

the Hills we bless thee, Our God, our Father's God."

We shall now be pleased to listen to Elder James E. Faust, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder James E. Faust

Search for abundant life

My message this morning concerns the search for the abundant life. Without wishing to give any offense, I would sincerely like to try and relate this search to everyone, including those Church members and others who consider themselves to be "loving critics" of the Church. I do so, not out of fear that any criticism or opposition might injure the Church, but rather out of a sincere spiritual concern for the critics themselves. Criticism can be helpful if it is properly motivated and if it reaches those who make the decisions, but it is often a symptom of a problem with which the critics themselves are struggling. I believe those who find fault would be surprised at how often the leadership of the Church prays for them. It is in that spirit I would like to speak today.

President Gordon B. Hinckley reminded us, "As a Church, we encourage gospel scholarship and the search to understand all truth. Fundamental to our theology is belief in individual freedom of inquiry, thought, and expression. Constructive discussion is a privilege of every Latter-day Saint" (*Ensign*, Sept. 1985, p. 5).

Divine and secular knowledge

The Savior said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). How is the abundant life to be obtained? The abundant life involves an endless search for knowledge, light, and truth. President Hugh B. Brown said: "God desires that we learn and continue to learn, but this involves some unlearning. As Uncle

Zeke said: 'It ain't my ignorance that done me up but what I know'd that wasn't so.' The ultimate evil is the closing of the mind or steeling it against truth, resulting in the hardening of intellectual arteries" (in baccalaureate address, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 4 June 1965).

We gain knowledge from two sources. One is the divine and the other is secular. Rex E. Lee has referred to them as the "rational process and the extrarational process" (in *Speeches of the Year, 1982* [Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1982], p. 131). We are all more familiar with the rational process that we learned in school and through lifelong study. The extrarational, or divine source, is less common. This source is, however, more sure. Both sources may be available to us. Fortunately, we do not have to choose one to the exclusion of the other. Brother Lee continues, "We should feel equally at home in the academy and in the temple. We should regard each as a center of learning" (*Speeches*, p. 132).

The learning process

We are apparently part of an expanding universe. Secular knowledge is expanding very rapidly. Our knowledge of gospel truth is also expanding. Prophets continue to speak. Increased understanding of the scriptures is also possible. And so the opportunities for the abundant life increase as we pursue the quest for truth and knowledge.

In the infinite process of accepting and rejecting information in the search for light, truth, and knowledge, almost everyone may have at one time or another some private questions. That is

part of the learning process. Many are like the biblical father of the child with the "dumb spirit" who pleaded with the Savior: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

Those who are in spiritual peril

The Church has not and, in my opinion, should not speak on every disputed question. But I cannot help wondering if a member of the Church does not place himself in some spiritual peril when publicly disparaging the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, or his successors, or any of the fundamental, settled doctrines of the Church.

When a member expresses his private doubts or unbelief as a public chastisement of the leadership or the doctrine of the Church, or as a confrontation with those also seeking eternal light, he has entered upon sacred ground. Those who complain about the doctrine or leadership of the Church but who lack the faith or desire to keep God's commandments risk separating themselves from the divine source of learning. They do not enjoy the same richness of the Spirit that they might enjoy if they proved their sincere love of God by walking humbly before Him, by keeping His commandments, and by sustaining those He has appointed to lead the Church.

Some of those who now criticize and find fault have, in the past, felt the peaceful, spiritually settling comfort enjoyed by those in full harmony with the gospel as restored by Joseph Smith. They may also have been lost and forgotten by those who should be more caring.

Divine warrant and commission

No stone wall separates the members of the Church from all of the seductions of the world. Members of the Church, like everyone else, are being surfeited with deceptions, challenges, and temptations. However, to those of enduring faith, judgment, and discernment, there is an invisible wall which

they choose never to breach. Those on the safe side of this invisible wall are filled with humility, not servitude. They willingly accept the supremacy of God and rely upon the scriptures and counsel of His servants, the leaders of the Church. These leaders of the Church are men with human frailties, and are imperfect in their wisdom and judgment. Perfection in men is not found on the earth. But almost without exception these leaders sincerely, humbly, and prayerfully render great and dedicated Christian service to the best of their ability. More important, they hold a divine warrant and commission through which great and eternal blessings come to those who sustain and follow them. They are God's servants.

Absolutes for faithful membership

To what should we subscribe to be correct and sound in doctrine? What are the absolutes upon which faithful membership is based? In my opinion, they rest upon the following:

First, the fatherhood of God, the Eternal Father.

Second, the divinity of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world.

Third, the mission of Joseph Smith as a prophet of God and the restorer of the fulness of the gospel.

Fourth, the unbroken succession of priesthood line and authority from Joseph Smith to President Spencer W. Kimball, who is the prophet, seer, and revelator on the earth today.

Acceptance of gospel with full heart and soul

A few may lack understanding of the real commitment of the faithful. For instance, a critic recently wrote that obedience to commandments such as tithing is mandatory. In order to claim certain blessings, obedience is certainly obligatory, but compliance is never mandatory—that is, forced. Nothing is mandatory in this church. Free agency is a cardinal principle of obedience. Obedience comes from love

of God and a commitment to his work. The only punishment for serious transgression or apostasy is the removal of members from the society and fellowship of the Church. (See D&C 134:10.)

