

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 be permitted to take part in this great conference of the Church. I trust that the few moments that I occupy this position I may be led to say such things as shall be in keeping with the occasion and that may be of some benefit and advantage to those who are gathered together.

I am very glad to be able to report the California mission as being, from my viewpoint, in good condition. We have had a larger number of missionaries in the field during the past Winter than we have ever had during any previous period in the history of the mission. This larger number is accounted for owing to the fact that a good many short-term missionaries were sent to California. A large number of the short-term men who have been assigned to California have been men quite well advanced in age, two or three of them being just under eighty years of age. They have all manifested a splendid spirit and have been very anxious to magnify their callings as preachers of the gospel. Their spirit has been stronger in some instances than their physical organism, and a number of these elders have already been released on account of failing health. Those who have been released were not quite able to stand up to the stress of missionary work. I am very sorry to say that one of these brethren, Brother Thomas Wilson of the Woodruff stake, after returning home suffered for a considerable period of time and then passed on to the great beyond. Elder Wilson was a good and faithful man. We appreciate the splendid work that has been accomplished by the short-term missionaries. Short-term missionaries will be made welcome again in California. While I have no thought that it is my prerogative to indicate what should be done regarding this class of missionaries, I take it from some expressions that I have heard from some of these brethren that they could just as well as not have been in the mission field earlier in the season if they had received notification, and this certainly would be a very great advantage to missionary work. If short-term missionaries could be notified so as to leave their homes, probably not later than the month of October, they could give more time in the field and thus make their services more valuable. They could render service during the winter months and still return in time to take up their farming operations. I think the great majority of these short-term missionaries who have been assigned to California have been men who have been engaged in agricultural pursuits. Many of them have already been released to return home in order that they might give attention to the planting of spring crops, and the balance of these short-term men I suppose will be home within a month or two from the present time. They have brought a splendid influence into the mission. They are men of faith and confidence, they have set a good example before the people and

have had wonderful testimonies to bear in relation to the great work that the Lord our God has planted among the children of men.

We also have an excellent body of young men and women; and while I suppose every mission president is anxious to have some men of experience in the mission field to lead the way, to preside over conferences, to instruct and teach younger men and women, personally I feel, the longer I labor as a missionary, that our Father in heaven made no mistake when, through his servants from the very beginning, he called very youthful men to go abroad to represent him in the preaching of the gospel. It is perfectly marvelous to note the change that takes place with these missionaries. Last Saturday night I had the pleasure of meeting quite a body of California missionaries in their missionary reunion, and I was proud of that company of young men and women. Just a short time ago I met every one of these young people in the mission field when they first reported for missionary labor, and almost invariably I met trembling boys and trembling girls. They hardly knew, as a rule, whether they had any testimony concerning the divinity of the work of our God, or not. In fact it has not been an unusual thing to hear some of these missionaries say that they did not have a testimony, they believed in the work of God, they had faith that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, and they were anxious to come to the knowledge which they had heard their parents and bishops and presidents talk about in their home communities. These young people that I met in the reunion were a different class of young men and women altogether from the young men and women I met as they came into the mission field. They were no longer trembling. They were no longer in any doubtful mood concerning the work of God. They were full of conviction. Instead of striking hands with trembling boys in a good many instances, I found myself shaking hands with bishops in the Church of Christ, with bishop's counselors, and with stake superintendents of Mutual Improvement organizations, and Sunday school organizations, and it was evident from the words that fell from their lips, in the brief conversations I was able to hold with them, that they were in very deed ministers of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they had burning in their souls the same testimony, the same knowledge, the same understanding, that were in possession of their fathers and mothers.

I said in our Mutual Improvement General Board meeting the other night, when there was a little discussion regarding testimony, that I heard one of our bright, well-educated young missionaries say that he had attended one of our Church schools for four years until he graduated from that school, and then attended the Brigham Young University for four years until he graduated from that institution of learning, and he made this wonderful statement: "I have come to understand my relationship toward my Father in heaven, the nature and importance of the Priesthood of Almighty God that has been conferred upon me, and the duty I owe to my fellowmen, better in the three

months that I have been laboring here as a missionary than during all those years when I was attending school and taking regular theological lessons." Then he added: "And I had good teachers, too."

