

I pray that the Lord will bless us; that he will make our shoulders equal to the burdens that we have to bear; that we may carry on this work in honor and in dignity before him; that eventually, in his own proper time, it may fulfil the purpose for which it was established in the earth. With these few words I give way, praying God's blessings upon us all, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH F. MERRILL

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

Brethren and sisters: No doubt you have come to this 103rd annual Conference of the Church to hear the word of the Lord as it shall fall from the lips of his servants who shall address you. So far as I am concerned I assure you that I have but a single desire and that is to speak only as my brethren and the Lord shall approve. And so I have earnestly prayed that the Lord will direct me in what I shall say.

SUCCESS THROUGH DIVINE LEADERSHIP

This is the Lord's work—not man's. It will prosper only if he leads it. It cannot prosper if directed by the uninspired wisdom of men. This is a fact that we should keep clearly in mind. For it applies not only to the work of the Church in general and as a whole, but also to any part of the work and to individual efforts in the Church. I am, of course, only stating a fact that is well known in the Church, the recognition of which is the beginning of wisdom of the person who would serve acceptably in teaching the word of the Lord.

AN ANALOGOUS SITUATION

The current economic conditions still form a major topic of discussion. Many members of the Church look to its leadership to show them "a way out." Is not the situation somewhat analogous to that which prevailed when Jesus lived among the Jews in Palestine? The Jews were looking for a Messiah. But they wanted a savior who should lead them out of political bondage and establish them as an independent nation strong enough to cope successfully in a test of arms with any other nation. Even some of the followers of Jesus hoped and expected that he would develop into such a leader. They were disappointed that he did not do so and therefore saw their fond hopes blasted when he was lifted upon the cross. They failed to see in him the promised Messiah.

So in this day I am very sure that the Lord through his servants, the Presidency of the Church, has already very clearly pointed a way out from our present difficulties. But it appears that even many members of the Church, and certainly the peoples of the world generally, have failed to see the Lord's plan of economic recovery as given in the inspired words of the First Presidency of this Church. In this day we are so accustomed to striking headlines in the announcement of even many unimportant things that we are wholly unprepared to see a way out of

the universal gloom that is not announced with the blowing of trumpets or some other equivocal method.

THROUGH HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

Yet the Lord has spoken on the subject of the depression through his servants the prophets. I solemnly testify to you that this is the truth. Do you ask when and where? I readily answer that he spoke through the First Presidency of this Church in their *Annual Greetings* published in the Christmas edition of the *Deseret News* December 19th, 1931, and December 17th, 1932. The texts of these two greetings are somewhat similar and might be stated as follows:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

After briefly describing the prevailing conditions the Greetings of last December contain the following words:

"Looking forward with the gift of prophecy the Prophet Isaiah, more than 2500 years ago said: 'It shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with the master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the giver of usury, so with the taker of usury from him.'"

And the Greetings go on to say:

"No one will deny that Isaiah foresaw existing conditions. He tells us in simple language the causes which have led up to this condition, in the following words: 'They have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.'"

THE REMEDY

The Greetings then continue:

"The remedy which will bring relief from the present confused condition"—now listen Latter-day Saints and ye peoples of all the world—"the remedy which will bring relief from the present confused condition is clearly set forth in the words of God our Father, spoken through the Prophet Malachi as follows: 'Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. Bring all thy tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in mine house and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there will not be room enough to receive it.'"

And the Greetings of the First Presidency continue:

"These are not our words, but the words of God our Father, spoken through his chosen prophets."

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

And there are other similar words of God our Father spoken through his chosen prophets, the First Presidency of this Church. They are found in the Christmas Greetings published in December, 1931, and are in part as follows:

"Notwithstanding the confusion which at present prevails in this world of ours, we have much to be thankful for, and can look confidently forward to a brighter and a happier day."

These certainly are cheering words. And the beauty in them lies

in the fact that they are divinely inspired and therefore absolutely true. Hence they are full of hope and comfort.

FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS NECESSARY

But in this orderly world of ours nothing takes place without a cause. This is a truth taught by science and is familiar to all students of science. It is a truth that has also been taught to the Latter-day Saints since the early days of the Church. We find it recorded in Section 130 of the Doctrine and Covenants and expressed in the language of the Prophet Joseph Smith as follows:

"There is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated; and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."

Our God never promises any blessing either in his holy scriptures or through the mouths of his divinely inspired servants except conditionally; that is, to obtain the blessings the necessary requirements must be satisfied. And so we would expect a relief from the present deplorable conditions to be based upon the fulfilment of certain requirements. What then are the requirements that enable us to "look confidently forward to a brighter and happier day?" Listen, Oh Israel, listen "all ye that are heavy laden." Thus saith the Lord through his servants, the First Presidency:

"If the people of the world will turn unto God, and acknowledge His Son our Redeemer; if each citizen of our country will put away selfishness, strife and bitterness, * * * the clouds of adversity will roll away, the sun of prosperity will shine again, and peace and plenty will prevail from the rivers to the ends of the earth."

THE LORD'S PLAN

Here then we have stated in plain language how we may get out of this world-wide depression. The plan is simple: it is the Lord's plan. Many other plans have been proposed, some of them widely discussed. But none of them will completely succeed. Of this we may be certain for they are the plans of men and not of God, since they do not contain all the elements of God's plan.

