

Bishop Victor L. Brown

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

● In Proverbs we read, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6.) Josh Billings paraphrases this truth: "To bring up a child in the way he should go, travel that way yourself." Travel that way yourself. How many of us are traveling that way ourselves?

Adult activities

I listened to a nationally recognized educator speaking on television. Her subject was marijuana. She said that the use of marijuana was no worse than some other social habits, implying that there was really nothing wrong with young people's smoking marijuana. Recently a national figure holding a responsible position in the government, a position of great influence over what comes into our homes on radio and television, had this to say: "The language I use when I am at a cocktail party is different from that which I use at home, or at church, and I don't see this as being hypocritical." The other day in one of our own communities, some fathers, apparently worked up over some issue, let the air out of the tires of some of the police cars in order to interfere with enforcement of the law, and then the same fathers had great fun telling about it in front of their own sons.

Restricted movies

When criticism is leveled at the type of movies shown on the screens today, the movie producers reply that they only produce what the public will buy. Of 21 movies showing locally recently, I could find only three that indicated no restrictions on those attending because of material that might be offensive or objectionable, and these ratings were by the movie industry itself. A scene in one of those admitting all ages, subject only to parental supervision, brought peals of laughter from the audience when the drunk tore the blouse from a woman in an exhibition

of abject lust. If this is the kind of entertainment we adults enjoy, how in the world can we teach our children morality?

In my teens I was told a dirty story by an active church leader. Although my memory for stories is notoriously poor, that particular one is still with me, and I remember the name of the man who told it. What kind of example are we as adults? Does our character change with circumstances as the chameleon changes its colors? Does the language we use change to fit the environment? Do we go to movies that appeal to our base animal instincts and cause us to grovel in filth with the authors and actors? Do we break the law because that is the thing the crowd wants to do at the moment, or are we strong enough to stand on our own principles, no matter what the social pressure? These are some of the questions we must ask ourselves if we are to train a child up in the way he should go and travel that way ourselves.

Problems with parents

Throughout the Church I hear the comment from stake presidents and bishops, "If we did not have problems with parents, we would not have them with the young people." As a people, we accept today standards of conduct that would have been totally unacceptable yesterday. For example, the filthy, obscene language that is read and heard under the guise of freedom of speech is becoming more and more acceptable in so-called respectable society. Pornography has become a major industry in many parts of the world. The chief psychotherapist at one of Washington's largest hospitals says, "A normal 12- or 13-year-old boy or girl exposed to pornographic literature could develop into a homosexual. You can take healthy boys or girls and by exposing them to abnormalities virtually crystallize and settle their habits for the rest of their lives."

Some are even saying, "What is

wrong with becoming a homosexual?" In one church, a leader recently performed a marriage between two male homosexuals. As a matter of fact, some of the world news media made quite a story of it. And yet who is responsible for this moral decay? The children? Hardly. It is we adults, those of us who permit the sale of filth on our newsstands and also permit the broadcasting of it over airways.

Questionable publications

Sometime ago, while waiting for my wife to finish her shopping, I looked over the magazine rack in a new supermarket. With one or two exceptions, the covers of the magazines and captions of feature articles dealt with sex in one form or another. This was in a family store in a residential neighborhood. How long do you think these publications would last if we, the adults, did not buy them? What is happening to us that we permit our standards to erode to such a degree? It hasn't happened overnight. No, it has happened so gradually and so subtly that most of us have not even been aware that it has happened at all.

Erosion of standards

I agree with David Klein that this moral erosion started when "western man began to lose his belief in God as a personal force, as decider of his fate, as ultimate judge of his actions. The idea that God created man became old fashioned; we evolved. . . . Life began to be seen as more or less accidental; sin became a relative, sociological matter, and to many a pure fiction. . . . He still believed in right and wrong, and he still knew when he was doing wrong. . . . but he no longer believed he had offended God by it or incurred His punishment. . . ."

Quoting further from Mr. Klein:

"The difference between living this way, and trying to live righteously because God commands it is profound.

"What used to be an offense against God became 'anti-social'; a sin became a crime. . . . Stealing was bad because

honesty was the best policy. You tried to avoid being unfaithful to your mate because it might harm your relationship. If you attended religious services, it was to respect a tradition. Virtue became its own inexplicable reward, for there was no other." (David Raphael Klein, "Is There a Substitute for God?" *Reader's Digest*, March 1970, pp. 51-52.)

Instability of philosophies

There is no stability to this kind of philosophy. It changes with the shifting sands of time, place, and circumstance. It is subject to the whims and habits and philosophies of men. No, there is nothing man can hold onto with the assurance that each principle will withstand the erosion of society. Permissiveness has become so acceptable in the society in which we live that many of us are afraid to establish solid, sound guidelines for ourselves as well as for the youth. How important it is that there be rules and standards by which we live and that these standards be based on solid foundations. There must be meaning to standards. As Mr. Klein said, "If a parent must tell a youngster that his life has no meaning, how can he tell him that he should not take drugs?" (*Ibid.*, p. 53.)

Reversing trends

Unless these trends are reversed, nothing but tragedy lies ahead. Great empires have fallen because their people have lost their way. What to do about it? Each adult who touches the life of a young person affects that individual in one way or another. However, the adults who affect the lives of the youth most profoundly for good or ill are parents. If we are to bring up our children in the way they should go and travel that way ourselves, we must turn to the basic, simple, sound, unchanging truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ and make them live in our lives. What we need today are parents who are converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ; who are willing to apply it, believe it, and use it; who pay an honest tithing; who are honest with their

neighbors and debtors; who actually sustain the authorities of the Church; and who teach the gospel to their children in such a way that the children will love the Lord.

Need for exemplary parents

We need parents with courage, who will stand up and speak up for the right, who are actively involved in government of all levels; parents who are modest in dress, speech, and conduct; parents who are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ; parents who teach their children that we do have a Father in heaven, that we are his spirit children, that he has placed us here on earth for a great and glorious purpose, that he loves us, that he has given us commandments along with our

free agency, that we will receive rewards and judgments based on our own actions; parents who accept all of the commandments as having come from God, to be obeyed for that reason if for no other; parents who have no other gods before the Lord, who do not commit adultery, who do not steal, who do not covet their neighbor's wife or husband, who do not bear false witness against their neighbor; parents who love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their mind, and who love their neighbor as themselves.

It is my conviction, and I bear my witness, that this is the only pathway to the salvation of mankind, in this life as well as the life to come, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

Elder Loren C. Dunn

Of the First Council of the Seventy

● You were born on the 23rd of December, 1805, in the town of Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont.

Your father was a farmer, a respectable farmer but of somewhat humble circumstances.

You spent the early years of your life on your father's farm, which was nestled in the rolling, green hills of the state of Vermont. When you were nearly ten years old, your family moved to what is now called Wayne County in upstate New York, where your family again pursued the occupation of farming; and to help supplement the family income, you worked for other farmers in the nearby area.

Great religious revival

Some five years after you moved to New York, there commenced a great religious revival in your area; and great multitudes united themselves to different religious parties as a result of this religious fervor.

At first there was unity between the different sects, but as time went on

they contended against each other in hopes of winning additional converts.

You are in your fifteenth year now, and your father's family, along with all of the families in the area, is proselyted by the religious faiths.

The confusion it creates leads you to say, "Who of all these parties is right?"

While seeking an answer, you come across a passage of scripture in the Bible that says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (Jas. 1:5.)

Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to yours.

The first vision

In compliance with the biblical admonition, you retire to the woods not far from your home on the morning of a beautiful, clear spring day in 1820;