

fully perform them. I humbly pray. Amen.

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

We have been listening to truth, so we will ask the congregation to arise and join in singing John Jaques's inspired hymn—"O, Say, What is Truth:"

O, say, what is truth? 'Tis the fairest gem

That the riches of worlds can produce;

And priceless the value of truth will be when

The proud monarch's costliest diadem

Is counted but dross and refuse.

Yes, say, what is truth? 'Tis the brightest prize

To which mortals or Gods can aspire:

Go search in the depths where it glittering lies,

Or ascend in pursuit to the loftiest skies,

'Tis an aim for the noblest desire.

The sceptre may fall from the despot's grasp,

When with winds of stern justice he copes,

But the pillar of truth will endure to the last,

And its firm-rooted bulwarks outstand the rude blast,

And the wreck of the fell tyrant's hopes.

Then, say, what is truth? 'Tis the last and the first,

For the limits of time it steps o'er:

Though the heavens depart, and the earth's fountains burst,

Truth, the sum of existence, will weather the worst,

Eternal, unchanged, evermore.

J. Jaques.

Following the singing of the hymn, President Grant said:

Usually, in our conference proceedings, the hymn is mentioned

and the first line recorded, but I would request Brother Edward H. Anderson, our clerk, to see that in publishing the proceedings of this conference, this inspired hymn shall appear in full.

Since our last meeting the vacancy caused by the death of our beloved President has been filled by my being taken from the Council of the Twelve, creating a vacancy in that Council, and Brother Melvin J. Ballard has been sustained by you here, yesterday, to fill the vacancy in the Council of the Twelve. We will now ask Brother Ballard to occupy the balance of the time in this meeting.

ELDER MELVIN J. BALLARD

Scourges have a lesson and a meaning of great significance—Testimonies of Nature—The wisdom of men cannot counteract the scourges of God—Through calamities and judgments the Lord often touches the hearts of men—Why the innocent and the good suffer affliction—The answer from the Lord who speaks through the suffering of the good, that all may repent—Let us therefore resolve to serve God better than ever that we may escape the judgments or tomorrow—Danger in material prosperity—But God is at the helm.

The circumstance which has postponed the annual conference of the Church from April until June has already been commented upon. I feel, however, that it is a matter of sufficient importance to call your attention to it again. I believe that the events that have transpired have a lesson and a meaning of great significance to the Latter-day Saints and to the world. I believe that it is pleasing to the Lord for us to contemplate these things that are occurring, and

to learn the lessons which he intends we should and, therefore, my mind and my thoughts have been dwelling upon this matter for some time past. I believe that the Lord understood exactly what was to transpire. I read in the first section of the book of Doctrine and Covenants, in the Lord's preface to this book, that he, the Lord, knowing those things that would happen in the last days, the judgments that would come, war and pestilence, etc., spoke through his servant, the Prophet Joseph Smith and addressed the whole world through this humble instrumentality, revealing the fulness of the everlasting gospel, giving command that the elders of the Church should carry this message and warning, that this is the hour of God's judgment, and that the Lord had provided the means of escape through the restoration of the everlasting gospel, and that the elders of the Church were to carry this message to the islands of the sea and to the nations of the earth. I believe, as we review the efforts of our brethren—our fathers, our grandfathers, who have endeavored to perform this duty, that they stand with their skirts clear of the blood of this generation. By thousands and tens of thousands they have gone to the islands of the sea, to the lands of the earth, to countries where they were not wanted, where they were imprisoned, and from which they were exiled, and many of them have given up their lives there, through being martyred or through disease. They have given their best. Nothing has deterred them. None of the things of the earth that are attractive to men have swerved these brethren from the

discharge of their duty; so that we have, I believe, a record that is clean and clear, and we have performed our duty towards the world.

