

## ELDER ALMA SONNE

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**M**Y BRETHREN and sisters, I come to this responsibility with a prayer in my heart that the good spirit which has been present in this session and in the other sessions may continue with us.

Last night, as I sat in the audience at the missionary meeting, it occurred to me that the Church as a whole, and the members individually, have always been true to their missionary responsibility. It also occurred to me that those who participated in it, faithfully, have been abundantly blessed. God has prospered his work in the earth. And I rejoice with you in its success.

A few years ago I talked to a business executive who has since reached the pinnacle in his business organization. He told me of making an application for work years ago in this organization. After a conversation with one of the officials, he was told that, inasmuch as he did not have a college education, the place was not available to him. But the young man explained that he had been on a mission for the Latter-day Saint Church, and the official turned to him and said, "Well, I regard a mission for the Mormon Church equivalent to a college education." That man has risen to prominence, not only in his business organization, but also in the world. Surely, those who engage in this missionary work receive blessings which qualify them for their daily activities.

Elder Orson F. Whitney, on one occasion, told about his ambition to become an actor. But his poverty stood in the way of its realization. Finally, his mother, sympathetic with his dreams and desire, told him to sell some of her city lots here in Salt Lake City and use the proceeds for his education. But no sale materialized. Then something happened which revolutionized the plan and the entire life of Elder Whitney. He became a missionary. His former dreams vanished. Speaking of that first

mission which he fulfilled with such credit, he later wrote:

I know now that I had a testimony, a deep conviction of the truth, but it was latent, undeveloped, like a gold mine in the depths of the earth. Something had to occur to bring it out. That something was my mission. It bored a tunnel, sank a shaft, and brought the precious ore to the surface.

Thousands among our brethren and sisters could give a similar testimony. Orson F. Whitney did not become a professional actor. His love for the footlights disappeared. Upon his return from the missionary field, he became a defender of the faith, an expounder of the scriptures. He became a bishop, an Apostle, a recognized orator and poet, a writer of history, a law-maker, and a mission president. All of his natural endowments came into full play. His field broadened, and his gifts and powers were exercised to build faith in the hearts of his fellow men, and to proclaim the gospel of salvation at home and abroad. Like Abraham of old, Orson F. Whitney was chosen before he was born. You and I are the beneficiaries of his stupendous work, his boundless achievements, and his richly endowed life.

Most of us, I dare say, have read Elder Widtsoe's little book, *In The Gospel Net*. It is the story of a great conversion, for in it, Brother Widtsoe tells how his mother became a member of the Church. I have often thought of that humble shoemaker whom he describes and who was presenting the gospel to the people who came to his shop; his soul was full of love for his fellow men. And as a result, the entire Church has been blessed. Who will estimate the far-reaching results of his efforts, and who will estimate the extent of the contribution made by Elder John A. Widtsoe, whose books and pamphlets, Church works, and expositions on agri-

culture, which are numerous and scholarly, have been and are being read extensively, at home and abroad! His powerful messages have broken down many prejudices and opened the door to many investigators. These humble beginnings have a way of growing and expanding into mighty movements and great accomplishments.

I have before me the report rendered to the Church by President Brigham Young after the completion of his first mission over in England in 1840. Said President Young:

We landed in the spring of 1840, as strangers in a strange land, and penniless, but through the mercy of God we have gained many friends, established churches in almost every noted town and city in the kingdom of Great Britain, baptized between seven and eight thousand souls, printed five thousand Books of Mormon, three thousand hymnbooks, twenty-five hundred volumes of the *Millennial Star*, and six thousand tracts, and emigrated to Zion one thousand souls, established a permanent shipping agency, which will be a great blessing to the Saints and have left sown in the hearts of many thousands the seed of eternal truth, which will bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God, and yet we have lacked nothing to eat, drink, or wear; in all these things acknowledge the hands of God. (*Millennial Star* 26:7.)

What I have read covers one year of missionary activity by a handful of missionaries. I marvel at the achievement. I glory in their success. Without God's help they could not have done it.

May I say that the Church, as we have it today, is a product of the missionary system, begun six months after its organization. The Book of Mormon, the Articles of Faith, the revelations to the Prophet and the fundamental, philosophical teachings have survived a century of relentless opposition, criticism, and investigation. No changes, no apologies, no retractions have been necessary. The Church is like a rock in the storm-tossed seas, like a beaten anvil, immovable. Its foundation is firm and deep. It cannot be uprooted. Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God. We are here, you and I, because of his

prophetic vision. Some of his contemporaries marked the great west as a land of desolation, forbidding and uninhabitable. Daniel Webster saw only a vast, worthless area, with its savages and wild beasts, deserts of shifting sands, cacti and prairie dogs, and a three-thousand-mile coast line without a harbor in it.

What did Joseph Smith see? He saw homes for a mighty people, the Latter-day Saints, where the Saints of God would make settlements and build cities. The wisdom of God, brethren and sisters, is greater than the wisdom of man.

May we appreciate it, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### President David O. McKay:

Will the presidencies of the temples please meet in the Salt Lake Temple, fourth floor, tomorrow afternoon at 4:30 o'clock. President Young of the Temple will please see that the west door is open.

The Tabernacle Choir Chorus will now sing, "Abide With Me," conducted by J. Spencer Cornwall.

We wish to commend the congregation today and in previous sessions, for their orderly and reverential attitude during our hours of worship.

The closing prayer will be offered by Elder Francis W. Brown, formerly president of the Central States Mission. After the prayer this conference will stand adjourned until seven o'clock this evening, when, in accordance with the practice of the Church, the general meeting of the Priesthood of the Church will be held. Only those holding the priesthood are invited to be present. Persons not holding the priesthood will kindly refrain from attempting to enter the building. That session will not be broadcast. Overflow meetings, however, will be held in the Assembly Hall and Barratt Hall; at both places, we are informed, there will be television.

The session at ten o'clock Sunday morning will be broadcast over Station KSL, and by arrangement through KSL