

**PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.**

Joy derived laboring in cause of Truth—Enemies arrayed against Church on false premises—Temporal and spiritual condition of Church members highly satisfactory—Each faithful Saint entitled to personal revelation—Charge of “Commercialism” repudiated—Tithing disbursement supervised by eighteen honest men—Consistency in prayer—Development throughout eternity.

I feel very grateful for the privilege I enjoy of meeting with you here at the opening session of this, the eighty-second anniversary of the annual Conference of the Church. I esteem it a great privilege to be permitted to live and be associated with my brethren and sisters in the great cause in which we are engaged. Personally, I have nothing but this cause to live for, for the rest of my life. It has been very much, almost entirely the object of life with me, ever since my childhood: and I am very thankful that I have had the privilege of being connected with the missionary work of the Church, and I hope and trust that I may be able to continue in this ministry the remainder of my days. I feel in my heart that there is nothing greater for me, or for any other man living, than to be identified with the cause of truth, and I verily believe that we are engaged in the cause of truth, and not error.

It is a source of gratitude also, and pleasure, to Latter-day Saints, to know that their enemies are not and have not been opposed, openly and avowedly, to the principles which we have espoused. As a rule, the opposition arrayed against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been arrayed against us from false premises, and

instead of our religion and the principles of the Gospel, which we have embraced, being attacked by our enemies, as a general thing, they have been attacking those things which they have falsely laid to our charge and of which we are not guilty. Our enemies would not appear to be very consistent to oppose the principle of revelation from God to man. They would not appear very consistent to oppose the Latter-day Saints for believing in the fact that the Lord Almighty is quite as capable of revealing Himself to the children of men in this dispensation as He ever was; and, therefore, when our enemies oppose us, or our faith in these principles, it is on the false premises that we only profess to but do not believe in them. They cannot, surely, array themselves against the principle of faith in God and in His ability to reveal Himself in our age of the world as He has ever been able to reveal Himself to the children of men; but they claim that we pretend to believe in these things when there is no such thing. Well, they are responsible for saying there isn't any such thing as revelation now; we are not responsible for that. On the contrary, we are responsible for declaring to the world that God has revealed Himself to man in this dispensation; and that He has done so to be consistent with Himself and with His eternal purposes, that He might make Himself known to His children in this age as well as in any other age of the world. And so we might go seriatim, throughout every doctrine and principle of the Church which has excited opposition in the world, and we will find that it is not always the truth that they are fighting, but it is

their construction of our views from their points of view. They charge us with errors of which we are not guilty. They charge us with acts that we have never performed, and with conduct that is entirely at variance and inconsistent with our lives and history. They have framed, in their minds, acts and beliefs and practices that the Church of Christ, never in any sense, has been guilty of or connected with; and yet they charge us with doing these things. To be more plain in the matter, to illustrate what I desire to convey to you: They charge us with being corrupt, with having practiced corrupt principles. They charge us with having been seclusive and opposed to the world, opposed to our national government, opposed to good, true, and wholesome laws, and to works of righteousness. Really, they charge us with being murderers, adulterers, and all manner of evil-doers. Much the same as was charged against the Son of God and the ancient Saints. They distort what we do believe into something that is entirely contrary to our belief, and then proceed to array themselves against us.

Now, let me say to you, if our enemies desire to oppose the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because we believe, with all our souls, in the divinity of Christ and the precepts and principles which He taught; if they are opposed to us because we believe that these principles have been restored again to the earth in this dispensation, and we have espoused them and are trying to live them the best we can, we have no fault to find with them. Let them find fault with our faith

as much as they will. We shall not complain of them, although we would regret exceedingly that they do not comprehend the truth as we comprehend it. I cannot find fault with my enemy for charging me with earnest and honest belief in the divinity of the mission of Jesus Christ. I cannot find fault with Him for charging me with believing in the divine mission of Joseph Smith. I cannot find fault with him for charging me with having faith in God, in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, and for believing in repentance of sin and departing from it, and in the principle of baptism by immersion, for the remission of sins, and in the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. If they will charge me with these things, I shall not complain of them; but if they should charge me with falsely believing in them, or merely pretending to believe in them, they would be placing me in a false light, and would be charging me with that which is not true. It is in this light that I have spoken of this matter as I have. The world do not oppose us for what we do, but they oppose us for what they charge us with doing, which we do not do.

