

# Conference Report April 1969

Elder Ezra Taft Benson  
Of the Council of the Twelve

<http://aheavenlybanner.com/index.php?page=documents&did=8>

Thank God for that timely and inspiring message from our beloved leader, President David O. McKay.

My remarks today are directed to the humble followers of Christ. I pray that what I have to say will be of help to them.

One of the grand promises which the Lord made when he restored his Church in these latter days was that the Church should never again be taken from the earth nor given to another people. This is reassuring, for no matter how much individual apostasy we may see occur among Church members, the Church itself shall endure and remain intact. Our task, then, is to see that we personally endure to the end in faithful fellowship with the Church.

The Lord distinguishes between the Church and its members. He said he was well pleased with the restored Church, speaking collectively, but not individually. (D&C 1:30.) During his ministry on earth, the Lord spoke of the gospel net drawing in fish. The good fish, he said, were gathered into vessels, while the bad were cast away.

It is important to realize that while the Church is made up of mortals, no mortal is the Church. Judas, for a period of time, was a member of the Church—in fact, one of its apostles—but the Church was not Judas.

## Disharmony of some members

Sometimes we hear someone refer to a division in the Church. In reality, the Church is not divided. It simply means that there are some who, for the time being at least, are members of the Church but not in harmony with it. These people have a temporary membership and influence in the Church; but unless they repent, they will be missing when the final membership records are recorded.

It is well that our people understand this principle, so they will not be misled by those apostates within the Church who have not yet repented or been cut off. But there is a cleansing coming. The Lord says that his vengeance shall be poured out "upon the inhabitants of the earth. ... And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord; First among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me. ..." (D&C 112:24-26.) I look forward to that cleansing; its need within the Church is becoming increasingly apparent.

The Lord strengthened the faith of the early apostles by pointing out Judas as a traitor, even before this apostle had completed his iniquitous work. So also in our day the Lord has told us of the tares within the wheat that will eventually be hewn down when they are fully ripe. But until they are hewn down, they will be with us, amongst us. The hymn entitled "Though in the Outward Church Below" contains this thought:

"Though in the outward Church below  
Both wheat and tares together grow,  
Ere long will Jesus weed the crop  
And pluck the tares in anger up. ...  
We seem alike when here we meet;  
Strangers may think we are all wheat;  
But to the Lord's all-searching eyes,  
Each heart appears without disguise.  
The tares are spared for various ends,

Some for the sake of praying friends,  
Others the Lord against their will,  
Employs, his counsels to fulfill.  
But though they grow so tall and strong,  
His plan will not require them long;  
In harvest, when he saves his own,  
The tares shall into hell be thrown."  
(Hymns, No. 102.)

## Tares among the wheat

Yes, within the Church today there are tares among the wheat and wolves within the flock. As President Clark stated, "The ravening wolves are amongst us, from our own membership, and they, more than any others, are clothed in sheep's clothing because they wear the habiliments of the priesthood. ... We should be careful of them. ..." (Era, May 1949, p. 268. See also, Conference Report, April 1949, p. 163.)

The wolves amongst our flock are more numerous and devious today than when President Clark made this statement.

President McKay has said that "the Church is little, if at all, injured by persecution and calumnies from ignorant, misinformed or malicious enemies. A greater hindrance to its progress comes from faultfinders, shirkers, commandment-breakers, and apostate cliques within its own ecclesiastical and quorum groups." (Era, Dec. 1967, p. 35. See also, Conference Report, Oct. 1967, p. 9.)

Not only are there apostates within our midst, but there are also apostate doctrines that are sometimes taught in our classes and from our pulpits and that appear in our publications. And these apostate precepts of men cause our people to stumble. As the Book of Mormon, speaking of our day, states: "... they have all gone astray save it a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men." (2 Ne. 28:14.)

## The precepts of men

Let us consider some of the precepts of men that may and do cause some of the humble followers of Christ to err.

Christ taught that we should be in the world but not of it. Yet there are some in our midst who are not so much concerned about taking the gospel into the world as they are about bringing worldliness into the gospel. They want us to be in the world and of it. They want us to be popular with the worldly even though a prophet has said that this is impossible, for all hell would then want to join us.

Through their own reasoning and a few misapplied scriptures, they try to sell us the precepts and philosophies of men. They do not feel the Church is progressive enough—they say that it should embrace the social and socialist gospel of apostate Christendom.

