

The congregation will please remain seated during this singing.

The opening prayer will be offered by Elder E. Bentley Mitchell, formerly president of the Tahitian Mission.

The congregation, with Richard P. Condie conducting, sang the hymn "High On the Mountain Top."

Elder E. Bentley Mitchell, former president of the Tahitian Mission offered the invocation.

Singing by the congregation, "Redeemer of Israel."

President David O. McKay:

Our first speaker this morning will be President Stephen L Richards of the First Presidency of the Church. President Richards will be followed by Elder Delbert Leon Stapley, of the Council of the Twelve.

PRESIDENT STEPHEN L RICHARDS

First Counselor in the First Presidency

ISAT in the Tabernacle a short time ago listening to beautiful music. After the concert was over I was a little embarrassed inwardly to recognize that I had heard but very little of what went forward, for almost at the beginning of the program my thoughts turned to this great building in which we are met today. Somehow or other, its place in our history and its connotations assumed such proportions in my thinking that I decided that it might be worthy of a little of our attention as we ponder the progress and mission of the restored Church of our Lord.

This Tabernacle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, erected on what we designate as Temple Square in Salt Lake City, Utah, has come to be one of the most interesting and widely known buildings in western America, and perhaps in all America, excluding structures at the national capital and at points of great historic interest in the formation of the republic.

The first work on the Tabernacle was begun in the spring and summer of 1863. The first foundation stone was laid July 26, 1864. The Tabernacle was completed, so far as to be usable, by October 6, 1867, when the first conference was held in the building. The following is a quoted notation in the record:

"The gates to the Temple Block were opened at nine o'clock, and the people flooded in. Long before ten o'clock, the time for the commencement of the

conference, the seats in the great Tabernacle were filled, the aisles and doorways were crowded, and many were left outside. The stand was filled with the Church officials and the various choirs who were present to take part in the service."

The conditions here described are not difficult for the present generation to visualize.

The organ was only one-third completed by this time but was used to accompany the singing. Temporary seats were used since the installation of permanent seats was not completed until sometime during the summer of 1868. The gallery was not completed until later, and was first used at the postponed general conference of the Church on May 5, 1870. It is recorded that this additional seating capacity was much appreciated, and that the installation of the gallery improved the acoustics of the building.

The Tabernacle was not dedicated until October of 1875. I shall speak of the dedication later.

Perhaps one of the first significant items about the building is its size. It is 250 feet long by 150 feet wide; 65 feet to the ceiling, 75 feet to the top of the roof, standing upon 44 stone pillars, with 16 doors 10 feet wide, and 4 doors $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide, allowing the exit of 13,000 persons in 5 minutes. Its architect, Henry Grow, claimed that it was the largest hall in the world unsupported by columns. I have made no

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research to determine for how long a time the architect's statement may have been true.

The huge capacity of the building is most tangible evidence of the firm conviction of the builders in the growth and destiny of the cause they upheld. Without its great size it never could have served its mighty purpose. In the early days of our settlement in these valleys of the mountains, communication was very difficult. Even after the coming of the telegraph and the railroads, people had to come and see and hear to get correct impressions and information. Had the building been smaller, countless thousands would have been deprived of opportunities and blessings they have most highly prized. Then, too, it seems to me worthy of note that the building was built just about as large as it could have been built so that an audience within it could be made to hear, long before the day of electrical magnification of sound. The acoustics of the Tabernacle have been the subject of comment by scientific persons and others for many years. I don't know that a full treatise has ever been written, but it would make a deserving and interesting thesis. This great structure, enormous at the time of its building, is the physical embodiment of a mighty concept that the work of God is expansive, all-embracing, with room for all who will come and listen and receive.

