

Eighty-Seventh Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

FIRST DAY

The Eighty-seventh Semi-annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, on Friday, October 6, 1916. President Joseph F. Smith presided.

AUTHORITIES PRESENT.

Of the First Presidency: Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose; of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, Francis M. Lyman, Heber J. Grant, Rudger Clawson, Reed Smoot, Hyrum M. Smith, George Albert Smith, Orson F. Whitney, David O. McKay, Anthony W. Ivins, Joseph F. Smith, Jr., and James E. Talmage; Presiding Patriarch Hyrum G. Smith; of the First Council of Seventy, Seymour B. Young, Brigham H. Roberts, J. Golden Kimball, Rulon S. Wells, Joseph W. McMurrin, Charles H. Hart, and Levi Edgar Young; of the Presiding Bishopric, Charles W. Nibley, Orrin P. Miller, and David A. Smith; Assistant Historians Andrew Jenson and A. Wm. Lund. There were also a large number of Presidents of Stakes with their Counselors, Presidents of Missions, Patriarchs, Bishops of

Wards, and numerous other prominent men and women representing various quorums and organizations of the Church.

President Joseph F. Smith called the assembly to order, and invited the singers who were present from all parts of the Church to take seats with the choir. As a result, the choir was greatly enlarged.

The choir and congregation sang: "How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord."

Prayer was offered by Bishop Orrin P. Miller.

The choir and the congregation sang: "We thank thee, O God, for a prophet."

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

Our religion a terrible reality and the most important thing to us in this world—The Latter-day Saints are most devout believers in Jesus Christ and his mission—Our indebtedness also to Joseph Smith for the ordinances of the gospel of Christ—Presidents of missions and of stakes, and bishops of wards faithful men of God—The duties of bishops and presidents of stakes and some causes of regrets relating thereto—Resignations deplored—Work for the dead—The nature of God the Eternal Father to whom we pray—Let us live up to what God

has revealed before we ask for knowledge yet unrevealed—A patriarchal blessing upon the Saints given with authority—Injunction of the people to live their religion in peace and settle their own troubles—General condition of the Church and changes in the presidencies of stakes and missions.

It is with a grateful heart that I greet you, my brethren and sisters, at the opening session of this conference, the 87th semi-annual general conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is worthy of note that this building is so well filled with our people this morning. To me it is a good omen and I feel very grateful indeed to meet you here, to see you, to look into your faces, and to feel that I am in the presence of a vast audience of men and women who have come here today because of their faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and because of their love, devotion and integrity to the work of the Lord. I feel to thank you for your presence and for the influence for good that will be felt, not only today, but hereafter, because of the presence of so many members of the Church this morning. I feel thankful that I am permitted to be with you, and that the Lord has preserved my life and given me the goodly measure of vigor, health and strength that I possess. Above all things, I thank God that I am still in the faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that I still love the work of the Lord, that I believe in it with all my soul.

My only regret is that I am not capable of doing more for its advancement, its development, and the increased faith and devotion of its members throughout all the world. I regret that I have not greater power to labor for the

spread of the light, wisdom and intelligence that are to be obtained by all who will receive the gospel.

It is a joy to me always to have the privilege of meeting with men and women who have embraced the truth and who are true to it in their daily life, for after all, we establish the standard of our integrity and our fidelity to the truth by our daily works. The tree is known by its fruits, and we do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles. When you see a number of individuals, a community, or an entire people, who have embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ, consistent with their professions, true to their covenants, true in every respect to their faith, you will see men and women who are bearing good fruit and worthy in all respects. The religion which we have espoused is not a Sunday religion; it is not a mere profession; it is a most—I was going to say—a most terrible reality—and I believe I would be justified in using that expression, because it savors of life unto life or of death unto death. If it is, and pardon me for using that expression, *if it is* what we profess it to be, what we have embraced it for, what we believe it to be as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it is the most important thing in the world to us, and the results to us in this world and in the world to come will depend upon our integrity to the truth and our consistency in observing its precepts, in abiding by its principles and its requirements. We believe in the divinity of the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the one and only son begotten of God, and who possessed in himself the power of life, the power over death, and yet who yielded that power to be-