They are bothered that President McKay believes that "the social side of the Restored Gospel is only an incident of it; it is not the end thereof." (Letter of the First Presidency to Dr. Lowry Nelson, July 17, 1947.)

They attack the Church for not being in the forefront of the so-called "civil rights movement." They are embarrassed over some Church doctrine, and as Lehi foretold, the scoffing of the world over this and other matters will cause some of them to be ashamed and they shall fall away. (See 1 Ne. 8:28.)

## Publishing differences with Church

Unauthorized to receive revelation for the Church, but I fear still anxious to redirect the Church in the way they think it should go, some of them have taken to publishing their differences with the

Church, in order to give their heretical views a broader and, they hope, a more respectable platform.

Along this line it would be well for all of us to remember these words of President George Q. Cannon:

"A friend ... wished to know whether we ... considered an honest difference of opinion between a member of the Church and the Authorities of the Church was apostasy. ... We replied that we had not stated that an honest difference of opinion between a member of the Church and the Authorities constituted apostasy, for we could conceive of a man honestly differing in opinion from the Authorities of the Church and yet not be an apostate; but we could not conceive of a man publishing those differences of opinion and seeking by arguments, sophistry and special pleading to enforce them upon the people to produce division and strife and to place the acts and counsels of the Authorities of the Church, if possible, in a wrong light and not be an apostate, for such conduct was apostasy as we understood the term." (Deseret News, November 3, 1869.)

### **Birth control**

The world teaches birth control. Tragically, many of our sisters subscribe to its pills and practices when they could easily provide earthly tabernacles for more of our Father's children. We know that every spirit assigned to this earth will come, whether through us or someone else. There are couples in the Church who think they are getting along just fine with their limited families but who will someday suffer the pains of remorse when they meet the spirits that might have been part of their posterity. The first commandment given to man was to multiply and replenish the earth with children. That commandment has never been altered, modified, or canceled. The Lord did not say to multiply and replenish the earth if it is convenient, or if you are wealthy, or after you have gotten your schooling, or when there is peace on earth, or until you have four children. The Bible says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: "... Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them..." (Ps. 127:3,5.) We believe God's glorified by having numerous children and a program of perfection for them. So also will God glorify that husband and wife who have a large posterity and who have tried to raise them up in righteousness.

### **False reasoning in population limitation**

The precepts of men would have you believe that by limiting the population of the world, we can have peace and plenty. That is the doctrine of the devil. Small numbers do not insure peace; only righteousness does. After all, there were only a handful of men on the earth when Cain interrupted the peace of Adam's household by slaying Abel. On the other hand, the whole city of Enoch was peaceful; and it was taken into heaven because it was made up of righteous people.

And so far as limiting the population in order to provide plenty is concerned, the Lord answered that falsehood in the Doctrine and Covenants when he said:

"For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves." (D&C 104:17.)

A major reason why there is famine in some parts of the world is because evil men have used the vehicle of government to abridge the freedom that men need to produce abundantly.

True to form, many of the people who desire to frustrate God's purposes of giving mortal tabernacles to his spirit children through worldwide birth control are the very same people who

support the kinds of government that perpetuate famine. They advocate an evil to cure the results of the wickedness they support.

### **Subversion of educational system**

The world worships the learning of man. They trust in the arm of flesh. To them, men's reasoning is greater than God's revelations. The precepts of man have gone so far in subverting our educational system that in many cases a higher degree today, in the so-called social sciences, can be tantamount to a major investment in error. Very few men build firmly enough on the rock of revelation to go through this kind of an indoctrination and come out untainted. Unfortunately, of those who succumb, some use their higher degree to get teaching positions even in our Church educational system, where they spread the falsehoods they have been taught. President Joseph F. Smith was right when he said that false educational ideas would be one of the three threats to the Church within. (Gospel Doctrine, pp. 312-13.)

### **Sex education in the schools**

Another threat, and he said it is the most serious of the three, would be sexual impurity. Today we have both of these threats combined in the growing and increasingly amoral program of sex education in the schools. At the last general Relief Society conference of the Church, Elder Harold B. Lee quoted President J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in regard to this matter. Let us listen and learn from the following wise words of this seer, President Clark:

"Many influences (more than ever before in my lifetime) are seeking to break down chastity with its divinely declared sanctity. ...

