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Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933), Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

# “How Long, Oh Lord, How Long?” James E. Talmage and the Great War

Richard E. Bennett

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What is it that is happening? A war greater in area and scale and more fearful in carnage, than any that has ever been since life on the round world began. Five months—no more—have passed since the first gun was fired, and already the list of men who were strong, healthy, capable, keen, five short months ago, and who are now stark in death, outnumbered anything of its kind in human history. And to reckon up the load of sheer blank sorrow in innumerable homes, and the actual but incidental war sufferings, short of death, or possibly worse than death, would baffle the power of any man. Put thus bluntly, it is all horrible beyond words.

So spoke Randall Thomas Davidson, archbishop of Canterbury, in a sermon he delivered at St. Paul's Cathedral in London on 3 January 1915. Lest we forget, more than nine million men in uniform and legions of civilians died on the battlefields, battleships, and bombed-out byways of the First World War. Another twenty-one million were scarred and disfigured. Whatever the causes of the conflict, they have long been overshadowed by the “sickening mists of slaughter” that, like a plague, hung over the world for four and a half years. The battles of the Marne, Ypres, Verdun, the Somme, Vimy Ridge, Jutland, Passchendaele, and Gallipoli—these and many more are synonymous with unmitigated human slaughter in what some have described as a nineteenth-century war fought with twentieth-century technology. This conflict brought the awful stalemate of

protracted trench warfare and hand-to-hand combat and introduced, on a wide scale, submarine warfare, chemical gas mass killings, and tank attacks and aerial bombings. Yet what should have been the “war to end all wars” became the catalyst for an even deadlier conflict a generation later.

The Great War was likewise an assault on faith, particularly Christian faith, in ways scholars continue to debate. As damaging, perhaps, to Christian thought as are the theories of scientific determinism and of higher criticism and its questioning of biblical authority, the war’s cold clash of death struck deep into the conscience of established Christianity. As one religious leader put it: “How is it with the Christian religion at the Front? . . . All verdicts must be rough in war. . . . War is a muddy business, encasing the body in dirt and caking over the soul. . . . It forms hard surfaces over the centres of sensitiveness.”<sup>2</sup>

Though Church leaders had much to say about the war, the focus of this article is restricted to a study of the ruminations and writings of Elder James E. Talmage, the English-born Apostle, scientist, seasoned scholar, and trusted Latter-day Saint theologian.<sup>3</sup> The author of such seminal studies as the life and mission of Christ, the Articles of Faith, the place and purpose of the temple, and the Great Apostasy, Elder Talmage was asked to make a nationwide speaking tour to explain the Latter-day Saint view of the war.<sup>4</sup> His private journals and public sermons offer a unique vantage point from which to view how a modern Apostle interpreted, on behalf of his church, the tumultuous times associated with World War I.<sup>5</sup>

Like many others, Elder Talmage was surprised at the sudden outbreak of the war, triggered as it was by the assassination of Austria’s archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife by a Serbian nationalist in late June 1914. “One of the surprising features is the suddenness with which the storm of war has broken,” he recorded on 5 August, one day after Great Britain had declared war on Germany.<sup>6</sup>

“The war situation in Europe has grown more formidable with the passage of days,” he wrote two weeks later, concluding that “Austria’s insistent demands on Serbia formed rather the excuse than the cause of what has developed into the greatest war of all history.”<sup>7</sup>

### A Witness to Suffering

For much of the forepart of the war, Elder Talmage spoke little

of blame and much of suffering attendant to the war. He was deeply troubled by the scale of human suffering. "Every day brings news of the progress of the terrible conflict in Europe," he wrote at the end of August 1914. "All the news that comes is censored, and it is certain that we do not get the whole truth . . . [but] if the despatches are at all reliable, there are today under arms over 10,000,000 men, and the dead already reported number many scores of thousands, and the end is not yet in sight."<sup>8</sup>

A peace-loving man, Elder Talmage was shocked and dismayed by the unfolding drama of death and prayed for a speedy termination. In one entry of his journal, representative of scores of others, he wrote: "The war news becomes more terrible with the days. . . . The fatalities and other casualties are horrible to contemplate."<sup>9</sup>

Very early on, Elder Talmage formulated his views of the war—views that would, for the most part, remain remarkably consistent over the next four years, albeit with some modifications. Speaking at the general conference of the Church on 6 October 1914, the fifty-two-year-old leader staked out the following positions: (1) God, our Heavenly Father, is not responsible for the war; (2) the war is a fulfillment of prophecy; (3) on a grander scale, the war is a continuation of a premortal struggle between good and evil; (4) the war is a remarkable sign of the imminent return of Christ; (5) though man is entirely at fault, God will redeem it all for good; and finally, (6) ours is neither to condemn the aggressors nor to take sides (the one view he would modify over time).

