

GENERAL CONFERENCE

OF

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

FIRST DAY.

The Seventy-eighth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, at 10 a. m. on Saturday, April 4th, 1908, President Joseph F. Smith presiding.

AUTHORITIES PRESENT.

There were present of the First Presidency, Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund; of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Francis M. Lyman, John Henry Smith, Heber J. Grant, Rudger Clawson, Hyrum M. Smith, George Albert Smith, George F. Richards, Orson F. Whitney, David O. McKay and Anthony W. Ivins; Presiding Patriarch, John Smith; of the First Council of Seventies, Seymour B. Young, Brigham H. Roberts, J. Golden Kimball, Rulon S. Wells, Joseph W. McMurrin and Charles H. Hart; of the Presiding Bishopric, Charles W. Nibley, Orrin P. Miller, and David A. Smith; Assistant Historians, A. Milton Musser and Andrew Jenson. There were also a large number of Presidents of Stakes and Missions, with

their Counselors, Bishops of Wards, Patriarchs, and numerous other prominent men and women representing various organizations of the Church.

President Joseph F. Smith called the assembly to order, and the services were commenced by the choir and congregation singing the hymn:

Now let us rejoice in the day of salvation;
No longer as strangers on earth need we roam,
Good tidings are sounding to us and each nation,
And shortly the hour of redemption will come.

The opening prayer was offered by Elder Joseph E. Taylor.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn commencing:

"Guide us, O Thou great Jehovah,
Lead us to the promised land,
We are weak, but Thou art able—
Hold us with Thy powerful hand."

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

OPENING ADDRESS.

God's protecting care, mercy, and blessings manifested.—Efforts of opponents

over-ruled for good.—The Saints' business is salvation of the living and redemption of the dead.—Practical efforts in cause of Temperance.—Important educational movement among Priesthood.—Boys should be actively employed in their callings.—Contention a characteristic of apostates.—Interesting statistics.—Testimony of divinity of the Prophet Joseph Smith's mission.

I esteem it a pleasant duty to attempt to make a few remarks at the opening of this our 78th Annual Conference. I am delighted with the vast number of brethren and sisters who are in attendance this morning. I am glad to look into your faces, to see you, and to realize, as I am made to do this morning by your presence, the interest that you feel in the cause of Zion, and in the work of the Lord in which we are engaged. It is also evidence of the interest you feel in the matters that may be presented to the conference for your approval; we desire and hope that we will be able to present only such matters to you, for your action and acceptance, as will be pleasing to you and acceptable to the Lord.

I believe that we have every reason to feel grateful to our Heavenly Father, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, for His merciful providences and wonderful kindness that have been extended to His people during the past year, since the last general annual session of the Church in conference in this place. The hand of the Lord is over His people, and His eye is upon His work—never was it more so than is visible at the present time. It is true that we owe to Him our deliverance from our enemies, from those who have sought our hurt and who are still seeking our hurt. We acknowledge the hand of Him who over-

rules all things, for we do not claim to possess the wisdom, the knowledge, or the power, in and of ourselves, to accomplish that which has been accomplished, or to effect the deliverance that has been wrought out for the people of God since the incipency of this work. We realize that it has been by the favor, and mercy, and protecting care of Almighty God that His people and the work of redemption, established in the latter days through the Prophet Joseph Smith, have been preserved and brought to their present standing, power, and influence in the midst of the earth. We thank God for His mercies and blessings; and I do not know but what we owe in some small degree gratitude to those who have bitterly opposed the work of the Lord; for in all their opposings and bitter strife against our people the Lord has developed His power and wisdom, and has brought His people more fully into the knowledge and favor of the intelligent people of the earth. Through the very means used by those who have opposed the work of God, He has brought out good for Zion. Yet, it is written, and I believe it is true, that although it must needs be that offenses come, woe unto them by whom they come; but they are in the hands of the Lord as we are. We bring no railing accusation against them. We are willing to leave them in the hands of the Almighty to deal with them as seemeth Him good. Our business is to work righteousness in the earth, to seek for the development of a knowledge of God's will and of God's ways, and of His great and glorious truths which He has revealed through the instrumentality of Joseph the Prophet, not only for the salvation of the living but

for the redemption and salvation of the dead.

I rejoice as much today—and more, if I am capable of rejoicing more, in the work of the Lord than I ever did before. I feel today as confident and as sure in the continued providences of the Lord, in His continued mercy toward His people, and in the glorious fact that it is His work, that He is directing it and will continue to do so, as I ever felt in my life. Indeed there is not the shadow of a doubt in my mind in regard to these things. I feel confident of the truth of God's work, of the mission of the Prophet Joseph, of the truth and divinity of the precious ordinances of the Gospel that have been restored to man in the latter-day, and I believe that this Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. I feel sure of it. I am convinced of the truth of these things in every fiber of my being.

