

## ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE

Among the many outstanding features of this conference one has appealed to me with unusual force, namely the sustained note of jubilation—righteous jubilation and thanksgiving, I believe—over the progress of the Church, its growth, and, what is more, its development as shown in the facts set forth by statistics and other data, convincing us of the steady progress of this the Church of Jesus Christ. We have reason to be grateful; the results show it. But this joy and rejoicing has been wisely tempered by advice and counsel regarding our important duties. There has not been lacking the note of warning lest we fail in greater or lesser measure, lest we begin to retrograde rather than advance.

## "ZION PROSPERS"—IS ALL WELL?

It is well to sing "Zion Prospers," pleasing to be able to chant "All is Well;" and when we so sing in the spirit of thanksgiving and appreciation the Lord accepts our songs as praise. But it is possible for us to sing in another tone and speak the same words, chant the same melody, and yet be unacceptable unto the Lord. Indeed as I mention this, one of our popular songs, I call to mind that the very title of it was used by an ancient prophet by way of warning unto the people. The Prophet Nephi warned the people against lethargy and neglect, and pointed out that many were thus comforting themselves with the thought that they needed to do little or nothing, for all was well in Zion. Speaking of the wiles of the evil one, the devil himself, Nephi said:

"And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell. \* \* \*

"Therefore, woe be unto him that is at ease in Zion!

"Woe be unto him that crieth: All is well!

"Yea, woe be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!"

I would not place that pleasing song under ban, but when we sing it, let us sing it in the right spirit and not bring the woes upon ourselves for excusing our lethargy and our laziness by crooning, "Zion prospers, all is well."

## THE MOMENTUM OF THE CHURCH

How much have I, how much have you contributed to Zion's prosperity, my brethren, my sisters? Let each one take the question to himself. Many are being carried by the resistless momentum of this great Church, this wonderful work—swept along with it. And they are rather a drag than a means of power or a source of energy. True, the mathematical principle holds that the whole is the sum of all its parts, and consequently the state or the condition of a community must

be the algebraic sum of the several conditions of its individual members. But we are not always able to judge of the members separately by the condition of the community.

We are doing much now in seeking to improve the condition and the activities of our quorums, the quorums of the Holy Priesthood; and we have some quorums whose records are good as compared with others. With totals of activities high, it may appear that the members are energetic and that they never before have accomplished so much. But look a little deeper and you may find that of a quorum of ninety-six elders, sixteen perhaps have been doing the work and the other eighty have been carried along without much effort on their part.

#### COLLECTIVELY OR INDIVIDUALLY?

The Lord has expressed himself forcefully with respect to such conditions, in these last days. In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants—I pray you read for yourself—after reciting his purposes and plans and the partial realization of such in the bringing forth of this gospel in this age, he speaks of those who were charged with authority in that day to administer the affairs of the Church, those to whom these commandments were given, and explains that the commandments were given that his servants might have power to lay the foundation of this Church and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness. Please mark his words: “The only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth with which I the Lord am well pleased.” But that is not the end of the sentence or paragraph: “with which I the Lord am well pleased, *speaking unto the church collectively and not individually.*”

There lies a vital distinction. It is expressed but we often overlook it. It is a distinction that should be heeded in all our organizations within the Church, and without; the difference between the collective status or conditions or achievements and the work of the individual. A manufacturing plant may turn out a great total of product, it may have an immense output, and you may say that it is doing well; but examine the units, look into the machinery, not simply inspect it in a general way, but test, try every machine, every part; and you may find that not one mechanical unit there is doing more than fifty or sixty per cent of what it could do, and yet the output is big.

A great acreage may result in a very large yield, but when you come to consider the yield per acre you may find that you are gathering only thirty or even twenty fold when you ought to have been reaping seventy and eighty and even an hundred fold.

We as individuals are not doing all that could be done, all that should be done. I have no concern for the Church as a whole; its destiny is foretold, it is going on to glorious victory. But that does not say that each of us who are members of the Church will go on to glorious victory; we may be left behind entirely. What are we doing individually? I repeat. The tithing system of the Church has been

referred to in this conference. It is a marvel to the people of the world, but look into it and see our tithing record.

#### THE TITHING SYSTEM

The law of tithe as revealed of God is not being practiced by any other religious organization on the face of the earth, nor has it been since the restoration of the Gospel or during the time of the great apostasy. We say that the results in this Church are very impressive. They are, but are they what they should be? How much have you contributed to making the observance of the law of tithing acceptable to the Lord? I do not mean how much in dollars and cents, I do not believe that is the way in which tithing is recorded above. The recording angels may have a system of bookkeeping that is a little better than ours. How much have you contributed by way of paying the tithe, whether it be ten cents or a hundred dollars? For be it known that the one who pays with honest heart the ten cent tithe, if it be a true tithe, will rank higher on those books than the one who pays a thousand dollars when that is only a tenth of a tithe for him. What are we doing individually? I know what some are doing, for they have told me. Some are very busy trying to find excuses in the matter of tithing as in other duties. Some come with strange questions: "Tell me please, ought I to subtract this or deduct that before I calculate the amount of my tithes?" Very seldom do I find it necessary to analyze the case and to give an answer direct. Sometimes I have smiled because I could see the perfidy of the questioner's coming to me for excuses, and I did not feel complimented. But I have given him a rule, and I venture to give it here. I have found it helpful myself, and I think that all may profit by it.

