

strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. (D. & C. 121:45-46)

It was this, my brethren, it was this attribute that was manifest in Carthage Jail that Stephen A. Douglas never felt. He saw only, but he did not feel. That is one reason why today it is recognized by people around us that there is a bigness in the coming together, as we do here on these occasions of the general conference, but those who do not know as we know do not sense the bigness of this thing. They do not know what it

is that impels men to come hundreds of miles in answer to a call such as this. They do not know what it is that impels men in our outlying stakes to give their all, almost, for the benefit of their brethren, to help build up their social life, their physical life, and, above all, their spiritual life. These are the things that men do not realize when they come in our midst. These are the things that men did not realize when they came to Nauvoo, in the days of the Prophet Joseph. They saw merely the external, not the internal; but there is a power here that you and I feel, and we are grateful to God tonight for it, for the testimony that God has given us of the divinity of this work, and I rejoice with you in it with all my heart, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER MARVIN O. ASHTON

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I would give almost anything I have if I could fight away the timidity that comes with this responsibility. However, with that feeling, there is with me the consciousness of the thousands of sympathetic attitudes towards us who have this responsibility in general conference. If we did not enjoy the music and the fine things that are said here on these occasions, if we didn't have those at all, it would be worth while just to grasp the hands of you men and get the white of your eyes and the spirit that you carry with you. I want to take this occasion to express my appreciation of the filial feeling that you extend to us.

As we go about visiting you in the different stakes, so far as some of us are concerned, we wonder just how much good we do. But there is one thing we are sure about, and I have expressed it more than once; we are sure of the fine spirit that we get from you, and it is not your fault if we don't take it elsewhere. I am one of those who believe that inspiration goes up the ladder as well as down the ladder. I mean that we expect and get inspiration and revelation from our file leaders. It must be that way—that's the inspiration going

down the ladder. I am not unmindful, however, of the inspiration that goes up the ladder as you in your communities, your wards, and your stakes develop things and perfect them; then we who visit you get these ideas and partake of those influences. We are like the bee who goes from flower to flower sipping honey as we find it. Unless we are altogether dead on our feet, we cannot help scattering the pollen—the precious gems we find in your particular stakes. Each one of us is made the better by virtue of the attainments and spirit of the rest of us.

I remember seeing, as a boy, a packing company's advertisement that was on the billboards of every city in the United States. I can see that picture now as vividly as if it were yesterday. It was a herd of steers being crowded into one can of beef extract. In other words, in every can were vitamins of the herd. Rather a rough comparison, I agree, but in a sense isn't each one of us a soul of the virtues of all of us?

I am thoroughly convinced that one of the great virtues of the Church is that of visiting about and taking the honey, if you please, from flower to flower. Our visiting with one another keeps the

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Church alive. There is no question about it. What concerns me right now is that these contacts with one another are going to be hampered. It is this rubber situation. It is a challenge to you. You have never had so many inroads on your organizations as now. You have the boys leaving for the army, you have people going to the arms centers, and last but not least, you have the people that are going crazy over money. It is going to their heads, and it is a sad picture.

You have often heard it said, "Liberty, liberty, how many crimes are committed in thy name?" May I just change that a little bit? "Oh, rubber, oh tires, (the want of them), how many crimes of omission are going to be committed in thy name?" If you are inactive, if you are shirking your responsibilities, you are going to blame it on the lack of rubber, and while I love you and hope you love me, I am not unmindful of some of the conditions we find in the stakes. We find people who are not as active as they ought to be. They have a testimony of the gospel, (at least they think they have), but it stops there. We are not as active as we should be. I often think of the old fellow down our way who used to get up on fast days and say, "I just can't rest until I have borne my testimony." The trouble with him was that he bore his testimony the first part of the meeting and then went sound asleep and pretty nearly snored his head off. Now are you doing that? Am I doing it? It is one thing to have a testimony and another thing to do something about it. Don't you think that I have so little sense that I am speaking disparagingly of the testimony of a humble person. The Church rests on that kind of faith. My mother taught me at her knee just how important that is.