I feel that it is a great privilege for us to be permitted to come together from time to time in the capacity in which we have met this morning. Here, during our conference, the elders of the Church will have opportunity to bear their testimony of the truth, to exhort and to admonish, to advise and counsel and instruct the people, as the Spirit of the Lord may move upon them and give them utterance. Here we have the opportunity of mingling together, of renewing acquaintances, and of partaking of the spirit of the work of the Lord which pervades assemblies of this kind. I rejoice to see you here and welcome you today. I pray that God's blessings may be extended to every soul present this morning, that life, and health, and peace may be our portion. I pray that the protecting care of the Lord may be upon you, individually and col-

lectively, and upon all that you possess, all that the Lord has given unto you. I trust that we may have a time of rejoicing, and that at the conclusion of our conference we may return to our homes having renewed strength and determination in our souls to continue on and on in faithfulness to the covenants that we have made with the Father of Lights, with Whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Let us strive to keep sacred the covenants we have made with Him in the waters of baptism, and in the ordinances of the Gospel, wherein we have promised to be His children in very deed.

It may be proper for me to say that since our last semi-annual conference, quite a number of our beloved brethren and sisters have been called from this sphere of action. Some of them were prominent in the ministry, and all have been beloved and honored for their integrity to the cause of Zion. They have gone to meet their Father, and to render that account of their ministry in the world, as described by Alma the Prophet, by which they shall receive that judgment which will assign them to the paradise of God, where they shall await their resurrection from the dead. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," and we feel in our hearts to exclaim, like him of old, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

I will say to my brethren and sisters who are present that I believe, in all candor and in truth, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, now organized in the midst of these eternal hills, was never in a better condition, spiritual or temporal, than today. The people never were more united than they are now. They never observed the laws of God more faithfully,

or more truly and honestly than they are doing today, not only upon general principles, or in a general way, but specifically they are becoming more careful in their observance of the words that the Lord has spoken for their good. I believe that we are coming nearer to the point where we shall be able to observe that great and glorious law of temperance which the Lord Almighty has given unto us, wherein He has said that strong drink is not good, that tobacco is not for the habitual use of man, not for the stomach, but for sick cattle. We are coming to the conclusion that the Lord knew best, when He delivered to the Church, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, that "Word of Wisdom," contained in the book of revelations from the Lord. Although we see a few, professing to be Latter-day Saints, who are still slaves to the debased appetite for tobacco, and perhaps some with an appetite for strong drink, yet the great majority of the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are coming nearer and nearer to a proper observance of the law which the Lord has given to us for our health, for the preservation of our lives; that we may be in harmony with His Spirit and His will, that we may be clean and undefiled, that we may be nearer like unto Him Who was without sin, Who was indeed pure and holy as God is pure and holy. When I see a man professing to be a Latter-day Saint, or even professing to be a member of the Church, though not making any great professions of being a Latter-day Saint, befouling his breath with intoxicating drink, with the fumes of tobacco, or unnecessarily indulging in stimulants, it grieves my spirit, my soul goes out for him in pity and

in sorrowful regret, and I wonder why it is that we, individually, cannot realize our own folly, our own degradation in yielding to these pernicious habits that are neither useful or ornamental, nor in the least degree beneficial, but indeed are harmful. Why cannot we rise to that degree of intelligence that would enable us to say to the tempter, "Get behind me," and to turn our backs upon the practice of evil. How humiliating it must be to a thoughtful man to feel that he is a slave to his appetites, or to an over-weening and pernicious habit, desire, or passion. We believe in strict temperance. We believe in abstinence from all injurious practices and from the use of all hurtful things. Poison, in the judgment of the physician, may be beneficial, under some conditions in life, as a momentary relief; but poison, under any circumstance, should only be used as a temporary expedient, necessary, perhaps, in our best judgment, for the time being, for the instant—for sudden and certain desired relief,—but the continued use of that poison will fasten its fangs upon us, so to speak, in such a way that by and by we will find that we are over-powered by it, and we become slaves of the pernicious habit that becomes a tyrannical master over us.

There is a general movement throughout the land looking towards local option and temperance among the people of our state, and of the adjoining states. I sincerely hope that every Latter-day Saint will co-operate with this movement, in order that we may curtail the monstrous evils which exist, especially in our cities. I wish to say that I am in sympathy with this movement, and I know that my brethren are united with me and in

harmony with the efforts that are being made to establish temperance throughout the land. We want nothing drastic, nothing that would be illiberal or oppressive, but we do think that the people ought to have their choice as to whether they will permit or have in their midst drunkenness, rioting, and murder—which is too often the result of drunkenness,—or whether they will insist on abstinence from these things, that the people might have peace insured among them, and that their children might not be subjected to the temptations into which they are thrown because of the presence of these evils.