The Tabernacle has been a great cultural center. For eighty years it has housed substantially all of the major concerts, symphonies, bands, choirs, and vocal and instrumental artists who have come to this section of the country. It is safe to say that without it the communities in this area would have been deprived of innumerable opportunities to see and hear the outstanding talent of the world. It has been the scene of great pageants that will long live in our memories; and in addition to being the greatest stage for artistic presentations in our community, it has been a place of instruction and rehearsal for thousands upon thousands of children,

young people, and adults, developing talent and artistic appreciation wholly beyond our power to measure. Throughout the years the building has generally been contributed to almost every conceivable cultural project which has come our way.

In thus extending the use of the building, the Church has had what I believe to be a unique experience. I don't know that there is a comparable situation in the country. It has always been the effort to maintain standards of conduct in this building and on the grounds roundabout which comport with the beliefs and standards of the Church. Those who come here are asked not to smoke or drink or use profane language, and I think that, with few exceptions, they who are not of our faith, and who do not practise our standards, have been sufficiently respectful of our views to observe the decorum of this building. We appreciate their consideration.

This Tabernacle has been, in some respects, a civic center. It has been a forum for Presidents of the United States, candidates for the Presidency, notables from foreign countries, and lecturers, and for the discussion of some of the most important issues which have ever confronted the nation. It has been used as a gathering hall for great national conventions, and it has played a part in the advancement of important civic causes. It has paid tributes of homage and honor to our national heroes; it has met the demands of emergency; it has been through the years an invaluable asset in our community life.

More important than any of these, however, in the history of this great Tabernacle, is its place and function as a house of worship.

Since singing usually begins our public worship, at this point I would like to speak a little of the choirs of the Tabernacle. Here is and has been for over seventy-five years the home of the Tabernacle Choir. I would not venture to say whether the Tabernacle has made the choir or the choir has made the Tabernacle famous. It is

sufficient to know that all through the years we have had a great choir in a great setting. As many as sixty years ago the Tabernacle Choir had a national reputation. Through eisteddfods, its high placement in contest in the World's Fair, and through concerts in big cities, east and west, it early attained renown in musical circles. In recent times, through national and international broadcasts, the Tabernacle Choir and the Spoken Word are household words throughout the land. During its history, both before and after enlarged facilities became available, two aspects of its work have been outstanding and conspicuous: First, the devotion of the members; and next, the excellence of its leadership. I doubt if any comparable volunteer organization of its size and responsibilities can present as fine a record for as long a time. The Church is and has been for these many years proud of this great organization, and I believe we all feel a lasting debt of gratitude to the great conductors, the great organists and technicians, and the great members of this illustrious organization. I attribute their greatness, in large measure, to the deeply religious fervor which has always actuated them. I know that with their artistic temperaments they have loved to sing, but the consistency of their performance has come out of a sense of conscientious duty and opportunity to serve the Lord and advance his kingdom. From that sentiment have come some of the great contributions which the choir has made—contributions which breathe the spirit and essence of the latter-day work, contributions which have inspired the missionary for his work, which have honored and venerated the pioneers who laid the foundations, which have extolled the glory and virtue of Christ our Lord, and his honored prophets, and which have brought comfort and solace to the poor, the discouraged and bereaved. Here is a choir which, through the generations, has seen purpose in its work, which has striven steadfastly to advance a great cause, which has made

art serve its Author, the Lord of the universe. God bless our Tabernacle Choir, from the beginning through the generations, as an emissary of art and truth in the earth.

Housed within the building is the great organ. Its impressive façade of colossal pipes and ornamental columns and caps makes it appear as an ornate temple within the auditorium, beautiful and intriguing to behold. The history of its initial construction is itself a glorious record of pioneer achievement. Its melodic voice now heard in nearly all civilized portions of the globe has been a thing alive, proclaiming in sonorous and tender tones the solemn and the sweet message of the Savior's gospel to all who have the heart and the ear to interpret and apply. Just as the choir is integral with the Tabernacle, so is the organ with both.

