

I was satisfied they would be well represented in this group. When I think of the way we have been multiplied in this country and that those whom I have just referred to are the descendants of the first company of 143 men, 3 women and 2 children who came into these valleys, I marvel at what the Lord has done.

ELDER THOMAS E. MCKAY

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

President Smith, counselors, my brethren and sisters, I was impressed by the opening prayer of this session and especially by the inspirational music furnished by the Brigham Young University chorus, and also by the two very timely and appropriate sermons to which we have listened.

I have missed at this conference my brother and colleague, Elder Alma Sonne, now president of the European Mission, and I hope, brethren and sisters, that you will not forget him, that you will pray for him and those presidents who are working with him. He needs our prayers. He is a great leader and is the right man in the right place.

AN OUTSTANDING STAKE CONFERENCE

Last Saturday and Sunday, March 29 and 30, I had the privilege of attending the Los Angeles Stake quarterly conference. In some respects it was outstanding. They had 47½ percent of the priesthood at their nine o'clock session. Fifty-nine percent of the ward teachers were there. It had been previously announced that a roll would be called of the wards at one of the general sessions; the night session, when the roll was called, showed the largest attendance ever held in the evening—twenty-five percent of the entire membership was there. They have had larger numbers in their 10:30 a.m. sessions. One of the wards had forty-eight percent of its membership at that evening session. I asked one bishop how he did it. He said the ward teachers deserved most of the credit. He has them organized, not more than five families to each pair of teachers. During the month of March in their visits, the junior member who is, as a rule, a priest or an ordained teacher, extended a special invitation from the bishop for all to attend this conference. He took the names of those who needed transportation and furnished these names to the chairman of the adult Aaronic Priesthood transportation committee. This junior member also checked at the conference to see who of their members were there, and those who were not, and at the next visit he will have something to talk about, praising those who were there and telling those who were not what they had missed. This procedure, I understand, is followed also at the ward conferences and the sacrament and the priesthood meetings. The teachers keep track of the members of the families under their supervision who are absent, especially those in the service of their country. They know

those who are unemployed and are having other difficulties and report them to the bishop. I recommend this method to all bishops. I am sure that many of your problems would be simplified and you would not be so overworked as many of you are now, if you would use your ward teachers as the Lord intended that they should be used, to watch over the Church always.

CONVERSION OF PARENTS BY MISSIONARIES

Another feature of this conference that appealed to me very much was the large number of nonmembers, friends and investigators of the stake missionaries in attendance. After the two general sessions, some of the missionaries brought quite a number of these nonmembers to the front, and I had the privilege of shaking hands and talking with them. One young man was especially interested in missionary work. He had traveled quite extensively. Two of the members of the presidency especially are very close friends of mine, and they had been a little extravagant in telling these nonmembers of the number of missions that I have spent in Europe, and this young man said, "You certainly have devoted quite a number of years of your life to the Church, and I am sure it has cost a tidy sum of money." I said, "Yes, but when I think of the wonderful home life in these beautiful valleys of the mountains, and contrast conditions here with conditions in Europe, I am still in debt, yes, very much in debt to the Lord." I told him of the missionary system of our Church, how from the beginning we have sent missionaries into all the world as the Savior did when he was here in person; how two of these missionaries away up in the highlands of Scotland found my father as a young man and his parents; how two others in Wales called at the home of my mother, then a small girl, and her parents; how both families joined the Church about the same time, crossed the ocean, the same year, but in different vessels; how they spent a few months in the East preparing for their thousand mile trek across the plains with oxen and covered wagons; how they crossed these plains the same year but in different companies; how they arrived in the Salt Lake valley and counseled with some of the leaders and decided to go north, perhaps as far as Cache valley, but when they arrived in Ogden at the junction of the Weber and Ogden rivers and saw those large cottonwood trees that looked so beautiful and inviting, both families decided to make their new homes in Ogden; and there it was that my father saw my mother for the first time, sitting on the tongue of her covered wagon, and his face would always beam when he would add, "and I never forgot her."

