to a God who was alive. For them he is alive and present. He acts, he moves, he informs, he intervenes. He transmits knowledge and power. He is not just ultimate, he is intimate. He is a person. He is a jealous God.

I should like to bear my personal testimony to everyone under the sound of my voice today that I know as I know I live that God lives, that he does hear and answer prayers. When as members of the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve we meet in the temple and join in prayer, he who is mouth actually speaks to the Lord, expressing our gratitude, our concern, asking for strength and wisdom and inspiration. And I wish to bear testimony that I have seen these prayers answered many times.

I know of no greater blessing that I enjoy than to know that I can go to God the Eternal Father in humble prayer, knowing that he is there as a living, personal God. I appeal to all of you who have any doubt in your mind that you accept the words of Jesus Christ himself and of the prophets of every dispensation who have said that God lives, that he is the Creator of mankind, in whose image we are made. Through accepting the gospel as given by Jesus Christ and in going to God in all humility, our prayers will be answered,

our success will be greater, our lives will be happier; and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ we may go forward confidently toward immortality and eternal lives into the presence of God the Eternal Father.

May we all prepare ourselves for these blessings, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

President N. Eldon Tanner has just spoken to us.

Last Wednesday we sustained Brother James A. Cullimore as one of the Assistants to the Twelve. He has not yet been ordained and set apart. We thought it appropriate that he be given an opportunity to say a few words this afternoon, although the program that was previously prepared is rather full. Even in our courts, a man is asked before sentence is passed if he has anything to say. So we will give Brother Cullimore now an opportunity to say how he feels.

ELDER JAMES A. CULLIMORE

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brothers and sisters: I think that possibly only these brethren of the General Authorities who have preceded me can really tell how I feel. I think it is impossible to know unless you go through it yourself.

I am most grateful, however, for this tremendous honor that has been bestowed upon me, for the privilege I have of working with these brethren, and with you, in the service of the Lord. I feel very humble in this calling. I feel entirely inadequate and unqualified. I think that I feel somewhat as Newel K. Whitney did when he was asked by the Prophet Joseph Smith to be the bishop of Kirtland, for he said that he felt that he was not capable, he was unqualified and just could not do it. After the Prophet had told him that the Lord had called him and that it was by revelation that this was made known, he still didn't feel that he was able and could act. Then the Prophet said, "Go and ask Father for yourself." He went and knelt in humble supplication, and he heard a voice from heaven which said, "Thy strength is in me." He accepted and went about his work, and I understand was a bishop of the Church for some 18 years. (*LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 224.)

"He that doeth works of righteousness"

I know that only by virtue of the strength I can receive from the Lord can I be made a qualified and capable servant of the Lord in the fulfillment of this responsibility.

I am so grateful for the heritage that I have, for the teachings of a good mother and an able father who taught me in my youth to love the Lord. I am grateful for the experiences that I have had of living away from Zion—Utah Zion—in the far-flung corners of this country and in many areas of the country. There are many such circumstances as mine all over the world and especially in the United States. I see, as I have made visits to your stakes, that almost without exception a devoted family has been instrumental in the growth of the Church in that particular area, as family members have seen fit to serve the Lord, to devote themselves to the work, and to build the Church.

We are grateful for any part that we may have had in building the Church in the areas where we have lived, and in so doing we have built our testimonies and have felt strong in the things that we have done. I take strength and consolation in the teachings that the Lord gave to the Prophet