CONDITION OF THE STAKES OF ZION.

Addresses Delivered at the Seventy-Fourth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, on Monday, April 4, 1904, by Elders

William McLachlan, Nephi L. Morris, Richard W. Young and Elias S. Kimball

Representing Pioneer, Salt Lake, Ensign and Blackfoot Stakes of Zion.

ELDER WILLIAM McLACHLAN,
(President of Pioneer Stake.)

My brethren and sisters: In standing before you this afternoon I desire, above all other blessings, that the Spirit of the Lord may direct the words I shall utter. Forty-one years ago I became identified with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A few weeks later I received a testimony of the truth of this work. In the year 1862, in answer to prayer, with a very earnest desire to gather to this land, the Lord spoke to me by the power of His Spirit, and gave unto me a promise that I should have the privilege of gathering according to my desire the following year. With that word came the most positive and definite assurance that was ever given to man. I could not doubt the word that the Lord gave to me on that occasion, and it was fulfilled to the very letter, although I had much trouble and difficulty in accomplishing my wish. From that time to the present I have been a resident of Salt Lake City—that is, from October, 1863. I feel it is a great honor to be called to labor in any capacity in the work of the Lord. I realize very much my weakness and my inability to fill the call that has been made upon me, and the honor that has been bestowed upon me by the Priesthood of the Son of God. But I have been a worker, more or less, all my life, and my desire is to serve the Lord first, and then, if I am able, to serve the people with all the strength that God shall give me. I wish to devote my time, and the ability that God shall give me, under the inspiration of His Spirit, in laboring for the building up of this work and the spread of righteousness and truth in the earth. The pugilists of the present day talk about heavy, light and feather-weights; I feel that I am a feather-weight. But the Lord is just as willing to hear and answer the petitions of the humble and incapable as those who are competent, and blessed with great talents and ability. I feel it is the privilage of every man and woman who has entered into covenant with God to be just as good as the best. There is nothing to prevent all from being good. The man who has the greatest ability is not always the best man; but the man who is humble, who is willing to acknowledge the hand of God, and who will seek His aid in accomplishing the work that has been assigned him, will be blessed and prospered in that labor. It is with this confidence in God my eternal Father that I have accepted this honor that has been conferred upon me, and by and through His help I shall try and do my duty.

May the blessing and peace of Heaven be upon the people of God. May the blessing of the Lord be upon their lands, upon their houses, and upon everything that pertains unto them, that we may become a united and a free people—free from sin and from stain of every kind, and live in harmony and peace together before God. This is my prayer and desire in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

ELDER NEPHI L. MORRIS.
(President of Salt Lake Stake.)

I most sincerely desire I may be guided and influenced by the Holy Spirit in the few remarks I shall make to you upon this occasion. Like President McLaughlin, I feel very weak in this position to which I have just been called. I have endeavored during my life to discharge the duties which were imposed upon me as a member of the Church of Christ, and I have learned that by humility and devotion to duty one may achieve somewhat of success. Without these qualities there is little hope of success. If my remarks are to be measured by my experience as a President of a Stake, they will be certainly very brief, for I was only set apart to this new appointment a little over a week ago. My duties thus far have consisted in signing a half dozen recommends or so, and the attending of banquets, so that my experience is very limited. I feel, however, to accept, with meekness and with gratitude to God, the appointment which has been given me, and rely upon Him in the discharge of the duties pertaining to that calling. I am proud to be associated with the Church of Christ, and to have the fellowship of such men as surround me upon this occasion. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ; I am not ashamed of the members of the Church of Christ, and can look the world in the face and bear my testimony to the truthfulness of the work in which we are engaged. I know that we are a people called of God for a chosen purpose, to help uplift and save mankind. I know the world misunderstands us, and it is for our heavenly Father and ourselves to make our mission clear to the world. I know that we are maligned and misrepresented; but I have no fear of the lies of the world. They cannot hurt us. We are looked upon as being a fanatical lot of people—a people who have no high estimation of virtue, of honor, and of those qualities which go to make truly great disciples. But this is because the world do not understand the Latter-day Saints. It is for us then, to make them understand us; and if they will but look upon us without prejudice they could not fail to appreciate the principles which animate our lives—the love of virtue and honor, and devotion to God.

My most earnest prayer is that the Spirit of God may continue with His people, and that their lives may be characterized by unity, by devotion and sacrifice to him, and that he may qualify us by His Holy Spirit in the performance of all our duties, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ELDER RICHARD W. YOUNG.
(President of Ensign Stake.)