Our mission has been to save men. We have been laboring all these eighty odd years, of the Church to bring men to a knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to bring them to repentance, to obedience to the requirements of God's law. We have been striving to save men from error, to persuade them to turn away from evil and to learn to do good. Now, if our enemies will only charge us with doing this, all right; and if they wish to oppose us for doing this,

that is their business; but when they charge us with doing that which we have not done, believing that which we do not believe, practicing that which we have never practiced, then I pity them. I pity them because they are doing it in ignorance, or because they are wilfully disposed to misrepresent the truth.

I desire to say that, in my judgment, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was never in a better condition spiritually or temporally than it is today. I believe that our priesthood quorums are in as good condition today as they ever were in the Church. I think, if possible, they are more effectually and efficiently organized, and in better working condition than ever they were before. I believe that the faith of the Latter-day Saints in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the divinity of the mission of Joseph Smith, is as good and as great today as it ever was, if it is not better. I believe that there is as much union and fellowship in the Church as ever did exist in it. I don't intend or mean to say that we have not, occasionally, discontented people, fault-finders. I presume that we will always have a few of them; but I do not believe that there were ever fewer of them proportionately than there are now. I do not believe that ever before, the Latter-day Saints generally understood the principles of their religion better than they understand them today. I do not believe that they were ever firmer in the faith, and I believe with all my soul that the Church is growing today quite as fast as in any period of its existence. I am quite satisfied in my own

mind that the presiding authorities of the Church were never more united than they are and never stood firmer together than they do now. I believe that the presidents of the stakes of Zion, at any other period of the Church's history, were never more faithful or more diligent in the performance of their duties than they now are. This is my judgment, from my point of view; and I think that, from my point of view, we are as capable of judging of these conditions as any men can be. We have no reason to complain, no reason to be in doubt.

Let me say, too, that I believe that the spirituality of the people of God, the people of this Church, is as great as it ever was. It has been charged, by public speakers abroad, and by men who we might suppose occupied positions in the community enabling them to know better, that the "Mormon" Church is losing its spirituality, that the spiritual things of the Church are waning among them. This is as false as can be. Let me say for their instruction, if such individuals will receive instruction from me, that there is not a man, or woman, or child, who is in fellowship or in good standing in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that has not received, by the laying on of hands, of those who have power and authority to confer blessings from the Lord to the children of men, the gift of the Holy Ghost—every man, every woman, and every child that has been baptized into the Church. Where will you go, outside of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to find a church or a religious community, no matter what its name or charac-

ter may be, that has received an equal advantage with this? where will you go to find a people, in the world, on whom has been conferred the gift of the Holy Spirit, by the laying on of hands? So far, then, from the truth is this statement that the Church is losing its spirituality, it is receiving additional gifts of the Spirit of God in every member of the Church added to it. And the spirit of inspiration, the gift of revelation does not belong to one man solely; it is not a gift that pertains to the Presidency of the Church and the Twelve Apostles alone. It is not confined to the presiding authorities of the Church, it belongs to every individual member of the Church; and it is the right and privilege of every man, every woman, and every child who has reached the years of accountability, to enjoy the spirit of revelation, and to be possessed of the spirit of inspiration in the discharge of their duties as members of the Church. It is the privilege of every individual member of the Church to have revelation for his own guidance, for the direction of his life and conduct; and therefore I aver—and I believe I may do so without any reasonable chance for it being gainsaid or opposed—that there is not another church in the world, or an organization of religious people, who are so universally spiritual in their lives, and who are so universally entitled to the gifts of the Spirit of God as are the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. You are all entitled to revelation. It is your privilege to have it revealed to you whether I am a servant of God or a servant of men; whether I am in the discharge of my duty, or not; whether I, as a presiding

officer in the Church, am acting in the discharge of my duty acceptably to you and the Lord. It is your privilege to have revelation in regard to this, and to know the truth yourselves. And it is my privilege to have revelation from God, as an individual, for my own temporal guidance, as well as for my spiritual guidance; and I repeat again that there never was a time in the earth, since the Church was organized, when the spirituality of the people of God was greater than it is today.

