

FIRST DAY MORNING MEETING

FIRST SESSION

The opening session of the General Conference convened in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Saturday, September 30, 1978, at 10:00 A.M. with President Spencer W. Kimball presiding and conducting.

The music for this session was provided by the Tabernacle Choir with Brothers Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger conducting and John Longhurst at the organ.

Before the commencement of the meeting, the Tabernacle Choir sang, "Praise to the Lord."

President Kimball then made the following remarks:

President Spencer W. Kimball

We extend a cordial greeting to all assembled this morning in the Tabernacle on Temple Square at the commencement of this, the first General Session of the 148th Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We also welcome those seated in the overflow congregations in the Assembly Hall and the Salt Palace and the many throughout the world who make up the unseen audience of radio and television.

The Tabernacle Choir has just rendered, "Praise to the Lord."

Seated on the stand are all of the General Authorities of the Church ex-

cept Elders Robert D. Hales, Hartman Rector, Jr., and F. Enzo Busche, who are serving as mission presidents.

Elder G. Homer Durham and Bishop J. Richard Clarke are seated in the Assembly Hall and Elders James A. Cullimore and Ronald E. Poelman are seated in the Salt Palace.

Present also are regional representatives, stake and temple presidencies, bishoprics, and other general and local officers of the Church, and members of the Church from many foreign lands. We extend a special welcome to government, education and civic leaders who are present.

Jerold Ottley and Donald Ripplinger will conduct the music for this session. John Longhurst is at the organ. The Tabernacle Choir will now begin this session by singing, "Oh Lord, I Would Hear Thy Word."

Following the singing, the invocation will be offered by Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a President of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

The Tabernacle Choir sang, "Oh Lord, I Would Hear Thy Word."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell offered the invocation.

Without announcement, the Choir rendered the number, "Behold Thy Servant Lord."

President Spencer W. Kimball

The Church has been greatly saddened by the passing of Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He died on August 19, 1978. Elder Stapley served faithfully and ably

in the Twelve for twenty-eight years. His presence will be missed greatly, and we repeat our love and condolence extended to his family at the time of his passing. We present for the vote of the

conference, as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to replace Elder Stapley, Elder James Esdras Faust. All of you who are in favor of this proposition, please make it manifest by the show of the right hand.

We also present for the vote of the conference Elders Fred Burton Howard, Teddy Eugene Brewerton, Jack H. Goaslind, Jr., to serve as members of the First Quorum of the Seventy, and Elder William Grant Bangerter to serve as a president of the First Quorum of the Seventy in place of Brother Faust. Will those who can sustain these Brethren in the positions indicated, please signify it by raising your right hands? Any contrary by the same sign.

We ask these Brethren to take their places on the stand in the seats provided.

Growth of the Church

How glorious it is, brothers and sisters, to welcome you to this world conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to envision the great throngs gathered here in Salt Lake City and elsewhere, making this in very deed an international gathering of the faithful Saints.

I rejoice with you in the progress and expansion of the Lord's earthly kingdom in almost all parts of the free world. We are constantly opening up new areas, and we are continually establishing new missions and dividing others to give more effective leadership to the ever-increasing numbers of our young men and women engaged in full-time missionary service. Since our last conference six months ago, we have added ten new missions, for a total of 166 throughout the world. We now have 26,606 missionaries carrying the gospel to almost every nation, kindred, tongue and people under the direction of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, whose divine calling it is "to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to

build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations" (D&C 107:33).

Before the end of the year, we will have over 1,000 stakes. This seems incredible when I recall that there were but 145 stakes in the whole world when I became an Apostle in 1943.

This growth is cause for thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for divine direction of this program of saving souls and bringing them into the fold of Christ. While much has been done and accomplished, much more remains to be done. We must go forward in courage and great boldness to proclaim Jesus Christ as the resurrected Lord and the Redeemer of mankind.

Gardens and yards

We have asked everyone wherever possible to assist with a home garden for the production of food so you may enjoy the efforts of your labors and help provide for your needs. We urge parents not only to engage in this activity, but to let their boys and girls share in helping with the garden. They will not only learn the value and joy of work, but it will help them develop a sense of responsibility as they participate in such family projects.

We should make not only our fields and dooryards attractive, but our homes, barns, outbuildings, and fences should be kept in good repair and painted. We realize, too, that such projects are never ending and need continuing attention and planning.

Journals

We renew our appeal for the keeping of individual journals and records and compiling family histories. Any Latter-day Saint family that has searched genealogical and historical records has fervently wished their ancestors had kept better and more complete records. On the other hand, some families possess some spiritual treasures because ancestors have recorded the

events surrounding their conversion to the gospel and other happenings of interest, including many miraculous blessings and spiritual experiences. People often use the excuse that their lives are uneventful and nobody would be interested in what they have done. But I promise you that if you will keep your journals and records they will indeed be a source of great inspiration to your families, to your children, your grandchildren, and others, on through the generations.

Family home evenings are a most appropriate time and place to engage in such activities and especially to train young children in the art of writing about their lives. If you haven't already done so, make up your minds that today you will start your journals.