My dear brethren and sisters and friends: Of the fifty-odd Presidents of Stakes in this Church I am the very latest in point of ordination. I feel that I have not yet cut my teeth, and that I have not even learned how to talk. I have, however, in my mind some things which I think it would be fitting to mention, if the Spirit shall prompt me, and I pray that I may have it during the few minutes that I shall occupy your time. Like Brother Morris, and like practically all under the sound of my voice, I am proud to be numbered among the Latter-day Saints. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, and the man does not live who is able to say that on any occasion whatever I have not been willing and, if the occasion were proper, anxious to declare my belief in the principles of what is called "Mormonism." I esteem it an honor to be associated with this people, despised and misunderstood though they are. I know their work, their faith, the sacrifices they have made, their honesty, their virtue, their aspirations and their hopes, and, as I say, I feel it an honor to have a standing in this Church and to be associated with this people. It is no new thing for the people of God to be despised, to be despitefully used, and to be evilly and falsely spoken of. That has been the common lot of the people of God in all ages. If we are thought to be unpatriotic, we have but to turn back to the first few centuries after the time of Christ to behold a people who were persecuted by reason of their alleged lack of patriotism, and by reason of the accusation that they indulged in treasonable practices. It is reasonable I take it, that the churches of the world should have little sympathy with this church. We have come forward with a message that this is the Church of God, and that by other professing Christian churches the ordinances have been broken, and they have strayed from the true path. Naturally this arouses within them a feeling of indignation, and for my part I have something of sympathy for those not of our faith in their opposition to this Church, but nothing of sympathy with their desires to trample upon right and justice and constitutional principles in their treatment of us. I believe with all my heart that this is the Church of God. I desire to be a humble and obedient member of that Church. I desire to fill the position to which I have been appointed—unworthily I believe—under the influence and power of the Spirit of God. It is my desire to be useful among this people, according to the capacity which the Almighty has given me, and to that end I pray for the faith of the Latter-day Saints, particularly within my own Stake. I pray God that He may bless this people, that they may appreciate their responsibilities and their duties. Our professions are high, and our conduct should be equally high. It is not sufficient that we should be contented with knowing that we have the truth; we should not stop short of living according to the principles of truth that we have received. We may look among the Christian churches of today and we will find many noble examples of Christian fortitude and sacrifice, which we might very well emulate as Latter-day Saints. Again I pray that God will bless this people, that they may arise to the fulness of their privileges and their duties, and I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ELDER ELIAS S. KIMBALL.
(President of Blackfoot Stake.)

My brethren and sisters: I am pleased with the opportunity of reporting the Blackfoot Stake of Zion. I desire to enjoy the Spirit of the Lord in the few remarks I shall offer. I am interested in the work to which I have been called. I look forth with hope and aspiration to be able, as a servant of God, to do something, to make a good account of my stewardship, and not to be a disappointment to God and to His servants whom He has placed at the head of this Church. I will take advantage of this opportunity to bear testimony concerning the brethren who stand at the head of this Church. I have perfect confidence in the integrity and honor of the leaders of our Church. I lift up my voice in protest against every declaration of disrespect concerning them, and, so far as my influence and power goes, to stay such declarations. I protest against them. I have been brought in contact with President Joseph F. Smith and his counselors, and a number of the Twelve Apostles, and I am proud of the honor of their acquaintance, and can testify to their virtues and integrity. I tell you, regardless of statements which are made inside and outside of the Church, those men are interested in the welfare of all people, and are laboring incessantly for their welfare and upbuilding. This is my humble testimony to you, my brethren and sisters, and that is the reason I have for saying at this time I believe in them, and extend to them my faith and prayers, and I will give them my support with the help of God. I believe in this Church also. I know it is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and I am willing to make any reasonable sacrifice, and I pray that I may be willing to make the sacrifice of my life, if called upon, for the building up of the Church and kingdom of God in these latter days. If I understand the position correctly, this is a covenant that every man and woman in the Church has entered into. Therefore it behooves us to be upon our guard and cease evil speaking. I believe the people of Blackfoot Stake will compare favorably with the Saints in any other part of God's vineyard, but I have heard some things that have not been pleasing to me respecting the subject I have just mentioned. It is a principle that has been known by our people ever since the organization of this Church, that those who lift up their voices against the Lord's anointed will not be blessed. It is something that our people should become better acquainted with. In reading the other day about the Japanese, I learned that they are recognized as the most loyal people of any nation. They love their Emperor, they love their country, and that is their religion. I do not think the Japanese should be one whit ahead of the Latter-day Saints in loyalty. We should revere and honor those whom God has placed at our head. We should give them our faith and prayers. We should not only love them, but we should love our God, our Church and our country. That is my religion, and I pray that I may have it burned into my heart and brain so that I may never forget it as long as I live.

I feel well in the gospel. I know that it has made me what I am, if I am anything. I know it will make me what I hope to become, through a faithful, honest, virtuous life. It is worth to me more than all the riches of the world, and with the Lord's help I hope to be willing to sacrifice all for it.