The Church is charged with commercialism. There is not the least semblance of it, in truth. The Church is neither buying nor selling goods or chattels. It is not engaged in merchandising of any description, and never has been; and there could not well be a more false and groundless statement made against the Church than to charge it with commercialism. It is true that, unlike other churches or religious organizations, the people of this Church observe the law of tithing, which is the law of revenue of the Church. We do not pass around the hat to you, or the collection box, for means to defray the expenses incident to the carrying on of the work of the Church. You give it voluntarily. This reminds me of another falsehood that is spread abroad by our enemies, namely: That the "Mormon" people are compelled to pay tithing, that the authorities of the Church demand it of them, that it is made obligatory upon them, and is tyrannically exacted from them all the time, which is an infamous falsehood, a slander, for there is not a word or syllable of truth in it. The observance of the law of tithing is

voluntary. I can pay my tithing or not, as I choose. It is a matter of choice with me, whether I will do it or not do it; but feeling, as I do, loyal to the Church, loyal to its interests, believing that it is right and just to observe the law of tithing I do observe it—on the same principle that I think it is right for me to observe the law of repentance, and of baptism for the remission of sins. It is my pleasure to do my duty with reference to the observance of these principles, and to pay my tithing. The Lord has revealed how this means shall be cared for, and managed; namely, by the Presidency of the Church and the High Council of the Church; (that is, the Twelve Apostles), and the Presiding Bishopric of the Church. I think there is wisdom in this. It is not left for one man to dispose of it, or to handle it alone, not by any means. It devolves upon at least eighteen men, men of wisdom, of faith, of ability, as these eighteen men are. I say it devolves upon them to dispose of the tithes of the people and to use them for whatever purpose in their judgment and wisdom will accomplish the most good for the Church; and because this fund of tithing is disposed of by these men whom the Lord has designated as having authority to do it, for the necessities and benefit of the Church, they call it "Commercialism." What absurdity! You may just as well call their practices in passing around their contribution boxes, for collecting means with which to build their church, with which to pay their ministers, and with which to carry on the monetary affairs of their churches, "commercialism," as for them to charge us with "commer-

cialism," because we handle the tithing of the Church, and appropriate and use it for the benefit of the Church.

Before we get through with the Conference, we expect to hear some reports from the Presiding Bishopric, who are the temporal custodians of the means of the Church and whose duty it is to account for the receipt and disbursement of these funds; and you will be surprised, perhaps, to learn how generally and universally, in the Church, the means gathered from the tithes of the people are disposed of for the benefit of all the people—and not for a few. Then, I repeat, it is not that which we do, but that which they charge us with doing, that they are finding fault with. Well, let them find fault. It only proves their ignorance or their ill-feeling and lack of judgment in making complaints against the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Again, I repeat, that there are no more spiritually minded people on earth than the Latter-day Saints. There is no more prayerful people on earth than the Latter-day Saints. There is not another people who are nearer to God their Father than are the Latter-day Saints; for they have the right to go to Him in their secret chamber, at the altar of prayer in their own homes; they can bow down and get very near unto the Lord, nearer, I think, than any other people. I do not say it boastfully either; I say it as I believe it to be a simple truth. Does it not stand to reason that a man who has received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands a man that has been born again of the water and of the Spirit, in accordance with the plan that God has in-

stituted by which he may come into His fold, can get nearer to God than those that have not been born again, or those who have not been endowed with the Spirit of the Lord? Of course, it stands to reason, and it is consistent to claim that much for the Latter-day Saints. Our mothers, and the mothers of our children, whose hearts are filled with solicitude for the welfare of their children, having had conferred upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit, by the laying on of hands, can go to their secret chambers and bow down before God and commune with Him as no other mothers on earth can do, if they will only observe the principles they have embraced and will live up to their privileges. By the influence that they will thus gain over the hearts of their children they will lead them in the path of righteousness and truth, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the love of truth, in obedience to His commands, in such a way as others cannot do who are destitute of these privileges, blessings and endowments, so freely conferred upon the mothers in Israel. I am aware that there are those who will say: "That is boasting; that is like the Pharisees." They will liken this talk of mine to that of the egotistical Pharisee, illustrated in the parable of the Savior: "Oh, Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men." But it is not true. That would be another false charge. On the contrary, it is in the same spirit that the sinner appealed unto the Lord: "Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner." The man who possesses the spirit of revelation can realize whether he is a sinner, whether he is prone to evil, whether he is mag-

nifying his standing before the Lord, or not, better than a man that has not the Spirit of the Lord in him, can he not? Is the man that is ignorant of the principles of the Gospel, and of the way in which he should reach the Father and commune with Him, more likely to be acceptable to God in his prayers than one who knows how to approach the Lord, who has received the truth in his heart, who will pray to God in the spirit of prayer and true devotion.

