

## CHURCH OF THE AIR

Columbia Broadcasting System's *Church of the Air* was presented at 7:30 a.m., Sunday, October 7, 1956. The program was as follows:

The Tabernacle Choir, under the direction of J. Spencer Cornwall, furnished the music for this service with Alexander Schreiner at the organ. Richard L. Evans was the announcer.

Music: Organ and humming choir: "Sweet Is the Work."

*Announcer:* The *Church of the Air* is presented by CBS Radio so that clergymen of many faiths may speak to a nationwide congregation. Today's service, in connection with the Semi-annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, comes to you transcribed from the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square, through the facilities of Station KSL in Salt Lake City, Utah. Our speaker is Elder Alma Sonne, business and civic leader, and Assistant to the

Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church. Music is by the Tabernacle Choir directed by J. Spencer Cornwall, with Alexander Schreiner at the organ.

The Tabernacle Choir opens this *Church of the Air* service with F. Flaxington Harker's setting for a beloved and comforting Old Testament text: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace . . . that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

(The Choir sang: "How Beautiful Upon the Mountains."—Harker.)

*Announcer:* We shall now hear on this *Church of the Air* Service Elder Alma Sonne, business and civic leader and Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, frequently referred to as the Mormon Church. Elder Sonne has titled today's talk: "Faith, the Bedrock of Life."

### ELDER ALMA SONNE

#### *Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I AM AWARE that Christianity does not mean the same to all people. There are many beliefs, many interpretations, numerous conflicts and much discussion on matters pertaining to religion. I do believe, however, that the best people in our country are interested in preserving spirituality in America. No nation can grow permanently great without God. History has so proven. The foundation of spirituality is faith in the true and living God. Without such faith man is forever in the shadows, for he has lost his greatest incentive to right living.

One hopeful feature of the modern times in which we live is a return to the Bible. From beginning to end this sacred volume is a message of faith. It is a powerful testimony of the existence of God, and the divine mission of Jesus Christ. Its religious significance is recognized in all Christian countries. History proves that the Holy Bible has irrevocably altered the lives of men and nations. It has touched deeply the very heart of

humanity, its influence has reached into the literature of the world and its passages have been quoted by preachers and laymen alike.

I believe that Biblical research and intensive study of the sacred writing will some day contribute much to the intelligent use of the Bible. Scholarship and honest investigation will eventually remove all doubt respecting its divine authenticity, its trust-worthiness and reliability as a guide to human progress.

It is natural for most men to turn to the past for proved wisdom. The Bible contains the wisdom of the ages and the demonstrations of God's power to uplift the human family. From its pages come a transcendent comfort and a deeper sense of life's purposes. I refer to its teachings with the utmost confidence. "Search the scriptures," said Jesus, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39.)

The greatest advocate and teacher of faith in God is Jesus Christ. During his

ministry he demonstrated its power. He taught faith to the unrepentant. He urged those stricken with disease to exercise their faith as a means of receiving the desired blessing. He healed the sick, raised up the dying, restored sight to the blind and brought hope and comfort to the distressed.

Thomas Didymus, who was profoundly shaken by the scene at Golgotha, had lost his faith. He had said on one occasion that he was ready to die with his Master. But like the others, he ran away. He had become sullen, resentful and unbelieving. ". . . Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:25.)

Like all skeptics he insisted on a material test. He would not believe his eyes. He must feel and touch. So-called "reality" was his stronghold. But the Master understood the texture of his mind. Thomas Didymus must be reassured and strengthened in his faith.

A week later, the disciples were in the same house as on the first occasion and Thomas was with them. Suddenly the Lord appeared. He greeted them all with the words "Peace be unto you." His eyes searched out the doubting Apostle. He called him by name and said: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." (John 20:27-28.)

But to Thomas came the distinction of receiving the last, but not the least, of the Beatitudes. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:29.) Is this not the very foundation of the Christian religion? Is it not fundamental to everything that Jesus taught and did? Thomas Didymus admitted his defeat. He was prepared at that moment to recognize his Lord as the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. Thus fortified Thomas Didymus, like the others, could climb the difficult heights of self-denial without wavering or faltering. His faith had been restored, his doubts had fled

and the foundation upon which he stood would never give way.

