

First Pres.

An  
Open Letter  
to the  
Saints



Reorganized  
Church of Jesus Christ  
of  
Latter Day Saints

Independence, Missouri  
U. S. A.

*An Open Letter to the Saints*

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## *Wrong and Dangerous Methods of Protest Examined*

Following the action of the General Conference of 1925, which adopted the much discussed "Document on Church Government," there were those who joined in "protest" against the document, particularly that part referring to "supreme directional control." In our recent "Open Letter" we set forth the correct interpretation of that document, as adopted by the recent conference of 1926, which is quite different from the light in which some have represented it to the Saints.

Our purpose now is to consider some of the methods of "protest" employed. First, we feel that a serious mistake was made by those who repudiated the decision of the conference. The appeal had been taken to the General Conference by both sides to the discussion.

### *Validity Conference Action*

In the Open Letter, T. W. Williams and the others signing with him had bound themselves to the decisions of the conference and had declared that no man or quorum should be exempt from its decisions:

General Conference, the enactments of which combine both the inspiration of God and the will of his people, is the highest authority in the church. . . . We accept the Bible, Book of Mormon, and *Doctrine and Covenants*, which contain the constitutional law of the church, and recognize the rights and

powers of the priesthood as therein defined. We declare for government in the church by lawful and orderly processes and hold that General Conference enactments are binding *without exception* upon members, officials, and quorums.—*Saints' Herald*, June 4, 1924, p. 531.

Also the following is interesting in view of subsequent events:

The accumulated intellect of the masses is greater than the heaviest brain that God ever gave to a single individual. . . . The combined wisdom of the entire group is greater than that possessed by any member of the group. . . . There is nothing lost when even a great man condescends to pool his wisdom with the mass.—T. W. Williams, in *Saints' Herald*, July 9, 1925.

### *Common Consent*

“Common consent” has from time immemorial been the rule of the church. “Common consent” may obtain without a vote and by tacit understanding. This is fortunate, because we must work together all the time while we vote together only at intervals.

But frequently the expression of common consent is sought by vote. And the General Conference, as indicated by T. W. Williams and his co-signers, is the highest legislative body through which the people may express their opinion. The majority vote has always been taken as an expression of common consent. Majority rule has ever been the precedent of the church and affords one invaluable safeguard; since the minority must be in honor bound to abide the decision of the vote if they take part in the voting, otherwise we would have constant schisms, minority after minority seceding as from time to time questions of importance are voted on. On that point the late President Joseph Smith taught:

The *common consent* is supposed to be in the expressed *will of the majority* when so obtained. All may not be pres-

ent when the question is up on which common consent is desired, but all having an opportunity to be made acquainted with the subject matter upon which such consent is desired or agreed in the consent of the majority of those present when the expression is taken or had . . . Common consent is not complete consent in the sense that all the church have spoken, for the reason that it is impossible to obtain such complete consent. The right to speak and by a vote consent the many have delegated directly or indirectly to officers and members in the church who represent those not present, their voice and consent, or, with voice and consent, is an expression of the common consent of those whom they represent. Such consent, though the majority *may be of but one in the assembly*, would carry the common consent of the whole . . . That the "majority principle" may sometimes work an injury to the minority is conceded; but that it is so in reality as a rule cannot be held. But if the majority principle at times works an injury to the minority, and for that reason the principle ought not to obtain . . . should the rule of the *minority* be assumed to be right and prevail? For it is equally certain that the minority principle would work an injury to the majority, the *greater* number. What other rule then could be accepted than the principle that the voice of the greater number should prevail, in the absence of the direct expression of the will of the Master? We confess to ignorance of any better method of decision.—*Saints' Herald*, December 25, 1895.

The decision of the conference of 1925 was by a large majority, a total of 919 votes for and 405 against. All "instructed" delegates might have been omitted and the majority would still have been very large, and that after the most prolonged and thorough discussion that we have had on any question, running as it did through the *Herald* nearly one year and through the General Conference for many days.

One has said, "The Saints should think for themselves." That is true. And if ever the church thought and prayed it was preceding the conference of 1925 and the more recent one of 1926. Of what

good is it to think if after the people have thought long and deliberately and then spoken, their decision is to be flouted?

Those who voted with the minority but later acquiesced in the decision of the conference followed the rule of the church and are entitled to respect and consideration. Nothing said in this letter reflects upon such.

### *Separation a Grave Error*

In all kindness we feel that those who separated, refused to meet longer with their brethren in the regular meeting places of the Saints, and subsequently effected separate church organization under the name "Church of Jesus Christ," made a serious mistake. A precedent is thus set to every minority to thus secede and from the outside seek to enforce its will upon the majority; and failing that to organize another church.

And remember, it was but a *part* of the *minority* which did this. Indeed but a *minority* of the *minority* thus seeking by these means to correct that which they considered wrong. The way to redress wrongs or imagined wrongs is within the church through the regular agencies of the church. The Lord has specifically warned us on that point and has said: "Let nothing separate you from each other."—Doctrine and Covenants 122: 17.

### *Wrong Methods of Protest*

Even more mistaken than this separation for purposes of protest have been some of the methods by which a few have sought to influence the church, or,

if the expression be not too harsh, to enforce their will upon the body.

