

We are convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, Salt Lake City, Utah.

President Smith is presiding and he has asked the one speaking, President Clark, to conduct the services.

These services will be broadcast in the Assembly Hall over a loud speaking system and by television. All general sessions of the Conference will be seen and heard in the Assembly Hall in the same way.

The proceedings of this session will be broadcast over Station KSL of Salt Lake City, and by arrangement through KSL, over the following stations:

In Utah: KSUB at Cedar City, KSVC at Richfield, KJAM at Vernal, KVNU at Logan.

In Idaho: KGEM at Boise, KID at Idaho Falls, KEYY at Pocatello, KBIO at Burley.

In Oregon: KBKR at Baker, KSRV at Ontario.

And by transcription: KTYL at Mesa, Arizona, and KEXO at Grand Junction, Colorado.

This session will also be televised over the KSL television station, channel 5.

The choir singing for this session will be by the Brigham Young University Choir, with Elder Newell Weight conducting, and Elder Frank W. Asper, at the organ.

We will begin the services by the Brigham Young University Choir rendering "Christ, the Lord, Is Risen Today."

The opening prayer will be offered by President A. Lewis Elggren of the Liberty Stake, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Singing by the Brigham Young University Choir, "Christ, the Lord, Is Risen Today."

President A. Lewis Elggren of the Liberty Stake offered the opening prayer.

The Brigham Young University Choir sang, "The Heavens Resound."

#### **President Clark:**

President David O. McKay of the First Presidency will be the first speaker this afternoon.

### **PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY**

#### *Second Counselor in the First Presidency*

Most sincerely I join President George Albert Smith in expressing appreciation for the inspirational singing furnished us this day by the Brigham Young University students, and equally inspirational is their presence here—three hundred and twenty young men and young women devoting their service willingly,

gladly, to the inspiring and upbuilding of the members of the Church in attendance at this conference.

#### ANCHORED TO THE TRUTH

I feel impressed to say to you young folks that I know of no greater blessing you can receive than to be anchored to the truth, and by that I mean three things: *First*, always to feel a surety that this Church is divinely guided. *Second*, that the Lord has authorized his servants and placed upon them the duty to proclaim to the world the restoration and truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Third*, and most applicable to us all, that inspiration from the Lord is a reality, just as real as the love each one of us has for his loved ones. Young men and young women, God bless you that this testimony may be yours as it is mine this day!

#### INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

. . . Remember, my brethren, . . . ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free. (Helaman 14:30.)

These words taken from the Book of Helaman indicate the purport of what I should like to say this afternoon. I pray for his inspiration and your sympathy and prayers that I may give this message in accordance with his will.

Next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct that life is God's greatest gift to man. Among the immediate obligations and duties resting upon members of the Church today, and one of the most urgent and pressing for attention and action of all liberty-loving people, is the preservation of individual liberty. Freedom of choice is more to be treasured than any possession earth can give. It is inherent in the spirit of man. It is a divine gift to every normal being. Whether born in abject poverty or shackled at birth by inherited riches, everyone has this most precious of all life's endowments—the gift of free agency; man's inherited and inalienable right.

Free agency is the impelling source of the soul's progress. It is the purpose of the Lord that man become like him. In order for man to achieve this it was necessary for the Creator first to make him free. "Personal liberty," says Bulwer-Lytton, "is the paramount essential to human dignity and human happiness."

The poet summarizes the value of this principle as follows:

Know this, that every soul is free  
To choose his life and what he'll be,  
For this eternal truth is given,  
That God will force no man to heaven.

He'll call, persuade, direct aright—  
And bless with wisdom, love and light—  
In nameless ways be good and kind,  
But never force the human mind.

Freedom and reason make us men;  
 Take these away, what are we then?  
 Mere animals, and just as well  
 The beasts may think of heav'n or hell.

—William C. Gregg

With free agency there comes responsibility. If a man is to be rewarded for righteousness and punished for evil, then common justice demands that he be given the power of independent action. A knowledge of good and evil is essential to man's progress on earth. If he were coerced to do right at all times, or were helplessly enticed to commit sin, he would merit neither a blessing for the first nor punishment for the second.

Says the Prophet Lehi,

Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other. . . .

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. (II Nephi 2:16-27.)

#### MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

There is more of that in II Nephi to which I call your attention.

Thus we see that man's responsibility is correspondingly operative with his free agency. Actions in harmony with divine law and the laws of nature will bring happiness, and those in opposition to divine truth, misery. Man is responsible not only for every deed, but also for every idle word and thought. Said the Savior:

. . . every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36.)

As a boy I questioned that truth when I first heard it expressed by my father. I remember saying to myself, "Not even the Lord knows what I am thinking now." I was very much surprised, therefore, when later as a student in the university, I read the following in [William] James' psychology about the effect of thought and action on human character. I am giving it today for the young people particularly:

#### SPINNING OUR OWN FATES

We are spinning our own fates good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its ever so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, "I won't count this time." Well he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many

separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning, to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation, in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently, between all the details of his business, the *power of judging* in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away. Young people should know this truth in advance. The ignorance of it has probably engendered more discouragement and faint-heartedness in youths embarking on arduous careers than all other causes put together.\*

### PERSONAL INFLUENCE

There is another responsibility correlated and even coexistent with free agency, which is too infrequently emphasized, and that is the effect not only of a person's actions but also of his thoughts upon others. Man radiates what he is, and that radiation affects to a greater or less degree every person who comes within that radiation.

Of the power of this personal influence William George Jordan impressively writes:

Into the hands of every individual is given a marvelous power for good or evil—the silent, unconscious, unseen influence of his life. This is simply the constant radiation of what man really is, not what he pretends to be. Every man, by his mere living, is radiating sympathy, or sorrow, or morbidness, or cynicism, or happiness, or hope, or any of a hundred other qualities. Life is a state of constant radiation and absorption; to exist is to radiate; to exist is to be the recipient of radiation.

