

Even though it is said in a jocular way, I am in dead earnest about it, because I have as great respect in general and as great confidence in the son as I have in the father. I believe that God's work is so soundly set up that the sons will be better than their fathers, because they have had a longer period of advantage of the Church.

I bear you my testimony of the soundness of the young people of Zion, and I bear my testimony that the reason they are sound is because they have a sound guidance, the guidance of eternal truth, the guidance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I humbly pray that I, and that you will, all of us, be worthy to guide and set examples to these fine young people that have been entrusted to us; and if we do this I am sure that Zion will prosper and that the work will go forward.

May God grant that this shall be the case.

The Tabernacle Choir Men's Chorus sang "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"—Words by Wesley, Music by Holbrook.

PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY
Second Counselor in the First Presidency

In the words of Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, "it is good to be here." That exclamation expresses the feeling of Latter-day Saints whenever they meet in sincerity of purpose to worship the Lord.

Our souls are enriched, not only by what is said but by what is felt in just being together. I pray that I may be guided by that same spirit during the few moments that I stand before you.

One of the paramount duties, I might say the paramount duty of parents is to win and merit the confidence and respect of their children. Equally paramount in the life of a bishopric or of a ward is to win and merit the confidence of the people of their ward. Too few parents have the confidence of their children. There are too few officers in the Church who have the confidence of the members, particularly of the young people of wards and stakes.

I feel impressed to say a word about something which destroys that confidence. The Savior on one occasion said:

Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Then in strong condemnatory terms He said:

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (Matt. 7:1-3, 5.)

The context of that scripture plainly indicates that the sin the Savior is condemning is the disposition to look unfavorably on the character and actions of others, which leads almost invariably to the pronouncing of rash, unjust, unlovely judgments upon them. Very often these judg-

ments are formed on insufficient evidence, and after superficial observations, and people who form them and express them in the presence of children put poison into those children's minds. Parents who speak at the table against the bishopric, against a teacher, stake president, or any other officer of the Church are, unwittingly, perhaps, but most assuredly lessening in their children's minds the respect and confidence in Church authorities.

SLANDER—A DEADLY WEAPON

One of the most deadly weapons of warfare is the poison gas. Slander is to a child's confidence in Church authorities in undermining character what poison gas is to the physical body. Now, that is putting it strongly, but I believe it is true. We should avoid as poison "Slander whose whisper over the world's diameter, as level as the cannon to its flank, transports its poison shot."

Here is a letter that illustrates what I mean, about people's forming hasty judgment, judging without sufficient evidence. I hesitate to refer to it because in a way it is complimentary and also the writer has done what the Savior has asked us to do; viz, "If you have aught against your brother, go to him. Between thee and him alone, adjust your difficulty." But there are other elements in the letter which prompt me to read it to you as illustrative of this theme. I hope the writer will either hear or read what I am saying. Then, too, there may be others who may be thinking along the same lines as this letter.

To quote:

I am writing you in reference to the Church statistics that are read from the stand in the April conferences every year and which are later published in Salt Lake newspapers. Some of my friends and myself have been rather puzzled by the figures as they are given out each year. We couldn't understand the tremendous growth in Church membership since 1938 as compared to previous years. We have all kept the statistics since they were first published. One of my friends is a certified accountant. He was as puzzled as the rest of us until he discovered that although the number of children baptized in the stakes and missions and converts baptized in the stakes and missions had been added to the Church membership, there had been no deductions on account of deaths in our Church membership throughout the world.

Then follows this insinuation or accusation:

Of course we are all aware that this method is used by the Roman Catholic Church, but is it honest? According to figures recently released by the state board of health there were five thousand two hundred ninety-two deaths in Utah during 1943. Those figures are incomplete. We know we have a large Church membership in Utah, also in Idaho and Canada and other parts of the United States. I think a conservative figure for the number of deaths in our Church each year would be about five thousand. Whatever the actual figure, would it not be more honest to deduct the figures from our Church membership instead of keeping dead men on our list? I am as anxious as anyone in our Church today to see our membership grow, but I want to see it grow by fair means.

Then there is the venom, I don't know against whom:

Of course we can guess the name of the man who is responsible for the fantastic way of bookkeeping, but the less said about him the better.

