

# Of the Mortal Condition

Our Father in Heaven, we thank thee for thy many mercies and kindnesses to us. We thank thee, Father in Heaven, that our lives have been spared, that thou hast lengthened out the hand of thy mercy from day to day, that thou hast prolonged the days of our probation. We thank thee for the church and kingdom which thou hast put here. We thank thee that we are here, Father, where we can speak of the things of the kingdom. We thank thee for the restoration of the gospel through the prophets and thy servants in these latter days. We ask thee to bless the leaders of the work at this time. May thy spirit be with President McKay and his counselors and the missionaries and all of those who labor for the upbuilding of Zion. Father, help us that we here also may be aware of a sense of our calling in the work.

We recognize, Father in Heaven, that our knowledge is small, and our faith is weak, that our judgment is faulty, and our memories are leaky and unreliable and that none of us have seen anything but a tiny segment of speculative, tentative, and fragmentary knowledge. So help us to be wise, Father, in the day of our probation, let us not teach with our learning and deny the Holy Ghost, nor take honor of one another.

Father, we thank thee for the gospel and all that it means to us. We thank thee for the speaker who is here today. Bless him that he may instruct us in the nature of this latter-day work more fully through the example of thy first elect in this dispensation, the great Prophet Joseph Smith, who brought forth the work out of darkness and obscurity in these last times; that through his life our testimonies may be strengthened, that we may be strongly moved to do all things with an eye single to thy glory. Be with us now throughout this assembly, we ask in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Devotional Assembly Prayer”

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[Man:] Weakness is his present condition, glory his everlasting birthright.

“To Open the Last Dispensation,” 5

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Those without faith live in a world of their own which to them seems logical and final. They take the very *unscientific* stand that beyond the realm of their own very limited experience nothing whatever exists!

God’s works to them look small, and they will never be cured of their myopia until they are willing to face facts and pass a test that only the honest in heart can consider without a chill of aversion. The test is this: “If men will come unto me I will show them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; . . . then will I make weak things become strong to them” (Ether 12:27). What man of the world or posturing Ph.D. is ever going to *ask* for weakness? The men of the world seek for the things of the world, the realities they know—and the greatest of these are “power and gain.”

“A Permanent Heritage,” *CWHN* 5:260

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The Lord's Prayer is more than just a way of getting through life, a code of morals or a pattern of behavior. It is an appeal to a Father we have known before and hope to dwell with hereafter. It asks for help in carrying out the first and greatest commandment. In this very short prayer, God, man as the child of God, and fellowman are all put in their proper relationship, which is the closest possible family association, approaching identity. The Tempter and his methods are introduced without which the statement of the Gospel plan would be incomplete; for the prayer by its very nature is an appeal from those in distress who are supplicating for something much better than what they have.

What we want is to dwell in the Father's Kingdom under the sole dominion of his divine will by his power and in his glory forever and ever. Jesus proceeds to explain the relationship to those to whom he imparts the prayer: The Father will deal with you exactly as you deal with other humans; he will even withhold his kindness from you if you withhold it from them. But as far as credit for what you do, you are making no deals with men; you are not out to impress them or make points with them. . . . Any consideration of reward is wholly between you and your Heavenly Father; and any credit you are able to get from man, seeking it deliberately by various means, you will lose with him.

"Chattanooga," 14

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The Lord has often pushed the Saints into the water to make them swim; and when our indolence, which is nothing less than disobedience, gets us into a jam, he lets us stew in our own juice until we do something about it.

"Best Possible Test," CWHN 12:534

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The worst sinners, according to Jesus, are not the harlots and publicans, but the religious leaders with their insistence on proper dress and grooming, their careful observance of all the rules, their precious concern for status symbols, their strict legality, their pious patriotism.

"What Is Zion?" CWHN 9:54

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Sin is waste. It is doing one thing when you should be doing other and better things for which you have the capacity. Hence, there are no innocent, idle thoughts. That is why even the righteous must repent, constantly and progressively, since all fall short of their capacity and calling. . . .

Why do people feel guilty about TV? What is wrong with it? Just this—that it shuts out all the wonderful things of which the mind is capable, leaving it drugged in a state of thoughtless stupor. For the same reason a mediocre school or teacher is a *bad* school or teacher. Last week it was announced in the papers that a large convention concerned with violence and disorder in our schools came to the unanimous conclusion (students and teachers alike) that the main cause of mischief was *boredom*.

Underperformance, the job that does not challenge you, can make you sick. Work that puts repetition and routine in the place of real work begets a sense of guilt. Merely doodling and noodling in committees can give you ulcers,

skin rashes, and heart trouble. God is not pleased with us for merely sitting in meetings: “How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations,” wrote the Prophet Joseph Smith from the Liberty Jail,—“too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters called and chosen of God.”

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:66-67

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Why do we insist on taking ourselves so seriously? Because we are frightened to death of being found out. Men have turned their backs on the atonement of Jesus Christ to make for themselves a world of humbug. To lend dignity and authority to the pretentious fraud, they have invented the solemn business and drudgery of everyday life. To avoid answering questions, we pretend to be very busy—my, how busy!

In every conservatory of music there is the student who practices scales and exercises with dedicated zeal for eight or ten hours a day or works away for months and years with terrifying persistence at a single piece. This is the devoted grind who impresses others by his matchless industry. But don't be fooled: This drudge is not working at all. He is running away from work! His ferocious application to dull routine is but a dodge to avoid the novel and frightening effort of using his head. And never, never for all his years of toil, does he become a real musician.

