

Sunday, October 2

Third Day

**President David O. McKay:**

Elder S. Dilworth Young of the First Council of Seventy has just concluded speaking.

The Choir and Congregation will now sing: "For the Strength of the Hills," after which we shall hear Elder Ezra Taft Benson.

The Combined Choruses and the con-

gregation joined in singing the hymn, "For the Strength of the Hills."

**President David O. McKay:**

We acknowledge the receipt of a dozen or more telegrams from those who gathered last evening in Priesthood meeting in the various parts of the west. Their numbers will add to the 22,000 reported already.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will now speak to us.

**ELDER EZRA TAFT BENSON**

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**M**Y BELOVED brethren and sisters and friends: I thank God for that stirring Mormon hymn which we have just sung. ["For the Strength of the Hills."]

In deep humility I stand before you this morning. I seek an interest in your faith and prayers, and the blessings of our Heavenly Father, that I might have his Spirit to sustain me.

This is a great honor, a sobering responsibility, and a sacred privilege. I thrill with this great conference and the messages that have been given. Although I will have to get part of the messages through the written word, I am very grateful to the Lord that I was able to attend part of the meetings yesterday and to be here this morning. It became necessary to attend an important cabinet meeting in Washington on Friday and to stop in Denver en route to Salt Lake City.

I would like to say to you, my brothers and sisters and friends, that I am very happy to report, based on that visit and on a telephone conversation five minutes before this session began, that the President of the United States continues to make excellent progress. He has been informed of the spontaneous prayers that have ascended to our Heavenly Father in the sessions of this great conference, and more particularly the prayer which was offered in his behalf by the General Authorities of the Church as they surrounded the sacred altar in the temple in fasting and prayer

on Thursday. Knowing the President as a great and good man—a man of faith and deep spirituality—I know he would want me to express to all within the sound of my voice his gratitude for the faith and prayers which have been offered.

I have been deeply impressed the past few years with the growth in spirit, fellowship, and brotherhood which seems to be in evidence in the Church. For the past three years I have been traveling approximately one hundred thousand miles each year. Almost everywhere I have gone I have been greeted by members of the Church, either at the airport or at meetings—which they were not obligated to attend—and always there were expressions of love and confidence and prayers in my behalf, and an expression of interest and pride in the growth of the Church in all the world. I believe I have also found evidence of increased faith and devotion.

It is quite appropriate, it seems to me, that much reference has been made in this conference to conditions in Europe and the great events that have taken place there in recent months: the dedication of the temple at Bern; the breaking of ground for a new temple in England; the announcement of a possible third temple.

Reference has been made to the European tour of the choir, the faith of the Saints, and the blessings which they enjoy today compared with only a few years ago—yes, just a short decade ago. I am very grateful to President McKay

and the other members of the Presidency that Sister Benson and I were invited to attend that glorious dedication in Bern, Switzerland. I think I have never felt in all my life the veil quite so thin as it was three weeks ago this morning as we met in the opening session of that dedication service in that lovely spot in the house of the Lord, and as we listened to the prayer offered by President McKay and the remarks which preceded that prayer. Surely he was inspired, and surely we were all uplifted and convinced beyond any shadow of a doubt that the action taken by the First Presidency in extending temples into Europe had the benediction and approval of our Heavenly Father. I shall never forget that glorious event! To me it was the most important event that has transpired in Europe in 118 years since the gospel was first taken to those shores. I am grateful to the Lord that my official duties permitted me to attend that dedication, almost in a miraculous manner, because had it not been for the postponement of a week I probably would not have had the opportunity. I think, President McKay, that the postponement was in part an answer to my prayers.

Naturally I was deeply impressed with the contrast between conditions in Europe in 1946 when I was there last and conditions as we find them now. I have been going back in memory, off and on ever since the dedication, reviewing in my mind the conditions that existed there when I went on an emergency mission in response to the First Presidency's call in 1946, and conditions as we saw them and as others saw them on this recent tour of the choir and the visit of the other brethren and the dedication of the temple. Surely the God of heaven has blessed Europe and the people of those countries. It almost seemed impossible for me to realize that in 1946, while traveling over 60,000 miles, most of it by army planes — unheated planes with bucket seats—in jeeps, and some of it in wooden railway coaches and on army trains—that much of Europe was in complete economic and spiritual collapse; it seemed almost impossible to realize the change that had come about,

the comforts that are available now which were entirely absent then. Then there were railway stations that were bombed and blasted, schedules that were irregular and undependable, whole cities laid waste, service disrupted, and business paralyzed. Now everything seems to be in order—no more sleeping on straw beds or living on "K" rations. Everything seems promising and peaceful.

