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CONFERENCE

Of the Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints

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*With a Full Report of
All the Discourses*



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to our children and our children's children to the latest generation, that in his own due time, when he shall gather his jewels, we, who have had this great opportunity, may find our names enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS

Notwithstanding I was born in the Church and have passed my sixty-sixth birthday, I feel but a mere child in this great latter-day work. In speaking to you, my brethren and sisters, this afternoon, I will call your attention to the word of the Lord to his servant, Moses, as recorded in the Pearl of Great Price, Book of Moses, first chapter and thirty-ninth verse:

THE WORK AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD

"Behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."

I conclude from these words that with the Lord the salvation of man was the end he had in view, and that all other works of his are but a means to that end. In these last days, after a period of spiritual darkness has been over the earth and the hearts and the minds of the children of men for centuries, our Father has restored anew the gospel, established his Church, and restored the holy Priesthood, having the same end in view.

THE GOSPEL TO BE TAUGHT

The gospel is the law of the Lord by which all men are to be judged and to be condemned or justified according to merits, therefore justice demands that the gospel be taught unto all men. The Lord has most graciously provided that this shall be done, that those who do not have the opportunity of hearing the gospel in the flesh shall have an opportunity of hearing it in the hereafter, and that those who have not the opportunity of receiving the saving ordinances of the gospel in life may have the work done for them vicariously by their kindred who come after them. This principle of the living working for the dead, and of the dead looking to the living to do the necessary work for them, is what is called the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, and it has the same end in view, that of the salvation of men.

I think the President of this Church has the same motive concerning the Latter-day Saints and the children of men generally that our Father in heaven has, and that is to bring about, by the means at his command,—the organizations, institutions and workers in this Church,—the salvation of the children of men. It would please the President of this Church more than anything else if we who are members of the Church would be true and faithful to our covenants and keep the commandments of the Lord.

FAITH THE MOVING CAUSE

If we had sufficient faith, my brethren and sisters, I feel sure that there would be no doubt in regard to our salvation. Faith is the moving cause of all action. It is the foundation of all righteousness, and righteousness is the thing that is going to save men and women in the kingdom of God. One of the purposes of our meeting together in these conferences is that the faith of the Latter-day Saints may be more firmly established, that under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, which is always present in these conference meetings, and the instructions that are given, we may be reminded of our first love, of this the gospel of our Redeemer; that we may be reminded of the manner of men and women we should be. The very elect of mankind have been chosen out of the world, and very few indeed, in the language of the scripture—one of a city and two of a family—to carry on the work of our Father, looking to the saving of his children.

TESTIMONIES HAVE STRENGTHENED FAITH

Those who were present yesterday morning at the opening meeting of this conference and heard the remarks of President Heber J. Grant must have been deeply impressed, as I was, with the strength of character and of testimony of this our beloved President. Many evidences were brought forth proving the truth of this work, and that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God; and a powerful testimony was borne that God lives, and that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of mankind. The testimonies of others of the brethren have been in accord, all calculated to strengthen the faith of the Latter-day Saints and to convince those who are not members of the Church. We, each and all of us, ought to feel as our Father in heaven feels in regard to man's salvation, and that so far as we have the power we should endeavor to lead men and women with whom we may be associated to an investigation of the truth, and possibly through the blessing of the Lord to membership in his Church, and finally to salvation.

FURTHER CONCERNING TESTIMONY.

I realize that some are less credulous than others. The evidences presented which have convinced us beyond question or doubt seem to be insufficient for the converting of many of our Father's children. For this, of course, we are sorry.

Nature's testimony of God is incontrovertible. Men may question the authenticity and the truth of the scriptures, perhaps, but the evidence of nature is incontrovertible. The Apostle Paul in reasoning with the Romans used this expression:

"For the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are left without excuse."

Men are known by their works. A prophet is known by his works. The tree that bringeth forth fruit is judged by the fruit. The things

which God our Father has created, all that we see in nature, are his handiwork and testify of his existence, of his power, and of his love. Hence we sing that beautiful hymn:

"Earth, with her ten thousand flowers,
Air, with all its beams and showers,
Heaven's infinite expanse,
Sea's resplendent countenance—
All around, and all above
Bear this record, God is Love."

There are other evidences. The Savior said to one of his apostles, St. John, 20th chapter:

"Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

The Lord expects men and women to receive the testimony of those who have seen:

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book;

"But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

The scriptures tell us that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, "for prophecy came not in olden times by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost." The scriptures, then, are the product of the Holy Ghost, and they are written that they might testify of him. And they have so thoroughly testified of him that men believing on him, by reason of the testimony of these scriptures, have reasoned out also a philosophy, that God, who is the Father of Jesus Christ, is a personal, immortal and glorified being.

