

ELDER DAVID O. MCKAY

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I have listened with great interest to the remarks of President Grant. He has outlined a course of procedure and attitude of mind and spirit which all Israel should accept and follow.

TRY THE SPIRITS

Just as my name was announced I was turning the leaves of my Bible to find the text:

“Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.”

It is a wonderful thing to be anchored in the truth. When one is anchored to a testimony that God has spoken in this dispensation, that he has revealed his truth, there is little danger of one's becoming moved from one's place by any false theory, or any half truth, or any false accusation, that may be brought into his life. All such will affect one only as the waves affect immovable cliffs on the shore. But when one is not anchored then one becomes easily moved, at least unrestful and ill at ease. So it is necessary at all times to try the spirits, to make the test. Let the Church, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, be the measuring rod. When things do not harmonize with the truths of the Gospel we can pass them by, or at least hold them in abeyance until either their truth or falsity be established.

AN EXPERIENCE IN THE MISSION FIELD

My mind recently has been drawn to the importance of our people testing the spirit of slander, of calumny, and I would like to raise my voice this morning in warning against such a spirit. It is easy to distinguish between the spirit of slander and the spirit of the Gospel. I remember an instance in England during my late mission that may illustrate my meaning. Two Elders had gone to great expense, for them, in procuring a hall, in announcing their meeting, in distributing literature, etc. Their hopes were high on Sunday morning when as they approached that hired hall, they saw a goodly number of persons accepting their invitation. One gentleman who was dressed in the garb of a Christian divine approached the hall and was greeted by the Elder who was standing at the door. The latter extended his hand, but the minister refused, saying contemptuously, “I did not come here to shake hands with you.”

“Very well,” said the Elder, “you are welcome,” and invited him into the hall.

When the Elder reported this to me he said: “I felt somewhat discouraged and gloomy.”

I said: “You ought to be very thankful for the experience that came to you that morning. That gentleman misjudged you. You know he misjudged you. You know your sincerity. You know what you had in your heart. You know also that he was wrong in his

accusation and in his feelings toward you and your people. Test that spirit and see if you have not more confidence in the work in which you are engaged than you ever had before."

THE SPIRIT OF SLANDER

And so, Latter-day Saints, test the spirit of the various accusations that are sometimes hurled against our leaders and against the Church. We have always had lies, calumny and vituperation to fight and the Church of God will always have it. Our only problem is for us to be unmoved from our station.

The scriptures tell us that,

"Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off.

"He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight."

Slander is defined as "defamation whether oral or written." "A false report maliciously uttered and tending to injure the reputation of another."

"Slander," says Shakespeare, "whose edge is sharper than the sword;
whose tongue

Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie
All corners of the world: kings, queens and states,
Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave
This viperous slander enters."

"Slander is a poison which extinguishes charity, both in the slanderer and in the person who listens to it; so that a single calumny may prove fatal to an infinite number of souls; since it kills not only those who circulate it, but also all those who receive it."

Diogenes being asked, "What is that beast, the bite of which is the most dangerous?" replied, "Of wild beasts, the bite of a slanderer; and of tame beasts, that of the flatterer."

The source of slander may be found in a depraved nature. It is a weed the roots of which find richest sustenance in a soul that is seeking to destroy his fellows. In uncultured souls there is a desire to ride on the downfall of another—their souls feed on others' failures.

It was Emerson who said, referring to this depravity in human nature, that an accident cannot happen in the street but the bystanders will be animated with the faint hope that the victim may die.

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S EXPERIENCE

If we look back into history we shall find that great men have suffered perhaps more from this evil than from any other one thing. I ask you to recall the father of our country. We can think of him appropriately on this occasion as the nation will soon celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of his birth. Perhaps the saddest experience of his life was at Valley Forge, December, 1777. His army was in winter quarters, about twenty-two miles from Philadelphia. He had fewer than ten thousand men, three thousand of whom deserted to the British.

"The soldiers were thinly clad, some half naked, others with no clothing, but tattered blankets wrapped around them. So many were sick as the result of privation, and so many were without coats, blankets, hats or shoes, that one wonders how the army held together at all."

Under this stress of critical, desperate condition it must have seemed to Washington that he was abandoned not only by Congress, then in session at York, but also by most of his friends as well. John Adams had turned against him, so also had Richard Henry Lee. General Gates insulted him by sending reports direct to Congress instead of to Washington, his superior officer.

As carrions hover around a dying creature, so in Washington's dire calamity came men to seek to crush him—men who formed what has been called the "Conway Cabal," a contemptible attempt to dishonor Washington and to supplant him by a self-asserting, arrogant schemer. Falsehoods most damnable appeared in print, and lies fell like froth from unclean mouths.

In the midst of all this Washington's imperturbable conduct makes his character shine in immortal glory.

I need not refer to Lincoln who, surrounded by men who attacked him, who accused him falsely, towered as Goldsmith has said of another,

"As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

AN IMPRESSIVE INSTANCE IN CHURCH HISTORY

One of the most impressive instances in all the world of the dire effect of calumny we have in the history of our own Church. About June, 1844, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith and the other leaders of the Church were lied about. Enemies right in the city of Nauvoo circulated some of the worst blasphemous accusations that men could contemplate or imagine. Not only that but they began to publish vituperative slander. You know that there was one issue of the Expositor which so insulted the women and cast reflections on the men that the City Council convened and declared that printing press a nuisance. Later Joseph Smith the Prophet, in speaking to Governor Ford, said: "There is not a state in the Union that would have stood it as calmly as we, that would have put up with it one hour."

