

BISHOP CARL W. BUEHNER

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

My dear brethren and sisters, this to me has been a very stirring session of conference. We have heard the vital statistics of the Church, and we have sustained the General Authorities of the Church. From among the priesthood have also been chosen three devoted and humble men to take a place with the other General Authorities of the Church. I know each of them well. They have given dedicated service to the work of the Lord, and with all my heart I can say to them that their joy will be even greater as they travel among the people of the Church.

I am always thrilled to participate with you in one of these great general conferences of the Church. I keenly feel, however, that even though conference time is a wonderful time, it is even more wonderful for those who have already spoken.

Let me tell you a couple of little stories that I think you may appreciate. I heard one of our fine sisters bear her testimony in fast meeting not long ago and express her gratitude for four wonderful little boys that had been born into their home. The parents loved these four little youngsters immensely. Word came that they were going to have another little arrival in the home, and the family all decided that the fifth should be a little girl. They pleaded with our Heavenly Father that this might be the case. He heard the plea of the family, and when the baby was born, it was a girl. This little girl grew up in this home, knowing how much she was wanted and appreciated. She seemed very much loved by the four little boys, the father and the mother. Each poured out his affections upon her. She grew up in this atmosphere, knowing she was very important and very much wanted in the home. When she was somewhere between four and five years of age, and while she was in the midst of her family and feeling very happy about her home and her little brothers, she said, "Mother, I'll bet you were really surprised when you found out I was a Mormon, too."

In the sight of our Heavenly Father,

every one of us is a very important person. I wish we could always remember this and realize how much we are loved by him and reciprocate that love by living close to his teachings.

The other little story I should like to tell emanated from the Primary Children's Hospital. This is one of the great institutions we have in the Church. Those of you who have been there know something about its little patients, some of whom are there for an extended period of time, even flat on their backs on their little beds, and some more fortunate are in wheelchairs. Very few can get around on their own. I have never been in a place where there are happier patients than those in our Primary Children's Hospital. Employed there as a nurse is a very lovely woman who lost her husband and who has a family of her own to raise. The oldest boy of this woman was old enough to receive a call to go on a mission. The children in the hospital, most of whom have so little, had such a love and devotion for their nurse, whose son was now going into the mission field, that they sent a little Indian boy, who had a broken leg, but who could get around with crutches, to solicit a contribution from these little patients. You understand they have very little, many of them being there as Church-service cases. I understood they practically cleaned out all of the assets of these children and gathered up a total of \$6.68. This was presented to the missionary as their appreciation for his wonderful mother who was their nurse and to help the great missionary program move forward.

We are asked to give two or three pennies for each year of our age annually to help this institution. As you catch the spirit of these children, you often wish you were a thousand years old when they come to collect these pennies. I have frequently said, "God bless the Primary and their hospital for what they are doing to bless our children!"

May I say just a word about a lovely experience I enjoyed in being able to go back to the land of my birth after

an absence of about sixty years and to visit the city where I was born. I had the opportunity of bearing my testimony at a district conference in Stuttgart, Germany. I saw a little building which more than sixty years ago housed the Stuttgart Branch. Meetings are not held here any more. They have a beautiful chapel of their own. It was in this little branch chapel that I received a name and a blessing. In the areas close to Stuttgart, I saw the little villages in which my father and mother were born. They later moved to Stuttgart and were there married. This is where the missionaries found them and taught them the gospel.

I was also made very much aware of the fact that Stuttgart today is almost a new city. I was told that about seventy percent of the original city had been bombed out during the war. The scars of war are still evident, as you see large buildings with no windows, no doors, the roofs demolished, and parts of the walls destroyed. Many new buildings have been erected.

I began thinking of my own situation and giving credit to the great missionary program for my many blessings. The scripture in Jeremiah 3:14 says, ". . . and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and bring you to Zion." I wondered why my father and my mother were those who were gathered two from a family. This has caused many serious reflections. I was just at the age when I might have been involved with the two world wars that were fought in that land. The destruction of property and the millions of people who lost their lives might just as well have included the Buehner family.

I do not know whether my parents responded the first time the missionaries knocked on their door or the second time or the third time. I am grateful, however, that the missionaries knocked on the door of my parents sufficient times to convince them that they had the great message of the age to give to them, the story that God had spoken again in this day to the boy Prophet Joseph Smith and through him restored the gospel. To me there is nothing more important or nothing greater. I appreciate so much that my parents accepted the gospel and

that like thousands of others had the desire of coming to this great land of America.

