

**ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE***Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

We have heard many strong testimonies, many fervent admonitions, much good advice, quotations of numerous scriptures, every one to the point, in this conference. You will agree with me in the thought that it is good for us to be here and to have been here in the earlier sessions. When this conference shall end we are not going away disappointed, but enriched and encouraged, I trust, in the duties that lie immediately before us.

## RELIGION A SUPPORT

Of late I have found the thought welling up in my mind, even more forcefully and persistently than usual: Of what use to me is my religion under these times of special stress and test? I take it that even if you had not known before you came here that we are living under times of pressure and strain you would know it by this time, for several speakers have emphasized the fact. If you had not realized that there is something called the depression abroad in the world, you must have found it out by this time, for that also has been mentioned by speaker after speaker.

The word "depression" has become decidedly trite, but I do not know any other word in the English language that exactly expresses the condition we wish to describe. Now, we must recognize that as an existing condition. It is no mere theory, but a solemn fact. It is not merely a local condition, it is not only nation-wide, but world-wide.

## PRESENT CONDITION FORETOLD

It may be small comfort to remind you that this thing was definitely foretold. It may perhaps not soften the fact of your financial difficulties to tell you that you have heard of these hard times from the mouths of those whom you sustain as your leaders, utterances made from this stand, and from the pulpits in your several stakes and wards for lo, these many years past. Some of you will know that I, with my brethren, have been very plain in citing to you scriptures, perhaps apologizing in a way for appearing a little pessimistic, yet begging you to understand the predictions as being the nature of optimistic warnings in the way of caution and counsel.

True, this reminder may not be of any more comfort to you than that to a boy who is writhing in the after effects of eating green apples to be told that he was warned against green apples.

## FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND

Remember that the Lord said to his disciples in the day of his personal ministry: I tell you these things beforehand, that when they come to pass you may see and understand.

He knew very well that not many of them would open their ears

and their hearts and understand at the time what he said. He told them of the troubles that were about to befall Jerusalem. He told them of the persecutions that were coming upon them, his chosen ones. He told them of the crucifixion that was awaiting himself, and they could not or would not understand but tried to explain away his words as passing remarks incident to the times. Do you not remember how he tried to make them understand that he was speaking in earnest, and that he wanted them to take his words literally?

On that solemn march of his on the way to Jerusalem and the tomb, traversing the roads slowly, and halting wherever he found people willing to listen to him, he stopped and beckoned his followers to come up, and said to them: Let this thing sink down deep into your ears and hearts—I, the Son of Man, am on my way to Jerusalem to be handed over to wicked men, I am to be crucified and on the third day shall rise again.

Then he passed on, and they talked among themselves wondering—What in the world does he mean by rising again? Even after he had risen from the sepulcher there were many who doubted. When the women came from the tomb with the gladsome news some of the disciples treated the story as but an idle tale based on emotional imagination.

Well, that may be a trait of human nature developed through the centuries, but I trust we can rise above it, and open our eyes and our hearts and come to an understanding of what the Lord has told us, of what he is telling us, for he speaks today in terms that are literal and in the language that we best can understand.

#### HUMAN WISDOM MAY BE AT FAULT

Oh, there are so many tongues spoken among men; the world is a babel; but of the tongues used by the Lord in his communication with men he selects for each occasion the language that they ought to understand. He spoke through the voice of prophecy, year after year, decade after decade, century after century, telling of the wars that would surely come in the last days, warning the people against the conditions that would make those wars certain. But would men hear? On the very eve of the outbreak of the World War there stood in this very pulpit one of the world's greatest thinkers, who declared conditions to be such that there never could be another great war between and among the major powers of the world; that the financial interests of the world were such as to forbid. Then having demonstrated, by the citation of statistics and figures many, that there could not be such a war, he proceeded to demonstrate that if war did break out in spite of all, it could not last more than six weeks; for there was not enough wealth in the world to keep a war going with present-day weapons and under conditions of modern fighting, more than a few weeks.

I heard him speak, and I had occasion afterward to say to him: "Doctor, you have left out some important factors of your problem." He said: "What are they?" "The words of the prophets; for the war will come. It has been predicted conditionally, and the conditions

are such as to make its coming certain." And I heard the refrain of ancient prophecy: "Behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

#### BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

We recognize that a human being is more than a physical creation. The man who thinks otherwise is behind the times, in the first place, even in the matter of the fads and fashions of changing conjecture. Do you think you are nothing more than a makeup of bones and muscles, of nervous tissue and blood and other anatomical structures of your body? You are more than that! You know it, and the man who says he is nothing more really feels or fears that he is. He feels that he is something more than that, though he may try to persuade himself otherwise. There is something in this human frame of ours that existed before the body was formed. Some people have called it soul, spirit, mind, and some by names that are less common among us—gnome or devil; but it is there. It is the immortal spirit that existed in the primeval kingdom, in its period of pristine childhood, before ever it came to take its place in this school of mortality, and to assume the student's garb of flesh.

A man is more than body and mind; he consists of body and mind and spirit, though we may regard the mind as being an attribute of the spirit. We know that our educators have risen above the thought that education should deal only with the mind. We have had intellectual giants developed among us who were of small practical use, comparatively speaking, and some of them have proved a detriment and hindrance to the progress of the race. We have had physical giants with the strength of huge animals but with minds dwarfed, and spirits shrunken and shriveled.

