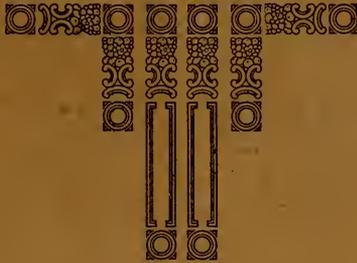


Eighty-second Annual Conference

of the

CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-
DAY SAINTS



HELD IN THE
Tabernacle and Assembly Hall
Salt Lake City, Utah, April 5, 6, 7, 1912
with a full report of the discourses

Published by the Deseret News

25c.

sins and serve God and keep His commandments, that they likewise shall be entitled to eternal life. May the Lord bless our brethren who shall follow in addressing this conference, pour out upon them that good Spirit, and use them as His servants, to speak to the assembled Saints, to their edification and advancement, to the strengthening of their faith and to the building up and promoting of all the glorious interests of Zion, is my prayer in the the name of Jesus. Amen.

“Lord God of Abraham,” a baritone solo, was sung by Brother Lynn Gibb.

ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS.

Profound reverence for Jesus Christ and His mission—Resemblances in the life of the Savior and Joseph Smith—Unimpeachable evidences of the truthfulness of Joseph Smith’s claims.

I sense very keenly, my brethren and sisters, the responsibility resting upon me in occupying this position, where I am expected to lead this vast congregation in profitable thought. I have absolute confidence in the power of the Lord to assist me, and believe that the faith and prayers of the Saints will avail much with the Lord. I therefore ask you, my brethren and sisters, to give me your faith and prayers, that I may be blessed and that you may be blessed.

The acoustic properties of this magnificent building are such that, if there were perfect quiet, a pin dropped on the stand could be heard in the most remote part of the building. That reminds me that we often, unconsciously, by the moving

of our feet, coughing, and moving about, disturb the congregation and make it impossible for some to hear. It also makes it necessary for the speaker, especially if he have a weak voice, to raise his voice so far above the natural tone that he disturbs himself.

I can bear witness to the truth of all that has been spoken thus far in this Conference, and I am thankful for it. I am sure that the faithful Latter-day Saints have received the same witness that I have had with reference to this matter.

In the hearts of the Latter-day Saints there are two names very closely associated, and very dear to us—the name of our beloved Savior, Jesus Christ, and our dear Prophet, Joseph Smith. The mission and labors of these two were not entirely unlike. We look upon the former as the noblest of all the sons of God, as the first born of our Eternal Father in the spirit, and the only begotten of the Father in the flesh, the Creator of all things, under the direction of the Father, the Redeemer and Savior of the world who voluntarily gave Himself to a life of sorrow and affliction, of trial and temptation, on whom was heaped all manner of indignities, who resisted all temptations to do evil, who denied Himself everything that was forbidden in the law of the Gospel, of which He was the author. He did all things that were required of Him, doing the will of the Father under all circumstances, and finally gave His life, a martyr, sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary, for all of our Father’s children. This He did that we might be redeemed from the original sin, that we might live again immortal beings; that after we have laid off

these mortal bodies, our spirits shall take upon themselves again bodies which shall not be subject to death, nor to suffering as here in the flesh; also that we might be redeemed from the effects of our own sins and transgressions, and be saved with Him in our Father's kingdom, through obedience on our part to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. We do love the Lord, Jesus Christ, our Savior. We love His name, and hold it most sacred, and we would not profane it. Only the base or the ignorant would do that.

We look upon Joseph Smith as one of the noblest of the sons of God, reserved in the spirit to come here upon the earth in these last days to be a prophet, yea the great prophet of the nineteenth century, of the dispensation of the fulness of times. His life was subject to sorrow and suffering, for his people, and he experienced constant anxiety and interest for the welfare of the Latter-day Saints and the children of men. He was persecuted as was the Savior, and was wont to swim in deep water, all the days of his short life; he was prosecuted in the courts, some thirty-nine different charges having been falsely brought against him, and he was as many times acquitted, for Joseph Smith was an innocent man. When the persecution became so rife, and he had thought to flee from it, that he might be of service perhaps for many years to come unto this people, whom he loved better than his own life, some supposed friends intimated that it was cowardice on his part to leave the people under these circumstances, and Joseph Smith remarked: "If my life is of no further value to this people it is not