I stand today in a pulpit sanctified by its history. When I recall the noble servants of our Heavenly Father who have stood here and given inspired counsel to the people, and borne testimony with such power and conviction and spirit as to electrify every soul who heard; when I contemplate the operation of the still, small voice, which has come from simple and lowly words given here, which have touched the hearts and sympathies of the people; when I think of the vast volume of precious truth which has been proclaimed from this stand, I feel very small and weak within it. My only comfort comes from the realization that the noble ones who have graced this pulpit have been called to speak here, as I have been called, and that they were common men, so far as the aristocracy of the world is concerned, drawn from all walks of life, just as my brethren and I are today.

What a difference in the history of the Tabernacle it would have made had the building come to be merely a great preacher's church. We have had in America such preachers and such churches. For periods of time eloquent men have enthralled audiences, achieved wide distinction, and have undoubtedly

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done much good. In the providence of the Lord, this pulpit has never been any one man's forum. Rather it has been the oracle of a divine dispensation where the cause has overshadowed the man, where humility has higher rating than self-assurance, where worship is measured in deeds rather than protestations.

Ponder for a moment, my brethren and sisters, and all who listen, the glorious and vital truths which have been proclaimed in this building—the nature and composition of the Godhead, the organization of the universe, the history and placement of man in the earth, his purpose in living, and the divine destiny set for him, the laws governing his conduct and his eligibility for exaltation in the celestial presence, the true concept of family life in the eternal progression of the race, the truth about liberty and the place of governments in the earth, the correct concept of property, its acquisition and distribution, the sure foundations for peace, brotherhood, and universal justice. All these elemental things, and many others incident thereto, have been the burden of the message of truth which has come from this building through the generations.

These messages have not changed with the passing of time. The Lord revealed these enduring principles. They are part and parcel of eternal truth. Man may, by his faithful research and study, discover more about them, but he will never change them. I would not discourage the inquiring mind in its exploration of the universe and quest for truth. My only caution is to begin with recognition of the divine source of truth and the revealed word of God.

What confidence and assurance it brings to us to know that our men and women of today, surrounded by an environment radically different from that of our forebears who brought this great building into existence, proclaim the same doctrine as did they. How upsetting it would be if we had to choose between the principles and doctrines of their time and ours. We in this Taber-

nacle hear the same message as did the people in Kirtland and Nauvoo.

It is true that methods and practices change. They have done in the past, and they may be expected to in the future. It is within the province of a receptive priesthood, obedient to the inspiration of our Father, to adopt and adjust methods, looking toward the advancement of his kingdom. It is also within the province of his chosen servants to interpret and apply the law, but they will never change it, for the law of God is eternal.

I wish to say a word about the comfort and solace which have come to our Father's children in this great building. Funeral services have been held here for many noble men and some women. Heavenly music has been rendered, so inspiring and touching that it seemed as if those from the other world could have joined in the singing. Sermons depicting the transition into immortality, and expounding the atonement and redemption wrought by our Savior, have been given with such convincing assurance as to elevate the aggrieved and despondent to the sublimity of resignation, hope, and firm faith. Within these sacred walls have the great of our community found opportunity for the expression of their noblest thoughts and convictions, and from here they have been laid to rest in the closing of their lives. All the life dramas that have here been enacted, all the vital episodes in this historic setting will never be recounted; but they are all known to one who keeps the record, and every resolution, every change of heart, every contrition arising out of the service rendered in this building, will be a fitting tribute to the purposes it has served.

In some respects the Tabernacle may appropriately be designated as the center of our missionary work. More sermons expounding the doctrines of the Church and calling the world to repentance and defining the way to life eternal have been preached from this pulpit than from any other place in the Church. These sermons, testifying to the divine

calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the restoration of the holy gospel, have been heard not only by the vast congregations who have assembled here, but also they have been printed, translated into various languages, and circulated in many countries throughout the earth. The pronouncements from this very stand have furnished to our armies of missionaries, in large measure, the material for their work among the peoples to whom they are sent. In the earlier days the missionaries were personally called from the stand in this Tabernacle. One can well imagine the thrill and deep impression made by such procedure. Here the courses of life were changed by assignments from the Presiding Brethren. Here the spirit of sacrifice chastened the soul, and men and women were dedicated to the work of God. Here was the true spirit of missionary work—love and sacrifice for fellow man—developed and fostered.