### The Role of God in War

As to the role of Providence, the war was neither God's doing nor, for that matter, Satan's alone. "Some go so far as to say that the hand of God being in all things, God Himself is responsible for all that is, and for all that takes place. I have heard it taught by advocates of a frivolous theology that whatever is, is in accordance with the will of God. My whole soul revolts against such conceptions as that." Ever the advocate of the agency of man, this strict antideterminist went on to describe as "absurd" the belief that God's infinite foreknowledge "determines what shall take place." "Let us be men and be willing to take the blame for our evil acts, if we have chosen the evil," he said. Nor was the war, strictly speaking, the devil's own doing. "If Satan and his hosts were bound today and no longer able to work personally upon the earth, evil would go on for a very long time, because he has very able representatives in the

flesh.”<sup>10</sup> Man is his own agent and brings upon himself many of his greatest sufferings—sufferings that are in his power to avoid and ameliorate.

### The War as Fulfillment of Prophecy

As to the fulfilling of prophecy, Elder Talmage was a staunch advocate of the uniquely Latter-day Saint view that the Prophet Joseph Smith had predicted such a tragedy more than seventy years before. “Terrible as is the conflict, it was foretold by prophetic voice and it marks the fulfilment of prophecies depicting conditions of the last days preparatory to the coming of the Son of Man.”<sup>11</sup>

Quoting from the Doctrine and Covenants, he often read the prophecy that tells of the Southern states dividing against the Northern states in the Civil War of 1861–65, after which Great Britain would “call upon other nations” to defend itself “and then war shall be poured out upon all nations” (D&C 87:1–3). To Elder Talmage, divine prophecy, though absolutely certain, could never be construed as a divine imposition upon the agency and affairs of humankind.

On various occasions during and after the war, Elder Talmage took delight in recounting the story of listening to a leading scholar of the age, Dr. David Stan Jordan, who, in speaking at the Mormon Tabernacle just before the outbreak of the war, had stressed the impossibility of such a conflagration. Said Elder Talmage:

I spoke with the gentleman here in this stand, at the conclusion of his address, in substance to this effect: “I wish I could believe you, Doctor.” “You don’t?” “I do not.” “What is wrong with my deductions?” “They may be logically drawn, but your premises are wrong. You have failed to take into account certain essential factors; you have discarded and ignored the predictions of the prophets; and on such a question as this I shall accept the word of the prophet rather than the conclusion of the academician.” . . . Within a short span of months after that time, several of the most powerful nations of the world were locked in the death-grapple, which has been tightening with the passage of the years. So, as I read the words of the prophet that war should be poured out upon all nations, and that in this day and dispensation, in which we live, this the land of Zion should be the only land wherein safety might be found.<sup>12</sup>

Though a believer in prophecy, Elder Talmage was never a fatalist. People could change and repent and bring about an end to suffering and conflict. An advocate of national days of prayer, he

prayed for peace and counseled others to do the same. "We may all fervently pray that the year now about to dawn [1915] shall witness a cessation of slaughter and the establishment of suitable conditions of peace." 13

### A Continuation of the War in Heaven

Elder Talmage later offered yet another interpretation—that the Great War was but a continuation of the titanic struggles in the pre-mortal existence between Lucifer and the Almighty God as spoken of in both ancient and modern scripture.<sup>14</sup>

"And now, in these last days, immediately precedent to the return of Christ, who shall come to rule in righteousness on the earth," he wrote much later in the war, "the arch-fiend is making desperate effort to enthrall mankind under the autocracy of hell. The conflict under which the earth has been made to groan was a repetition of the pre-mundane war, whereby the free agency of spirits was vindicated; and the eventual issue of the later struggle was equally assured."<sup>15</sup>

Further insight into this uniquely Latter-day Saint view of the war can be found in his book *Jesus the Christ*. Though the genesis for this much-celebrated work was a series of lectures Elder Talmage had presented in 1904 and 1905 on the life of Christ, this classic work was an outgrowth, if not in part an interpretation, of the war. Certainly Elder Talmage wrote it with news of the war very much in mind.

