

Sunday, April 10

Third Day

gested that I call them on Sunday evening when I returned.

"Oh, no," I said. "I'll check with you tomorrow."

On Saturday, the tomorrow about which she spoke, I called before leaving. The doctor had been there, and everything was as before. Upon arriving at my destination I called again and received the same assurance. After the first meeting I placed another call and was informed that Mother had slept peacefully away, surrounded by her family. The last words she was heard to speak were "Ira, Ira," the name of my father, who by six years had preceded her in death.

This then is the secret: In a thousand quiet, spiritual ways, that witness comes. The gospel of Jesus Christ is

true. I bear solemn witness that Jesus is the Christ. I know, and she knew, that he is the resurrection and the life and that as he said, "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25-26.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

Elder Boyd K. Packer, Assistant to the Twelve and President of the New England Mission, has just spoken to us.

Elder Marion D. Hanks of the First Council of the Seventy will now speak to us.

ELDER MARION D. HANKS

Of the First Council of the Seventy

It has been a great blessing through this conference to have with us Brother Ivins, our dearly loved and respected associate. He isn't here at this meeting, but I think it not inappropriate to tell you that he has been very ill and through the graciousness of the Lord has been restored marvelously and is able to be with us occasionally. He has been in meetings of this conference.

I would like to commend also the appointment of President Cullimore, a strong and choice associate in the missionary cause in England—a man of great substance and faith and strength.

I was thinking a few moments ago about a meeting in Idaho at which I listened to a speaker who had waited for a long time to be called on. He commended the people at the meeting for their graciousness to him, expressed appreciation for their kindness, thanked them for making him feel at home, and said, "You have really made me feel like one of you. I don't know which one, but he ought to be about ready to go home—he's tired!"

As I have listened with you to the great sermons of this conference and to the marvelous music and have felt

the spirit and enjoyed the instructions, like you I have paid many of the speakers the tribute of divided attention. Their sermons have started me thinking. Two thoughts in particular have recurred. The repeated references to the modern movement celebrating the demise of God have recalled a reported exchange between Nietzsche and another. Nietzsche's message read, "God is dead." Signed "Nietzsche." The answer came back, "Nietzsche is dead." Signed "God."

The other thought: Someone said that atheists do not find God for the same reason that thieves do not find policemen.

During these conference sessions I have been thinking of you—you and your counterparts all over the Church, all over the world—you who do so much of the meaningful work of the Church in your own area and sector. I am sure that you, like I, will go home with the desire and determination, born of appreciation, to apply and make use of what has been said here.

Perhaps you will go home strengthened in two pivotal principles around which our efforts revolve.

Great worth of souls

The *first* is provocatively expressed in a few words shared with me by a choice friend sometime ago. I suspect you will remember them as I have. He said: "You can count the seeds in an apple, but can you count the apples in a seed?"

"... the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. . . ." (D&C 18:10.) The worth of the *individual* soul is great in the sight of God and in the lives of those who love God and seek to express this love through affectionate service to his children.

In order that we might cooperate with our Heavenly Father in his stated purpose to "bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man," we have been blessed with the gospel, the Church, and the priesthood.

Plan for exalting man

The gospel is God's plan for the exalting of man to an eternal creative opportunity with his Father through giving him a vision of his great origins and heritage, his purposes and responsibilities, and his inspiring potential.

The *Church* is the institutional embodiment of the gospel, the organization through which one may experience and express the great principles of God's plan.

The *priesthood* is the power by which God and his sons move in spiritual leadership. And all of these—gospel, Church, priesthood—are designed to bless man and bring about God's purposes for him.

The earth itself was prepared for man. "Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children that they should possess it." (1 Ne. 17:36.)

The individual, then, is the focal point of all the programs and performance of the Church—not the program itself, not the statistics. *Not institutional expansion but individual exaltation is the purpose of it all.*

The implications of the thought are clear: "You can count the seeds in an apple, but can you count the apples in a seed?"

Every choice child of God is a link in a chain stretching from the past to the future. In the choice young people of the Church are the seeds of the future.

