

DESERET NEWS:

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TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

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CHARLES W. PENROSE, EDITOR.

WEDNESDAY, - APRIL 6, 1881.

FIFTY-FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

The Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, convened in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, on Sunday, April 3rd, 1881, at 10 o'clock a. m., as per call of the First Presidency:

Present on the stand: Of the First Presidency.—John Taylor, George Q. Cannon, and Jos. F. Smith.

Of the Twelve.—Wilford Woodruff, Lorenzo Snow, Erastus Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Brigham Young, Francis M. Lyman and John H. Smith; Counselor D. H. Wells.

Patriarch.—John Smith.

Presidents of Seventies.—Joseph Young, Horace S. Eldredge, John Van Cott and W. W. Taylor.

Of the Bishopric.—Edward Hunter, Leonard W. Hardy and Robert T. Burton.

Besides Presidents of Stakes, Bishops and other leading men from nearly all the Stakes of Zion.

Conference called to order by President John Taylor.

Choir sang,

All praise to our redeeming Lord,
Who joins us by his grace.

Prayer by President Joseph F. Smith.

The choir sang:

Oh, my Father, thou that dwellest
In the high and holy place.

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR.

We are met this morning to attend to the duties and the responsibilities which devolve upon us at our annual Conference. We thought that we would change the programme a little as it regards time; and as it is the spring season of the year, when men are generally engaged with their labor, we thought by commencing our Conference today, it would give men an opportunity of being present without losing a day's labor in their fields. We have this morning a delightful time, very pleasant weather and everything favorable for our assembling together. And whilst we are thus assembled, it is proper that we, as Saints of the Most High God, ought to have our hearts and feelings under the direction and inspiration of the Almighty, that we may seek for the good Spirit of the Lord to be with us, to guide us and to direct us in all of our teachings, in all of our business transactions, in all of our counselling and in the various duties and responsibilities which devolve upon us to attend to on this occasion.

This is the 51st Anniversary of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—or it will be next Wednesday morning—and when we reflect upon the circumstances with which we have been surrounded from that time until the present, we certainly must feel that we have cause to rejoice and to be grateful to the God of Israel for the many mercies and blessings which He has manifested toward us, and for His protecting care which has been over us in the midst of opposition and in the midst of calumny, and in the midst of reproach, having been assailed all the time by enemies to God and to His truth, the Lord has preserved us, and we will give to God the glory. And irrespective of the feelings and ideas and theories of men, we feel to rejoice and praise God our heavenly Father from the bottom of our hearts for the kindness and mercy which He has vouchsafed unto us; and whatever may be the feelings of man toward us, our feelings are glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men, even to all who love the truth everywhere, among all peoples in all the world. And whatever may be the feelings of others toward us, our feelings are nothing but kindness and mercy and salvation to the human family.

We are here to carry out the word and will and designs of God. We are here to help to build up His kingdom; to combat error; to advance principles of truth; to establish Zion, and to bring to pass things that have been spoken of by all the holy Prophets since the world was. And in our teachings, in our administrations, in our selecting missionaries to go forth to the nations of the earth to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, and in all the relations that we may have to do with, in our assembling together, we ask for the guidance of the good Spirit of God to be with us. And I say to Israel, God bless you and lead you in the paths of life, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

