

# *The Light of Truth*

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**M**y dear young fellow students, this is the type of Brigham Young University that I am more familiar with, about the size that I was acquainted with some time ago. It seems never to have gotten on the record that while I graduated from the University of Utah, I attended Brigham Young University at one time; and I have fond memories of those far-gone days. As Debbie Mitchell sang to us this morning in the spirit of a devotional assembly, I recalled how frequently, in numbers approximating the numbers we have here, we met down on the lower campus. I had the experience at that time of singing in the male and mixed choruses, and I gained something of an appreciation for this type of devotional experience. I sincerely pray that I may add something to your experience today.

As I have tried to contemplate what would be appropriate and edifying to say to this distinguished group of students and teachers, I have spent more than a usual amount of time in reflection.

I attended a Boy Scout court of honor a short time ago, and I was impressed, as I have been before, with the power of the Scout Oath: “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country.”

I felt that I would like to do justice to the concept “On my honor.” As I have pursued the theme, it has led me into various branching paths. Honor, of course, implies honesty. These concepts led me to think of truth, and truth led me to light. I found myself considering virtue and a recognition of its opposites—evil, error, wickedness, and falsehood—and I felt the movement of our time that threatens virtue with the substitute of self-gratification, replacing freedom with license and with the proposition that there is neither good nor evil but only the right to follow your own point of view.

False teachers usually take the attitude that they have discovered something new and that their concepts are the ultimate truth. The opposite is frequently the case.

I had a teacher in geology of whom it was said, “He has rewritten all the books on the geology of Utah.” A wise companion said to

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me, "Don't let that bother you. It won't be long until someone else will rewrite his books. He doesn't know it all yet either."

I had a history teacher who was insisting that the Bible was a fable as he made certain allegations about the origins of civilization. I challenged him one day by agreeing that as history the Bible was somewhat fragmentary, to which he quickly assented. At that point I asked him why he would discard something that, while imperfect as history, was obviously far more substantial than some of the ideas he was advancing and had a great deal more evidence backing it. He had no further comment.

Old principles are often the real truth. As we hear the constant theme of the so-called "new morality," we find that it too is as old as the hills. The only thing new is another generation waiting to be beguiled and enslaved.

Nineteen hundred years ago Peter said the false teachers were doing the same thing, "bring[ing] in damnable heresies, even deny[ing] the Lord that bought them, and bring[ing] upon themselves swift destruction. And many [he said] shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. . . . But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government." (2 Pet. 2:1-2, 10.) Can you see that attitude as you drive down the highway, finding that if you make one false move, the driver in the next car acts as if he would take your head off if he had the chance?

If you ask people to conform to certain standards of dress or grooming or be personally responsible for the rules of common decency, you frequently receive a snarl or a curse in response. Is that not despising government?

"But," continues Peter, "these, as natural brute beasts, . . . speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; . . . Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls." (2 Pet. 2:12,14.) Do

you not hear people all around you telling you that wantonness is the best way to live? These unstable souls are indeed beguiled.

*An heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:*

*Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray. . . .*

*These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*

*For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*

*While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*

*For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*

*But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." [2 Pet. 14-15; 17-22]*

And so in literal fulfillment of this prophecy, we can observe the magazine and television ads setting forth the glories of beer-drinking, the allure of the casinos and bars, the riotousness of pleasure-seeking in the modern fashion and in the modern dress or, in many cases, undress. I have heard the remark that someone is going to get into her bikini. That certainly is a contradiction in terms. No one ever got into a bikini. They are almost completely out of it. But the cry is the same as of old: "Wine, women, and song." We have

seen the false teachers lead us from the principle of permanent marriage to the idea of temporary marriage and on to the concept of no marriage at all—and this in the short space of a few years.

We have been told that the way to eliminate the crime of drug abuse is to make drugs legal. We have eliminated bootlegging in our society by legalizing liquor. The way, therefore, to eliminate prostitution must be to make every woman a freewill harlot. All these are the inducements and temptations that speak evil of the way of truth. They represent a perversion of truth and a departure from the true way as it has been known from the beginning.

When Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, he was asked: "Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." And Pilate made it plain that he was not of the truth. Either in confusion or in worldly cynicism, he asked: "What is truth?" (See John 18:37–38). Can you hear this helpless response around the world today? An ex-president answers the evidence of his duplicity with the implied statement: "What is truth?" His great weakness was that he couldn't tell the difference. The same with a former vice president. A candidate, when asked to tell the truth about what really happened, says in essence: "What is truth?" And as with the priest, so it is with the people. Can there ever be an adulterer without his being a liar? What about the covenants of marriage? What member of the Church can commit fornication without breaking the covenant of baptism? And so I speak to you today who are of the covenant. You have been brought up in light and truth and know the way of safety and salvation. It is our constant desire to so express the warnings that you will always be alert to the pitfalls that surround us in our society and daily lives.