The Latter-day Saints possess that spirit; they know how to approach the Lord; they do not call upon Him to be heard for "much speaking." When we pray, we pray to the Lord for that which we need, that which we feel is or will be good for us, or necessary for our well-being and happiness; and when the Lord has blest us in our labors, crowned our efforts with success, and we have laid up, in store, an abundance of bread, we are not so inconsistent as to repeat the Lord's prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." We do not have to do it, but we thank Him daily for the bread we have. We thank Him for the blessings that we enjoy, and we acknowledge His goodness and mercy in bestowing upon us the blessings that we possess. But we do not have to repeat the Lord's prayer, every day, which was given to His ministry, the apostles in ancient times when they were sent out like lambs in the midst of wolves, and He taught them that they were not to take thought of what they should eat or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed; that the Lord would feed them; that the Lord would open the hearts of those they ministered

unto, to provide for their necessities. Go, and when you pray, pray for what you need. What did they need? Bread, bread for this day. "Give us this day our daily bread; leave us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the power, and the kingdom, and the glory, forever and ever." Our ministers pray this prayer when they are out in the world depending upon the Lord for His goodness, and guidance; but when they are at home with their houses supplied with all that is needful, and their granaries full, and all else that they need, then, instead of saying, "Oh Lord give us this day our daily bread" we say, "Oh Lord, we thank Thee for what Thou hast given us; bless it to our good, and help us to make a wise and proper use of it." That is the way the Latter-day Saints pray. You pray with intelligence; you pray with understanding; you approach the Lord with a knowledge of what you should do, and how you should approach Him, and how you have a right to ask Him for the blessings you need, even to the laying on of hands upon the sick, praying for them, and rebuking disease, that they may be healed under the blessing of the Lord; and that the world does not possess.

Now I think I have made clear, what I said in the beginning, that some people in the world are charging us with things we are not guilty of. They are arraigning us before the bar of public opinion for things we are strangers to, things we do not believe, things we have never done, things we have no connection with whatever, only in the imagination of our enemies. When they charge the Church with commercial-

ism, they charge it with that which is false. When they charge the Church with losing the spirituality of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they charge it falsely; it is not true. The Latter-day Saints do pray, and they are more faithful than most of the people of the world. Now, I may say, consistently, that there are good people in the world, people who are just as faithful to what they know, as we are faithful to what we know; and I judge in some instances you will find examples of people out in the world who do not know as much as you do of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who have not the testimony of the Spirit in their hearts as you have, of the divinity of Christ and of Joseph Smith, who are just as devout, just as humble, just as contrite in spirit, and as devoted to what they know, as some of us are, and they will be rewarded according to their works, every one of them, and will receive a reward far surpassing anything that they dream of.

Some people dream, you know, and think, and teach that all the glory they ever expect to have in the world to come is to sit in the light and glory of the Son of God, and sing praises and songs of joy and gratitude all their immortal lives. We do not believe in any such thing. We believe that every man will have his work to do in the other world, just as surely as he had it to do here, and a greater work than he can do here. We believe that we are on the road of advancement, of development in knowledge, in understanding, and in every good thing, and that we will continue to grow, advance and develop throughout the eternities that are before us. That is what we believe.

I believe in the Latter-day Saints. I believe they are a people who will do their duty, as a general thing. That there are delinquents, that there are those who are slothful, that there are those who are indifferent, and that there are those who have not the faith they should have, we know; we understand that; and that there are some, occasionally, who go wrong entirely, do wrong entirely; we know and understand that. But the vast majority of the Latter-day Saints are good and faithful members of the Church. God blesses them; they are in fellowship with Him and with each other.

