

President Spencer W. Kimball

Beloved brethren and sisters, we are nearing the close of this semiannual conference which we have attended, and have enjoyed I hope.

Area conferences

Some few years ago we established a new policy. As the Church grew large, populous, and far-reaching, and realizing the cost of transportation from the far reaches of the earth to this conference, realizing the limitation on the facilities here even—for we had long since filled this building—we determined to take the conferences to the people.

And so the first was held in Manchester, England; the second was held in Mexico; the next year we went to Munich; last year we went to Stockholm; and this year we have been to Brazil and to Argentina and the states in South America.

We have been highly gratified with the reception. We have taken a group of the General Authorities and we have held for the local people a conference somewhat similar to this one. We have sustained the authorities of the Church; we have given to them the benefits that they might have received had they come to this conference.

We expect to continue this program and to go to different parts of the world and take the messages and keep in close touch with the great numbers of people who are congregating in the far ends of the Church.

Recently we were in Brazil and then Argentina on successive weekends, and we came back with our hearts filled with gratitude at the attitudes and the spirits and the testimonies of those good people who came in large numbers, at some sacrifice, to those centers to hear the gospel from the leaders of the Church.

Temple in South America

When we were in Brazil—Sao Paulo—we announced to those people that, subject to their willingness and their readiness to assist, we would build a holy temple in South America for all the South Americans at that time. Hopefully, in later years, other temples might be built for those who are farther away. The people received it with gratitude and great happiness, tears of joy and thankfulness.

They have been coming as they could accumulate the funds for that long trip to the United States. They have been coming two, four, and six at a time to receive their endowments in the holy temple and to be sealed to their companions and to their families, and so to realize that they could have a temple close to home was a great joy to them.

As we talked about financing it—and we always give the local people the privilege of contributing toward it and the body of the Church, of course, makes the larger contribution—they were anxious to do so. They were glad to pledge what they could toward building the temple.

I was handed a little note this morning from one of the brethren who has spent much time in Brazil, and he said, "It has been reported to me that over 140 Brazilian members had already booked passage to come to this conference and to go to the temple. After you made the announcement to build a temple in Brazil, 70 cancelled their passage and pledged the fare to the building of the temple." It runs into tens and tens of thousands of dollars, as you would recognize.

We think that a wonderful demonstration. We are sad that they need to wait any longer for their temple privileges; but to the young people,

time is not quite as crowding as it is to some of us older ones.

Testimonies and sermons

During this conference, you have heard many beautiful testimonies and sermons of great strength. We hope that the listening audience—which could run into the millions—may have been listening with pure hearts and receptive minds and that some of them may wish to join us in this great congregation now that is running into the millions.

We know that it is true. We testify that to all the world. We hope that they will set aside any prejudices they might have had, or misconceptions, and that they might come to the fold of Jesus Christ where it is pure and undefiled.

During this conference the Brethren have spoken upon many subjects; and, all in all, they have covered quite well the fundamentals of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As we sat in a press conference a few days ago, I was asked by the pressmen, "What situation exists in our society today which causes you the greatest concern?" We had already discussed the problem of growth, for we are growing so rapidly it is a little difficult to keep the leadership ahead of the people; but we are, thankfully, making headway.

Story of Belshazzar

As I thought quickly over this matter, I attempted to answer the question, and I recalled the time when the world leadership was based in Assyria and Babylonia. I remember the Old Testament story of Belshazzar—spoken of by President Romney in the priesthood meeting last night—the son and successor of the famous Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, being the last reigning king before the conquest of Cyrus the Great. We remembered the unholy thefts of Nebuchadnezzar, when he defiled the sacred temple of Solomon in Jerusalem and took from that temple

many costly and precious serving items. I noted that Belshazzar the king made a great feast, with a thousand of his lords. He drank wine before the thousand and with the thousand. To feed a thousand persons at a banquet is a herculean effort.

Not satisfied with the theft of the golden and silver vessels which his father had taken from the holy temple, which had already been dedicated to the Lord for His purposes, Belshazzar took the stolen vessels and filled them with intoxicating liquor, and invited into his chambers, not only the thousand of his lords, but his princes, his wives, and his concubines. His guests ate and drank, probably gave toasts to the gods of gold, the gods of silver, the gods of brass, the gods of iron, the gods of wood, and the gods of stone. (See Dan. 5:1-4.)