One of the truest examples of the present condition of the world was brought to my attention many years ago when a man by the name of Ray Smith spoke in our sacrament meeting. Brother Smith had been involved over a number of years with the prisoners at the Utah State Penitentiary, and he told us some of his experiences with prisoners. He mentioned that on one occasion as he was speaking to a group of Church members, a woman pled with him, "When you return to the prison, Brother Smith, I wish you would look up my son. He needs help." And then she said something that Brother Smith found hard to understand: "He was always a good boy."

Brother Smith soon made contact with this young man, who he said appeared to be anything but a "good boy." He was one of the most rebellious and defiant of all the young men he had met, and Brother Smith was completely rebuffed. He wondered how the mother could say that this young man was a good boy until he reflected on her experience in bringing him forth into life and tenderly caring for him through his infancy and childhood. So he decided to make other overtures.

He noticed one day on the wall of the old prison a sort of mural that someone had painted. It showed the beginnings of talent, and he inquired who had done it. He was told that it was this same young man. This gave Brother Smith an idea, and he again approached the young man, saying, "I noticed the painting on the wall out there. I was told that you had painted it. I was impressed with it, and I wonder if you would be willing to paint a picture for me."

The young man responded, "I don't know whether I would or not. What is the picture?"

Brother Smith said, "I've never really seen the picture. I've just read about it and imagined it in my mind, but I wish you would try to envision the picture and decide if you could paint it."

The boy asked, "Where is the picture?"

Brother Smith said, "It is right here in the eighth chapter of the first book of Nephi. I want you to read about the picture and try to visualize it."

A few days later he returned and asked the boy if he had read it. He said, "Yeah, I read it."

"Did you see the picture?"

"Yeah, I saw it."

"Will you paint it?"

"I don't know whether I will or not."

Brother Smith said he then went downtown and purchased materials with which the young man could make a suitable painting and delivered them to him. For the first time the young man was touched. He said, "This is good stuff. I have never worked with this kind of material." And so, of course, he painted the picture. The reason I remember the story so well is that Brother Smith brought the picture with him when he spoke in our sacrament meeting.

Many of you will recognize that the picture was a portrayal of Lehi's dream. Lehi, as you recall, was led for a period of time through a dark and dreary wasteland and eventually beheld a large and spacious field where there was a tree whose fruit was desirable and capable of making one happy; and as Lehi went forth and partook of the fruit, he beheld it was most sweet, above all that he had ever tasted. Later on Nephi explained that the fruit was representative of the love of God. As Lehi partook of the fruit, it filled his soul with joy, and he wished that his family could partake of it also. As he cast his eyes about, he beheld a river of water that ran near the tree, and he saw his family standing a little way off at the head of the river. He beckoned to his family, and his wife and two sons came forward and partook of the fruit; but his two rebellious sons would not come. He then beheld that along the straight and narrow path that led to the tree and along the bank of the river was a rod of iron. He saw numerous concourses of people pressing forward so that they might obtain the path that led to the tree. As they came forth,

there arose a mist of darkness so great that many on the path lost their way and wandered off, but others pressing forward caught hold of the end of the rod of iron, which I always felt served as a hand railing, and came safely through the mist of darkness until they arrived at the tree. Then after they had partaken of the fruit, they cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed, and looking on the other side of the river they saw a great and spacious building. It was filled with people, both old and young. Their manner of dress was exceeding fine, and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers toward those who had come and were partaking of the fruit. Many of the people who had tasted of the fruit were ashamed because of those who were scoffing at them, and they fell away into forbidden paths and became lost.

All of this I saw in the picture that Brother Smith showed us that night in sacrament meeting. I have never in my life seen a better representation of the true conditions on the earth, both in ancient and at present times. Truly the old patterns repeat themselves, and the inhabitants of the earth today are much the same.

Brother Smith, incidentally, pointed to a special item in the picture and said to the young man, "The picture is very descriptive, but where did you find that angel hovering over the chasm of filthy water? I don't remember reading about an angel in the picture."

The young man responded, saying, "I know. I put it there. That is my angel. I am sure that God has provided me with a safeguard to turn me about from the direction in which I seem to be going."

Naturally, the conclusion of the story was the redemption of this young man.