Several very important movements have been inaugurated of late among us for the advantage of the Saints, and especially for the benefit and advancement of those who are associated with the various quorums of the Priesthood. I desire to mention the effort that is being made by our Seventies in their organization of classes and schools for the instruction of the members of their quorums, that they might be qualified for the great work of the ministry to which they are dedicated. Efforts are also being made to organize and put to usefulness the quorums of the Lesser Priesthood. In my judgment, we are progressing rapidly in these directions. It is also understood that those of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the presidents of High Priests quorums, and the High Priests throughout the Church are instituting methods by which those who are members of these quorums may learn their duty and become familiar with the laws of the Church, which should govern their actions, that they may be, indeed, fathers among the people, exercising the functions that belong to their calling as High

Priests in Zion or in the Church. They should be exemplars; they should be teachers. They should understand, above all other men, the principles of government and the order of the Church. They should move forward solidly in the exercise of their influence, individually and collectively, against all evil, against the spirit of indifference, the spirit of neglect and unbelief. Every man who holds the office of High Priest in the Church or has been ordained a High Priest, whether he is called to active position in the Church or not—inasmuch as he has been ordained a High Priest, should feel that he is obliged,—that it is his bounden duty to set an example before the old and young worthy of emulation, and to place himself in a position to be a teacher of righteousness, not only by precept but more particularly by example—giving to the younger ones the benefit of experience of age, and thus becoming individually a power in the midst of the communities in which they dwell. Every man who has light should let that light shine that those who see it may glorify their Father which is in Heaven, and honor him who possesses the light and who causes it to shine forth for the benefit of others. In a local capacity, there is no body of Priesthood in the Church who should excel, or who are expected to excel, those who are called to bear the office of High Priest in the Church. From among those who hold this office are chosen the presidents of stakes and their counselors, and the High Councils of the fifty-six stakes of Zion which are now organized; and from this office are chosen the bishops, and the bishops' counselors, in every ward in Zion; and heretofore, of this office are those who have been called

to take charge of our stake Mutual Improvement organizations. Those holding this office are, as a rule, men of advanced years, and varied experience, men who have filled missions abroad, who have preached the Gospel to the nations of the earth, and who have had experience not only abroad but at home. Their experience and wisdom is the ripened fruit of years of labor in the Church, and they should exercise that wisdom for the benefit of all with whom they are associated.

The Seventies are laboring for the purpose of qualifying themselves for the work of the ministry abroad among the nations of the earth, which is their legitimate calling. I commend the efforts of our brethren of the Seven Presidents of Seventies in their endeavor to bring about the good results they have in view in this direction.

The Elders' quorums should also be looked after, and those who preside in them should be active in season and out of season. They should be vigilant and faithful in looking after those intrusted to their care, and are subject to their direction and counsel.

The Bishops and the Lesser Priesthood should be very active and energetic. We should look after our boys who have been ordained Deacons, Teachers, and Priests in the Church. We should find something for them to do in their callings. Let them be appointed to active labors in their several spheres. Put forward those who have not had experience to accompany those who have, and give them something to do. Let the Deacons not only assist to keep the meeting houses in repair and their grounds in proper condition, but let them be set to work to look after the welfare of the widows and fatherless,

the aged and the poor. Many of our young men who are idle, languishing for the want of something to do, could be made most useful in helping the poor to clean up about their homes and make them comfortable, and helping them to live in such a way that life would be pleasant to them. There is no reason why the members of the Lesser Priesthood should not be engaged in missions and labors of this kind. Instead of calling upon the Trustee-in-trust for the tithing to pay for planting trees to ornament the grounds of the meeting houses, or to paint the woodwork, or to renovate and cleanse the houses of worship, to make them suitable for the worship of God,—call the Lesser Priesthood to the work. Give them something to do that will make them interested in the work of the Lord, and above all things direct their energies in such a way that they will be helpful to the needy, helpful to the poor, helpful to themselves and to the Church. It will benefit them not only as regards their standing in the Church, and their faith in the Priesthood which they bear, but it will help them to become better boys at home. They will be more dutiful to their parents, more respectful to their brothers and sisters and others. They will become more mindful of their duties at home and abroad. This is in the line of discipline, of instruction and of gaining practical experience. Instead of leaving these young people, who are full of energy, to roam the streets, to congregate upon the corners, or to idle away their time in folly, and in contracting, perhaps foolish habits and practices, give them something to do that will be uplifting, something that will be enlarging to their souls, and that

will be an instruction to them that they will remember all their days.