On 14 September 1914, one month after hostilities began, he received a "written appointment from the First Presidency [of the Church] to embody the lectures in a book to be published for the use of the Church in general." Provided special accommodation in the Salt Lake Temple where he could think and write without the interruptions of a busy office, Elder Talmage was "asked to prepare the matter for the book with as little delay as possible."<sup>16</sup>

Over the next eight months, with the battles of the Marne and Ypres thundering in the background, Elder Talmage devoted "every spare hour" to the labor "reading aloud finished chapters to his brethren of the Twelve for their approval."

That the war was a chief concern at this time may be gleaned from the following entries juxtaposed in his journals:

For 30 September 1914: "Since I began my work on the life of Christ I have devoted every possible hour to the labor, oft-time working in the Temple until a late hour at night." He then observed, "The

war condition in Europe apparently grows worse with the days as reckoned in terms of slaughter and destruction. The unprecedented struggle is still in progress, and the end is seemingly yet far off.”

And for Sunday, 28 February 1915, five months later: “Spent greater part of the day in [the] temple as I have spent every day on which I have been free from appointments for months past.” He then commented, “The month ends with the usual dreadful reports from the seat of war. Every day brings word of slaughter on land, attacks by air ships, and the sinking of vessels at sea. The condition of the armies in the field during the winter season must have been distressing in the extreme.”<sup>17</sup>

Elder Talmage completed his masterpiece on 19 April 1915, and the work immediately went into its first printing of five thousand copies that came off the press in August of that same year. Several other much-larger printings followed throughout the course of the war.

<sup>18</sup> Unlike any other serious Christian study of the life of Christ, Elder Talmage’s account begins with the war in heaven between the forces of evil and of good—a topic not covered in his earlier lectures.<sup>19</sup> To what extent this foundation chapter owes itself to the war is difficult to determine. This much, however, is certain: Elder Talmage’s message of a living Christ, His Resurrection, and His ultimate victory over death all brought faith, hope, and peace to Latter-day Saint readers everywhere at a perilous time of anguish, uncertainty, and fear.

### A Sign of the Last Days

Sprinkled like seasoning throughout his sermons and writings is a “premillennialist” interpretation of world events, a certain expectation that the war was heralding the almost imminent Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Speaking even before the outbreak of the war, Elder Talmage, then only a freshman member of the Quorum of the Twelve, declared to the Latter-day Saints: “Let me say, there is no time for us to lose, no time for us to waste, if we are in need of individual repentance, reformation, setting in order and better doing: and to those who have not yet accepted the word of the gospel, not yet bowed in obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, permit me to say that there is no time to be lost, no time to be wasted, for the coming of the Christ is near at hand.”<sup>20</sup>

Speaking at a conference of the Pioneer Stake in October 1916, right after the dreadful battle of the Somme, in which over a million lives were lost, Elder Talmage said, “We were living in a most impor-



tant age of the world's history. It was an age replete with significant events and presaged the near approach of the long expected day when Christ should come and reign among men as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Just when he would come no man knew; but the signs of the times pointed to the fact that this day was not as distant as some supposed."<sup>21</sup>

Later, with America's entry into the war, he returned to this same theme. "In our assurance that the Lord shall come, and that His coming is very near, let us beware of those who undertake to set dates, to designate months and years; for the Lord hath positively declared that that shall not be given to man to know, nor even to the angels. . . . But," he continued, "certain signs are specified, and those signs are today ripening like the fruit in autumntide, when the fulness of summer is past. Who can doubt the imminence of this event, which shall be known as the consummation of the ages?"<sup>22</sup>

Two events in particular reinforced his conviction in the near return of Christ. One was the short-term emancipation of Russia from Czarist domination, and the other was the British recovery of Jerusalem from Muslim control. Speaking of the former, he saw the possible emancipation of the Jews and a wonderful new opportunity for many Jews to return to their homeland. "Verily the purposes of the Lord are ripening fast," he confided in his diary in March 1917.<sup>23</sup>