APOSTLE WILFORD WOODRUFF

Reiterated the previous speaker's sentiment of gratitude to God for the privilege of meeting with so many of the Saints and those bearing the Holy Priesthood in this the last dispensation. He could not but marvel when he meditated over the way in which the Saints had been protected and blessed from the beginning. Alluded to the example of the three Hebrews thrown into the fiery furnace for refusing to bow down before Nebuchadnezzar's image, and of their passing through the fiery ordeal unscathed, also to Daniel's cruel treatment and subsequent preservation. He never knew a man who gained anything by trying to shirk the duties which God expected of him. Instanced Jonah's experience. Although the Savior and His Apostles were called upon to seal their testimony with their blood, they could not afford to turn away from the truth or shirk its responsibilities. Joseph and Hyrum Smith were also faithful unto death, and they could afford to die for, but not to desert the truth. It is for all the Latter-day Saints to cherish the memory of such noble examples, and to remember that they can afford to carry out the purposes of God even though death should ensue. But no man can afford to compromise with error or forsake the Gospel of God. If we are faithful we will see the fulfillment of all the promises that God has made in respect to this age and dispensation. The revelations we have received in this day are from God, just as much as any that were ever given to man from the heavens, and just as truly as ancient revelations have been fulfilled to the letter, so true is it that not one jot or tittle of modern revelation will fail unfulfilled. God is over us and we need not fear. He will break every weapon formed against us, and though we have met with persecution in a measure, and even now the hands of the wicked are stretched out against us, God will deliver us from all our enemies. Why are we persecuted? It is said we believe in the principle of plural marriage. This merely a pretext. If we compromised that principle we should have to renounce all—prophets, apostles, bishops, laws and ordinances, and even our God. This we cannot afford to do. God will sustain us. He controls man, and he will watch over us henceforth and for ever. We need not fear man, nor renounce one principle of our religion for his sake. But fear God and keep his commandments, and we shall inherit eternal life in his celestial kingdom.

APOSTLE LORENZO SNOW

Said we could well afford to entertain good will and peace toward all mankind. It is for this that we have been called to the position we hold, and this is our mission upon the earth. Jesus came to earth to carry out his Father's will and to do the work of his Father. He, in turn, gave the same mission to His apostles. He glorified His Father and he told His disciples they must do likewise. He told them they should be hated of all men for His sake. All that we receive of good comes from God, and no man can understand the ways of God but by the Spirit of God. Before the foundation of the world, a system of communication between God and men was established, and in no other way can communication be received from Him. The Jews could not, with all their understanding, know that Jesus, the Son of God, was in their midst. Jesus said then, "This is eternal life to know the true and living God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." On one occasion, when Peter had answered Him that He was "Christ the Son of the living God," Jesus said: "Blessed art thou Simon bar Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," and he also

said, "Upon this rock (of revelation) I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. "It is to be hoped all the Saints to-day are built upon this Rock. It was the principle in ancient days and it is the principle to-day upon which the Church is founded—the principle of revelation from God. Through this came all our knowledge and intelligence concerning the things of God, and we receive through it the comforts of the Spirit which enable us to suffer persecution gladly, looking forward to our eternal exaltation, and ready to suffer and sacrifice all things for the sake of the Kingdom of God. By doing the works of God, we glorify God, even as Jesus did, and we know that if we do these works, we shall be rewarded by being raised to His presence and made sharers of His glory. We must be united and act as a unit in building up God's kingdom. If we refuse to do the works which will make us one, God will find some means to compel us to become one, for except we are one we are not His. In Missouri the Saints failed to consecrate all their property to the building up of God's kingdom and they afterwards had to give it all up to the mob. Let us hope this will not be the case again. But let us keep God's commandments and seek to glorify Him in all our acts.

APOSTLE F. D. RICHARDS

Felt thankful for the peace in which we had been permitted to meet together; that the gospel had been revealed to man in this day, and that so many had believed it. We have good reason to be grateful, while pestilence, war and famine accompany the human family in other nations, here we have health, peace and plenty. Yet we are sometimes prone to think we are hardly dealt with, and often we borrow trouble. Now God has promised to help us in real trouble, but He has never said He would help us to bear up under "borrowed trouble." We should trust in God. He will be ever near to guide, console and advise His faithful people. It belongs to us to keep the covenants we have made with the Lord and with each other, and the Lord has said it is His business to take care of His Saints. The hand of God has been over us from the beginning, and ever since our glorious retreat into these mountains, we have prevailed. God has said, "I the Lord will forgive whom I will forgive, but it is for you (the Saints) to forgive all men." We must remember this and put it into practice in thought and action. Do we realize that we once lived in the spirit world and had the picture of this world placed before us, and that we have been permitted to come here because we were faithful in a pre-existent state? We came here first as our Savior did, to descend below all things, and by adopting the principles of righteousness to gradually ascend to our eternal exaltation. This is the only way by which man can be exalted. And although we are persecuted for preaching these principles, we cannot afford to relinquish them. But no member of the Church who has the spirit of his calling upon him, wishes anything but good to the human race. It is our constant prayer that the world may receive the Gospel and partake with us in its blessings.