But the Prophet controlled himself and so did his associates, and only legal action was taken. He gave himself up under the protection of Governor Ford, assured by the honor of the State of Illinois that he would be protected and given a proper hearing and a fair trial. After he received what seemed to be a partial fulfilment of this promise he was released; then a false charge of treason was placed against him, and illegally and without shadow of right he and his brother were incarcerated in jail. Then lies continued to circulate. We know what the result was. The best blood of this country was shed in innocence. He knew he was innocent. He knew his rights. So did his brother Hyrum, John Taylor and Willard Richards who were there with him.

But because of lies, black and damnable, the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum were martyred.

Governor Ford himself tells about the falsehoods that were circulated after the martyrdom, and how the people's minds were stirred up against them. In the midst of it all what was the Prophet's attitude? A calm, Christ-like attitude. Said he, when he was going to Carthage that evening:

"I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am calm as a summer's morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and all men. If they take my life I shall die an innocent man, and it will yet be said of me, he was murdered in cold blood."

THE MAN OF GALILEE

What was Jesus' attitude when they circulated calumny against him? Wherever he went he was pursued by men who were his enemies. They watched him in order that they might trip him. They questioned him in order that they might get him into a trap.

"How difficult it is to speak if one is speaking in the presence of people who are watching each sentence, determined if possible to catch the speaker in error. Wherever Jesus went his conduct was scrutinized by eyes that were green with envy. Everything he did was criticized, every action called forth a storm of abuse. His enemies gathered around him like a swarm of mosquitoes biting him, like a swarm of hornets stinging him—but he never complained. They nagged at him, pelted him with abusive epithets, sowed the land with lies about him, but he never grew bitter. We have known many a good man to grow sour simply because he had been misunderstood by a few people. Many a woman has grown bitter because of unfortunate experiences with those who were her fellow-workers in the Church. This Man of Galilee knew little but misunderstanding and ingratitude and criticism and abuse; but he never complained, and at the end of the day he was as sweet as at dawn. Long before he came somebody had said that when the supreme man arrived he would submit to tribulation without complaining. As men looked upon this Man of Galilee they were reminded of the great line of the prophet, 'As a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.'"

Brethren and sisters, what is the attitude, the spirit of the vilifier, as compared with the spirit of the Christ, the spirit of the leaders of the Church, the spirit of every true Latter-day Saint? It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, and if we as Latter-day Saints will but hold to the truth as it has been revealed all will eventually be well. My brethren and sisters, let me bear you my testimony that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it has been revealed in this day lies the hope and the salvation of the human family. I feel it with all my soul. I believe I can prove it to the satisfaction of any who will honestly and prayerfully investigate the tenets and organization of the Church.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH

Then let us rally around our President who this morning said, "Hold to the truth, be true to the principles of life and salvation as revealed in this dispensation."

It has been impressively said that:

"A man cannot believe in God without believing in the final inevitable triumph of truth. If you have truth on your side you can pass through the dark valley of slander, misrepresentation and abuse, undaunted, as though you wore a suit of mail that no bullet could enter, no arrow could pierce. You can hold your head high, toss it fearlessly and defiantly, look every man calmly and unflinchingly in the eye, as though you rode, a victorious king, returning at the head of your legions with banners waving and lances glistening, and bugles filling the air with music. You can feel the great expansive wave of moral health surging through you as the quickened blood courses through the body of him who is gladly, gloriously proud of physical health. You will know that all will come right in the end, that it *must* come, that error must flee before the great white light of truth, as darkness slinks away into nothingness in the presence of the sunburst. Then, with truth as your guide, your companion, your ally, and inspiration, you tingle with the consciousness of your kinship with the Infinite and all the petty trials, sorrows and sufferings of life fade away like temporary, harmless visions seen in a dream."

God help us to be anchored in the truth, give us power to preach it, and power to live it. Then, when slander, calumny and misrepresentation are hurled against us, they will fall as weakened arrows against an impenetrable coat of mail.

May we ever carry forward this great work in the spirit of the Master, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I feel assured this morning that we are to have a most excellent conference because the Spirit of the Lord has been with us and has dictated the words that have been spoken. I trust that for the few moments I stand here I too may be led to say that which will be pleasing in the sight of our Heavenly Father and beneficial to you.

TESTIMONY CONCERNING GREAT TRUTHS

I am grateful for a testimony of the Gospel, for a knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the world, the Only Begotten Son of the living God. I know that he came into the world as its Redeemer and as the Savior of men. He brought salvation and exaltation to all who are willing to accept in faithfulness all of his teachings. Moreover, I know that Joseph Smith was called of God and was a prophet, and that he was given divine authority and spoke the truth. To him were the heavens opened. He received a visitation of the Father and the Son and was called to usher in the great last dispensation known as the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. This dispensation was spoken of by ancient prophets and by the apostles of former times. The ancient prophets looked forward to this dispensation for they knew it was to be the time of the restoration of all things both which are in heaven and which are on earth. This restoration was to come through the sending of the Gospel from heaven with the fulness of the priesthood, and all things were eventually to be set in order according to the will of the Lord.