Let me read to you of Henry Ward Beecher's conclusions, drawn from the scriptures. He says:

"I am compelled to say that I must form an ideal of God through his Son Jesus Christ. Christ is indispensable to me. My nature needs to fashion the thought of God, though I know him to be a spirit, into something that shall nearly or remotely represent that which I know. I hold before my eyes therefore a glorified form. But after all the glory, whatever may be the nimbus and the effulgence round about it, it is to me a glorified form of a glorified man, and I therefore fashion to myself out of the spirit, that which has to me as it were a divine presence and a divine being; namely, a divine man."

Why cannot other intelligent men and women reach the same conclusion from these same scriptures? It seems to require more evidence to convince some than others. To me these are convincing evidences, and the fact that we teach truly scriptural doctrine is one of the strong evidences of the truth of this work in which we are engaged.

THE LORD HAS RAISED UP WITNESSES TO TESTIFY

Now again the Lord has raised up witnesses who are to testify, and the people who hear them are supposed to believe, and if they do not believe they will be left without excuse.

I will read from the first chapter and eighth verse of the Acts of the Apostles :

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

That is the kind of witnesses the apostles of the Lord were to be in his day, and in this day he has also special witnesses, and the people are expected to hear their testimony.

You remember the parable given by the Savior, of the rich man and the poor man, how that the rich man found himself in torment after life, because of his neglect to do the things he knew he should have done, and when he appealed to Father Abraham to send someone from the dead down to earth to visit his five brothers and warn them that they might not come to that place and condition of torment, the answer was, “They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. And if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one were sent from the dead.”

THEIR TESTIMONIES WILL STAND AGAINST THE WORLD

These testimonies borne by the servants of God in this day will stand against the world. Men of the world need a tutor, a Phillip, to explain the scriptures to them so that they may understand them.

MONUMENT TO THE THREE WITNESSES AND THEIR TESTIMONY

Last Saturday we unveiled a beautiful monument here to the memory of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, who testified that an angel of God came down from heaven and brought and laid before their eyes, that they beheld and saw, the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God through Joseph Smith; that they heard a voice from heaven saying that the plates had been translated by the gift and power of God, and that voice commanded them to bear record to the world, and they gave their record and testimony to the world.

Another testimony, that of eight reputable men, who declared that Joseph Smith, having the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated in his possession, showed the plates to them and that as many of the leaves as he had translated they did handle with their hands and they saw the engravings which were upon the plates, and declared that they had the appearance of ancient work and of curious workmanship.

BOOK OF MORMON TESTIFIES OF THE WITNESSES

I shall read to you what is found in the Book of Mormon telling of these witnesses who should be raised up, long centuries yet to come, after this prediction. It is found in the Book of Ether 5:3, 4:

“And unto three shall they be shown by the power of God; wherefore they shall know of a surety that these things are true.

“And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established; and

the testimony of three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God and also his word, of which the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear record—and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day.”

Why? Because men and women learning of these things are supposed to accept the testimony of these witnesses.

The testimony of all these witnesses is a direct testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon. We declare that it contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel as restored through an angel, as the plates from which this book was translated were given to Joseph by an angel. And thus the vision of John the Revelator on Patmos was fulfilled, when he saw that an angel should fly in the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth, etc.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

Those witnesses and their testimony, to me (perhaps I am more credulous than some), is an equally strong testimony that Joseph Smith, who translated from those plates the Book of Mormon, is a true prophet of God; and, being a true prophet of God, his story of his first experience when he went into the woods to pray, and in answer to his prayer the Father and the Son appeared to him, must have been true. For, had it been false, he would have been a great imposter, and God never would have used an imposter in bringing to light this truth, the Book of Mormon, the fulness of the everlasting gospel. So that these testimonies are to me just as strong evidence that Joseph Smith's story of the visitation of the Father and the Son is true, and that means that God the eternal Father is a personage having a body of flesh and bones and spirit, a glorified immortal being, and his Son Jesus Christ is like the Father. To me it is also satisfactory evidence that what the Lord told Joseph Smith, as Joseph explains it to us, is true in regard to a universal apostasy, and the intention of the Lord to restore his gospel and his Church in the near future. The visitation of the angel Moroni to Joseph is an established fact by these witnesses, by their testimony, also the visitation of John the Baptist and the conferring of the Aaronic Priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver, and later the visitation of Peter, James and John, who held the Melchizedek Priesthood, who conferred upon Joseph and Oliver the keys of that Priesthood.

Now just a word or two from the Doctrine and Covenants in conclusion. We read in the 20th section:

“Therefore, having so great witnesses, by them shall the world be judged, even as many as shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this work.

“And those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life;

“But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation.”

May the Lord add his blessings, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.