

## REY L. PRATT

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

I am very happy, my brethren and sisters, to be in attendance at this conference, and to have the opportunity of adding my testimony to those that have been borne and that will be borne to the divinity of the work in which we are engaged.

While listening to the opening remarks of President Grant, my mind reverted back over the history and the accomplishments of the Church in the years that have passed, since it was organized in this dispensation in which we live. Truly, it is marvelous to contemplate the work, the development and the faith of our people. It is marvelous to note how the Church has extended, and how rapidly the stone that is destined to fill the whole earth, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, is rolling forth. It is marvelous to contemplate the wonderful foundation that was laid through the Prophet Joseph Smith for the Church to build upon. Accurately was it all laid out and designed. It would seem that there might have been some things instituted in the beginning that would have needed correction as the work proceeded. That certainly would have been the case, had not this work been established through and by the inspiration of our Heavenly Father to his chosen prophet. There has been laid for the Church and this people a foundation upon which they have builded without wavering, a foundation of faith that has withstood all of the trials and the tribulations and the persecutions and the drivings to which the Church has been subjected. The hymn that propounds the question, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in his excellent word," is answered by the growth and the development and the continuity of the Church that was established through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith. I rejoice in this foundation of faith that has held our people together, and that has kept us going through all these years that have passed. I read with marvel in my heart the deeds of valor and of heroism enacted by our pioneer parents who came to this land. I stood again, the other day, on the site where Brigham Young made that memorable remark: "This is the place!" I had just crossed a desert country, overland from El Paso, passing through parched and barren lands, and through sections that were inland seas in years long passed, the ground parched and cracked, and as I stood there I thought that I could visualize what this country must have looked like at that time. Yet, by the vision that was given, through the inspiration of the Lord, his prophet was able to say: "This is the place." And the foundation of faith laid in the hearts of the people of the Church was sufficient to make them believe it and to build upon it, so as to withstand the privations, the trials and the hardships incident to the conquering of this land. What a miracle has been wrought! This is a veritable garden spot; a beautiful city has arisen on that wasteland.

I recalled, this morning, hearing my father tell me of his boy-

hood days, when grandfather was away on a mission, and grandmother's meager earnings as a dressmaker were not sufficient to supply what was necessary to eat. They roamed these barren hills to gather segos, thistle tops and red root, and from those things, many and many times, made out their meager meal. It is marvelous to contrast those conditions with what we see today. But I maintain, my brethren and sisters, that men would not have done that without vision; men would not have done that without a foundation of faith that made them know, beyond all doubt, that this is the work of the Lord, and that they were in his service. They knew that out of their labors would grow the very things that we, their children, witness here today.

The question to me, my brethren and sisters, is, How firm a foundation is there laid in the work of the Lord for my faith? Will I be able to endure to the end? Will I be able to meet the changing conditions that I find in my life? I am not called upon now to do those things that I had to do as a boy, for I went into a new land and had to make fences, build ditches, kill snakes, ride the cattle range, and do many things that neither I nor my children are called upon to do now; but I meet conditions, my brethren and sisters, that test and try my faith. Will I be able to live and maintain my integrity and continue to build upon the faith of my fathers? Will I continue to build upon the broad foundation that is laid for our faith in the work of the Lord? We are living in an age of skepticism. We are living in an age of doubt. We are living in a day when men in all parts of the country doubt even the existence of our Father in heaven. Statistics reveal the fact that in these United States half of the population, practically, are without organizations in a religious way. They are unchurched; they have no particular affiliation with any religious denomination. I do not say, nor do I believe from my contact with them, that they have no faith in God, but they are not anchored, they are wandering, stumbling, as it were, at noonday; feeling for the wall, as does the blind man. This, my brethren and sisters, is because of the skepticism that has grown up, because of the false teaching in regard to Christ and his mission, and in regard to the gospel that was established as the means of salvation to our Father's children in the world. Will we be led away by the teachings of these men who are teaching false doctrine, or can we maintain our faith and our integrity in this glorious gospel? We have a marvelous mission, my brethren and sisters, to carry this work into the world. There are thousands and thousands of people, millions of them, who are not conversant with the principles of the gospel. As I have said, they do not believe that there is a religion upon the earth which is divine, and still there is something in their hearts, something within them that reaches out, and they are longing for something tangible, for something real, that they might know where the word of God is. Within our keeping is the responsibility of carrying this great message of the restored gospel to them.