Temple Attendance

There is an urgency to engage more fully in the redeeming of our kindred dead through more frequent temple attendance. All those who possess temple recommends should use them as often as possible to engage in baptisms, endowments, and sealings for the dead. Other members of the Church should concern themselves seriously with preparations to qualify for temple recommends that they, too, might enjoy these eternal blessings and also act as saviors on Mount Zion. There is an ever-increasing burden of temple work to be done by the Saints, and we should rise to meet this challenge.

Sabbath day observance

I again would urge upon all Saints everywhere a more strict observance of the Sabbath day. The Lord's holy day is fast losing its sacred significance throughout the world, at least our world. More and more, man destroys the Sabbath's sacred purposes in pursuit of wealth, pleasure, recreation, and the worship of false and material gods. We continue to urge all Saints and God-fearing people everywhere to observe

the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Businesses will not be open on the Sabbath if they are not patronized on that holy day. The same is true of resorts, sporting events, and recreation areas of all kinds. Pursuit of the almighty dollar is winning, it seems, over the Lord's commandment, "Keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary" (Lev. 19:30).

"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do *not* the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46; emphasis added).

Violating the purpose of the Sabbath is not the only matter in these days which calls forth our cry of protest. We are greatly concerned about the world in which we live. The mass media of communications daily presents us with so much that is evil, that is ugly and sordid, and so much that is destructive of righteousness. Godlessness seems to reign everywhere. Satan is unfettered apparently. We have previously said that the growing permissiveness in modern society gravely concerns us.

Forces of good and evil

We see about us constant change. Even the pace of life itself has speeded up. Sometimes it seems that the world is undergoing such throes of change that people are disoriented, not knowing what is of value. Right and wrong, however, are as they always were. The principles of the gospel are unaltered. All of men's evil speaking and all of men's evil acting cannot alter one jot or tittle of the commandments of God.

The forces of good are clearly and continually under attack. There are times when it seems the world is almost drowning in a flood of filth and degradation. And I want to cry out, "Hold on! Hold on to what is right and true. Therein is safety. Don't let yourself be swept away."

In 1946 I visited Hawaii shortly after a huge tidal wave, where walls of water some forty feet high struck Hilo and the Hamakua coast, and I saw the devastation that resulted. Homes had been overturned and shredded, crushed

into splinters like toothpicks; fences and gardens were obliterated; bridges and roads were washed away. Bathtubs, refrigerators, mangled autos lay strewn all about the streets. Where one of our little chapels had stood, nothing remained but the foundation. More than a hundred people lost their lives; as many more were injured; thousands were left homeless. I heard many stories while there of suffering, of heroism, of salvation.

One woman told how she received a telephonic message from friends to get out and to leave—that a tidal wave was coming. She looked out to sea and saw the monstrous wave approaching, like a mountain. She and her husband picked up the baby and ran for their lives up the hill. However, two of their little girls were away from home playing near a clump of lauhala trees. They saw the wave coming, ran into the trees, and held tightly with their arms around the tree trunks. The first gigantic wave washed entirely over them, but they held their breath and clung with all their might until the water receded and their heads were again above the water. When the wave receded, they quickly ran up the hill before the succeeding waves came. Together, the family watched from the safety of the hill as their home below disappeared under the pounding of the waves.

We, too, are faced with powerful, destructive forces unleashed by the adversary. Waves of sin, wickedness, immorality, degradation, tyranny, deceitfulness, conspiracy, and dishonesty threaten all of us. They come with great power and speed and will destroy us if we are not watchful.

Keep all God's commandments

But a warning is sounded for us. It behooves us to be alert and to listen and flee from the evil for our eternal lives. Without help we cannot stand against it. We must flee to high ground or cling fast to that which can keep us from being swept away. That to which we

must cling for safety is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our protection from whatever force the evil one can muster. An inspired Book of Mormon prophet counseled his people: "Remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo" (Hel. 5:12).

I would emphasize that the teachings of Christ that we should become perfect were not mere rhetoric. He meant literally that it is the right of mankind to become like the Father and like the Son, having overcome human weaknesses and developed attributes of divinity.

Because many individuals do not fully use the capacity that is in them does nothing to negate the truth that they have the power to become Christ-like. It is the man and woman who use the power who prove its existence; neglect cannot prove its absence.

Working toward perfection is not a one-time decision but a process to be pursued throughout one's lifetime.

Through Moses the word of the Lord came down from the mountain. The commandments which the Lord gave to the children of Israel set minimum standards of conduct. These commandments, said Paul, are "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24).

But living by the letter of the Ten Commandments is only the beginning of perfection. Jesus taught the sanctity of the Ten Commandments, but emphasized repeatedly that there was more.

It is not enough to acknowledge the Lord as supreme and refrain from worshipping idols; we should love the Lord with all our heart, might, mind, and strength, realizing the great joy he has

in the righteousness of his children.

It is not enough to refrain from profanity or blasphemy. We need to make important in our lives the name of the Lord. While we do not use the Lord's name lightly, we should not leave our friends or our neighbors or our children in any doubt as to where we stand. Let there be no doubt about our being followers of Jesus Christ.