Do you know four lines that mean much to me?

"Nobody knows what a boy is worth;
We'll have to wait and see,
But every man in a noble place
A boy once used to be."

Each boy and girl, and every adult also, is infinitely valuable. None is to be rejected, none written off, none neglected or left without the conscious concern of devoted brothers and sisters in the kingdom of God.

Responsible for influence

This leads, then, to the *second* basic conviction of which I have been thinking: Each of us has a solemn and significant responsibility to others of God's children and the capacity to wholesomely and favorably influence them for good if we will. We are brothers to all men, and we have a special responsibility to those of our own household and to those in whose lives we may, by reason of our church membership and by reason of responsibilities assigned us in the various organizations and programs of the Church, exert some important influence through love.

The organization of the Church makes available to every individual, old and young, at every stage in his life, strong supportive friendships and leadership. From babyhood through the whole of life every individual should have available always the friendship and sincere concern of a bishop and his counselors, of priesthood and auxiliary organization leaders and workers, of interested and loving family and friends and neighbors relating under the special motivation and inspiration of the Lord through his Church. Every individual all of his life should be blessed in the Church by a program that involves the consistent concern of teachers—home teachers they are now called—who are assigned to a special relationship of interest and helpfulness.

Influence of teachers

In preparation for the imminent organization of the Church in 1830, the Lord revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith that His representatives holding the priesthood were to visit the homes of the members of the Church, "exhorting them to pray vocally and in secret and attend to all family duties.

"... to watch over the church always, and be with and strengthen them;

"... And see that there is no iniquity in the church, neither hardness with each other, neither lying, backbiting, nor evil speaking;

"And see that the church meet together often, and also see that all the members do their duty."

"They are . . . to warn, expound, exhort, and teach, and invite all to come unto Christ." (D&C 20:51, 53-55, 59.) As in the ancient Church, the members of the Church are to be "remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith."

And to "meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls." (Moro. 6:4-5.)

Influence on lives of others

To every person thus blessed by office or assignment or membership in the Church with the special responsibility of stewardship and concern in the lives of others, the Lord said:

"Therefore, let every man stand in his own office, and labor in his own calling; and let not the head say unto the feet it hath no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?

"Also the body hath need of every member, that all may be edified together, that the system may be kept perfect." (D&C 84:109-110.)

Illustrations:

Let me spend a few minutes illus-

trating the great importance of our responsibilities to each other under these sacred assignments from the Lord to be stewards in his kingdom.

In one of the stakes of the Church in another land, a lovely young lady left her home to live in another city where she had found employment. She was away from family and established friends and from the Church and its warm involvements. She didn't take occasion to look up the church organization in the city to which she went, finding it easy for a time to avoid the customary associations of her church membership. She formed other associations in the new city, and they were not the kind she had had at home. Gradually she began to become involved in another kind of attitude and another kind of behavior. She had not made serious mistakes but had begun a way of living that would not have pleased her parents and that was not the manner of her former life.

There came a night when, dressed in clothing that she might previously have been embarrassed to wear in public, perhaps harboring in her mind anticipations of conduct that she would not ever have considered before, she waited for the arrival of some of her new friends. It was a critical hour in her life and a critical night in her life, and she knew it. When she answered the knock at the door, she was surprised to find not those whom she was anticipating but rather three adults whom she did not know. They identified themselves as the bishop and his counselor and the president of the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association. The bishop had received a letter from the bishop of the girl's home ward notifying him of the address and circumstance of his ward member in the new city. The bishop and his associates were calling to express their friendship and concern and to invite the young lady to the activities and associations of the Church in this town. As she talked with them she became embarrassed at her clothing, chagrined at the activities of the recent past and the anticipations of the evening. She wept and rejoiced and responded gratefully to the friend-

ship of this bishop and his fellow workers. The anticipated events of the evening never transpired. She formed the warm and wonderful friendships she needed with people of quality and devotion. She became active in the Church and went on to her happy and wholesome opportunities.

