

# *The Eightieth Semi-Annual Conference*

O F T H E

Church of Jesus  
Christ of Latter  
day Saints



Held *in the Tabernacle and  
Assembly Hall, Salt Lake  
City, Utah, October 3rd, 4th  
and 6th, 1909, with a full  
report of the discourses*

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joy to me to look into the faces of my brethren and sisters, whom it has been my privilege to visit in their homes.

I realize that you are here because you believe it is our Father's will that you should be; and you have come for the eternal blessings of our Father, rather than remain at home to seek those things that perish in this life.

I am grateful for the testimony God has given me that this is His work. I know that He lives. I know that Jesus Christ is His Son and the Redeemer of the world. I know that Joseph Smith was the instrument in the hands of our Father, to bring again the Gospel of salvation to the children of men. The Lord has continued His priesthood in the Church, since the days of the Prophet and his presiding authority, until the present time. We are now presided over by a faithful servant of our Heavenly Father, one of His children whom He has chosen to declare unto us His mind and will.

I hope that the words which we have heard, in this conference, will be taken home by each of us. "Have I set my house in order?" This should be the query in every heart. Not, Has my neighbor done so? but, have I done what the Lord has required of me?

Brethren and sisters, we may have given to us, in this life, a few things that will give us satisfaction, temporarily; but the things that are eternal, the things that are "worth while," are those eternal things that we reach out for, and prepare ourselves to receive, and lay hold of by the effort that we individually make.

This is God's work; it is the power of God unto salvation, unto every

man and every woman that will receive and obey its precepts; and I bear you witness of it, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

#### ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS.

Unity among all the Presiding Quorums.—Prophecies fulfilled.—Responsibility resting upon the Saints.—Elders laboring under Divine appointment.—Work at home: conversions among the Gentiles.—Duty of the Priesthood Quorums.—Work enough for all.

I have been trying to take stock of myself and of my faith, since coming into this meeting, this afternoon; and I have concluded that the harmony which exists in the testimonies of my brethren, which have been borne during the meetings of this conference, and my own thoughts and feelings, is an evidence to me that my faith is about right. I indorse, with all my heart, the testimonies which have been borne, the instructions which have been given to us during the conference. I uphold and sustain, with all my heart, the President of the Church, as such, and as the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator and mouth-piece of God unto this people; and I thank the Lord for him, for his integrity, for his love of the truth, for his administration of the affairs of the Church of our Master. I uphold and sustain with him his counselors. These as men of God, approved of Him, sustained with willing hearts by the people who know them, and know that their deepest interest is for the welfare and triumph of the work of the Lord. I sustain, with all my heart, the members of the Council of the Twelve. I know these men from association

with them, day after day, in counsel and in our administrations among the people, and I know that they have the love of the work at heart. I know of their unity—for they are united, to a man, in every question that has come before us, pertaining to the welfare of this work and of the people. I sustain them, pray for them, and I know that the Lord is with them and blessing their administrations. I uphold and sustain the Council of the Seventy, and I know that this council is in harmony with the Council of the Twelve and the First Presidency. The Presiding Bishopric and the Patriarch are one with these councils. I believe I can say in truth that all the councils of the holy priesthood, throughout the length and breadth of this Church, uphold and sustain the general authorities, and are one with them in interest and labor for the progress of the work of the Lord.

In witnessing the great concourse of people that we had here in this building yesterday, and upon the grounds surrounding this building—knowing that at the same time there was an overflow meeting being held in the Assembly Hall—my thoughts were directed to a revelation found in the eleventh section of the book of Covenants, where the Lord, speaking to the Prophet in the year 1829, before the organization of the Church, said: "A marvelous work is about to come forth upon the earth." When I think of the conditions at that time—(there was no organization of the Church then, but the Lord told the Prophet clearly what He had in mind to accomplish; Joseph was to be the instrument in His hands, the chief of all instruments, in bring it about)—and then

when I see what has been accomplished, knowing that all these people are but a small representation of the Latter-day Saints, I saw, and was impressed with the fulfillment of that promise unto Joseph. I rejoice in it, and it makes me more satisfied, better assured that all those other promises that have been made by the Lord through His prophets, pertaining to the ultimate triumph of His work in the last days, will be fulfilled.