Is personal self-sufficiency one of the reasons men and women may lack faith? Some seem afraid to look to any source of wisdom and knowledge above themselves. They rely only on the secular source of learning.

A small number may claim fealty and loyalty to the Church but think it smart, sophisticated, or trendy to be a little rebellious, a little bit independent, and to disparage some of the traditional doctrines handed down by the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors. This may result from a lack of divine knowledge. When I was a boy, one frequently maligned doctrine was the Word of Wisdom. Some took offense when Church leaders taught it. Now scientific proof, unknown in my youth, has established the Word of Wisdom to be a great law of physical health, even though, in my opinion, its greatest benefits are spiritual.

I have heard some say, "Well, I can believe all of the revelations but one." It is hard to understand this logic. If one believes that revelations come from a divine source, how can one pick and choose? Acceptance of the gospel should be complete and absolute, with full heart and soul.

The fulness of the gospel

Some want to justify their criticism by claiming, "But it is the truth." My answer is, "How can you be so sure?" Spiritual truth must be bonded to faith and righteousness to be fully understood. The Apostle Paul reminded us that the misuse of the truth changes it into a lie. (See Romans 1:18-25.)

Since the beginning of the restored Church there have been much opposition and many critics both from within and without. What have been the results of all this opposition and criticism? Some of the spiritually im-

mature, the weak, and incredulous have dropped out. The Church itself, however, not only survives, but it grows and strengthens. In some respects nothing in the world is equal to this work. Despite the many challenges of great growth there are indications of increased faith over much of the earth. For instance, never in the history of the world have so many temples been built.

I do not believe this work will be stopped or seriously injured by its detractors. There are many prophetic statements to the contrary. History has proven quite conclusively that the Church has grown under persecution; it has prospered under criticism. By finding fault with the doctrines, practices, or the leadership of the Church, one can waste much time and effort in a fruitless endeavor. Those who have been washed in the waters of baptism put their eternal soul at risk by carelessly pursuing only the secular source of learning. We believe that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the fulness of the gospel of Christ, which gospel is the essence of truth and eternal enlightenment. We hold that the great legacy of this church is that it possesses the only full means for eternal life.

Who declares doctrine of the Church?

Who is to declare the doctrine of the Church? It is well established by revelation and practice that the current President of the Church and his counselors have the keys to declare the doctrine of the Church. The investiture of this authority comes from revelation. The Presidency are constituted "a quorum . . . to receive the oracles for the whole church" (D&C 124:126). Of this authority, President Stephen L. Richards stated: "They [the Presidency] are the supreme court here on earth in the interpretation of God's law.

"In the exercise of their functions and delegated powers they are controlled by a constitution, a part of which is written and a part of which is not. The

written part consists in authenticated scripture, ancient and modern, and in the recorded utterances of our latter-day prophets. The unwritten part is the spirit of revelation and divine inspiration which are pertinent to their calling.

"In formulating their interpretations and decisions they always confer with the Council of the Twelve Apostles who by revelation are appointed to assist and act with them in the government of the Church. When, therefore, a judgment is reached and proclaimed by these officers, it becomes binding upon all members of the Church, individual views to the contrary notwithstanding. God's Kingdom is a kingdom of law and order" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1938, pp. 115-16).

Become heirs to truth and the abundant life

We do not wish any who have questions [about the Church] to prove that they are sincere in their feelings by leaving the Church. That is not what we want. We hope that their sincerity would be manifested rather by building upon those feelings that have kept them in the Church. Their faith can be strengthened by following their intuitive judgment and the purest and noblest feelings of their own souls. By looking to a source higher than themselves, they can receive answers to their questions from the divine source. If there have been some mistakes, there is a way back. The doors are wide open; welcoming arms are outstretched. There is a place for all; there is a contribution for each to make.

In the spirit of Wilford Woodruff's letter to Lyman Wight, an Apostle who became separated from the leadership of the Church, we say to all: "Come home to Zion, mingle in our midst, confess and forsake your sins, and do right, as . . . all men have to do,

in order to enjoy the favor of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and have fellowship with the Saints. . . . We all feel interested in your welfare; you have no enemies here; the longer you stay away from us, the more alienated your feelings become" (quoted in Ronald G. Watt, "A Dialogue between Wilford Woodruff and Lyman Wight," *Brigham Young University Studies*, autumn 1976, p. 113).

The leadership of the Church will continue to pray for its critics, its enemies, and those who seek to do it harm.

I believe that few things in life deserve one's complete confidence. I testify that the Church is worthy of our full trust. There is no inconsistency between truth and faith. I know that everyone who sincerely and righteously seeks to know this can have it spiritually confirmed. May we open our minds, hearts, and spirits to the divine source of truth. May we reach above ourselves and beyond our mundane concerns and become heirs to the knowledge of all truth and to the abundant life promised by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I pray that this may be so, in His holy name, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." Following this, we shall hear from Elder Loren C. Dunn, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."

Elder Loren C. Dunn spoke without further announcement.
