

We are weak, but Thou art able,
 Hold us with Thy powerful hand.
 Holy Spirit,
 Feed us till the Savior comes.

Prayer by Elder Matthias F. Cowley.

Singing by the choir:

Though deep'n'ing trials throng your way,
 Press on, press on, ye Saints of God;
 Ere long the resurrection day
 Will spread its life and truth abroad.

ELDER B. H. ROBERTS.

With you, my brethren and sisters, I rejoice in the privileges and blessings of this conference. The presence of so many upon the opening day of conference bespeaks the widespread interest that exists among the Latter-day Saints in the work of God. I take it that we are all interested in all the affairs of the Church, in all phases of the work, both the work within the stakes of Zion and the work abroad among the nations of the earth. But while we have this general interest in all departments of the great works of our Father, it is but natural that we should have a particular interest in that department of it in which more especially we are called to labor. I make this remark in order that you may understand why it is that I address a few words to the conference in relation to that body of Priesthood over which, in connection with the other presidents of the First Council of Seventy, I am called to preside.

We have in the church 143 quorums of Seventy. There would be over 10,000 men in that body if all the quorums were full; but some of them are not full. Others, however, have members awaiting admission. So that the number of Seventies today in the Church is not far from 10,000. They are a body of men set apart and especially ordained to engage in the foreign ministry of the Church. When you take into account the very extended area of country in which these quorums are scattered, you can readily understand that it requires considerable labor to reach these organizations and keep them fully organized and the vacancies in the respective councils filled.

Why I refer to this subject is for the purpose of making a suggestion or two to the Presidents of stakes and the Bishops of wards who are gathered on this occasion. I think a little careful attention to the great amount of work that is required at the hands of the First Council of Seventy in keeping these quorums completely and fully organized would make the presiding brethren a little cautious about taking our Seventies, and especially the presidents of quorums, for local positions. Of course, I understand that there are very important offices to fill in the Church, and when the right man is found among the Seventies it is proper that he should be ordained to the position; but if one equally fitted could be found among the Elders or the High Priests I think it would be wisdom on the part of presidents of stakes and Bishops to find men for local positions in these quorums and not disturb the presidencies of the quorums of Seventy. Of late, when thinking upon this subject, and the inconvenience that we are frequently put to, I have been much impressed with a principle that is named in the Book of Mormon. The passage gives a description of the manner in which the Apostles among the Nephites, upon this continent ordained men to office. It is as follows:

"The manner which the disciples who were called the Elders of the church, ordained Priests and Teachers.

"After they had prayed unto the Father in the name of Christ, they laid their hands upon them, and said,

"In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a Priest; (or, if he be a Teacher,) I ordain you to be a Teacher, to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ, by the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen."

This is the point more especially, however, to which I direct your attention:

"And after this manner did they ordain Priests and Teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men."

If those who in the first instance direct the footsteps of our youth into the quorums of the Priesthood, would take into account more the gifts and callings of God unto these young men, I think it would be possible to overcome

some of our difficulties. The young men should be directed into those quorums that their natural gifts—"the gifts and callings of God" unto them—qualify them for. If it is observed in a young man as he develops under the eye of the Bishop, that he is possessed of executive abilities, then that fact should be remembered, and he should be directed into that quorum where his special training would develop the qualities he possesses for a career of usefulness in the Church. Or when a young man is found who is possessed of that combination of qualities that go to the making of the judicial mind; if he has the rare faculty of balancing one statement as against another; the ability to look at both sides of a question, and justly weigh the evidence; then he should be directed to the Elders' or High Priests' quorum, whose business it is to prepare men for presiding and judicial callings in the Church; and sometime in the future, when a High Councilor, or some presiding officer is required he might be remembered and found in that quorum where it would create no disturbance to take him, and place him in the presiding or judicial position. On the other hand, where men are observed to possess the ability to teach, and the spirit of testimony is strong upon them, and they have in them the making of a good witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, let such be directed into the quorums of the Seventy. Thus, if we stand down the line where we begin to divide men off in the direction of their life's labors in the Church, and consider "the gifts and callings of God unto them," I think we can help the conditions of which I am now speaking. In any event, while present conditions exist, local presiding officers, I am sure, would confer a great favor upon the First Council of Seventy, if they took more into account the inconvenience and the increase of labor they make us when they choose men from among the presidencies of the quorums of seventy, when others could be found who would fill the positions equally well.