In connection with these thoughts, I thought of the wonderful responsibility that rests upon us. Numerous as we are, in the sense that I have spoken of, we are but a handful of our Father's children. The Lord, through His prophet John, upon the Isle of Patmos, referred to a time when the everlasting Gospel would be restored by an angel from heaven. It was to be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. We accept the visitation of the angel Moroni, the message which he brought, the Book of Mormon which contains the everlasting Gospel, and the revelations of the Lord to us since, as a fulfillment of that prediction, and we have accepted the great responsibility of preaching this Gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, throughout the world. We have made efforts to this end. I hope that our efforts are accepted of the Lord. I sometimes wonder if we are doing all that He requires of us in this connection. We aim to maintain, at the present time, in the mission-field, from the stakes of Zion, about two thousand missionaries. They are maintained at a cost of time and money to the elders and to the Church, together with other expenses connected with the

mission fields, in the neighborhood of two million dollars per annum, or more closely figuring, \$150,000.-00 per month. When we think of it in this sense, it is indeed a wonderful work that we are doing in the preaching of the Gospel abroad.

Now, there is another point in connection with this responsibility, that I desire to speak of for a few moments; and that we may be impressed with the greatness of this responsibility, I desire to read a few paragraphs from the third chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. The Lord said to Ezekiel:

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

"Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

"Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered, but his blood will I require at thine hand."

This is a responsibility—the Lord placed it upon Ezekiel, as a watchman upon the towers of Israel; and we have been commissioned with like authority and with like responsibility. It extends to the preaching of the Gospel in the nations of the earth; and that same responsibility, if I understand correctly, rests upon those of us who remain at home.

Just a few verses from the eleventh section of the book of Covenantants. The Lord says, in a revelation given in May, 1829:

"A great and marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

"Behold, I am God, and give heed to my word, which is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow; therefore give heed unto my word.

"Behold, the field is white already to harvest, therefore, whoso desireth to reap, let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God;

"Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God".

And reading from the 15th paragraph:

"Behold, I command you, that you need not suppose that you are called to preach until you are called."

We read from the scriptures, with reference to authority, that no man taketh the honor upon himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron. Aaron was called by the voice of the Lord, through His prophet Moses. This is a principle observed in this Church. One of the articles of our faith reads, "We believe that a man must be called of God by 'prophecy and by the laying on of hands,' by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof."

There are many men in Zion who have been thus called by the voice of the Lord, through His servants—the way the Lord has appointed, and they have had the hands of the servants of the Lord laid upon them. They have been blest and

set apart for their particular ministry. Take for example the presidencies of the various stakes of Zion, the Bishops, and their counselors in the various wards throughout the Church, and the visiting ward Teachers in the labor which they are called to perform: they have all been called, appointed, ordained, blest and set apart for their particular labors; and this responsibility rests heavily upon them, and many other responsibilities not mentioned.

There are today many of Israel being gathered up, coming up to Zion of their own accord. We find them purchasing homes, farms, and business of our people, from one end, I was going to say, of this state to the other; yes, and in other states where our people are located. We are selling them our inheritances, in many instances; and some of these people have proven to be of the blood of Israel. We have converted many of them, but I fear that we are not doing our full duty in that regard. And it is that point that I have in mind to impress upon all the people gathered here this afternoon—not alone those whom I have mentioned, these officers, but upon all men and women in the Church, for the Lord exempts no one, as I understand the reading of the revelation. He expects us to *find* something to do, if we have not been specially called. I wish now to read a few verses from the 58th section of the Book of Covenants:

“For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant; wherefore he receiveth no reward.

“Verily I say, men should be anx-

iously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward.

“But he that doeth not anything until he is commanded, and receiveth a commandment with doubtful heart, and keepeth it with slothfulness, the same is damned.”