I also enjoyed the privilege of going into Berlin. Berlin, once a very proud and beautiful city, is now a divided city. I saw what happens when a city and a people are divided. West Berlin is a little island in Russian territory. There is one highway 110 miles long on which supplies are taken to West Berlin by truck and car, and there is also a twenty-mile wide air strip permitting planes to fly in and out of the city. When an airplane for any reason gets out of the twenty-mile allowed zone, it is over Russian territory.

I admire the faith and stability of the wonderful members of the Church we have behind the Iron Curtain. After hearing the president of the East German Mission relate a number of spine-tingling experiences, I could not help thinking how grateful many people must be that the gospel touched their lives and brought them away from situations such as those being endured by members living in this condition.

I learned that in the Russian schools behind the Iron Curtain, children are taught that there is no such thing as a God, that everything is material and force. These children come home and challenge their parents and say, "Why don't you get up to date? In school we hear every day that there is no such thing as God, and yet you have us kneel down and pray each night and morning and ask our Heavenly Father to bless and watch over us. How can this be when there is no God?" Because of such a reaction, many persons have escaped to the West Zone. President Fetzter indicated that there are strong and devoted members behind the Iron Curtain in almost sufficient numbers to organize a stake there. Of course, such a stake can never be organized under these circumstances. I feel to say, "God bless those wonderful people there."

As we drove into areas in East Berlin, I observed the great industrial area of that city, silent and unproductive. There was no smoke coming from the large smokestacks. There seemed to be no activity of any kind. I had a feeling, without having had the privilege of going into these buildings or even

through this area, that the machinery had all been dismantled and taken into Russian territory. I do not know what the future is for this city, but after carefully viewing the situation, I hope the day comes when Berlin can again be reunited as a proud and noble city and reunite the German-speaking people.

In London our guide referred to these areas that had been bombed out as "blitzed." As we drove through the city, every few miles he would say, "Here is another area that was 'blitzed' during the war."

All over Europe a tremendous construction program is underway. People seem happy. They seem well-dressed and even prosperous. They do not have enough money to buy automobiles or to purchase electrical appliances, but there is full employment, and everyone seems to be able to live fairly well.

I was thrilled, as others have already reported, at the tremendous progress missionary work is making in these European countries. You have already heard what is happening in England—I suppose probably the greatest activity since that reported in the very early days of the Church when Wilford Woodruff, Heber C. Kimball and others served as missionaries.

ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

Of the First Council of the Seventy

We in this Church have a solemn obligation to carry the message of salvation to our Father's other children in the world. To us the Lord has given this command: "Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature, . . ." (D&C 68:8.)

This call to missionary service does not leave us any choice or option as to the course we should pursue. It is not merely a permissive invitation which allows us to spread the gospel message on a voluntary basis, or if we find it convenient to do so. The decree is mandatory. We have no choice about it, if we are to retain the favor of God. The Lord has laid upon our shoulders the obligation to spread the gospel, to raise the warning voice, to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel. If we neg-

I shall always be grateful for what this missionary program has done for us and our family. Our own family has been an example of what happens to those being gathered one of a city and two of a family. Even though my parents have been dead for twenty-five years, there are practically a hundred of us now because of the two that were gathered more than sixty years ago. At the rate we are growing, in a few more generations, we will have a small city of our own.

It is always wonderful to meet with you in conference. I bear you my testimony to the divinity of this great latter-day work and want to tell you that I find great joy in the service of the Master. I rededicate my life to his service and to help further the purposes of the Almighty. I do it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Bishop Carl W. Buehner of the Presiding Bishopric has just addressed us. We will now hear from Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of the Seventy.

lect to do so, we have violated our trust and failed to comply with a divine directive.

When we come into the Church, we covenant in the waters of baptism that we will do missionary work. We enter into a solemn contract with Deity that we will bear testimony of the restoration of the gospel on every appropriate occasion. We agree "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" that we "may be in, even until death." (Mosiah 18:9.) We are also bound by the command that the Lord has given by revelation in this day, that "it cometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor." (D&C 88:81.) Thus we have an affirmative, positive, definite obligation resting upon us to do mis-