

SECOND DAY.

Saturday, April 6, 10 a. m.

Singing by the choir and congregation:

"Come, come ye Saints, no toil nor
labor fear,
But with joy wend your way.

Prayer was offered by Elder Seymour B. Young.

The choir sang:

Praise ye the Lord; my heart shall
join,
In work so pleasant, so divine.

ELDER M. W. MERRILL.

Evidence of progress—Temples and vicarious work for the dead—Duties of Presidencies of Stakes, High Councilors and Bishops—Effective methods of settling difficulties.

I am gratified to see so many in attendance at this conference. We are here from different parts of this State and from other States to receive counsel and advice and to partake of the spirit of the conference.

While sitting here yesterday I was thinking that it is forty-seven years this spring since I first attended conference in this city, and I have been contrasting in my mind the changes that have occurred from that time until now. At that time none of these beautiful buildings on this block were here. We met, I think, in the old tabernacle, and the congregation was small compared to what it is today. Since that time many of our dear brethren and leaders of the Church have been called to labor in another sphere, and others have taken their places; this beautiful Tabernacle has been erected; and four Temples have been reared in this State to the name of the Lord, at a cost of some millions of dollars. It is wonderful to contemplate the progress and advancement that the people of God have made. The Lord has surely blessed their labors, and multiplied them in the good things of the earth. He has also increased them in faith and in every blessing that makes life desirable. We certainly ought to be a good people, and very humble. We ought to

acknowledge God, and in the earnestness of our souls seek Him for a continuation of His mercies.

Yesterday, in thinking about the Temples which have been built, I wondered how many among us appreciate the privilege of entering into the house of the Lord and performing a vicarious work for our kindred who have passed away. The doctrine of salvation for the dead was revealed to the Church at an early day. From the very beginning of the work the Church has been commanded to build Temples. It was so with the Nephites. They had only been upon this continent a few years before they commenced the erection of a temple. The work in this dispensation had only been inaugurated a few years when the building of a temple commenced. This shows the importance of the work, and the necessity of the Latter-day Saints laboring in the interest of their kindred dead. There are many brethren and sisters who can bear testimony that numbers of those who have been officiated for in the temples of the Lord have approved of the work done for them by their friends. In the midst of all our other cares and labors, this principle of redeeming our kindred should not be lost sight of. Our Elders, when they go abroad, especially if they go to the land of their fathers, should be diligent in searching out the records of their forefathers, so that after their return they may officiate in the temples of the Lord for them. We only have this short life—but a few days—in which to engage in this work and to manifest to our kindred on the other side that we have interest in them, and we ought to avail ourselves of the opportunity. We without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. This work of the redemption of the dead will go on. President Taylor once remarked that it would go on in our lifetime, and in the lifetime of our children, and in the lifetime of our children's children, and

throughout the Millennium, and I do not know how much longer. The small beginning we have made is as a drop in the ocean compared to that which has to be done; for it is the design of the Father to save and redeem His children.

The Saints have done pretty well, considering their circumstances; but the spirit of temple-work has not yet permeated the hearts of the people as a whole. A number have done a good work, and have sought diligently the records of their fathers; while others have been indifferent. I feel in my heart that there should be an awakening among the people in regard to this matter. While we have the opportunity—while the day lasts—let us avail ourselves of this privilege. Some are putting it off because they have only got a small record, and they say to themselves, "I guess I'll wait a little longer until I can increase my record, so that when I do commence I can continue." I do not think that is a good idea. If you have the record of but few, those few ought to be officiated for; and when you have attended to them, if you are diligent, the way will be opened up whereby you may obtain other records. This has been the case frequently. We cannot afford to wait when we have the opportunity.

