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President Marion G. Romney

The Tabernacle Choir has sung, "Lovely Appear Over the Mountains."

It will now be our privilege to hear from President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church.

President N. Eldon Tanner

First Counselor in the First Presidency

Wherever I go, people seem to be interested in hearing about the area conferences we hold throughout the world. Today I should like to tell briefly why we hold them, how they are conducted, how the people respond, and the effect they are having in the different areas. I shall deal specifically with the area conferences held in Europe this summer.

Purpose of Area Conferences

President Kimball has explained that the Church has grown so rapidly throughout the world that it is no longer practicable to limit our general conferences to those held in April and October at the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City. First, it would be impossible to accommodate all the people who could come from around the world; and also, many who would like to come are unable to. So we are taking the conferences to the people.

Area conferences are held in strategic locations throughout the world in order that the president may meet the people, and the people in turn may see the prophet and the other General Authorities and their wives face to face. The primary purposes are to take the gospel to the people in their own environment and in their own language, encourage the Saints in their duties, increase their faith and devotion, and raise the voice of warning.

Though we now have members in 75 countries, we have Church organizations in only 58, where many different languages are spoken. And as of this date we have held ten series of area conferences in 28 different countries, with attendance ranging from 1,600 to 16,000 in each session—with a total of nearly 200,000 attending from 34 countries throughout the world.

Usually attending from headquarters are two members of the First Presidency, two members of the Quorum of the Twelve, and two or three other General Authorities, including the area supervisor of the area in which the conference is held, together with the wives of all.

Format

The format usually followed in each conference is as follows:

An evening cultural program, representative of the countries in the area, which have been extremely well done and exhibit the great talent of the local members.

A mothers and daughters meeting, at which talks are usually given by wives of the First Presidency, by a member of the First Presidency, by other General Authorities, and by a local sister. The speakers emphasize the great role women have in the Church and its auxiliary organizations and in the community, and the great influence they have in the lives of their families.

They are reminded that they could have no greater responsibility or satisfying experience than to be copartners with God in the divine plan of bringing his spirit children into mortal existence, to teach them the gospel, and to help prepare them to go back into the presence of our Heavenly Father.

There is also a priesthood meeting for fathers and sons.

At each conference there is a special dinner where the General Authorities and their wives have the opportunity of meeting and mingling with the priesthood leaders and their wives from the stakes and missions. There are also general sessions, usually addressed by members of the First Presidency, other General Authorities, and local leaders.

Those who attend

People attending these conferences come from villages and towns or cities where in every case the members of the Church are in a minority and often few in number. Many of them have traveled hundreds of miles and some for several days, and have made great sacrifices in order to attend.

The area supervisors attending (who are also General Authorities) always speak, and at this time I should like to acknowledge the splendid service they are giving in their respective areas. Their understanding of the people and the locale is most beneficial to all, and their messages are always inspiring. Likewise the local people rise to great heights as they demonstrate their faith and keen understanding of the gospel, with a determination to live and help others live its teachings.

Music is furnished by local combined choirs and choruses, made up of from 100 to 300 members, many of whom have traveled great distances and practiced many hours to give the best performance possible. I certainly wish to congratulate them. I am always greatly impressed with the fine music

directors coming from the different communities, and there are many emotional moments and many tears shed as our conferences conclude and they sing such songs as "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" and "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

We often hold press conferences in the cities we visit which focus attention on the Church and the fruits of the gospel. The favorable reports always emphasize that Mormons who live the gospel are healthier, happier, more successful, and live longer. This publicity, together with the spiritual meetings, results in increased faith and devotion, enthusiasm and activity.

New members

It is a joy to talk with new converts to the Church. One woman told me how thrilled she was because she had never before realized that God was a living, personal being, or that she was a spirit child of God; that she would have a literal resurrection, and by living the gospel and keeping the commandments she could enjoy eternal life in the presence of God.

Another, who had lost a child in death, said everything seemed hopeless until she learned through the teachings of the gospel that she could be sealed to her husband by divine authority for time and all eternity, that they could have their little one sealed to them, and that children born to such a marriage would be part of an eternal family unit.

Messages presented

Our messages to these devoted members is plain and simple as we speak to them—through interpreters where necessary. I point out to them that they have a great responsibility to make their influence felt for good in their respective areas. They must not be discouraged, but should live exemplary lives, teach their families to keep the commandments, and spread the gospel message to their neighbors.

In referring to their minority status as Church members I like to remind them that there were only six registered members when the Church was organized in 1830, and at that time the Lord told them to take the gospel to all the world. This must have been a discouraging challenge, but in the face of hardships and persecution they set out to meet it; and in spite of being driven from place to place, having their homes burned, their chattels taken, and their temples destroyed, for the gospel's sake they remained true to the faith. Today we have over 3½ million members, and more than 24,000 missionaries to help spread the gospel message.