And as for the British conquest of Jerusalem, he said: "Let us hope that this development in the great war is a step toward the restoration of the Jewish nation and the return of the Jews to their ancient home. One cannot but feel tonight that the portentous prophecies relating to the rehabilitation of the Jews have entered upon their literal fulfillment."<sup>24</sup>

Elder Talmage went on to predict the near return of the lost tribes of Israel, heralding the coming of Christ. Said he: "The tribes shall come; they are not lost unto the Lord; they shall be brought forth as hath been predicted; and I say unto you there are those now living—aye, some here present—who shall live to read the records of the Lost Tribes of Israel."<sup>25</sup>

### A Shift from Neutrality

The one view that shifted dramatically, as with many of the most conservative religious leaders of the day, was his political interpretation. At the start of the war, he was virtually neutral (though sympathetic to the Allied cause) and cautioned against condemning one

side or the other. “The warring nations are severally voicing prayers to God, prayers for what? For the right? No, for triumph, for the success of their arms whether they be fighting on the side of right or on the side of wrong. . . . We are striving not only in a national capacity, but in the capacity of individuals, for triumph rather than for truth, for selfish success, rather than for the vindication of the right.”<sup>26</sup>

However, news of the German U-boat sinking of the British steamship liner S.S. Lusitania and with the resulting loss of twelve hundred men, women, and children turned Elder Talmage, as it did many other Americans, decidedly against Germany for the first time.

<sup>27</sup> In fact, the deadly success of German submarine warfare was repugnant to him. “This appears to be one of the most barbarous developments of the European War,” he said of the Lusitania disaster, and although he acknowledged that the ship may have been carrying munitions of war, he concluded that “such conditions, however, cannot mitigate the horror of Germany’s attack. . . . Whatever technical or so-called legal defense Germany may have put forth, the fact that her Emperor and government have stained their hands with innocent blood never to be washed away is very generally recognized. Surely this is a day of horrors.”<sup>28</sup>

As the war escalated and as America’s interests became increasingly threatened, Elder Talmage, a Republican, nevertheless found himself praying for Democratic president Woodrow Wilson. “In every Latter-day Saint home prayer should be made for the president of the United States, for his cabinet, for all other officers of this nation, that they may be led to do that which shall further the purposes of God in the advancement of this people,” he declared in an October 1915 address. “I pray for him though I have never professed membership in the political party to which he belongs. He is to me no member of a political party but the president of the nation and he requires the assistance and direction and inspiration of the Lord that he may accomplish the purposes which God intends to have accomplished in leading this nation to its glorious destiny.”<sup>29</sup>

Ever the American patriot, Elder Talmage became even more patriotic as the drumbeat of war increased. By the time America entered the fray in April 1917, there was no more room for neutrality in his mind. Calling Wilson’s declaration of war “a masterly presentation of facts and a plain indication of our duty as a nation,” Elder Talmage viewed the decision as inevitable, a move “forced upon us by the utterly ruthless and indefensible course of Germany in her inhuman course of submarine warfare.” With a tone of relief mixed

with regret, he concluded that the only way to lasting peace was through American involvement to tilt the balance of power toward an Allied victory. "Let us hope that the participation by our nation in this great world conflict," he wrote early in April 1917, "will hasten the day of the cessation of ruthless slaughter." 30

From this point on, his condemnation of the kaiser and of German autocracy took on a more strident tone. For the first time, the tentacles of war began to reach into his own personal life as his two sons, Paul and Karl, enlisted in the United States Army and his son-in-law in the Canadian Army. His 4 July 1917 speech in Lester Park in Ogden, Utah, reflected the enthusiasm of a nation going to fight for a righteous cause. Germany he described as "the arch tyrant," the "knell of despotism," and "the voracious dragon of autocracy." Much more than having a baneful form of government, Germany represented the "Kultur of Hell," a common term of the time denigrating German philosophy and anti-Christian thought. "Germany is the black sheep in the human family, the recreant, lawless member, the trouble breeder, the blatant outcast, and as such must be restrained and disciplined." In vivid contrast, America's cause was just, needful, and righteous—"to make the world safe for democracy." 31