Man cannot escape for one moment from this radiation of his character, this constantly weakening or strengthening of others. He cannot evade the responsibility by saying it is an unconscious influence. He can select the qualities that he will permit to be radiated. He can cultivate sweetness, calmness, trust, generosity, truth, justice, loyalty, nobility—make them vitally active in his character—and by these qualities he will constantly affect the world.

### PROGRESS THROUGH FREEDOM

Freedom of the will and the responsibility associated with it are fundamental aspects of Jesus' teachings. Throughout his ministry he emphasized the worth of the individual, and exemplified what is now expressed in modern revelation as the work and glory of God—"To bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." Only through the divine gift of soul freedom is such progress possible.

Force, on the other hand, emanates from Lucifer himself. Even in man's pre-existent state, Satan sought power to compel the human family to do his will by suggesting that the free agency of man be inoperative. If his plan had been accepted, human beings would have become mere puppets in the hands of a dictator, and

\**Psychology*, Henry Holt & Co., N. Y. 1892, p. 150.

the purpose of man's coming to earth would have been frustrated. Satan's proposed system of government, therefore, was rejected, and the principle of free agency established in its place.

#### FORCE RULES TODAY

Force rules in the world today; consequently, our government must keep armies abroad, build navies and air squadrons, create atom bombs to protect itself from threatened aggression of a nation which seems to listen to no other appeal but compulsion.

Individual freedom is threatened by international rivalries, inter-racial animosities, and false political ideals. Unwise legislation, too often prompted by political expediency, is periodically being enacted that seductively undermines man's right of free agency, robs him of his rightful liberties, and makes him but a cog in the crushing wheel of a regimentation which, if persisted in, will end in dictatorship.

The Magna Carta, signed by King John at Runnymede, June 15, 1215, was an expression of freedom-loving men against a usurping king. It was a guarantee of civil and personal liberty. These guarantees later found fuller and complete expression in the Constitution of the United States. Today, seven hundred years later, consider what is happening in Great Britain! With nationalization of industries, planned economy, control of all productive power, including persons and property, that country of liberty-loving people is on the verge of a totalitarian state as dictatorial as that which the feudal barons and the people wrested from King John. People are bargaining their liberty for a chimera of equality and security, not realizing that the more power you give the central government, the more you curtail your individual freedom.

#### GOVERNMENTS THE SERVANTS

Governments are the *servants*, not the *masters* of the people. All who love the Constitution of the United States can vow with Thomas Jefferson, who, when he was president, said,

I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.

He later said:

To preserve our independence, we must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. We must take our choice between economy and liberty, or profusion and servitude. If we run into such debts, we must be taxed in our meat and drink, in our necessities and in our comforts, in our labors and in our amusements.

If we can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under pretense of caring for them, they will be happy. The same prudence which in private life would forbid our paying our money for unexplained projects, forbids it in the disposition of public money. We are endeavoring to reduce the government to the practice of rigid economy to avoid burdening the people and arming the magistrate with a patron-

age of money which might be used to corrupt the principles of our government.

### FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

This principle of free agency and the right of each individual to be free not only to think but also to act within bounds that grant to every one else the same privilege, are sometimes violated even by churches that claim to teach the doctrine of Jesus Christ. The attitude of any organization toward this principle of freedom is a pretty good index to its nearness to the teachings of Christ or to those of the Evil One. For example, I read recently the statement of a leading clergyman who claimed the divine right of his church, wherever it was in power, to prohibit any other church from promulgating its doctrine. . . . And, "if religious minorities actually exist, they shall have only a *de facto* existence without opportunity to spread their beliefs."

He who thus tramples underfoot one of God's greatest gifts to man, who would deny another the right to think and worship as he pleases, propagates error and makes his own church in that regard as far as he represents it a propagator of evil.

Contrast this unchristian-like stand with the statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may. (Eleventh Article of Faith.)

### REVELATION ON GOVERNMENT

And, again, in one of the greatest revelations on government ever given, we read the following:

That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—

Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;

That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. (D. & C. 121:36-37; 41-46.)

If you can find more sublime thoughts anywhere in literature than expressed in that great revelation, please let me know where they are.

#### PRESERVATION OF FREEDOM

In conclusion, I repeat that no greater immediate responsibility rests upon members of the Church, upon all citizens of this Republic and of neighboring Republics than to protect the freedom vouchsafed by the Constitution of the United States.

Let us, by exercising our privileges under the Constitution—

(1) Preserve our right to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience,

(2) Preserve the right to work when and where we choose. No free man should be compelled to pay tribute in order to realize this God-given privilege. Read in the Doctrine and Covenants this statement:

... it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another. (*Ibid.*, 101:79.)

(3) Feel free to plan and to reap without the handicap of bureaucratic interference.

(4) Devote our time, means, and life if necessary, to hold inviolate those laws which will secure to each individual the free exercise of conscience, the right and control of property, and the protection of life.

To sum up this whole question: In these days of uncertainty and unrest, liberty-loving people's greatest responsibility and paramount duty is to preserve and proclaim the freedom of the individual, his relationship to Deity, and, (repeating the message of our President, to which I subscribe with all my soul) the necessity of obedience to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ—only thus will mankind find peace and happiness:

... If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32.)

God enlighten our minds to comprehend our responsibility, to proclaim the truth and maintain freedom throughout the world, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### ELDER THORPE B. ISAACSON

*Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric*

President Smith, President Clark, President McKay, my dear brothers and sisters, friends of the radio and television audience, I