The choir sang the anthem,
"Sing to the Lord in joyful strains."

Benediction by President George Q. Cannon.

Sunday, 2 p. m.

The choir sang:
"Mortals awake, let angels join,
And chant the solemn lay."

Prayer by Elder Erastus Snow.

The choir sang:
"O Lord of Hosts, we now invoke
Thy Spirit most divine."

Elder Orson Pratt who has been prostrated by sickness for many weeks past, had so far recovered and gained sufficient strength as to be brought to the Conference, and took his seat with the Apostles.

PRESIDENT JOHN TAYLOR

Said owing to the magnitude of this immense audience, it was very desirable for as much silence to be maintained as possible, he therefore called on the Deacons to keep children from walking about, and to preserve as good order as could be maintained that the congregation might be able to hear the remarks of the speakers.

PRESIDENT GEORGE Q. CANNON

Addressed the assembly. Expressed his pleasure at meeting with the

Saints in Conference, and invoked the Spirit of the Lord to his aid while speaking. He had been absent in Washington for 15 or 16 weeks, enjoyed excellent health and had never felt better under similar circumstances. There had been considerable said about the Saints of late in the Capital, but he had not been disturbed in his feelings for a second. There is an excitement in the warfare we are engaged in; the consciousness that we are on the winning side and that victory will eventually perch on our banners, renders the experience pleasurable. With the activity which prevails at home among the Saints, with the labors of the Home Missionaries, Improvement Associations, Relief Societies, Sunday schools, etc., and the sending of missionaries abroad to disseminate the principles of truth together with the building of Temples and other works, it is no wonder that opposition should be fierce and that there should be a great deal of talk and agitation about the "Mormons." We have been taught from the beginning that these things were to be. Year after year, as this work develops and the purposes of God unfold, do we see the striking fulfillment of the prophecies concerning us. Joseph Smith, a prophet of the living God, heralded as good and as evil throughout the world, is gradually being lifted up, and through this the name of God is being glorified. Many of the Prophet's predictions of 50 years ago, and up to the time of his death, have been fulfilled, and he has been proven to be a prophet. Not by the Saints alone, but by the inhabitants of the earth at large; they are doing all in their power to establish his claim as an inspired servant of God. How marvellous are the purposes and works of God! Using men, nations, governments, as seemeth Him good to effect His wonderful purposes! Those who have been brought up in this Church who can remember the dark and bitter past, know how little they once could see the accomplishment of these prophecies. They could only see them with the eye of faith. But the years that have ensued have brought to pass the things that seemed so unlikely to be fulfilled. When the work was in embryo, it excited hatred and called forth attention. A young and illiterate man testified that he had seen an angel from heaven, and that the old gospel, its gifts and the everlasting priesthood were to be restored, and the Church of God established upon the earth. It aroused a fever of excitement. Men were stirred up to persecute him, began to tell lies about him, and to blast his reputation. His family and himself were calumniated. Every word or act of his life was tortured into evil, and charges were spread abroad respecting him, which had not the least color or semblance of truth. Fifty years ago the Church was organized with but six members. It would seem that so insignificant a number of men might be permitted to pass unnoticed. But not so. It was heralded far and near that Joseph Smith had organized a Church, and everything was done to crush him. False charges were heralded by the press and pulpit, and every effort made to slander and destroy this youth and his associates. At the same time it was said that "Mormonism" was a delusion and would soon burst and disappear. But it did not. The Elders went forth without purse or scrip, preaching by the spirit and power of God, in the face of all the slanders circulated concerning them and the work continued to grow and spread. They went into Canada, crossed the ocean and sowed the seed of truth on foreign shores. It went from land to land until almost every nation heard the gospel sound. The Elders were persecuted, but they cared not, but continued to preach, for they knew they had it to do. At home persecutions continued, even as the work increased. The Saints were charged with every crime, but especially with the crime of professing to receive revelations from God and to enjoy the Spirit of God and the gifts of Christ's ancient gospel. In Missouri, Gov. Boggs issued an exterminating order, and the Saints were driven out of the State, for death and apostasy were the only alternatives. In the midst of all this, Joseph Smith predicted that the Saints would become a great and mighty people, and throughout their persecutions they clung to these promises. They knew they were to be hated by all men for the sake of their religion, even as the ancient Saints were, but they had faith to endure through all and to-day they can see the fulfil-