come a sacrifice for a broken law and for the redemption of the children of men from temporal death. As it was brought upon them without any act of theirs, so they are removed from the results and consequences of it through the righteousness of the Son of God, and the power which was given to him. I hold, therefore, that there is no people professing to be believers in the divine mission of Jesus Christ who are more devoutly, sincerely and consistently, believers in Christ, than are the Latter-day Saints, and that there is not a people in all the world better entitled to the name of "Christians" than are the Latter-day Saints. Our faith in him lies at the foundation of our religion, the foundation of our hope for remission of sins and for exaltation after death and for the resurrection from death to everlasting life. Our faith in the doctrines that have been restored through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith confirms and strengthens us and establishes beyond a question or doubt, our faith and belief in the divine mission of the Son of God. Joseph Smith was the instrument chosen of God and endowed with His authority to restore the holy priesthood, the power of God to bind on earth and in heaven, to loose on earth and in heaven,—the power of the priesthood by which men may perform ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind. Through Joseph Smith the gospel of repentance, baptism in water for the remission of sins, the baptism of the Holy Ghost and by fire have been restored, and the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is made manifest through the spirit of truth. We

are obligated to this humble servant that the Lord chose to lay the foundation of this work for the ordinances of the gospel of the Son of God, then and still unknown to the world, by which we may become united together as families, as kindreds, under the bonds of the new and everlasting covenant, for time and for all eternity. We are obligated to the Prophet Joseph Smith, as an instrument in the hand of the Lord, for the knowledge that we possess of the work which is necessary to be done in the house of God, for the salvation of the living and the redemption of the dead, and for the eternal union of souls who are united in this life by the power of God under the bond of the everlasting covenant. We are indebted, or obligated at least, to the Prophet Joseph Smith as the instrument in the hands of God, for the knowledge we now possess that a man cannot be exalted into the presence of God and the full enjoyment of his glory, alone. It was not designed for the man to be alone, for the man is not without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

I might devote my time this morning speaking to you of the conditions as I understand them of the Church throughout the world. I feel that it is scarcely necessary for me to devote much time, however, to that subject. Most of you are well acquainted with the conditions of the work of the Lord that we are engaged in throughout the world. I believe that the cause of Zion is sacred in the sight of the Lord, that his eye is upon his people and that his power is working in their midst and in the midst of the earth for the accomplishment of his purpose, for be it known, or let

me say it, although it is known, that it is not the work of man, but it is the work of God, and He it is that is doing it, not man. We give to the Lord the credit this morning for the presence of this vast multitude of men holding the priesthood after the order of the Son of God. We are grateful for the instrument that the Lord has chosen to bring to pass these results, to help, at least, to bring them to pass, but we are more grateful to the Lord himself for the power that he is wielding and the work that he is doing by his Spirit shedding light and truth abroad in the hearts of his people and hovering over the hearts and minds of the people of the world, waiting to enter when they are ready to receive the truth and hearken to his word. I rejoice in these things. I am happy to say that we have confidence, I would say unlimited confidence, in our fellow-workers in the cause of Zion. I look at our boys that are presiding over the various missions in various parts of the world, and so far as we know, and we have good reason to be well acquainted with them, they are young men after God's own heart, true as steel, pure as angels in their lives, upright, virtuous, strong in the truth and equal to their tasks by the help of the Lord, desiring only to perform the duties that are enjoined upon them in the fields of labor to which they have been appointed and where they are devoting their energies and their knowledge.

We reflect upon those who have been called to preside over the various stakes of Zion, and I may say the same of them, with very little exception—I would scarcely perhaps be justified in saying that there was any exception, but there

is not the same perfection in the knowledge of duty and in the execution of that duty in the performance of the labor required at their hands in some of the presidents of the stakes of Zion, that we find in others. In other words, we have some young and inexperienced men engaged in that work. They have much to learn yet to become equal in all respects to those who have had years of experience in the performance of the same duties. But we have confidence in them; we believe they will improve where improvement is needed; we believe they will learn their duties where they fail to understand it as they should, and they have our confidence and our support and our prayers that they may succeed and not fail.