#### A RULE FOR COMPUTING YOUR TITHES

When you are in doubt as to just how you should calculate your tithes, reverse the terms as we sometimes do in solving complex mathematical problems, and suppose for the time being that the Lord had said this; let us postulate this as an assumed law given to the Church: "In order to show my love for my people, the faithful members of my Church, it is my will, saith the Lord, that each one shall receive from my storehouse, the storehouse of my church, at regular intervals during the year, an amount equal to one-tenth of his income." Now my dear brother, sit down and calculate how much the Lord owes you under that kind of law, and then go pay it to your bishop.

#### CHURCHES AND MEMBERS OF CHURCHES

There is another phase of this distinction between individual and collective computation. The Lord was pleased with this Church in the day in which he spake as quoted and he is pleased with it today as a church; likewise he is pleased with a great many of its members; for there are many, many faithful members in this Church, men and

women who are doing well nigh all they could do save for the imperfections of humanity. And the Lord is pleased with them; he is pleased with the Church, for it is progressing. There are churches with which he is not pleased.

We are oftentimes charged with being very exclusive, and we admit the charge; we are exclusive, but in a rational sense. How can we solemnly testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ and then ascribe that same high title to other organizations that have been formed, not under the direction of Jesus Christ, but according to man's thought and plans? Some people say that we are illiberal because we do not admit that all other churches are just what this church professes to be. We admit that other churches are what they profess to be, when their profession is based on facts.

Now when we say that the Lord is not pleased with those churches, we do not mean that he is not pleased with the members thereof. We hold that God is no respecter of persons, but on the contrary that he will acknowledge good in any soul, no matter whether that person belongs to a church or not. But the Lord is not pleased with those churches that have been constructed by men and then labeled with his name. He is not pleased with those doctrines that are being taught as being his doctrines when they are only the effusion of men's brains, undirected by inspiration and utterly lacking in revelation.

#### CHURCH OF CHRIST AND CHURCHES OF MEN

He has expressed himself with regard to the churches that are built by man and has said they shall be overthrown. Indeed he has applied strong terms to some of those churches, or to church organizations in general, that have been brought into being by man. Read his words to John the Revelator. See what he means by the synagogue of Satan to which some of the people belonged. Read what he has said about the great and abominable church, the mother of abominations. The church as such may be wholly corrupt because of the false claims that are being made for it, and yet within that church as members there may be people who are doing their best. They have been deceived. As to the degree of culpability that will be charged up to them for their having become subjects of deception, we may not be able to judge.

But I do not understand that when the Lord states that those churches shall be overthrown—I mean the church of the devil, using his expression, and those that are making false claims, and shall be thrown into the fire, as he says—I do not understand that all members of those churches are to meet destruction, physically or otherwise. He is speaking there of the church collectively, and he is not pleased with it; but individually he may be well pleased with many of his sons and daughters who have been born under an environment that has led them into those churches which are not of God.

I feel that we should give attention to the individual unit. Wholesale farming is all right but we do not always get the yield that we would get if we were to pay greater attention to each particular plant.

And so with respect to members and membership in this Church. I trust that when the account shall be cast up, the Lord will be pleased with his Church, and I know he will be; but I hope that he will not be utterly displeased with me as a member; and I have the same wish with respect to every one of you, my brethren and sisters. But I pray you, be not content with the progress of the Church as an organization unless you are progressing with it, and not simply being carried along by it.

In brief reference to the olden parable: There are some who have just enough oil in their tiny lamps to show that they claim to belong to the organization, but their light goes out when a little trouble comes, a little persecution; and they walk in the light of the Church without individual light. I pray that the Lord shall be well pleased with his people individually, as I know he will continue to be pleased with his Church collectively, in his name, Amen.

A solo, "O Divine Redeemer," was sung by Sister Emma Lucy Bowen.

### ELDER WILLIAM R. SLOAN

#### *President of the Northwestern States Mission*

Behold a great and marvelous work has come among the children of men. The spirit of this conference has evidenced that to a very marked degree to the thousands of people that are in attendance at this conference.

I am delighted to bring good news from the Northwestern States Mission. I am thrilled beyond my power to express at the reception which I have received during the past two days from fathers and mothers who have sons and daughters now laboring in the Northwestern States. I have never seen before such a manifestation of faith in God as has been shown by these good parents, not only one, but many. Even today people who have driven hundreds of miles to be present at this conference have said, "President Sloan, my son, my daughter, is at the service of God as long as he desires them to remain in the mission field."

I have a young man laboring with me now who eighteen months ago received a call to the mission field. He is the son of a widowed mother who is working hard to sustain her little family, and he is a twin. When the call came, the mother looked at it with tears in her eyes. She called on the Bishop and said, "Bishop, I pray you, do not separate my twins. Let them both go on a mission." The elder and his sister are laboring in the Northwestern States Mission.

Last February one of the brethren in Montana passed away, leaving a wife and a family of children in almost destitute circumstances. As the spring opened up the good saints and friends of that branch united together, and in one day they plowed, disced, harrowed and seeded this