It is not enough to refrain from moviegoing, hunting, fishing, sports, and unnecessary labor on the Sabbath. Constructive use of the Sabbath day includes studying the scriptures, attending church meetings to learn and to worship, writing letters to absent loved ones, comforting the sorrowing, visiting the sick, and, in general, doing what the Lord would have us do on this, his holy day.

If we truly honor our parents as we are commanded to do, we will seek to emulate their best characteristics and to fulfill their highest aspirations for us. Nothing we could give them materially would be more prized than our righteous living.

It is not enough to refrain from killing. We are rather under solemn obligation to respect life and to foster it. Far from taking a life, we must be generous in helping others to enjoy the necessities of life. And when this has been accomplished, we seek to improve the mind and the spirit.

We refrain from taking harmful substances into our body. Through wisdom and moderation in all things, we seek good health and a sense of physical well-being.

It is not enough to refrain from adultery. We need to make the marriage relationship sacred, to sacrifice and work to maintain the warmth and respect which we enjoyed during courtship. God intended marriage to be eternal, sealed by the power of the priesthood, to last beyond the grave. Daily acts of courtesy and kindness, conscientiously and lovingly carried out, are part of what the Lord expects.

It is for us to keep our hearts and

minds pure, as well as our actions.

"Thou shalt not steal," the Lord said on Sinai (Exod. 20:15). Thus it is for us to be honest in every way. We must be generous, the very opposite of selfishness. When money is needed, we give money. But often what is needed more is love and time and caring, which money cannot buy. When that is true, even being generous with our money is not enough.

Bearing false witness and coveting the belongings of others are further evidences of selfishness. "Love thy neighbour as thyself," Jesus taught. On this and on the love of God "hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:39-40).

Kindness, helpfulness, love, concern, generosity—we could go on for the list of virtues is endless. The development of these traits is what the Lord asks of us.

"If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things" (Articles of Faith 13).

Truthfulness of the Gospel

The gospel of Jesus Christ is true. Any earnest seeker can know for himself that it is true by studying and living its principles and seeking the companionship and help of the Holy Ghost. But how much easier it is to understand and accept if the seeker after the truth can also see the principles of the gospel at work in the lives of others. No greater service can be given to the missionary calling of the Church than to exemplify positive Christian virtues in our lives.

The Lord holds forth a glorious promise to those who love him and demonstrate this love by faithful, devoted service and the living of his eternal principles. When the winds of change blow fiercely and the waves sweep over us, we have a tree or rod of principle to which we can cling for safety. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ which has been restored to the earth in its fulness.

May the Lord bless us, each one, to

hold fast to the iron rod, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Following President Kimball's address, the Choir sang without announcement, "Lead Me Into Life Eternal."

President Spencer W. Kimball

The Tabernacle Choir has rendered, "Lead Me Into Life Eternal."

We shall now hear from Elder Boyd K. Packer, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Boyd K. Packer

It will be my purpose to give an unqualified endorsement to an organization to which I have never belonged. It has greatly enriched my life and that of my family. I have never been eligible to hold membership; nevertheless, it continues to be an influence with me.

Origin of Relief Society

It is the Relief Society, one of the oldest women's organizations in the world. There are members in about seventy nations, numbering now well over a million. Each year the membership increases by thousands. Only women are eligible to join.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith established it, he said to the women:

"You will receive instructions through the order of the Priesthood which God has established, through the medium of those appointed to . . . direct the affairs of the Church in this last dispensation; and I now turn the key in your behalf in the name of the Lord, and this Society shall rejoice, and knowledge and intelligence shall flow down from this time henceforth" (*History of the Church*, 4:607).

The Prophet told them that the organization would be "a charitable Society, and according to your natures," and then he added, "If you live up to your privileges, the angels cannot be restrained from being your associates" (*History of the Church*, 4:605).

Thirty years ago, President George Albert Smith said:

"You are . . . more blessed than any

other women in all the world. You were the first women to have the franchise; the first women to have a voice in the work of a church. It was God that gave it to you and it came as a result of revelation to a Prophet of the Lord. Since that time, think what benefits the women of this world have enjoyed. Not only you belonging to the Church have enjoyed the blessing of equality, but when the Prophet Joseph Smith turned the key for the emancipation of woman-kind, it was turned for all the world, and from generation to generation the number of women who can enjoy the blessings of religious liberty and civil liberty has been increasing." (*Relief Society Magazine*, Dec. 1945, p. 717.)

Family benefits from Relief Society

I would not press to join the Relief Society. I can get more from it if I leave it to be a women's organization. I then benefit more, much more, than I could by holding membership.

I hope the name, the Relief Society, will never be changed. It ties back to the very charter given to women by the Prophet. Its full, balanced program responds to every worthy need that is by nature a part of womanhood.

Each member is constantly exposed to literature, art, music, to current events, to *homemaking skills*, and, I emphasize, to *spiritual living*. She is encouraged to the full expression of every worthy feeling and impulse and talent.

When my wife returns from the grocery store, some things are set out