

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH.

GREETING

I feel extremely grateful for the privilege of once more standing before such an audience as this assembled here at the opening session of our eighty-eighth semi-annual conference of the Church. I hope that I may have the Spirit of the Lord to assist me for a few moments to express my feelings and hopes, and my gratitude to the Lord for the inestimable privileges that we enjoy today. It is almost marvelous to me to look upon the vast sea of intelligent faces, beaming with joy and happiness, and with the consciousness of right, as I have the privilege of doing this morning in looking upon this vast congregation. I am sure that the Lord is well pleased with your presence here in honor of this semi-annual meeting of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I certainly feel very grateful for your presence, for it is an indication of the union of feeling and of heart pervading the Latter-day Saints, and the honor in which you hold the work in which we are engaged. It is an evidence that the Spirit of the Lord is with you, that the love of truth is in your hearts, that your faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ is not abated, and that you are here to honor your membership in the Church, and the positions which many of you hold as presiding officers over the various organizations of the Church. In this vast attendance at the opening session of this conference you have indicated your loyalty to the cause of Zion and your love for the work of the Lord, and your confidence in your brethren whom you have sustained, from time to time, as presiding officers in the Church, and I welcome you, one and all, in your presence here this morning, and I sincerely pray that the Spirit of God may descend upon us during this session, and throughout the succeeding sessions of the conference, until we shall finish the work we have in hand to do.

OUR HOPE OF SALVATION FOUNDED ON THE TRUTH

I desire to say to my brethren and sisters what I have often said, and which is still true, that the work of the Lord is progressing on the earth, and there is no power beneath the Celestial kingdom that can prevent its progress; for so the Almighty has decreed. I bear this testimony to you. I feel in every fiber of my soul that it is true; and, indeed, if it were not true—notwithstanding the hopes we have, notwithstanding the faith with which the Lord has blessed us, notwithstanding the prosperity that has attended us here in our labors in the valleys of these mountains, in harmony with the purposes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—if it were not true that the Almighty is at the helm, and has been at the helm from the beginning, and will continue to the end, our hopes and our anticipations for present and for future life would be in vain. This work is the power of God unto salvation, and nothing else will do, nothing else can compare with it. Even error, as it has been said by one, may become venerable with age, and may become popular by

the number of its votaries; but neither error nor the popularity of numbers will avail for the salvation and redemption and exaltation of the children of Almighty God.

Our hope of salvation must be founded upon the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for we cannot build upon error and ascend into the courts of eternal truth and enjoy the glory and exaltation of the kingdom of our God. That cannot be done.

Then I bear testimony again to you, my brethren and sisters, that the foundation of the cause in which we are engaged is the gospel truth, and it is a glorious thing to know that so many—and yet so few in comparison to the vast aggregation of humanity—have learned the truth, learned the fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and that it must of necessity be the truth, for God has never devised error for the redemption of his children, nor for their blessing and exaltation. He has never given to the children of men falsehood and error to lead them back into his presence. The Almighty, in the beginning, never devised a plan for the redemption of his children that was not true, that was not efficacious, that would not be effectual in the accomplishment of his purpose to bring to pass the final exaltation into the kingdom and the enjoyment of his presence, of all his children who would obey his laws and keep his commandments.

THE INTEGRITY OF THE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH

I testify to you, as I know and feel that I live and move and have my being, that the Lord raised up the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, and endowed him with divine authority, and taught him those things which were necessary for him to know that he might have power to lay the foundation of God's Church and kingdom in the earth. Joseph Smith was true to the covenants that he made with the Lord, true to his mission, and the Lord enabled him to accomplish his work, even to the sealing of his testimony with his shed blood. His testimony is now, and has been, in force among the children of men as verily as the blood of Jesus Christ is in force and a binding testimony upon all the world, and it has been from the day it was shed until now, and will continue until the winding up scene.