We have great respect for our bishops, the bishops of the wards of the Church, very numerous now, but we have one cause for regret with reference to the disposition we see exhibited too often among the bishops. It is a common saying that once a bishop, always a bishop. When a man is ordained a bishop and is set apart to the office of bishop, as president of a ward, he is entrusted with very responsible duties, he becomes a father to the people, he is their guardian, their watchman upon their tower. It is his duty to be acquainted with every member of the Church in his ward. It is his duty to minister to every member and every unit of the membership of his ward, not only to the heads of families but to each of the children of the families as well, who dwell in his ward. It is his duty to look after the poor, the needy, the sick and the afflicted, not that he himself is expected to do everything that is to be done in his ward, not at all; but through the agencies that

he may call to his support to perform the duties that are requisite to be performed in the ward, he is thoroughly, or ought to be thoroughly provided with means to visit every family and to know the status and standing of every member in his ward; to know whether his people are living their religion or not; whether they are doing their duty; whether they are liable to wander away from their duty or from their faithfulness in the Church. In too many instances, we find that our bishops are not instant in season and out of season, in the performance of their duties in this regard. We call for elders to go abroad to preach the gospel. We send out instructions to the bishops informing them as to the character of the men we require for missionary service, men who are sober, who are intelligent, who are well and hearty, not diseased, not crippled, who have faith in their hearts and the love of truth in their souls, and keep the word of wisdom, attend to their Sabbath duties as well as to all their other duties that belong to membership in the Church. And yet too often, we receive reports from our bishops informing us that such and such a youth or man had been selected for a mission and *so far as they know*, he is all right, and when we further inquire into it, we discover that he does not keep the word of wisdom; we discover that he is financially unable to fill a mission or that he is not physically able to go. We discover sometimes that a youth is the head in his family, in other words, his father is dead, his mother is a widow and it requires all his energy to provide for his mother and the younger children, and yet he is recommended to go on a mission by the bishop without

inquiring into it. That is why I say we have some regrets with reference to the faithfulness, competency and diligence of some of our bishops in looking into the affairs of the people of their wards. Another source of regret is that we have too many of our bishops who want to quit the bishopric. They want to resign, to give the duty of the bishopric over to somebody else. They get tired of it. Of course it is a labor, it is a great responsibility, and when a man becomes incapable of performing the duties of a bishop and the president of the stake is attending to his duty, he will consult with him and recommend that he be honorably released. Let him be honorably released, without the necessity of resigning; and so the presidents of stakes should do their duty in their stakes, as well as the bishops should do their duty in their wards. It is a common saying and perhaps a vulgar one, that the Lord hates a quitter, and I must say to you, that it does not strike me as the right thing for a man to quit doing his duty as long as he is able and it is expected of him to do it. He should do it until he is disqualified by illness or age or other incapacity and then the presiding officers of the stake should know his condition and should recommend his honorable release and, the appointment of some one capable to succeed him.

Now, I did not intend to enter into this subject. I thought when I come in this morning that if I could stand up here and bear my testimony to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and express my gratitude for the love of God upon all his people, that it would be sufficient for me, and let the younger men, such as Brother

Penrose, do the heft of the teaching and preaching and exhortation, correction and admonition to the Saints and the officers of the Church.

I hope the Lord will give me sufficient strength, mental and physical, and sufficient influence of his Holy Spirit that I shall be able at least to set an example of rightfulness and of righteousness before my associates in life, and thus by example, preach the truth as long as I draw breath. I do not want to quit the service of God, nor the service of his people, nor do I want to quit observance of the ordinances and precepts of the gospel of Jesus Christ, nor do I want to become indifferent or thoughtless and careless with respect to these sacred duties and the principles of the gospel.

The work for our dead, which the Prophet Joseph laid upon us with more than ordinary injunction, instructing us that we should look after those of our kinsfolk, and our ancestors who have died without the knowledge of the gospel, should not be neglected. We should avail ourselves of those sacred and potent ordinances of the gospel which have been revealed as essential to the happiness, salvation and redemption of those who have lived in this world when they could not learn the gospel and have died without the knowledge of it, and are now waiting for us, their children, who are living in an age when these ordinances can be performed, to do the work necessary for their release from the prison-house. Through our efforts in their behalf their chains of bondage will fall from them, and the darkness surrounding them will clear away, that light may shine upon them and they shall hear in the spirit world of the work that

has been done for them by their children here, and will rejoice with you in your performance of these duties.

