

“Obedience – that which God will never take by force – he will accept when freely given, and he will then return to you freedom that you can hardly dream of – the freedom to feel and to know, the freedom to do, and the freedom to be, at least a thousand fold more than we offer him. Strangely enough, the key to freedom is obedience.” –Boyd K. Packer, Apostle

Path of Redemption

A Talk Given by Chauncey C. Riddle

Chauncey C. Riddle was professor of philosophy and chairman of the Department of Graduate Studies in Religious Instruction at Brigham Young University. Dr. Riddle published frequently in Church magazines. The following is a close reproduction of a talk given by Brother Riddle, August 12, 1965, at Brigham Young University. Brother Riddle came in very concerned about an incident which had just occurred in his office, which incident is described below. The following has been taken from the notes of Molly Johanneson and Carma Moore, September 2, 1965 and though they believe what is said, the thoughts are those of Brother Riddle, unless otherwise indicated.

A young man who used to be a student at BYU and who has been in the East for the past four years was just in my office; he told me that since leaving the “Y” he and his wife had experienced a “deadening sensation” in relation to the Gospel. He said that he had held a number of jobs in the Church, as had his wife, and his wife had supported him in all the things they had done. They had paid their tithing and they still did. They felt that they had done everything asked of them. Still he felt that there was not much that the Church had to offer them anymore. His wife felt the same way. How is it that a person could come to feel this way? Have you ever had this same feeling? He said that he had a number of friends who commiserated with him and his feelings – a number who felt the same way.

Why is it that a person who is active in the Church, who is doing things which he is asked to do by the Church leaders, who is trying to keep his testimony alive, could find that the Church could mean less and less to him? Is this the way that it should be? Are there not many missionaries especially who find this same thing? Are there not many fine men who have at one time been bishops, etc., who were at one time considered “A-1” Mormons who have found that the Church has lost its meaning and who are today straying from the straight and narrow? What is the answer to these questions? Do these things need to happen?

First, I would say that there is a need in the lives of all of us to outline clearly in our minds what the role of the Church is in our lives. It is necessary to point out that there are TWO kinds of

people in the Church. There are those who go to Church to be inspired, to be fed and strengthened, and there are those who go to inspire; to give and to help. This latter group get their strength elsewhere, and then they are able to go to Church and give the strength they have received. The Church serves as an important instrument to build up the individual. The more he participates in the organization, the less and less he is going to get out of it. This is because the more he accumulates the knowledge disseminated there, the less there is for him to receive in the limited scope of that particular phase of the Church. Most of the things that are given there, he will have already received. It may get boring.

Now, because he has received these things, is it the Lord's intention for him to reach that pinnacle of knowledge, starve to death, and leave the Church? Impossible! It isn't the Lord's intention for any man to starve. When ordinary Church association doesn't inspire a man, he is by that time in his Church experience been converted; he should have been changed, transformed, to the point where the Spirit can direct him and inspire him. This is the other source from which he receives strength. The message of the Gospel is to change over our basis of living from a material to a spiritual foundation. The converted are those who receive the real message which the Church has to give. If people are looking to the Church for inspiration, they will see that the message is more than merely going to Church and doing the job asked of them. They will see that they are supposed to read the scriptures and perform other acts to gain wisdom and spiritual strength, so that they might find the Lord as their source of personal strength.

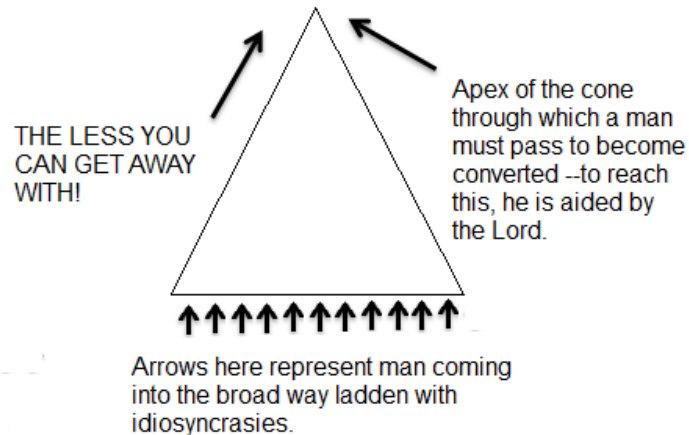
Those who find the Lord and receive personal inspiration from Him do not experience this "Lack" this "deadening sensation." Those who never shift over to this personal, spiritual basis are never really converted to the Gospel and the Lord. They fall away, as they have come to a dead end. The man I was talking to said, "The shoe fits. All I saw was the Church as a restriction on me and my time." He never really got converted over to the Lord.

Another phenomenon had occurred at the same time. I look at it this way. When people come into the Church, they are in the 'Broad Way'. All that a man must do to be baptized is to say that he will accept the Gospel. Perhaps he will have to make an attempt to give us some of his habits, but few other demands are made on him immediately. Each "convert" brings many of his idiosyncrasies with him.

