

FIRST DAY

MORNING MEETING

The first session of the One Hundred and Eighth Annual Conference was held Sunday morning, April 3, 1938, at 10 o'clock a. m.

Long before time to commence the Conference every seat and available space in the large Tabernacle auditorium and galleries was occupied. In addition, thousands of people congregated in the large Assembly Hall immediately south of the Tabernacle, and on the Tabernacle grounds, where, by means of amplifying equipment that had been installed, they listened to the Conference proceedings as they were broadcast from the Tabernacle.

President Grant opened the Conference by announcing that the Tabernacle Choir would furnish the music for this session and would join with the congregation in singing the hymn, "Redeemer of Israel."

After the singing of this hymn, the opening prayer was offered by Elder Samuel E. Bringham, President of the Cottonwood Stake.

ELDER SYLVESTER Q. CANNON

Presiding Bishop of the Church

I am grateful, my brethren and sisters, for this opportunity of being with you in health and strength to enjoy the spirit of this Conference. There are many things that might be discussed, many things of great import in the progress and welfare of this people, and I am sure they will be brought out during the Conference. The time available to me prior to the Tabernacle broadcast is limited and will permit of brief remarks only.

IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE

In thinking over that which I might say I have thought of many things, and among other things one of the greatest and most important is that spirit which brings us to a unity and a willingness to cooperate and to comply with the desires and instructions of our leaders, and particularly with regard to the observance of the laws and commandments of the Lord, which is the principle of obedience.

When Saul, king of Israel, was instructed by Samuel the prophet to fight the Amalekites, who had been a bar in the way of the children of Israel in their trailing through the wilderness, he failed to do what he was instructed, and Samuel rebuked him in these words:

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the word of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Saul was rejected by the Lord as a result of his disobedience and failure to comply with the instructions which he had received from the Lord's servant.

RESULTS OF DISOBEDIENCE COME IN NATURAL WAY

Now, as a matter of fact nothing apparently happened, because Saul continued as the king of Israel. Anyone who heard that statement of Samuel's might have concluded that it had failed. But Samuel had gone, under the instruction of the Lord, to Bethlehem, and there had selected another man and had anointed him to become king of Israel. I say Saul remained as king for some time before the judgment of the Lord came upon him. After a certain time he went into battle and was killed in a natural way in the fight. And that I think is an evidence of what we may expect of mankind wherever we live. If we learn to obey the instructions that are given us, and especially if there come to us instructions from those who have authority; or if we fail to comply with the laws and commandments that the Lord has given us, we are in the way of undergoing condemnation. It may come about in a perfectly natural way, because obedience or disobedience to spiritual or natural law, or to civil law, brings the reward or the penalty in every instance.

THE GOSPEL A PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY

The Apostle James, in speaking in regard to the importance of observance of divine law, and at the same time the perfect freedom of agency of every individual to do as he or she chooses, makes this statement:

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Every principle given to us of the Lord as a part of the Gospel is a law of liberty, and the Gospel as a whole is the perfect law of liberty. We have the choice whether we shall accept it or reject it, whether we shall live it, or shall fail to observe its commandments; but according to that which we shall do shall we be judged, and that is perfect fairness and justice, not only in this life but in the life to come.

OBSERVANCE OF LAW

I might discourse at length, but time will not permit, with regard to the benefits that come to us through the observance of law. As Latter-day Saints we claim to obey, honor, and sustain the laws wherever we may be. Any man or woman, any boy or girl who fails to observe the constitutional laws, man-made though they may be, imperfect though they may be—if they fail to observe them they are the losers, and thereby if law-breaking continues there is confusion and destruction to civilization, whether in the community, the state, the nation, or the world. And to that extent it is very vital that we should realize that obedience means compliance with law, whether it is civil, natural, or spiritual. It is of vital importance to the continuance of progress of civilization.

SOURCE OF UNITY

I realize and you realize that if we observe to do what the Lord has

commanded us and expects us to do, we shall grow in unity and power, because that is the very source of power of this people—their willingness to comply and thereby become united. Yet they lose nothing of their individuality or their understanding or their intelligence or their judgment. So that obedience to this perfect law of liberty brings us joy and blessings, as promised by the Apostle James.

BLESSINGS PREDICATED UPON OBEDIENCE

You will remember again the statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

There is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven, before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated; and when we obtain any blessing from God it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

This applies to every principle of the Gospel. I will not take the time to discuss them in detail, I need only say to you that every principle of the Gospel that the Lord has given us is positive and forward-looking, and everything contrary to that is negative. Thereby we may conclude that everything we learn that is of light and advancement, that is true and exalted and forward-looking is of God and intended for the welfare and progress of mankind. It requires action, it requires discernment, it requires judgment to observe these conditions and to be obedient. The opposite is to fail and to neglect, which is negative, and only brings us sorrow and sadness. By doing wrong things we are doing negative things; by doing right things we are doing positive things.