HIS FATHER'S CALL AS A MISSIONARY

They waited until she was in her seventeenth year before they married. They went up through scenic Ogden canyon, settled in Ogden valley, one of the beauty spots of the world, and built to-

gether their new home in Huntsville. It was here that ten children were born to that beautiful black-eyed, stately, now angel mother. When they had five children, that dread disease, diphtheria, spread through the valley and the surrounding towns. In those days these contagious diseases were real plagues. More than twenty young people died in Huntsville alone that winter; among them our two eldest sisters, Margaret, eleven, and Lena, nine. They died within a few days of each other and were buried in the same grave. They had been such a comfort and help to Mother, that Father, who was always so considerate of her well-being, grieved over their loss even more than Mother; he found it difficult to adjust himself. It was just a few weeks after this tragedy that he received his call to go on a mission. He would go, of course. No other thought entered his mind, but to go now and leave my mother in her delicate condition with three small children, seven, five, and three years old, seemed impossible. He decided after worrying about this matter for a few days to ask for a year's postponement. When he told Mother what he intended to do, she appreciated of course that it was out of consideration for her that he didn't want to leave home then. But her black eyes sparkled as she said kindly, but firmly, "David" the Lord wants you now, not a year from now, and he can take care of me just as well when you're in Scotland as he can if you are at my bedside. You go now."

They had excavated in the fall preparatory to building an addition to their home in the spring. That, of course, would have to wait. My father remembered too, that he had not paid his tithing on his wheat. He generally paid his tithing on his grain when he threshed, but for some reason, a shortage of sacks, I think, he had not paid his tithing on his wheat, so he decided to go to the granary and arrange for it. With the first bucketful of wheat that he dipped, he struck the floor of the bin. He was shocked! He thought, "If I pay my tithing, my family will not have sufficient wheat for spring seeding and for flour until the next harvest." The thought started to enter his mind, "I'll wait and have them pay my tithing in the fall for both years." He recognized where that thought came from, so he poured that wheat into the sacks in a hurry and paid a little more than he was owing.

He left on April 19 for his mission. On the twenty-ninth my sister Anne was born. You understand now why it was so difficult for him to leave just at that time. While he was on this mission, we were blessed, and Mother had managed very well. When he returned, she very gently, and I think proudly, placed a beautiful baby in his arms, a baby now over two years old, which he had never seen. The addition to the house as previously planned had also been erected without letting him know anything about it. It was a wonderful home-coming.

THE VALUE OF MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE

Many other incidents which I could relate if I had the time would illustrate that a missionary in the field is a good investment. Moreover, to the missionary the experience is invaluable: travel is itself educational; the missionary has the opportunity to meet all kinds of people, at times the opportunity presents itself to visit other churches, cathedrals, museums, art galleries, and oftentimes to attend operas and theaters. Add to these broadening influences the educational background found in all "Mormon" communities, we soon learn the reason why two leading educators were able, in a recently published book, to classify Utah as highest in all-around educational performance among all the states. They divided the states into five classifications: highest, high, medium, low, and lowest. Among the ten highest Utah ranked first.

Yes, this is a missionary Church, brothers and sisters. We have always had missionaries. We kept out about two thousand until the war and then, of course, our missionaries were called home. Six hundred ninety-nine of them were evacuated from the European missions alone; but our servicemen and women—God bless them—more than compensated for that return. Nearly all of them have been missionaries, preaching the gospel by their example of clean living, and then since the war, the First Presidency have called on an average of about three hundred a month. Now, as we were told yesterday by Brother Anderson in the statistical report, we have over three thousand two hundred missionaries in the field, a thousand more than the Church has ever had before. And then, too, we have about that same number of stake missionaries, and also hundreds of local missionaries called in the missions themselves. Yes, we are all missionaries. I wish we would adopt the motto that we had in the mission field, "Every member a missionary." We can't all go into the mission field, but oh, brethren and sisters, we can all preach the gospel *by our example*.

May the Lord help us and bless us with faith and sufficient will power that we may live so that it will be said of us, not only that we believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, but also that we are honest, we are true, we are chaste, we are benevolent, we are virtuous, and that we do love our neighbor as ourselves, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Brigham Young University Mixed Chorus and the congregation sang: "Praise to the Man Who Communed with Jehovah," by Phelps; Hymn Book No. 282, L.D.S. Hymns No. 167.

ELDER JOHN A. WIDTSOE

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My brethren and sisters, this vast congregation, crowding and overcrowding the capacity of the Tabernacle, seems to me to be a