

ELDER JOSEPH W. McMURRIN

(Of the First Council of Seventy, and President of the California Mission.)

It is certainly a very great privilege, my brethren and sisters, to attend a General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to have the privilege to listen to the splendid counsels that are imparted by the presiding authorities of the Church, and to partake of that good spirit that prompts the presiding authorities as they undertake to expound the doctrines of the gospel and to counsel the people to walk in those paths that will be for their best advantage. It is also a very great privilege to have the opportunity of standing up in one of these great conferences to bear testimony to the truth that has been revealed for the salvation of the children of men in this great dispensation of the fulness of times. And with this privilege there is also a very great responsibility which causes men to have more or less anxiety at the thought of attempting to discharge the duty that is placed upon them, when they are called to stand up in the midst of the people for a few moments as spokesmen.

My labors, my brethren and sisters, as many of you no doubt know, are at present in the California mission. When I left Los Angeles a few days ago, the appearance of things in that part of the land were about as contrary to what we see around the outside in this stormy weather as one could well imagine. Southern California, at this particular period of the year, is probably as beautiful a country, in many parts of it, as could be found anywhere upon the face of the earth. I had the pleasure, just a few days ago, of being in the company of Elder Richard R. Lyman, of the Council of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishop of the Church, in attending services in San Bernardino and also in Los Angeles, and as we were traveling from the city of San Bernardino these brethren burst out again and again with exclamations of surprise and joy at the beauty of the scenery through which we passed, for we traveled through vast sections of great orange groves; and along the roadway, continuously, I might say, there were great clusters of blooming roses and geraniums and other flowers that were indeed beautiful to look upon.

I am very happy to report in this conference that the California mission is making fair advancement. I suppose men who are engaged in the missionary work in every part of the world would be glad if they could make better headway than they do. California, as you know, is a land that is given much to pleasure. Thousands, I suppose hundreds of thousands, of people come to California every year to escape cold weather in other sections, and to enjoy and spend the means that they have been blessed with, and people who come for such purposes are not very willing to listen to the teachings of the servants of God, as

they undertake to bring to the attention of men the message that has been committed into their care. And yet I am happy to say that we continually find a few people who become pricked in their hearts, and who do investigate the message of the gospel, and who are brought to the waters of baptism and become numbered with the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have been very greatly blessed in the California Mission in having occasional visits from the President of the Church, and from other prominent brethren, and they have always manifested a very ready willingness to go into the branches of the Church and to meet people face to face and bear testimony to them in relation to the truth. We have been blessed in this regard to a very great extent. President Heber J. Grant, during the past year, I suppose has visited the branches in Oakland, California, and in San Francisco, and at San Jose, in Ocean Park, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Santa Anna, San Diego, and San Bernardino; and a little further back, we had him also at Gridley, in the Sacramento Valley, where we have a large number of people who are engaged in agricultural pursuits.

The California Mission has a membership of about six thousand two hundred souls. These people, to a very great extent, are not converts that have been made in the mission field, but they are men and women who have been born and reared in the Church, with their families. We have a great many men in the California Mission who have had splendid experiences in the Church, who have been abroad in the world as preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who have been in stake presidencies and in high councils and in bishoprics, and who have occupied other prominent positions in the Church; men and women who are still established in the faith of the gospel, who love the truth, who have come for various reasons from their former homes to make homes in the state of California. We have had, during the past year, a very remarkable experience, in that a very large number of our people have come from the wards and stakes of Zion to make homes in California. There has been received during the year, something over twelve hundred souls, who have come with recommends, and have united with the branches in the California Mission, and then there are a great many others who have come into the mission who have not brought transfers, and a great many that we haven't met. We have been trying to extend the missionary labors, going into communities where the gospel has not been preached, that we know of, to any extent in that section. We have never been able to send the missionaries into any locality in the state where they have not discovered men and women who claim membership in the Church. In every little community wherever the missionaries have resided for any length of time, they have come in contact with these Church members who have practically been lost for a considerable period of time and haven't had recognition in the mission. This has resulted in quite a large number of additions in the organizations that have been effected in the California mission. It might not

be out of place in this conference to call attention to some of these increased organizations. In 1918, there were eighty-five Church organizations in the California mission. In 1919, they were increased to one hundred and fifteen organizations. In 1920 and 1921, they have been increased to one hundred sixty-two organizations, which means that there have been seventy-seven additional Church organizations. They cover conferences, branches, Relief Societies, Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Associations, Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations, Primaries, Sunday Schools, and one Religion Class. You will readily discern, my brethren and sisters, that with this increased number of organizations, a very large number of men and women, between two and three hundred, who have heretofore not had any direct responsibility resting upon them as officers in the Church have now been brought to feel that they are under an increased obligation to render service in the building up of the kingdom of God. Of course, this has increased the spiritual strength of the people in these various localities, and men and women have been aroused to a better performance of the duties that rest upon them as members of the Church of Christ. I am very happy to be able to report that the California mission has played its full part in contributing, in a material way, to the tithes that have been paid for the advancement and upbuilding of the Church of Christ; and, notwithstanding the financial depression that has been mentioned by some of the speakers during this conference, there has been more tithes paid during 1920 than has ever been paid in the mission before; I think about twenty-six per cent more tithing during the past year than was paid during the previous year, and I am also glad to be able to report that the California mission, in the amount of tithing that is paid per capita throughout the entire mission, stands above the general average of the Church, which I think is a very splendid thing to be able to report.