Now, the Lord bless you. I did not expect to talk so long when I got up, for I did not feel at all in the humor of talking. I have been suffering, for a short time, with a severe cold, as many others are at this time of the year; and I presume I will feel the effects of this exertion, a little. But, I bear my testimony to you, I know the truth, so far as I have gone. I do not know it all, but what I do know, what I have learned, I know. Not only do I *know* the truth, so far as I have learned it, but I go a notch higher, I know positively that I *do know* the truth of some of these principles we have received. I know that the principle of faith in God, in Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of the Lord, and the Holy Ghost, is a correct principle. I know that the principle of repentance is a true principle, and I know that I know it, too. I know that baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, by one having authority, is a true principle, because Christ taught it; Christ obeyed it, and would not fail, for anything, to ful-

fil it—not that He was sinful and needed to be baptized for the remission of sins, but He only needed to do it to fulfill all righteousness, that is, to fulfil the law. I know that that is a true principle. I know that it is a true and righteous principle to keep one's self pure and unspotted from the world, and I *know* that I *know* it, too. I know that it is just and true that men should not steal, nor lie, nor commit adultery, nor bear false witness against their neighbor, nor do anything like unto it. I know that these are true principles, and I thank God, that I do know it, and that it is in my heart to observe and keep these things. I know, too, that it is a proper thing for us to accept and honor the Holy Priesthood that has been restored to the earth in this dispensation, through Joseph the Prophet. I know that is good, because it is calculated to uphold the truth, and sustain the Church, and develop men in knowledge, in good works, in fidelity to the purposes of the Lord, and it is essential to the proper government of the people of God in the earth, and for our own individual government, the government of our families, the government of our temporal and spiritual affairs, individually as well as collectively. I believe that every individual in the Church has just as much right to enjoy the spirit of revelation and the understanding from God which that spirit of revelation gives him, for his own good, as the Bishop has to enable him to preside over his ward. Every man has the privilege to exercise these gifts and these privileges in the conduct of his own affairs, in bringing up his children in the way they should go, and in

the management of his farm, his flocks, his herds, and in the management of his business, if he has business of other kinds to do; it is his right to enjoy the spirit of revelation and of inspiration to do the right thing, to be wise and prudent, just, and good in everything that he does. I know that this is a true principle, and I know that I know it, too; and that is the thing that I would like the Latter-day Saints to know.

And I know this, that God has organized His Church in the earth; and I know that when He designs or purposes to make any change in the manner or matter of governing or controlling or presiding over the affairs of His Church, that He will make the change, and He will make it in such a way that the whole people of the Church, who are doing right, will understand and accept it. I know that the Lord will not raise up "Tom, Dick, or Harry," here, there and everywhere claiming to be Christ, or "one mighty and strong," claiming to be inspired and called to do some wonderful thing. The Lord will not deal with men in that way; that while organization of the Church exists, while quorums and councils of the Priesthood are intact in the Church, the Lord will reveal His purposes through them and not through "Tom, Dick, or Harry." Put that in your little "note books" now, and remember it; it is true.

Now, the Lord bless you. God bless this people. My heart is filled with love and gratitude to God, and with love and blessings for the Latter-day Saints, from every part of the land, and everywhere. I

pray that God's blessing may rest down mightily upon you, and that you may prosper in all your efforts for good, and in every lawful business in which you are concerned, as individuals and as communities, that you may live in harmony, in peace and good-will, that you may be generous toward the erring. Try to save men and not destroy them. Set an example before the world, that they cannot gainsay, and so that they cannot condemn you for your conduct or acts; and if they condemn you at all, that they will have to conjure up something that is not true and then fight it, as the prejudiced world is doing in relation to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

There are our Elders over in Great Britain meeting with bitter opposition; and here in our own land are falsehoods being circulated of the most infamous character, and by the most keen subtle and cunning processes that ever were known to man, intended to destroy the influence of this people, but error, and falsehood will fail. And "truth is mighty and will prevail," therefore, we can afford to wait. Let the evil one exhaust his efforts, and do his worst; and the Lord will overrule it, in the end for the good of His cause, and for the discomfiture of His enemies; which may God grant, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The favorite hymn, "Oh, my Father," translated into the Spanish language by Sister Samantha B. DeFoley, was sweetly sung by Sister Amelia Margetts.