I suggest these things because I am engaged in this work, and I feel the importance of it. It is just as important to redeem our kindred as it is to go abroad and bring souls into the Church. The houses of the Lord have been erected, their doors are open to those who are worthy, and we ought to attend to this. Furthermore, associated with the Temples of the Lord are blessings that cannot be found in other places. The power of God is frequently manifested there to individuals. The visions of their minds are opened, and they see the things of God. Of course, these things are not for the public, nor to be heralded abroad; they are sacred, and given of the Lord for the comfort and consolation of His faithful servants and handmaidens. Hence I urge the importance of the Saints considering these things in their homes. Families should arrange their affairs so that this work can be attended to in their life-

time; for the evidence is manifest on every hand that it will only be a little while before you and I will be among those that were; we will be gone to the other side, our labors, so far as mortality is concerned, finished. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.

Many things were brought to my mind yesterday relative to the growth and sanctification of the people. I have found in my experience that it is a constant labor to obey the precepts of the Gospel. We have a perfect Church organization. Nothing like it can be found anywhere. It has come from the Lord. We have Stake and ward organizations. One of the Stake organizations is the High Council. Now, it has been considered in days gone by that the office of High Councilor was a nominal one, and that there was not much for the High Council to do. This is a mistaken idea. They should be one with the Presidency of the Stake, as the Twelve Apostles are one with the Presidency of the Church; and it would be an excellent thing if the presidents of Stakes would follow the lead of the Presidency of the Church. We find that the Presidency of the Church have their regular meetings. They meet one day each week, and as many of the Twelve meet with them as are able. It would be well if this were followed in the Stakes. Let the Presidency of the Stake meet every week, and the High Council meet with them, and talk over matters pertaining to the welfare of the people of the Stake. Let them sing and pray together, and ask the Lord to direct them in their ministry. I know this is a good thing. I will tell you what is needed in the whole Church, and that is, that every ward in the Church be labored with by the officials of the ward and of the Stake, that it may be said one year from now that every non-tithepayer in the Church has been converted. Somebody has to do this labor, why not the Presidency of the Stake and the High Council take it up and see what good they can accomplish the coming years. Let them see if they cannot bring about a reformation, that the report may not come to the President of the Church that there are ten thousand, or any

other number of non-tithepayers in the Church.

This law of tithing was not instituted by man; it is the word of the Lord to the people, and those who do not comply with it will certainly meet with loss. Hence the importance of every member of the Church being enlightened, that they may be brought to realize their position and the necessity of reforming and doing better. And how can a man be converted without somebody to convert him? How can he hear without a preacher? If this labor were to devolve upon the Presidency and High Council, it would give the High Council something to do besides sitting on trials. While the High Councils are organized and prepared to hear and adjudicate difficulties between brethren, their labors should be directed in other channels, and those who have difficulties should be advised to settle them themselves.

I will tell you how I have done in Cache Stake. For the past year we have not had one High Council trial. We have selected brethren and sent them to parties having difficulty and trouble, and I have said to the brethren, Go and sing the songs of Zion to them. "Well, how many times shall we sing?" "Well, sing once, and then pray; sing again, and continue to sing until the Spirit of the Lord is there, and you can feel that there is a softening." I tell you, it has had excellent results. The difficulties have been settled by the parties themselves. Their hearts have been softened, and they have concluded to arrange their own troubles. That is the only way they can be settled. The High Council cannot do it; the Bishop's court cannot do it. They may pass decisions, but does that settle it? There is only one way to settle it, and that is set forth in the scriptures: Go to thy brother, and between him and thee alone make reconciliation. Let us settle our difficulties ourselves, and let the High Council be employed in preaching the Gospel and in conversing by the fireside, just as our Elders do in the world. Our Elders make more converts by the fireside than they do in the pulpit. They go to the homes of the people and talk

with them. That is just what is needed in Zion. Let our brethren who have authority go to the firesides of the people, and convert them to attending their meetings and doing their duty.

Especial complaint is made that the Elders do not attend their quorum meetings. They need converting. They are good men, but careless and inconsiderate. Their minds need to be touched by the Spirit of the Lord, and there needs to be an awakening in their hearts. There is no trouble about the sisters; if the brethren will only do right, lead and counsel, and sing and pray in the family circle, the sisters will be all right. The difficulty lies with the heads of families and with the bearers of the holy Priesthood, who have agreed to do their duty, because when we ordain people now we ask them if they will be faithful in their calling and ministry. We need an awakening.

