

ELDER REY L. PRATT

Of the First Council of Seventy and President of the Mexican Mission

I am happy, my brethren and sisters, to be in attendance at this conference, and to report the condition of the mission over which I have been called to preside. In the first place, I am happy to say to the fathers and mothers of the missionaries in the Mexican mission that they are all enjoying at the present time good health; they are in splendid spirits. They manifest a determination to fill their mission in honor and to reach with their testimonies and teachings as many of our Father's children as lie in their power.

You, my brethren and sisters, undoubtedly are acquainted with the fact that due to the present religious controversy in Mexico, and existing laws, it is impossible for our ministers or missionaries who are of foreign birth, that is, not Mexican citizens, to labor and officiate within the Republic of Mexico. Consequently we have been obliged to withdraw from that land all of our active missionaries from Zion. We are happy, however, in the fact that our local priesthood in some twenty odd branches in the Republic of Mexico are doing all that is possible to maintain the organizations of the branches, and to continue the holding of meetings and the administration of the gospel among that people. Notwithstanding the adverse circumstances existing in that country at this time, and the fact that so many missionaries, about 60 per cent of the force that we ordinarily have, have been withdrawn, the people are doing remarkably well. They are faithful in attendance at meetings, and in payment of tithing. We are in constant communication with them by letter, and their leaders manifest to us not only a belief in the principles of the gospel, but a knowledge that these principles are true. They pray for the return of the missionaries to that land, and a continuation of the preaching of the gospel among their people.

It may be a revelation to some of you to know that there are great communities of Lamanite people of Mexican nationality, residing in the large cities of the south and southwestern parts of our country. In the city of Los Angeles alone it is estimated that there are between fifty and seventy-five thousand Mexican people living in sections of the city pretty much by themselves. In that city we have a remarkable work started and are making great progress. Your boys and girls who are down there in that mission are happy to be engaged in that work and find no difficulty in confining their labors to a people who speak a foreign language. They have acquired the language with remarkable success, and success is attending their labors. The same might be said in relation to other cities along the border. We have missionaries in Mesa, Arizona, in Ray and other places around the great mining parts of Arizona. We have missionaries in Tucson; we have missionaries in Bisbee, and Douglas, also in Albuquerque and southern Colorado. They are doing a splendid work in El Paso, Texas. We have missionaries in Del Rio, San Antonio, Houston, Corpus Christi, Eagle Pass, Laredo, and Brownsville, all in Texas. At a recent conference

held in the southeastern part of our mission at Laredo, at which Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, of the Council of Twelve, was present, we were able to preach to a congregation of some two hundred and twenty people at some of our sessions. I remember to have gone to the same city only a few years ago, at which time I surveyed the situation, and there was not so much as one who had any sympathy for us within the confines of that city or surrounding country. I am proud to be identified with the missionary work there. I am proud of the young men and the young women who comprise our missionary force. I love the work of the Lord. I bear you my testimony that the gospel is true.

And, my brethren and sisters, as I stand before you this afternoon, I make a plea for tolerance for the Lamanite people; they are our Father's covenant children. I have learned it more intimately than I ever knew it before, in the last twenty-one years of consecutive missionary service among them. I was acquainted with them years before that, and, notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary in the press and by people who might think very lightly before they speak, I have never been injured at their hands, nor have any of your boys or girls been injured at their hands. And although it may seem paradoxical to send a lady missionary among people who are so maligned, and expect her to get away unhurt, the chivalry of the Indians, spoken of by President Ivins this morning, is a safeguard even to your daughters, and you need not fear for them even among the people of Mexico or the Lamanite people. There are underlying reasons why they fight, and I want to tell you that if I were suffering as they have suffered for four hundred years, I would be ashamed if I did not fight as they fight. There is wrong, of course, in the country, and it would take a long time to explain it to the satisfaction of the people as I understand it. I pray God that he will right the wrongs of that oppressed people, and that freedom and liberty and right and justice may come to them. I bespeak for them your sympathy and your love. Brethren and sisters, in the name of consistency, let us give them credit for being what they are, because through their fathers we truly have this great volume of scripture, this New Witness for God, the Book of Mormon, and it is replete with promises to them of a redemption, and an uplift from the conditions under which they labor. I lament, perhaps as much as anyone, the existing conditions in the Republic of Mexico, and all I can do is to pray that right will triumph. I firmly believe that it will, and I wish that we could extend to them sympathy and the right kind of help which is not always condemnation.

May the Lord help us to see the right and to do it, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ELDER CHAS. A. CALLIS

President of the Southern States Mission

Brethren and sisters: When Elder David O. McKay was speaking this morning of the two thousand young Lamanites and their splen-