Let us take for example the man who teaches religion professionally. He is often usually the young, fireball type who is more energetic and also most naïve—he knows very little about the world and the ways of religion. I think we can class many young returned missionaries in this group. They are not learned to begin with, but as they teach, they find that they do learn very rapidly. As they learn, they begin to experience a Squeezing-In sensation. They begin to see that there are fewer and fewer things they can get away with and still obey the spirit and the

knowledge which they have received. THE WAY BECOMES NARROW. He finally comes to the point where he realizes that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is all or nothing. If he wishes to continue up through the apex of the cone pictured below, he must choose to devote himself wholly and completely to the Lord Jesus Christ. (This is supposed to be the covenant that we keep at Baptism, but few realize that this is the promise they are making, and even fewer keep the covenant.)

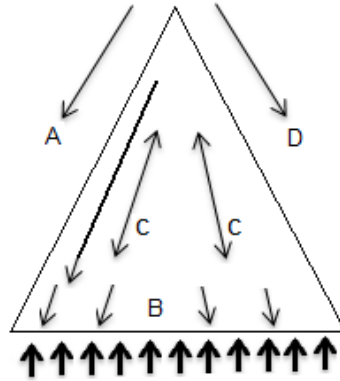
Cone which represents a man's progress in the Gospel



Now, when one reaches the apex of the cone, one of two things happens.

- (1) The individual decides that he does not want to make the sacrifice. He knows he can go on living in the Church apparently as a Latter Day Saint. (Doing what everyone else is doing.) So, HE ESSENTIONALLY RENOUNCES COMPLETE SERVICE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. When a man does this, he begins to water down the doctrines, so he can live them better. He starts broadening the Gospel to fit his life-style. These people who were once on the upgrade meet themselves on the downgrade and thus experience a DEADENING EFFECT. I refer to this situation as spoiling. Many go up and down all their lives in this state of incomplete commitment. They back off to a Terrestrial level. THE CELESTIAL DEMANDS EVERYTHING.

(c) many who fluctuate back and forth, but who never enter through the apex in this life, will probably be worthy of the terrestrial kingdom. One must overcome the World.

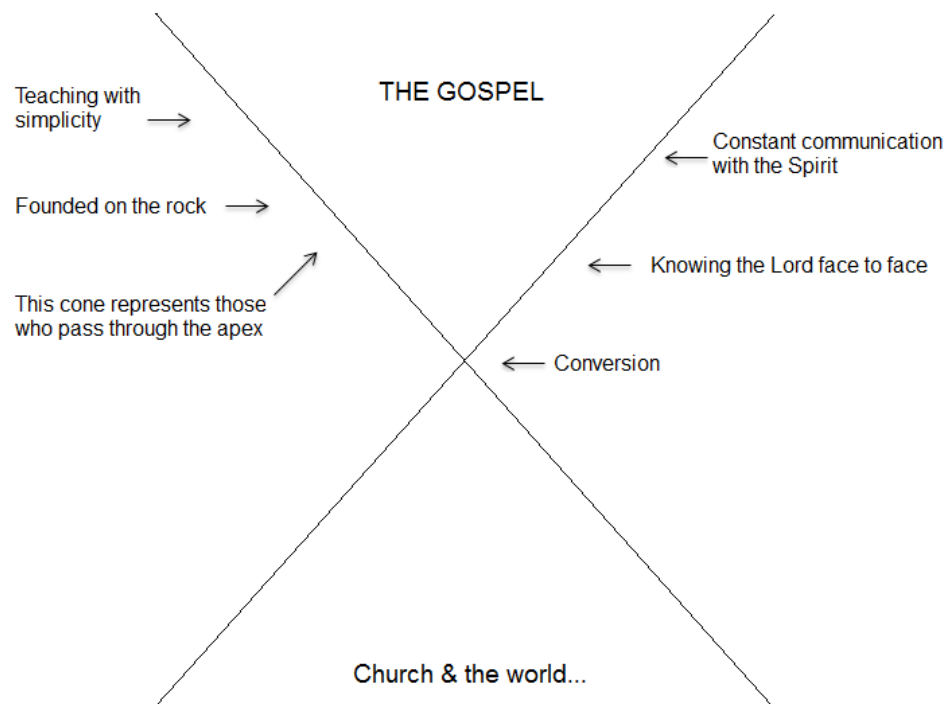


(A & D) many who decide not to devote themselves completely will try to broaden the way.

(B) many of the spoilers turn rotters and exit through the broad way through which they once entered.

- (2) This man realizes that if he is to go ahead, he must devote himself to the Lord 100%. After many struggling, he will go ahead, and pass through the apex of the cone. Here is the wonderful thing about passing through the apex. As one passes through the apex of the first cone he finds himself emerging into another cone where the Lord enlightens this man to new and undreamed of knowledge which forever expands.

