

ELDER JOSEPH W. McMURRIN

Of the First Council of Seventy, and President of the California Mission

I feel, my brethren and sisters, that this is a very wonderful privilege that has come to me, and as has already been said by a previous speaker, a tremendous responsibility. I sincerely trust that the Lord's good Spirit, that influence that has been manifested through the proceedings of this conference thus far, may be with me in the few moments that I occupy.

My thoughts naturally dwell upon matters pertaining to missionary work, as my responsibility is in the mission field. I have had a rather unusual and remarkable experience, I feel, while laboring in California. My appointment to that field of labor took place just a little prior to a period of depression in a business way in the states of Utah and Idaho and in other sections, while in California there was a great degree of business activity. Great buildings were being erected, thousands of homes were being built, and new divisions in the great city were being opened up. Men who were out of employment were attracted from many other states and came to California hunting for work. In the days that I have in mind they were quite generally successful in finding employment, and in turn they communicated with their friends and relatives. The result has been a great influx of Latter-day Saints into the state of California.

When I took up my missionary work we had on the records of the California mission about four thousand souls. At the present time we have over ten thousand souls, and there has been taken from the mission some twelve or fifteen thousand members who are in the three stakes that have been organized in California. So our responsibility and our labors to a considerable degree have been to look after these Latter-day Saints who have come there in such large numbers, and it has been necessary to organize fifty, sixty, or seventy branches of the Church. Of course thirty or possibly more of those organizations are now in the stakes that have been established in Los Angeles and San Francisco. But there are people still coming to California. Many of them are disappointed when they arrive, for the reason that opportunities for employment are not as they have been in times gone by: and there are a good many idle men who are anxious to work but who cannot find employment.

This great influx of people has made it necessary to do a large amount of building, and building operations have been made possible by the generous attitude of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I suppose that some of the people do not know that from the funds of the Church liberal contributions are made for the erection of chapel buildings, not only in the stakes of Zion but throughout the missions of the world. We have usually received from the First Presidency from the general funds of the Church at least fifty per cent of the cost of the chapel buildings that have been erected in the

California mission, and this fifty per cent, speaking roughly, is sufficient to buy the material that goes into the buildings. The result has been that many buildings have been erected, probably thirty chapels, representing a value of six or seven hundred thousand dollars. Nine of those buildings were commenced during the past year and will be occupied, all of them, during the present year.

The people have operated to a considerable extent in the same manner that this sort of thing was done in pioneer days. Aside from the assistance to which I have referred, the people who make up the branches have given of their skill, (and many of them are mechanics), and they have labored faithfully to build these buildings; sometimes going after the regular day's work was over and working four or five hours, away into the night, that they might have places in which to worship the Lord our God.

We have had wonderful assistance from the missionaries who have been sent to us. I have looked into the faces of stake presidents—Brother Chipman, formerly president of the Alpine stake, Thomas Clark Callister of the Millard stake, President Wayne H. Redd of the San Juan stake,—they have all been in California. President Miles L. Jones, who has now been called to preside over one of the missions in America, and other men, some of them members of stake presidencies, have been with us in California. One of these men said to me yesterday, when I invited him to come again to California: "O, Brother Joseph, I could never again have such a joyful time as I had while I was with you in California." But I am sure he could have just as joyful a time again.

I have been wondering, as I have looked into the faces of these splendid men who are here in this congregation, how these stake presidents came to receive these missionary appointments? My understanding is that they offered their services in response to the call made by the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I understand that there has been a suggestion made by the Presidency that short-term missionaries may in some cases come from the ranks of stake presidents, from the ranks of bishops, and from high councils in the various stakes of Zion. I am sure that these men whom I have named and other men whom I could name, have accomplished a marvelous work in the California mission. I very much doubt if they realize how great has been their ministry and how wonderful their influence. Some of these men when they got into this labor became tremendously interested, so much so that when the usual period of a short-term mission of six months had passed by they did not want to return home and they doubled the period. We have had short-term missionaries who have actually suggested, when it was necessary for them to return, that they be not released. They had the spirit of this work upon them, they felt its importance, and in some instances we have left their names upon the record, and they have come back and have again taken up the work of preaching the Gospel, all at their own expense. Surely God's work is great and marvelous.

We find occasionally new evidences coming to our attention to

strengthen us in the work of God. I would like to read an item that has had a remarkable bearing upon my own feelings in regard to the wonder of the works of the latter days. This clipping is from the *Los Angeles Examiner*, I think of July, 1927. It says:

"Dr. Robert A. Millikan, head of the California Institute of Technology, at Pasadena, yesterday made some startling statements, showing that the question of the existence and traits of these cosmic rays may be considered as scientifically determined, together with the fact that about one-tenth of the energy in the heat and light given forth by our sun and stars is returned from space by these rays. This was of such a striking nature, it opened such perspectives to the imagination and vision of the astronomical and physical features of the universe that the reporter persuaded Dr. Millikan himself to write just his thought, and the doctor wrote: 'It is a legitimate speculation, that since we now have evidence that the sun and stars are actually radiating away their masses in the form of heat and light, somewhere in the universe the reverse of that process is going on, and light and heat are condensing back again into ordinary matter, new stars thus being in the process of forming as old ones disappear.'

"Coming from the one whom many learned men consider the foremost physicist of the world, these statements carry immense weight and portend future research endeavors of a phase new to science and new to all the world."

And then, listen, my brethren and sisters, to this quotation from the Pearl of Great Price, the Book of Moses, as given in vision and translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

"And it came to pass that Moses spake unto the Lord, saying: Be merciful unto thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

"And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words."

The great scientist, or the commentator on his words, declared that the forming of new planets as suggested was new to science and new to all the world; and yet the great prophet of the latter times, not a scientist, made declaration through this vision that the very doctrine that is dawning upon the minds of men was revealed by the Lord God of heaven. Praise to his name!

I hope that we will take the admonitions that have been given, and that our testimonies will hold us secure in the work of God, no matter what information may be presented that may be difficult for us to explain. May God help us to be true to our testimonies and to his cause for ever and ever, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

An anthem, "Let the mountains shout for joy," was sung by a quartet consisting of Hyrum Christiansen, Pearl K. Davis, James N. Astin, and Jessie Williams, with the choir.

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Anchor C. Schow, President of the Lehi Stake.

Conference adjourned until 2:00 p. m.