

work to do in four when at that very moment about ten o'clock one morning a knock came at the door, and because of my frustration I almost said (but I didn't), "COME IN!" Instead I said, "Come in." And in the framework of that door stood a 19-year-old USC freshman student who had refused our offers to come and join our group on four previous occasions. His head bowed, hands in his pockets, he said, "Brother Dunn, I have got to see you, *now*." And I almost said (but I didn't), "Can't you see I am busy?" Because I was. Fortunately I had the presence of mind to invite him in; and as he took a chair, several questions went through my mind.

Question number 1, "What are you going to court for this morning, Paul?" "Well, to try to save a piece of property." "What do you want the piece of property for, Paul?" "Well, to erect a building." "Well, what do you want a building for?" "Well, to teach some students." "What just knocked on your door?" "Oh, a student." And wouldn't you know, he took the whole four hours.

The time came for legal counsel to arrive, and we went to court. I

don't know all of the ramifications. We lost the hearing and eventually the piece of property, and it took us two years to secure another site. You would be happy with what the Church has done at Los Angeles State College, but more important, we saved the boy. Had it been your son, I think you would agree that we made the right decision.

God grant us the vision as leaders, teachers, and parents to put people first. Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. I add my personal witness. God lives. Jesus is the Christ. This is his church. This is his prophet. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Thank you, Brother Dunn. Elder Paul H. Dunn of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder John H. Vandenberg, Assistant to the Twelve, will now address us. He will be followed by Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Presiding Bishopric.

Elder John H. Vandenberg

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

It was a wintry Sunday morning in northern New York. The temperature was several degrees below freezing. The walks were icy; roads were blocked with heavy snowdrifts. No one came to church that morning except the minister and an 89-year-old woman, who had hobbled ten blocks from where she lived.

Surprised at seeing her, the minister called her by name and asked: "How did you get here on such a stormy morning?"

"My heart gets here first," was the cheerful reply, "and then it's easy for the rest of me." (*Quote*, January 26, 1973, p. 5.)

Persuasions of the heart

This simple illustration brings to mind that all individuals are confronted with decisions to make every day, and whatever the choice, it is commensurate with the persuasion of the heart.

These persuasions of the heart are related to two opposing forces constantly at work within every human being. They are the forces of good and evil, which the Master referred to as God and mammon. Coupled with these forces is the individual's power to reason, which only man, of all God's creations, possesses. This enables him to make choices. It is man's control valve of what he wants to be. The forces governed by his own reasoning determine the nature and quality of the choice made. Thus, that which we call character is formed. We refer to this privilege of choice as the agency of man.

It has been said that "every day is election day, for throughout every hour of every day we each exercise our right of choice. We don't have to have a local or national election in order to elect or vote. . . . A man's election can determine the deciding vote for or against his own success. . . . You elect to gain a thorough knowledge of your business or you don't. You elect to be honest or you don't. You elect to save a part of what you earn or you don't. You elect to always do your best or you don't. And by your own election you will be defeated or you will succeed." (Jim Love, *R&R Magazine*, Research and Review Service of America, Inc., vol. 10, p. 64.)

The principle of agency

Our Father in heaven was aware of the reality of this principle of agency in the beginning. We read from the scriptures in some detail:

"Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; . . .

"And God saw these souls that they were good. . . .

"And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him:

We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

"And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

"And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; . . . and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.

"And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me." (Abr. 3:22-27.) And that one said, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever." (Moses 4:2.)

". . . And another answered and said: Here am I, send me." (Abr. 3:27.)

"I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor." (Moses 4:1.)

". . . And the Lord said: I will send the first.

"And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate. . . ." (Abr. 3:27-28.) "And he became Satan, . . . the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice." (Moses 4:4.)

Satan rebelled against God and "sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him. . . ." (Moses 4:3.)

Unfortunately, many do not realize the quality and blessing of that gift of agency of man. If we would but reason the matter, we would come to realize as is expressed in this thought: "Choice is an element of human dignity. Without the power of choice, a man is a lot less than a man. Without the exercise of choice a man never discovers what he can be or what he

can do. Choice is the key to the future." (George E. Farling, "Youth Can't, But Must," *Weslyan Methodist*.)