I remind them of the great sacrifices made by those early pioneers who had to leave their comfortable homes in Nauvoo and travel through the wilderness, during which journey they suffered death and deprivation. But knowing they belonged to the church of Jesus Christ, they carried on, remembering, as we all should, that our Lord and Savior himself was persecuted and finally crucified, giving his life for us that we might enjoy immortality and have eternal life with him if we accept and live his teachings.

Our members need to understand about the apostasy and the restoration and have a testimony of the divine mission of Joseph Smith. They must understand and live the Word of Wisdom and be fully converted to the concept that the Spirit of God cannot dwell in an unclean body.

Chastity emphasized

I wish it were possible for me to convey to you the sweet spirit and inspiring words of all the speakers, but since time will not permit, I should like to give you some excerpts from talks given at our last series of conferences.

President Kimball, in his sweet and loving manner, expressed greetings and pronounced the blessings of the Lord upon the people. He urged them to

keep the commandments, to live honest and upright lives and be an example to the world.

One talk to which I should like to refer was on chastity. The president spoke plainly and in a way that the people not only could understand, but could not misunderstand. He used the analogy of a ship on a stormy sea, and said that many ships had been lost, with their cargo and passengers, through collision with other ships, icebergs, and rocky shoals. He explained that a new signaling device was being perfected that would detect any danger of collision and keep signaling to the captain until the danger was averted.

He said our young people are traveling oceans where great disasters can come unless warnings are heeded, and added:

"As a leader of the Church, and in a measure being responsible for youth and their well-being, I raise my voice loud and strong and unflinchingly to say to the youth: 'You are in a hazardous area and perhaps in a period of your lives where there are some dangers. Tighten your belts, hold on, and you can survive this turbulence.' When we have been warned we should listen and put it into our lives and be sure that we avoid the shoals and the rocks and the danger points."

The President spoke very strongly against fornication, adultery, and other perversions. He quoted Paul, who cautioned not to "company with fornicators. . . . Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (1 Cor. 5:9, 13.)

President Kimball continued: "Oh, if our young people could learn this basic lesson—to always keep good company, to never be found with those who tend to lower their standards! We must repeat what we have said many times: Fornication with all its accompanying sins, great and small, was evil and wholly condemned by the Lord in Adam's day, in Moses' day, in Paul's

day, and in 1976. The Church has no tolerance for any kind of perversions."

He emphasized the gravity of such sins, but opened the door for forgiveness as he talked about true repentance. He quoted from the Doctrine and Covenants as follows:

"Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

"By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them." (D&C 58:42-43.)

Then he said:

"That the Church's stand on morality may be understood, we declare firmly and unalterably it is not an outworn garment, faded, old-fashioned, and threadbare. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and his covenants and doctrines are unchanging: Old values are upheld by the Church, not because they are old, but rather because through the ages they have proved right.

"Improper sex can bring only unhappiness, disappointment, disgust, and usually rejection. In one dark, unglorious hour, lives can be shattered. Chastity lost is gone forever, and virtue stolen cannot be returned. Our final words are those of the Prophet Isaiah: 'Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.'" (Isa. 52:11.)

Listen, learn, labor and love

Elder Thomas S. Monson described an area conference as a time to ponder, a time to pray, a time to reflect, and a time to resolve. He spoke of free agency, saying:

"This gift of agency, this right to choose, is overwhelming in its importance, everlasting in its significance. What choices will you make? From this area conference let us not return to our homes unchanged. Rather let us stride from this building with our heads uplifted, our minds filled, our hearts touched, and our souls stirred."

He made suggestions to be incorporated into each life to achieve the goals set, and the first was to *listen*. He emphasized the importance of listening to the Lord, to the prophets, to parents, and to the still, small voice which whispers to each of us. He asked that each in attendance "close his ears to that lilting melody sent forth by that pious piper of sin, even Lucifer, and rather listen carefully to the voice of truth."

He gave as a second suggestion that we must also *learn*. Then he quoted from James: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22.) We must learn from the scriptures and from good books, he told them, and also from the lives of good men, such as the General Authorities.

The third suggestion was that we should *labor*. He reminded us of Nephi's declaration: "I will go and *do* the things which the Lord hath commanded." (1 Ne. 3:7, italics added.) He told us to share our testimonies through our labors in building the kingdom of God.

His final suggestion was to *love*. He told us what the Savior said to the lawyer about the first and great commandment to love God, and the second which was "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:39.)