By early 1918, there remained "absolutely no shadow of doubt that the prime purpose of Germany in precipitating this awful struggle upon the world was the lust for world dominion." Comparing that nation to the cause of evil, he continued: "The fallen Son of the Morning, who suffered defeat and expulsion in these latter days to force tyranny and autocratic rule on the embodied spirits who in their antemortal status fought against him. The right must eventually prevail, and the rights of man be vindicated. Under the awful stress of this struggle it is difficult to repress the agonized appeal to the Throne of God—How long, O Lord, how long!" 32

Though "that government is making itself hated of the rest of mankind," Elder Talmage could hardly conceal his begrudging respect for its war capacity: "Her powers of endurance are marvelous; her resources are yet far from being exhausted." 33

Despite such fervent words, in the quiet of his den, Elder Talmage hoped that the war would not strike tragedy into his own home. "With all our patriotic approval and cooperation," he confided in a later journal entry, "we cannot resist the underlying thought and hope that the right kind of peace may be attained before our loved ones reach the battle"—a hope realized by subsequent events. 34

Writing to his son Paul, then in field training, Elder Talmage prayed for more than his personal safety and well-being. “We constantly pray, my boy, that you and your brother may be preserved from evil, from the temptations and sins to which it is so easy to yield amidst the unavoidable abandon of military life. But we rely on Divine assistance and determination you will both be able to keep yourselves clean. Next to this we pray that you may be among those who are spared to come home in safety and with credit for having contributed to the victory we so confidently count on.” 35

### An Advocate for the Church

In the spring of 1918, with the outcome of the war still very much in doubt, Elder Talmage was dispatched by the First Presidency on a cross-country speaking tour for at least two reasons: (1) to promote the image of the Church of Jesus Christ as a loyal supporter of the enlistment process and of the government’s Liberty Bond Drive and (2) to explain the Latter-day Saint philosophy of war. Speaking in scores of cities and writing syndicated columns for major newspapers all across America, Elder Talmage reiterated those views that he had held throughout the war as presented above. Stressing the call of duty for Latter-day Saints to take up arms, Elder Talmage identified the mission of the Church with that of the Western world, a point not made before. “We have particular concern in the outcome of the great conflict,” he said over and over again, “for we solemnly proclaim that to this church has been given the Divine appointment to preach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world; and the discharge of this high commission is possible in its entirety only as free speech, liberty of conscience, and a free press are insured among the nations.” 36

With the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918, Elder Talmage joined with others worldwide in celebrating the long-sought-for end of the war. Official word reached Salt Lake City at 12:45 D P Notwithstanding the late hour and the curfews because of the influenza plague, Elder Talmage reported that “this city seemed to spring into life. Bells were tolled, whistles blown, and within an incredibly short time hundreds of automobiles were dashing about the streets, most of them having tin cans, sheet iron utensils and other racket-making appendages attached to the rear.” The next day, he reported that “flags and bunting appeared in abundance everywhere, tons of confetti were thrown from the tops of high buildings, every available band was pressed into service, and during the afternoon and well

on into the night dancing was indulged in on Main Street. . . . Such a day as this has never before been witnessed in the world's history."<sup>37</sup>

As to his views on the peace process, while he hoped it would result in nothing less than "the complete subjugation of militarism as a ruling and compelling power in the affairs of any nation," he deplored any act of vengeance. "Personally I trust that no gun will be fired, not a single bomb dropped, and not one paragraph be written into the peace document, in the spirit or interest of vengeance. If ever the ancient scripture had special application it has now: 'vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord' (Romans 12:19). The conquered peoples will suffer enough through what we may call the natural, that is the inevitable, consequences of their assault on civilization and their diabolical efforts to subjugate the world."<sup>38</sup>

With respect to Woodrow Wilson's initiatives to conclude the war with his proposed Covenant of Peace and a League of Nations to prevent any further such horrors, Elder Talmage responded with guarded optimism. The League of Nations became a very divisive issue for Latter-day Saint leadership, with Heber J. Grant supporting it and others, like J. Reuben Clark and David O. McKay, in opposition. However, Elder Talmage saw in Wilson's initiatives, though flawed, an unparalleled opportunity for peace.<sup>39</sup>

"Though the League be not a perfect device," he admitted in remarks given at a 1919 Independence Day celebration in Salt Lake City's Liberty Park,

its creation is of significant import. . . . If future wars shall come, let us see to it that they come, not because of our efforts to prevent but in spite of the best safeguards we can establish.