In another city, long enough ago that the story can now be told without likelihood of the recognition of the individuals involved, I heard another and different story.

Let's use the name Donna to designate another sweet young lady who left her home for a nearby bigger city for employment. She had a great desire to attend a church university and needed funds to help her achieve her ambition. She failed to find work in the big city, and as time went by she became more and more discouraged. Then, through a series of incidents, she came into the influence of an unscrupulous and designing person who took advantage of Donna's loneliness and youthfulness and the discouragement of her inability to find work and led her into an immoral experience.

The experience was horrifying to Donna, and she returned home with a broken heart to tell her mother and, after a time, her bishop of the tragedy.

There was counsel and compassion, admonition and direction, prayer and blessing. Donna went back home to make her adjustments and to begin to learn the sorrow of remorse of conscience and the blessing of gratitude for the graciousness and goodness and mercy of God. Then one day she had to counsel again with the bishop, to report to him that through this one fragmentary, tragic experience it was now apparent that she was with child. Now a different situation existed, and there was additional counsel and an effort to meet this new situation. There was consideration of the Relief Society Social Service program, which provides for such situations, and other possibilities were considered; but the decision was finally made by Donna that she would remain at home in her small town to wait her time. Some

efforts were made at dissuasion in view of the problems this course involved, but Donna decided that, under the special circumstances of her widowed mother's illness and otherwise, she would remain there.

Donna stood up in the next fast and testimony meeting and explained her condition. She acknowledged her fault and asked the forgiveness of her people. She said to them, "I would like to walk the streets of this town knowing that you know and that you have compassion on me and forgive me. But if you cannot forgive me," she said, "please don't blame my mother—the Lord knows she taught me anything but this—and please don't hold it against the baby. It isn't the baby's fault." She bore testimony of appreciation for her bitterly won but dearly treasured personal knowledge of the importance of the saving mission of Jesus Christ. Then she sat down.

The man who told me the story reported the reaction of the congregation to this experience. There were many tearful eyes and many humble hearts. "There were no stone throwers there," he said. "We were full of compassion and love, and I found myself wishing that the bishop would close the meeting and let us leave with this sense of appreciation and concern and gratitude to God."

The bishop did rise, but he didn't close the meeting. Instead he said, "Brothers and sisters, Donna's story has saddened and touched us all. She has courageously and humbly accepted full responsibility for her sorrowful situation. She has, in effect, put a list of sinners on the wall of the chapel with only her name on the list. I cannot in honesty leave it there alone. At least one other name must be written—the name of one who is in part responsible for this misfortune, though he was far away when the incident occurred. The name is a familiar one to you. It is the name of your bishop. You see," he said, "had I fully performed the duties of my calling and accepted the opportunities of my leadership, perhaps I could have prevented this tragedy."

Sunday, April 10

Third Day

The bishop then told of his conversation with Donna and her mother before her departure for the big city. He said that he had talked with some of his associates. He had talked with his wife, expressing concern for Donna's well-being. He worried about her lack of experience and her loneliness. He had talked, he said, with the Lord about these things also.

"But then," he said, "I did nothing. I didn't write a note to the bishop or to the brethren in Salt Lake City. I didn't pick up the telephone. I didn't drive a few miles to the big city. I just hoped and prayed that Donna would be all right down there all alone. I don't know what I might have done, but I have the feeling that had I been the kind of bishop I might have been, this might have been prevented.

"My brothers and sisters," he said, "I don't know how long I am going to be bishop of this ward. But as long as I am, if there is anything I can do about it, this won't happen again to one of mine."

The bishop sat down in tears. His counselor stood up and said, "I love the bishop. He is one of the best and most conscientious human beings I have ever known. I cannot leave his name there on the list without adding my own. You see, the bishop did talk with his associates. He talked with me about this matter. I think that he thought that because I travel occasionally in my business through the big city, I might find a way to check on Donna. I might have done, but I was hurrying to this meeting or that assignment and I didn't take the time. I too talked with others. I mentioned my concern to my wife. I am almost ashamed to tell you I talked to the Lord and asked him to help Donna. And then I did nothing. I don't know what might have happened had I done what I thought to do, but I have the feeling that I might have prevented this misfortune.