He concluded by saying:

"Soon this historic series of conference sessions will come to a close. The throngs will leave, the lights will dim, the strains from the organ will fade and disappear; but you and I, we will never again be the same. We have heard a prophet's voice, even that of President Spencer W. Kimball. We have worshipped together in love. We have felt our Heavenly Father's divine approval. Hopefully each has decided: I will listen; I will learn; I will labor; I will love. To assist us in our determined course the ever-present help of the Lord is assured. 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice,

and open the door, I will come in to him.'” (Rev. 3:20.)

“Voice of warning”

Beautifully exemplifying the theme of our conferences was a talk given by Elder Boyd K. Packer on “the voice of warning.” He began by quoting from the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein the Lord said:

“The voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days.

“And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them.” (D&C 1:4-5.)

He then referred to the recent collapse of the Teton Dam in Idaho, and graphically described what happened on that occasion as houses, churches, and whole towns vanished. In all, 790 homes were destroyed, and 800 others were severely damaged, as were schools, churches, business houses, etc. About 7,800 people were in the immediate path of the flood, and farther down the valley another 25,000 or 30,000 were in danger. I quote:

“But what happened to the people that Saturday morning? There was a miracle! There were several deaths, but only six of them by drowning. How could such terrible destruction take place with such a little loss of life?

“The answer: they were warned. A number of them had been subjected to a restless, anxious feeling that morning, and so responded instantly when the warning came. They heeded the warning. Latter-day Saints pay attention to warnings. They have read the revelation which states:

“‘For this is a day of warning, and not a day of many words. For I, the Lord, am not to be mocked in the last days.’” (D&C 63:58.)

Elder Packer stated that by scientific calculations 5,300 lives might have been lost, but there were so few. And it was not a case of going upstairs

onto the roof. The houses were completely washed away, and most of the people had miles to go to reach high ground. They were saved because they heeded a warning and then warned their neighbors.

He quoted again from the revelations: “And let those whom they have warned in their traveling call on the Lord, and ponder the warning in their hearts which they have received. . . . Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor.” (D&C 88:71, 81.)

Then he said: “That is how they were saved. Everyone, when warned, raised the voice of warning to his family and to his neighbors. . . . Do you think they were casual about it? That is not the way it happened. The warnings were shouted and screamed. Horns were honked. Every means was used to sound the warning. ‘Come out of the valley. A flood is coming!’

“Of the six drowned, one stood just below the dam and had no chance. The others either failed to heed the warning or went back to get something. Every man who was warned, warned his neighbor. There are chapter after chapter of miracles. The whole episode stands as a mighty miracle. And the whole disaster looms itself as a warning.”

Elder Packer concluded his account in these words:

“It is Saturday morning in the Lord’s scheme of things, and we go complacently about our work, concerned with the ordinary cares of life. But many of us carry a restless, anxious feeling. And in these conferences we have heard the prophet and the apostles raising a voice of warning. ‘Come out of the valley,’ they are saying. ‘Come to higher ground. Come away from the flood of mischief, and evil, and spiritual disaster.’ And I repeat, it behooves every man who has been warned, to warn his neighbor.”

Warn our neighbors

And so, my brothers and sisters and friends, the main purpose of area conferences, the main purpose of general conferences, the main purpose of *this* conference, is to sound the voice of warning. You who hear and are warned must warn your neighbors. If we fail to heed the warnings given, or fail to warn our neighbors, we all may be lost.

In this day when so many have turned away their hearts and their ears from the word of the Lord, it behooves all who yet believe to be more diligent and more faithful and more anxious to proclaim the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I bear testimony that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that this is his church which he directs through our prophet, Spencer W. Kimball. Let us so live that we, with our families and loved ones, may be saved from the destruction which is inevitable unless we turn again to God and keep his commandments.

That we may all be engaged in works of righteousness, and with love in

our hearts and a testimony of the truth on our lips, heed the warning voice of our prophet, and in turn warn our neighbors, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Following President Tanner's address, the Choir sang without announcement the number, "Lead, Kindly Light."

President Marion G. Romney

We have heard from President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing, "Lead, Kindly Light."

To those of the television and radio audience who have just tuned in on this conference, we wish to extend our sincere greetings.

We shall now be pleased to hear from Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton

Of the Council of the Twelve

A successful football coach recently described his best player as an athlete possessing an extra special dimension. Besides being a great team man, I was told he performs well for himself. He possesses all of the necessary physical and mental ingredients for success. He has personal pride and a good self-image. He has the bearing and self-conduct patterns that prompt his fellow team members and friends to say, "He's well balanced. He knows where he is going and how to get there."

Proper self-management

Proper self-management is a great virtue, which can lead to personal pride.

Personal pride is a great motivator. It is a virtue to understand who we are and to conduct ourselves accordingly. To be created in God's image is a tremendous blessing with accompanying choice responsibilities.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (1 Cor. 3:16-17.)

Appropriate personal pride prohibits shabby performance. Proper self-image is a basic ingredient of pride in one's self. It is necessary if individual