History repeated

I wondered if history were repeating itself, as I pondered and thought over the condition of our own world today and its permissiveness. In reading the media today I think I see some striking and frightening similarities in the two ages. I read of great feasts in many places, of many community leaders and social leaders and VIPs in large numbers. I read of the local lords and their wives and their mistresses. I read of their drinking and their drunkenness and their extravagances and their immoralities—their shame—and then I whisper to myself, "History is repeating itself."

The day of repentance

I weary of discussing too much the matter of the moral situation in our world. But I read in the Doctrine and Covenants where the Lord said, "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation; keep my commandments and assist to bring forth my work, ac-

ording to my commandments." (D&C 6:9.)

Then he said, "And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

"Wherefore, ye are called to cry repentance unto this people." (D&C 18:13-14.) As the early Saints were going into Missouri, the word of the Lord came to the leaders:

"Let them preach by the way, and bear testimony of the truth in all places, and call upon the rich, the high and the low, and the poor to repent.

"And let them build up churches, inasmuch as the inhabitants of the earth will repent." (D&C 58:47-48.)

And so today, I think, I fear, it is the day of repentance—a day for people to take stock of their situations and to change their lives where that is necessary.

The commandment came to the leaders in this day as it came direct from the Lord to Simon Peter in the days of old: "Wherefore, I give unto you a commandment that ye go among this people, and say unto them, like unto mine apostle of old, whose name was Peter. . . ." (D&C 49:11.) I find that Peter the apostle constantly called upon the people to cleanse their lives and repent from their transgressions.

"Dearly beloved," he said, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

"Having your conversation [or your conduct] honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Pet. 2:11-12.)

I read of the common practice of the associations of men and women not marriage partners; and they are claiming long and loudly that marriage is no longer necessary. And apparently almost without shame do they live together in a sexual partnership without marriage. Has God changed his laws? Or has puny, irresponsible, presumptuous man dared to change the laws of

God? Was sin yesterday? Did the devil reign in the hearts of men only in the far-away past?

Sodom and Gomorrah

Abraham knew that the cities of the plains—Sodom and Gomorrah and other places—were wicked cities, housing wicked, godless people, saying with Cain, "Who is the Lord that I should know him?" (Moses 5:16.) He was aware that destruction of those cities was imminent; but in his compassion for his fellowman, he begged and pleaded with the Lord, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city," will you spare the others of the city? (See Gen. 18:24.) That pleading being granted, came Abraham again and prayed that the cities would be saved if 45 were found, or 40 or 30 or 20 or down to ten, but apparently there could not be found even ten, in those vicious cities, who were righteous. (See Gen. 18:24-32.)

The evil continued. The sin was too well entrenched. They had laughed and joked about a destruction. The transgressions for which Sodom had apparently been renowned continued on. In fact, the people wanted to take advantage of the pure angel men they had seen come into the city. The vicious men pressed and would have broken down the doors to get to them. (See Gen. 19:4-11.)

Everything was done that could be done by Abraham to save the city, but it had become so depraved and wanton that to save it was impossible.

"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

"And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground." (Gen. 19:24-25.)

Toleration of sin

Again we see history repeating itself. When we see the pornography, the

adulterous practices, homosexuality gone rampant, the looseness and permissiveness of an apparently increasing proportion of the people, we say the days of Satan have returned and history seems to repeat itself.

When we see the depravity of numerous people of our own society in their determination to force upon people vulgar presentations, filthy communications, unnatural practices, we wonder, has Satan reached forth with his wicked, evil hand to pull into his forces the people of this earth? Do we not have enough good people left to stamp out the evil which threatens our world? Why do we continue to compromise with evil and why do we continue to tolerate sin?

God the same today

Recently I came across a statement of the presidency of the Church in another day, about six presidents ago, and I should like to have read many of the lines from that statement, for it brings to our mind that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the commandments that he gave to the early prophets in other millennia and to the prophets in the day of the Savior, and to prophets of this day, bring to our minds fully and conclusively that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We do not believe in situation-itis; we do not go with the people who think that this is a different age, this is a different time, these people are more enlightened, that was for the old times. Always the Lord will hold to his statements that he has given through the ages, and he will expect men to respect themselves, to respect their wives, and the wives to respect their husbands, and to respect their families, and to live righteously, as he has repeated thousands of times through the ages.

