

Lake City, Utah in the First Session of the 148th Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a President of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy

We know so little, brothers and sisters, about the reasons for the division of duties between womanhood and manhood as well as between motherhood and priesthood. These were divinely determined in another time and another place. We are accustomed to focusing on the men of God because theirs is the priesthood and leadership line. But paralleling that authority line is a stream of righteous influence reflecting the remarkable women of God who have existed in all ages and dispensations, including our own. Greatness is not measured by coverage in column inches, either in newspapers or in the scriptures. The story of the women of God, therefore, is, for now, an untold drama within a drama.

Daughters of God

We men know the women of God as wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, associates, and friends. You seem to tame us and to gentle us, and, yes, to teach us and to inspire us. For you, we have admiration as well as affection, because righteousness is not a matter of role, nor goodness a matter of gender. In the work of the Kingdom, men and women are not without each other, but do not envy each other, lest by reversals and renunciations of role we make a wasteland of both womanhood and manhood.

Just as certain men were fore-ordained from before the foundations of the world, so were certain women appointed to certain tasks. Divine design—not chance—brought Mary forward to be the mother of Jesus. The boy prophet, Joseph Smith, was blessed

not only with a great father but also with a superb mother, Lucy Mack, who influenced a whole dispensation.

Examples of excellence

When we would measure loving loyalty in a human relationship, do we not speak of Ruth and Naomi even more than David and Jonathan? And no wonder God with His perfect regard for women is so insistent about our obligations to widows.

A widow with her mite taught us how to tithe. An impoverished and starving widow with her hungry son taught us how to share, as she gave her meal and oil to Elijah. The divine maternal instincts of an Egyptian woman retrieved Moses from the bullrushes, thereby shaping history and demonstrating how a baby is a blessing—not a burden.

What greater conversation of anticipation has there been than that of Elizabeth and Mary when also the babe in Elizabeth leaped in recognition of Mary? (Luke 1:41.)

Does it not tell us much about the intrinsic intelligence of women to read of the crucifixion scene at Calvary, "And many women were there beholding afar off." (Matt. 27:55.) Their presence was a prayer; their lingering was like a litany.

And who came first to the empty tomb of the risen Christ? Two women.

Who was the first mortal to see the resurrected Savior? Mary of Magdala. Special spiritual sensitivity keeps the women of God hoping long after many others have ceased.

The charity of good women is such

that their "love makes no parade"; they are not glad "when others go wrong"; they are too busy serving to sit statusfully about, waiting to be offended. Like Mary, they ponder trustingly those puzzlements that disable others. God trusts women so much that He lets them bear and care for His spirit children.

Influence of sisters

In our modern kingdom, it is no accident that women were, through the Relief Society, assigned compassionate service. So often the service of women seems instinctive, while that of some men seems more labored. It is precisely because the daughters of Zion are so uncommon that the adversary will not leave them alone.

We salute you, sisters, for the joy that is yours as you rejoice in a baby's first smile and as you listen with eager ear to a child's first day at school which bespeaks a special selflessness. Women, more quickly than others, will understand the possible dangers when the word *self* is militantly placed before others words like *fulfillment*. You rock a sobbing child without wondering if today's world is passing you by, because you know you hold tomorrow tightly in your arms.

So often our sisters comfort others when their own needs are greater than those being comforted. That quality is like the generosity of Jesus on the cross. Empathy during agony is a portion of divinity!

I thank the Father that His Only Begotten Son did not say in defiant protest at Calvary, "My body is my own!" I stand in admiration of women today who resist the fashion of abortion, by refusing to make the sacred womb a tomb!

When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistices made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and in neighborhoods? Will what happened in cradles

and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses? When the surf of the centuries has made the great pyramids so much sand, the everlasting family will still be standing, because it is a celestial institution, formed outside teletial time. The women of God know this.

Gratitude

No wonder the men of God support and sustain you sisters in your unique roles, for the act of deserting home in order to shape society is like thoughtlessly removing crucial fingers from an imperiled dike in order to teach people to swim.

We men love you for meeting inconsiderateness with consideration and selfishness with selflessness. We are touched by the eloquence of your example. We are deeply grateful for your enduring us as men when we are not at our best because—like God—you love us not only for what we are, but for what we have the power to become.

We have special admiration for the unsung but unsullied single women among whom are some of the noblest daughters of God. These sisters know that God loves them, individually and distinctly. They make wise career choices even though they cannot now have the most choice career. Though in their second estate they do not have their first desire, they still overcome the world. These sisters who cannot now enrich the institution of their own marriage so often enrich other institutions in society. They do not withhold their blessings simply because some blessings are now withheld from them. Their trust in God is like that of the wives who are childless, but not by choice, but who in the justice of God will receive special blessings one day.

I, along with my brethren of the priesthood, express undying gratitude to our eternal partners. We know that we can go no place that matters without you, nor would we have it otherwise. When we kneel to pray, we kneel to-

gether. When we kneel at the altar of the holy temple, we kneel together. When we approach the final gate where Jesus Himself is the gatekeeper, we will, if faithful, pass through that gate together.

The prophet who sits with us today could tell us of such togetherness, when at the time of his overwhelming apostolic calling he was consoled by his Camilla, who met his anguished, sobbing sense of inadequacy and, running her fingers through his hair, said, "You can do it, you can do it." He surely has done it, but with her at his side.

Notice, brethren, how all the prophets treat their wives and honor women, and let us do likewise!

Finally, remember: When we return to our real home, it will be with the "mutual approbation" of those who reign in the "royal courts on high." There we will find beauty such as mortal "eye hath not seen"; we will hear

sounds of surpassing music which mortal "ear hath not heard." Could such a regal homecoming be possible without the anticipatory arrangements of a Heavenly Mother?

Meanwhile, there are no separate paths back to that heavenly home. Just one straight and narrow way, at the end of which, though we arrive trailing tears, we shall at once be "drenched in joy." I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Spencer W. Kimball

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a President of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us. Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now address us. He will be followed by President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie

Of the Council of the Twelve

*The morning breaks; the shadows flee;
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled! . . .
The dawning of a brighter day
Majestic rises on the world."
(Hymns, no. 269.)*

At dawning

When the sun goes down and the dusk of day deepens into night, then darkness reigns. During the night, darkness is everywhere and the vision of all is dimmed; none can see afar off. Though the heavens teem with stars—an uncounted host of them—and though the moon—she who rules the night—reflects her rays of borrowed light, yet the darkness is not pierced; the blackness of the night continues.

Deep shadows hide the beasts of forest and field. Wildcats stalk their prey in silence. Packs of hunger-mad-

dened wolves strike terror in their victims as their howling calls draw nearer and nearer. Coyotes are baying in the distance; somewhere a lion roars; and in that deepest shadow a jackal lurks, awaiting his chance to steal the slain game of another. The terrors of the night are real.

But finally a distant dawn is heralded. The morning stars shine forth more brightly than their fellows. A few rays of light part the darkness of the eastern sky, a sky still spotted with clouds. Beyond the mountains, not many leagues away, a new day is gestating in the womb of nature. As the earth turns slowly on its decreed course, the dawn brightens; the light of the morning increases; darkness flees. The stars no longer shine; the moon hides her face; their reflected glimmerings no longer pierce the blackness of the night.