The people too have changed—no more shivering with cold; no more evidence of malnutrition; no more people poorly clothed and in rags; no more hungry and starving people, especially little children. No more great streams of refugees crowding the country roads with all their earthly belongings on their backs; no more great hordes of displaced persons, families broken, people discouraged, bewildered, frustrated, sick at heart! Yes, there has come a great change, and I thank God that his blessings have been showered upon those nations, particularly those that have suffered so much because of World War II.

I would like to mention this morning just one simple experience to illustrate not only the changes that have come about, but also something of the influence and the power of music and the Tabernacle Choir. I have wanted to relate this to the Tabernacle Choir ever since I returned. Even though they are not all here this morning, I want to mention it.

You will recall the accounts of the bombing of that great city of Hamburg, a great and proud city, a great industrial center. When we went there in the spring of 1946, it seemed as if the whole city was a shambles. There was nothing but rubble. There were no streetcars operating, no bus lines—all services were broken. Everything seemed to be broken to pieces. As I remember they estimated that the city was over seventy percent destroyed. A thousand planes had swooped down upon that city night after night. During one terrible night—and I heard the account firsthand from many of our faithful Saints—during one terrible night five of our six places of meeting were destroyed. We lost, as I recall, twenty-six members of the priesthood.

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Then there followed one of the best demonstrations of the spirit of the welfare program that I think this Church affords: The district president called the Saints together and they brought such food, bedding, and clothing as they could salvage and put it at the feet of the district presidency for distribution among the members of the Church according to need.

While this experience was still fresh in our minds, we were meeting at the city of Herne with the Saints of the battered Ruhr industrial area for their first district conference after the war. The meeting was being held in an old bombed-out schoolhouse. I do not recall exactly how many people were there, but there were several hundred. We had set the meeting for eleven o'clock in order to give them time to walk the long distances many of them had to come, some of them carrying babies in arms because there were no public conveyances available, and most of them had worn out their bicycles or were unable to get repair parts.

The district presidency had arranged, with our co-operation, a special surprise for the congregation that morning. From somewhere they had obtained an old radio which they had placed under cover in one corner of the building. At a certain moment in that service, which I shall never forget, the controls of that radio were turned to Radio Stuttgart, the American army radio station operated by a Mormon serviceman, and we heard strains of the Tabernacle Choir float out over the audience in that stirring and beautiful pioneer song, "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

After the second number, "O My Father," had been sung, I think there was not a dry eye among the adults in that audience. I saw before me an audience literally melted to tears through the singing of Mormon hymns by our great choir. It seemed as if all the cares of those suffering Saints were forgotten that morning. Even during the thirty-minute lunch period—when the most common item for lunch was a mixture of cracked grain and a little water such as we used to feed the baby chicks—even during the lunch period they talked of their blessings and expressed their gratitude for the gospel.

Then as we left that evening after the second session, the common expression was, as we bade them good-bye, "All is gut, Brother Benson." Well, all is good now surely. With the coming of the temples, with the material restoration that has come to those countries, and with what I hope is a deepened interest in spiritual matters—to which the temple will contribute in great measure—I hope too there will be a great increased interest in things spiritual, that those nations might be preserved in peace.

May God bless those wonderful people who will be recipients of the blessings of the temple, provided they prepare themselves for those blessings by living the gospel. And I sincerely hope and pray that not only they, but also all of us everywhere, will make that preparation that we may enjoy the richest blessings known to men and women in this world which are tied up with the sacred ordinances and blessings of the temples of God. While I recognize that there are many Saints who are still isolated and who will be unable, probably, to reach the temples, this movement in Europe which I am sure was made under inspiration will bring the temples closer to many thousands of our Father's children.

To those who are still isolated may I say this: In my humble judgment if you continue to live the gospel and keep the commandments, and keep yourselves pure and unspotted from the world, the Lord will in some way make up to you that which you seem to be losing because it may not be possible for you to go to the temple. You will not be deprived of blessings which your lives merit.

Now, my brethren and sisters, much has been said regarding the attitude of the world toward the Church and kingdom of which we are a part. It seems as if we have been accepted, as it were, by the world. Much of praise, much of commendation, many favorable comments in the press and elsewhere have been made regarding the Church in recent years. Sister Benson and I were delighted as we traveled officially through six countries of Europe. We were delighted to find as we visited with officials of governments and agri-

cultural leaders, men of prominence, in dinners and receptions, and in informal meetings, that everywhere there was favorable comment regarding the Church and its people. Many, many were the conversations we held regarding the Church and its program.

But I would like to raise this warning, my brothers and sisters. In this period of apparent goodwill—good feeling toward the Church—when it seems as if we have no great obstacles any more as we once had, there should be deep concern. In my judgment, in the hour of our success is our greatest danger. And apparently this is an hour of great success. No more persecution—persecution which once tended to drive us together and make us united! Now we seem to be accepted by the world. Will it mean disunity? Will it mean that we will rest on our laurels and sit back, as it were, and think that all is well in Zion? I think there is real danger in this period, this period of praise and commendation. I am happy for it, provided we be careful, that we be on our guard. The praise of the world will not save us. It will not exalt us in the celestial kingdom. Only the living of the principles of the gospel will bring us salvation and exaltation. And so I hope that our performance in living the gospel will be equal to the commendation and the praise we are receiving, that our performance will at least equal our reputation, and we have a good reputation. God grant that we may merit all the good things that have been said about us, and that more good things might be accurately said about us in the future.

