

## ELDER M. W. MERRILL.

The preservation of families in the faith—The Counsels of the Priesthood should be regarded—Secret Societies should be avoided—Unprofitable amusements should not be indulged in—Further improvement in Tithing needed.

I think, my brethren and sisters, that I realize in part the responsibility of standing before you to say a few words. I have nothing particularly on my mind at this time, but depend for what I may say upon the Lord and your faith and attention.

I can testify that this work is true. I know it is from the Lord. I can testify that the hand of the Lord has been over His people from the organization of the Church, seventy years ago, and when I reflect upon my own condition, I feel very grateful in my heart that I have been made to see the truth of this work and I have been able thus far to retain a membership in the Church and fellowship with my brethren and sisters. I feel that this is a great blessing. Where people can retain their fellowship in the Church and not be cut off it certainly is a great blessing.

I appreciate the opportunity of meeting with you and testifying that this is the work of the Lord; and thousands of you people know it just as well as I do. But this knowledge of the truth will not save us, unless we abide in it. If we let the cares of the world envelop our minds to such an extent that we lose interest in the work of the Lord, we are in a pitiful condition. But if we place first and foremost our obligations to the Church then we have a good chance to remain in the Church and to retain our fellowship with each other. And when we have fellowship with each other, we have fellowship with the Spirit of the Lord, which will direct us in all our ways, and we will be preserved in the truth with our families. Some of our families perhaps are wayward. They do not do as we would like them to do. Is not this the case in many families? There are sons and daughters whose course does not give satisfaction to their fathers and mothers. What shall we do about it? Do the very best we can, but see to it that we have not been the cause of their lack of integrity

in the work of the Lord. I believe through our faithfulness and our entreaties with the Lord we may be the means not only of saving ourselves, but those the Lord has entrusted to us as sons and daughters. The Lord is merciful and He will hear our prayers and grant our desires through our integrity for him and his work. And peradventure, through our faithfulness, our children who are wayward and who perhaps have strayed away, will come back to the fold bye and bye, because the Lord will hear us in their behalf.

Perhaps there are many things among the Latter-day Saints that ought not to exist. The indifference to the counsels of God that was treated upon yesterday by President Cannon is a matter that is known to the whole people. We know that such conditions should not exist among the Latter-day Saints. There should be no necessity whatever for these things to be referred to by any Elders of the Church, because as Latter-day Saints we should live far above them. We should honor the Lord and His Priesthood and His work. We should set this example to our families, to our neighbors and to all with whom we associate. The lack of reverence to the Priesthood we may look upon as a trifling matter, but it is not. It is not the man particularly, it is the authority that God has bestowed upon the man. I am safe in saying, I believe, that there is no man who holds the authority of the Priesthood who has sought this position himself. He has not canvassed for the support of the people, but he has been placed in his position because the Lord wanted him there. Therefore men and women who trifle with these things and ignore the counsel of God, are treading upon dangerous ground and they will be brought into shame and disgrace before the people in the due time of the Lord, unless they repent. We cannot afford to do these things. Our duty is to sustain each other, sustain this work, to be in harmony with it, in all of its details, and to be in harmony with God's chosen servants in all the affairs of life. God will be with the men and women who will pursue this course, His Spirit and power will be with them, to sustain them through trying times.

I know as well as I see you that Satan is abroad and his ministers are in the land by the thousands. They are perhaps in this tabernacle. At any rate, they are in our midst, and they are prompting individuals unknown to them, in the morning, at mid-day and in the evening, and trying to divert their minds from the truth and from the work of the Lord. They are trying to stir up division and discord among the Saints, and they succeed in a measure. We feel sometimes that it is doing no particular wrong if we associate ourselves with secret societies. But it is drawing us away from the work of the Lord and from the Priesthood. People who join these organizations will argue that it is important for them; it is a sort of insurance for their families; and they are not bad things because there is nothing bad done there. Of course I do not know anything about that personally. I speak simply upon principle, and from that standpoint I know they are not productive of good to any Latter-day Saint. These secret organizations are what broke up the Nephite nation, and there is one society after another being organized in the midst of the Latter-day Saints. And whose work is it? Do the leaders of the Church advise it? Do they countenance it? I do not know that they do. I know that I do not personally endorse any of these things, because I do not think they are productive of good. On the contrary, they will result in those who hold the Priesthood losing the spirit of that Priesthood and going into darkness. The Lord has given us the most complete organization there is in the world. You cannot find anything like it anywhere. It is a safe-guard and an insurance to the people. Who among all the Latter-day Saints is allowed to suffer. If the husband should be taken away, if any of the family should be taken away, are those remaining not provided for? Why, tens of thousands of dollars of your tithes and offerings go to provide for the needy. Hence in the Church of God there is no necessity for any of its members being associated with secret societies. There are people, of course, who do not belong to the Church living in our midst; they may