It is about two months since I was called to preside over the Blackfoot Stake of Zion. It came hard upon me because I was required to break up my home and go to a new country. You who have not passed through that experience will hardly understand my feelings, but you who have been called to fill missions to the nations of the earth, and to make sacrifices in that line, will appreciate some of my feelings. I went into that country and looked over the situation, and, to tell the truth, I was a sick man for about ten days and until after I met with the people. Subsequently I felt to glorify God that I had been called from where I lived to a new country, where I might grow up with the people, and help them to develop one of the best sections in God's vineyard.

Now I will tell you a little about the country. I invite all our brethern and sisters who are without homes, and who expect in the future to seek homes in a new country, to come to the Blackfoot Stake. On the west side of the river from Blackfoot, there are over one hundred thousand acres of as good land as lies out of doors. From Basalt, on the north, down the river to Thomas, in the southwest part of the stake is a distance of twenty-five miles. It has an average width of from six to seven miles, and every foot of that land is arable and can be covered with water. Running through this section of the country are eight canals, which, when completed will hold a hundred and forty-two inches of water—more water than you have in Salt Lake valley. On the east side of the river there is a great extent of territory, which is covered with large canals taken from the Snake river. The country is only partly inhabited. There are many men in that section owning from six hundred and forty to three thousand acres each. They all love the almighty dollar enough to be willing to sell some of their lands. I regret to state, however, there is an excitement at the present time in our community. Eastern capitalists have thought it advisable and profitable to build a sugar factory near Blackfoot City, and the people have been thrown into an excitement on this account, as they were in Salt Lake City when the "boom" was on, and they are asking two or three times the price for their land that they were willing to take a month ago. I hope and anticipate that this spirit will disappear, and that the people will become more reasonable in their prices. In looking over that country I estimate it is capable of sustaining from forty to fifty thousand people, if it be cut up into smaller farms. I have never seen better soil; it is as good as you will find in any part of the Snake River valley, and in my opinion that is the greatest valley in the Rocky mountains. You who are unacquainted with the size of Snake river, and the Snake River valley, have a very slight conception of what there is to the north of you. I believe that every one claiming the name of Later-day Saint could go into the Snake River valley and become comfortably situated upon farms, it is so large. The Blackfoot district is an excellent farming and fruit district. While I do not wish to discourage our to offer why the Blackfoot section of the Snake River valley is better to live in than it is farther up. It is claimed by the citizens who have lived in that section of the country for a long time that the open seasons there are between two and four weeks longer than they are further up the valley. The altitude they are living in one of God's finest countries), I believe I have many reasons of Blackfoot is about the same as Salt Lake City—four thousand five hundred brethren who live up the valley (for feet—but it is considerably colder than Salt Lake City on account of the winds which prevail there. I have faith, however, in God's willingness and power to help His people if they will keep His commandments, and though these cold winds are disagreeable I think He will do as much for the people of Snake River valley in causing the winds to abate, and the climate to become more pleasant, as He did for the people of Bear Lake valley. My brother Golden and I used to live in Bear Lake valley; we ranched there for fourteen years, and we became inured to the windstorms which occurred continuously through the winter in that country. President Budge, of the Bear Lake stake, informs me that now it is a rare thing to have a severe wind storm, and the climate has become moderated and more desirable for the people. I have faith that this will occur in the Snake River country. People who live here have been educated to believe it is an undesirable country, with a cold, rigorous climate; I hope the time will come when you will get a correct idea regarding that section, and that some of you will come there and settle. There are thousands of young people in these older settled communities who would be greatly blessed if they would pick up their knapsacks and come out into the Snake River valley. I realize it is not the desire of our brethern that these older settlements shall become depopulated; but there are hundreds of young men who, if they stay in these older communities, will have small opportunity of ever becoming anything particular or gathering around them this world's goods. They have natural ability and intelligence, and they should go into a new country, grow up with it, and become prominent in the community.

I pray the Eternal Father that He will bless the Saints of God, and inspire us all to be faithful, true to our covenants, pure, and to abstain from everything that is reckless or unwise. I pray that we may become more loyal to God and to His servants. I feel highly honored, my brethren and sisters, in being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and in associating with you as such. I feel highly honored in being called to preside over the Blackfoot Stake of Zion, and with the Lord's help, and the help of my brethren and sisters who live there, we will accomplish something in the development of that country. I have two counselors who are strenuous young men, who have faith in the future, who believe in God, and who have love and confidence in His servants; and we are united. We have a desire to build up that country, that our people will have something to be proud of. May God bless us to this end, is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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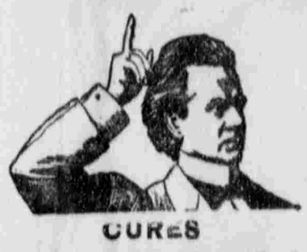

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