to me;" and he returned. As he was going to Carthage, or about to go, he made this remark: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but my conscience is void of offense toward all men;" and he met his death bravely. He was martyred and sealed his testimony with his blood. And we love him; he is our prophet, the prophet of the dispensation of the Gospel when we have figured, when it has been our privilege to tabernacle in the flesh. He has been the instrument in the restoration of the everlasting Gospel to earth, in the establishment of the Church and Kingdom of God, in the restoration of the Holy Priesthood, that power and authority to minister unto the children of men in the ordinances of life and salvation, and to preach this Gospel in all the world. The many revelations which the Lord gave through him to this people, for our enlightenment, for our comfort and joy, and our guidance through life, these all we appreciate, and it makes us to love more and more our dear and departed prophet, Joseph Smith.

We have received the witness of the Spirit, which has been promised to those who will do the will of the Father and yield obedience unto the ordinances of the Gospel. Through the Holy Ghost we do know that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world, and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, and that this work in which we are engaged is the work of the Lord, the power of God unto salvation. While we cannot transfer this knowledge and impress of the Spirit of God to others, or transmit it to our offspring, yet the promise is to all that if we will

yield obedience unto the commandments of God we shall receive the Holy Ghost; and it is the office and mission of the Holy Ghost to bear witness of both the Father and the Son. No man can know that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost we may know the truth of all things. So we promise to the people of the world that they, too, may obtain a testimony such as we have obtained, in the way in which we have obtained it; but there are other evidences, external evidences, I may say, which will appeal to the honest thoughtful man and woman, of the truth of the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

I would like to refer to one evidence, which I think is one of the strongest evidences that we have of the truth of these things. I refer you to the time when Joseph commenced his ministry. He was living with his father's family in the township of Manchester in the State of New York. It was in the spring of the year 1820, and there was in that neighborhood at that time a great warmth of religious feeling; indeed, a revival of the various religious denominations. I give credit to that condition for the activity of the Prophet Joseph, in a religious way, at that particular time, for he attended their meetings, he read the Scriptures, and he was wrought up in his feelings. Being a virtuous, pure-minded, and conscientious young man, religiously inclined, he had a desire to join the church which would be recognized of the Lord, and to do his part; but it was difficult for him; in fact, impossible for him to determine which one of all these religious denominations was right. One day, while

reading the Bible, he came to the first chapter of James, reading the fifth verse, as follows: "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Joseph felt that he, indeed, needed wisdom from the Lord, at that particular time, and he believed in the Scripture, and was impressed with the truth and importance of that statement, perhaps as much as was the author himself when he made it. He decided to approach the Father in prayer. Accordingly, he went out into the woods, and there for the first time offered a vocal prayer unto the Lord. It was a prayer of sincere faith, and it brought an answer. He tells us that there appeared above him a light which far exceeded in brightness the noon-day sun, and that as the light fell upon him he saw two heavenly personages standing in the light, immediately above him, in mid-air, whose brightness and glory defy all description; that one spoke to him, calling him by name, and said to him, pointing to the other, "This is my Beloved Son; hear Him." Joseph, remembering what he had come to ask and to pray about, asked the simple question which of all these religious denominations was right, that he might know which one to join. To his astonishment, he was told that they were all wrong, that those religious professors were corrupt, that they preached for doctrine the commandments of men, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof, and that their creeds were an abomination in His sight.

