

## ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

My brethren and sisters, I came very nearly believing that this was going to be for me a day of "passover," and, had it been such, I would not have been at all worried. The only thing about it was that I had no mark on the door to know that it was going to happen.

I have been more than pleased with the spirit of this conference, for I feel that every April Conference that we have should be a testimony to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our lives and our words should both be testimonies unto the world of the divinity of this organization, of the divinity of the Man, if you will permit me to call him a man, who caused it to come into existence.

If I could spend my days and could convert the world to that thought, or just a man or two in the world, I would feel that my life had been a most successful one.

## A NEW WITNESS FOR GOD

We have heard here some things incident to the life and the activities of our Savior. We have been told of them in the Bible, almost entirely in the New Testament. There are some prophetic utterances in the Old Testament, but we get most of our knowledge of Christ from the New Testament and from the Book of Mormon. We call the Book of Mormon—and rightly so—a "new witness for God," because it came along to corroborate and bear out the story of the writers of the New Testament. Now, in order that the Book of Mormon shall be a new witness for God, I think we must first believe in the Book of Mormon. In order to believe in the Book of Mormon we have to believe in the Prophet Joseph Smith, to accept his testimony that he saw God and Jesus Christ, and that he was commissioned by divine interposition to restore to the world the Book of Mormon.

## ARE REASON AND STUDY SUFFICIENT?

Where are we going to get that testimony? Can we reason ourselves into it by studying the few prophetic utterances of the Prophet Joseph Smith that have already come to pass? Can we get it by reading the testimony of the witnesses on the fly-pages of the Book of Mormon? Can we get it by studying the archaeology of America and reasoning from that point of view that the Book of Mormon tells a true story, and that consequently the Prophet Joseph Smith was a true prophet?

From some source we must get this testimony, in order that the Book of Mormon may be for us a new witness for God.

I cannot remember a time in my life when I have very seriously wondered if the Prophet Joseph Smith were commissioned of God. I grew up with that faith in my heart that he actually, in vision, saw God and Jesus Christ, the Angel Moroni, and other heavenly beings, and with that testimony more or less inherent within me, I have never

doubted the veracity of the Book of Mormon. As I grow older I like to dig into the archaeology and the ethnology of America somewhat, mainly with a view of getting things to tell other people that might help them along this line. But I find that there is in the minds of people who have studied these things such great confusion that you can hardly bring any uniform interpretation out of their studies and their reports. One man reads the inscriptions on the ruins of Mexico as far as he can, or looks at them and tries to interpret them. Another man does exactly the same thing, and they write quite divergent reports about them.

What good is it then as a testimony to the Book of Mormon?

#### A SURE WAY

There is, however, to me, and I believe there should be to you, a sure way of getting at that question. There is a promise in the Book of Mormon that if we will read it with a prayerful heart God will tell us whether it is true or not. I have often wondered in my mind just why God saw fit to do that most wonderful thing which he did in preserving and bringing to light the Book of Mormon. It tells us many interesting things about a people that lived on this continent, and it tells us above all others of the visit of Christ to that people, and the more I study it the more I believe that the purpose God had in mind was to bring that new witness of Christ to light.

#### THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

I think the preservation of the history of that people was purely a secondary matter, perhaps, but that the real purpose was to testify anew to the life of Christ and his mission in the earth, and to clarify the doctrines that he gave us. And I find that by reading it through and studying it from that point of view, rather than one of history, I do have a feeling and a testimony when I get through with the book that it is divine. There is a spirit in it, there is a whispering to your soul, that an honest man cannot deny.

That to me is the value of the Book of Mormon.

Now, if we could go into Mexico and Central America and South America, and into our own United States, and, by scraping aside the earth which has accumulated over a few centuries, expose to view a consecutive and true story of this people which would bear out in all its major details the story of the Book of Mormon, what a simple thing it would be. But it would lose, in my mind, one of its greatest values.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

We are blessed as much, if not more, by the acceptance of certain things on faith than to accept them on reason. Whenever we can reason ourselves into a thing we get a certain satisfaction out of it, it is true, but whenever through faith we can accept the life of Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, we get a development that no amount of reason can ever bring to us.

