

GENERAL CONFERENCE.

FIRST DAY.

The Fifty-seventh General Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints convened in the Utah Stake Tabernacle at Provo, at 10 a. m., April 6th, 1887, Apostle Lorenzo Snow presiding.

There were present on the stand, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Heber J. Grant and John W. Taylor. Patriarch John Smith, several members of the Presiding Council of the Seventies, President A. O. Smoot, of Utah Stake, President Angus M. Cannon of the Salt Lake Stake, and many leading officials of various other Stakes of Zion.

Conference was called to order by Apostle Lorenzo Snow.

The choir sang the hymn commencing:

"Afflicted Saint, to Christ draw near!
Thy Savior's gracious promise here."

The opening prayer was offered by Elder Angus M. Cannon.

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform,

was sung by the choir.

ELDER JOHN W. TAYLOR

was the first speaker. He said he desired by the aid of the Holy Spirit to say something appropriate to the circumstances of the people. Although the building was not sufficiently large to accommodate all the Saints who attended General Conference, it was an excellent structure, with admirable acoustic properties.

The speaker related a conversation that had occurred between himself and a stranger in this part of the country. This person enquired of him (the speaker) whether he thought the late special legislation passed by Congress would have the effect of entirely disrupting the Church. The answer was to the effect that the majority of the Latter-day Saints were able to take up the Scriptures and give a reason for the hope that is in them. They received a testimony of the truth of the Gospel—as they understood it—for themselves; they would rather relinquish their lives than renounce their religion. Such a people could not be destroyed. The stranger said he was a great admirer of sincerity, but it was suggested to him that sincerity in that which was erroneous would not be beneficial. The Saints combined sincerity with the truth of their religion. This gentleman appeared to be much interested in an explanation of the eternity of the marriage covenant when performed by a man holding similar power to that which was given to Peter by the Savior—to bind on earth and it would be bound in heaven.

The speaker asked the question whether the recent Congressional legislation against the Saints was doing any good among the latter. If so it was not to be regretted, being a means of educating the people up to a higher standard. In answering this interrogation he dwelt for some time upon the ordinance of fasting, prayer and the donating for the support of the poor, the first Thursday of each month being set apart for that purpose. This ordinance had in the past been but poorly observed. Recently, however, a great change had occurred. The hand of persecution was laid upon the people. They are aroused to diligence, and the meetings on fast days are crowded. If even this solitary object should be attained the effects of the opposition would be good. But there were other directions in which benefits accrued. It is not enough that the people shall merely come together and pay their offerings. There is a host of children growing up among the Saints. Many of these heritages of the Lord sicken and die. We go into the world and proclaim the Gospel, and assert that obedience will bring about its gifts, among them that of healing. Faith and the gift of healing are not as prevalent as they should be among the people. No man can enjoy the gift of healing unless he have the spirit of fasting and prayer. So is it with regard to the spirit of prophecy. The absence of spiritual gifts, shows that there is to some extent the heaven of apostasy among the Saints. The speaker referred, in support of this part of his subject, to a number of incidents in point that are related in the Scriptures. The incidents were not only referring directly to the gift of healing, but as exhibiting the key of power as incorporated in the ordinance of fasting. The speaker stated that a young man some time since arose in a thinly attended fast meeting and predicted that the time was near when such gatherings would be so crowded that there would not be found sufficient standing room. That part of the prophecy had been fulfilled.

