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Last evening several teen-age boys spoke from this pulpit to many thousands of young and older men in a great meeting. I should like to take my theme this morning in part from something said by one of them: "If I cannot respect mom and dad, whom I see, how can I respect my Heavenly Father, whom I do not see?"

Infant baptism an error

To briefly establish a foundation, let me refer to a recent magazine article which began with these words: "Infant baptism is under fire." There follow several examples of this significant theological development across the world among Protestant and Catholic thinkers, and then this statement:

"Perhaps the most formidable challenge to infant baptism was made recently by Switzerland's venerable Karl Barth. . . . In his latest book, Barth argues that there is no Biblical basis for infant baptism and that the ritual is not an act of God's grace but a human response to it—which means that the individual must be mature enough to understand the meaning of such a decision. The traditional understanding of the sacrament, he says, is simply 'an old error of the church.'" (*Time*, May 31, 1968, p. 58.)

"Of such is the kingdom"

With the substance of this we are in complete agreement. When the disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" the Savior "called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:1-4.)

"Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. "And he laid his hands on them." (Matt. 19:13-15.)

To this may be added the testimony of a Book of Mormon prophet: ". . . he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption . . . for . . . all little children are alive in Christ." (Moro. 8:20, 22.)

In other sacred scripture we are taught that infants are "innocent before God . . .," and then there is added this signal statement: "And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers." (D&C 93:38-39.) "But," said the Lord, "I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth" and to "set in order your own house." (D&C 93:40, 43.)

The tradition of their fathers

It is to the phrase "because of the tradition of their fathers" that I would give special attention in these few moments, and to the injunction to "set in order your own house."

Previously over this pulpit I have expressed my respect for children who have improved upon the ways of negligent parents, and my compassion for choice parents who have earnestly tried to bring up their children in the way they should go, only to have those children use their agency and individuality to follow other ways. The Lord has taught us that in his sight the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. Each who is accountable must ultimately account for his own decisions.

But multitudes of us still have our children at home, or have grandchildren, or are influential in the homes or with the children of others. Great numbers of young couples are just

starting their families, or soon will be. All of us should be brought to solemn thoughtfulness by the sobering word that although children are "innocent before God," the "wicked one" is able to take away "light and truth" "through disobedience" and "because of the tradition of their fathers."

The first definition of "tradition" in a modern dictionary is: "The knowledge, doctrines, customs, practices, etc., transmitted from generation to generation. . . ."

Our traditions

What is the tradition in your individual home and mine? What "knowledge, doctrines, customs, practices," and so forth are being or will be transmitted from our generation to our children and their children?

God teaches us that children are to honor their parents. What in us, our lives, our character, our behavior, is *worthy* of their honor? What in us is noble, responsible, faithful, gracious, considerate? What is worthy of their respect and their emulation?

Do we teach honesty by being honest? I love to remember the story of the man who, while his little son was with him, stopped at an isolated cornfield on a remote country road, and after looking before and behind him, to the left and to the right, started to climb the fence to appropriate a few ears of the farmer's corn. Said his son: "Dad, you forgot to look up."

Integrity in the home

What happens to the boy whose father boasts of the slick deal he has made in which others were outwitted? Years ago the late Joseph Welch said, on the occasion of his being named Father of the Year:

"If it were in my power to bestow on the youth of the land one single quality, I would not choose, I think, wit or wisdom or even that great boon, education. If I could choose but one, I would choose integrity. If one day my children and grandchildren say to one another, 'He taught us to value integrity,' I shall be content.

"How is the quality of integrity

passed on to the children in the home? It is passed on by living a *life* of integrity, of sober honesty, of responsible citizenship. How can one surely *fail* to pass this priceless quality on to children in the home? By being a little lawless; by being a fixer; by being a cheat and a chiseler. Not so long ago one of my two boys spoke these sobering words to me. He said, 'When the two of us were young, there were times when you and Mom would obviously set out to tell us how to live the good life. We could always recognize those moments and we would close our ears and our minds. Your most influential moments were your most inadvertent ones. We were apt to imitate what you really were—not what you said you were or even what you may have believed you were.'

"If your children are to have integrity, they must find it in the home and in you. If they live in an atmosphere of complete integrity, they will accept it as an attitude and never waver thereafter. And having integrity, they will themselves find freedom; and having found it, gladly grant it to all others."

Ideals and values

Every parent should ask, What ideals and values is my child learning? What is his image of himself? What is the view of others that he is developing in our home? Is his experience with his parents bringing him a growing consciousness that the "bright light of God" is over everything, and a growing confidence in the presence of his Heavenly Father?

In New Zealand we learned an old Maori proverb: "A bird must have feathers to fly." Parents have the primary responsibility for feathering our children for flight. A child who lives in an atmosphere of disrespect, criticism, or shame will not be inclined to respect or accept himself; and of shame it has been impellingly written: "Holocausts are caused not only by atomic explosions. Holocausts are caused wherever a person is put to shame." (Abraham J. Heschel, *The Insecurities of Freedom.*)

Our treatment of others

Our treatment of others will certainly condition a child's attitude toward others. Children who see and sense in parents a genuine concern for others, expressed in acts of kindness and compassion and unselfishness, will themselves be inclined to think well of mankind and to do as the scriptures bid: to "succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees." (D&C 81:5.)