ment of their Prophet's predictions. Hated and despised as he has been, the only result is that his persecutors have actually established his claim as a Prophet of God. The Latter-day Saints know this to-day and they know many other things yet remaining in the womb of time that are to be fulfilled. Our destiny is written in heaven, enrolled in the archives of eternity. God has spoken it and not one jot or tittle shall pass unfulfilled. While we are waiting for it on earth, myriads of angels and spirits of the just unbodied and disembodied, are waiting and watching it with eagerness from the heavens. It is the work which has been predicted by the prophets of ancient days, the golden age foretold by the poets in their gorgeous picturings of futurity. But the people who are doing it, are accused of every crime and misdemeanor, and every effort is being made to blacken their reputation. Why is this? The Saints know why. The same agencies that were at work anciently—that ruined the reputation of Christ, that crucified Him, that murdered His Apostles and the Prophets, and did not stop until the Church of God had been taken from the earth, is at work now against the Latter-day Saints. It is marvellous that the world cannot see this. Here is a small handful of people, driven from their homes into an untrodden wilderness, yet still carrying in their hearts a love of liberty, of their country, its laws, and the principles of freedom; and instead of seeking alliance with Mexico, whose territory they occupied, or with Great Britain, their neighbor on the north, or with any other power, they asked to be admitted as a State into the Union. Did they not show by this their patriotism and their love of liberty? And by their virtue, truth, temperance, kindness and hospitality which they have shown from the beginning, have they not manifested a desire to serve God and love their fellowmen? Why is all this outcry and spirit of persecution raised against us. Because it is to be. The warfare must go on—God on one side and Satan on the other. Satan has been at work since the beginning to gain the victory, and it would almost seem sometimes that he has been successful. But eventually the victory is with God and His people. It is the destiny of the Saints to uphold the principles of liberty, of right and to sustain the constitutional government. We are the nucleus of a nation upon which this duty will yet devolve. We are continually battling for the principles of liberty. We are now pleading for them, while efforts are being made to rob us of our rights. We want the liberty to serve God, and we wish all people to have the same liberty. Liberty of conscience, liberty of thought, speech and action, so long as it does not infringe upon anyone's rights, is our motto and our perpetual desire. This is gospel; the gospel of humanity; and it is as good a gospel as could be preached. The speaker closed with a fervent prayer for the good of Israel.

The choir sang the anthem,

How beautiful upon the mountains.

Benediction by Apostle Brigham Young.

SECOND DAY.

Monday, 10 a. m.

Conference convened as per adjournment.

The choir sang,

Praise ye the Lord, 'tis good to raise,
Your hearts and voices in his praise.

Prayer by Prest. Wilford Woodruff.

The choir sang,

May we who know the joyful sound,
Still practice what we know.

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH

Spoke of the multitude of the youth of Zion that are growing up in our midst; said it was nothing but reasonable to expect that they would be better qualified to carry on the great work of God and accomplish a more staunch and vigorous labor than their fathers have done, on account of their being free from the many false traditions that have been handed down from generations past. It is astonishing to think of the great number from the beginning to the present, who have embraced the gospel and then have fallen away. Even of the first Twelve Apostles who had been ordained to that high and holy calling nearly one-half had apostatized from the faith within two or three years of their ordination. The trials and temptations to which they were ex-