I realize that the devil is alert. He is the enemy of this work. He is the enemy of all righteousness, and I know that he is clever, that he never takes a holiday. He works overtime. He is ingenious. I am confident he will devise new ways to fight this work. We may not know just what form those schemes will take, but we must be vigilant.

President McKay, I thought, very wisely said last night that should opposition come the best way for us to meet it is to live to prove false any false accusations. With all my heart I endorse that sentiment.

But there is real danger, my brothers and sisters. There is real danger that during this period we may let down our guard, as it were; that we may be tempted to join with the world and adopt some of their standards against which we have been warned by the Lord. I think this is particularly true in the social field. Only recently there came to my attention the fact that a group of young women, wives, some of whose husbands are employed in the government of the United States and of men who had attained a certain amount of prominence in their respective fields, who had more or less concluded that in order to be accepted by the world, in order that their husbands might get ahead in the world, they would have to let down just a little in their standards. They had concluded they would have to serve cocktails and coffee in their homes when friends came.

I want to testify to you, my brothers and sisters, and particularly to the young married couples of this Church, that such a conclusion is not only unwise and unjustified, but it is also dangerous and can lead only to heartache and disappointment and a loss of faith. I am confident that now more than ever before, possibly, is a time for us to live the gospel, to keep the commandments, to maintain every standard of the church, and to be true to our covenants. By so doing we not only guarantee and safeguard our own future and our salvation and exaltation, but we will also tend to safeguard the future of our own descendants and assure to a much greater extent our own success in our chosen fields, no matter what those fields might be.

I think it was Nephi who said that the time would come when there would be a tendency for people to become pacified; they would be lulled away into a false security; there would be those who would be at ease in Zion, saying, "Zion prospers, all is well"; and that the devil would cheat their souls and lead them carefully down to hell. (See 2 Nephi 28:21.)

I think we need to be on the alert today to see that that does not happen in the Church. I had occasion many times on this last tour through Europe, as I have had before, to thank the

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Lord for the Word of Wisdom. Many were the conversations we had regarding the Church, and particularly those my good wife had, as we sat at dinners, luncheons, etc., and it came to their attention that we did not drink liquor, smoke, etc. Immediately they wanted to know more about the Church, and always there was commendation for our standards. Never once was there any embarrassment. Always there was a feeling of gratitude and thanksgiving on our part at the end of the day or evening because of the standards which the God of heaven has provided in his Church.

This was the same no matter how high the station of the officials with whom we met. And I say to you, it always will be true of men of goodwill, men of character. As Latter-day Saints we cannot afford to let down our standards, to refuse to live the gospel completely and fully.

God bless us, my brethren and sisters, that we may continue a peculiar people, as Peter said of the saints of old. He referred to them as a peculiar people. So are we, and may we continue so. May we who hold the priesthood of God be unafraid to step forward and provide the righteous leadership which is necessary in our various fields of activities! This is a time for demonstration, my brethren of the priesthood, to let the world know something of the fruits of Mormonism, something of the testimonies which we bear, something of our faith and our determination to live the gospel.

Yes, let us do what is right, and we shall have no occasion to worry. I testify to you with all my soul that this work in which we are engaged is the truth. God has again spoken from the heavens. His work is upon the earth. Joseph Smith was in very deed a Prophet of God. The same power and authority which he bore is now in the hands of President David O. McKay.

God help us to realize these facts and to heed the counsel of our great leader and those who serve as leaders in the priesthood everywhere, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve has just concluded speaking.

The closing song by the Combined Singing Mothers Choruses will be, "Still, Still With Thee," conducted by Sister Florence Jepperson Madsen. The closing prayer will be offered by Elder William Jackson O'Bryant, president of the Idaho Falls Stake, following which this Conference will stand adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

"Still, Still With Thee," by the Singing Mothers.

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Selection by the Singing Mothers Choruses, "Still, Still With Thee."

### THIRD DAY

#### AFTERNOON MEETING

The concluding session of the Conference was held at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, October 2, with President David O. McKay presiding and conducting the services.

The choral music for this session was furnished by the Singing Mothers Choruses, under the direction of Florence Jepperson Madsen, with Frank W. Asper at the organ.

President David O. McKay:

The music for this, the seventh session of the 126th Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will be rendered by the Combined Singing Mothers' Choruses from Twenty-one Stakes in the Bannock and East Idaho Regions, and from Star Valley, under the direction of