While speaking on the subject of the Seventy, I wish to call attention to one of the great things laid before us

in the opening remarks of President Smith. There is no body of men in the Church to whom his remarks on the matter of freeing themselves from debt, apply with so much force, as to the Seventy. The First Council is in constant communication with the Seventies in all parts of the Church territory. We are continually on the lookout for men who can go on missions. All the time we are corresponding with men who are recommended to us as worthy to go upon missions, but we find so many of them involved in debt that when this glorious opportunity is presented to them of going upon a mission, to discharge the high duties of their calling in the Priesthood, they are barred from accepting that appointment by reason of being financially involved. If I could say a word that would emphasize the teachings of the president upon this subject, I most certainly would do it, and urge upon our Seventies, above all men in the world, to free themselves from financial obligations, that they may be at liberty to exercise the powers of the Priesthood in preaching righteousness to the world, and in standing before it as witnesses of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the opening remarks of our president texts were given to the Elders of Israel which they can expound and teach with very great profit to the people; and I believe that upon those various subjects in this conference there will be words spoken that will throw great light and intelligence upon those subjects. The matter of encouraging our young men to engage in mechanical arts and trades is a matter that calls for most earnest attention and wisest consideration on the part of the leading brethren in Israel, and from fathers and mothers everywhere. The fact that it becomes necessary to call attention to such a matter is an indication that circumstances are undergoing a great change with us. Heretofore, occupying as we do a new country, our young men when they came to manhood and found a place inconveniently narrow for them, had but to remove a few miles where lands could be obtained, and out of those lands make themselves homes and establish

themselves in a community where they would furnish themselves with employment; and doubtless for some time to come there will be an outlet for our young people in that direction, although we may be required to remove to greater distances than in the years that are past. But as our communities increase in number and our centers of population become more and more crowded, we shall find those among us—in fact, we do now—who have no taste, no desire, to engage in the kind of life incident to opening new lands and establishing new communities; and of necessity they must turn their attention to the acquiring of skill in some kind of useful labor. It will be impossible for all to engage in the professions; for the cry already is that the professions are overcrowded. But in connection with turning our attention to the acquirement of skill in mechanical arts and trades, there is a question which we must needs reflect upon and provide for. This is an age of organization, both of capital and labor. The hosts of men that are engaged in the several trades have found it necessary in some way or other to protect themselves, that they may command a reasonable price for that labor. In other words, they have combined to control wages, just as far as it is possible to control them. It is beyond question that these organizations in some cases become oppressive and work great mischief. They feel power, and they forget right. But something had to be done in order to make it possible for labor to hold its own against the growing force and greed and power of combined capital; and whatever the excesses may be, and however much we may regret them, nevertheless organization and union on the part of labor became an absolute necessity to the working masses. The labor unions today to a very great extent dictate the number that shall be permitted to enter into the various crafts and trades. They say how many apprentices shall be allowed in the respective trades. They attempt to control the supply of labor in that way, because they do not desire that the supply shall be greater than the demand; because the greater the demand the better the price that may

be asked for the labor. I do not in the few words that can be said on this occasion undertake to discuss this question at length. I merely call attention to its existence. And it will become necessary for the Latter-day Saints in our centers of population to determine what shall be the relation of those entering into these trades to the unions that are controlling the trades. I merely bring it before you, that the wise men in Israel may take it into account; for it is one of the facts that we shall necessarily be brought in contact with when we undertake to encourage our youth, as perforce we must, to enter into mechanical arts and trades as the means of sustaining themselves by their labor.

