

Snow, *Biography of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 128-29.)

### Benefits of fasting

Surely the law of the fast is an inspired program and its observance has many virtues. President David O. McKay summed them up in these words:

"The word *fast* is used to signify a self-imposed restraint with respect to the eating of food. Historians tell us that the custom of fasting dates back to the early history of the human race. . . .

"Whatever its origin, it is significant to note that several virtues are attached to the observance of the custom. . . . All the principles associated with fasting seem to point to the fact that it produces, first, physical well-being; [then, self-mastery; next, an opportunity to help others, and finally,] spiritual strength.

"But the greatest of all [the] benefits [from fasting is] the spiritual strength derived by the subjection of physical appetite to the will of the individual." (See David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, Improvement Era, 1953, pp. 208-213.)

An extremely important factor of the fast day observance is attending the fast and testimony meeting and acknowledging and expressing gratitude to our Heavenly Father for his many blessings.

### Increased blessings

It seems to me that there are four factors involved in a proper observance

of the fast day, namely: first, abstaining; then, praying; next, testifying; and finally, contributing.

I am confident that each of us has a continual need for additional blessings. A devoted servant of the Lord, a member of the First Presidency, has given us the formula, which, if followed, will increase our blessings. Again may I repeat his inspired promise: "If we will *double* our fast offerings we shall increase our prosperity, both spiritually and temporally."

I firmly believe that the paying of fast offerings does result in rich blessings. And to this I testify in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Without announcement, the Tabernacle Choir sang "Recessional", followed by the playing of an organ interlude.

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### President Spencer W. Kimball

We have just listened to Elder Henry D. Taylor, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve. He was followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Recessional" and then a brief interlude.

We welcome those joining us on television and radio in this first session of the 144th Semi-Annual Conference of the Church.

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

## Elder L. Tom Perry

Of the Council of the Twelve

I have recently had the opportunity of returning to school, at least for a five-day period. I was invited to attend a data processing school. After the usual adjustments of trying to condition

myself again to a classroom situation, I was captivated by the latest marvels that mankind has developed. I was intrigued by an instructor who would key into a keyboard a few symbols and access a

file 3,000 miles away. In only five seconds, there on a visual display was the answer.

### **Evolution in business machines**

We were introduced to a new, small console printer, not the large, high-speed type. This was very similar in normal appearance to printers on the market today, except for the fact that this one was far more efficient than any I had had the opportunity of coming in contact with before. As the printer started to operate, it functioned normally, printing from left to right; but then, to save the time of the carriage return, it just spaced down one line and printed backward the next line, right to left. I was amazed by its speed, its accuracy, and the notable advances this machine had made over previous models.

As I examined this latest technology of mankind, my thoughts went back to my first introduction to an office machine as a child of five or six. This introduction was to an old, hand-operated adding machine my father used with his clerical functions as a bishop. I thought of what a marvelous evolution has occurred in my lifetime in just the business machine field alone.

### **Architecture of the Lord**

For that brief minute, as my mind reviewed our progress, I also had a compelling urge to look forward, realizing how many more technological developments are yet to come. I found myself awed once again with the architecture of the Lord as I contemplated his creative processes. Here he has supplied us with all of the raw materials to take care of our needs from the beginning, the creation, until the end, the celestializing of the earth.

It is in moments like this that I think of that great scripture our prophet quoted to us this morning:

"The earth is the Lord's, and the

fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Ps. 24:1.)

It has always interested me to note that in the scriptures when the Lord talks about righteousness, we hear him declare abundance, fullness, and plenty. Shortage and scarcity are not from him, but are man-made because of our failure to follow his original instructions to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over [it]." (Gen. 1:28.)

### **Two great commandments**

Now to maximize our potential, he has given us direction from the beginning on our behavior while we sojourn here as mortals on earth. He has asked us first to love him by believing on his words, and secondly to love our fellowmen enough to help bring them to a realization and a testimony of him. Christ, when confronted by the lawyer with the question "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" gave this answer:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. 22:36-40.)

From this reply by our Savior, we gain a knowledge of the two great fundamental commandments. I would like to reaffirm these to you in an effort to have us greater appreciate and understand them.

### **Alma's experience**

The first can be illustrated by an experience which occurred between a father and his son as recorded in the Book of Mormon. Alma was a high priest of the people and lived on this continent less than 150 years before the

time of the Savior. He must have been a father who had great love for his son because he called him by his own name. But as Alma the Younger grew into manhood, he departed from the teachings of his father. The scriptures record:

"He became a very wicked and an idolatrous man. And he was a man of many words, and did speak much flattery to the people; therefore he led many of the people to do after the manner of his iniquities." (Mosiah 27:8.)

After his father had tried diligently to change the ways of Alma the Younger and to no avail, he [Alma] went to the Lord and asked that Alma [his son] would be given a sign that he might know of the wrongness of his actions and be shown the right way to follow. A most remarkable event occurred in the life of Alma the Younger, for an angel stood before him and called him to repentance.

After this great vision was over, Alma fell to the earth, so great was his astonishment. He became dumb and could not speak and weak and could not stand. Those that were with him carried him and laid him helpless before his father. And his father rejoiced over what had happened because he knew it was of the power of the Lord. And he called the priests together and asked that they fast and pray with him two days and two nights in order that Alma would again receive his strength. Their prayers were answered; Alma recovered and stood before them and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort and saying:

"I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

"And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

"And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this [the warn-

ing], they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God." (Mosiah 27:24-26.)

Alma's words became a witness to each of us of what must occur in our lives if we are to find the rewarding, fulfilling experience of being converted to the ways of the Lord.