Again, and without desire to multiply words, I bear my testimony to you, my brethren and sisters, that God lives, that his Son lives, and I say to you in connection with this thought and this testimony that I accept without recourse, without any hesitancy or doubt upon my mind, the statement that was made by the Prophet Joseph Smith with reference to God and to his only begotten Son, that "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; The Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit," and man is made in their image. We also accept without any question the doctrines we have been taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith and by the Son of God himself, that we pray to God, the Eternal Father, in the name of his only begotten Son, to whom also our father Adam and his posterity have prayed from the beginning. If Latter-day Saints will take these simple statements of fact, given to us in the doctrine of Christ and restored and renewed to us in the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it would settle many a question that is being foolishly asked today. There are many things yet to be revealed. There are things to be revealed which God will make known in his own due time which we do not now understand. For my own part, there is as much already revealed as it seems possible for me to understand. If I could only grasp all that God has revealed, and comprehend it as I should and apply it in righteousness in my life, I think I should then be prepared for some-

thing more, if I was still worthy of it. Why, bless your souls, there are people among us that are worrying and fretting over things that have never been revealed to the children of men, and these very people do not even keep the word of wisdom, do not even pay their tithing, and as a rule, the man that does not pay his tithing and that does not keep the word of wisdom is the man that is everlastingly quizzing and asking questions about things he does not understand. If men would pay their tithing, if they would keep the word of wisdom, if they would say their prayers, if they would devote their lives to works of righteousness in the earth and study the gospel for themselves and obey it, they would have less necessity for asking questions, and don't forget the fact that they would know things better than they do.

The Lord bless you. From the depths of my soul, I bless you; I hold the right, the keys and the authority of the patriarchal Priesthood in the Church. I have a right to pronounce patriarchal blessings, because I hold the keys and authority to do it. It is given to me and my associates to ordain patriarchs and set them apart to give blessings to the people to comfort them by promises made in wisdom and the inspiration of the Spirit of God, of the favor and mercies of the Lord that they may be stronger in good works, that their hopes may be realized and their faith increased. And I bless you, my brethren and sisters in the cause of Zion, with all my soul and by the authority of the priesthood that I hold. I hold the priesthood of the apostleship, I hold the high priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God,

which is at the foundation of all priesthood and is the greatest of all priesthoods because the apostle and the high priest and the seventy derive their authority and their privileges from the priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God. All authority comes out of that high priesthood. I prophesy that the blessing of the Lord will be upon his people throughout the extent of our glorious land, and upon the people of this nation, if they will do right. The blessings of the Lord will be more particularly poured out upon the Latter-day Saints if they will live their religion as they should. The idea of a Latter-day Saint quarreling with his neighbor, haling him before his bishop for trial. Why, bless your souls, what is the use of it? I never had to do a thing of that kind. I have, I think, suffered some things that might have justified me complaining to my bishop and asking the bishop to see if he could make my neighbor do his duty, but I haven't had occasion sufficient to do it and I have never done it. I have never been under the necessity of going before the high council with my troubles. My religion teaches me a better way than that. I would rather yield to injustice than try to exact every pound of flesh, so to speak. And I do not think it is necessary for Latter-day Saints to get so far apart in their judgment, in their likes and dislikes, in their desire to claim something they think is theirs, as to go to law for the court to set him right. Give and take. Be reconciled with each other. Do not go to the courts of the Church nor to the courts of the land for litigation. Settle your own troubles, and difficulties; and as Bishop Hunter used to say, which is

an axiom, that cannot be disputed, there is only one way in which a difficulty existing between man and man can be truly settled, and that is when they get together and settle it between them. The courts cannot settle troubles between me and my brother. If they decide against him, and in my favor, of course I receive it with gladness, and praise the judge because he has favored me, but my brother rejects the decision, and while I may feel it is settled, my brother is not satisfied at all, and condemns the decision, and is embittered against me. So the only way to settle a trouble between brethren is for them to get together and settle it between themselves and let it be settled fully and forever. If we have the spirit of the gospel in our hearts, if we have the love of truth abiding in our souls, if we half love our neighbors as we love ourselves; and especially if we love God with all our hearts and mind and strength, we can easily give and take until we can settle troubles existing between neighbors and brothers without anybody else coming in to help us do it. I have often been called upon to help others settle their troubles, but I have never had to ask anybody else to come and help me settle mine. I think we ought to live our religion. We should keep the commandments of God. We should possess and enjoy the spirit of the gospel in our hearts and bear the fruits of the spirit in our lives; faith, hope and charity, love, humility and forgiveness in our souls one for another, and avoid, as far as possible, the spirit of accusation, of contention, that leads to strife, to confusion and division among men, and the spirit of hatred. Oh, banish hatred from