Elder Taylor then dwelt for some time upon educational matters. He spoke in words of commendation regarding the Brigham Young Academy. The system that prevails in it is such that students who graduate therein, come out of the institution with an understanding of the principles of the Gospel as will necessarily look pleasing. At the last General Conference held at Coalville, an Epistle from the First Presidency was read. One point impressed upon the people through that channel was the necessity of establishing denominational schools for Latter-day Saints. Not much had yet been done, since the publication of

that epistle in the direction referred to. Other religionists established schools, and some people claiming to be Latter-day Saints sent their children to them. No matter what might be the religious faith of a parent, if he be consistent he will desire that his children be trained in the same line. The speaker would prefer to see a large number of schools established upon the plan pointed out by the First Presidency, each taught by a good, sound, intelligent Latter-day Saint, than a great many Elders sent into the world to preach the Gospel. The good accomplished in the former would be greater than by the latter. If adverse legislation and other forms of persecution should drive the Saints into adopting a higher phase of education than now obtained, the results would indeed be gratifying. The speaker stated that the First Presidency were in good health and enjoying the blessings of the Almighty. He concluded with a general exhortation to faithfulness.

ELDER ABRAM H. CANNON,

of the Council of the Seventies, was the next speaker, and briefly addressed the congregation. He rejoiced at the privilege of attending a General Conference, a pleasure he had not had for two years. Notwithstanding existing troubles there was abundant cause for thankfulness to the Almighty. He had appeared frequently as if the people were about to fall into the hands of their enemies, and that they should be in bondage, yet the Lord had delivered them. The Saints were growing stronger and brighter by the ordeals through which they were passing, and the set time to favor Zion and cause her to shine in splendor was at hand. No unprejudiced person could help acknowledging that the wonderful endurance exhibited by the Saints was due to something more than fanaticism. They had been upheld by the power of the Spirit of God. The speaker was pleased to witness a spirit of inquiry growing among the young people, who are preparing to take part in the great work of the latter days. They would yet become a power in the earth. Those who attended this conference ought to carry to their homes the spirit of this gathering and the instructions imparted. It was a source of satisfaction that so many of the brethren were at liberty, notwithstanding the schemes of the wicked. The deliverance promised to the Saints would come, but the contest involved in the future developments of the present state of affairs would cause all to be tested. All earthly considerations will have to be made secondary to the integrity that must be maintained toward the work of God. In this way persecution was rendered a cleansing process. Those who were not vessels of honor could not endure and would fall by the way, and thus was the community purged from hypocrites.

ELDER A. O. SMOOT,

President of Utah Stake, announced that if those visitors who were without suitable places at which to lodge, would remain after the close of the meeting, they would be cared for by a committee appointed for the purpose. The same committee would act in that capacity during the entire session, that no visitor might go unprovided for.

The choir sang an anthem:

When the Lord shall build up Zion.

Benediction by Elder A. O. Smoot.
Recess till 2 p. m.

AFTERNOON.

Conference resumed at 2 o'clock.
Singing by the choir.

The towers of Zion soon shall rise,
Above the hills and reach the skies.

Prayer by Elder John Nicholson.

We're not ashamed to own our Lord,
And worship Him on earth.

was sung by the choir.

ELDER HERBER J. GRANT,

of the Quorum of the Apostles, addressed the Conference. He bore testimony to the increased faith and good works of the Latter-day Saints. He could endorse, in that regard, the statements made by Elder Taylor. Recently he had been on a trip as far south as St. George. He had seen the people leave their vocations and turn out to meetings, filling the halls where they were held to overflowing. This was a result of the opposition directed against the Church. History thus repeats itself; opposition to those whose cause is right only serves to strengthen them and render them more resolute. Before the present phase of things set in not a few of the Saints had apparently forgotten the purpose for which they gathered from the lands of their nativity. Opposition had caused many of them to return to their first love, and to increase their affection for the truth. If the Saints desired the things of the world in place of the righteousness of the kingdom of God; if they labor to that end they can gain their object, but it requires energy to accomplish this. But if this endeavor absorbs the interest that should be taken in the things of the kingdom, they will languish spiritually, on the same principle that the things of this world can be obtained, by blending every energy toward their attainment. Some people, however, seem to think that the things of God can be obtained without effort. This is erroneous. We must earn what we obtain. In ministering among the people it is found that where people do not live their religion blessings are slow to come, because

the laws upon which they are predicated have not been fulfilled. In instances where the laws of the Gospel have been lived up to faith could be exercised by the ministering servants of God, and the desired results follow. In this Church one man is not dependent upon another for light and for a testimony of the truth of the Gospel. Were it not for this fact our position would indeed appear hopeless. All are entitled to the revelation of the Holy Spirit to guide them in their several spheres as much as the President of the Church is to obtain revelation for the guidance of the community as an entirety. But this inestimable blessing can only be attained and enjoyed by making the necessary effort.