GIVES ANSWER

It is that accusation and that indication of venom which prompts me to say what I am going to say.

I said to him :

In your concluding paragraph you say you are as anxious as anyone in our Church today to see our membership grow, but you want to see it grow by fair means. The implication in that statement, of course, is an insult to the Church Authorities, and the thought behind it is unworthy of any faithful Latter-day Saint. For your information I am pleased to give you the following regarding the gathering of statistics which may or may not be entirely accurate, but at any rate it is honest. I called up the Presiding Bishopric to ascertain the method of gathering the statistics. Each ward is supplied with what is known as Form E, which is a transcript of the record of ward members covering marriages, divorces, births, blessings, confirmations, ordinations, deaths and excommunications. At the beginning of every year the ward membership is broken down with regard to the Priesthood members; high priests, seventies, elders, priests, teachers, and deacons, number of male members, number of female members, number of male children and the number of female children; and then right after that there are columns covering increases, those baptized, converts and children, those received from other wards, from missions, children blessed. Then follows decreases: Removed to other wards, removed to missions, deaths and removed from the record, children over nine not baptized. They are not counted as members. These are decreases. The total decreases. The total decreases are then subtracted from the membership as of January 1st, plus the increases of the year, the result of which is the exact membership of the ward as of December 31st of each year.

In the above paragraph you will see that every death is reported in the ward and deducted from the ward membership.

CONDEMN'S ATTITUDE

Now, we commend this writer for his interest in the Church, and his associates, and the expert accountant, but we condemn the hasty conclusions of error and their conclusions that some men in the Church have not been fair in giving out statistics. As I visualize the little group working and working, testing these figures I fancy I can hear unlovely remarks made. We are justified in that conclusion from that venomous statement about some man who, he implies, is not just strictly honest.

I don't know how many young people have heard that; but those who have, had poison put into their lives and the seeds of distrust sown in their thoughts toward Church Authorities. I know of nothing in our home life which will tend to influence young people to stray from the duties in the Church or the path of virtue in the Church so quickly and effectively as will fault-finding by parents; even talking carelessly about the weakness of bishops; even making slighting remarks about the Relief Society teachers who come, or laughing at the ward teachers, or saying that the ward teachers' visit are not effective. These things in the presence of children are like termites eating the foundation of your house, crawling up into the woodwork.

Parents, you may not see the evil effect of it all at once, but some time later in life when you find the character undermined, you may wonder what is wrong. Then, too late, you may discover that termites have undermined the faith—the termites of slander, of fault-finding.

The Lord has warned us against fault-finding from the beginning. He said it is the teacher's duty to see that there is no backbiting or evil speaking.

A WONDERFUL ORGANIZATION

What a wonderful organization the Church is, and how in every detail the Lord seems to have marked out the danger signs, as well as He has shown the paved road to happiness and success.

I said the prime duty of parents is to win and to merit the confidence, the trust—the trust of their children. If you haven't it, you had better worry, you had better pray. You may lose them. One-third of the Lord's children turned away. They had their free agency. But let us pray to God to give us power to win the confidence of our children.

And bishoprics, you fathers of the wards—pray that you may have the confidence and trust of the people. And if you have aught against any, go to them.

There is a story told that a company of botanists seeking some special flowers up in the Canadian Rockies, came one day to a very rare flower down on the side of a cliff. To reach it they would have to retrace their steps and go back ten miles to come up from the valley below. Someone suggested that if they had a rope they could let a boy down to pick the specimens. That suggestion was prompted by the fact that a little boy had been following them for about an hour, watching them silently.

They got the rope and said:

Here, lad, we'll give you \$5 if you will put this rope around you and permit us to let you down to get those flowers.

Without saying a word the lad scampered off. They thought they had frightened him. He went to a house nearby and soon came back with a man by his side. Then the little fellow answered:

You may put that rope around me, and I'll get the flower, if you'll let my dad hold the rope.

God help us as parents and officers in the Church to merit such trust of our boys and girls, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT J. REUBEN CLARK, JR.

First Counselor in the First Presidency

This hour, sooner or later, comes to all of us here on the stand.

I have enjoyed this conference very much. We have had a spirit running through it that seems to me unique in our conferences. There has been a peace, and a quiet; there has been a comfort and a consolation