Author of man's agency

Since the authorship of the agency of man is God's, should we not look to him for the best media to help us to control our choices? The media he has given to us are the words spoken by his prophets, as are recorded in the scriptures. Jesus confirms this in responding to the recreant Jews of his time, who accused him of breaking the Sabbath by healing a man on that day. He included in his rebuke to them these words:

"And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.

"And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." (John 5:37-40.)

Answers in the scriptures

The guide to the answer to their problem was to be found in the scriptures. He rebuked them for not accepting the scriptures that they had. The guide to the solution to every problem of life is to be found there. The knowledge on which to pursue our reasoning is in them. Listen to the counsel of Paul to Timothy:

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:15-17.)

As fellow workers for the cause of building the kingdom of God, they are our source of faith, commitment, determination, and leadership; doctrine for the foundation of our decisions. Let us refer to the scriptures for a few well-known examples to illustrate. I refer to the example of the faith of Job, a very affluent, God-fearing man, having much of the world's goods and a fine family. Overnight, he suffered the sudden loss of all his earthly possessions and his children and then responded to the situation with faith and realism.

He "rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

"And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:20-21.)

Then upon being rendered with bodily affliction and poor health, his own wife chided him and said to him, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die."

Job answered, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:9-10.)

And then in the midst of all his afflictions, Job gave this testimony: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job 19:25-26.)

Commitment

As to commitment, is there a more touching example of devotion than Ruth to her mother-in-law, Naomi, as Naomi pled with Ruth to return to her own people following the death of her husband, when Ruth clave unto her and said:

"Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

"Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16-17.)

And Queen Esther, in her determination to save her kindred people from destruction, seeking God's help through fasting, instructed Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:16.)

And Joshua the leader, as he turned the hearts of the belligerent people by his example of choice, spoke to them: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

"And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should

forsake the Lord, to serve other gods;

"And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." (Josh. 24:14-16, 24.)

Making proper choices

These are but a few of the unnumbered examples to be found in the scriptures, but even as we examine these few evidences of outstanding characters, our spirits receive the inspiration of their strength. Reasoning tells us that the development of their lives had to be built on making proper choices. They were established on truth. Their examples teach us celestial lessons.

The Lord's call to us is: "Come now, and let us reason together. . . ." (Isa. 1:18.) He wants us to listen to and consider his doctrine. The scriptures tells us this: ". . . that men might be made partakers of the glories which were to be revealed, the Lord sent forth the fulness of his gospel, his everlasting covenant, reasoning in plainness and simplicity." (D&C 133:57.)

He wants us to become acquainted with his gospel, to test it, to prove it, to participate in it, and to use it as a base on which to make our decisions. This is that men might base their choices on truth. When reason is joined with truth, there is convincing logic that sets up the path in our hearts that leads upward and onward to a nobler life.

Reason is only compatible with truth. Error and evil, no matter how one may try to reason with it, still remain error and evil leading to chaos. It is difficult to understand that anyone, after examining the truth, could "say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." (Job 21:14.)

One of the sad expressions of the scriptures is when Christ said:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23: 37-38.)

The expression is applicable in this day to those who deliberately will not come and reason with the Lord.

Let us incline our hearts toward God, that we may receive these words of John:

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name

of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John 3:21-24.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Elder John H. Vandenberg, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve, has just addressed us.

Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone, second counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve, who will be the concluding speaker.

Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

President Romney recently said, "Welfare is not a program of the Church; it is of the essence of the Church." I truly believe that. Welfare is more than just furnishing the temporal needs of the Church members. Welfare is for every single member of the Church. It involves the 96 percent who do not need to be assisted by the commodities and by those things furnished by the bishop's storehouse. Welfare is for those who have, to give, as well as those who have not, to receive.

All are beggars

Now the scriptures are replete with verses bearing witness to what President Romney has said. In Mosiah, King Benjamin said:

". . . and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain. . . .

"Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance . . . for his punishments are just—

"But . . . whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.

"For behold, are we not all beggars? . . ." (Mosiah 4:16-18.)

And then clearly Paul said: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have