

The Choir and the congregation sang the hymn, "Redeemer of Israel," after which the Choir sang the anthem, "Grant us Peace" (Stephens).

### PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

We owe a wonderful debt of gratitude to Brother Evan Stephens and we thank this choir—the Hyrum Stake Choir—for their beautiful rendition of some of his compositions.

### ELDER GEORGE ALBERT SMITH

*Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I was born of goodly parents, across the street west from here, sixty-six years ago today, and am informed that there were two feet of snow on the level and drifted to the tops of the fences. Happy am I to be with you and to have you celebrate my birthday in General Conference. It affords me the opportunity to meet many dear friends and greet you under most favorable circumstances.

#### MEMBERSHIP IN CHRIST'S CHURCH A PRIVILEGE

During a very busy life it has been my joy to witness the constant development of the work of the Lord in this and in other lands. I am sure that the splendid report of the condition of the Church that we have listened to this morning and the address of our beloved President cause us to be grateful to the Lord that we have membership in the organization that He named for his beloved Son. To have fellowship in the Church of Jesus Christ that was organized under his direction for our earthly happiness and to prepare us for eternal life in the Celestial kingdom is indeed a glorious privilege.

#### THE BOOK OF MORMON IN BRAILLE

Reference has been made this morning to the Book of Mormon that has been printed in Braille for the use of the blind. I regret that I did not bring a set here for you to see. It consists of seven volumes, each 12 inches long, 12 inches wide and 2-3 inches thick, nicely bound in green cloth and embossed in gold. A set will be presented to the larger libraries of the country making it available to most of the blind just as is the Holy Bible. It was printed by the American Printing House for the Blind, at Louisville, Kentucky, the same concern that prints Bibles for the American Bible Society. It was proof-read by a scholarly blind man, one of the two best Braille proof-readers in the United States, who was also employed to proof-read the Bible.

#### ITS DISTRIBUTION AN IMPORTANT DUTY

The Book of Mormon is a sacred record containing information that is found in no other book. The Lord has commanded us to divide

with all his children the truths of the everlasting Gospel that have been revealed to prepare them for a place in the Celestial kingdom. Distributing the Book of Mormon is a most important missionary duty. In the year 1827 Joseph Smith was living at Palmyra in New York and it was at the Hill Cumorah, not far from his home that an angel delivered into his custody a volume of plates having the appearance of gold. He was directed to translate their contents into English, which he did by the gift and power of God. It caused quite a commotion in the community when it was reported that Joseph had received some golden records and had them in his possession. Attempts were made to take them from him. He and his father's family were harassed because of the report that they had something valuable in their possession. The Lord had informed Joseph before he was fifteen years of age that a great mission was to be given to him if he would live a righteous life. Later it became part of his duty to translate and publish to the world the Book of Mormon. When the people in the neighborhood learned that he was contracting with a local printer to publish the book they did everything possible to discourage it. They declared that the work was a fraud and determined to prevent its publication, and in order that the venture might be a financial failure they tried to make the distribution impossible by agreeing that they would not read the book

#### A REMARKABLE PROPHECY

Notwithstanding the threats that were made Joseph placed the manuscript containing this prophecy in the hands of the printer for publication (II Nephi, 30th chapter and 3rd verse) :

And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, *there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed.*

And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews.

And the Gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers.

It is interesting to note that notwithstanding the animosity of the people and the threat not to purchase the book it did not deter the youthful prophet from publishing the prediction that had been made by Nephi, "There shall be many which shall believe the words which are written." Let us see if that promise of the Lord has been fulfilled.

#### IN FULFILMENT OF THE LORD'S PROMISE

The Book of Mormon was first published in English in 1830; in Danish in 1851; in Welsh in 1852; in German in 1852; in French in 1852; in Italian in 1852; in Hawaiian in 1855; in the Deseret alphabet

in 1869; in Swedish in 1878; in Spanish in 1886; in Maori in 1889; in Dutch in 1890; in Samoan in 1903; in Tahitian in 1904; in Turkish in 1906; in Japanese in 1909; Czecho-Slovakian in 1933 and in Braille in 1936.

Now that the Book of Mormon has been published in Braille it is interesting to note that in 2nd Nephi, 27th Chapter and 29th verse the following occurs: "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness."

While there are not many blind people in our own communities it is estimated that there are more than 125,000 in America.

We were very grateful when the Presidency of the Church authorized the Society for the Aid of the Sightless that has been operating a small Braille plant for many years, to arrange for the publication of an edition of the Book of Mormon in Braille. We knew that such action would enable those people who have been denied the sense of eyesight to exercise another sense that the Lord has magnified in them, "the power to read by touch," and they could read the important information recorded in the Book of Mormon.

In addition to the 18 languages in which the Book of Mormon has already been printed it has also been translated and prepared for publication in Hindustanee, in Greek, Hebrew, Bulgarian, Russian and Armenian.

About eighty years after the Book of Mormon was published I went to Palmyra to purchase the old home of Joseph Smith where a part of the Book of Mormon was translated. I made an investigation and found that the people of that section had fulfilled their promise. I did not find one soul who had ever read the Book of Mormon. The only copy that I found among them was the printer's copy that had never been cut, and it was held as a curiosity by the banker there, Honorable Pliney T. Sexton, who was a very good friend of ours.

#### AS A RESULT OF FAITH

Think of the problem that presented itself to Joseph Smith. Money was being expended, borrowed money, in order that the book might be published. Martin Harris had mortgaged his farm to secure the necessary funds. It required faith of a high order to continue under such circumstances. The edition of five thousand was eventually delivered and paid for and the estimate now is that considerably more than a million copies have since been distributed among the nations of the earth. The demand for it increases as the days go by, and it fills my heart with joy to know that every man who will read it prayerfully, every man who will desire to know whether it be of God or not has the promise, not of Joseph Smith or any living human being, but the promise of our Heavenly Father that they shall know of a surety that it is of God. (Moroni 10:3-4-5):

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

#### A COMPANION VOLUME TO THE BIBLE

It is surely pleasing to have this other volume of scripture prepared for the use of the blind to read as a companion to the Bible that for many years has been printed for them in Braille. These two books hand in hand teach us all where we came from, why we are here, where we may go, and they both contain the advice, the loving advice of our Heavenly Father intended to inspire us to do that which will enrich our lives here and prepare us for eternal happiness.

#### OFFERING THE GOSPEL TO OTHERS

It is a privilege to live in this day and age of the world. It is marvelous to be associated with the people who have, as you learned this morning, more than seventeen hundred missionaries in the world today, offering without money and without price the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who need it but do not understand it. Our missionary effort at home is assuming large proportions, for many in the stakes of Zion are proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No other people in this world are making such an effort to share with the children of men the glorious truths of our Heavenly Father for the uplift of mankind and for the preparation of those who desire to dwell upon this earth when it shall be the Celestial kingdom of our Lord. Grateful am I that after sixty-six years of experience in this world, after associating with men and women and teaching them the Gospel in this and many other lands, that my assurance of the divinity of this work is stronger today than ever before.

#### BEARS TESTIMONY

I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Lord. And I know, as I know that I live, that the Church that bears the name of the Redeemer by his direction, is of divine origin, and that the authority to speak and act in the name of the Savior has been placed upon his children here and that we are made partakers of those blessings that are to prepare us for eternal life in the Celestial kingdom. Knowing that, and realizing the seriousness of such a statement on this my birthday, I gratefully bear to you my testimony that I know that these things are true, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.