

## ELDER SYLVESTER Q. CANNON

*Presiding Bishop of the Church*

I am grateful, my brethren and sisters, to have the privilege of partaking with you of the spirit of this session, and of the preceding sessions of this conference. I am happy in the selection of the splendid men who have been called into these positions in the Church. I support them with all my heart, just as I support all of the General Authorities of the Church. Likewise, I sustain and have faith and confidence in the stake and ward authorities and the mission officers and all of the members of the Church. I rejoice in the spirit of faith that has been evidenced in the sessions of the conference. I have been greatly edified, strengthened and encouraged. I rejoice in the progress that the Church is making in every direction.

## INCREASE OF RESPECT FOR THE CHURCH

Recently I had occasion to visit throughout the East, and also in the West; and everywhere I have gone I have found that the Church is growing in respect and recognition among the people who are not of our faith. There are many things that are helping to bring about this condition. I am sure that we have a power in this Church that we scarcely appreciate. That is the power of righteousness, of dependability, of integrity. Through the coordination, cooperation and united effort of the Latter-day Saints, even greater progress and greater recognition can be brought to pass, not only in this nation, but throughout the nations of the world. As people of the world come to understand our actual motives and efforts, they are bound to give greater consideration to our message. For the real purpose of this work is to promote the welfare of mankind here and hereafter—to bring them unto truth and the way of eternal life.

## A BALANCED BUDGET

The Church is progressing financially as well as spiritually. I may say to you that the Church has a balanced budget. The First Presidency, and those associated with them, have made estimates of income and expenditures for the Church as a whole for the year. For the first six months of this year the expenditures have been less than half of the budget set-up. The income of the Church has increased this year, the tithes, as well as the number of tithepayers, showing a material increase, and this in spite of the fact that we have had drouth and other unfavorable conditions. Whether it is an evidence of improvement in financial conditions or not, I am not able to say. But I am grateful that the Latter-day Saints are appreciating in larger measure the divinity of this principle, as well as of other principles of the Gospel, and are endeavoring to live in accordance therewith. May I say to you that the tithes are being expended entirely in accordance with the revelations of the Lord as contained in the 119th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants and with the general Church policy. They are being disbursed with

economy and with care for those purposes that are of great concern, not only to the Latter-day Saints, but to the people of the world, for whom so much is being done because of the responsibility that is upon us to preach the Gospel and promote this message with which we are charged.

#### BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

Among other things, the Church is doing more this year in the way of building improvements in the various wards and in a number of the missions. I believe that more commodious and more convenient buildings are being erected at less cost than has been the case almost ever before. I hope to see the time come, as conditions will permit, when every ward throughout the Church, and every branch in the various missions that warrants such a thing, shall have the conveniences of a suitable meeting house which will provide the facilities necessary to carry out the various activities of the Church, as well as the proper conditions for divine worship.

#### CEASE FAULT FINDING

I was impressed when President Grant read certain parts of a section of the Doctrine and Covenants while referring to President Ivins and his outstanding habits and characteristics. He referred to a statement made in that revelation to the effect that we should cease to find fault with one another. That reminded me of an axiom with regard to fault-finding. "Nothing is easier than fault-finding; no talent, no self-denial, no character, no brains are required to set up in the grumbling business." It is true that all of us have weaknesses, none of us has reached perfection, we are all subject to criticism, and we are all able to improve. If people are fair, if they are honest, and if they have criticisms to make, they will make them to the ones of whom they complain. They will tell them either personally or in writing, with their names signed to that which they write. If they have the courage and the honesty to do that, then the one who is criticized has the opportunity either to admit that their criticisms are right and profit thereby; or prove to them that their criticisms are wrong, in which case it is the critic's business to apologize. That is, I think, the only fair way to criticize. But to go about fault-finding and undermining the character or influence of those who are engaged in constructive activities, is a very unfair and cowardly method.