associate with any society they please. But for Elders of Israel, some of whom have traversed the earth in preaching the Gospel, to lay down their Priesthood and join secret societies, it is different. Are there any cases of this kind in the midst of the people? I hope not, but I fear that there are such cases. Hence I warn my brethren and sisters, especially the young, that these organizations are not for the Latter-day Saints. They belong to the world and I warn you against them. I would warn you mothers to teach your sons to live the Gospel and its principles and to identify themselves with the organizations of the Church. We have organizations that take in all the people, from the child to those who are a hundred years old, and in them we have all that we can possibly attend to. Some of the brethren spoke yesterday about people being away so much from their families. Well, I do not know, but if all our organizations were attended to properly, it would take the fathers away a great deal. However, as Solomon said, there is a time for all things. There is time to instruct our children and to associate with our families, if we would divide our labors properly, and not waste any of our time in associating ourselves with organizations wherein there is no profit.

There are a great many amusements introduced among the Latter-day Saints wherein there is no profit. People get together and indulge in card playing. I do not know personally that there is any particular wrong in playing cards, but it is the example and the fascination about it which leads to gambling, and this has ruined many men and families. It leads to drink and to many other evils. Hence, when I see published in the paper what a nice time so-and-so had at high five, or some other game, I wonder if there was any profit in the game to those people who assembled. I believe in social gatherings, such as family gatherings, and gatherings of the Saints, where they meet together and talk good things and rejoice together in the truth. I believe such gatherings are profitable; but when the table is set with intoxicants, I do not think they result in good. We should not encourage our

families to engage in these things, because they lead to evil and away from the Lord and the influence of His Spirit. There are plenty of good and profitable things to engage in; and these things that are not profitable, let us not participate in them. When we are invited here and there to sociables and gatherings, we ought to consider, is there going to be any profit in this for me. Oh, yes; it's going to be a grand thing; we are going to have a nice program. Well, I have thought sometimes that we are getting so much program that everything will be run by program by and by, if the Presidency of the Church will only sanction it. I heard not long ago of Relief Society meetings having programs. I asked them what they had a program for. "Oh, we have a program so as to make it interesting." "You leave the Lord out, then; you have everything cut and dried, learned by heart, and you do not depend upon the Spirit of the Lord." I do not believe in too many programs. In some cases we might have programs, which would be very nice and profitable. But to carry this to the extreme, like we have our politics, I think will work an injury. I heard of a ward once where they were going to introduce programs into their ward meetings. I do not believe in that. I think we can have a ward meeting without a program, and we will depend upon the Spirit of the Lord to direct what shall be said and done.

My brethren and sisters, there are many things that we can improve in. We can improve in our tithes and our offerings. Who is there in all Israel that cannot improve a little in this direction? Peradventure there may be a few that observe the law of the Lord strictly; but I tell you the large majority of the Latter-day Saints do not, although there has been great improvement made among the people. Further improvement is in order, and it will be well for us to do a little better this year than we did last year. If we cannot do any more ourselves, we might convert others to pay their tithing, if we will take pains to reason with them, that they might not be burned in the day of the Lord Almighty. It is said that they that are tithed shall not be burned, inferring that they that are not tithed may be burned. This is

a law of the Lord. It was not instituted by man. President Snow did not inaugurate this principle. The Lord revealed it to the Prophet Joseph and it is expected that all Latter-day Saints will observe this law of the Lord. I want to bear testimony that you who observe this law strictly will be blessed of the Lord. He will multiply you and your means shall be increased unto you, because you have obeyed the law of the Lord and you are entitled to have the windows of heaven opened unto you and blessings poured out upon you. But do not become faint-hearted or discouraged because you do not receive everything today that you expect; but trust in the Lord, and so sure as you continue to trust in the Lord the way will be opened up from time to time and means will be multiplied upon you. Above all things, my brethren and sisters, let us resolve in our hearts that from this time forward we will observe the law of the Lord, we will be consistent in our lives as Latter-day Saints, and we will try to educate ourselves to love one another, to love the work of God, to love His Priesthood, to reverence and obey them, and to walk in the light that God may sustain us and give us the victory, which He will do, if we will only do these things.