In more recent times the Tabernacle, with its wonderful Sunday morning program, has made an invaluable contribution to our missionary endeavor in bringing to our missionaries a more kindly and considerate reception as they bear the message of the gospel from door to door out in the world. Also in later years, with visitors to Temple Square reaching more than a million a year, this historic structure has achieved a position subordinate to but few places in the country in tourist interest. Thousands there are who come here every year, whose unfavorable preconceptions are altered, and who must go away with unforgettable impressions emanating from the teachings and influences coming from this building and the grounds round about. Surely a large part of Isaiah's prophecy has been realized. The Lord's house has been established in the top of the mountains, and many nations flow unto it. We await the day which will surely come when the remainder of this great prediction shall be fulfilled, when

... many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the

Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3.)

Can we doubt, my brethren and sisters, that these things have been wrought by the hand and power of the Lord? In all humility I bear witness that here is the seat of the government of the kingdom of God, here is the place where the authorized servants of our Lord are sustained and confirmed by the voice of the people. Here in this venerated Tabernacle has every President of the Church, save only one, been upheld as prophet, seer, and revelator, and President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From here has gone forth the law out of Zion, and the blessings, the love and compassion of the servants of the Lord for his children.

For nearly half a century I have been the beneficiary of the teachings and the influence coming from this historic building. I thank God for it. I do not wish to worship things material, but I bow before the inspired vision and the lofty aspirations which brought this sacred edifice into being. If my regard for it, and my meager recital of the part it has played in the advancement of beauty and righteousness and truth in the earth shall bring any measure of increased deference and respect for the Tabernacle and the holy cause it represents, I shall be profoundly grateful.

I said I would refer again to the dedication of this building. The notation in the record is that the dedicatory prayer of the "New Tabernacle in Salt Lake City was read by Elder John Taylor" on Saturday, October 9, 1875. In my opinion the prayer is a masterpiece in composition, and in its comprehensive recital of the conditions and aspirations of the people at that time. It breathes a spirit of humility, repentance, deep gratitude, and a faith so realistic and compelling as to overcome all obstacles in the achievement of the mighty destiny conceived for

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God's work in the world. I wish every member of the Church could read it. *The Deseret News* printed it three-quarters of a century ago. Perhaps they might care to do it again at some convenient time. This remarkable prayer went into great detail. In it were dedicated not only the usual components of a great building, but also "the mortar which binds the foundation stones together," the "nails, bolts, and straps of iron, of copper, and the brass, the zinc, the tin, and the solder wherewith the metal is soldered together," the plaster of the building, even "all the lath and the nails and the sand and the lime," the locks and the hinges on the doors and windows, and the paint and the varnish "and all the ornamentation of this building, both within and without." All these minute things represented work and sacrifice which made them sacred.

Every portion of the building was dedicated that it might fulfil its sacred purpose. Listen to the words regarding this historic rostrum, where my associates of the General Authorities of the Church now sit in your presence: "And we dedicate and consecrate that portion of this house where our president and thy servants now are, to be a holy and sacred place wherein thy servants may stand forth to declare thy words and minister unto thy people in the name of thy Son forever. . . ."

"May thy holy angels and ministering spirits be in and round about this habitation, that when thy servants are called upon to stand in these sacred places, to minister unto thy people, the visions of eternity may be open to their view, and they may be filled with the spirit and inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the gift and power of God; and let all thy people who hearken to the words of thy servants drink freely at the fountain of the waters of life, that they may become wise unto salvation, and thereby overcome the world and be prepared for an everlasting inheritance in the celestial kingdom of our God. . . ."

"We pray thee to bless the Twelve

Apostles; fill them with the spirit of their office and calling, clothe them with the intelligence of heaven, the light of revelation, and the gift and power of God."