The forming of a League of Nations is a great stride on the road of real advancement; and I verily and reverently believe that it is a human response to the promptings of the Divine Spirit . . . but to those who violently assail and seek to destroy the league at its birth, the words of Gamaliel apply: "If this counsel or this work be of men it will come to naught: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."<sup>40</sup>

When news arrived that the Republican-controlled United States Senate had voted down Wilson's initiatives, thereby blocking America's involvement in the League, Elder Talmage recorded the following in a spirit of quiet resignation:

It is greatly to be regretted that the question of the League of

Nations was made a partisan issue, but Woodrow Wilson was determined to make it an issue. The answer is very decisive; for President-elect Harding gave no promise of adoption of the League Covenant. In my judgment, the U.S. will have to take a stand with the other great nations of this world. . . . However, the voice of the people has been heard in the land. . . . My prayer has been that the Lord so overrule the affairs of men as to bring about the election of those best suited to the carrying out of His purposes. . . . Until I learn otherwise, I shall try to believe that the supplication has been in large measure answered. 41

### The Redemption of the World

As to the lingering question of the impact of the war upon Christianity and perhaps, by extension, upon the Church, Elder Talmage wrote little. But from what he did say, it seemed no threat. In his mind, though the war was an outgrowth of an apostate world, God would redeem it for good.

Millions of men have been killed on the battlefields, and other millions—not alone of men but of tender women and innocent children—have given up their lives to feed the ever hungry maw of the demon War.

Critics with distorted vision, and skeptics with poisoned minds, have blatantly proclaimed the dread conditions of current times as evidence that Christianity has failed. The conclusion is unwarranted; it would be more reasonable to say that the world has never yet tried what Christianity can do. What we have come to call Civilization has seemingly failed; for if the present conflict be a part of civilization, God give us the simple savagery of the past. 42

Whether such a response would have been different if it had been Latter-day Saints killing one another in overwhelming numbers rather than Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims dying on the world's battlefields is impossible to say. What effect future wars in the twenty-first century may have upon a worldwide membership and upon a worldwide church must await future historians. The ugliness of war, however, cannot detract from the gospel message of peace or, as Elder Talmage put it in one stake conference: "From the Mormon point of view, there can be no question as to the divinity of Jesus Christ. . . . It is this that the Gospel offers shelter to those who might be shaken by the rude war of modern indifference and unbelief."<sup>43</sup>

What Elder Talmage did see springing phoenix-like out of the ashes of the war was the increased opportunity for the spreading of

the gospel message. "The missionary work will become more needed and greater," he said at a conference of the Summit Stake in August 1916. "There will be a greater call for missionaries. There must be a revival among us, should be less frivolity, to prepare for the development in store by the Lord."<sup>44</sup>

Put another way, and in geological metaphors he, as a scientist, well understood, God would redeem it all for good. "Out of it all He can cause to rise the principles of truth. As the crystal forms in the brine, He can cause the principles of righteousness to crystallize out from the gory magma which is presented to us by this terrible conflict."<sup>45</sup>

It would be a terrible omission to conclude this study without reference to Elder Talmage's fundamental and repeated response to the horrors of the Great War. For all the hell of battle, the shattered dreams, the snuffed-out lives, and the waste and worry and weariness of war, there stood above it all, like the rising sun above a declining world, the certainty of the Redemption and Resurrection of Christ and of all mankind everywhere. To minimize this point is to misrepresent the man. Such a view may be best captured with an excerpt from a talk he gave during the height of the awful slaughter of Verdun, in which over a million men were killed: "Ye sons and daughters of the living God, we are eternal beings. We shall live though the experience of death . . . must come unto each of us; but victory over the grave has been inaugurated, and shall be carried to a glorious consummation, through and by the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is the Redeemer, as well as the Savior of mankind."<sup>46</sup>

## Notes

1. Randall Thomas Davidson, *The Testing of a Nation* (London: Macmillan Company, 1919), 17–18.

2. *Ibid.*, 128–29. A noted Canadian scholar of religious history has recently argued that Canadian soldiers were ill-prepared for the war by mainline Christian churches in Canada. "We as a church advised our youth to join the army," one soldier reported. "Not anywhere in my three years of army life have I heard of or come into contact with, a great spiritual leader or moral leader. . . . There was no note of leadership in the church that found an echo in the heart." David B. Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith—Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 74. Marshall argued that the war contributed much to the secularizing of Canadian Protestantism.