I bear my testimony to you, my brethren and sisters, of the divinity of the mission and work that was accomplished by President Brigham Young and his associates in fleeing from the wrath that threatened in Illinois and Missouri and other places, into these peaceful vales, which was done by the will of heaven and by the guiding power of the Holy Spirit. President Young and the pioneers were enabled to lay the foundation of a commonwealth, the equal of which is scarcely to be found within the borders of our glorious land, and it was done, not by the wisdom of Brother Brigham, nor of Brother Heber C. Kimball, nor of any of their associates, grand men as they were, true servants of the living God as they were, faithful and true to their callings, grand as was their integrity to the cause of Zion—but back of them, behind them, above them and below, and all around them, was the power of God, leading and directing them,

and thus consummating his purposes through their instrumentality. We give the honor to our Father in heaven, and we also honor and bless the names of those great and good men whom the Lord chose to accomplish his purpose, and through whom he did accomplish his purpose without failure.

I bear my testimony to the integrity of John Taylor as one of the purest men I ever knew in my life, a man clean from head to foot, clean in body and clean in spirit, free from every vulgar thing, so common among the children of men. I know whereof I speak, for I was with him day and night, month after month, and year after year, and I bear my testimony of his integrity. He was a martyr with the Prophet Joseph Smith. He suffered more than death with Joseph and Hyrum, and the Lord preserved him and honored him by calling him to take charge of his work for a season in the earth, thus exalting him to that most glorious and most responsible position that any man could be called to occupy in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I bear my testimony to the faithfulness of Wilford Woodruff, a man in whom there was no guile, a man honest to the core, a man susceptible to the impressions of the Spirit of the Lord, a man guided by inspiration in the performance of his duty, far more than by any gift of wisdom or of judgment that he himself possessed.

I bear my testimony to the work that was accomplished by President Lorenzo Snow, although it was brief, yet some of the things which were left for him to do were absolutely necessary in order to relieve his successor and others that may arise in time to come, from mistakes and errors that had crept in before.

As to the present administration of the gospel and of the work of the Lord I have nothing to say. Let the work speak for itself, let the people and the voice of the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints say what is being done by the Lord, let it not be said by me, nor by my counselors and my associates. The Lord forbid that I should ever imagine for one moment that we are of any great importance in this great work of the Lord. Others may be raised up, and the Lord can shape their minds, he can qualify them and can humble them, if need be, to fit them for the duties and responsibilities that may be required at their hands. I believe that Zion is prospering, and that so far as our spiritual life, our spiritual growth, and our faith are concerned, as well as our temporal condition, we are prosperous, and all is well in Zion today.

BENEFITS OF VISITS BY THE GENERAL AUTHORITIES

We made a short visit not long ago to some of our southern settlements. It is something that we should do oftener. I am conscious of it now, more so than I have been in times past. I am satisfied that the authorities of the Church should visit the people. It is not enough that the teachers in the wards should visit the Saints, and the stranger within our gates, and understate the work, or at least carry on the work of teaching the people the way of righteousness and of truth, and union, and love. That is not sufficient. It is not sufficient that the bishops should