I believe that God purposely covered up these things that when

the Book of Mormon should come to light in this generation it would have to be accepted on faith. Faith is the greatest motive power in all the universe. Faith is greater than knowledge, time and time again. The devil knows the truth; he has not a spark of faith, or he would live according to it. Faith would impel him to change his life.

Faith to me is the greatest thing in life, and God has purposely, I believe, covered up in antiquity the history of this people and the story of the Book of Mormon, so that when it should come to light it would have to rest upon faith, a faith that could be given to us only by God himself. I believe that every honest inquiring soul who reads through the Book of Mormon with the thought in mind that he will learn its spirit, and from that spirit learn if it teaches truth, will get that testimony whether he is in the Church or out of it.

#### TESTIMONY COMES AS A GIFT OF GOD

I believe it is the greatest lesson, or one of them, that we can possibly have for the conversion of the world. Some of our stake missionaries report their greatest success through study classes where the Book of Mormon is the subject matter. To me that is the great witness for God. It came to us unadulterated; it came to us through divine interposition, translated by the power of God, and when you read it your testimony comes not from the fact that you can put two and three together and get five, that you can reason from a premise to a conclusion and determine that there is no question as to its origin, but the testimony comes to us as a gift given of God.

#### THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTIES

I represent to you today a body of the Priesthood whose purpose it is to carry that testimony to the world. Of every seven men in the Melchizedek Priesthood, approximately one is a Seventy in this Church. It is the especial duty of this body of men to support and uphold the hands of the Twelve Apostles. The Doctrine and Covenants goes so far as to tell us that we are their direct lieutenants and operate under their direction, and that we are preferentially to be called to aid them in the discharge of this duty. It is then our duty to go forth as special witnesses, calling the world to repentance and faith in God, and we carry in our right hand a new witness for God, the Book of Mormon, and ask the world to read it with an inquiring mind, not critically, because wherever there is a critical attitude there are too many things that can upset one, but if we really are sincere in our desire to know the truth, and will ask God to give us that testimony, I bear witness that it will come to us.

#### A LIVING TESTIMONY

I pray that those of us who are members of this Church, when reading the Book of Mormon will have this spirit, not one of criticism.

not one necessarily of investigation and discovery, except in so far as we can discover the spirit of God speaking to the hearts of men. I pray that he will bless us with his spirit, that as the days go on and grow into years, and as the years pass and we grow toward the end of our lives, that we may realize that we have done our best to live honorable, upright lives, to be a credit to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to be a living testimony of the work that was established under Jesus Christ. God grant it. Amen.

### ELDER RUFUS K. HARDY

#### *Of the First Council of the Seventy*

For the unbeliever and the skeptic I imagine I have a panacea. I think were he permitted to sit where I have been sitting for these few days looking into your countenances, he would in very deed believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not think it is possible that the light, the intelligence, and that spirit which emanates from an audience such as this can carry other than conviction even to the heart of one who is a firm unbeliever.

God has given to this people so many blessed things that your faces just speak them out loud. It has been said that our life here is but a shadow of the life from whence we came, and that in the future death will be but a shadow of the life which we personally know and comprehend while we are living.

#### THE BOOK OF MORMON PRAISED

God in his mercy and goodness has granted to us all this knowledge and all this understanding. I rejoice beyond my ability to express myself at the things which have just been spoken by Brother Ivins. I believe there is no other book that can be profitably studied by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints particularly, and by the world in general, that would do as much good and bring the same conviction to the hearts of the people of this great world of ours, as the Book of Mormon.

At least fifteen hundred years ago there was penned by the hand of one with whom we became acquainted later on, a record which was hid up and which contained the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I think those words would intrigue anyone, and the things which are written in this great and marvelous book—history, adventure, all that one could desire even for young children—the glamor and the charm of it would take them far.

Moroni, the man who hid up the record of these things, appeared to Joseph Smith, September 21, 1823. Later he appeared time after time and brought this sacred record with the careful statement that it must be correctly, accurately, definitely, positively translated, according to the will and promise of God. Afterwards, through holy messengers,