

ELDER LEGRAND RICHARDS

Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles

I am very happy, brothers and sisters, to have the privilege of attending this conference with you. I rejoice in my membership in the Church and in the faith of the Latter-day Saints, and the work that they are accomplishing for good in the world.

Last night we were told in our missionary conference meeting here, that during 1958 we had 33,330 convert baptisms into the Church. Now that represents a lot of work, and it represents people who have left the teachings of their youth and joined this Church because the Lord has given them a witness by the power of the Holy Spirit, that this work is truly divine.

I returned a week ago from touring the West Spanish-American Mission, among our Spanish-speaking people. I was impressed as I listened to President Christiansen here today tell of the testimonies he heard while touring the missions of Europe. Such testimonies you hear wherever you go. One little Mexican widow we met while touring the mission, left with six little children, and asked to bear her testimony, thanked the Lord that she had the gospel now to raise her children by. That was typical of many of the testimonies we heard.

Recently at a conference in Arizona, a prominent banker, who had just joined the Church, said, "This Church is not just a religion, it is a way of life." And when you find the joy and the happiness that come to people through accepting the gospel, it makes you feel as if we should put forth every effort in our power to share our message with all of our Father's children.

The Lord indicated when he gave the signs of his second coming, that this gospel of the kingdom, the gospel that he preached, the gospel that he left with his twelve, would be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then should the end come.

It is not that we expect everybody will accept the truth, because their minds are blinded, but if they would, it would greatly enrich their lives. I

thought as I listened to these testimonies, that if I could have the desire of my heart above all other things, it would be that all men everywhere, our Father's sons and daughters, might share with us the glorious truths of the restored gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I think I felt like Alma of old. After hearing the testimonies of his brethren of their experiences in the mission field, he made this statement:

"O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trumpet of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people!" (Alma 29:1.)

On Wednesday of this week, we spent eight and one-half hours listening to our mission presidents. Thirty-eight of them spoke and bore their witness of the joy they found in their labors, and of the happiness that comes to those who accept the gospel, and of the miraculous manner in which the Lord had led some of the missionaries to the homes of those who have been seeking after truth.

So I feel that the greatest desire of our hearts should be to share this message with all the world.

One of our noted commentators is reported to have said that he was once asked what message could be broadcast to the world that would be considered more important than any other, and he said, after giving it consideration, he decided that to be able to broadcast to the world that a man who had lived upon this earth and had died had returned again with a message from God, would be the greatest message that could be broadcast to the world.

That being true, the Latter-day Saints have the greatest message. You have heard the testimony borne this morning that the Father and the Son appeared to the boy, Joseph Smith. You listened to President Clark tell of the doubt in the hearts of even the followers and the apostles of Jesus when the report came to them from the women that he was not in the tomb but that he was risen, and they thought it was an idle tale.

When we talk today of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ coming back to this earth and holy messengers visiting this earth in our day, the world thinks that these are idle tales and yet they profess to believe in the Bible, how the Lord appeared to the prophets of old and the Bible bears witness that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever without shadow of changing, and how can they believe in that kind of a God and then believe that the heavens are sealed so that he cannot talk to us today as he did in days of old.

I would like to say to those who are not members of the Church who might be listening in over the air, or those who are here present today, that our witness is true. We know it is true, and someday, if you have listened to our testimonies and you do not go to the trouble to find out whether these testimonies are true or not, you are going to be held accountable; for our message is to be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.

I have thought that it would not be necessary to study everything and read all the scriptures if one really wanted to know if our message is true. There is no other message like it in all the world; no other people profess an opening of the heavens and the visitation to this earth of holy messengers in our day; for the most tangible evidence of the truth of the story of the Prophet Joseph Smith is the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon has been distributed by millions of copies all over the world, and there are many, even not members of the Church, who believe that the Book of Mormon is true.

Just read the testimony of the three witnesses in the front of every book, where they testify that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before their eyes, that they beheld and saw the plates and the engravings thereon, and the angel declared unto them that they were translated by the gift and the power of God.

Why cannot the world believe such a testimony as that? And then there is the testimony of the eight witnesses to whom the Prophet was privileged to show the plates. Then there is the testimony that comes from those who accept the gospel.