#### SPIRITUALITY NEGLECTED

Educators today are recognizing the need of symmetrical training, developing the body and the mind. But that would not be a symmetrical education because aside from the mind, even though the mind be an attribute of the spirit, there is the spirit itself, and the race has not developed spiritually in due proportion. Let the evolutionists show to what extent man has developed spiritually during the last several centuries. And the fact that man has become unsymmetrical in his development is the all-important fact, I take it, lying at the basis of the disturbed conditions in society today.

#### AN INSTANCE

By the way, only yesterday I noticed an item regarding two great structures in the city of London, not very far apart, St. Paul's Cathedral, a triumph of architecture, a monument to the great architect, Sir

Christopher Wren, and the Bank of England, in the same section of the city. It has been discovered that both those buildings are leaning over, their foundations seem to be sinking, with the possibility of their eventual fall, and capable engineers have been called into consultation.

I noted that Professor Miles Walker, who is the president of the engineering section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, had something to do with the consideration of that problem, and he draws attention to the fact that the cases in point are not the only kinds of displacement to be considered in this world of ours today—the sinking of great buildings. He suggests that some of our social structures, spiritual structures, if you like, are sinking and coming out of plumb, and there is danger of their collapse. He proposes that the British Government organize an experimental colony to be managed by engineers—remember, he is an engineer and the president of the Engineering Section of the great British Association for the Advancement of Science—a colony to be directed by engineers, to demonstrate how far it is possible to maintain, say one hundred thousand people, with all the best of modern facilities of life, in a state of semi-isolation, separating them from conditions that bring about the “restraints and social errors of modern civilization.”

It is very interesting to note that the recommendation was overwhelmingly rejected and the great man was given to understand that science, in one sense, has already gone ahead too fast, and that the spiritual part of man has not kept up. One of our American newspapers, a leading one, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, makes comment on that in these words:

“An ancient seer, who knew nothing of modern engineering or of the achievements of science laid down the rule that in a successful society men would do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.

“Every Utopian experiment has failed because it has not stressed the spiritual side of life with its sense of social obligation and the need of unselfishness. They have ignored the weaknesses of human nature.

“If Professor Walker were dealing with machines, his plan might succeed. Man, however, is not a machine. The experiment in Russia to make a machine out of him is slowly but surely breaking down.”

#### SUPPORT UNDER ADVERSITY

“Man, know thyself.” Oh, that we may know ourselves and know that we are children of the Eternal One, and that this body is a secondary creation, a later construction, and that it is not the only thing about man, nor the principal thing, for the body will die—though surely it shall be resurrected—but the spirit can not die, and the spirit is really the man.

Now, what is my religion doing for me under these conditions? It should be a support. It should show me that notwithstanding these stresses and seemingly unfavorable forces there is purpose and plan in the experiences through which the human race is passing. It should teach me to be more considerate because of the suffering about me, in which perhaps I share, and to be more willing to help. It should

teach me to be more tolerant, to be kind, to be kinder than I have been, and not to fight complainingly against the conditions that befall. You know that winter is coming by and by. Will you grumble and complain because of the ice and snow? It has to come, and the wise man will prepare for it.

#### LIBERALITY TOWARD OTHERS

My religion ought to teach me to have greater respect for my fellows, and to realize that this is the day of which the prophets have spoken, when all that can be shaken in the institutions of men shall be shaken. Are they not shaking all about us? Have your banks not shaken and fallen? Have your theories of philosophy not been found faulty? Have the conjectures of scientific men not been reversed, changed, and in some instances shaken to pieces? Only that which has been established by a power greater than man shall endure.

My religion ought to teach me to regard my fellow as entitled to his views, as well as I am to mine, in matters political as in all else. I believe in men taking part in politics. We have to do so in order to function in government, even as has been said. But I say to you Latter-day Saints if you, my brother, claim to be a Republican, be a straight, honest one. And if you, my other brother claim to be a Democrat, be a genuine Democrat. I know too many honorable Democrats to believe that all the good is in the Republican party, or the reverse. Some people even say: "Both can not be right." "Oh, is that so? Then if the Republicans are right the Democrats must be wrong." Would the proposition stand analysis? According to that, if the Democrats are good the Republicans are bad, out and out. Well now, I know good people and I know bad people, according to my mode of analysis, in both these parties, and I have been led to say sometimes that I think each is a little worse than—perhaps I should say better than—the other. Do not think because your neighbor does not vote your ticket that he is reprobate and bound for destruction. Do your duty as citizens, as I try to do mine, and do not feel that your neighbor is not entitled to his views. Do not let rancor and hatred find a place in your heart because of political differences.

#### VALUE OF OPPOSITION

Perhaps no greater truth was ever expressed than that revealed through the prophet Lehi: "It must needs be that there is an opposition in all things." As it is we sometimes have trouble in getting any considerable part of our citizens to the polls, and how many do you think would go if we had only one party and one ticket in the field? There must needs be opposition. Let it be honorable opposition. Let differences of opinion be held in honesty. Oh, let us be men, remembering our divine origin, and conducting ourselves accordingly.

May we go hence encouraged to greater effort, to endure and to meet what comes, in the right spirit, and to serve the Lord our God in our actions, as we profess to do according to the words of our mouths, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.