Through the *Torch of Truth* it was openly announced that a part of the program of protest should be to induce the Saints to withhold tithes and offerings in order that a "collapse" might result; to withdraw support both "morally" and "financially." (*Torch of Truth*, Vol. 1, No. 2.)

It may be argued that they aimed at a "collapse of the administration" and not of the church. But the results would be much the same. The church was to be broken financially, bankrupted, in order to get at the President of the church. Brethren, does this appeal to you as being the order of God and of the church? Every missionary's family would pay the price, including numbers of those who were in the minority in 1925 who yet feel to preach the gospel and support the church.

The *Messenger* has repeatedly approved the work of the *Torch of Truth*. And the pamphlet, "The 'New' Social Program of the Church," by T. W. Williams was written and published with the express purpose to send it to all the leading tithe payers of the church that it might have the effect of "crippling" the finances of the church. To that end copies were systematically sent to the chief tithe payers of the church, the pamphlet itself being a serious misstatement of the teachings and philosophy of the church. The church has no "new" social program; it is the old social program outlined by revelation to Joseph Smith nearly one hundred years ago, and before him to Enoch and his band, and to the saints following Pentecost, and to the Book of Mormon church.

Alleged financial reports and statements regarding the supposed financial condition of the church have been published in the *Messenger* and even in secular newspapers, apparently intended to undermine the financial as well as the moral credit and prestige of the church and thus promote the sought-for "collapse."

We feel it to be a serious mistake to thus seek to ruin, impoverish, "cripple," bankrupt the church and pull it down in "collapse" in order to promote the purposes of a protesting minority. Fortunately the methods mentioned have not succeeded.

### *A Better Way*

We appeal to those who have been so misled to take second and sober and better thought and abandon such methods. We appeal to those who have sustained the church financially in the past to see to it that such methods do not succeed.

Let us seek to build the church up. And when we meet in conference from time to time, let us oppose that which we feel to be wrong and defend that which we feel to be right. But when the church has spoken let us, as of old, pay honor to the principle of "common consent" and recognize that safety is found in majority rather than in the rule of a minority of the minority.

### *A Very Good Year*

The tithe payers of the church during the past year have given a rather definite answer to the proposal to wreck the church financially. The fiscal year just ended, June 30, shows a considerable balance of receipts over expenses. And this in the face



of the fact that nearly every year since 1920 there has been a deficit amounting some years to one hundred thousand dollars.

The total income thus far for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1926, consisting of tithes, offerings, Christmas offering, surplus, and bequests, etc., totals over \$576,000. This does not include \$190,000 cash received on the Graceland Endowment-Stewardship and other funds, which sum was not included in our foregoing statement that the total receipts for the year exceed total expenses. The total receipts for the year including endowment funds amount to approximately \$775,000, or over three quarters of a million dollars. The year is a decided improvement over the preceding year and particularly so since the recent General Conference. June tithing receipts have been in sums ranging from fifteen cents to fifty thousand dollars.

Naturally, at first glance, the fifty thousand dollar check attracts most attention. But if fifteen cents is all that one owes the Lord, he has done his duty when he has paid it and has full recognition in that regard. Many small sums help to swell the total needed to carry on the work.

See page 10 for summary of advance financial report for the twelve months church year, ending June 30, 1926.

It is gratifying to note the sums sent in by children who file their inventories and pay their tithing. Some ask us, Why teach children, who have little or nothing to pay, to file their inventories? It should be done for the same reason that we teach them the other gospel principles and laws. Early habits per-

sist. We are planting for the future. It is helpful to the children and to the church that they should learn the full law of the Lord while young.

*Let Us Press Forward*

We feel hopeful concerning the work of the church. More than ever before we feel a keen desire to help in the redemption of Zion. In public and in private we endeavor to conform our lives to the principles of righteousness and honor. With all the faithful we pray for and hope for and work for the redemption of Zion.

Yours in gospel bonds,

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY.

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI, July 20, 1926.

*Summary of Advance Financial Report for the  
Twelve Months Church Year Ending  
June 30, 1926*

Tithes, offerings, bequests, etc., for general purposes, \$576,000, compared to \$497,000 for previous year—an increase of \$79,000.

Operating expenses are approximately \$15,000 lower than for previous year.

The saving in expenses added to increase of offerings results in a surplus income of between \$90,000 and \$100,000.

Graceland Endowment Fund and other funds received by the Bishopric amount to over \$190,000, making total actual offerings and contributions through the office of the Presiding Bishopric approximately \$775,000.

Other financial activities not reflected in Bishopric's books at all but estimated per Schedule "A-1" of my advance report, bring actual total offerings by members in support of the church work to at least one million dollars, or in round figures ten dollars per enrolled member.

Liquid assets (cash and bonds) in the hands of the Bishopric amount to \$165,000, or about \$50,000 more than a year ago.

A substantial increase of net worth is shown—about \$160,000. This is made up of the operating surplus of some \$90,000, and the expenditure of \$70,000 on Auditorium and site which automatically transfers from "Reserve" to "Net Worth," when expended for the purpose contributed or "reserved" for.

AUDITOR.

July 15, 1926.



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