Now while God's plan is simple it may not be easy to execute. It is based upon the two great commandments—Love the Lord thy God with all thy might, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. To keep these commandments we must live the Golden Rule, never an easy thing to do.

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

Latter-day Saints, you have come up to this conference to hear the word of the Lord. I have read it to you as the Lord has given it through his servants, the prophets. And now the question is, Are we ready to accept it? To do so we must repent. And so the call of the Lord to his people is a call to repentance. To repent of what? Of our "selfishness, strife and bitterness." It is a call not only to me and to you but all the people who inhabit the earth. Peace and prosperity will not return unless we do repent. Let us not forget this fact. Men may plan and scheme

and legislate but peace and plenty will never again smile upon all the inhabitants of this goodly land until we keep the commandments of Jesus Christ, the God of this land. Believing this with all my heart I cry repentance wherever I go among the people. It is the theme of all my talks in the congregations of the Saints.

LAW GOVERNS THE UNIVERSE

Does the Lord, our Father in Heaven, delight in the suffering and misery of his children, conditions everywhere prevalent in these distressing times? Does any right-minded, kind-hearted earthly parent delight in the punishment of his child? Most certainly not. But our Heavenly Father is not only loving, kind and merciful. He is also just. He is the Creator of the world, of the universe, and of all things that in them are. But this world is an orderly world. Law governs all the phenomena of nature and of every existent thing. If we violate any of these laws, the laws of health for example, we may expect to suffer the consequences. The justice of God requires that we do so. We have a depression and are suffering the consequences because we have violated the laws of right social living. And these are God's laws. God has not become cruel and inflicted us with the bitter troubles from which we are suffering. We have made our own troubles. Let us recognize this truth, turn about and repent. Then the Lord will be delighted with us and we shall come to a happier and a brighter day. But repentance is the condition.

We must turn "away from our selfishness, strife and bitterness." Why have we not paid our tithes and our fast offerings, as the Lord has commanded us? Is it not because of our selfishness? Can we really believe in the divinity of this work and then withhold our tithes from the store house of the Lord? Can we expect to enjoy the favors of the Lord if we fail in fulfilling the conditions upon which his favors are based? If we do have such expectations we shall be disappointed, for our God is a law observer, a just God.

THE SIN OF SELFISHNESS

Of all our sins the sin of selfishness is one of the most common and one of the greatest. It saturates our entire life—social, business, political, even religious. One of the reasons why most man-made plans of economic recovery would fail miserably, even if attempted, is because they are characterized by selfishness—inordinate selfishness in many cases. Now, no plan, no matter by whom proposed, will succeed if it has this characteristic. God has so spoken. His word will not fail.

AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE

One of the most outstanding examples of inordinate current day selfishness is the propaganda for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. During recent years millions of dollars have been spent furthering this propaganda. The arch-enemy of this amendment is the Association Against the 18th Amendment, an organization small in numbers, but powerful in influence because of the

enormous sums of money it can command. More than fifty millionaires are reported to have membership in it. Many millions of dollars have been spent in its work. Why? Because if beer and other alcoholic beverages can be taxed and large revenues secured from this source, the rich will pay smaller income and corporation taxes. One rich man said the taxes on liquor would save one of his companies alone ten million dollars a year in corporation taxes. And his family have several large corporations. "Yes, let us have beer and repeal the 18th Amendment," cry the rich propagandists. "Why? Because this will shift huge taxes from our shoulders" to the backs of the working people of America, a fact that workers apparently have not yet recognized.

Yes, I repeat, brazen selfishness is the chief motive back of most repeal propaganda. Against all such I lift my voice. I stand for the 18th Amendment and against its repeal. Would that every member of the Church and every citizen stood with me. Does any one think the Lord will be pleased with us if by any act of ours we allow evil to come nearer to our doors?

In closing I again call to repentance and proclaim aloud, "that the coming of a brighter and a happier day" is dependent upon our living the Golden Rule and acknowledging Jesus Christ as our Savior.

The Lord help us so to do I pray in the name of our Redeemer, Amen.

ELDER BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS

Of the First Council of Seventy

Sometime about the middle of March I took note that the governor of this state issued a proclamation to the citizens thereof, appointing a day, the 12th of March, if I remember right, on which the churches of the state were asked to hold special services of a rather patriotic nature, giving voice and prayer to convictions and ideas that would be uplifting, to establish confidence in our nation, and to entreat the favor of God towards it. I think there was quite a general response to that proclamation, as indeed there ought to be to such proclamations, whether by the presidents of our country or the governors of our state, in such matters as thanksgiving days, and if necessary, days of fasting and of seeking any special favors of God.

It is peculiarly fitting that a people who profess, as an article of their faith: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates; in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law"—to such a people it is highly fitting that heed be given to the announcement made for reverence in our feelings and faith toward God. I visited some stakes in the Church, however, where circumstances, which I suppose were beyond control, did not admit of giving heed to this proclamation of our governor, a man in every way worthy of our confidence, and worthy of our confidence in his sincerity and his faith when making such a proclamation as the one I refer to—and I speak somewhat understandingly, because I have known him from his boyhood, and know the value and virtue of his life.