visit the people of their wards and keep in touch with them and become acquainted with the people, and let the people know who is the father of the ward,—this is not enough. It is not quite sufficient that the presidencies of the stakes of Zion should visit the people, and should understand the necessities of those who dwell in their stakes, and be known of them. For it is also necessary that the Presidency of the Church, the Twelve Apostles, the Patriarchs, the Seven Presidents of Seventies, the Presiding Bishopric, in fact all the general authorities of the Church, should visit as far as possible, and see the people, and be seen of them. We want to keep in touch with and know one another. So far as I feel at present, I know of nothing that I would not like you to know concerning me. I want you to know what I am, what I am like, whether I am a man or not, whether I am trying to magnify my calling or not. I want you to look at me and know something of what I am doing; I want you to know me and I would like to know you. And so I can speak for my brethren. We have nothing that is not in common with the Latter-day Saints. We know nothing, and we will preach nothing to the people except that which the Lord God has revealed, and we advise and counsel those who are in authority, and whose duty and business it is to teach and preach the principles of the gospel to the world and to the Latter-day Saints, to confine their teachings and their instructions to the word of God that has been revealed. There is a great deal that has been revealed that has not yet been lived up to, I assure you. There is a great deal yet remaining to be learned. There is a great deal that is yet to be taught in the spirit of instruction, and there is a great deal that has been revealed through the Prophet Joseph and his associates that the people have not yet received in their hearts, and have not yet become converted to as they should. When we obey and are capable of observing the precepts of the gospel and the laws of God and the requirements of heaven, which have already been revealed, we will be far better off and nearer the goal of perfection in wisdom, knowledge and power than we are today. When that time comes, then there are other things still greater yet to be revealed to the people of God. Until we do our duty, however, in that which we have received, until we are faithful over the things that are now committed into our hands, until we will live our religion as we have it now, as the Lord has given it to us, to add commandments, to add light and intelligence to us over that which we have already received, which we have not yet fully obeyed, would be to add condemnation upon our heads. It is enough for us to live in the light of present inspiration and present revelation and for each individual member of the Church to keep the commandments of the Lord and labor in the Church as the Spirit may give him and her guidance in the performance of duty. Every soul of us is entitled to inspiration from God, to know what is our duty, and how we are to do it. We have not learned it yet, not all of us, but we are in a fair way to learn. The Lord is still patient; he is long-suffering; he is full of love and graciousness towards all, and we are doing a little better all the time. I believe we are a little more faithful in the performance of our duties than we have been in the past; yet there is great room for improvement.

IMPORTANT COMMANDMENTS TO BE KEPT

One of the important commandments of God is to honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Many of our people neglect that commandment; they don't do it, and many of us permit our children to go loose on the Sabbath day, instead of curtailing, teaching, and curbing them within the boundary of the gospel requirements. The law of God is that we shall love one another. If we could learn to do that, then amen to bishops' trials and bishops' courts, or, to the necessity of them. If we only loved one another so that we would do good to others as we would have them do unto us, there would be no bickering, contention, quarreling, strife, bitterness, or evil in the hearts of neighbor against neighbor, and all would be peace and happiness. If we loved God with all our hearts more than we love the world, our houses, our lands, our flocks, our herds, and our gold in the banks, I say, if we loved God with all our hearts and minds and strength, there would be no necessity for prisons, no necessity for courts of justice in the land. There would be no necessity for the occupation of lawyers and pettifoggers to dispute and contend over differences and disagreements among the people. All these things would be as things of the past, relegated to uselessness. Men would then know the truth, they would love it and would walk in its light which shines from the presence of the glorious Father, because then we would show that we love him and are willing to keep his commandments. We have much to learn, too, in relation to these things.

SIMPLE BUT VITAL TEACHINGS TO BE OBSERVED

The Lord has given us a little simple word, so simple that the weakest of all that are or could be called Saints, should be able to observe and obey it, and yet some of the very strongest of us do not do it, but neglect to keep it. We have much to learn yet, in that simple little Word of Wisdom that the Lord has given to his Saints for their health, vitality and strength, but not all of us observe it.

The Lord has given to us the law of tithing, by which we are to furnish, by our tithes and our offerings, the revenue necessary to carry the gospel to the world, to gather the Saints, and to gather the elders after their missions are completed, from their mission field, and build temples and conduct the work that is necessary to be performed in the temples for the living and for the dead. Not all of us observe that law, and yet, I am happy to say to you, that this year shows a very material increase in the fidelity of the Latter-day Saints in their observance of that law. Our tithes this year so far have been better than at any other time previously. That is a good indication, and yet it may be improved very materially.

A YOUNG MAN IN AN OLD BODY

Now, there are many other things, but I cannot tell them all to you. I begin to feel that I am getting to be an old man, or rather a young man

in an old body. I think I am just about as young as I ever was in my life in spirit. I love the truth today more than I ever did before in the world. I believe in it more firmly now than I ever did before, because I see it more clearly, I understand it better from day to day by the promptings and inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord that is vouchsafed to me; but my body gets tired, and I want to tell you, sometimes my poor old heart quivers considerably.

