

One Hundred Ninth

ANNUAL

CONFERENCE

OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



Held in the Tabernacle
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

April 6, 7, 9, 1939

With Report of Discourses



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

Printed in the United States of America

honor, with integrity and love. I am quite sure there is no people, other than the people of the Latter-day Saints, that has such faith in prayer and exercise it more generally than do we. Never forget God's blessings.

THE DIVORCE EVIL

One thing more that I desire to speak of is divorce. I haven't the figures now. I don't know how we stand along this line, compared with other parts of our country or the world, but I do know that the last investigation made by me revealed the fact that there were fewer divorces per capita among the Mormon people than other group of people in the world. South Carolina has no divorce law and I understand Nevada has about fifty-seven kinds or fifty-seven reasons for a divorce. Brethren and sisters, I pray that the Spirit of God may be in your homes, and that marriage of a man and a woman may be such that they can work together in the service of our Heavenly Father and that the Spirit of the Lord may direct their thoughts and their actions, that people seeing their deeds may judge that there is something binding upon them and their conscience, quite different from those of the world.

Our Heavenly Father, bless the Authorities of thy Church and particularly give strength and health to our President. God be with us and bless us all, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER GEORGE F. RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I realize keenly, brethren and sisters, the responsibility resting upon me in being asked to speak, being expected to lead this vast congregation in intelligent and profitable thought. I think it a wonderful accomplishment for a man to be able to stand before a congregation of this size and think consecutively and intelligently, and to give intelligent expression to those thoughts. It makes me to fear and tremble.

I realize in this position, as in all others, my dependence upon the Lord. If he were not to assist me by his Holy Spirit, my mind would close up like a clam. I wouldn't know where to begin, how to continue, or to end. But with the help of the Lord, the experiences I have had in the past, trusting in him and having his blessing to attend me, I have some hope, with the prayers and faith of the people, that I may be able to overcome my weakness and present something that will be worth our consideration.

I have in mind that what I shall say will not only be heard by those within this building, a congregation made up of members and non-members of the Church, but possibly by many people on the outside who are listening in over the radio, and I would like to say something that would be helpful to those who are not members of the Church, as well as to members of the Church, if they will accept of what I have to say, the advice that I may be led to give.

I want to say this, that I am grateful that my feelings are in complete harmony with what has gone before in this conference. I think we have had a splendid conference. The Spirit of the Lord has been with us, and we have really been fed the bread of life. I was deeply interested in the statistics which were read to us yesterday morning, which show the accomplishments of the Church, and the faithfulness of the members thereof. I feel in my heart to bless the Latter-day Saints for their faithfulness and their worthiness.

PLANS MADE IN COUNCILS OF HEAVEN

And now I have a thought pertaining to the Gospel, that I would like to talk over with you and consider it together. We read in the Book of Moses, in the Pearl of Great Price, an account of a visitation of the Lord to his servant, the prophet Moses, where the Lord talked with Moses face to face, and in conversation told Moses that it was his work and his glory to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man.

The provisions for the accomplishment of these purposes were made in the councils of heaven before the world was. We were all present. We saw the Savior chosen and appointed, and the plan of salvation made, and we sanctioned it. Not all of our Father's spirit children sanctioned it, for we are told that one Lucifer, who stood high among the sons of God, took exception to the plan. He would substitute his will and his way of salvation for that of the Eternal Father, which would have deprived us of agency in this life, which we exercised in the spirit world, and other important principles were involved. Because he and those who were associated with him, one-third of heaven's hosts, could not have their own way, they rebelled and a war ensued, as we read in the scriptures, and he and his followers were cast out and down, and became the sons of perdition. They were the enemies of God then, and the enemies of man, and they have been since, and they have wrought havoc among the children of men from that day to this.

It is said that experience is a dear school, but that fools will learn in no other. I shall not undertake to say how much of truth there is in that saying, but it does have the effect of calling our attention to the fact that we should, as intelligent, wise men and women, profit by the experiences of others. And so we should profit by the experience of Lucifer and those who went away with him in rebellion, and forever and always try to make our minds and our wills conform to the mind and will of God, the Eternal Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, who are one, and who seek our welfare, our happiness and our salvation.

PUNISHMENT OF THOSE NOT VALIANT

The negro is an unfortunate man. He has been given a black skin. But that is as nothing compared with that greater handicap that he is not permitted to receive the Priesthood and the ordinances of the temple,

necessary to prepare men and women to enter into and enjoy a fulness of glory in the celestial kingdom.

What is the reason for this condition, we ask, and I find it to my satisfaction to think that as spirit children of our Eternal Father they were not valiant in the fight. We are told that Michael and his angels fought, and we understand that we stood with Christ our Lord, on the platform, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever." I cannot conceive our Father consigning his children to a condition such as that of the negro race, if they had been valiant in the spirit world in that war in heaven. Neither could they have been a part of those who rebelled and were cast down, for the latter had not the privilege of tabernacling in the flesh. Somewhere along the line were these spirits, indifferent perhaps, and possibly neutral in the war. We have no definite knowledge concerning this. But I learn this lesson from it, brethren and sisters, and I believe we all should, that it does not pay in religious matters, matters that pertain to our eternal salvation, to be indifferent, neutral, or lukewarm. The Lord, through one of his servants, addressing the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, said:

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

To members of the Church I would ask, are any of us of that class today—lukewarm, indifferent and neutral—a lesson to be learned from the experiences of others who have gone before. I firmly believe that God had something to do with the recording of these events, and having them preserved and handed down to us from generation to generation, that we might read, and reading, profit thereby. We are under direct command of the Lord to search the scriptures, where these things are contained. We have been admonished in this conference so to do.

