

This I Believe

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It is always a wonderful thing to meet with university students. You are young and ambitious and bright. You are looking ahead rather than looking back. You are struggling to prepare yourselves to find “a place in the sun.”

Some of you are married, and I hope it is all you dreamed it would be. Others of you, most of you, are looking in the direction of marriage. You are sparring around trying to be attractive to some young man or some young woman, whichever the case may be. You are dreaming of happy and enduring relationships to come—although there is very little time to dream while you work to hold up to the extreme pressure of your studies. Even with that constant pressure, I think everyone of you would say it is a wonderful thing and a wonderful time to be alive and that you would not trade places with anyone else in the world.

It dawned on me the other day that I was part of a graduating class of a sister institution in 1932. This coming June it will be sixty years ago that we proudly and happily marched in a processional, listened to a commencement address of which I remember absolutely nothing, and went out to face the world.

That was a dark season, that year of 1932. It was at the bottom of the great worldwide depression. The unemployment rate was not

the 5 or 6 or 7 percent over which we worry today, but more than 30 percent. Men saw their savings vanish, and some, with nothing to live for, took their own lives. Many with greater faith held on tenaciously as they sank into the pit of poverty.

It was into that world of economic distress that we of the class of '32 arrived, breathing something of an air of cynicism. Yet notwithstanding this, there was much joy in our lives. Cars were cheaper then, but few could afford one. But we dated, we danced, we had a lot of fun while worrying about life, and somehow we made it and pulled through. I can think of scores of my peers who had nothing in those days but who, somehow, with the blessings of heaven, went forward and became men and women of strength and substance as they walked a straight and steady course, guided by principles to which they held with steadfastness.

It was their beliefs and the motivation that came therefrom that pulled them through. Everyone of us is largely the product of his or

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her beliefs. Our behavior is governed by these. They become our standards of conduct.

The thirteen articles of faith enunciated by Joseph Smith have stood as an expression of doctrine ever since 1842, when they were written as a concise statement of our theology.

I have a few personal articles of belief, ten to be exact, that I have tried to observe over the years and which this evening I would like to share with you. I hope you will not think me arrogant or conceited or self-righteous in doing so. I hope you will not think me egotistical. While I speak in a personal vein, I feel the things I mention are of universal application. I have chosen as a title for this talk the title of a small book put out many years ago by Edward R. Murrow, *This I Believe*. I have shared these thoughts with smaller groups on one or two previous occasions, although not in precisely the same language. And I do not necessarily set these ten statements in order of their importance. Here, then, are my ten articles of belief.

First, I believe in the wonders of the human body and the miracle of the human mind.

I have in my home a reasonably good sound system. I do not use it often, but now and again I sit quietly in the semidarkness and listen for an hour or so to music that has endured through the centuries because of its remarkable qualities. I listened the other evening to Beethoven's concerto for the violin and marveled that such a thing could come of the mind of a man. The composer, I suppose, was very much like the rest of us. I do not know how tall he was or how broad he was or how much he weighed. But I assume that he got hungry, felt pain, and had most of the problems that we all have, and maybe some that we do not have. But out of the genius of that mind came a tremendous blending that created rare and magnificent masterpieces of music.

Have you ever contemplated the wonder of yourself, the eyes with which you see, the ears with which you hear, the voice with which you speak? No camera ever built can compare with

the human eye. No method of communication ever devised can compare with the voice and the ear. No pump ever built will run as long or as efficiently as the human heart. What a remarkable thing each of us is. We can think by day and dream by night. We can speak and hear, smell and feel.

Look at your finger. The most skillful attempt to reproduce it mechanically has brought only a crude approximation. The next time you use your finger, look at it and sense the wonder of it. While sitting in Symphony Hall in Salt Lake listening to a concert, I was in a position to see the fingers of the performers in the orchestra. Whether playing the strings, the percussion instruments, the brass, the woodwinds—all involved the use of fingers. One does not have to use one's fingers to sing or whistle, but beyond that, there would be little of musical harmony without the deft action of trained fingers.

I believe the human body to be the creation of divinity. George Gallup once observed, "I could prove God statistically. *Take the human body alone—the chance that all the functions of the individual would just happen is a statistical monstrosity*" (emphasis added). Our bodies were designed by our Eternal Father to be the tabernacles of our eternal spirits.

I am grateful for the growing knowledge of how to take care of our bodies. I once read that the smoking of a single cigarette, actuarially speaking, would result in a loss of seven minutes of life for the smoker. I wonder how any thoughtful individual can smoke cigarettes. How can any thoughtful individual take debilitating drugs into his or her system? How can any thoughtful individual expose himself or herself to the deadly scourge of AIDS or to other health problems that follow immorality and abuse of the body?