"Brothers and sisters," he said, "I don't know how long I will be serving in this bishopric, but I want to tell you that as long as I am, if there is anything I can do about it, this will not happen again to one of mine."

The president of the YWMA stood up and told a similar story. The bishop's counselor in charge of this auxiliary organization had talked with her. She had had some moments of thought and concern but had done nothing. She added her name to the list.

The last witness was an older man who stood and added two names to the list—his own and that of his companion ward teacher. He noted that they were assigned to the home in which Donna and her mother lived and that they had failed in some visits and made no effective effort to be the kind of teachers that the revelations of God had contemplated.

"I don't know how long I will be a ward teacher," he said, "but as long as I am, I will not miss another home another month, and I will try to be the kind of teacher that the Lord seemed to have in mind."

The meeting ended, and the wonderful man who shared this great experience with me said, "Brother Hanks, I think we could not have more clearly understood the importance of the offices and officers and organizations in the Church if the Lord himself had come down to teach us. I think that if Paul had come to repeat his instructions to the Corinthians that 'the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay . . . the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it' (1 Cor. 12:21-22, 25-26.)—I think we could not have understood the point more clearly."

A number of years ago Brother Joseph Anderson and I had the privilege of driving with President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., to a solemn assembly in St. George. On the way I related to him this story, it having recently happened then. He thought a long time and had a tear in his eye as he said, "Brother Hanks, that is the most significant story I ever heard to illustrate the great importance of our

filling our individual obligations in the Church. When you have thought about it long enough, pass it on to others."

I have thought about it long and often. I believe it illustrates powerfully and humbly the purposes of the Lord in establishing his kingdom and permitting us the blessing of individual service therein. I now share it with you and pray God to bless us all

to understand its implications and to act on them, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

President McKay has consented to give us a parting message, and we will now be blessed by what he has for us, after which there will be some announcements to make.

PRESIDENT DAVID O. McKAY

Brethren and sisters, we have had a glorious conference. I do not know when I have been more thrilled with the messages than I have been by those given at this conference, which began on the sixth and has continued through Saturday and Sunday.

Response to calls of duty

One thing has stood out in my mind as most significant. It is the response of brethren and sisters to calls to duty, either in the Church locally or away on calls that require absence from the town in which they live. I have been impressed with the responsiveness of men, women, and children to a call of the Church to duty that they need to perform at home or abroad.

Peace Corps

The government has a great plan for calling the youth of the country to perform service, not for themselves but a mission for the country itself. They are not succeeding so well as they had anticipated in getting the young men of the United States to fill the calls made. But you do not find a responsiveness to duty unheeded by the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Calls to serve in the Church

I have had occasion to be thrilled with the willingness of the church membership to respond to the call of missionary work, whether it is local or foreign. Every man, almost without exception, and particularly every woman says he or she is ready to

respond to any call that the Church makes. I don't know of anything more impressive in this Church than this response to a call to service by these faithful members. When you think of the thousands of missionaries, most of them men, but many of them women, who are giving their time, their means, in response to calls of bishops, stake presidents, and others in the service of this great Church, it is wonderful. Many have said, "I will sell my home, I will make any sacrifice in order to fulfill the call to duty."

As I stand here before you, I think I cannot refer to one refusal to a call to duty. I have in mind a postponement for a year, or for six months and sometimes more, but I cannot think of one person who has said, "I cannot accept a call." One of them might say, "Give me six months, a year, two years, and I will fulfill the call, the duty, that you now give me."

Yes, I can think of one, a young man, who said, "No, I think I can't fulfill that call." He is thinking of it now and worrying. He will accept it, I am sure; if he is given a few months, maybe six months, he will come back and say, "I will take that call and do the best I can."

Now, when you multiply the calls in the missionary area alone, it is wonderful that the membership of the Church is so responsive to any duty, any responsibility that the Church desires of them. It is apparent to all the Church, this responsiveness of the membership to the call to duty; it is