

**NINETY-FOURTH  
ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE**

**of the Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-day Saints**

**Held in the Tabernacle and Assembly Hall  
Salt Lake City, Utah**

**April 4, 5 and 6  
1924**

*With a Full Report of all  
the Discourses*



Published by the  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
Salt Lake City, Utah

our graves, we expect to come up out of our graves, and take up these bodies purified, and go on to exaltation and glory.

I testify to you that I do know that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God, and a great prophet of God, a mighty man. He was the man who founded this Church and kingdom under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Priesthood that was given to him. Great was that man. Now, I rejoice in these things beyond measure, and I pray God, the eternal Father, that he will continue to bless this people and strengthen them and unite them together by the power of his Spirit, that we may be able to accomplish the work which is required at our hands. This I testify to you, and this blessing I ask in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

A soprano solo, "My Redeemer," was sung by Miss Arline Ridges, a granddaughter of Brother Ridges, who was the original builder of the Tabernacle organ.

### ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS

I feel very keenly, my brethren and sisters, the responsibility, in addressing this large congregation. I believe that the prayers and faith of good men and women avail much with the Lord, and I therefore ask that you give to me your sympathy and your faith and prayers, that I may be able to bring forth something that will be worthy your consideration.

#### CONDITIONS MADE KNOWN BY STATISTICS

In the Presiding Bishop's Office of the Church, there are kept and compiled many important statistics, and these statistics give to the authorities of the Church, who choose to consider them, an understanding of conditions which it would be next to impossible to acquire through visiting in the Church, in the various stakes of Zion. We have had some of these statistics presented by our President, in the opening session of this conference, and I desire to call attention to some others, briefly, which indicate conditions which are in need of being improved or corrected; conditions with respect to which perhaps the great majority of the people are not informed. For example:

#### LARGE NUMBER OF UNMARRIED IN THE CHURCH

From the reports of 1923, we are informed that there are in the Church 27,104 members of the Church over 21 years of age who have never been married. When you think that this large tabernacle will seat about eight thousand people, multiply that number by three and one-half, or nearly so, to equal the number of unmarried people in the Church over twenty-one years of age, it is almost appalling! And then, if we were to add to that number the young women of the Church, between the ages of 18 and 21, who might be said to be of marriagable age, the number would be increased by some thousands.

## WHY IS THIS CONDITION?

Why is this condition in the Church we may ask? And if it is in need of being remedied, how can it best be accomplished? We, as a people, believe in marriage. It is with us a religious principle. Indeed, we believe in marriages such as the Lord has revealed; that we should be sealed, for time and eternity, by those having the sealing power. We are informed that such marriages as are performed in our temples are necessary for men and women to obtain a fulness of glory and exaltation in the celestial kingdom of our Father in Heaven; for those who attain to that glory are to have a continuation of the seeds, forever, an eternal increase. Why then should there be so many members of the Church of marriageable age who are not married? I am led to wonder if we are partaking of the spirit of the world in this thing; for if I am correctly informed there are religionists who believe that in the practice of celibacy they can get nearer to the Lord, that they can minister more satisfactorily to him in the unmarried state than in the married relation. I am sure that this is a great mistake, an untrue doctrine.

## FORBIDDING TO MARRY, A DOCTRINE OF DEVILS

Indeed, I think I might say that it is a doctrine of devils, and I would quote to you from the Scriptures to sustain my understanding of this doctrine. The Apostle Paul, in his epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:1-3), says:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron: Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

Here the Apostle Paul characterizes this forbidding to marry as a doctrine of devils, as I understand it, along with lies in hypocrisy, and one of the great evils that should characterize the falling away from the truth in the last days. I hope as Latter-day Saints we are not imbibing those worldly ideas; for we have been called out of the world, as we read in Revelations 18:45:

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

"For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

## EXEMPLARS TO THE WORLD

We are expected to be exemplars unto the world of mankind, in all things that are good, right and righteous, and thus be preachers of the truth by example as well as by precept. There is no justification that I can find in the Scriptures for the non-belief in marriage as a

principle and ordinance of salvation, but on the contrary we find the Apostle Paul teaching the Hebrews that marriage is honorable in all; and in a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, known as the 49th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants, we find the Lord's own words: "Whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man."

And in Genesis 2:18: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone."

I would ask who knows better than the Lord what is good for man; and what is good for man is good for woman, and it is not good that woman should be alone.

In Genesis, the 5th chapter, I read this: "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam."

That is a rather peculiar expression "called their name Adam." The author of the *Compendium*, commenting on that expression, says that man in his fulness is a two-fold organization, male and female; either being incapable of filling the measure of their creation, alone. It requires a union of the two to complete man in the image of God.

#### TWO KINDS OF MARRIAGES—AUTHORITY

There are two kinds of marriages particularly taken note of in the statistics of the Church; one we call temple marriage, and the other civil marriage. Temple marriages, however, are civil marriages in that they comply with all the requirements of the civil law; but temple marriages have other important elements in them that the civil marriage, performed outside of the temples, have not. For instance, the individual solemnizing these temple marriages must have authority. He who holds the keys, the President of the Church, delegates this authority to man to seal on earth and it shall be sealed in heaven, for he has received this authority and has the right to delegate it to those who are worthy, as he may elect.