I think of the wonders of the age in which we live, this greatest of all ages in the history of mankind. More of invention and scientific discovery has occurred during my lifetime

than occurred altogether during all of the previous centuries of the history of man. When I was born in 1910, life expectancy in the United States was about fifty years. Today it is seventy-five. During my brief sojourn on earth there has been added to the average life of a man or woman in the United States, through the wonders of science and associated advances, a quarter of a century of living. This is the remarkable fruition of the efforts of thinking men and women who have applied their inquisitive and dedicated thought processes in the fields of medicine; industrial safety; hygiene and sanitary measures; chemistry in the form of medicines; research in the fields of genetics, microbiology, the environment, and other disciplines, all involving the processes of the human mind.

What a miracle is the human mind. Think of its power to assimilate knowledge, to analyze and synthesize. You are here at this university to learn.

What a remarkable thing this is—this process whereby the accumulated knowledge of the centuries has been summarized and filtered so that in a brief period you can learn what was first learned only through long exercises of research and trial and error. Education is the great conversion process through which abstract knowledge becomes useful. It is something that need never stop. No matter how old we grow, we can acquire knowledge and use it. We can gather wisdom and profit from it. We can be entertained through the miracle of reading and exposure to the arts and add to the blessing and fulfillment of living. The older I grow, the more I enjoy the words of thoughtful writers, ancient and modern, and the savoring of that which they have written.

Under a divinely given mandate, we are to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). And "whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection" (D&C 130:18). Learning is eternal.

Second, I believe in beauty. The earth in its pristine beauty is an expression of the nature of its Creator. The language of the opening chapter of Genesis intrigues me. It states that "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:2). I suppose it presented anything but a picture of beauty.

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). And so the Creation continued until "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). I interpret that to mean that it was beautiful, for "out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight" (Genesis 2:9).

I believe in the beauty of nature—the flowers, the fruit, the sky, the peaks and the plains from which they rise. I see and believe in the beauty of animals. Is there anything more regal than a magnificent horse—its coat brushed and clean, its head held high, its gait a symphony of motion?

I see and admire beauty in people. I am not so concerned with the look that comes of lotions and creams, of pastes and packs as seen in slick-paper magazines and on television. I am not concerned whether the skin be fair or dark. I have seen beautiful people in a hundred nations through which I have walked. Little children are beautiful everywhere. And so are the aged, whose wrinkled hands and faces speak of struggle and survival.

May I be personal for a moment? I sat at dinner across the table from my wife the other evening. It was fifty-five years ago that we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. The wondrous aura of young womanhood was upon her. She was beautiful, and I was bewitched. Now, for more than half a century, we have walked together through much of storm as well as sunshine. Today neither of us stands as tall as we once did. As I looked at her across the table, I noted a few wrinkles in her face and hands. But are they less beautiful than

before? No, in fact, they are more so. Those wrinkles have a beauty of their own, and inherent in their very presence is something that speaks reassuringly of strength and integrity and a love that runs more deeply and quietly than ever before.

I believe in beauty—the beauty of God’s unspoiled creations, the beauty of his sons and daughters who walk without whimpering, meeting the challenges of each new day.

I believe in the beauty of good music and art, of pleasing architecture, and of good literature untainted by profanity or verbal filth.

My dear young friends, there is so much of ugliness in the world in which you live. It is found in the scarred earth, the polluted waters, the befouled air. It is expressed in coarse language, in sloppy dress and manners, in immoral behavior that mocks the beauty of virtue and always leaves a scar. But you can rise above this and revel in the beauty to be found with a little effort.

Third, I believe in the gospel of work. There is no substitute under the heavens for productive labor. It is the process by which dreams become realities. It is the process by which idle visions become dynamic achievements.

Most of us are inherently lazy. We would rather play than work. We would rather loaf than work. A little play and a little loafing are good. But it is work that spells the difference in the life of a man or woman. It is stretching our minds and utilizing the skills of our hands that lift us from mediocrity. It is work that provides the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the homes in which we live. We are accused in America of losing the work ethic. We are accused of losing pride in the quality of our workmanship. That point might be argued for a long time. But we cannot deny the need for work with skilled hands and educated minds if we are to grow and prosper individually and if the nation is to stand tall before the world.

When Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, Jehovah declared: “In the sweat of

thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Genesis 3:19).

Fourth, I believe that honesty is still the best policy. What a destructive thing is a little dishonesty. It has become a cankering disease in our society. Every insurance adjustor can tell you of the soaring costs of dishonest claims. Cheating in the payment of taxes robs the treasury of millions and places undue burdens on those who pay. Employee theft, padded expense accounts, and similar things bring tremendous losses to business institutions. The institution may be able to stand the loss of money, but the individual cannot afford the loss of self-respect.

