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TEMPLE WORK.

Remarks made at the General Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Friday, October 4th, 1895, by

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[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I have learned by experience that it is necessary for the congregation to be very quiet in order to hear what is said from this stand. I sat in the congregation yesterday at the singing contest, and it was with great difficulty that I could hear the speakers. Brother George Q. Cannon made a short address, and though he has an excellent voice to make people hear, it was with difficulty that I heard all he said. Perhaps, however, I am accounted a little hard of hearing.

I have been much edified and instructed in the remarks that have been made during the conference thus far. I looked upon the remarks of President Snow this morning as being very choice. They were but few, but they were to the point, and to me had a great deal of meaning in them. He alluded in his closing words to the subject of working for the dead. To me this is a very important subject for Latter-day Saints to consider. Our Elders go abroad to the different nations of the earth and preach the Gospel, and gather up a few people, "one of a city and two of a family," and bring them to Zion. It is on this principle that this congregation is here. There are people here from the various nations of the earth. Some of these have availed themselves of the opportunities afforded in laboring in the interest of their dead kindred. But I have thought sometimes that this subject was not so seriously considered by the Latter-day Saints as it ought to be. Our President, Brother Willford Woodruff, has labored a great many years in the temples; has done more work, perhaps, than anybody else in the Church for his kindred and others who have passed away. To me it is a certainty that beyond the veil is a reality as much as here, and it is a certainty that our kindred on the other side are watching anxiously over our movements in this direction. We have in operation four temples in the church. Some of them have been in operation quite a number of years, and all have had work done in them for some time. But we have not done a great deal of work yet compared to the amount that we have to do. For your information I might read the statistics of the work that has been done in the temples up to the last of last year, and

you will find that it has not been so extensive as it should have been. The Salt Lake Temple has probably been well filled since it was opened; but other temples in the Church have been very slimly attended, and I believe it has been a consideration on the part of the Presidency of the Church whether it would be wise to keep all the temples open during all the year. I do not know that they have considered it very seriously, but I have heard remarks of that kind. The baptisms that have been performed up to December 31st of last year (1894) only amount to 773,737—a little over three quarters of a million. This comprises the work in all the temples from the beginning, not including, however, the Endowment House. Of course, there was quite an amount of work done in the Endowment House; but we have found that a great deal of that work has been duplicated, from the fact that people did not keep a record of the work themselves, and the records of the Endowment House in times past were not available to everybody.

The Prophet Joseph, to whom the Lord revealed this work in the first instance, had great concern about it. He impressed the importance of it on the minds of the Saints in the latter part of his ministry among the people. I believe it would not be out of place to read an extract or two from the sayings of the Prophet Joseph in relation to this subject. He felt that the Saints should have interest in it and go to with all their might and labor in the interest of their kindred dead, and he talked to them frequently about it. In speaking in regard to the Saints becoming saviors upon Mount Zion, the Prophet Joseph said thus to his brethren:

But how are they to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building their temples, erecting their baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations, and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with them; and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah.

He further says:

The saints have not too much time to save and redeem their dead, and gather together their living relatives, that they may be saved also, before the earth will be smitten, and the consumption decreed falls upon the world:

And again:

The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead.

The Apostles say that they without us cannot be made perfect. It is necessary that the sealing power should be in

our hands, to seal our children and our dead.

These sayings are just as true as the sayings of President Woodruff on this subject. The Lord recognizes in His servants the right and the authority to advise and counsel the Saints in these matters. We quote from Peter, and we quote from James and John, and other prophets, and we have the same right to quote from the Prophet Joseph, or from the Prophet Brigham, or from the Prophet Willford. In fact, to me the living oracles of the Church are more important, if we should make any difference at all, than the written word. It is a good thing to have the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; but it is a little better in my mind to have the living oracles of God in our midst. The Lord deals with His people according to circumstances and conditions. He reveals to them from time to time His mind and will. We never have had the promise of having everything at once. But we have the promise of having line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. Hence the importance of the living oracles of the Church, who are in harmony and fellowship with the heavens. These servants of God have had the spirit of Joseph in continuing the work that was commenced by the Prophet in the erection of temples, and millions of dollars have been spent by the Latter-day Saints in the building of temples, and I suppose some few non-Mormons have contributed also for this purpose. There is an object in all this, and the Latter-day Saints should consider the purposes for which the temples of the Lord are erected. We cannot get along without them now, we have had too much experience. If we had not built those temples, the Lord might have rejected us. The Saints in all parts of the land should consider seriously these matters. You want your children sealed to you; you want your wives sealed to you, and wives want their husbands; you want your folks that have gone beyond the veil officiated for. We have only just commenced this work. We have not baptized a million yet out of the hundreds of millions that have lived and died. It is a subject that we ought to be awakened to. You and I will die after a little while; we do not know how long. I do not know that I will ever have the privilege of standing here again. I may, and I may not. It is the same in your case. You know not, unless God has revealed it to you, that these times and opportunities will be lengthened out to you to officiate for your kindred; and you are going to meet them some day, which may not be far distant, on the other side, and perhaps they will ask you what you have done