DIVINE PRINCIPLES

Now, without going into detail, because time will not permit, I might refer you to some of the things the Lord has commanded us to do. In the first place he has commanded us to teach our children correct principles, that they may live righteously, that they may grow in the knowledge of the truth, and become faithful, active men and women in the Church. If we fail to do that as fathers and mothers we shall lose the blessing which would come to us otherwise; and if our children fail to receive these things and observe them they will also lose the blessing. How unfortunate it is when children of faithful, upright parents, either through lack of proper watchcare, training or spiritual, loving influence succumb to temptations and lose the spirit of the Gospel!

If we fail to observe the Word of Wisdom—that great standard of physical welfare—we are losing control of our better selves. If we observe it we learn to control our appetites and desires and our passions, so far as they affect us physically. One course is positive. It means self-control. The other is negative. It produces excesses.

With regard to the observance of the Sabbath day: If we live in accordance with that instruction we shall grow in clear thinking, in peace, and in right living. If we break the commandments we give ourselves to thoughtless pleasure, we are losing that sense of relationship with the

divine and interfering with our progress. Likewise, if we cultivate hatred, envy, and jealousy instead of cultivating love, we develop negative instead of positive qualities—lower instead of higher—and suffer thereby. On the contrary, if we cultivate love for our fellow men generally and all who are dear to us, and for our Heavenly Father, then we grow in righteousness, peace and happiness.

POSITIVE QUALITIES PROMOTE REAL HAPPINESS

The same is true of morality. If we observe the principles of clean living which we are instructed to observe, we shall grow in faith and strength and power, and if we fail to do so we shall grow in vice and licentiousness, which are prevalent throughout the world today. Another principle that develops finer characteristics in men and women is that of fasting, the donating of the value of the food that would otherwise be consumed. If we practice it we develop in the spirit of self-denial and charity—two of the greatest qualities we can possess. Failure to live it invites selfishness, and hinders proper restraint. Again, if we are growing in faith we are becoming stronger and abler spiritually and thereby we shall increase in unity. On the contrary, if we cultivate doubt, and carping criticism, we hinder advancement and lose the opportunities that are ours. Then again, if we fail to observe the law of tithing, a divine law given us for our progress, a principle with a promise, we gain spiritual and temporal blessings. If we disobey it those benefits will be denied us. The observance of these principles develops the qualities in men and women most vital to civilization.

I want to call your attention to the fact that we have been instructed by our brethren who preside over the Church here upon the earth to observe all of these principles. I think that in large measure Latter-day Saints are endeavoring to observe them. The more fully we observe them the greater the blessings to us. We are the ones who gain or lose by living or failing to observe these commandments, these instructions and principles.

So, my brethren and sisters, I urge upon you that, as far as you have influence, you exercise that influence with the Church officers and members by example and by kindly encouragement, to observe every principle which the Lord has given through his servants. Such observance inures first to the welfare and progress of the individual, and, secondly, for the Church as a whole.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CHURCH OFFICERS

I remember that six months ago President Grant gave certain instructions with regard to what is expected of the officers of the Church in the observance of its principles. I think there should be no neglect or failure whatever in our faithful observance of these things. There is every reason why every man or woman who receives authority in this Church should set the example of righteous living in every way. The giving of authority requires a faithful compliance with every request made of us. Further, there is no request made that is not reasonable.

Time will not permit my speaking further. I pray the Lord to bless us continually and may his choice favors continue with us throughout this Conference, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

TABERNACLE CHOIR AND ORGAN BROADCAST

During the period from 10:30 to 11:00 a. m. the following program of choral and organ music was presented by the Tabernacle Choir and Organ, in the Tabernacle, as a part of the General Conference session, and was broadcast by radio throughout the United States and Canada by the courtesy of the Columbia Broadcasting System, originating over Station KSL, Salt Lake City:

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| "Again as Evening's Shadow Falls" (Fletcher) | Choir |
| "In Springtime" (Kinder) | Organ |
| "The Morning Breaks" (Careless) | Male Choir |
| "To Thee, O Lord" (Kalinnikoff) | Choir |
| Hymn arrangements by organist | Organ |
| "Praise" (Rowley) | Choir |

The Choir was conducted by J. Spencer Cornwall. Organ accompaniments and Organ solo presentations were played by Frank W. Asper.

CHURCH OF THE AIR BROADCAST

Immediately following the *Tabernacle Choir and Organ* Broadcast, the following program was presented on the Columbia Broadcasting System's *Church of the Air* series:

The Choir and congregation joined in singing the hymn, "O Say, What is Truth?"

ELDER ALBERT E. BOWEN

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Observing the orderliness and unity of purpose obtaining among his followers, who had been gathered from various countries of the world and from numerous nationalities and creeds, a visitor to the Prophet Joseph Smith asked:

"Mr. Smith, how do you govern these people?"

Promptly came the pregnant reply, "I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves."

Thus tersely is stated a concept fundamental in the creed of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—self-government fashioned upon fixed and enduring principles. It is a statement of the ideal in government. As concerns the individual, it is a statement of the law of progress, the law of salvation.

STABILIZING POWER OF AN ULTIMATE AIM

The discovery of eternal, unchanging principles, upon which the lives of men may securely be built, is the end of all search. We believe