I hope there will not be any thought in the mind of any educator who may be in this great congregation, that I do not entertain a proper appreciation for education. I would to God that I had more education myself. I am proud of the men in our midst who have passed through great institutions of learning in our own land and in other lands, and who have had conferred upon them degrees of honor, because of their educational attainments, and yet I do hold that in giving actual service in the preaching of the gospel, in coming in contact with individuals who question one in relation to the principles that have been revealed of God, there comes by the power of God, and the inspiration and revelation of the Spirit of the Lord, an understanding regarding the purposes of God, the greatness and power and necessity of his work, that cannot be obtained from books, and that cannot be put into the hearts of men by teachers, let them labor ever so well and faithfully. I do not understand that there is any way of coming to a comprehension of the purposes of God other than by having the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord. If we come to understand the truth, as one of the old apostles taught, it must be by the revelation of God. So taught the apostle Paul to the Galatians. There is no other way.

I am greatly comforted when I hear testimonies such as I have referred to; and missionaries bear many such testimonies. I heard one of our college-bred men, Elder Louis E. Rowe, who is at present in charge of the Sunday school and Mutual Improvement work in the California mission, make the statement not long ago that he would not exchange the information and understanding that had come into his soul as a result of his missionary labors for all the college training that he had ever received, or ever expected to receive. With, I hope, a due appreciation for the declaration that came from the Prophet Joseph Smith that, "The glory of God is intelligence," I myself entertain the thought that there does come by the power of God and by the mysterious revelation of the holy Spirit, a knowledge, concerning the purposes of Almighty God that is superior to anything that any man living has ever obtained or ever will obtain while the world stands, from any institution of learning.

Our Father in heaven has established this work. Men in the world do not believe it. We have been sent out to bear testimony that God has set his hand to accomplish a marvelous work and a wonder. Yesterday when I looked over this great congregation I wondered what can be in the minds of men and women not of our faith when they come into this tabernacle and see it crowded to its utmost capacity with Latter-day Saint men. Latter-day Saint congregations are not made up chiefly of women, as is the case in many of the churches of the

world. Our meetings are crowded with men, men of hard sense, men who know something about the battle of life; yet they leave their affairs and come from long distances that they may be in this general conference.

As I looked over the tremendous gathering yesterday morning there came into my mind the promise that was made by one of the prophets, Isaiah, when he said:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Another prophet, Jeremiah, made this declaration:

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."

I have had some experience as a missionary in many of the nations of the world. In my missionary work I have been brought in contact with many thousands of Latter-day Saints who have been converted to the truth of the great message that missionaries are attempting to deliver to the peoples of the earth, and I know that they have not come up to Zion for gold or for silver or for perishable things.

I call to mind, now, that many years ago, when I was a boy missionary in Scotland, in conversation with a good sister in that country she made this statement to me: "I would to God that the way might be opened up that I might go to Zion with my children. It would not matter to me," said that good mother, "though I was sure to lay down my life on the journey, if I could only have in my soul the knowledge that my children would be taken to the land of Zion, and that they would be brought up under the care and teaching of the servants of God." I know that men and women who have gathered from afar, to this land, designated by the Lord our God for the gathering of his people, are actually fulfilling the promise that was made by the holy prophets, that they are coming to the land of Zion with the thought uppermost in their minds, that they may learn more perfectly of the ways of God; that they may receive more completely of the blessings that our Father in heaven has to give to his servants and his handmaidens who are willing to keep his commandments.

I would like to ask the strangers who are present in this congregation: Where else in all the world can a people be found who have been gathered from all nations like this people, or where else among the religions of the world can teachers be found who believe in the promises of the prophets such as I have mentioned? Men at

large are not looking for any such fulfilment of the promises of God. The Latter-day Saints alone teach and believe in such promises as are made by Isaiah, Jeremiah and other prophets pertaining to the last days.