Some men go into the world and instead of preaching the pure principles of the Gospel as revealed from heaven, ridicule and tear down the religions of the day. The effect of this is to induce persecution. Men who tear down the religious houses (theories) of the day before depicting a better dwelling and inviting them within, are simply persecuted for their own want of wisdom and not for the truth's sake. Those who claim to have faith and charity and do not sustain those pretensions with works in harmony with such professions; they are spiritually dead, and only fit to be lopped off from the religious tree, which will be the more healthy by being thus denuded. The trouble that will come upon the Saints will be so overwhelming that nothing but the power of God will enable them to endure. He who does not live so as to enjoy it will inevitably fall by the way. He who keeps the commandments of God has no reason to fear, no matter what may transpire.

ELDER ANGUS M. CANNON,

President of Salt Lake Stake, was the next speaker. He said he experienced peculiar feelings when he undertook to address the audience. Many changes had transpired since he last spoke to the people in Provo. This assemblage was composed of people of various nations, who had come to the tops of the mountains to be taught in the ways of the Lord. Jesus came to do His Father's will, not His own, and promised that His disciples should yet do greater works than He had performed. In accordance with the call made through John the Revelator, we had gathered out of Babylon, that invitation having been repeated in this day. Have we actually gathered out of spiritual Babylon, by leaving her evils behind instead of bringing and perpetuating them here? A few years ago a revelation came to us through President John Taylor, to the effect that we should repent and set our houses in order. The speaker had witnessed evidences of repentance on the part of the people. This was an encouraging indication, and led him to see a glimmer of light. The Lord would hear the prayers of His people and deliver them from all their foes. He would provide a ram in the thicket for their salvation. We are a nation of Priests, and a process of separation was going on among us. Those who are for God were exhibiting their position by good works. Those who were of the spirit of Babylon were showing their situation with equal distinctness. The condemnation of the world was that light had come into the world but a certain class of men preferred darkness because their deeds were evil. He knew of a former eminent Elder now deceased, who said, while in life, that he would give all he possessed of an earthly character if he could prove to his satisfaction that the Gospel as understood by the Latter-day Saints was not a divine system.

Elder Cannon then spoke on the Word of Wisdom, denouncing the blessings promised as a result of obedience to it. President Young had stated in 1822, or 1823, that none would be permitted to take part in the building up of Zion on that spot designated by the finger of revelation. He had known of some striking instances wherein the non-observance of the Word of Wisdom had been a great drawback to the advancement of individuals, and related one that had come under his own observation. The power accruing in the matter of exercising the gift of healing was desirable. The speaker held that light upon this subject had come into the world and those who accepted it were under a species of condemnation. We need to obey every counsel of the Almighty to enable us to withstand the onslaughts of our enemies.

It is a question whether ancient Israel was in a closer place than now confronts the Saints. If the latest measure had failed in bringing the people into bondage, this failure was not to be accredited to any change in the feelings and desires of their enemies. If the people wish the incubus of oppression to be lifted and the prisons no longer to hold the servants of God, the families no longer to be scattered abroad, they have but to repent of their sins. Those who had sought to enslave the Saints and to obtain the political mastery over them, in a territorial, county and municipal capacity, were angry because those who had not entered into the extended marriage relation peculiar to the Saints were willing to take an oath to the effect, that they would not break recently enacted laws. They were angry because this class of Saints were willing to step in and save the whole community from going under the heel of the oppressor and despoiler. There were some men