I attended a conference recently where a young woman, a convert, the mother of two little children, was asked to bear her testimony. She said something like this:

"When the elders came into my home, they read me the promise in the Book of Mormon that when that book came to us, if we would read it, asking God the Eternal Father in sincerity, that the Lord would manifest the truth of it unto us by the power of the Holy Ghost."

She said, "I believed that promise, and I went into my bedroom and got down on my knees and asked God the Eternal Father to let me know whether that book was true or not, and I read it, and my whole soul was illumined, and I knew that it was divine."

We had a man here as a tourist in Temple Square a few years ago, a minister from Texas, and after returning home he wrote a letter back saying that he had purchased a copy of the Book of Mormon. He said, "I have a library of important books that cost me over twelve thousand dollars, but I have one book that is more valuable than them all because it is the word of God and it is the Book of Mormon."

Just recently a letter came in to the headquarters of the Church from a minister in the East. He said he bought a copy of the Book of Mormon years ago from a Mormon elder who called at his home. He said, "I put it in my library. I never read it until recently, and now I have been reading it, and I have been quoting from it in my sermons." In his letter he mentioned the words of Alma and the words of Nephi out of the Book of Mormon which he had used in the preparation of his sermons.

Why cannot the world believe? Why cannot they accept it? Some of you remember a few years ago how Brother Nicholas G. Smith told us of being invited by the dean of religion at the University of Southern California in California to lend him a copy of the Book of Mormon. He gave him a copy used by the missionaries that had passages underlined in red ink, or a lead pencil, and that minister invited Brother Smith and the missionaries to attend his next meeting in his own parish, and he stood before his people

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and read verse after verse that had been underlined by the missionaries, and then he said something like this:

"Why cannot we fellowship a people who believe in such wonderful things as I have been reading to you here today?" And then he went on to say, "We have here a volume of scripture which has been in our midst a hundred years, and we have not known anything about it."

I see that my time has gone. I love the Book of Mormon. I know that no honest soul searching after God can study that book without knowing that it is divine, that it was not written by Joseph Smith; and when it is evident that it is what it purports to be, a volume of scripture that the Bible promised should come forth in our day, then all of the message of the Prophet Joseph Smith is true, then they will open their hearts and their minds to the messages of Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John, Moses, Elijah, Elias, the prophets who have visited this earth in the restitution of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began, which Peter declared and promised would occur in this world before the coming of Christ.

The Book of Mormon was preserved to be a witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.

In 1934 a questionnaire was sent out to five hundred Protestant ministers by the Northwestern University, and out of 500, 130 of them denied the Deity of Jesus. When the blind lead the blind, Jesus said "... both shall fall into the ditch." (Matt. 15:14.)

We invite all men everywhere to make an investigation, and we promise them as servants of the Living God that they can know that this work is divine and that is my testimony to you, and I give it to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

President David O. McKay:

The Brigham Young University Combined Choruses will now favor us with "Worthy Is the Lamb," conducted by Norman Gulbrandsen. The closing prayer will be offered by Elder Frank D. Parry, formerly president of the Uruguayan Mission, after which this Conference will stand adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

Brothers and sisters, I believe I will take just a minute and digress from our usual policy. You are thrilled this morning with the presence of these young people from the Brigham Young University. Many of them, perhaps all, I do not know, will be heard in a great musical production based on the history of the Mormon Battalion which the Brigham Young University is presenting in Provo the last of this month and June first, second, and third. They call it, "Sand in Their Shoes." Because of the historic significance of this play and the sacrifice and suffering of the brave men and women who made this trek, I believe that all members of the Church who can possibly attend that will be highly pleased and well paid for their effort. I have heard it said that in many ways this play will be comparable to the Hill Cumorah Pageant.

Success to the Brigham Young University in that great play. We appreciate very much your singing today and your presence.

We shall now hear the Choir sing, "Worthy Is the Lamb," and the benediction by Elder Frank D. Parry.

An anthem, "Worthy Is The Lamb," was sung by the Brigham Young University Combined Choruses.

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Frank D. Parry, formerly president of the Uruguayan Mission.

Conference adjourned until 2:00 p.m.