Among those judgments which the Lord said would come—after the testimony of his servants, crying repentance to the nations of the earth, and offering the means of escape through the acceptance of his gospel—should be the testimonies of thunder, of lightning, of earthquakes, of the sea heaving itself beyond its bounds, of plague, of famine and of pestilence. I believe in my soul that the Lord is speaking to the nations of the earth, following the testimony of his humble servant. You will recall, in the forty-fifth section of the Doctrine and Covenants what the Lord said to his servant, the Prophet Joseph, concerning some of these judgments. I believe that in part at least we find a fulfilment of one of the calamities that the Lord said would come in consequence of the wickedness and the rebellion of the people against that message which the Lord delivered for the salvation of the world. You will find it in the thirty-first verse. "There shall be men standing in that generation"—the generation in which he was then speaking—"that shall not pass, until they shall see an overflowing scourge; for a desolating sickness shall cover the land." We may have laughed at that. Men have, in the past, tried to relegate the judgments of God into the realm of accident, things that have happened because of the ignorance of men. I recall, myself, reading how that the great black plague and other plagues that have infested the world have been attributed to

the ignorance of the people; and writers, modern scientists, have said, that such a thing never could happen again, because we know so much about the laws of sanitation, how to correct disease and control it; and they have told us that such a scourge could not occur in this day. We stand at the zenith of our knowledge; never before have men known so much about bacteriology and sanitation; and yet coming from unknown quarters, and making its way—men do not know how—from city to city, from individual to individual, there has come upon the world this dread affliction that has affected us so that our general conference had to be postponed. I believe in my soul that it is the Lord speaking, even as he has spoken before, when men undertook to build so they could preserve themselves against calamities. When they built a tower to reach so high that the floods of the earth could not touch them, he was greater than all their towers. He stands above all man's feeble efforts to protect himself from the calamities and judgments that are going to come upon the children of men, if they do not repent. You recall how that after the building of what was termed the "non-sinkable ship," the great *Titanic*, it sailed away from the shores of England, with a boast on the lips of the men and women who drank their toast to the wonderful achievements of men in building a non-sinkable ship. Little did they think that in a few hours that great ship would strike an iceberg and go down to the depths of the sea.

So, no man has been able to build so well, and no man has yet acquired knowledge and informa-

tion so that he can secure himself against the hand of the Lord, if he desires to reach him and touch him; for we stand helpless before him. Physicians have discussed the subject of the influenza-pneumonia scourge, and have adjourned their meetings unable to decide just what it is. They have called it the "unknown disease," or the "X disease." Ordinary nurses have been more successful than skilled physicians in preserving the lives of many. The deaths that have occurred in the world are appalling. Recently we learned that in India alone there have been more than six million persons who have died with this affliction. When I have contrasted the results among the Latter-day Saints, I believe that I am safe in saying that no community in the world has been touched so lightly as the Latter-day Saints. There are three hundred thousand people living in Portland, Oregon, and I remember that it was reported that two thousand persons perished there during the influenza epidemic. So there were twice as many deaths from that cause in Portland, last year, as there were in the entire Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and its population is certainly greater than three hundred thousand. Yet Portland had a record, according to the statistics, lower than most of the cities in the United States. My heart was touched, because many times we had to administer the last rites for those who did not belong to the Church. The morgues were full, and there were not enough ministers to conduct the services. I remember being greatly affected when we put into one grave three beautiful children, from one family, and laying mothers into the

graves, who were taken away from their children, who were greatly in need of their help.

I recall one circumstance when at the cemetery three funerals were being conducted at the same time, and we were so close together that we had to wait our turn in giving the opportunity for each group of mourners, peacefully, to lay their dead into the ground. My heart was touched, I say, as I listened to the wail of grief that came forth from each group of mourners as the last rites were said. I withdrew behind a little clump of trees and cried earnestly to my Father in Heaven to know why innocent children should perish, why mothers should be taken away who were needed in their families—good, true Latter-day Saints, many of them. I received an answer which was satisfactory to my soul, and it was that this was the judgment of God, even as he had said that his judgments would be poured out upon the nations of the earth, if they did not repent; that the Lord was speaking to the children of men, because the day of the coming of the Redeemer was nigh at hand, and men could not live in their wickedness and see him. They must repent or they shall perish, and the Lord was trying to touch the hearts of the children of men through this judgment.

