

## ELDER ALMA SONNE

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**M**Y BRETHREN AND SISTERS, I want to join with President McKay in expressing appreciation for the very fine singing to which we have listened today. I have often thought that we take for granted the singing and the uplift which come to us from our choirs, and yet we know that singing is an essential part of worship and that we can get nearer to God when we hear these songs of Zion than we can in any other way. I wish all of you could have heard the two choirs who rendered the music in the Oahu (Hawaii) Stake of Zion a week ago last Sunday—one in the morning and one in the evening service. Everyone present was thrilled as the choirs sang their selections. I have heard choirs sing in all parts of the world, and I am here to testify that our choirs and other musical groups are improving every year, and I sincerely hope that this improvement will continue throughout the Church in the various stakes, wards, and missions. For one, I thank the leaders for their devotion and for the effort they put forth to instruct our singers.

I want to say a word about the testimony which comes to each one of us who is active in the Church. A testimony is a precious gift from God. I have often said that the testimony we possess, you and I, is in reality the strength of the Church.

Not very long ago, a man who was investigating the Church and its doctrines came to me with this statement, "I have discovered the genius of Mormonism."

I was interested, of course, and said to him, "What is it, pray?"

He answered, "It is your machinery for doing religious work." Seeing I was not particularly impressed, he turned to me and said, "You don't believe it, do you?"

"No, I don't believe it," I replied, and without further comment he left.

Several weeks passed before the man

returned. This time his spirit and attitude were altogether different. Upon entering my office he said, "I have read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover."

"Well, brother, what's the verdict?" I asked.

To my surprise and amazement he replied, "It is true."

"Do you mean to say you believe the Book of Mormon is true?"

"Indeed, I do," he replied, "and I believe Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and I believe you Mormons," as he called us, "have the restored gospel of Jesus Christ."

Of course, I was very happy. But I asked him another question: "Do you still believe that the genius of Mormonism is its superb organization?"

He answered, "No, never. There is something back of that organization or it would not function." He further said, "The thing that is back of it is the individual testimony of all the Mormons."

I am sure he analyzed the situation correctly, for he proceeded to tell me, "If it had not been for the well-founded faith of the Pioneers, they would never have made the trek across the prairies to the Rocky Mountains." He further said, "If it were not for these convictions, your missionary system would collapse, and soon you would have no missionaries to send into the world. Your fiscal system would crumble similarly, for people don't pay tithing unless they have a testimony."

So I believe it is our paramount duty today and always to safeguard our testimonies and to live so that we will never lose them. That may seem like a big order, but I am sure it is God's will. May he help us to appreciate our responsibilities in this respect and may he help us to safeguard our God-given testimonies.

I recall that Jesus, when he talked

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to Nicodemus, bore his testimony when he said,

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? (John 3:11-12.)

The testimony which Peter gave to the Savior will live as long as men and women believe in God. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and the Savior's answer will similarly live, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (See Matt. 16:16-17.) There, my brethren and sisters, you have the very keystone, the source and explanation of the testimonies which are the strength of the Church.

"... I know whom I have believed," (II Tim. 1:12) said Paul, the Apostle, after a long life of trial and persecution. Paul knew, for he had lived in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And finally, said Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon,

... he lives!

For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father. (D. & C. 76:22-23.)

There is no argument against testimonies like these, my brethren and sisters. May we be blessed abundantly in our endeavors to serve the Lord and preserve in our lives the truths of the restored gospel, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### ELDER MARION G. ROMNEY

#### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

**M**Y BELOVED brethren and sisters and friends: I have in my pocket a wonderful talk, one I have been three months preparing. I find it necessary, however, to deprive you of the great pleasure of hearing it at this time because it has already been given. President McKay gave half of it, and Bishop Wirthlin and Brother Lee used most of my scriptures. I am very happy, however, to be in harmony with them.

I pray the Lord to be with me now while I address myself to another subject, one that has been going through my mind this afternoon. I need your prayers and want you to think these few remarks through with me.

The subject to which I refer is the atonement of the Savior, and surely there could be no more appropriate theme upon which this meeting could close. The atonement of the Master is the central point of world history. Without it, the whole purpose for the creation of earth and our living upon it would fail.

From the scriptures, we learn that

from the very beginning of the world, there has been among the Lord's people those who have understood the gospel, a ceremony pointing to the atonement of the Redeemer. When Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, the Lord told them to build an altar and offer sacrifice. This they did, and they did it without knowing the reason therefor. I wish every one of Adam's posterity had the faith of their first earthly father, the faith to do what the Lord tells him to do without first having to have an explanation as to why he should do it. But to continue with our theme:

And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. (Moses 5:6-7.)

The angel told Adam other things—some of them Brother Lee talked about.