The Lord expects us to look around and see what can be done of our own accord, and devote ourselves to such work as we are capable and have opportunity of doing for the salvation of the children of men. Now, one more passage, from the 38th section:

“And again, I say unto you, I give unto you a commandment, that every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.

“And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and in meekness.”

Of course, “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness, and meekness, and love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile.” That is the spirit in which we are to exercise our priesthood and our authority, and discharge this obligation, whether it be abroad, or at home. It does seem to me that we have here the voice of the Lord, all that is necessary in the way of authority to justify and place responsibility upon every man, be he Elder, Priest, Teacher, Deacon, or member, to lift his voice in defense

of truth and of righteousness, seeking opportunity where he can do good, allaying prejudice, bringing to the knowledge of those who are uninformed the revealed word and will of the Lord. There are many of our people who are diligently engaged in this work. When traveling among them, we discover this fact. I would call attention to several instances that have come under my observation, and the observation of my brethren, in their travels, which have been reported to us.

Some few months ago, while I was in the Fremont stake of Zion, visiting one of the wards, the Bishop reported that during the three years of his administration, in connection with his counselors, the ward teachers, and such help as he had in that ward, they had been the means of bringing into the Church twenty adult members. In one of the wards in Davis stake, it is reported that in nine months time, by organized, systematic, diligent effort, the brethren there had been the means of bringing thirteen out of the twenty-two non-Mormons in that ward into the Church, and others are investigating. And they propose to continue their labors. President Lyman recently visited the Bingham stake, and one of the Bishops of a small ward in that stake reported that, during the past three months, six adults had been baptized into the Church. Visiting in the Morgan stake, a few weeks ago, it was reported by a member of the bishopric of one of the wards that during the past three months twenty-one people over ten years of age, ranging from fifteen, to thirty, several of them married—heads of families—had been brought into the Church. So these instances might be multiplied.

The thought occurs to me, brethren and sisters, Bishops and ward teachers: If in these wards, by systematic, faithful, devoted effort, these have been converted and brought into the Church, is it not possible that there are some of the blood of Israel within the limits of your wards, of your districts, who could be brought, also, to see the truth, if you were to do your full duty by them? The quorums of the Priesthood have all the authority necessary. Every presidency of a quorum have been called, appointed, ordained, set apart for their labors—not alone to preach the Gospel in the world but to minister at home and in their quorums. Do the presidencies of High Priests' quorums, or the Presidencies of the Seventies' quorums, or the Elders' quorums require more authority than has been given to them, to enable them to take up the work in their own quorums? I think not; they have all the authority that is necessary; and the responsibility accompanies the authority. Yet, we find no field, anywhere, that might be more fruitful, through the diligent labors of faithful men, than in these quorums of Priesthood. Therein are men who have repented of their sins, who have come forth and embraced the Gospel; but some have slackened in their efforts; have neglected to labor, the spirit of the Gospel seems to be withdrawn from them, they are without the Spirit of the Lord, and are in darkness. We should labor with these men. They may have indulged in habits which are forbidden, and have acquired these habits right under the noses, so to speak, and in the presence of the presidencies of these quorums. I think that these men ought, indeed,

of all men to be watchmen upon the towers in Zion, especially to the quorums of Priesthood over which they preside. They should be so familiar with every member of the quorum, by frequent contact with them, in conversation, interviewing them as to their faith and their faithfulness in the discharge of their duties as quorum members, that those members could not deviate far from the narrow way, the path of duty, without being discovered. And when the discovery is made, in the very incipency of these habits, this labor should be taken up by those who are in the presidency over them, for upon them rests responsibility concerning the life, the faithfulness of their members.