A year ago the media of a neighboring state made much of the acts of a group of legislators who succumbed to the temptation of a sting operation. Men and women with good reputations evidently ruined their lives and good names over a few paltry dollars that they really did not need and for which they have paid a terrible price.

A letter and an old ash tray came to the office of the Presiding Bishop the other day. The letter reads: “Dear Sir, I stole the enclosed ash tray from your hotel in 1965. After these many years, I want to apologize to you and ask for your forgiveness for my wrong doing. I have enclosed a check that attempts to reimburse you for the ash tray.”

The check was in the amount of \$26.00, one dollar for each year he had kept the ash tray. I can imagine that during those twenty-six years, each time he tapped his cigarette on the rim of that tray he suffered a twinge of conscience. I do not know that the hotel ever missed the ash tray, but the man who took it missed his peace of mind for more than a quarter of a century and finally ended up paying far more for it than it was worth. Yes, my brethren and sisters, honesty *is* the best policy.

Fifth, I believe in the obligation and blessing of service. I speak of that service which is given without expectation of monetary reward. Most

of the troubles of the world come because of human greed. What a therapeutic and wonderful thing it is for a man or woman to set aside all consideration of personal gain and reach out with strength and energy and purpose to help the unfortunate, to improve the community, to clean up the environment, and to beautify our surroundings. How much greater would be the suffering of the homeless and the hungry in our own communities without the service of hundreds of volunteers who give of their time and substance to assist them.

I have a friend in Seattle, a prominent and highly successful lawyer. When he married, his wife said to him, “Let’s resolve to spend one-quarter of our time to improve the community in which we live.” Many years have passed now, and that resolution has been kept. Jim Ellis, now a widower, is properly given credit for dynamic and unselfish leadership in one project after another to improve the water and the environment and to build with tremendous foresight public facilities that have blessed the lives of all of the citizens in that great area of our nation.

Everyone here tonight who has served a mission could testify of the tremendous happiness that comes of service to others. Our Church educational program finds expression not only in Brigham Young University, but on a more far-reaching scale in the seminary and institute system where in some areas of the world a great corps of volunteer teachers carries the instruction load. Last year there were 18,930 dedicated Latter-day Saints so serving who contributed 3,228,104 hours of their time. I talked with one of these the other day, a successful California businessman who gets up at five o’clock, five days a week, to teach seminary. He said, “It’s the best thing I ever did.” No man can live fully and happily who lives only unto himself.

Way back in 1625, Arthur Warwick, an English essayist, wrote: “If I cannot give bountifully, yet I will give freely, and what I want

(lack) in my hand, I will supply by my heart.” And King Benjamin said, “When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

Sixth, I believe the family to be the basic and most important unit of society. The greatest joys of life are experienced in happy family relationships. The most poignant of sorrows, the most bleak and forlorn feelings of misery come of unhappy family life.

We have many failures in America, but the greatest of these, in my judgment, is that failure which is found in broken homes across the nation. Immeasurable is the heartache. The root of most of this is found in selfishness. The cure for most of it can be found in repentance on the part of the offender and forgiveness on the part of the offended.

Every marriage is subject to occasional stormy weather. But with patience, mutual respect, and a spirit of forbearance, we can weather these storms. Where mistakes have been made, there can be apology, repentance, and forgiveness. But there must be willingness to do so on the part of both parties.

I believe in the family where there is a husband who regards his companion as his greatest asset and treats her accordingly; where there is a wife who looks upon her husband as her anchor and strength, her comfort and security; where there are children who look to mother and father with respect and gratitude; where there are parents who look upon those children as blessings and find a great and serious and wonderful challenge in their nurture and rearing. The cultivation of such a home requires effort and energy, forgiveness and patience, love and endurance and sacrifice; but it is worth all of these and more.

To the many of you who are here who dream of finding the right eternal partner, may I say that in my judgment the real essence of happiness in marriage lies not so much in romance as in an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one’s companion.

Thinking of self alone and of the gratification of personal desires will build neither trust, love, nor happiness. Only when there is unselfishness will love, with its concomitant qualities, flourish and blossom.

Marriage, in its truest sense, is a partnership of equals, with neither exercising dominion over the other but, rather, with each encouraging and assisting the other in whatever responsibilities and aspirations he or she might have.

Seventh, I believe in the principle of thrift. We are witnessing in America tremendous business failures to a degree and an extent we have not seen in a long while. Many of these are the fruits of imprudent borrowing, of debts so large they cannot be paid. We have seen billions upon billions lost in the failure of savings and loan institutions that have been forced to the wall because borrowers did not meet their obligations. We have seen strong banks shaken and brought to their knees because those to whom they loaned money could not pay their debts. The assets of Pan Am Airlines were recently sold. The company could not meet its obligations. Once Pan Am was looked upon as the greatest commercial airline in the world. On more than one occasion I have flown on Pan Am to Tokyo and other great cities of the Orient, to Australia, to India, and around the world to Switzerland and Germany and Britain, to the nations of South America, and to other places where this once mighty monarch was easily the best to be had. It was built by the astute and courageous Juan Tripp. But it lost its sense of service, it borrowed beyond its ability to pay, and, area by area, it has sold its routes and is now dead.