Now we, a new generation, are called upon to walk the paths of life. As Boy Scouts we pledge, on our honor, to live in righteousness. As members of the true Church, we have covenanted with our Heavenly Father that we

will keep his commandments. Unless we grasp the rod of iron, we will be in peril.

Occasionally missionaries, with whom I have worked a great deal, falter in their trustworthiness. As I have instructed them, I have informed them that I am willing to accept any report they wish to give, but that it will be impossible for them to deceive me or the world very long. I ask them to turn their attention to their companions: Have you sized them up? When you made an appraisal of each of them, didn't you decide whether they were honorable and faithful and devoted? You can tell who is diligent. You know which ones "goof off." Remember they have each made the same appraisal of you, and you cannot shake off the destiny you create for yourself. You will be known as you are, both by your companions and by your Father in Heaven.

The same is true with the honor codes that have been established at this great university. They are there for the purpose, of course, of helping you build your character and keeping you faithful. They require that you walk in the light of truth. You do not have to. No one is going to check on you individually, but eventually your true nature will come to light and that is the only control applied by an honor code. The end product is visible to the whole world.

In the area of morality—and morality deals with much more than sexual purity—morality is an innate and integral honesty that abides within the intimate being of each individual. Those who do not have rules of honor are called amoral people, meaning people without morals, foreigners to truth. The measure of honor resides within the intimate actions of each individual. It has very little to do with the outward declaration of public utterance. This is one of the reasons why people have a tendency to scoff at politicians. Personally, I do not think we are justified in pointing our fingers at our politicians. These men and women are, after all, people like ourselves (to some extent most

people are politicians), some honorable, some dishonorable, but probably in essence a true reflection of our own society, neither more nor less virtuous than other people in general.

Among the most impressive of the non-scriptural teachings in personal righteousness is the well-known passage in Hamlet wherein Polonius instructs his son Laertes, who is about to depart on a journey to France, and concludes his father's blessing that is filled with wisdom and good counsel by saying: "This above all,—to thine own self be true; and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man" (*Hamlet*, act 1, scene 3).

Among the great scriptures offering light to the people who have made the covenant are some pointed declarations in the ninety-third section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Speaking of John's testimony, the Lord said he bore a "record of the fulness of my glory." Glory would be synonymous with light.

*And he bore record, saying: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was;*

*Therefore, in the beginning the Word was [meaning the Savior], for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation —*

*The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, . . . because the world was made by him. [D&C 93:6–9]*

The Savior said:

*Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth;*

*And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come. . . .*

*The Spirit of truth is of God. I am the Spirit of truth. . . .*

*He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.*

*Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.*

*All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. [There is enough philosophy in those lines to occupy your mind all day if you have a mind to think about it.]*

*And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation.*

*For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; . . .*

*The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.*

*Light and truth forsake that evil one.*

*Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.*

*And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience [that means through our disobedience, not his], from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers.*

*But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth. [D&C 93:23–24, 26, 28–30, 32–33, 36–40]*

May I relate an experience that came many years ago as I was learning to fly airplanes. My instructor and I were flying straight and level, and off on the horizon lay a range of mountains. Suddenly the instructor put the plane into a maneuver, and I saw with my own eyes the mountain range rear up, stand on its end, turn upside down and then continue around until it resumed its former position. The instructor then climbed up to a height, and he put the plane into a spin. As we came falling

through the air, I looked down below and saw the whole world whirling around as if it were a huge wheel. I had never beheld phenomena of this nature before.

I have in the succeeding time performed these maneuvers myself many times. If I were to perform that snap roll today, I would not be able to see the mountains stand on end nor turn upside down. The reason is that I have been enlightened by reality and have learned the truth. I know now that it was I who was turning around, not the mountain, and it was not the world that was spinning. Having thus oriented myself, I now observe things in their true light. This is the case as the temptations of this world come upon us. We may momentarily be confused by what appears to be reality; but truth is eternal and will bring clarity to our perception, if we are obedient to the covenant and hold to the iron rod.

Since I have said a few things that may reflect on teachers—false teachers—I would like at the conclusion to express my great admiration for the true teachers with whom you associate at this university with abundance—people of devotion and faith and testimony, men and women who can act in the capacity of true prophets, as the Spirit of the Lord directs them. And as you have the privilege of living and learning under that kind of influence, you, too, become representatives of the light of the world.

“On my honor” is the rule by which every Latter-day Saint must govern his life. To this I testify as I express my knowledge and assurance that God lives and that Jesus is his Son and the author and finisher of our salvation, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.