The work of the Lord, President Smith tells us, is growing; and further he says there never was a period of time in its history when interest in it was greater than today. I rejoice in that growth. I sometimes wonder if we comprehend or even apprehend the facts that enter into that growth, and that enlargement of interest. If time would permit it, I should only be too glad to call attention, not only to the direct evidences of growth and of interest in the work of God, but also to the indirect means that God is employing in the matter of enlarging His work and preparing the way for nations to be born within it in a day. It does seem to me that the whole world is fermenting with the leaven that God planted when He brought this work into the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. To the Church has been assigned the honor of the title role in God's great drama of the last days. But as in the drama the actor bearing the title role does not alone develop the thought of the poet's mind, so we as the Church of Latter-day Saints, though bearing the honor of the position assigned to us, do not constitute the only force that God is using in bringing to pass His great and mighty purposes. In his day Paul said that some men preached Christ of envy and strife, and some of good will; but he gloried in this fact, that whether preached out of envy and strife or of good will, the Lord would so overrule their actions as to bring to pass His purposes. I sometimes feel

amused when I reflect upon what the surprise of many of our enemies will be when they discover that the Lord has overruled their actions, made even of them instruments to accomplish His ends, and had so controlled their wrath as to make it praise Him.

The theology of the world has changed since the introduction of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You can find no minister today to voice from his pulpit the doctrine of infant damnation. You can get no minister today to deny the possibility of continued revelation from God. You can get no minister today to undertake to defend the position that God, by a mere caprice of His sovereign will, "sends one to heaven and ten to hell"—not for any good or ill they have done before Him, but just for His glory. The doctrine which the poet Burns satirizes in substantially that language is a thing of the past in the pulpits of men. These modifications in the Christian world's theology—and a hundred other modifications—have been due chiefly to the truths God revealed through Joseph Smith the prophet; and thousands of eloquent tongues and pens have been employed teaching these truths which have led to the correction of many errors in religion, without knowing the origin of their doctrine.

The advancement made in all the arts and sciences is also very materially helping to bring to pass God's mighty purposes. We overlook, it seems to me sometimes, the moral force that goes with some of our great inventions. It is now about three-quarters of a century since the electric telegraph flashed from Washington to Baltimore the first intelligible message by that means of communication. Since then that all parts of the world have been brought into instant communication with one another. It seemed to dawn upon the minds of some that if a message could be transmitted over wires, by means of sounds in dots and dashes there was no reason why the tones of the human voice could not be so communicated; and now, though separated by hundreds and thousands of miles, a man may converse familiarly with his friend by means of this great invention. Recently another step has been taken in the progress of this means of communi-

cation, which gives us reason to believe that before long the wires may be dispensed with, the ocean cables may be abandoned, and out on the sensitive, trembling atmosphere, that touches all parts of the world, a message can be sent forth, and safely carried even across the great expanse of ocean, so that the whole round world can be through this means in constant communication. The moral force—the force that makes for faith—in these things is this: The idea is dispelled that it is impossible for God, at His home, to be in immediate communication with the whole world. These mighty inventions, this progress in art and in science, are constantly developing the powers that are in man and the great things that he can accomplish, narrow as are his limitations at present. The result is that men reason after this fashion: If man with his limited knowledge and intellectual powers can accomplish so much, is it difficult to believe that God has accomplished all that is accredited to Him in the revelations of the prophets? So there is in the development of these arts and sciences that which makes for faith in the power of God; and these indirect means are accomplishing very much in preparing the minds of men for these great truths that are to be found in the revelations brought forth by the Prophet Joseph Smith. The heaven is working; and some of these days it will only be necessary to strike the keynote and there shall be a wide and broad acceptance of the things that God has revealed through the great latter-day prophet.

I rejoice in these indirect means, as well as in the direct means, that the Lord is using for the accomplishment of His purposes, in preparing the way for the coming of His kingdom, which I pray may come quickly, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH H. MERRILL.

(Late President of the Samoan Mission)

I am truly thankful to my Heavenly Father for the privilege thus accorded me to stand before you, my brethren and sisters, this afternoon. I hope that the Spirit of God may dictate that which I may say, that we may all be