Inasmuch as the Seventies and Elders form the foreign ministry to a very great extent, they ought to be practicing their profession while they are at home, for they have an ample field in the quorums of Priesthood. But, we are told in what I have just read, that the members, as well, have this responsibility. They also should preach, and their preaching should be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor. The requirement of this Gospel, in respect to the preaching of the word, is: "Let every man that is warned, warn his neighbor." There should be no cowards among us. I sometimes think that we neglect our duty as teachers to our fellow men at home, because of cowardice. We are not as bold and courageous as we might be. There may be a cause for this. Perhaps, in some of us the testimony of the truth is not sufficiently grounded into our souls, and, perhaps, our course of life is not what it ought to be, and this condition closes our

mouths; it humiliates and embarrasses us when we undertake the performance of our duties. So we ought to remain as faithful, at least, as we were when we came into the Church. Our lives should be worthy the emulation of all men, and thus bring glory to the name of the Lord and to His work. If we were living thus, the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon us, the spirit of our callings would attend us, and we would be fearless in the discharge of our duties, we would have love in our hearts for our fellowmen, and, if the sense of responsibility would not force us to do our duty, the love we would have burning in our souls for our brethren and our sisters, and those who come among us, would cause us to reach out a helping hand and lead them into the narrow way which leads to safety, to salvation and to eternal life.

But notwithstanding all these reasons why we ought to be active, there is too small a percentage, I believe, of the Latter-day Saints, who have the true, real missionary spirit, even among those who have been out in the world and have spent two or three years, and later, perhaps, duplicated it, in the mission field. They come home, and some even forget what manner of men they ought to be as preachers of righteousness, and lose the spirit of missionary work, a thing to be regretted. Why, their talents, their ability, their memory, everything sharpened by that missionary work, qualifies and equips them to do this most necessary work of individual missionary labor. There is a field broad enough, no one is without excuse, and no man, or woman, need be jealous of the opportunities afforded his or her

neighbor, for he has all the opportunity of doing good that is necessary.

Now, I would like to impress one thought upon your minds, my brethren and sisters who preside in the stakes and in the wards, in the quorums and in the auxiliary associations: that we be chaperones, that we be guardians of the people, that we, indeed, be fathers unto the people, and give unto them that which they most need. Let us cultivate in ourselves this spirit, a desire to teach, to encourage, counsel and advise wherever we have opportunity, wherever we see that it is needful. I promise you, if you engage in this work, it will increase your own faith; it will be an anchor to your souls; it will bring joy and satisfaction to you, and your hope of eternal life will be greatly augmented. Thus engaged, our confidence in the Lord will be increased, and also our assurance that our lives will not be spent in vain, but that we will obtain, in the end, the promised blessing of eternal life. God bless us to this end, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **ELDER ORSON F. WHITNEY.**

The President of the Church and the President of the Nation.—God finds and qualifies His servants.—The power of Presidency.—No officer chosen for personal reasons.—An abundance of material for the Lord's work.—President Taft's "sermon."—Christ's doctrine.—A mission of Salvation.

"Our President." I see these words confronting me, in letters of colossal size; and I can think of no better text for the few remarks that I shall make on this occasion.

The motto hung in the eastern end of the Tabernacle was placed there in honor of the President of the United States, who recently paid Utah a visit, and spoke to the assembled citizens from this stand. I desire to refer to him before I complete my discourse; but for the present I wish to speak of our other President, if he will pardon me for being personal in his direction—I mean President Joseph F. Smith, the leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

While President Smith was speaking, yesterday morning, with such earnestness and power—a greater power than any of his brethren can hope to command and exercise—I was reminded of some conversations that I had not long ago with two of the brethren numbered among the general authorities of the Church. Each one said, in substance, "I would not know where to look to find another man to lead this Church; if I should survey the land from one end to the other, I do not believe I could find as good a man, a man as well qualified for that position, as President Joseph F. Smith." I agreed with my brethren; but I thought then, and the thought has recurred to me now: it is not my business to find the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; that is the Lord's business. I have full confidence that the Lord could find a man to preside over this Church at any time, and that He would qualify him and equip him to the performance of his duty to that degree that the people would feel, as they feel now towards our honored President, that he is the right man for his time and place.

I presume this question arose during the lifetime of the Prophet