

President Spencer W. Kimball

My dear brothers and sisters, I am happy to greet you at this opening session of our 150th semiannual world conference of the Church.

Eternal families

From the beginning, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has emphasized family life. We have always understood that the foundations of the family, as an eternal unit, were laid even before this earth was created! Society without basic family life is without foundation and will disintegrate into nothingness.

Therefore, whenever anything so basic as the eternal family is imperiled, we have a solemn obligation to speak out, lest there be critical damage to the family institution by those who seem to be deliberately destructive of it.

The commandments and standards of morality set by the Lord himself are under attack on every hand. There are false teachers everywhere using speech and pornographic literature, magazines, radio, TV, street talk—spreading heresies which break down moral standards.

Because of the seriousness of this matter, I have prepared an article for the November 1980 *Ensign* and *New Era* magazines in which I speak out frankly and at length on the subject of morality. This is a grave responsibility, and not an easy one. I encourage all Latter-day Saints to read this special message.

Perilous times

We are living in perilous times as more and more individuals dishonor the marriage vow and as juvenile delinquency mounts. Divorces in the United States are up over 65 percent since 1970. The number of unmarried couples living together has gone up over 157 percent during the past

decade. Many more children are growing up without having both parents in the home. In 1979, almost one of every five families with children was being maintained by one parent.

Abortion has reached plague proportions. There have been, for instance, "more deaths from abortion in England in the decade since the English Abortion Act than there were deaths in the First World War." Of this, Malcolm Muggeridge said:

"I was brought up to believe that one of the great troubles of our Western world was that in the First World War we lost the flower of our population. Well, now we have destroyed an equivalent number of lives in the name of humane principles, before they were even born." (*Human Life Review*, Summer 1980, p. 74.)

Furthermore, many of the social restraints which in the past have helped to reinforce and to shore up the family are dissolving and disappearing. The time will come when only those who believe deeply and actively in the family will be able to preserve their families in the midst of the gathering evil around us.

Whether from inadvertence, ignorance, or other causes, the efforts governments often make (ostensibly to help the family) sometimes only hurt the family more. There are those who would define the family in such a nontraditional way that they would define it out of existence. The more governments try in vain to take the place of the family, the less effective governments will be in performing the traditional and basic roles for which governments are formed in the first place.

Seventh commandment

Whether we like it or not, so many of the difficulties which beset

the family today stem from the breaking of the seventh commandment (see Ex. 20:14). Total chastity before marriage and total fidelity after are still the standard from which there can be no deviation without sin, misery, and unhappiness. The breaking of the seventh commandment usually means the breaking of one or more homes.

Delinquent adults still tend to produce delinquent children, and that awful reality will not change simply by our lowering standards as to what constitutes delinquency—either in adults, youth, or children.

We of all people, brothers and sisters, should not be taken in by the specious arguments that the family unit is somehow tied to a particular phase of development a mortal society is going through. We are free to resist those moves which downplay the significance of the family and which play up the significance of selfish individualism. We know the family to be eternal. We know that when things go wrong in the family, things go wrong in every other institution in society.

Those who, whether in ignorance or malice, attack the family are setting in motion an awful and needless cycle of misery and despair, for they will search in vain and pain for substitutes, and the wisdom of the worldly wise shall perish publicly for their folly concerning the family.

The decline in many of our families is occurring at a time when the nations of the world are moving into some of the most difficult times known.

Permissiveness will not pull us through such crises. Materialism will not sustain us, for moth and rust will still lay waste and corrupt all mortal treasures.

Our political institutions—parliaments, congresses, and assemblies—cannot rescue us if our basic institution, the family, is not intact. Peace treaties cannot save us when

there is hostility instead of love in the home. Unemployment programs cannot rescue us when many are no longer taught how to work or do not have the opportunity to work or the inclination, in some cases, to do so. Law enforcement cannot safeguard us if too many people are unwilling to discipline themselves or be disciplined.

Rising generations who have been taught that authority and loving discipline are wrong will not keep the fifth commandment, honoring their fathers and mothers (see Ex. 20:12). How can the rising generations honor their parents if their parents have dishonored themselves—especially by breaking the seventh commandment?

Almost every array of statistics one sees with regard to the family becomes a sad sermon in statistics, reminding us of the need to stem and to turn the tide.

Let us be sure, in our Latter-day Saint homes, that we do our part to stem and to turn the tide.

Importance of journals

Again, I urge you to be diligent in recording your personal and family histories. We are pleased with the success of the recent World Conference on Records, where more than eleven thousand people from over thirty nations around the globe gathered to share and learn concerning personal record keeping. In this, let us be an example to others and reap the benefits of stronger family units as we preserve our heritage.

Parents to teach children

We hope our parents are using the added time that has come from the consolidated schedule in order to be with, teach, love, and nurture their children. We hope you have not forgotten the need for family activity

and recreation, for which time is also provided. Let your love of each member of your family be unconditional. Where there are challenges, you fail only if you fail to keep trying!

We genuinely welcome help, real help, from churches, schools, colleges, and universities, from thoughtful men and women of every race, creed, and culture who care about the family. But, as indicated earlier, if the supporting network of institutions does not function adequately, then we will do our part anyway. There is no lack of clarity in what the Lord has told us. We cannot shirk. He has placed the responsibility directly where it belongs, and he holds us accountable with regard to the duties of parents to teach their children correct principles and of the need to walk uprightly before the Lord—and there is no substitute for teaching our children by the eloquence of example.

Families can be forever

Oh, brothers and sisters, *fami-*

lies can be forever! Do not let the lures of the moment draw you away from them! *Divinity, eternity, and family*—they go together, hand in hand, and so must we!

I bear you my solemn witness that God lives, that Jesus Christ lives, and that he is our Savior and Redeemer. I leave you my love and my blessings, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Following President Kimball's address, the Tabernacle Choir sang the hymn "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah" without announcement.

President Marion G. Romney

We have just heard from President Spencer W. Kimball, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Guide Us, O Though Great Jehovah."

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

President N. Eldon Tanner

Follow the prophet

I feel it a privilege and a blessing to be able to be with you this morning in this session of conference. To follow President Kimball is something that I have tried to do now for about seven years. And if I can succeed, I am going to make a go of it. I am so happy to be with you this day, to partake of the spirit that is always present in the conferences, to hear the Tabernacle Choir, and to hear the sermons of the leadership of this great church.

Testimony

I was not prepared to talk at all,

but President Kimball asked me if I would like to say a few words. I would like to bear my testimony to my family, friends, businessmen, and the world. I have had the great privilege of being with four Presidents of this church and of seeing how the Lord works through them. One cannot doubt when he sees them that they are prophets of God, leading us in the paths of truth and righteousness and helping us to prepare ourselves and our children for eternal life.

We know we are spirit children of God, and we were present when it was decided to form an earth here where we could come and dwell and