

How Firm a Foundation

By Dwight D. W. Davis

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.—Luke 6: 46-49.

A few years ago, were we to have entered a certain director's room in one of San Francisco's largest office buildings, we would have seen five men sitting around a large mahogany table. The immediate problem confronting these men was the expenditure of seventy-six million dollars in the construction of what is the world's largest bridge. Of that great outlay, twenty-six million dollars was to be dumped into the bay without delay. But it had to be done just so, for the result was to be a chain of huge, concrete islands strong enough to sustain the towers and superstructure of a titanic bridge. The erection of these pillars was unique, for it was the first time engineers had undertaken to build from the top down; it was the first time engineers had undertaken to go so deep—a hundred feet from the surface of the water to the mud below; below the mud, another hundred feet to the solid rock. But where to dump the concrete for the erection of these mammoth pillars!

This assignment was given to Bill Reed. His task was to explore the bottom of the bay along the five-mile course of the bridge. It took months to complete this survey, because of the necessity of working under pressure—one hundred pounds of air per square inch as compared with sixteen pounds of air per square inch on the surface of the earth. When the task had been completed, twenty-six million dollars worth of reinforced concrete was sunk into the bay at the points designated by Reed.

In any work of construction the type of foundation to be used should receive primary consideration. The utmost care was used in laying the foundation for the San Francisco bridge not only because of the stupendous monetary outlay involved but more particularly because of the calamitous toll that would be exacted in human lives were the bridge to collapse. Whether it be bridges, or dams, or skyscrapers, material foundations are important; yet there is something of more vital concern to us here. What about the Spiritual Foundations that are being laid by the membership of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints?

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS

All of us know that for material foundations such things as rock, cement, steel, etc., are used—but what are some of the materials for a solid spiritual foundation? Perhaps we can best develop the point through a process of partial exclusion; therefore before we consider the elements of a strong spiritual foundation, let us ask ourselves this question: Of what do Spiritual Foundations not consist?

Membership, as such, in a church is no guarantee of a spiritual foundation. If all there were to salvation was the enrollment of so many millions of names on the church books, the kingdom of heaven would long ago have been established.

Too many people erroneously confuse membership with spirituality and celestial glory. Latter Day Saint ministers have long expounded the doctrine that every man shall be judged according to the works done in the flesh. Christ, himself, said that we shall be known by the fruits which we bear. The church, when we join it, does not automatically put beneath us strong spiritual foundations; what it does do for us, however, is provide us with multiple avenues for the self-development of spiritual foundations.

The church provides us with a set of doctrine, with a priesthood organization through which God administers to the needs of his people; the church provides us with a spiritual environment, with opportunities for the development and the expression of our talents. Only as we seek to expand our philosophy of social interrelationships, do we build within us strong spiritual foundations. Membership in the church provides us with the possibilities for constructing solid spiritual foundations—it is no guarantee of them.

In the spring of 1820, when young Joseph Smith went into the woods to inquire of the Lord which of all the existing sects of the day was right, he received the rather startling information that he must "join none of them for they were all wrong; that their creeds were an abomination in the sight of God, that those professors were all corrupt; that 'they draw near to me (God) with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrine the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.'"

This simple, straight-forward account of Joseph Smith's first religious experience, written by himself, is arresting. It leads one to this conclusion: Spiritual Foundations do not consist in the Creedal Dogmas of human personalities.

The religions of Joseph Smith's day were religions of creeds, and dogmas uttered by human personalities. Joseph Smith realized that all the sects of the

day could not be right. He sought the Lord for guidance because of his own internal confusion in listening to the respective denominational ministers emphatically declare his creed to be the one way to salvation. Indeed, it was a "war of words and tumult of opinions."

Since the attention of the converts was centered on human personalities, conversions were to human personalities. Jesus Christ was lost to sight. Small wonder one of the personages in Joseph Smith's vision pointed to the other and said: "This is my beloved Son, hear him." For the first time in centuries, man was commanded to turn his heart to Christ and follow him.

We do not seek to disparage the work of the reformers, for God worked through them in preparing the way for the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But we do emphasize the importance of learning the folly of following the "man." Allegiance must be to God and the church—not man.

But let us consider some of those elements that go to constitute a strong spiritual foundation. Certainly one such element would be a personal, spiritual experience to tie to during the hours of trial that may come to us. That spiritual experience may not be as startling as Paul's, or Alma's, or Joseph Smith's, yet it may be just as convincing and just as stabilizing. If God reveals himself to us in such a way that we know beyond all doubt that this is his work, and that we must be instruments in his hands for effecting righteousness, would not this testimony strengthen our spiritual foundations?

Since true convictions find their outlet in self-expression through group expression, these personal, spiritual experiences become more meaningful as one identifies himself with some worth-while program. More and more lives of Latter Day Saints must be motivated with the conscious realization that we have been created for an express purpose; hence the need for discovering that purpose in order that we might fulfill our destinies.

One of the functions of the church is to assist and guide us in this task of discovery. As this light dawns upon us we must strive to align our lives in conformity with the universal purpose of God. Such alignment necessarily ties us in with the creative work of the church and compels us to lose ourselves in the achievement of its goals; namely, the evangelization of the world and the zionization of the church. Some compelling program to tie to, then, is another element that assists us in the building of a strong spiritual foundation. Have we so identified our lives with the program of this church that we can say it is a part of our foundation?

Important as these elements may be, we have yet

to realize that all spiritual foundations, if they are to stand the strains of life, must center in Jesus Christ. Humanity has yet to learn the transforming power of these truths uttered by the Savior: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . ." "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . ." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. . . ." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. . . ." "Peace on earth and good will to all men."

Just as Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, so likewise should Latter Day Saints be looking for that same city. If the cities to be builded by Latter Day Saints are to have permanent foundations, then Latter Day Saints themselves must have firm spiritual foundations. Bridges may collapse, and they have; dams may break, and they have; buildings may crumble from the shock of earthquakes, and they have—but the foundation of Jesus Christ standeth sure.

ACNE VULGARIS

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Vaccines have been known to be quite beneficial also the X-rays, and these should be resorted to if all other forms fail. My advice is that all persistent disorders of the skin should be treated by a physician.

TO THE JUNE BRIDE

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and prayer and reading of the sacred word. All this when if I had waited possibly only a short time, oh, what a difference!

Think not that my husband is irreligious; he is not. He is like the average man you meet, possibly better for he has but few of their habits. Pray for me and mine that someday my greatest desire may be granted and we may have as our motto, "Each for the other and all for God."

(For obvious reasons, the name of the author cannot be given.—Editors.)

The ability to manifest Charity of the first grade might be a matter of heritage, but it is more likely to be developed and held by practice.