### Conversion of Peter

Now conversion is not an end, but a beginning of a new way of life. Let me again use the example of another strong character from the scriptures to illustrate the second great commandment of what must follow conversion. The New Testament tells us of one who was among the first to follow the Savior in his earthly ministry. The scriptures record:

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers.

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

"And they straightway left their nets, and followed him." (Matt. 4:18-20.)

Now fishing, to Peter, represented his wealth or his ability to gain the things of the world. You will note that right from the beginning Peter was asked to make a choice between the things of the world and the requirements of God. Peter had an opportunity of becoming converted as few men who have lived on the earth have had because of his associations with the Savior. The scriptures record the great witness that was given to him when he, with James and John, was taken to a high mountain apart from the rest of the world: "And [the Savior] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." (Matt. 17:2.)

Even after such a remarkable witness, we find the Savior continually reminding Peter of his commitments and responsibilities:

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon,

behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:31-32.)

Peter was then privileged to witness the greatest of all manifestations given by the Savior to mankind, for he witnessed the sorrow of the crucifixion and then was privileged to see the resurrected Lord. But even after witnessing the resurrection, it seemed as if Peter had still failed to catch the real significance of his conversion. After the glorious experience of seeing the resurrected Savior, when the disciples were again alone as the Savior had ascended from them, Peter's first thoughts were to return again to the things of the world.

And he said to those with him, "I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

"But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was [the Savior.]

"Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." (John 21:3-6.)

Here the Savior teaches Peter a great lesson. The things of God are above those of man. The Lord has power to supply the fishes, the things of the world, but they are secondary to his work.

Then finally the great lesson of the Savior's mission is taught to Peter as they dine together:

"Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs." (John 21:15.)

Then the question a second and

third time. And finally, Peter, being grieved, replied to the Lord, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." (John 21:17.)

Finally Peter understood: "when thou art converted"—a condition carries with it a responsibility to do something with that conversion, to feed the sheep of the Savior. The real value of our commitment through our conversion is when it is interpreted into action, when something results from that which has occurred from knowing the Lord.

### John Taylor's testimony

In the lives of many of our great Church leaders of this dispensation we've seen this process of conversion interpreted into a powerful desire to strengthen the lives of the brethren. One example that has always impressed me is the story of John Taylor.

The gospel was first introduced to Brother Taylor and his family in Toronto, Canada, by Elder Parley P. Pratt in April of 1836. At that time John Taylor was engaged as a minister and investigated very carefully the teachings of Elder Pratt. He wrote down eight sermons which Elder Pratt preached and compared them to the Bible to see if he could find anything that was contrary to the scriptures. He made his investigation of the Church a regular business for three weeks and then was satisfied and was baptized.

About a year later John Taylor visited Kirtland, Ohio. The gloom of apostasy was hanging over the city and, sadly, this dissension had affected Parley P. Pratt as he returned from his mission to Canada. Elder Pratt tried to show Brother Taylor why he thought the Prophet Joseph was in error. To this John Taylor steadfastly replied:

"I am surprised to hear you speak so Brother Parley. Before you left Canada you bore a strong testimony to Joseph Smith being a Prophet of God, and to the truth of the work he has

inaugurated; and you said you knew those things by revelation, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. You gave me a strict charge to the effect that though you or an angel from Heaven was to declare anything else, I was not to believe it. Now, Brother Parley, it is not man I am following but the Lord. The principles you taught me led me to Him; and I now have the same testimony that you then rejoiced in. If the work was true six months ago, it is true today; if Joseph was then a prophet, he is now a prophet." (B.H. Roberts, *Life of John Taylor*, Bookcraft, 1963, pp. 39-40.)

Parley P. Pratt saw the error of his ways and was strengthened and went to the Prophet Joseph with tears in his eyes and asked for forgiveness and reaffirmed his allegiance to the prophet-leader of the Church. Truly the words of a converted John Taylor had an inspirational effect in the life of Brother Parley P. Pratt.

### Responsibility of conversion

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:32.) All of the abundance, fullness, and plenty of this earth was given to us by God to be enjoyed in righteousness. We in turn are expected to love him; to be converted to him and his ways and to feed his sheep; to multiply, replenish, and strengthen our brethren. I pray that we may all catch the vision of what conversion means and focus our service on the effort to build the kingdom of God here on earth; that we may be likened unto Alma, Peter, or President John Taylor and the other great prophets and leaders of the Church throughout the dispensations of time who caught sight of his marvelous work and proceeded to dedicate their lives for its purposes.

May I add my witness to this conference that God lives, that Jesus is the Savior of this world, that Spencer W. Kimball, who conducts this conference session here today, is a prophet. Think of it—a prophet of the Lord

on the earth today! May I give this witness as I know it, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The Tabernacle Choir sang "See the Mighty Angel Flying" without announcement.

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### President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve has just given the concluding address, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "See the Mighty Angel Flying."

We are grateful to the managers and operators of the many television and radio stations for offering their facilities as a public service to bring the proceedings of this conference to millions throughout many areas of the world.

These proceedings are being broadcast over stations in countries of Latin America by means of satellite transmission. Through special arrangements with the Armed Forces Radio and Television Network, this session will be televised to bases of the Armed Forces throughout the Pacific.

We shall conclude this session of the conference with the Tabernacle Choir singing "How Beautiful upon the Mountains." Following the singing, the benediction will be pronounced by Elder David B. Haight, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

The conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

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The number, "How Beautiful upon the Mountains", was rendered by the Tabernacle Choir.

Elder David B. Haight, Assistant to the Twelve, pronounced the benediction.

The conference was then adjourned until 2 o'clock p.m.