But why the Latter-day Saints—why should they be afflicted? They have received the message of the gospel, or their fathers, in foreign lands, and have, in a measure at least, accepted of the means of escape from these calamities. Then the words of one of those revelations came to my mind, which was fully satisfactory to me. I refer to the ninety-seventh section of the

book of Doctrine and Covenants, with which perhaps you are all familiar. You will find in the twenty-second verse what I am now reading:

“For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly—and who shall escape it?”

“The Lord’s scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yet it shall not be stayed until the Lord come.”

In that connection I want to read you something from the fifth section of the book of Covenants, dealing with this subject; for, let us not say to ourselves that we are out of the woods, that the trouble is past, and no more trouble will come. I would to the Lord that we had arrived at that state, when this would be possible, but we are not there yet. You will find here in the nineteenth verse of the fifth section:

“For a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out, from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming.”

That is the word of the Lord. Now I do not understand that the plague of influenza shall continue until the Lord comes, but I do think that one form or another of chastisement shall follow, with its seasons for repentance, for the preaching of the gospel, and crying to the nations of the earth: “Will you now listen unto the Lord,” and if they shall not listen, then another affliction will come, until men shall either repent, or they shall perish. For these are

the last days, the days preceding the coming of the Redeemer, and he will not come when the wicked stand and flourish. Reading again from the ninety-seventh section:

"For the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works."

Now here is the answer for ourselves:

"Nevertheless, Zion shall escape, if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her.

"But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire."

My brethren and sisters, why should we hope to escape, who have been baptized into this Church, yet ignore the commandments of the Lord? For there are among us those who do not keep the Word of Wisdom, some of us do not pay our tithing; we do not sanctify ourselves by adding unto our faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge, to knowledge, temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness. Why should we claim exemption—we who know the truth, we who have been warned, we who will testify that we believe God has spoken—why should we escape if we do not keep the commandments of the Lord? And I say this with a feeling in my heart of deep appreciation that the Latter-day Saints are, notwithstanding all this, the best people in the world; and I have received a witness to my soul that the innocent children and faithful Latter-day Saints were not taken because they were wicked, nor because the families that were touched needed to be chastised more than others, but that the Lord was speaking through those who

have been taken—these one thousand who have gone from us. The Lord is speaking through them to the whole Church, crying repentance unto us, calling us to set our houses in order, to keep the commandments of the Lord.

When I read that wonderful statement in the concluding verse of the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom, wherein the Lord promised that those who would seek to keep these commandments, that he would make them immune, that the destroyer should not destroy them unnecessarily, before their day and time. As I read the statement that those who were guilty of the excessive use of tobacco had fallen easy victims to the influenza, I thought that the Lord, in giving us the Word of Wisdom, was trying to make the Latter-day Saints immune, so that they might stand in the midst of the plagues and judgments that are to come. We will not escape them; we will be touched by them; but I want to testify to you that when the Latter-day Saints turn to the Lord and keep his commandments, and serve him in all things that have been required, these judgments shall not harm us; and our loved ones shall not go from us until the day appointed for them to go has come. But if we shall be touched, it is because the Lord is preparing us to stand in our places to be a light among the nations of the earth, the salt, the very savor of the world; and we cannot be that except we keep the commandments of the Lord.

So in my own mind and soul, I have resolved that I am going to serve God better than I have ever done; that I am going to learn this lesson, that I do not want any more

whippings; that I want to be willing and amenable today, so that the judgments of tomorrow need not fall upon me. I know that many of our brethren and sisters who have perished were worthy to go; and those who need repentance have stayed, that they may repent. I pray in my soul that the Lord will comfort and bless those who have been bereaved; for he knew whom he could touch. Many who have suffered the loss of their loved ones have been able to endure it, because they had faith; and had it touched other families, it might have wrecked them. The Lord knew who could stand this affliction, and so he has administered it, I believe, for the wise purpose of calling us unto him, calling us back to the standards of our fathers.