While it is proper for the Presidency and High Council to meet, and to sing and pray together, the same rule will apply to the Bishopric of every ward. Have these meetings weekly; and do not let some trifling thing keep you from them. One Bishopric said to me that not one of them could sing. I suggested that they call in somebody who could sing; and if they could not get anybody let them sing the best they could themselves. Do the best you can, and the Lord will accept it. Sing and pray, and talk over the affairs of the ward. Just as sure as you will adopt this policy and carry it out, you will be benefactors to the ward and a blessing to the people. Your minds will be led out in the interest of the people; and when they see you have their welfare at heart they will be willing to come to you for counsel. President Snow says there are many Bishops who do not do their duty. I know that is true, and I know the Lord inspired him to say it, for he could not make a personal visit to each ward and find out its condition. The Lord inspired him to say this, and it ought to sink into our hearts. We want to save men and women; we want to save families. We go abroad and spend our time and means to preach the Gospel and gather people

into the Church, while in many instances we are neglecting those right at our doors. Everybody is not alike, and it is a good thing we are not. President Snow says we each have our individuality, and we always will. I suppose we will always be just what we are, and if we make progress in ourselves, so much the better. It is expected that we will make progress, and that we will spread abroad.

It is designed in the heavens that this people shall be at the head, and that the great men of the nation will come by and by to Zion for counsel and wisdom. Where are we going to get it? What are our opportunities above other people? Why, we commune with the heavens. There is where we are in advance of the world. We not only have the advantages of their learning, but we have divine inspiration, by which our minds are enlightened. The Presidency of the Church have the heavens opened to them by the Spirit and power of God, and they will be able to counsel the wisest of the nations. This time will come; nor is it far off.

My brethren and sisters, I feel the importance of having an awakening among the saints. Do not think to attain to great things by peculiar measures, as Brother Smoot referred to yesterday, such as having special fast meetings for the benefit of somebody. Take the order of the Church as it is, and do not seek to bring in side issues and change the ordinances of the Gospel. If we change the ordinances of the Gospel, we will soon break the covenant we have entered into. The Lord complained to ancient Israel that they transgressed His laws, changed the ordinances and broke the everlasting covenant; and He chastised them because of their iniquities. On another occasion He told them that they had robbed Him. They wanted to know wherein they had robbed Him. "In tithes and offerings." How many of us have robbed the Lord in tithes and offerings? While there has been a very commendable increase in this direction, I feel in my heart that we have not yet fully come up to the mark and satisfied the feelings of our beloved Presi-

dent, because he comprehends these things, and God is with him to inspire and direct him in his counsels to the Latter-day Saints. Let us see if we cannot improve this present year. But if a reformation is brought about, it must be by effort and labor. If it is effective in ourselves and in our families, it will need labor. This devolves upon the Presidents of Stakes, upon High Councils, and Bishops, and all the Priesthood, and the Lord will not justify us if we seek to shirk the responsibility. Hence, my brethren and sisters, I think the best thing we can do is to make new resolutions in our hearts; and wherein we have failed in the past, let us try to make up for it in the future. So sure as we do, the Lord will be with us, and the manifestations of His power will be felt in every Stake and ward of Zion. It is the rule, the discipline of the Church, and we must seek to carry it out in our lives, that it may be said of us when we pass away, as it can be of a number of good people, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have done well in your lifetime; you have filled the measure of your creation in usefulness before the Lord, and have labored unselfishly in the interest of His work." If we could divest ourselves of selfishness and trust implicitly in our Father, how grand would be our history.

I suppose I have occupied all the time that belongs to me. I feel well. I know that this is the work of God. I bear record to you that it is. The Gospel has been revealed in our day and time, and we have been privileged to have our eyes opened a little to comprehend the great truths God has revealed. These brethren at the head are the right men in the right place. The Presidency of the Church are filled with inspiration; they are clothed with the power of God, to the extent that their administration is successful, and will continue to be successful. Let our administrations continue to be successful, and the Church will triumph; the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom will be given to the Saints of the Most High by and by, and shall never more be taken from them. Amen.