For an excellent study of the American churches' response to war, see *The Church and Its American Opportunity* (New York: Macmillan, 1919).



3. James E. Talmage was born 21 September 1862 at Hungerford, Berks, England. He became a member of the Church at the age of ten and was ordained an elder in 1880 in Utah. A geologist by profession, he became an instructor at the Brigham Young Academy and later served as president of the LDS College from 1888 to 1892. He later served as president of the University of Utah. For more biographical information, see John R. Talmage, *The Talmage Story: Life of James E. Talmage—Educator, Scientist, Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1972). The best published collection of Talmage's seminal talks and sermons is James Harris, ed., *The Essential James E. Talmage* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1997), number five in the Classics in Mormon Thought series.

4. Some of the other classic works of James E. Talmage include *The Articles of Faith: A Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1901), *The Great Apostasy: Considered in the Light of Scriptural and Secular History* (Portland, Oregon: Northwestern States Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1909), *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission According to Holy Scriptures Both Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1915), and *The House of the Lord—A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962). These works are still in print and very much relied upon by Latter-day Saint readers as reliable and inspiring doctrinal works.

5. The primary sources used for this paper are the private journals and public sermons of Elder Talmage that are available in the James E. Talmage Collection in the Special Collections Department of the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; hereafter cited as Talmage Collection. I wish to thank the staff members at Special Collections for their assistance in accessing these materials. I also wish to thank Ron Watt of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for his assistance in locating key talks of Elder Talmage in wards, stakes, and missions during the war-time period. Talmage's official Church correspondence was not available for research. I wish also to thank my research assistant, Keith Erikson, for his invaluable assistance in studying these sources.

6. James E. Talmage journals, 5 August 1914; hereafter referred to as the JET journals.

7. JET journals, 18 August 1914.

8. *Ibid.*, 31 August 1914.

9. *Ibid.*, 8 September 1914.

10. James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, 6 October 1914, 101–4.

11. JET journals, 28 November 1914.

12. James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, October 1916, 75.

13. JET journals, 31 December 1914. Wrote Elder Talmage on a later occasion:



"We can but hope and pray for Divine interposition in the interests of peace, so far as the greater purposes of God may be served thereby." JET journals, 29 July 1915.

14. The scriptures he most often referred to are in the book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price.

15. From an article entitled "There Was War in Heaven," 1917/18, Talmage Collection.

16. JET journals, 14 September 1914.

17. *Ibid.*, 30 September 1914 and 28 February 1915.

18. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*. Since 1915, the book has gone through numerous editions and is still in print.

19. In a promotional article announcing the publication of the new work, attention was given this very point: "The chapter devoted to the antemortal Godship of Christ presents in concise and convincing array the scriptural proofs of our Lord's station, power, and authority before the world was prepared for the habitation of man. It is made plain that Jesus Christ was the Word Or Power through whom and by whom the worlds were created." From an article entitled "A New Church Work Just Issued from the Press of the Deseret News, 'Jesus the Christ.'" See JET journals, 11 September 1915.

20. "Earth Being Prepared for Savior's Coming," *Deseret Evening News*, 3 August 1912.

21. Minutes of the Pioneer Stake Conference, 29 October 1916, as extracted by the Church Historical Department staff, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah.

22. James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, April 1917, 68.

23. JET journals, 23 March 1917. Elder Talmage was bitterly disappointed to learn of the counterrevolution in Russia and the entrenchment of Communist rule. "The Russian nation has been betrayed by self-constituted leaders, notably Trotsky and Lenin, who succeeded in starting a counter-revolution to that by which the last Czar was dethroned, and, who, while pretending to work for the good of their people, have been playing into the hands of Germany and Austria." JET journals, 8 March 1918.

24. JET journals, 8 December 1917. Elder Talmage, of course, was not alone in this interpretation. Conservative Christians and other premillennialist evangelicals saw in the fall of Jerusalem the hand of God. For example, see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture—The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism: 1870–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 150.

25. James E. Talmage, in Conference Report, October 1916, 76.

26. James T. Talmage, in Conference Report, October 1914, 101. Further to this