Then followed prayers, in the order indicated, for the Patriarch to the Church, for the seventies, the high priests, the high councils, the elders, the Presiding Bishop, the priests, teachers, and deacons. There were prayers for the Jews, for the Lamanites, and for all who desire to do good in this and all other nations. There were prayers also for the cooperative institutions, for those who entered into the United Order "according to thy word," the Relief Societies, the Retrenchment Societies [the Mutuals], the Sunday Schools, and then this mighty appeal: "Let the comforting influence of thy Holy Spirit rest upon the Saints, and the quickening power of the Holy Ghost unite thy people in sympathy, affection, kindness and interest. May thy people, O God, be one—one with Jesus as he is one with the Father . . . one in spirit and feeling and interest; one in temporal and one in spiritual things, a band of brethren; one in rolling forth the kingdom, united together by eternal, indisputable ties; one in gathering thine elect, in building Temples and administering to the living and for the dead; one in building up the Zion of our God; one with all the redeemed and all the angelic hosts, in introducing the principles and laws of life to all of Adam's race and ushering in the millennial reign."

My brethren and sisters, I re-utter that prayer in your presence today. It is the supreme desire and ambition of my life that this glorious destiny for our people and God's work be realized. I testify that Jesus the Christ lives, that he is the Lord of the earth, and the Author of our salvation, that his precious gospel and his Church have been restored and reestablished through his chosen servant, the Prophet Joseph Smith, and that the Holy Priesthood, and the authority to represent the Lord have descended upon our present leader

in authentic succession, and that he stands before us today in humility, in heart and mind receptive to the divine Spirit, to lead us in the greatest cause ever committed to men. I give you also my firm conviction that if we will but follow the teachings and the counsels of our President and his associates,

all of which are in conformity with the pronouncements and principles given in this sacred Tabernacle for nearly a century of time, there will be fulfilled every prophecy and glorious promise ever made to Zion. God bless us to this end, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ELDER DELBERT L. STAPLEY

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I SINCERELY ask for an interest in your faith and prayers, my brothers and sisters, and hope that part of the Tabernacle dedicatory prayer pertaining to the speakers, may also be enjoyed by me.

An important duty of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to assist its members to attain the full measure of their possibilities and powers. This would give great strength to the Church and bring joy and happiness to the membership of the Church.

As sons and daughters of God, created in his image and likeness, possessing, however imperfectly, his characteristics and attributes, we should nevertheless be inspired to perfect ourselves and become like him. The duty therefore of each of us is to develop and prepare ourselves to become worthy children of an Eternal Father.

The Church provides every opportunity for us to use our God-given talents, gifts, and powers. However, we must learn obedience to authority and to keep all the commandments of God.

The Prophet Joseph said of the Savior, that he suffered temptations but gave no heed to them. And Paul, writing to the Hebrew saints said that in all points he was tempted as we are, yet without sin. The Savior perfected himself through obedience and by obedience became the author of eternal salvation.

There must be on our part a willingness to accept responsibility in all faithfulness and devotion; it makes possible

the attainment of our divine heritage and blessings.

The Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

... men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good they shall in nowise lose their reward. (D. & C. 58:27-28.)

The right of free agency and choice belongs to all of us, but God holds us accountable for our individual acts. The Lord has placed Prophets, Apostles, and teachers in his Church to interpret and point the way for his people and all the world in spiritual and temporal matters. Safety is in following divinely appointed leadership and counsel. The rights and powers of these leaders stem from the Savior himself, and each can trace his priesthood and authority through an unbroken chain to this divine source.

The keys of this power and authority center in the president of the High Priesthood of the Church. It is not given to any other man to so represent God here upon the earth. The Lord expects his people to unite and follow under this leadership and not permit themselves to be tossed about by those who would find fault or would claim revelation and teach contrary to what God has revealed to his chosen prophets.

The Latter-day Saints need to be careful that they do not become per-