We are feeling some anxiety in that mission in relation to missionaries, and I suppose the same feeling is with all of the mission presidents. There seems to be disposition to a greater extent than ever before, it seems to me, for fathers and mothers and others who have representatives in the mission field, to feel that it is a proper thing to suggest the release of missionaries, long before the time that the mission president would release them. I desire to ask bishops and presidents and fathers and mothers that they give attention to this matter, and that they be not too ready to recommend the release of the men and the women who have been called to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will open the Doctrine and Covenants, you will discover again and again in the revelations of the Lord that there can be no greater service rendered than the preaching of the gospel. Many of the brethren, at an early period in the Church, went to the Prophet Joseph Smith and inquired what they could do that would be of the greatest advantage to themselves, and the Lord answered again and again that the thing that would be of greatest worth to those men

who thus sought counsel at the hands of God, through the prophet of the Lord, would be to lift up their voices in the preaching of the gospel. I do not know that this has ever been revoked. If the greatest thing that men could engage in, at the introduction of the gospel, was to cry repentance among the inhabitants of the earth and to expound the doctrines that have been revealed for the salvation of the children of men, that service is just as great today, as it has ever been in the history of the Church, and I think it would be well for fathers and mothers, and for men who occupy presiding positions in the organizations of the Church here in Zion, to counsel that missionaries be permitted to remain in the mission field until those who preside over them feel prompted by the Spirit of the Lord to say that the time has come when they should lay down their missionary work and return again to their various homes. I realize, my brethren and sisters, when I make this statement, that always there can be conditions that cannot be controlled by fathers and mothers, and that cannot be controlled by others, however interested they may be, that may make it necessary for missionaries to return, but it is an injustice to any young elder in the mission field, who has been there for sixteen or eighteen months, and who has made the discovery, perhaps, that God is his Father, that God has called him to be his servant, has called him with divine authority, and has made him a preacher of righteousness, just when he is being baptized by the power of God, and when ability is being developed within him to expound the doctrines of the gospel—not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit—then to have somebody make a recommendation that he be released and be taken away from his missionary work and be brought home, disappointed, knowing in his own soul that he had not accomplished the work that he had desired to accomplish. And the preaching of this gospel is to be continued as it is written in the very first revelation: "And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days. And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I, the Lord, have commanded them." You may read further, I shall not take the time—of the marvelous promises that have been made by the Lord God of heaven in relation to the preaching of the gospel, and that all men can come to an understanding of the truth as it has been revealed, if they will hearken to the counsels that are given of God through his servants.

I desire to say to you, fathers and mothers, and I know whereof I speak, for I have been in the very period of missionary work in the past that the missionaries who are in California, very largely, are in today, and I would rather have had taken from me anything that I possessed in the world than to have been robbed in the days of my boyhood of filling, to the full satisfaction of those who presided over me, the first mission in which God, in his bountiful kindness, gave me opportunity to labor. I plead with the fathers and the mothers, and with bishops and presidents, as far as possible, to encourage men and

women to remain in the fields, and let them understand that there is, as a general thing, but one opportunity given to a man in a lifetime—that is the history of missionary work, just one opportunity in a life time,—to preach the gospel; and do not interfere and bring home from the mission field men who are filled with the Holy Ghost, who are anxious to cry repentance, who have had a wonderful love come into their souls for the gospel of the Redeemer, and who have been made to know, just as their fathers and mothers know, that the things that they are teaching are true—the power of God unto salvation. I thank God that I have that assurance and knowledge in my soul, and I praise God that he has given me this assurance, and bear testimony to its truth with all my soul, in the name of Jesus Christ, my King. Amen.

ELDER CHARLES H. HART

(Of the First Council of Seventy.)

I take it as a compliment to my father, James H. Hart, rather than any slight to myself, that I should be invited to the stand under my father's name. I recall an incident in his life, suggested to me during this conference, of his being lost with a companion in a fog or storm. They wandered for hours without reaching any known landmark, until night settled upon them and the situation became serious. They knelt in prayer for their deliverance, and shortly after arising from their knees in the snow of that cold country, the clouds broke away for a few minutes, they beheld the North Star and received their bearings. So in this conference there have been presented guiding gospel principles, foundation stones upon which we may safely anchor, and to which we may look for guidance. In the constitution of this commonwealth, framed under the presidency of the late President John Henry Smith, it is declared that "frequent recurrence to general principles is essential to the security of individual rights and the perpetuity of free government." By parity of reasoning, a frequent recurrence to the fundamentals of religion are essential for individual guidance, and for the well-being of the Church. I rejoice in the fundamental instructions and the solid satisfaction of the spiritual feeding, given us during this conference. The injunction of the opening speech was to keep the commandments of the Lord. I am reminded in this connection that the Ten Commandments form the very foundation of the laws of all civilized nations. One of our most learned jurists in the civil law, that is, the Roman law as distinguished from the common law, said of the civil law, (and it is in keeping with the Book of Mormon quotation made by Elder Whitney in this conference) that "the spirit of man, divinely inspired, has wrought from the beginning. The roots of the tree of life strike down into the remotest past"; that a system had been developed which reigns by reason after the authority which pro-