

ELDER ALMA SONNE

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles

President McKay, brethren and sisters, after having listened to the music during these conference sessions, and after having heard the prayers which have been so fervently offered, and hearing also the stirring sermons which have been delivered, and having felt the spirit of all meetings in this conference, I have been led to say in my own heart, "Surely this is the marvelous work and wonder spoken of by Isaiah the prophet."

Seven or eight months ago President Joseph Fielding Smith in speaking to the General Authorities of the Church suggested that each one of them read the Book of Mormon during the year. Like many others, I began the reading. I have almost finished it. At the same time I also read Orson Pratt's treatise on the book as he wrote it many years ago. It has been refreshing and stimulating to me and certainly very enlightening, even though it has been read and referred to many times over the years.

Elder Pratt, in writing his analysis of this latter-day scripture, makes this statement: "The book must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God. If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever pawned on the world."

Many people during this year are reading the Book of Mormon. Many have read it in the past, and many will read it in the future. It was given to the world through Joseph Smith the Prophet when he was a young man in his early twenties. The Prophet was a humble man. He was unlearned in the arts, the sciences, and literature of the world. At the same time he laid no claim whatever to any literary power or ability. The book was not produced as a result of prolonged preparation or any studious effort such as the writing of a book would entail. It is in perfect harmony with the Bible teachings. It contains a similar message and emphasizes the same truths. No book was ever written with a higher and a nobler purpose. Its aim is to teach the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is the Christ,

the Eternal God who manifests himself to all nations.

It is and always has been a builder of faith and a converter of souls. Its power in these respects is marvelous and beyond the understanding of the unbelieving and those who "are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight." A humble approach to its reading is necessary.

Readers of the book are left with God's help to determine its value, its divinity, and its truthfulness. They are not asked to consult with the scholars or the recognized men of learning as to its validity. They are cautioned, however, to ask God the Eternal Father in the name of Jesus Christ regarding the reliability and the trustworthiness of the message it contains, directed as it is to the Jews, the Gentiles, and the remnant of the Nephite race.

Under that procedure they will receive a testimony as to its sanctity and authenticity which is stronger and mightier than all the arguments of cynics and skeptics. No one has found anything that nullifies the testimony of the three witnesses to this sacred volume. Their testimonies still stand. Not a single thing has been brought to light, not a single thing to discredit their solemn declaration. It was challenged, as you may know and surmise, and the integrity of the witnesses was questioned. Their characters were assailed, and they were accused of being in collusion with a wicked pretender and a false prophet.

It has always been so and naturally was expected, for the world is full of doubters and cynics. Jesus knew this when he talked to Nicodemus. "We speak that we do know," said Jesus, "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.)

These were the words of the Master, but these witnesses never wavered in their testimony. They left the Church and were unfriendly to the Prophet.

They were excommunicated at a time when the Church needed their support. There is something dramatic about Oliver Cowdery's return to the Church. The day he came back the fortunes of the Church were at their lowest ebb. The people were outcast and had been driven from their homes and possessions. Fully repentant, Oliver Cowdery was baptized and entered the Church as a humble member.

Martin Harris returned and was baptized after a long period on the outside. His numerous testimonies to his neighbors and friends are a vindication against the charges that he had denied his testimony.

David Whitmer, disgruntled and disappointed, did not return. He claimed the Church had left him; that he had not left the Church. He evidently lacked humility which is required of faithful members of the Church. His last act was to reconfirm his testimony and to rebuke those who had accused him of being unfaithful to the written document which he had signed. He executed an affidavit on his deathbed to silence those who had questioned his integrity.

But the book itself is the best evidence of its divinity. If the book is a fraud, Joseph Smith knew it. There could be no question in his mind about its being fraudulent or genuine. He had the answer. Thousands have read it and have come away with the same testimony which he and the others gave. Not a single logical explanation has been offered to discredit the claim of the Prophet and his associates. The book still stands as a divine record, unmarred by the attacks of critics, most of whom were insincere and untrustworthy.

ELDER GORDON B. HINCKLEY

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

My beloved leaders, my dear brethren and sisters, it would be neither appropriate nor desirable for me to speak at length. I wish merely to share briefly with you some of the feelings of my heart.

Sister Romney told me yesterday afternoon that she knew that I was the one to be sustained because of the appearance of my eyes when she talked

If Joseph Smith wilfully and deliberately fabricated that volume and gave it to the world as scripture, he was unworthy of the confidence of all good men. Of all men he would be the most deceptive and the most dishonest. He would be a stranger to every divine and holy impulse. By every law of affinity his mind would be darkened by his evil designs. God's Spirit would depart from him. No heavenly inspiration or enlightenment could emanate from one so bad, but his scriptural productions, every one, emphasize moral and spiritual values. They are warnings against wrongdoing. They are confirmations of Bible teachings.

The Book of Mormon especially is a strong indictment against every sin in every form. I beg of you, brethren and sisters, to read the book; and as you go home following this conference, open the sacred volume and read it slowly and prayerfully, chapter by chapter, until it is finished, and, if you will do so, God will bless you. He will strengthen your testimony. He will increase your faith, and he will bless you in your devotion to the great cause for which we all stand.

May you and I be faithful in all things I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Elder Alma Sonne, Assistant to the Twelve. Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, whom we sustained yesterday as a member of the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us.

with me yesterday morning. I confess that I have wept and prayed.

I think I feel some sense of the burden of this responsibility to stand as a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ before a world that is reluctant to accept him. "I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me." I am subdued by the confidence of the Lord's Prophet in me, and by the expressed love of these, my