Faith opens the door to an understanding of God—His character and attributes. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) These words came from the prayer which Jesus offered to his Father for the apostles and all others who believe on him.

Faith is constructive for it supplies the urge to do things. A people blessed with faith are progressive, and invincible before difficulties. Israel was delivered from the Egyptian bondage through the exercise of faith. The pioneers found their way to a home in the West and laid the foundation of a commonwealth in the desert because of their faith in God's promises. By the same token the Pilgrim fathers established their ideals of civil and religious liberty in America.

Without an abiding faith the soul has no anchorage and is "driven with the wind and tossed." (James 1:6.) Man's faith in God is an acknowledgment of God's power to save and exalt the human family. It recognizes the deityship of Jesus Christ and accepts his gospel as the plan of salvation. It puts man in possession of vital information to lead him onward and upward, and to inspire him to live in harmony with divine law.

Faith is a gift of God to be developed by prayerful and open-minded investigation. It sets up hope and courage and explores the realms of the unseen. A loss of faith is a tragic setback in the journey towards perfection.

Skepticism, on the other hand, has no vitality. It offers no program. It contradicts every claim to a life after death. It robs man of his belief in moral and spiritual values, and destroys his fondest hopes and noblest aspirations. Unbelief is negative and rejects the revelations of God however manifested.

We are surrounded by many mysterious manifestations in nature and the outside world which we cannot explain. And yet the miracles performed by Jesus and the Prophets have been a stumbling block to many whose faith is weak. These deniers of God's power have refused to accept the God of the Bible as

the Creator and the Ruler of the universe. Jesus, Himself, proclaimed his supremacy when he said: ". . . All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28:18-20.) No Christian can read those words without having a sense of awe and reverence for the Redeemer of mankind. He is the light of the world. He has no parallel among the many who have aspired to world leadership.

Paul, the Apostle, was a product of Christ's gospel. The power of faith manifested itself in the complete conquest which it made of him. There is as much difference between Saul of Tarsus and Paul, the Apostle, as there is between night and day. He came at a juncture in the Christian movement when he was most needed. His call to service in the ministry was unexpected for he was already listed with the enemies of the cause he later represented. His entire life from the day of his conversion, reflected an unconquerable faith, a firm conviction and an unshakable testimony which has lived for centuries.

His second letter to Timothy, which may have been his last, reveals his anxiety and concern for those who had joined the faith. The letter was written from his dungeon in Rome, where he was a prisoner for the gospel's sake. He begs Timothy to come to him and to bring a cloak which he had left behind in one of his missionary journeys. He also asks for books and parchments to satisfy his yearning for knowledge and studies which he had pursued during his years of missionary work. I quote from his epistle. ". . . for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (II Tim. 1:12.) What could be more reassuring?

How does the letter end? I read the closing words: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight,

I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (II Tim. 4:6-9.)

Those words are not the strain of the vanquished. A few days later, no doubt, he was put to death by Nero, a man stained with every crime and steeped in every vice.

Prayer is a manifestation of Faith. Every spiritual truth and all religious attainments have been achieved through prayer. It is an avenue of enlightenment. In his utmost extremity man is helpless and hopeless without God. Thoroughly humbled, he kneels in prayer and comes away triumphant. He does what is humanly impossible. Prayer has given stimulus and effectiveness to his strivings.

The hour has come to restore simple worship, family devotion in the home, a prayerful approach to daily problems, the landmarks of faith and a sense of God's eternal laws.

When the Master gathered his disciples at the foot of the Mount and delivered his magnificent Sermon to them, He taught them how to pray. ". . . enter into thy closet," said He, "and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." (Matt. 6:6.) The prayer of faith is a personal communion with God. It is the pathway to power. It is the road to deliverance and contentment.

(The Choir sang: "The Voice of God Again is Heard."—Stephens.)

*Announcer:* The Tabernacle Choir sings next on this *Church of the Air* service Harriet Beecher Stowe's words of the glorious assurance of everlasting life: "When sinks the soul, subdued by toil, to slumber, its closing eyes look up to Thee in prayer; Sweet the repose beneath Thy wings o'er shading, but sweeter still to wake and find Thee there. So shall it be at last in that bright morning, when the soul waketh and life's shadows flee. Oh, in that hour, fairer than daylight's dawning, Shall