you. Hatred harbored in our hearts, or envy or jealousy, will injure those who permit them to abide in their souls and rancor in their thoughts a thousand-fold more than it will injure others. So let us banish those things from our hearts, and from our thoughts. Let us live righteous lives, let the husband love his wife and be true and kind to her, and the wife be true and kind to her husband, and they be true and loving and solicitous for the welfare of their children; let them be united as a family unit in the Church and as that condition extends abroad to the borders of Zion, we will have the millennial reign among us, and there will be peace on earth and good will to men everywhere.

The Lord bless you, and I hope you will pardon me for occupying so much of your time.

I have a few little items that I have jotted down which I will take the pains to read for the information of the conference:

In the British Mission, Elder Hyrum M. Smith has been honorably released and is succeeded by Elder George F. Richards. His son, George F., Jr., also accompanying him on his mission to Great Britain.

In the Netherlands Mission, Elder LeGrande Richards has also been honorably released and succeeded by Elder John A. Butterworth, who was laboring as a missionary in the mission when Brother Richards was released.

In the New Zealand Mission, Elder William Gardner has been honorably released and is succeeded by Elder James N. Lambert, a young man born and reared in our city here.

In the Samoan Mission, Elder John A. Nelson, Jr., has been honorably released and is succeeded by Elder Ernest Wright.

In the Swedish Mission, Elder Theodore Tobiason has been honorably released and is succeeded by Elder Andrew P. Anderson.

In the Swiss and German Mission, we are endeavoring to release Elder Hyrum W. Valentine, and have already sent Brother Angus J. Cannon, a son of President George Q. Cannon, to succeed him. He has met with an obstruction on his way to Switzerland, and therefore the release of Brother Valentine is delayed, but we hope Brother Cannon will get through before long and that Brother Valentine and his wife will be safely headed toward home.

The Tonga Mission has been organized with Elder Willard L. Smith as president. This mission has been associated with the Samoan Mission from the beginning, but it is so far away from the headquarters of the Samoan Mission, that we have concluded it best to make a separate mission of it.

The presidencies of the following stakes have been reorganized: Beaver Stake, Bannock Stake, Big Horn Stake, Panguitch Stake and Parowan Stake. Forty-six bishops and sixty-eight ward clerks have been appointed since last April. This is one of the things I had in my mind, it is too many changes, if we could avoid it. I might suggest in connection with this thought that if the presidents of the stakes would be a little more cautious and pay a little better regard to the suitability of the man chosen to act as a bishop, to his qualifications in every way, and

especially to his status as a resident in the ward, so he will not be under the necessity of pulling up, after he has been bishop a few months, and moving off somewhere, necessitating a change in the bishopric, I think that we would perhaps be able to save some of these numerous changes in the bishoprics of our wards.

There have been twenty new wards organized since last April conference, and all these new wards need houses of worship, and of course, the first thing they think of is to build a meetinghouse, and they look to the Trustee-in-trust to help them very materially in the building of them. So we have applications from all quarters, not only among the well established stakes and wards who have had meetinghouses in the past, but from these new stakes, and quite a number of our older wards, well established, who have had meetinghouses for many years, have come to the conclusion that the old houses are not quite good enough and they must have new ones, and so we are called upon to contribute to them as well as to the building up of the new wards.

There are now seventy-two organized stakes of Zion, with eight hundred and sixteen wards and independent branches, and there are twenty-two missions in the Church.

The Lord bless you, is my prayer, and I humbly ask it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

A baritone solo, entitled, "The Seer, the Seer, Joseph the Seer," was sung by Anthony C. Lund, conductor of the Tabernacle Choir.