CONSEQUENCES OF REJECTING THE GOSPEL

We have another example, that of the antediluvians. We are told that Noah the prophet preached to that people a hundred and twenty years. They rejected the prophet. They rejected his message. They gave themselves up to the lusts of the flesh, and were immoral and corrupt, according to the scriptures. A just God, in his mercy, wiped them off the face of the earth with a flood. You may call that a severe penalty, but that does not tell the story, by any means, of the consequence of their rejecting of the Gospel and of their wickedness. We are told that they were shut up in a spirit prison for over twenty-three hundred years, according to Bible chronology. We do not know what the nature of that imprisonment was, but the prophet Alma tells us that they were in darkness and having a fearful, awful looking forward to the time when the fiery indignation of the wrath of God would be poured out upon them. It is something to be dreaded and to be feared.

THE HOPE OF REWARD

That suggests in my mind the teaching of the Savior. There are two principal incentives for all men to do what is right, the one the hope of reward, the other the fear of punishment. We have sung today, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent word." And, "What more can he say than to you he hath said, you who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?" The hope of reward. He has promised the male membership of his Church who shall receive the Priesthood, that if we will magnify that Priesthood—and that means live righteous lives, lives of service to God and to our fellow men—all that he has shall be given unto us, and the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.

There are other blessings besides those pertaining to earth and earth things. They are in the hands of God to give, and he is glad to give them to his faithful servants, his faithful children, for he loves us with a perfect love, and our souls are precious in his sight.

OBJECT LESSONS FROM THE PAST

So the condition of the antediluvians, of those who rebelled in the beginning, Lucifer and his followers, and the negro race that we have been speaking of, are object lessons from which we should profit. Not only did the antediluvians lose their lives in a flood—eight souls only saved—and suffered an imprisonment for centuries in the spirit, of whatever nature that might have been, but we are told in the vision from which President Grant quoted yesterday morning, that the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon the glories that we read of in the scriptures of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul speaks of the glory of which the sun is typical, another of which the moon is typical, and another of which the stars of heaven are typical.

This was shown to the Prophet and Sidney Rigdon, and they were told what class of people should attain to the celestial glory, to the terrestrial and to the telestial glory. And speaking of those who should attain to the terrestrial glory, he said: "These are they who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it." So I conclude, and I think justly and rightly, that the antediluvians not only lost their lives, because of their wickedness and rejection of the Gospel, and were shut up in prison, but they are denied the opportunity of going into the celestial kingdom; and even if they accepted the Gospel, or the testimony of Jesus, in the spirit, they may go only into the terrestrial kingdom.

I am reminded of the march of time. We see over and over again that crime does not pay. And I say it does not pay to reject the counsels of God and give ourselves up to wickedness. There are the cities of the plains. The people, because of their wickedness in rejecting the Gospel—ten righteous men could not be found in all Sodom and Gomorrah—fire from heaven was sent down to destroy them, and may

we not conclude that their further fate was like that of the antediluvians? It does not pay.

So we follow down six hundred years before the birth of the Savior, when Lehi preached the same Gospel to the people in Jerusalem, and his life was sought, that it might be taken away, as other prophets have lost their lives. He had to flee the city and was led, as you know, to this American continent. The people of Jerusalem who were not slain in battle were taken captive, and the city was destroyed, as Lehi had predicted, because the people would not repent.

Then there are the sons of Lehi who were rebellious. You know the punishment that befell them.

And when the Savior came, he came unto his own and his own received him not. They put him to death, and they have since been a hiss and a by-word in every nation of the earth, and the results of this action still follow them.

Will we, brethren and sisters and friends, profit by the experiences and the mistakes of others, as we read of them in the holy scriptures? If we are wise we will do so. God grant that we may, for the salvation of our own souls, and the effect that it will have upon the world, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The *Nebo Stake Male Chorus* sang "Service" (Cadman).

ELDER BRYANT S. HINCKLEY

President of the Northern States Mission

It fills a missionary's heart with gratitude and stirs his soul with pride to attend a general conference of the Church. He may labor with ever so much zeal, still the returns are small. His voice is a little one in the world. You can well imagine how it heartens and encourages him to come to a conference like this and see this great body of people! There is a serene and tranquil influence here; a sense of peace and security born of a settled faith in God and his beneficence.

I was greatly interested in the report which President McKay read yesterday, a brief and comprehensive report showing the great service of the Church, in a material way, for a single year; also showing the strength of the Church, its growth and its progress.

Since listening to that report my mind has been going over the past. I am not an historian, but I travel over historic ground. I have been to Far West, frequently to Nauvoo and to Kirtland, and have passed over a good deal of territory which has been sanctified by the touch of men and women whose hearts were warmed with a living faith in God.

A hundred years ago, an onlooker, unfamiliar with the spirit and power of Mormonism would have said that this Church could not endure. It seemed to be on the brink of ruin. The winter of 1838-39 was a very dark period. The leaders of the Church were imprisoned. The people