"In schoolrooms the children are taught what is popularly called 'the facts of life.' Instead of bringing about the alleged purpose of the teaching, that is, strengthening of the morals of youth, this teaching seems to have had directly the opposite effect. The teaching seems merely to have whetted curiosity and augmented appetite. (Relief Society Magazine, December 1952, p. 793.)

"... A mind engrossed in sex is not good for much else. ...

"Already the schools have taught sex facts ad nauseam. All their teachings have but torn away the modesty that once clothed sex; their discussions tend to make, and sometimes seem to make, sex animals of our boys and girls. The teachings do little but arouse curiosity for experience. ...

"A work on chastity can be given in one sentence, two words: Be chaste! That tells everything. You do not need to know all the details of the reproductive process in order to keep clean. ..." (Era, December 1949, p. 803. See also, Conference Report, October 1949, p. 194.)

### **Responsibility of parents**

Our Church News editorials have warned us about sex education in the schools. As the April 1, 1967, editorial stated:

"Sex education belongs in the home. ... Movements to place sex education in nearly all grades of public schools can end only in the same result which came to Sweden."

In answer to inquiries that have been received by the First Presidency about sex education in the schools, they have made the following statement: "We believe that serious hazards are involved in entrusting to the schools the teaching of this vital and important subject to our children. This responsibility cannot wisely be left to society, nor the schools: nor can the responsibility be shifted to the Church. It is the responsibility of parents to see that they fully perform their duty in this respect.

When you make a close study of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (known as SIECUS<sup>1</sup>), which is the major organization pushing sex education in the schools, and read their literature and learn of their amoral leadership, you can better appreciate why the Church is opposed to sex education in the schools, whether it is called family living program or by any other name. I commend the parents who have worked to keep it out of their schools and those who have pushed it out or are attempting to do so. They must love their children.

### **Sensitivity training**

Let us consider another precept of men: One of the tragedies of the Korean War was the fact that the enemy was able to brainwash some of our men. Those methods, highly refined and deviously developed, have been introduced on a broad scale into our own country by some behavioral scientists through a program commonly called sensitivity training. While claiming otherwise, the overall effect of this training has been to break down personal standards, encourage immorality, reduce respect for parents, and make well minds sick.

As in Korea, the heart of the training involves trying to get each member of a group to self-criticize and confess as much as possible to the group. Now any informed holder of the priesthood knows that this is directly contrary to the word of the Lord as contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 42, verses 88-92. Only when a person has sinned against many people is he to make a public confession.

"If any shall offend in secret, he or she shall be rebuked in secret, that he or she may have opportunity to confess in secret to him or her whom he or she has offended, and to God, that the church may not speak reproachfully of him or her." ([D&C 42:92](#).)

As President Brigham Young put it, ... if you have sinned against your God, or against your selves, confess to God, and keep the matter to yourselves, for I do not want to know anything about it." (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 158.)

But some sensitivity training doesn't stop there. They usually want each person to tell the group about all of their innermost feelings, their personal secrets, their fears, their repressed desires. They have even conducted nudity sessions as a means of supposedly breaking down their inhibitions. They want the group to know each other's vulgar thoughts and lustful ideas, their hates, envies, jealousies. But this flies in the face of the counsel of the Prophet, who has said, "All such evils you must overcome by suppression. That is where your control comes in. Suppress that anger! Suppress that jealousy, that envy! They are all injurious to the spirit. ..." (President David O. McKay, Gospel Ideals, p. 356.)

### **Standards attacked**

In these sensitivity sessions one's standards, religion, family, and friends may be subjected to brutal and prolonged attack by the group. And when it's all over, if you've confessed all and had your values and ideals smashed, you may doubt if there is much worth believing or defending, and your loyalties may now have been realigned away from your family and church toward the group—for on them you may now feel very dependent, and you may be more anxious to get their consensus on a position and their approval than to find out what's right and do it.

When General William F. Dean was released from a Korean Communist prison camp, the young Chinese psychologists who had been trying to break him said: "General, don't feel bad about leaving us. You know, we will soon be with you. We are going to capture your country." Asked how, they replied: "We are going to

destroy the moral character of a generation of our young Americans, and when we've finished you will have nothing with which to really defend yourselves against us."

