

THE DESERET WEEKLY

PIONEER PUBLICATION

ESTABLISHED

TRUTH AND LIBERTY

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION.

JUNE, 1850.

NO 26.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1893.

VOL. XLVII.

CULTIVATE THE SOIL.

Discourse Delivered at the Sixty-fourth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Friday Afternoon, October 6, 1893, by

ELDER MARRINER W. MERRILL.

[REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.]

I am pleased to have this opportunity, in common with my brethren, to bear to you my testimony of this work. To me it is a source of gratification and pleasure to be able understandingly to announce to this congregation that I know this is the work of the Lord; and although I may fail and come short, yet this work will not fail it will not be taken away and given to another people, but there will be a sufficient number retained in this Church to carry on the work, to preach the Gospel, to gather Israel, and to build up Zion.

I have listened with interest to all that has been said today, and I have been deeply impressed in hearing the different speakers dwell upon the various subjects that have been presented. The financial condition of the people seems to occupy to some extent the minds of most of those who have spoken. I have contrasted our situation today with what it was thirty-five years ago, and I find that we are not so badly off after all. I believe a great deal as Brother Taylor has expressed, that much of this stringency is simply in our own feelings. It is because fear has come upon us; that is, upon some of us, because I can find in my travels a great many people going along in the even tenor of their way, and they have no particular concern about anything or anybody. They are trying to live honest, upright lives, pay their obligations and be good people. They do not owe anybody anything. I heard it remarked once, in quite a large congregation, that everybody was in debt. This is far from being the case, in my view. I believe that there are a great many people that are not in debt. I believe there are many people that have means to spare—means to assist others that have not means. While our crops are not as abundant as they have been in former years in all parts of the country where our people live, yet there is an abundance of food to supply the wants of the people. I think it a very excellent

idea for people to seek to find ways and means whereby they may employ the unemployed. This is a matter for the consideration of all the Bishops of the Church. I have thought it a good idea for the Bishops of the various wards and their counselors to meet together occasionally and talk over matters relating to their wards. I speak thus because I have had some experience in these things, and I know it is an excellent thing to do. They might meet, say, once a week and talk over the situation of their people, and see if there could be ways and means devised whereby the people may be employed. There are very few people, in my opinion, that want others to support them for nothing, or that want to be maintained on charity. I believe that a great many of our people that are helped by the offerings of the wards would rather work for what they get. It is good policy for everybody to work for what they get, if they are able to. Of course, there are some people who are invalids, or aged, that need our sympathy; but there are a great many people who are not now employed that are willing to work, if somebody will employ them.

There is another consideration associated with this matter that I will here speak of, and that is in relation to people traveling in a certain groove. They have had perhaps two or three dollars a day for their labor, and they get it firmly fixed in their minds that they cannot work unless they get that amount per day. I do not believe this is a good policy. My counsel has always been for people to work for what they could get. If they could not get a dollar a day, work for fifty cents. It is better to do that than not to do anything. And I am not saying to you anything that I have not done myself. I have seen the time when I was glad to work for fifty cents a day. When I came to this city in 1853 the country was undeveloped, and there was scarcely any employment for anybody. I was alone, a boy, without kindred, without friends—only so far as Latter-day Saints are friends to each other—and I tell you I was glad to work for fifty cents a day. And from that day till this I have never seen the time in all my history and experience that I did not have plenty to do. I have hunted for work, and if there was not anybody to give me work, I would make work for myself. I would make shoes for the children, or something of that kind. I do not believe it is good policy for people to sit down and say, "If I

can't get what I want; if I can't get cash for my labor, or a certain amount per day, I will not work at all." I believe there is plenty of work for everybody right here in this city. You can travel today from one end of this city to the other and see scores and scores of acres of rich ground, that will bring forth food for man and beast, being uncultivated. And you can see scores of old trees that ought to be taken down and used for firewood, and new ones planted in their stead. Then we say there is no employment. And this is the case throughout the whole country. The country is not half developed yet. It will sustain five or ten times the present population. When we have nothing to do, we should look around our neighbor's places and see if we cannot induce him to make some improvements, whereby the city and the country may be beautified and Zion be adorned. We have done very well in the past; but there is room for improvement everywhere; there is room for improvement in the farms and in the orchards, north and south, east and west. To say that we cannot find employment shows that we have not looked for it in the right direction.

There is also plenty of means whereby the people may be sustained. I endorse the remarks of the brethren in relation to people becoming scared and drawing their means from the banks. It is all foolishness and all wrong. I have never been one that has believed in borrowing anything in my life, and I have never encouraged people to borrow and to give notes, with mortgages, etc. In my view, it is all wrong. Of course, I may not be right as I am not a financial man; but I believe that we, as a people, should be lenders, and not borrowers. A great many of our people are lenders now, and I would that they were all lenders. But now, it is said, we owe each other. What is the best thing to do? The very best thing to do is to pay just as soon as we can, and then profit by the experience we are now passing through. Let no man in Israel say that his paper will be outlawed in a few years, and then he won't pay it. That is dishonest in any man. Pay every man what you owe him, no matter whether that man be Jew or Gentile, saint or sinner, just as soon as possible; and do not sit down and say, "Our brother will be lenient with us, and will not sue us, and he can wait." Make an effort; rustle around and try and meet your obligations, and keep your word good, that people may have confidence in you. There are people