

A duet, "An angel from on high," was sung by Claude Cornwall and Ellen Copening Ferrin.

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Presiding Bishop of the Church

It is a surprise to me, my brethren and sisters, to be called upon this morning to address this great congregation. I rejoice with you, however, in the privilege of being present and of listening to the testimonies, the instructions and the inspiring remarks made by those who have spoken. I appreciate the fact that this work is the work of the Lord and that it is growing. I was reminded while President Grant was speaking, that in examining the statistics for some years past, I notice that the membership of the Church today is over four times as great as it was fifty years ago, and in other respects the work of the Lord is growing and prospering.

Yet I realize, also, that there is great room for progress and improvement in every line of activity. If it were not so we would not be the people of the Lord, because he expects of his people that they shall improve and increase in good works and in activity continually. We are told that the Savior said to his disciples upon one occasion: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." I appreciate the fact that this life is a life of progression, of improvement, of learning, and of the application of that learning to the problems of life and to the bettering of conditions among humanity.

We have heard this morning the statement from President Grant of the work that has been done in a financial way in the benefiting and the blessing of the people of the Church and of mankind. As to the money expended from the tithes during the past year, considering the membership of the Church and the conditions of the people, I venture to say that there is no other organization in the world that disburses such an amount of money as does this Church. I venture to say, also, that there is no other organization that is expending it as efficiently as the Church is doing. This is because of the fact that practically all of the money employed for charitable purposes, for missionary work, and for the construction, operation and maintenance of the meetinghouses and chapels throughout the Church, is expended in a very economical way, largely through the voluntary, cooperative effort given by the people.

I am reminded of a statement made in a government census report just received at our office a few days ago, of one of the organizations in this country—a national organization of a charitable nature—wherein it is shown, as I remember it, that less than 25% of the money expended by that organization was used for benevolences. The remainder of it was used for salaries and for other purposes. Some was used for building construction and maintenance, but a large proportion of it was used for other than benevolent purposes, for which it was primarily raised.

We have had in this state recently a Community Chest drive. The Community Chest is an organization that is recognized as being necessary, and more efficient and helpful than is the case where individual drives are undertaken by various agencies. The result of the drive has been to accumulate funds amounting to about \$150,000, for something like nineteen agencies, and for the administration of that organization. The members of the Church appreciate the fact that this is a desirable thing for the community needs.

I would like to call your attention, however, to the fact that, in addition to what has been done by the Community Chest this year and last year and the previous year, the members of the Church living in these city stakes, and the Church itself, have given directly for charitable purposes in this city each year an amount equal to that raised for the Community Chest. In addition thereto there has been spent something like \$30,000 for other purposes for which various agencies of the Chest are instituted. In other words, over \$180,000 was given and expended in this city by the Church last year for such purposes as the agencies which the Community Chest is undertaking to support. And, of the money donated for charitable purposes every cent of that which was given, went directly for the purpose for which it was intended. A great volunteer effort was given by the people of the Church.

I think there is no other organization in the world that is willing to give the service or to make the sacrifices manifest by the people of this Church. This is not to be ascribed to the people of themselves, but to the influence of the Gospel upon them. I would like to read a word or two from the scriptures. Jesus in teaching his disciples on one occasion said:

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

In another place the Savior gave a parable in which he describes a man who has acquired means:

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

"And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

I think that one of the most objectionable conditions which prevails in the world today is that of selfishness and greed. It has caused

more hatred, strife, bitterness and warfare among men than almost any other thing, so far as my understanding goes. Even today in this nation we are experiencing evidences of such conditions and actions on the part of men in endeavoring to build up their own fortunes at the expense of the welfare of the community. The people of the nation are aroused, I think, to a certain extent at least, to an appreciation of the seriousness of this condition. Prosperity tends very often to lead men away from a spirit of unselfishness. As they acquire means they tend to become, very often, greedy and selfish, and concerned only with their own welfare. I believe it was the Apostle Paul who said that the love of money is the root of all evil. Surely, when men set their hearts and their minds solely to the acquirement of wealth, there is great danger of their losing the perspective of things that are more important in life.