And so as I talked to the press, that thought came to my mind. What can we do that we aren't doing? How far can we go? What changes can we make that

will guarantee righteousness in this world? Because if we don't, it looks as if destruction could come, as it came to the Babylonians or as it came in a little different way to Sodom and Gomorrah and other cities.

So we feel very strongly about this; and that's why we continue to preach about it; why we caution our children and teach them; why we caution our youth; why we caution our married folks to let marriage be a beautiful, sanctified situation.

Closing testimony

Now, my brothers and sisters, as we close this conference, we hope you return to your homes with new spirituality to a greater degree, that you will take to your families, to your friends, to your wards and stakes and branches the testimonies that you have received and the good feelings that have come into your hearts as you have listened to the Brethren as they spoke and bore witness.

I want to close with my testimony. I know that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ lives. I know that he loves. I know that he inspires. I know that he guides us. And I know that he loves us. I know that he can love or he can feel greatly aggrieved when he sees us getting off the path which he has marked so plainly and made so straight.

And I bear this witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Master. Amen.

President Marion G. Romney

We have been privileged to hear as our concluding speaker of the conference President Spencer W. Kimball, president and prophet of the Church.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Oakland Stake high priests quorum for the beautiful calla lilies on the stand, and, for the sweet peas, Brother D. M. Haws of Mesa, Arizona.

We have been privileged this

afternoon, and honored, to have with us Brigadier General Thomas M. Groome, Jr., Deputy Chief of Chaplains of the United States Air Force.

President Kimball has received this telegram: "President Spencer W. Kimball, Salt Lake City, Utah. The more than 20,000 saints thrilled as they listened to the words of a prophet by way of the first conference broadcast to the Philippines. Raymond L. Goodson, President, Phillipines Manila Mission."

On behalf of all who have listened to the singing during the sessions of this General Conference, we express our appreciation and sincere thanks to the members of the Tabernacle Choir for once again giving so generously of their time to bring us the beautiful and inspirational music heard in this conference.

We are deeply grateful to the members and conductors of other choirs, and to the organists who have generously rendered the beautiful and inspiring music for this conference.

We thank all who have contributed in various ways to the success and inspiration of this conference, especially the General Authorities, who have delivered such timely and inspiring messages.

We appreciate the attention given by local and national press representatives, and by representatives of radio and television in reporting the sessions of the conference.

We thank our city officials for the

cooperation given; the city traffic officers for their courteous and efficient handling of the increased traffic; the Fire Department and Red Cross, who have been on hand to render service throughout the conference.

We are grateful to the Tabernacle ushers for seating the great audiences of these conference sessions in such a courteous manner.

We again express appreciation to the owners and managers of the many radio and television stations who have given public service time to carry sessions of this conference from coast to coast in the United States, to Hawaii, Alaska, Mexico, Central America, Canada, Samoa, and the Philippines; and by satellite to Australia and countries of South America.

The Tabernacle Choir, directed by Jerold Ottley, will now render, "O Divine Redeemer."

The benediction will then be offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the First Council of Seventy, following which this conference will stand adjourned for six months.

The Tabernacle Choir sang "O Divine Redeemer."

The benediction was offered by Elder Rex D. Pinegar of the First Council of Seventy.

The conference was adjourned for six months.

WELFARE SERVICES SESSION

Saturday, April 5, 1975,—7:00 a.m.

A Welfare Services session was held in connection with General Conference on Saturday morning, April 5, 1975, at 7 o'clock. Invited to attend this meeting were General Authorities, regional representatives, stake presidencies, high councilors involved in welfare work, bishoprics, and stake and ward Relief Society presidencies and

others responsible for operating welfare production projects. President Spencer W. Kimball was present and presided. Presiding Bishop Victor L. Brown conducted the meeting. Speakers at this meeting included Bishop Victor L. Brown, Bishop H. Burke Peterson, Bishop Vaughn J. Featherstone of the Presiding Bishopric, Sister Barbara B.