I glory in the achievements of the past. I glory in the material growth and development of this Church. It shall not suffer under the administration of the man whom the Lord has called now to lead and direct the affairs of this Church; for he is competent fully to take care of those matters. But I do feel, brethren and sisters, that there is danger that in the material growth of this Church we may lose sight of the other features that are more essential. I feel there is danger, in the midst of this material prosperity, that we may be disposed to build ourselves up financially rather than to devote ourselves to the accomplishment of the great work that the Lord laid upon the shoulders of our fathers, namely, to convert the world and to save ourselves. The financial prosperity that has come to the Latter-day Saints is but a stepping-stone, if we only consider it properly, to prepare us to fulfil the

great obligations that rest upon us, and not to excuse ourselves from carrying the message of the gospel to a world whom the Lord is trashing, and whom he will thrash. Let us prepare our hearts to go when the time shall come, and make the kind of sacrifice our fathers have made, and do our part in spreading the truth among the nations of the earth. This is my earnest desire.

I bear witness that this is the Lord's work; that he is at the helm. The light is in the ship, and it will go steadily forward. I know, as I know that I live, that this is the work of our Father. I know that Jesus Christ lives, that he is the Redeemer and Savior of the world. I know it as well as I know that I look upon your faces today. When the day shall come that, like Thomas of old, I may thrust my hand into his side or feel the prints of the nails in his hands and feet; or like Mary, I may bathe his feet with my tears, I shall not know it any better than I know it today; for I know that he lives, that he is the redeemer of the world and that he did speak to the Prophet Joseph Smith. I know that this is the Lord's work; that he is in it, and it will rise triumphant and go forward.

My heart rejoices in the privilege of being identified with this work. I feel thankful that I have the confidence and the love of my brethren, and oh, my heart rejoices that I do have their love and confidence. I felt very humble in my soul when President Grant informed me, as I stated yesterday, that the Lord had made it known to him that I should continue my labors in the ministry, and that I should be one of the special witnesses of the Lord Jesus, and I said:

"President Grant, if I thought I could be worthy to be one of the special witnesses of the Lord, Jesus, it would be the happiest moment of my life; for I esteem that the highest honor that could come to man." But my ideal of the kind of men they ought to be was so great, and I found myself not measuring up to that standard, which I have in my own mind. Yet, with the help of the Lord and the patience of my brethren, I will do as I have said: I will try to be what you want me to be—a servant of the people; and with all the power and strength of my mind and soul I shall try to be faithful to this trust and to be a worthy representative of the Lord Jesus in the earth. I feel small; I feel little; I feel insignificant; but knowing, as I have known through the thirteen years that I have spent in the missionary field, that the Lord will help the weak and make them strong, I depend upon him and your love, your fellowship and your support. I know this work will go forward. I know that the spirit of the prophet now rests upon the president of this Church; that is my witness and testimony. The dogs may bark, but the grand, majestic Caravan, the Church of the living God, will move on triumphantly. God bless it forever and ever, and help us to keep loyal and true to it and put ourselves in the way so that we may receive the divine favor of our Father and escape the afflictions of the world. If we shall be faithful and true, I know that every promise and blessing that has been pronounced upon our heads will be realized and verified, which may God grant in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The choir and congregation sang: "For the strength of the hills," and the benediction was offered by Patriarch Frederick A. Mitchell.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The conference was called to order at 2 o'clock by President Heber J. Grant who presided.

The choir and congregation sang the hymn: "Do what is right."

Prayer was offered by Elder Lemuel H. Redd, Jr., president of the San Juan stake.

A quartette composed of Brothers Neilsen, Christensen, Plumeyer, and Holdaway sang: "Lead, kindly light."

ELDER JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH

Changes in life must come—Convinced of the divinity of the mission of Joseph Smith—The Solemn Assembly an inspiring sight—Order of the Church in choosing a President—Testimony.

My brethren and sisters, I have feelings of mingled sadness and joy in standing before you this afternoon. This conference, and the remarks that have been made by the various speakers, have brought to my memory many scenes of the past and I feel rather tender in my spirit. I realize perfectly that time is passing, that man's probation here, or, his days upon the earth, are limited, and when his work is finished, in the natural course of things it is to be expected that he will be taken home. I accept the changes that come, rejoicing in the