I bear you witness, my brethren and sisters, that we have the truth. I am satisfied, beyond a doubt, that the Book of Mormon was found in the Hill Cumorah, which hill has been acquired by the Church. I rejoice in this. I knew long before last summer that the Book of Mormon was true. I have studied it, I have pondered upon it, I have read it again and again in two languages. I have taught the people among whom I have been called to labor that it is true; but last July, for the first time in my life, I had the opportunity of standing upon that hill, and I endeavored to visualize what transpired there one hundred years ago. In my heart, I prayed to the Lord that I might have a witness there that the book is true, that the record had been taken from that sacred ground. I bear you my testimony that I know, as well as I know that I am looking into your faces, that the angel Moroni stood there with the boy prophet and handed to him those records. I bear you my testimony that I know that that boy, by the inspiration of the Lord, translated that record, and we have it as a witness for God in the earth today. The gospel; in its fulness, is contained in that sacred record. I would that the people of the Church would study it more than they do. I had occasion to make frequent inquiry, during the last year and a half, among our missionaries who came into the mission field as to their having read and studied that book before they came out. I find, my brethren and sisters, that there are far too many of them who have not given it serious consideration, and have not studied it. I rejoice in the fact that there is in the Church a disposition now, among the auxiliary organizations, to get the youth of Zion to read the Book of Mormon. You cannot read it without believing it is the word of God, and that it has been given to us for a purpose. I rejoice in the opportunity that has come to me to labor with the people whose ancestors wrote it. I bear you my witness that the Lamanite people are of Israel. I bear you my witness that they are descendants of those men who wrote that book, and I wish to do my part in their behalf. I wish to be instrumental, in the hands of the Lord, in bringing back to them the glorious knowledge that gives such joy to me,—that the Book of Mormon is true, that it contains a record of their forefathers, that it will teach to them the principles of the everlasting gospel, and that, by following those teachings, they may be saved in our Father's kingdom.

We have the Bible, a wonderful record which we all appreciate, as well as the Book of Mormon. But I wonder, as is propounded in the 29th chapter of Second Nephi, whether we have reflected whence we obtained the Bible? We obtained it through the Jewish nation. It was the Jews who wrote it, and the Book of Mormon asks the question: What credit do the Gentiles give to the Jews for the Bible that they appreciate so highly? Do we esteem them as we should? Do we reach out to them, as we should, in an endeavor to make true and to bring to pass the glorious promises of restoration for the Jews, as contained in the Bible? Likewise, do we, as a people, realize, to the

full extent, our obligation to the children of those who wrote the Book of Mormon? Do we always feel inclined to reach out to them and endeavor to make possible and to bring to a reality and to fulfilment the promises of the Lord made to those people, as recorded in that book?

I rejoice in the testimony that I have, that the gospel is true. My desire is to serve, in my humble and weak way, so long as the Lord requires my service. I desire that my family shall be found employed and engaged in service to our Father in heaven and to his Church. There is nothing else in all the world that I love so much as I do my family, my children. To me they are very dear, and I desire them to grow up in an environment where they shall have this same faith, and where they shall have this same testimony. I desire them to have an opportunity to serve in our Father's kingdom also. I love the young men and the young women whom the Lord has sent out to labor with me, during the past twenty-one years, in the missionary field. I feel a kinship to them, almost equal to that which I feel toward my own boys and girls. I rejoice when I see them go home in faith, and engage actively in the ministry there; and I rejoice, beyond measure, to have an experience such as I had just the other day, when a young man walked into my office, for I had not received word that he was coming or why he had come. When I asked him, "How long are you going to stay?" he said, "I have come to serve again as a missionary, for six months, in this mission." Twenty-one years ago he served as secretary in the Mexican mission. He has grown and has developed during those twenty-one years. He is more efficient today than he was then. I rejoice to see them come back, not only with their spirits as bright as when they left, but with renewed energy, with renewed intelligence, and better qualified to deliver the great gospel message.

Let us assume the responsibilities that are ours, my brethren and sisters, in the spread of the gospel. Let us be mindful of the fact that we must teach by example as well as by precept. The Lord help us to do so, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

The following telegram has been received from S. N. Kunz of Montpelier, Idaho:

"We are hearing the opening services by radio more distinctly than we usually do in most sections of the Tabernacle."

The congregation sang, "Redeemer of Israel."

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Heber J. Burgon, president of the East Jordan stake of Zion.

The meeting adjourned until 2 o'clock p. m.