I feel admonished now to bless you, and I bless you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SOME HISTORICAL ITEMS

I have just a few little items that I would like to announce:

Since our last conference, the Tintic stake of Zion has been organized, being a part taken from the Nebo stake, with E. Frank Birch, president.

The following wards have been organized, an indication of what I have said to you that Zion is growing, increasing, progressing:

<i>Wards</i>	<i>Stakes</i>	<i>Wards</i>	<i>Stakes</i>
Davisville	Idaho	Owendale branch.....	Shelley
West Warren branch.	North Weber	Hazelton branch	Boise
Hunt	St. Johns	Acequia	Boise
Lovell West	Big Horn	Beaver branch	Bingham
Logan Ninth	Cache	Springfield branch	Blackfoot
Logan Tenth	Cache	Upalco	Duchesne
Aberdeen branch	Blackfoot	Arcadia	Duchesne
Gooding branch	Boise	Jordan	Salt Lake
Vernon	St. Johns		

The following bishops have passed away:

John I. Gledhill, Vermillion ward, Sevier stake; Benjamin Argyle, Spanish Fork, Second ward, Nebo stake; John Stevenson, Diamondville ward, Woodruff stake; Robert Heber Beesley, Sunset ward, North Davis stake; Franklin L. Gunnell, Wellsville ward, Hyrum stake.

The following brethren laboring in the mission field have passed away:

Elder Peter Okelberry of Hazel, Idaho, died in the California mission, at Santa Anna, on May 22, 1917, of hemorrhage of the brain; Elder Enoch Coleman Hunsaker, of Honeyville, Box Elder county, Utah, died September 27, in the Eastern States mission.

There are now existing 797 wards of the Church and 38 independent branches, 74 stakes and 21 missions.

RELIEF SOCIETY PENNY FUND

In addition to these little items, I desire to mention the fact that some little time ago a number of the sisters of the General Relief Society Board inaugurated the idea of asking for a penny subscription per week

or per month, as the case might be—I don't know exactly, but I think it was a penny a week—from the sisters of the Relief Society throughout the Church, a contribution to be used to assist in the erection of the two temples now under construction, one in Canada and one in the islands of the Pacific Ocean. In an almost incredibly short time this penny fund has accumulated a sum equal to twelve thousand seventy-four dollars and some cents. It has not been missed by any of the sisters, and it will just add about a little over \$6,000 apiece to the two temples, to help pay for the workmen. This principle of the penny fund was inaugurated first in the City of Nauvoo, at the time the temple at Nauvoo was under construction. The suggestion came from Mary Smith, the wife of Hyrum Smith, and was seconded by her sister, Mercy Rachel Thompson. Through the sanction and permission of Hyrum Smith and the Prophet and others, they inaugurated this penny fund. The invitation to contribute was extended to all the branches of the Church then known in the United States and in Great Britain, and I only need to add that all the cash that was necessary to pay for all the nails and the glass used in the temple at Nauvoo was furnished by this penny fund.

IMPORTANCE OF THE GREAT LATTER-DAY WORK

Now, the Lord bless you, and may the work of the Lord continue to grow in your hearts and in your love. There is not anything in the world, nor beneath the Celestial kingdom of God today that is of equal importance to this latter-day work that you are engaged in. Receive that from me as my testimony. It is not mine only; it is the testimony of the Lord, and his word that cannot and must not be broken, and will not fail, and, therefore, I repeat it unto you and admonish you, my brethren and sisters, in the name of Jesus Christ, to keep the commandments and observe the laws of God, for they are the greatest things on earth to us. Amen.

A solo, entitled, "Storm and Calm," was sung by Edna Godfrey.

PRESIDENT ANTHON H. LUND.

I am sure the testimony borne by our President this morning has touched every heart present, and he has given us the key-word for our acts and conduct of life, namely, to love God and one another, and show it by keeping the Lord's commandments, not neglecting those things that have been required of us. By following these instructions he said we will be blessed, and I bear testimony to this.

PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH, SPIRITUALLY AND TEMPORALLY

The Church, since last we met, has made much progress. The people in Zion have been blessed this year with bounteous harvests. The Lord has promised that he will remember those who pay their tithes