“American business now devotes 50 percent of its earnings to debt service, double the level 15 years ago” (*U.S. News & World Report*, 15 October 1990). But this problem is not confined to business institutions. It is shared by individuals—such as you and me—in countless numbers in our land. Within a period of one year, consumer nonmortgage debt increased 27

billion dollars. “The typical family now spends 30 percent on debt service, compared with 20 percent a year ago” (*U.S. News*). Our pioneer forebears lived by the adage “Fix it up, wear it out. Make it do, or do without.” Reasonable debt for the purchase of an affordable home and perhaps for a few other necessary things is acceptable. But from where I sit, I see in a very vivid way the terrible tragedies of many who have gone on a binge of borrowing for things they really do not need.

President Heber J. Grant once said, “If there is anyone thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart and into the family, it is to live within our means; and if there is anyone thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet.”

Eighth, I believe in myself. I do not mean to say this with egotism or arrogance. But I believe in my capacity and in your capacity to do good, to make some contribution to the society of which we are a part, to grow and develop, and to do things that we may now think are impossible.

I believe that I am a child of God, endowed with a divine birthright. I believe that there is something of divinity within me and within each of you. I believe that we have a godly inheritance and that it is our responsibility, our obligation, and our opportunity to cultivate and nurture the very best of these qualities within us.

I do not have to be a scrub. Though my work may be menial, though my contribution may be small, I can perform it with dignity and offer it with unselfishness. My talents may not be great, but I can use them to bless the lives of others. I can be one who does his work with pride in that which comes from hand and mind. I can be one who works with respect for associates, for their opinions, for their beliefs, with appreciation for their problems and with a desire to help them should they stumble. I believe in the principle that I can

make a difference in this world. It may be ever so small, but it will count for the greater good. The goodness of the world in which we live is the accumulated goodness of many small and seemingly inconsequential acts.

I think of these great words written long ago by John Donne:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. [*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), no. 17]

I recall reading something of William Robert Anderson, who commanded a submarine during the Korean War and who later took the submarine *Nautilus* under the North Pole. He carries in his wallet a dog-eared card on which are written these words:

I believe I am always divinely guided. I believe I will always take the right road. I believe God will always make a way where there is no way.

Ninth, I believe in God, my Eternal Father, and in his Beloved Son, the Redeemer of the World.

I believe in the principle of the Golden Rule enunciated by Jesus Christ: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12). I believe in the principle of the Second Mile of which he spoke in the Sermon on the Mount. Though it is difficult to follow, I believe in that forbearance and forgiveness and charity of which he taught.

I believe in “the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may” (Articles of Faith 1:11).

I believe in the sacred writings of the past. Our books of scripture, which have lived through the centuries, set forth the basis of our civil law, of our societal relationships, of our family responsibilities, and, most important, contain the divinely given teachings, principles, and commandments by which to set the course of our lives. They enunciate the relentless law of the harvest: “As ye sow, so shall ye reap” (see D&C 6:33). They spell out a law of accountability under which we must someday give a report of our labors, our activities, and our words to the God of Heaven, who has granted us the privilege of life with all of its joys, with all of its opportunities, and with all of its challenges.

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

Not fully, but in a measure at least, I have come to know these, my Father and my Redeemer.

Tenth, I believe in prayer, in the invitation to come unto my Eternal Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in the integrity of the promise “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

It was that promise that prompted the boy Joseph Smith to go into the grove, there to kneel in supplication and seek an answer to his question.

I believe, without reservation, in the reality of the vision he described. From that well-spring of communication between the God of Heaven, the resurrected Redeemer of the World, and a boy, pure in heart and unschooled, has grown this magnificent and wonderful and true Church that is spreading over the earth to bless the lives of all who will hear its message.

I believe in prayer, that prayer which is the practice of those who have been called to leadership in this Church and which brings forth inspiration and revelation from God for

the blessing of his church and people. I believe in prayer, the precious and wonderful privilege given each of us for our individual guidance, comfort, and peace.

May I say now, in conclusion, that we pray for you, you precious and wonderful and able young men and women. We know that you pray for us. We thank you and we love you and leave our blessing upon you as you walk in virtue and with integrity before the Lord and before one another.

These then are my ten articles of belief. In so stating them, I have used the first person singular, and this is seldom good. I do so in the spirit of testimony. I have done so only to hold before you these beliefs with the hope that they may find application in your lives. And I do so with respect and appreciation for you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.