among us, however, who had never obeyed the celestial marriage system against which recent laws were aimed who did not feel that they could not take this oath. The speaker thought so too. Such were not in a position to defend the people of God or their cause. Those who had never obeyed the law of celestial marriage need have no fear, however, that they were breaking any religious covenant in taking that oath that they would obey the law of the country, and not aid, abet, counsel or advise others to break it. Brother Cannon concluded by denouncing the ways of the wicked and exhorting the Saints to have nothing to do with them or their doings.

ELDER GEORGE GODDARD

addressed the congregation on the subject of Sabbath schools, the word of wisdom and kindred subjects.

Singing by the choir:

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness.

Benediction by Patriarch Zebedee Coltrin.

SECOND DAY.

April 7th, 10 a. m.

Singing by the choir:

O God, thou great, thou good, thou wise,
Eternal is Thy name;

Thy power hath reared the lofty skies,
And built creation's frame.

Prayer by Elder Jacob Gates.

Be it my only wisdom here
To serve the Lord with alial fear.

was sung by the choir.

ELDER JOHN HENRY SMITH,

of the Quorum of the Apostles, addressed the Conference. He expressed regret that he had been unable to be present on the day previous and thus be enabled to drink more fully into the spirit of the instructions imparted and of the speakers. He had no fears in regard to the advancement of the cause of the Gospel. If he had ever entertained any fears in that direction it had not been on account of the action of outside opponents; they had been incited by the indifference of many of the Saints. On the other hand he had been pleased to see the integrity evinced by the people when the shafts of hate had been directed against them from the outside. It had been held by the enemies of the Church that it was useless to attempt to draw away from the faith those of mature years who were well grounded in it in theory, principle and practice; therefore the chief assaults to break the ranks must be made upon the young whose judgment is not yet developed. For this purpose schools and other institutions had been established in the midst of this community to undermine the religious structure reared, under the blessing of God, by the Latter-day Saints. So far as their education is concerned many of us had left the care of our children to those who were of a contrary faith to that held by us. On this account some inroads had been made among the youth of Zion. Heretofore we had relied for the retention of our children in the faith of the Gospel too much upon what training could be given them at home, and had not even directed a commensurate degree of attention to that. Thus have those who are arrayed against us had opportunities of making breaches in the ranks of the young. Yet the harvest that would be reaped by those who sought the destruction of the work of God would be very limited.

This was a day of fasting and prayer, and it should be a pentecostal time, when there would be an outpouring of the power of God. In the fast meetings the young as well as the aged could assemble and obtain testimonies of the truth, line upon line and precept upon precept, until all doubting would be removed. He could reiterate the statements of one of the previous speakers regarding the increased interest in the fast meetings and the concomitant duties connected with them. Many had by that means witnessed the exercise and manifestations of the spiritual gifts of the Gospel that they had never before beheld. The speaker felt that the people were improving, but there was still room for much greater advancement. It was to be hoped that the time would come when the fast meetings would be so marked a feature of our worship that every Latter-day Saint business man would at such time close his place of business and attend with his family. The work of God had come to stay and to move forward and root out iniquity in every place. It could not be overthrown. The speaker here bore a strong personal testimony to the divine origin of the Church.