Now, this story told by Joseph was either true or false; and upon

the truth or falsity of these statements "Mormonism," so-called, must stand or fall; for, if false, then would Joseph Smith have been stamped as a base deceiver of men, an imposter whom God never could have thereafter honored in the way in which Joseph Smith claims that He was honored and recognized of the Lord. Had the Lord any righteous work to accomplish surely He would not have chosen an imposter to represent Him. On the other hand, if true, then we might expect further manifestations of a similar character unto the Prophet Joseph; and so Joseph tells us that he did have other manifestations. He tells us of his receiving the golden plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and with those plates the urim and thummim, or the holy interpreters, by the use of which and by the help of the Lord, through His Spirit, Joseph was able to interpret the engravings upon the plates; and by the assistance of Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and others he was able to publish the Book of Mormon. In that book, in the fifth chapter of Ether, is a prediction by the angel Moroni when he sealed up the records, that when the book should come forth the Lord would raise up witnesses to testify of its truth. And the Lord did raise up witnesses; but, in the meantime, on the 15th day of May, 1829, Joseph and Oliver say that the angel, John the Baptist, appeared and, laying his hands upon them, conferred upon them the Priesthood of Aaron, and that later Peter, James and John came and conferred upon them the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood, with power to build up the Church and

Kingdom of God upon the earth—to seal on earth and it should be sealed in heaven, to loose on earth and it should be loosed in heaven. Now, what I want to say is this, that if it can be proven that any subsequent event related by the Prophet Joseph, of a divine character, was true, then that evidence will prove the truth of all the events which preceded it, and must of necessity prove that the first vision which he had and what the Lord told him was true. I will refer you to the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon. I will not read their testimony, it is familiar to most of you, it is found in the front part of the Book of Mormon. Those three witnesses, who were raised up by the Lord, and whose testimony was published unto the world as a savor of life or death, according as the world should receive or reject their testimony, they certify that an angel of God came down from heaven—this was in the latter part of June or possibly in the month of July, in the year 1829—and that he brought and laid before their eyes those golden plates from which Joseph Smith had translated the Book of Mormon. They saw the engravings upon the plates, and they heard a voice from heaven saying that they had been translated by the gift and power of God, and they bear their testimony that they do know that the Book of Mormon is true.

Now, the angel had told Joseph that this book contained a history of the ancient inhabitants of this continent, and also the fulness of the everlasting Gospel, as it was taught by Jesus Himself unto that people. We have affidavits referring to the character and the tes-

timony of these men, many years after their first testimony, which go to show that they maintained their testimony to their dying days, notwithstanding two of them, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer, left the Church. If time would permit to bring forth this evidence, it does seem to me that it would be convincing to the honest in heart. Now, here is the thing, brethren and sisters, this point, these witnesses to the Book of Mormon, their testimony, and also the testimony of the eight witnesses that they saw the plates in the hands of the Prophet Joseph, and they hefted them, and handled the leaves which had been translated; these testimonies are also proofs that Joseph Smith's first story was true, that he saw the Father and the Son, and also that he heard that which he says the Son told him of existing conditions. They are also evidences of the truth of the statement that John the Baptist appeared and conferred the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver; they are also evidences of the truth of the statement that Peter, James and John conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the Melchizedek Priesthood. They are also evidences of the truth of all those sacred and important revelations which Joseph Smith received as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, prior to that date. This, I think, is logic which must be accepted. In order to disprove any feature of all those statements it is necessary to disprove the testimony of the three and the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon, which cannot be done. This is evidence of the divinity or the divine origin of the Book of Mormon, and evidence of the divine origin and

restoration of the Holy Priesthood, the establishment of the Gospel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, upon the earth.

We have joy in contemplating these things, and we say to the world that there are a multitude of similar external evidences which will appeal to you if you will but investigate. No man can hope to find out the truth without investigation. No man can hope to find out God without investigation, but the promise is that if we will turn unto Him, He will turn unto us; and if we ask in faith, and seek with a determination that when we obtain the light we will yield obedience to it, the Lord will lead us by His Spirit until we have a perfect knowledge and testimony of these things. I thus bear you my witness and testimony to the truth of these things, and pray God our Father to bless you my brethren and sisters and friends, one and all, that all may be brought to the light of the everlasting Gospel, and eventually to salvation in His kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

"The song of Ruth;" a soprano solo, was sung by Sister Anna Newell.

ELDER THOMAS E. MCKAY.

(Late President of Swiss and German Mission.)

Never before, my brethren and sisters, have I felt so keenly the necessity of the Spirit of the Lord to direct me as at the present time. I am very thankful, however, for this opportunity of making a few remarks upon the conditions that exist in the Swiss and German mis-