We read in Matthew 18:18 the following: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

This is by the Savior unto his disciples; and they who held that sealing and loosing power visited the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, in the spring of 1829, on the banks of the Susquehanna river, and there conferred that authority upon them, and they in turn have conferred it upon others. So these marriages performed in the temples are by those who have been thus authorized to speak for the Lord, and the individuals contracting marriage under these circumstances covenant most solemnly with each other to be husband and wife for time and for all eternity, as contrasted with the civil marriage covenant "until death do them part." The ceremony is of that character making the man and the woman husband and wife for time and for all eternity, so that these civil marriages, after all, are, we might say, but trial marriages; and it would seem so from the fact that there are

so many of our Church members who accept of a civil marriage ceremony before coming to the temple, and then later come to the temple to be sealed.

#### MARRIAGE FOR ETERNITY

I remember on one occasion when I was associated with the presidency of the Tooele stake, a prominent non-member of the Church requested me to perform the marriage ceremony for him. He was about to marry a beautiful woman, but before the ceremony was performed he called me to one side and said: "Now, Mr. Richards, don't make this thing too solid. We don't know whether we will be able to live together happily or not." That represents, I fear, the feeling of too many men and women who enter into these solemn obligations of marriage outside of the Church, as compared with those who marry in the temple, for these marry with the thought of never separating, of making themselves congenial, yielding here and there where it is necessary, and fulfilling the law that they may be one in time and throughout all eternity. The statistics of the Church go to show that those marriages performed in the temple are more enduring. There are more divorcements following civil marriages, more than half as many more, than there are following temple marriages according to the statistics of the Church.

#### TEMPLE AND CIVIL MARRIAGES IN THE CHURCH CONTRASTED

I might give you in detail the average per year for the last five years, and I will say here that it is a deplorable thing that since 1919 the civil marriages have outnumbered the temple marriages in the Church each year. The average number of temple marriages in the Church per year for the last five years is two thousand nine hundred and forty-six. The average number of civil marriages is three thousand two hundred and thirty-four. The divorcements after temple marriages, eighty-four; and the divorcements after civil marriages, one hundred fifty; or, in other words, one divorce to every twenty-one civil marriages in the Church, and one divorce to every thirty-six temple marriages. It is my belief that those very reasons, which might be assigned for members of the Church not going to the temple for marriage, are the causes of many unhappy marriages and the evil of divorce does not tell the whole story of sorrow which follows. Only those who in sorrow and disappointment have reached the climax and can endure the conditions no longer, receive divorcements. Many others suffer on and endure it for the sake of their children or others who are concerned.

#### PEOPLE OF ONE RELIGIOUS FAITH SHOULD MARRY

From the great number of men and women in the Church who have not been married, more than twenty-seven thousand, it would seem that those within the Church who do marry ought to be able to find companions without having to go outside of the Church. I want

to tell you that while some of those marriages, where they are of different faiths, may result in happiness, the great majority of them, I believe, result in disappointment, and sorrow, if not in divorcements. We would, therefore, advise our Latter-day Saint girls and Latter-day Saint boys to marry those of their own faith, and we would also advise those who are not of us to marry those of *their* own faith.

#### WE WANT OUR PEOPLE TO MARRY

Then there is one other thought that I want to leave with you: brethren and sisters, we want our people to marry. It would be a serious thing in my family if I had a son or a daughter that should grow up without marrying. We want the parents to use their influence to have their children marry and let them marry young, when the spirit of courtship and marriage is upon them, and then we want them, of course, to marry in the Church, in the right way; and when they are married they should fulfil the law which God has given, to multiply and replenish the earth. That is the thing which many, I feel, are not doing today, to the full, and it is my firm conviction that the time will come when those who are not doing their full duty will know the loss which they are sustaining, and it will be hell and torment to many of them. Now, we know that some cannot bear children, and some because of weakness are not able to do as much as others. God knows. I believe in the doctrine of the Scripture, that children are an heritage from God, and happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. And I believe in the saying of the Prophet Joseph that when God offers a man a blessing and he refuses to accept or receive that blessing, that man is damned. I believe that our Father has these children to give to us, and I believe that if we do not accept them we will meet with this disappointment. A little girl, eleven or twelve years of age, said to her mother one day: "Mother, why did you have so many children? When I grow up and get married I will not have so many children." Then the mother said to her: "My daughter, let us see. You are number fourteen. Suppose I had quit having children when I had thirteen, where would you have been, and where would your little brother have been?" Of course the little girl had not thought of it in that way. We value our children above price. A million dollars would not purchase one of them. There will come a time just as sure as we live, brethren and sisters, when we will know what we might have had and what we have not received, where we have rejected the offer from a kind and loving Father, so that we may then say with the poet, "Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: it might have been."

God bless you, my brethren and sisters. May he help us to see and understand these principles, to have faith and courage to live them, that we may be saved, and be an example in these things to our children, worthy of their emulation, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.