I rejoice in my ministry, my brethren and sisters. I can not conceive of any line of employment, that any human being can have, more desirable or that produces greater joy in the human heart than that which is found by men and women who are engaged in calling repentance to the inhabitants of the earth and in teaching to them the precious truths that have been revealed for the salvation of the human family. I feel grateful to my brethren of the presiding authorities of the Church for the opportunities they have given me to labor in the ministry, to labor at the present time in the great state of California. I feel grateful to them for the kind words they have spoken to me, for the encouragement they have given me and my companions, and I have a strong desire in my soul to perform the duties that rest upon me to the best of my ability, and to be found always crying repentance among the people and bearing witness to the truth as it has been revealed. It is true there are not any great numbers that pay attention to the testimony borne by the missionaries. In the California mission, during the year just passed away, there were about seven hundred sixty baptisms. A large number of these baptisms were the children of Latter-day Saints who reside within the confines of the mission, but we rejoice when we take into consideration the declaration of our Father in heaven that if one labors for a life time and saves but one soul, how great will be his joy with that soul in the kingdom of God. Then if we put that measure of importance and value upon the souls of men, wonderful things are following the ministry of these missionaries, not only in California, but in all the missions throughout the world, for I take it that few as the baptisms may be, they are far in excess of one soul to each man and woman who has been called to labor as a missionary.

Then there is another great responsibility that rests upon the missionaries. It is not to be gauged by the number of souls that we lead down into the waters of baptism. It has always been the decree of God and his manner of working with the inhabitants of the earth, to send forth his servants to warn mankind and bear witness concerning the judgments of the Almighty that are to overtake the inhabitants of the earth, and those judgments have not ceased, as the Lord God liveth. All that he has promised by the mouths of his holy prophets in due time shall be brought to pass; and upon the shoulders of these men who have been called to labor as missionaries there rests a responsibility to warn the people and testify as widely as possible that the heavens have been opened, that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ have come to earth, that holy angels have been sent by the command and appointment of God, and these holy messengers have

conferred upon the heads of mortal men authority of the holy Priesthood, the power to speak legally in the name of God. That authority is here, it is with the missionaries; they feel it. No wonder they say there has come to them a knowledge and comprehension concerning the purposes of God which they have never been able to obtain in institutions of learning, but they found it by revelation in the service of God.

I bear witness to this truth. I rejoice in it. I know that God lives, I know that Joseph Smith, the man chosen to introduce this great work of the latter days, was called and ordained to the authority of the Priesthood by the commandment of Almighty God. The Lord's Spirit has so testified to me and, whether my fellowman entertains the thought that I am radical or otherwise, God being my witness, I know that this is his work, and that it cannot be destroyed. It has been planted to remain. That is the promise of God. Overturn it if you can! Amen.

ELDER SYLVESTER Q. CANNON

Presiding Bishop of the Church

I rejoice with you, my brethren and sisters, in the testimonies that have been borne, and the instructions given in this great conference. I realize that all of you who have come together have come for the purpose of receiving the word of the Lord and instruction from his servants, and I, with you, have listened with great interest and appreciation to the instructions that have been given to us by the Presidency and those of the authorities who have already spoken. I desire to live in accordance with these instructions, and, so far as I have power, to help with you, to carry them out in our lives for the advancement of this great work in which we are engaged. I appreciate the fact that in endeavoring to speak to you this morning I am under a great responsibility, and that unless I can enjoy the influence of the Spirit of the Lord and your confidence and attention, I shall not be able to speak in such a way as shall be edifying and profitable to you who are present.

I have rejoiced greatly, and have been delighted with the opportunity that has come to me to visit in the various stakes of Zion. It has been a joy to attend the conferences that have been held, and to partake of the fine spirit that is manifest among the presidencies of stakes, the bishoprics of wards, and the sisters—the women who are engaged in the various activities which are common to them in the various stakes of Zion—and to feel the spirit generally that is manifested in these stakes. I have been edified, strengthened and encouraged in the appreciation of the fine manhood and womanhood that is in evidence among the officers and members throughout the Church.

I rejoice in the fact that this Church will have been organized ninety-six years tomorrow. I have been led to reflect upon some