In contrast to the excessive desire for self-aggrandizement which is all too common in the world, is the spirit of charity and sacrifice, of love and consideration, which is the spirit of the Gospel of Christ. The Latter-day Saints are a people who have been trained to sacrifice. They have been trained to understand the principles of the gospel which the Lord has established, which requires sacrifice. There is no principle that is invoked today in the Church, or that is to be found anywhere, that is more equitable, more efficient, or that helps more to promote the spirit of humility, faith and stewardship on the part of men, than does the principle of tithing and of offerings.

The Lord has given these principles to us that we may learn to sacrifice, that we may learn to overcome selfishness, and that we may learn to appreciate the fact that the things which this earth possesses and the things which we have in our possession are the Lord's. We can use them only during this life, and we ought to be willing to cultivate the spirit of giving one-tenth, at least, of our increase, for the welfare of his work. I can think of no other organization, or no other possibility of cooperation in so efficient a manner as that which is possible in this Church, through the paying of tithes and offerings whereby the means obtained through cooperative effort can be employed most effectively for the welfare of the people.

I do not know of any other organization that is engaged to the same extent as this Church, comparatively, in the building of temples, chapels, and recreation places, where the people can enjoy the spiritual, social and recreational features that are afforded by the Church. I visited one ward recently—a little ward comprising four hundred people—which, with the help of the Church, had erected a meeting-house that cost, I think, \$70,000. The four hundred members in that ward, almost all of them, had lost their homes largely because of adverse conditions in the farming industry and the lack of a market for their farm produce. Yet they had themselves donated in money and in labor nearly one-half of the amount I have stated. Can you appreciate what a sacrifice is made by those people? Sometimes I think we are inclined because of our desire to build fine meetinghouses, to

possibly overreach ourselves and put a greater strain upon the people than is desirable or necessary. But the people seem willing to do these things.

There is no premium on poverty. The faithful observance of the law of tithing does not impoverish those who practise it. On the contrary, it is a principle of blessing and increase. The Lord desires that his children shall prosper temporally as well as spiritually. But prosperity, whether temporal or spiritual, need not prevail at the expense of the other. Tithing is the most important principle now to be obeyed for the building up of the work of God in a financial way. It is the first donation expected of us in the advancement of his work. If all men and women throughout the Church who are earning would faithfully pay their tithes, the Church would have the means to do the things which are required without some other donations. In other words, the people would not have to donate additional means for meetinghouses if the members generally would observe the principle of tithing.

Now, as I stated, this principle is one that develops in men faith in God. It develops spirituality. Strange as it may seem to some, it is one of the most potent means by which we evidence our real faith in the Lord and in his work; for we give evidence of our faith by our works. We realize the fact that we are his children, that we are here but for a time, and that we can take none of the goods that we possess away from this earth. It is important that we should employ the means we may possess in a most effective manner for the welfare of our fellowmen as well as our own good.

Finally, observance of the law of tithing develops in us a spirit of economy and thrift, and of care in the handling of our own affairs. It helps us to overcome selfishness, and to be considerate of our fellowmen. It promotes the spirit of cooperation. It develops greater faith in the Lord and his work. And it will make this a land of Zion to us.

I have noticed repeatedly, and I think it is generally true, that those who are conscientious tithepayers are the ones who are able to meet their obligations fairly, and to make steady progress. They are blessed sufficiently at least to fulfil their obligations and to get ahead. The Lord blesses them and they enjoy spiritual as well as temporal blessings. I pray that the Lord may help us as Latter-day Saints to so live that we may be worthy to receive his blessings, through the development of the spirit of sacrifice, and the observance of this and every other principle of the Gospel. With all the prosperity that we may enjoy, and the general improvement in our financial conditions, may we still continue to maintain faithfully that principle, and may we go forward and cultivate in our hearts the feeling that we are stewards of all we possess, and that we hold it in trust for the Lord and his work. May we develop the spirit of dedicating that which we possess for the building up of his work! I pray the Lord to bless us to this end, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.