I want to say also, that so far as I know, and I think that we have the opportunity of knowing pretty well,—the condition of our auxiliary organizations is satisfactory. As a general thing they are in good condition. We may lack in some things, but as a whole our auxiliary organizations are active and energetic and are working constantly for individual and general good. I believe that there is a feeling of harmony existing between all these associations, one with another. There is no strife existing among them. There is no contention. Indeed the spirit of contention is a thing not known among the Latter-day Saints. You find the spirit of contention only among apostates and those who have denied the faith, those who have turned away from the truth and have become enemies to God and His work. There you will find the spirit of contention, the spirit of strife. There you will find them wanting to “argue the question,” and to dispute with you all the time. Their food, their meat, and their drink is contention which is abominable in the sight of the Lord. We do not contend. We are not contentious, for if we were we would grieve the Spirit of the Lord from us. Just as apostates do and have always done.

Perhaps I should not have occupied so much time. I have been suffering a little of late, like a great many others, with a cold, and I find that my talking is affecting my voice somewhat, but I have some data here that I thought I would mention in a general way.

One item is the number of missionaries laboring in the world,—that is Elders sent out from Zion into the mission field: On the 31st

of last December we had 1810 missionaries from Zion out in the various mission fields in the world. There were also forty-four sisters who have accompanied their husbands upon these missions. Besides these there are a number of local Elders working in the ministry.

We sent out, during the year 1907, into the various missionary fields 927 Elders, who will spend from two to four years on their missions.

There have returned from the various mission fields, during the year 1907, 707 Elders.

In this connection I wish to mention the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, through their Trustee-in-Trust, have paid the returning fares of all these Elders. They go out into the world at their own expense. They maintain themselves in their missions, at their own expense or by the assistance of their parents or kindred at home, and the little assistance that they may receive from time to time from the people among whom they labor.

I have another list, which is too long to be given here today, showing the number of Elders in the mission field from each stake of Zion. We can tell you, in a moment, just how many Elders each stake has in the mission field; but I feel that to continue longer would be to trespass upon your time.

I pray God to bless you. I feel joyous and happy in the ministry, in the work of the Lord.

We will hear, during the conference, reports from other quarters. A very careful and exhaustive auditation of the accounts and books, the receipts and expenditures of the tithing, for the last

year, has been made by the Auditing Committee of the Church.

It just comes to my mind that Elder Charles W. Nibley, having been called to the Presiding Bishopric, has been released from the Auditing Committee, and Brother Henry H. Rolapp, of Ogden, has been appointed to act in his stead. I would like to submit the name of Brother Henry H. Rolapp before this meeting for your approval and acceptance to act upon this committee. (Vote unanimous).

The general authorities of the Church will be presented possibly tomorrow, and if not then, the next day. We desire the brethren and sisters who come to the conference to come with their hearts full of the spirit of wisdom and of truth, and if you discern in us any lack of wisdom, or of judgment, any failure in the performance of our duty, we desire that those who have superior experience and knowledge, and greater intelligence, will do us the honor and favor of coming to us individually and letting us know wherein we come short. We will give a thousand errors, if we can find them or if they exist in us,—any moment for one truth; and we will swap off a hundred mistakes, aye thousands of mistakes if they can be found, for one accurate, consistent, and proper action. We are seeking for the truth. We love the truth, and we know when we learn the truth that it is the truth. We believe in the divine mission of Christ and in His great plan of redemption for the living and the dead. We believe in the divine mission of Joseph Smith the Prophet. We believe in every word that he spoke by the inspiration of Almighty God, and not one word that he ever uttered or gave as a revelation from God will fall to the

ground as error, but it will stand upon its own merit as truth, God's truth, eternal truth,—“While life and thought and being last or immortality endures.” This is our testimony to the divinity of the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and to the divine revelations that the Lord made, through him, to the world. God help us to receive the truth and abide by it, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The choir sang the anthem, “From afar, Gracious Lord, Thou hast gathered Thy flock.”

PRESIDENT JOHN R. WINDER.

President Smith's sentiments endorsed. —Greatly increased interest in Temple work.—Never has been a brighter day for the Saints.

In consequence of a very sudden cold I have taken upon my lungs, I do not know that I can make this large congregation hear, but I desire to say to you that I endorse every word and sentiment that has been spoken in our hearing, this morning, by our President. I repeat that I am in strict harmony with him in every sentiment he has expressed. I am thankful for the opportunity of saying this much, and acknowledging my gratitude to the Lord that He has been so good to me, and spared my life to see another conference, and to again meet with you, my brethren and sisters.

Every day of my life I see new evidences of the truth of the everlasting Gospel, and of the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith. There was one thing the President referred to incidentally that I would like to mention, and that is in re-