ELDER JOHN T. CAINE

was the next speaker. He desired to say such things as might be prompted by the Holy Spirit. He had had the honor of representing Utah in Congress. From the opening of the late session attempts were made to pass additional proscriptive legislation. Endeavors of that kind had been common for the last five years. The latest effort was to obtain a measure to secure the control of the Territory to a minority, and especially to give them the power to manipulate the public funds. This was the object of those in our midst. With those outside of this Territory it was different. Their desire was to regulate the domestic affairs of the people of Utah. They took the ground that if plural marriage is allowed to exist that system would spread and endanger the marital system prevalent in the

nation. On this subject a false sentiment had been built up in the country by means of fabrications and slanders. In this way erroneous ideas had been established. There were not a few, however, who understood the question just as it is and were opposed to all the measures of the kind aimed at Utah. Owing to the tide of popular feeling, they were a little reluctant to assert themselves. If the country could be properly informed on the main subject there would be no difficulty, as opposition would either cease or be so modified that it would scarcely be felt. The speaker, after stating that the Edmunds-Tucker bill was one of the most un-American and un-republican measures ever passed by Congress, gave some details regarding the tactics employed by its friends to have it rushed through the legislative mill without discussion. The measure as it passed was a hard one upon the "Mormon" people, yet, having been modified before its final passage, it had been shorn of many of its worst features, and gave its promoters no comfort. If all of its provisions had been eliminated except that which gave the governor power to appoint the officers throughout the Territory it would have been a great victory to the schemers. Congress was not prepared to go that far to satisfy a popular sentiment. The section which declared the plural marital status to be polygamy punishable with a five years' penalty had fortunately been struck out. No new penalties and disabilities were incorporated in the bill, as it finally passed, against polygamists. There were, however, within its provisions, punishments aimed at non-Mormon criminals. There was no desire in the administration to deprive the people of Utah of their rights as American citizens. It had been said that President Cleveland had been in favor of the Edmunds-Tucker bill. This was not true. The speaker had it personally from the lips of the Chief Executive that there were provisions in the measure that he did not and could not approve, and therefore he did not sign the bill. He (the President) also wished the people to know that so far as he was concerned there would be no vindictiveness on the part of the government in the enforcement of such laws. They must be applied in the same way as all other laws. He was not in favor of the extraordinary and cruel methods adopted by certain officers in that regard. It might appear strange, in view of the President's opinions and sentiments, that the evils that had existed in the courts here were not immediately cured. It must be remembered that this was a great nation, with extensive and elaborate interests. So far as the executing clauses of the Edmunds-Tucker bill were concerned, he had no apprehension that there was any desire on the part of the government to rob the Church of the property belonging to it. Regarding the test oath he had been assured by the leading men who composed the committee of conference on the bill that it did not enter the domain of belief, neither did it involve or interfere with the right of church membership or supporting it by the payment of tithing or other legitimate methods. The speaker was glad that those who belonged to the party who had sought the destruction of popular government in Utah had, at the first election (at Brigham City) held under the auspices of the new law, gone beyond their authority. They had gone into the region of belief and church membership. This had enabled the speaker to inform President Cleveland that what he had feared had actually been done. He had no idea that any such illegal proceedings would again be resorted to, as it would be an unprofitable business to those who engaged in it. The speaker concluded by an exhortation to all to maintain the principles of human freedom.

ELDER J. R. WINDER

was the next speaker. He had been reflecting on the situation as it was twenty-nine years ago, and that which existed to-day. It was the time of what was called the "move." Many of the Latter-day Saints, of large families, in that day, could put the whole of their earthly substance into a wagon and start out, not knowing where they were going, through the mud, taking from three to four days to reach this place from Salt Lake City. Now he (the speaker) came down in a little over two hours in a comfortable railway car and entered this capacious building to worship God. The deliverance of the Saints from impending danger at that time was most marvellous and wonderful. It would be just as striking in the present and every future crisis.

The concluding remarks of this meeting were made by

ELDER JOHN NICHOLSON.

He held that the present age was the most remarkable in the history of the world, in a general sense. It was also a momentous epoch in the progress of this community, concerning whom many important predictions had been made. Among them was one enunciated by Joseph Smith, to the effect that the principles inculcated in the constitution of our common country would be trodden under foot and the nation disrupted by disintegrating causes. It was the high destiny of this people, when the hour of peril should arrive, to take the leading part in the reorganization of the country upon constitutional principles. Preparation was