#### EXAMPLES OF HONESTY

Referring to the tributes that have been paid to the great men who have recently passed away in the Church, I am impressed with the fact that prominently among all the qualities they possessed was their unquestioned honesty and integrity. I think it was Pope who said: "An honest man is the noblest work of God." President Anthony W. Ivins and Elders Charles H. Hart and Franklin S. Richards were men of strict honesty. The statement made by the president of that great

life insurance company to President Grant, when he was selected a member of the Council of the Twelve, that because he recognized him to be fundamentally honest he changed his opinion regarding the other General Authorities of the Church, was impressive. I know of no man who is fundamentally more honest, whose honesty is less questioned, than that of President Heber J. Grant. That has been true of all the leaders of this Church from the beginning. They have set outstanding examples of trustworthiness.

#### IMPORTANCE OF HONESTY

Reference has already been made to the last Article of our Faith, that refers largely to the cardinal virtues, which are just as much a part of the Gospel and a part of our lives, as any principle. "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men," and so forth. This tenet expresses the importance of practicing these fundamental virtues. Honesty lies at the very foundation of our individual and community life, our civilization, our organizations of government, and the membership of the Church. If we live the Gospel we can not be anything but honest; if we are good citizens of this nation we can not properly be anything but honest. If honesty is lacking in the government, then it will gradually disintegrate. If graft, if racketeering, if other dishonest practices prevail, then there is bound to be lack of confidence, and there will develop an increasing attitude of disrespect for law and for those who are called to administer the laws.

#### HONESTY IN GOVERNMENT

We are entitled to expect from every officer of the government that he be honest in his dealings; and when he has the direction of employees of the government, that he shall require honesty and honest service from them; and that in the handling of funds there shall be strict honesty, and great care and accuracy maintained. Honesty is a disposition to conform to justice and honorable dealing, especially in regard to the rights of property. Likewise, it involves a determination to conform to justice and fair dealing in all our relations one with another. We can apply honesty to our actions as well as to our words. That is, of course, truthfulness and straightforwardness.

#### HONESTY AND TRUTHFULNESS IN POLITICS

We are now engaging in a campaign for political purposes. It is important that every one who engages therein shall be careful to be honest and truthful in the statements that he or she shall make, so that we may not indulge in acrimonious discussion and develop antagonism and ill feeling which is contrary to proper principles of political activity and of government. Our statements should be matters of fact and not of assumption. Our political views should be constructive and not destructive. Any candidate who makes wild promises or advocates specious plans impracticable of fulfilment, or who has not previously proven him-

self worthy of trust, should be rejected. Honest, dependable and capable citizens should be sought for positions in government. It is our business as voters to analyze carefully the character of the candidates and their viewpoints on public questions.

#### HONESTY IN OUR LIVES

It is expected of every one of us who are engaged in Church work, whether as members or as officers of the Church, that we shall exemplify in our lives the principle of honesty just as we do every other cardinal virtue, and every other principle of the Gospel. Thereby the Church will grow and thereby the faith and confidence of the people will be increased. I am happy to say that so far as my experience goes, almost without exception, the officers of the Church are thoroughly straightforward and honest in their dealings. While it is true that, in large measure, I think in larger measure than in any other religious organization, men are called upon to handle trust funds in this Church, they are, generally speaking, very careful and strict. I think it is of great importance that we should stimulate in even larger measure this condition among the younger members of the Church who are growing up, that they may also develop that spirit of honesty, fair dealing and justice in their lives.

#### BREAKDOWN OF HONESTY AND FAIR DEALING

There is a trend in the world and throughout this nation in large measure, because of adverse conditions that have developed in the last few years, to break down the spirit of honesty, fairness, justice and truthfulness. There is a tendency to repudiate debts, whether international or local. There is a tendency sometimes to go into avoidable bankruptcy, whether it be in a municipal or in a private capacity. It is important that we, as parents, in our homes, and as officers of the Church, should fulfil the responsibility to teach and inspire in the young people of the Church an appreciation of the worth of honesty; and to inculcate in the lives of every one who has to deal with funds and who has to deal with his fellow men, an appreciation of the spirit of honesty, fair-dealing and justice.