Young people so blessed may also be less susceptible to the bewilderment that confronts some in our generation's paradoxical stress on man's rights and privileges while at the same time belittling him as a creature of his environment, conditioned by sociological and psychological factors, not possessing the powers and capacities of free agency, of thinking and believing, of choosing and determining, not the unique personality that God has taught us we are. The "conditioned-reflex" version of the behaviorist cannot inspire the mystery and awe and wonder which are the glory of man. To know, instead, that every individual is an eternal person, a potential god or goddess, capable of deep love and graciousness and mercy, more than human, is to prepare us to live with courage and a sense of responsibility, to inspire self-reliance, self-respect, and genuine respect for others.

Tradition of discipline

What is the tradition of discipline in our homes? Is our child pampered, indulged, permitted in a moment of crisis to transfer his guilt to others—his parents, peers, family, the age he lives in, society? How will he handle disappointment and failure if he is not taught to face up to his mistakes honestly? We are not talking of imposing senseless punishment. We are talking of realities, of facts to be faced, of fair rules which are understood and enforced, with sanctions consistently imposed when they are broken. "Self-respect," someone has said, "is the fruit of discipline; the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say NO to one's self." (Heschel, *op. cit.*)

Other traditions to pass on

What shall we give to the children? Pray for a sense of humor. "Laughter leavens life" and brings a sunny spirit.

Pray also to be able to pass on the will to work, and the urge for excellence; the capacity for moral indignation, and the courage to stand alone; disdain for evil, and love of justice; the ability to love without condition or question. Do you know the story of the eight-year-old girl in an orphanage, unattractive, with annoying mannerisms, disliked by the teachers and administrators? One afternoon it was reported that she had broken a rule that would justify her expulsion from the institution. Against regulations she had been seen depositing a note in a branch of a tree overreaching the fence. The note was retrieved. It read: "To whoever finds this: I love you."

How in your home and mine is the tradition of patriotism?

On the Saturday evening just before Christmas last year, two clean, handsome young men—boys, really—their battle gear stacked nearby, stood before a large group of their comrades at China Beach near DaNang, South Vietnam, and sang "Silent Night." They had no accompaniment, and the sweet, clear ring of their voices will always be remembered, and the emotion we all felt. The next morning, before dawn, one of those young men came to my sleeping quarters to say good-bye and shake hands once more as he joined his outfit to head out into the bush on a search-and-destroy mission. It was not the Sabbath activity he would have chosen—he was disappointed not to be able to worship with fellow servicemen in our scheduled meeting—but he went his way to do his job. There is no question as to the tradition transmitted in this boy's home.

Self-control in homes

Fathers, mothers, what tradition are we planting in another generation, in our homes, as to self-control—control of our tongues and tempers and appetites? In 1884 Henry Drummond made a statement on this theme that could

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be read regularly with profit by each of us:

"We are inclined to look upon bad temper as a very harmless weakness. We speak of it as a mere infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, not a thing to take into very serious account in estimating a man's character. And yet . . . the Bible again and again returns to condemn it as one of the most destructive elements in human nature.

"The peculiarity of ill-temper is that it is the vice of the virtuous. It is often the one blot on an otherwise noble character. . . . This compatibility of ill-temper with the high moral character is one of the strangest and saddest problems of ethics. The truth is, there are two great classes of sins—sins of the Body and sins of the Disposition. . . . No form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself, does more to un-Christianize society than evil temper. For embittering life, for breaking up communities, for destroying the most sacred relationships, for devastating homes, for withering up men and women, for taking the bloom off childhood; in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence stands alone." (Henry Drummond: *The Greatest Thing in the World*, pp. 43-46.)

Traditions for future homes

What traditions are we passing on for other homes in future times that are worthy of the memories we ourselves have? On occasion through the years I have enjoyed the blessing of asking large groups of adult leaders to meditate for a moment on their conclusion to an unfinished sentence, and then share their thoughts. The sentence reads: "The thing I remember best about my childhood at home with my parents and family is"

I suspect your answers would be about the same as those that I have heard. Never once has anyone mentioned a high standard of living, or material possessions. Always they have spoken, as I would speak, of attention

from mom or dad; of family associations, traditions, sacrifices, adventures together; of books read aloud, songs sung, work accomplished; of family prayers and family councils; of small presents lovingly and unselfishly prepared; of homey and wholesome and happy memories. My single question to them has always been, and I ask it today, "What are we giving our own children that they will remember with equal joy and appreciation?"

Tradition of children's song

Since our last conference my wife and I were privileged to visit Samoa and other islands in the far seas. One afternoon in the mountain tops of Upolu, in American Samoa, in the village of Sauniatu, we had a remarkable experience pertinent to this moment. The village was deserted except for a few very young children and one or two who had stayed home with them. The rest were working in the fields or at other tasks. As we walked the single lane of Sauniatu, between the rows of *falés*, from the monument toward the new chapel and school, we heard children singing. There were perhaps half a dozen of them, none more than four years old, and they were singing with the sweetness of childhood a song we instantly recognized, and stood entranced, in tears, to hear: "I Am a Child of God."

In that high mountain fastness, at the end of a long, tortuous road, on an island of the sea, we found tiny dark-skinned children, none of them having seen more of the world than their small village, singing what they had learned through the tradition of their fathers, the greatest truth in existence, save one: I am a child of God.

That other truth? That there is a God who hears the voices of his children.

God bless us so to live and to teach that we may bring about a restoration of the home, the resurrection of parenthood, that the "wicked one" can never take away "light and truth" from our children "because of the tradition of their fathers." In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.