

President George Albert Smith:

We have just listened to President David O. McKay of the First Presidency, who will now be followed by Elder Alma Sonne, one of the Assistants to the Twelve. Elder Sonne will leave immediately after the conclusion of our Conference work here to go to England to preside over the European Mission. I suggest, my brethren and sisters, that he will carry a message from this Conference to many of your loved ones on the other side of the great ocean.

ELDER ALMA SONNE*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

Brothers and sisters: We have just listened to a great sermon, a sermon of precious truths. I hope and pray that during the few moments I stand here I may be prompted and directed by the good Spirit, for I desire to bear my testimony and to make acknowledgment of the rich spiritual heritage which is mine, and which I know is yours, because of our membership in the Church.

CONVICTION NECESSARY TO ACTION

The other day there came to my office a man to dissuade me, and to discourage me from accepting the call to the mission field. It was the same line of argument which I had heard thirty-five years ago. "Why must you go?" he asked. "Isn't the soul at home as precious to save as the soul in Europe?" he asked. I answered him very briefly. "I suppose," I said, "it's a matter of conviction." And then he replied, "It is very important what we believe."

I knew this man; I knew his background; I knew his family. I remember that from his youth he had walked in a road that led away from the Church. I recall his old grandfather, a pioneer. As a boy I had heard his testimony. He had seen the Prophet. He had heard him speak. This veteran came to Nauvoo when mobocracy and persecution were rampant. He later left his home and his little farm and cast his lot with the persecuted and driven people, driven across the prairie to the Rocky Mountains. Why did he do it? Because he had conviction!

A TESTIMONY OF THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

When I was a young man, feeling my way cautiously and thoughtfully, and I hope, prayerfully, I asked my father, "Why did you join the Church?" The question came to him as a challenge. He hesitated for a moment and then replied, "Because I read the Book of Mormon." He had come to America, not for the gospel's sake, but because he believed America was a land of opportunity, in which a person could make headway if he worked and saved and struggled toward an end. And then someone handed him a Book of Mormon. "Read it," he was

urged. He read a chapter or two every night, before retiring, until the book was read from cover to cover. He put it aside, not particularly impressed. Then one day as he was working in the field a thought came to him: "That book is God-given. Joseph Smith never wrote that book." And then he came to a logical conclusion: "If that book is a revelation, then 'Mormonism' is true, and the gospel and the priesthood are upon the earth." Then he sought out the bishop of the ward in which he was residing, and asked to be baptized a member of the Church.

A MOTHER'S FAITHFULNESS

I recall now that my mother, when she was not yet in her 'teens, walked across the prairie from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Cache valley, Utah, behind a yoke of oxen and a covered wagon; she, and her parents, trudged along over the dusty and sun-baked plains, until they reached the "valleys of the mountains." The first year was spent in a dugout; they endured hardships and privations. Why? Because a humble missionary had brought the gospel to their home and explained it to them in such a way that they could understand it. So it seems to me that we all have such a heritage. I am thankful for it.

PREPARATION FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL

We have been talking about America, the land of the free. There is an old American motto which is inscribed on our coins. It reads, "In God we trust." I am convinced if freedom in America, and elsewhere, is to be preserved, we must return to God. Indeed, I believe that years before the gospel was restored, preparations were made for its restoration. It was no accident that Christopher Columbus reached the shores of San Salvador in three flimsy vessels. It was no accident that the invincible armada of King Phillip of Spain was scattered by a storm which arose at an opportune moment on the high seas. It was no accident that a few drops of water, more or less, as Victor Hugo said, fell on the battlefield of Waterloo and brought about the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. It was no accident that thirteen loose, unorganized colonies on the Atlantic seaboard, without money, without credit, without a navy, without an army, were victorious in the Revolutionary War. It was no accident that the profound and great political truth set forth in the Declaration of Independence found expression through the pen of Thomas Jefferson. Why? Because he was inspired, and freedom of worship was an essential part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May God help us to appreciate the blessings which are ours. May he preserve our land and our nation in these crucial days, that America may live and freedom may go out to all the world, so the gospel of the kingdom can be preached without fear or favor to the nations everywhere, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.