I have been astounded in hearing reports that come from business men of misconduct on the part of young men and possibly older men. There are, unfortunately, all too many instances in business life of young men, supposedly of good character and trustworthy, who have embezzled funds from their employers. In a number of such instances employers have protected the losses and protected their employes from prosecution. But, of course, having been found unworthy of trust, they and their families have to suffer through loss of employment and loss of confidence. Honesty is not only the best policy, it is the only policy that can bring peace and satisfaction to every individual. Concealment of misdeeds may be possible for a time, at least, but sooner or later anyone who fails to practice those virtues of trustworthiness and fair dealing will lose the confidence of his fellowmen and fail in those qualities

that lie at the very foundation of character and progress. Men may succeed, by devious means, in taking property that does not belong to them, but such practices will destroy the moral fiber of their being. Right of property is guaranteed to us under the constitution. It is true we are subject to the government and to its regulations; and it is true also that we must cooperate in sustaining the government, but at the same time the rights of property can not be made null and void without destroying the spirit and appreciation of fairness among mankind.

#### DIVINE INJUNCTIONS

From Mt. Sinai, many centuries ago, came the injunctions which are just as binding for our welfare at present as at that time: "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness," and "Thou shalt not covet." The prophet Micah, at a later period, made the statement:

What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Upon every one of us rests that obligation to endeavor to be fair, just, honest, straightforward and respectful of mutual rights in our association with our fellow men. If we take advantage of others by fraud, we are just as guilty as one who steals. If we are employees, it is our place to give full, true service for the compensation we receive; if we are employers, to deal justly and fairly with our employees; if we have the handling of trust funds or funds belonging to others, that we manage them strictly and carefully, with a full sense of our responsibilities, and not for a moment touch one cent for our own purposes.

#### NEEDS DO NOT JUSTIFY DISHONESTY

It is true that in some instances people are greatly in need. Sometimes there is real suffering. But there are ways and means whereby needed relief can be obtained, without taking that which does not belong to them. The Church is doing, and will do, that which is necessary for the welfare of its members who may be in need. Besides, the government and the other agencies that have the handling of relief funds are prepared to do that which is right, proper and fair, according to actual needs.

#### HONESTY OF INDIVIDUAL AT HEART

Unless there is ingrained in the heart of the individual a real determination to be honest and straightforward, the trials and temptations which he or she will encounter in life will be such as to almost, if not quite, overpower their better motives. Therefore, the importance of thorough home training by the parents by example in their every act and by wise and frequent teaching of their children. At a certain age in childhood the desire to have that which they see is great, and the sense of propriety or ownership is lacking. So the careful training by parents, especially during such period of life, is particularly vital. As Shakespeare very aptly makes one of his characters, Polonius, say to his

son Laertes: "This above all, to thine own self be true, and it shall follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man." In like manner, the officers of the Church can be very helpful in stimulating constantly an appreciation of the necessity of strict honesty in all matters pertaining to Church membership and activity, and to the affairs of life.

#### HONESTY WITH THE LORD.

Just as we should undertake to be true to ourselves and in our relations with our fellow-men, so we should determine to be honest with the Lord. If we have faith in him and in the divinity of this work, we shall endeavor to be true to every principle and seek to practice every virtue which will help us to improve in right living. If we recognize our stewardship here upon the earth, we shall strive to be honest in our donations for the advancement of God's purposes. I believe that any man or woman who is a faithful tithpayer, who lives in accordance with the spirit of that principle, will be honest in his or her dealings with his fellow man. I know it has been said by a banker here—not a member of our Church—that he was willing to trust a faithful tithpayer. I am sure that viewpoint is correct. Rarely, if ever, can you find one who is faithful in the spirit and practice of that principle who would act dishonestly or unfairly, so far as his understanding goes, with regard to other things.

The Apostle Paul says:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

May the Lord help us in this respect, and in all other efforts to serve him, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The congregation sang the hymn, "How firm a foundation," after which Elder Walter K. Barton, President of the Franklin Stake, offered the closing prayer.

Conference adjourned until Sunday morning, October 7, at 10 o'clock.