To illustrate what I am driving at, may I tell a story that was told to us down in Lehi at a recent conference there. A good patriarch said that he was asked to take his saw and hammer to the church and do some work. He found the hammer, but he couldn't find the saw. He hunted all over for it,

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and finally his wife came to the rescue. She said, "Now, Father, if I were you I would think where I used that saw last, and I believe I would hunt in that place." Well, he went everywhere in search of the saw. He looked high and low ever trying to think where he last used the saw and praying that he might be guided to the lost article. He climbed on the roof—no saw in sight. At that moment, when he was about to despair, although it was a breezeless day, a slight stir of the air tipped the saw from the top of the chimney. It whirled through the air and stuck in the shingled roof a few feet ahead of him like the alighting of an arrow. In soliloquizing about this almost miraculous restoration, our patriarch remarked to us, "I thought I saw the *hand of the Lord in that saw*. But," emphasized he, "I was dead sure the Lord wanted me to see the *hand of the saw*." Now, it is easier to see the hand of the Lord in things than it is to see the *hand of the saw*.

Someone has wisely said, "Many a man has made a false step by standing still." A good member of our Church who is more skilful in the use of the baton than he is in penmanship stated that in giving the name of a hymn to be sung as, "Sweet and Low," the brother presiding announced it as, "Sweet and Sow." Rather an odd coincidence, but life is more "sweat and sow" than it is "sweet and low." Do some of us fish on the sand bar notwithstanding the fact that the fish have moved out with the river?

May I read in closing this piece called "Blind People"?

This is an age of readjustment. Only those capable of making quick changes fit the times. Those with closed eyes and closed minds are in for trouble. A blind man wants the furniture in a room left unchanged. Only then can he move about with any degree of comfort and safety. Change the setting, and he finds himself bumping into things. No longer can he move freely. In our Church there are many men who act as if they were blind. They too want no changes made. They worship familiar patterns, and new ideas, new methods, new personalities cause them discom-

fort. Now is the time to remember the law of the survival of the fittest. We survive or we perish according to our adaptability or inadaptability to our environment. Each of us must ask, "What changes must I make in my thinking to fit me to this new environment?"

I am not in any sense fighting the idea presented by Brother Bowen. I think he is just as right as he can be. You

can't change fundamentals. We have people coming in all around us by the thousands. What are you doing about it? Are we going to absorb them, or are they going to absorb us? It depends on our attitude.

May the Lord help us to be broad-minded and see the *hand of the saw* and work our heads off. Amen.

ELDER NICHOLAS G. SMITH

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

IT is a marvelous thing, my brethren, to be numbered among the men who have been called to act in the name of God here on earth. There are one hundred eleven thousand—slightly more—men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, divided into one thousand two hundred six quorums. I suppose there are five thousand of that number here tonight, and you constitute the leaders of the Church. As you know, my activity has been largely in the mission field. Since returning from the Northwestern States Mission, I have been assigned to read every Priesthood quorum report in this Church, and make notations as to where these Priesthood quorums are falling down. It has been an interesting thing to me to note that for the month of August just past, in activity, the high priests quorum of the San Diego Stake leads with eighty-two percent of its members active. The lowest stake in the high priests quorums runs only twelve percent. All along between that point of twelve percent and eighty-two percent, the different quorums function. Eighty-two percent would be a low percentage if the Priesthood really realized the importance of their calling as God's representatives in their respective places, I am sure.

In the seventies for August, Long Beach Stake led with seventy-four percent of the seventies active; in the lowest stake only eight percent of the seventies were active.

Of the elders in Juarez Stake fifty-nine percent were active, and there were two stakes that only had four percent of their elders active.

Now it has been interesting in checking these reports to find that many of the questions are not answered. They are slurred over and the very reason for those reports, of course, is to call to the attention of the presidency of the quorums wherein they are failing, and it is the duty of every presidency of a quorum to know his quorum members' activity and to be closely associated with them and to be indeed a father to his brethren and to show a great deal of interest in them. I have noticed that practically nothing is being done with respect to the request President Grant made some years ago, that we work with those who are addicted to liquor and tobacco; and I find in one quorum where there are forty-four members and not one of them is reported as observing the Word of Wisdom. Now, I think perhaps the secretary has neglected to fill in the answer in his hurry to get the job over. In other quorums I find where a third of the quorum members use liquor and tobacco, I am sure that these things are not pleasing to our Heavenly Father. But if the quorum secretaries would be more careful—if the presidencies of quorums would check upon these questions and the answers before they sign the reports and see that they are properly filled out and if quorums would only send in their reports—we have some quorums that haven't sent in their reports all this year, yet—to me it is rather strange after laboring in the mission field, and having one hundred percent response when you ask the missionaries to do something, to come home and work with the Priesthood and find