### **Demoralizing influences**

And so the precepts of men are at work on our youth in so many ways. Said President Clark, "... a tremendous amount of the modern art, of the modern literature and music, and the drama that we have today is utterly demoralizing—utterly." (Relief Society Magazine, December 1952, p. 792.)

Have you been listening to the music that many young folks are hearing today? Some of it is nerve-jamming in nature and much of it has been deliberately designed to promote revolution, dope, immorality, and a gap between parent and child. And some of this music has invaded our church cultural halls.

Have you noticed some of our Church dances lately? Have they been praiseworthy, lovely, and of good report? "I doubt," said President McKay, "whether it is possible to dance most of the prevalent fad dances in a manner to meet LDS standards." And what about modesty in dress? When was the last time you saw a high school girl wearing a dress that covered her knees? The courageous address of Elder Spencer W. Kimball a few years ago entitled "A Style of Our Own" is certainly applicable today.

I want to congratulate the Tabernacle Choir for their attire. It was noted that in their broadcast at Constitution Hall during the inaugural festivities, all the ladies seated on the front row had dresses that covered their knees.

Now what kind of magazines come into your home? With perhaps one or two exceptions, I would not have any of the major national slick magazines in my home. As President Clark so well put it, "... take up any national magazine, look at the ads and, if you can stand the filth, read some of the stories—they are, in their expressed and suggestive standards of life, destructive of the very foundations of our society." (Conference Report, April 1951, p. 79.)

### **President Cannon's test**

Now hear this test proposed by President George Q. Cannon: "If the breach is daily widening between ourselves and the world ... we may be assured that our progress is certain, however slow. On the opposite hand, if our feelings and affections, our appetites and desires, are in unison with the world around us and freely fraternize with them ... we should do well to examine ourselves. Individuals in such a condition might possess a nominal position in the Church but would be lacking the life of the work, and, like the foolish virgins who slumbered while the bridegroom tarried, they would be unprepared for his coming. ..." (Millennial Star, Oct. 5, 1861 [Vol. 23], pp. 645-46.)

To repeat again from the Book of Mormon, "... they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men." ([2 Ne. 28:14](#).)

May we cherish God's revelations more than man's reasoning and choose to follow the prophets of the Lord rather than the precepts of men in my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **» References**

1. SIECUS



## The Denial of God the Father and of the Mission of His Son

### The Aspiration for Leadership, Honor, and Gain (Power, fame, gain, lusts of flesh)

#### Disobedience to Priesthood Authority

#### Sexual Transgression

#### Disobedience to Civil Authority

#### Faultfinding

<http://www.believeallthings.com/1291/wolves-in-sheeps-clothing>

Wolves in sheep's clothing was a topic of J. Reuben Clark, Jr.'s conference talk in April 1949. These wolves – or false prophets – in sheep's clothing wear the habiliments of the priesthood, but in fact seek the destruction of the Church. He said:

“Now, our enemies are seeking to attack and are attacking our Church. Time does not permit me to read all the scriptures that I have here, telling of the things that are to come in the last days. But I might call your attention to the fact that the Savior in the Sermon on the Mount said,



“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” ([Matthew 7:15.](#))

To the people on this hemisphere he made the self-same statement. I also call your attention to the words of Paul in his farewell to the elders of Ephesus. He said,

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” ([Acts 20:29-30.](#))

I would like to read what Paul said to Timothy, but time forbids. But I will read what Moroni said to Mormon. I might read just one paragraph of the latter. It is the thirty-second verse in the eighth chapter of Mormon:

“Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins.” ([Mormon 8:32.](#))

The ravening wolves are amongst us, from our own membership, and they, more than any others, are clothed in sheep's clothing, because they wear the habiliments of the priesthood; they are they to whom Brother Widtsoe referred, as **distorting the truth. We should be careful of them,** and I endorse every word that Brother Widtsoe said, as to the obligations of those who instruct the youth. (Clark, J. Reuben, Jr. [Conference Report](#). April 1949. 162-163)

<http://www.ldschurchnews.com/articles/44286/Wolves-in-sheeps-clothin.html>

Then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, Elder [Harold B. Lee](#) said during the April 1962 general conference, "Thousands of new members have built upon the foundation of their faith at the time of their baptism, but there are wolves in sheep's clothing among them. Older members by bad example could 'wound their weak conscience and make their weaker brethren to offend.' " (See 1 Corinthians 8:11-13.)