In the manner of this poor dupe, the whole majestic world goes about its ostentatious enterprises, the important busywork of everyday life which includes, alas, nearly all its religious activities as well.

“Prophets and Glad Tidings,” *CWHN* 3:265

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If you take yourself seriously, you won't take the gospel seriously and the other way around. If you take the gospel seriously then you will say, now I know that man is nothing. . . . Oh, the nothingness of man. We can joke about ourselves once we take the gospel seriously and once we know its blessings and promises. Then we can relax and breathe easily and have some fun, which I don't do enough of.

“Nibley the Scholar,” 2

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Anyone can make his own statistical researches to prove that humanity in a thousand ways declares its almost unanimous preference for drab and depressing routines. If the world is a dark and dreary place, it is because we prefer it that way, for there is nothing in the world that can keep a man from joy if joy is what he wants. Direct access to our Father in Heaven through prayer is always open. But right there we draw back; as soon as we gain a distant glimpse of it, we are not so sure whether we want this joy. It is altogether too much for us to bear. We must learn by degrees to live with it. It is not strange that we are afraid of so great and overpowering a thing—that we are overawed by the feeling that all this is too good for us. The fact is that it *is* too good for us—much too good, and the message of the prophets and the Church to us here is that we must awake and prepare ourselves as good and faithful servants to enter into the joy of the Lord. We are not ready yet.

It was the glory of the Lord shining round about them that made the shepherds sore afraid, so that the angel had to reassure them that he was bringing only joyful news, good tidings of great joy, for he had been sent to announce, as all the prophets have, the coming to earth of the Redeemer. That has been the joyful message of all the prophets. That we may come to support not the burden of great suffering but the much greater impact of limitless joy is the purpose of our training here. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says the Lord to his prophets, "but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

Let no one imagine that there is no conflict between the World and the Prophets. Throughout the centuries each has been an affliction to the other. What the World teaches us, if we would believe its wisest men (how often the Latin poets have said it!), is to live gracefully in the wan shadow of ever-present sorrow. To the Prophets such teaching is posturing pretense and lame surrender, for they know better; theirs is the far harder task of persuading men to accept, and to live with, boundless and everlasting joy.

"Prophets and Glad Tidings," *CWHN* 3:266-67

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Brigham Young used to have a black leather couch in his office. A window faced the couch; when people came to see him, they would sit on the couch with Brigham Young's back to the window, the desk between them. Brigham Young would just look at the person for three minutes, that was all. He was never fooled; he could figure them out every time. After all, they had come to see him; he didn't ask for them. If they had anything to say, they could talk and he would say nothing. He would just let them talk, and lots of rascals came, people plotting against his life, people wanting to get money from him, all sorts of things. The man never had to talk more than three minutes.

Here is your nondirect interview which is so effective to the psychologist—Brigham had it worked out completely. My grandfather said he was never wrong. After three minutes he knew his man.

"The Book of Mormon: True or False?" *CWHN* 8:237

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Our weaknesses are like dogs, you see. If we walk toward them, they will run away from us. But if we run away from them they'll chase us.

"Brigham Young as an Educator," 1

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We have, of all people, Sigmund Freud to thank for showing us how our sins, even if we don't think of them as sins and cover them up by protestations of noble and selfless motivation, nevertheless abide hidden in the subconscious, to undermine our *confidence*, paralyze action, and lead to all sorts of frustrations, ulcers, rashes, and nervous disorders; only with virtuous thoughts can we proceed with that total confidence which creative work requires.

"But What Kind of Work?" *CWHN* 9:282

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Ours is the active, not the passive part; man is “to act, . . . and not to be acted upon.” We are to take possession, and not to be taken possession of.

“Rediscovery of the Apocrypha,” *CWHN* 12:224

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Change cannot be denied: it may seem like a great paradox or mystery to be constantly changing yet always remaining the same, yet the fact is that we see it all around us every day; the most obvious and undeniable act of life is that “each man in his time plays many parts,” while all the time remaining himself.

“The Greatness of Egypt,” 3

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The Lord has divided our history into dispensations. We live in our own box, so to speak, and what was going on in the other boxes is sometimes something we can’t even imagine, like what life would be like in Egypt. . . . We have come to this world in this dispensation to be tested by questions and situations which are totally alien to others times and places.

“Nibley the Scholar,” 11

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But why this crippling limitation on our thought [thinking of only one thing at a time] if we are God’s children? It is precisely this limitation that is the essence of our mortal existence. If every choice I make expresses a preference, if the world I build up is the world I really love and want, then with every choice I am judging myself, proclaiming all the day long to God, angels, and my fellowmen where my real values lie, where my treasure is, the things to which I give supreme importance. Hence, in this life every moment provides a perfect and foolproof test of your real character, making this life a time of testing and probation.

“Zeal Without Knowledge,” *CWHN* 9:66

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Do what Peter tells us to do: Have faith that there is more than you know; repent of all your present shallowness and silliness; wash off everything of this world in the waters of baptism, and be reborn, not in the self-congratulatory one-shot manner of pop religion, but to a course of action requiring perpetual, progressive repentance. Then “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” and get the guidance you need (Acts 2:37-38).

“But What Kind of Work?” *CWHN* 9:283