REDEMPTION



As one passes through the apex, one also sees a change in the teaching of that man. They teach less and less. In other words, their teaching becomes more simple. They emphasize the spirit. This is the foundation on the rock. They teach the fundamentals, the things that are necessary to get through the gate into the new world of knowledge,

the things that are necessary to lead a man to redemption. Once a man has made the decision to go ahead, he discovers that other cone at the top of the first one. This is a cone in which his spiritual power increases, yet he is still in the same channel of doing what the Lord tells him to do, and only what the Lord tells him to do. Paul says that he is a prisoner of Christ. Not that he minds being a prisoner of Christ, this is the most delightful, most wonderful experience that he has ever had... in the world. It is in this way that the power of Godliness comes to the world and a man begins to really do good for people. Remember the scripture which says, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32) The truth is the Savior himself! (See John 14:6 and John 16:13). By knowing the Savior, one may gain complete freedom by obedience; freedom from Satan's power, though he will still be bombarded by temptation as long as he remains on this earth.

What is it that would keep a person from going through the apex? One must give himself up completely to the Spirit. He must allow the Spirit to direct every decision and action in his life. This is a very real thing. It can be done and has been done by those who overcome the world.

IT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR ANYONE TO SPOIL UNLESS THEY WOULD RATHER HAVE WORDLINESS THAN RIGHTEOUSNESS. The decision is up to every man personally. We each have our free agency to decide what we want most.

People who never rise above the apex in this life will probably go to the terrestrial kingdom. It is likely that they will see in the spirit world the opportunity they missed because of their desires for worldliness, but they will not be able to enter into the Celestial Kingdom if they knew and rejected it in this life. The decision that we must make in this life is whether we will listen to the voice of our conscience or not.

Now, getting back to going to Church. Why would it be necessary for a man who has passed through the apex to go to Church? He is just the man who can GIVE. Does this mean that he needs to preach the Sacrament sermon every week? No! A man can give much by just sitting in the group. A good man, a good spiritual man will pull out of the speaker all that spirit he has: he will be a catalyst to the man who is speaking, so that he can give the audience every bit of knowledge and spirit which they need to receive, and both the speaker and the righteous man as well as the people who hear will rejoice. The righteous man is a benefit to all.

The formal business of the church is meaningless except that it accomplishes its grand purpose which is to bring us together so that we can be exposed to each other. If we don't learn to give comfort; if we don't delight in giving charity to one another, if we don't learn that this is the most important part of the Gospel, then the church will begin to become very boring to us. If we don't get past the formalism, we will begin to dislike the church. If we only see what the speaker didn't bring with him – that he is unprepared, if we only see uncouth deacons, then we are not seeing the real meaning of the church.

Some ask if we are not losing our freedom by doing all things which the Lord directs us to do. President McKay says also that it takes more determination, more intelligence to do this than to do the things that our own carnal nature tells us to do. Those who deliberately choose to serve the Lord are free. While those who think that they are free when they are doing only what they want to do are being led about by Natural Desire, (natural man), Satan. There is only one way not to be a robot. The person who thinks himself free is being led by a power unbeknownst to him. Those who choose to serve the Lord are the only ones who are not (NATURAL Men) robots. The action of the Natural Man is totally predictable.

(Some then asked Dr. Riddle if it was wrong for any who wished to pass through the apex to work for material wealth.) He answered that anyone who has material wealth as a goal, if he is a righteous man, this goal will be a secondary one. I can say that much. He will be working first to build up the kingdom of God.

Remember that the man who is first working to have money to build up the kingdom; after he has the money, is strongly influenced by Satan. The worldly influence of Satan is spiritual, intellectual, and physical; but so is the influence of the Lord. However, the first influence that the Lord must have is influence over the Spirit. That is why the church does not go out and feed all the millions of the earth. Our missionaries go out to feed the people spiritually; for when they –when any person—receives the Gospel, he is fed spiritually and then intellectually and physically. We give people the Gospel and then they can learn to handle their own physical needs.

Too many people think first of what their profession is going to be. They should think first how their life will include the SPIRITUAL. Then all things will follow in their place. This is the message of John the Baptist. Stop being material. Work becomes not the end to the means, but the means to the end. However, we must also remember that

with following the Gospel, there is no guarantee to each man for material wealth and worldly success.

Now here is my whole point. The Gospel is worthwhile to every man. Church is the means whereby we as the children of our Father may meet together to help one another. No matter how righteous you are, what revelation you are receiving personally, you will have your ultimate blessing of exaltation taken from you unless you share your blessings with the other children of our Father in Heaven. (Charity is the greatest gift of all and without it, all else will fail.) If we had any idea what is really in store for us, we would not waste our time on the undesirable.

Getting through the apex and staying there takes concentrated day by day effort over a lifetime. There are recorded instances of people who did it while they were still in their teens. One has to do the first things first. You can do it, and I can do it. There is no need for anyone to spoil. There is no need for the church to mean less and less to anyone. There is no need for a deadening sensation to occur, if a person will only understand the real essence of the Gospel. And if this deadening sensation does take place, it is not too late. The important thing is for us to discover what we want. Do we want to listen to the promptings of the Spirit and obey them? Do we want to keep in constant communication with the Lord, or work overtime when the Lord is telling us to use our time doing something else? If we do, then fine. The choice is yours, my brothers, my sisters, and mine. The Lord will allow us to have whatever degree of freedom we really desire. And now is the time that we must make that choice.