How many of you Latter-day Saints neglect your prayers? How many fail to call your families together in the morning and in the evening, or have you so much to do that you cannot attend to it? Do you have to go to some secret organization, and you have not time for family prayers? I want to advise you personally to drop all these organizations wherein there is no profit; associate yourselves with things wherein there is profit, wherein you may have more influence with your households, in persuading them to obey the laws of the Lord. There are a great many things for Latter-day Saints to do, and we know what is best to be done if we will only sit down and think about it. Let us consider our condition before the Lord and place ourselves in the position of the Prophet who said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Why cannot we adopt



that sentiment? If we will do so, and observe these things, we will be glad of it by and by. When we get through with this short career of ours, and we look back upon our lives, if we have kept the commandments of God, what joy and satisfaction it will be to us. We shall go in peace and associate with the just behind the veil.

Brethren and sisters, attend to the duties that pertain to your calling in the ministry, and let everything else take care of itself. God bless you, and lead us all in the paths of life, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The choir sang:

Let the mountains shout for joy,  
and the congregation joined in singing  
the Doxology.

Benediction by Patriarch John Smith.

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#### AFTERNOON SESSION.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn: Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!

Prayer by Elder B. H. Roberts.

The choir sang the hymn: Great God attend while Zion sings.

#### ELDER. ANTHON H. LUND.

*Spiritual gifts must exist in the Church of Christ—  
Their absence an indication of unbelief.*

I hope, while I shall address you, that the same good spirit may guide me as has assisted my brethren who have already spoken in the different meetings of this conference. I have enjoyed their remarks very much, and I believe all who have been present have felt to rejoice in the good teachings that have been given us.

This morning, when Brother John W. Taylor read the testimony of the Prophet Moroni to us, I was much struck with some of the words he read. We were told there that the spiritual gifts should always be found in the Church, and that if there ever came a time when these gifts were not in the Church it would be on account of unbelief; and a woe was pronounced upon the inhabitants of the earth if such should be the case. I thought how clear the Prophet Moroni made this; that the Church whenever it is upon the earth

must have the Holy Spirit within it; the members of the Church must have this Spirit, and the spiritual gifts must be manifested; otherwise it would be a dead church. These words are recorded in the Book of Mormon—this wonderful book that has been brought forth by the power of God in our age. This book was printed before there was a church organized, and yet we find these remarkable words in it, which at once furnish the world with a test whereby they can judge if this is the Church of Christ or not. It says that in the Church there must be found these gifts. Now, if Joseph Smith had not been an inspired man; if the Book of Mormon was not the word of God, but written by man, how careful such a man would have been not to furnish the world with a test like this whereby they could at once detect whether it was the Church of Christ or not. A man who should fraudulently give himself out to be an inspired man, would be careful that such words should not be given to the world. But these were not the words of Joseph; they were the words of a prophet that lived some fourteen hundred years before, and one who understood the Church of Christ.

When we look back upon the history of the Church we find that the spiritual gifts were very abundant in the original Church, and that whenever the Saints met they were much blessed with the power of the spirit. They were so eager to attend their meetings and to speak, prophesy, and talk in tongues, that the Apostle Paul had to regulate their meetings and give them counsel in regard to the manner of conducting them, that order might prevail. The Saints were abundantly blessed with these manifestations of the spirit. But when the apostasy took place, the spirit of the Lord departed, its manifestations were fewer, and at last they were not known in the Church. Then it was very convenient to teach the people that revelations were no longer needed, that prophets were not needed; that these spiritual gifts were given only in the beginning of the Church, to convert men; but that they were not to continue with the members of the Church, and therefore they were done