

## ELDER GORDON B. HINCKLEY

*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

My dear brethren and sisters, I seek the direction of the Lord that the things I say may be in harmony with the inspirational things to which we have listened these past three days.

This has been a marvelous conference. I have missed one voice. That is the voice of President Stephen L. Richards. His wisdom, his kindly persuasion, his unflinching courtesy were always an inspiration to me, and I shall be eternally grateful to him.

I rejoice in the appointment of President Henry D. Moyle as a member of the First Presidency. I am grateful for the opportunity of working under his direction in the great missionary program of the Church. I pledge him my loyalty and my energy.

I rejoice likewise in the appointment of Howard W. Hunter to the Council of the Twelve.

I am satisfied that the Lord guides this work. I echo the words of the Psalmist: ". . . he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:4.)

I wish to say a few words in furtherance of the theme set before us by President McKay in the opening address of the conference—"Preach the Word." I have in mind one of the great facilities available to us in carrying forth this assignment.

The other day in a stake conference, I heard an officer of the Air Force stand before the group and tell of the circumstances surrounding his coming into the Church. He said in substance:

"I had a date with a lovely young woman. When I called for her, I noticed on the table a copy of the Book of Mormon. I had never heard of it before. I began to read. I became interested. I secured a copy of the book and read it through.

"I had only the traditional idea of God and Jesus Christ. I had never given serious thought to the matter. But as I read this book there came into my mind light and understanding of eternal truths, and into my heart a testimony that God is our Eternal Father, and that Jesus is our Savior."

I am confident that the experience of

this man who was influenced by the Book of Mormon is similar to that of many others of our people.

Brethren and sisters, if there are miracles among us, certainly one of them is this book. Unbelievers may doubt the First Vision and say there were no witnesses to prove it. Critics may scorn every divine manifestation incident to the coming forth of this work as being of such an intangible nature as to be unprovable to the pragmatic mind, as if the things of God could be understood other than by the Spirit of God. They may discount our theology. But they cannot in honesty dismiss the Book of Mormon. It is here. They can feel it. They can read it. They can weigh its substance and its content. They can witness its influence.

Faced with its presence, but unwilling to believe the story of its coming forth, they have sought an explanation for it, other than the one given by the Prophet that it was engraven on golden plates by ancient prophet-historians, and that their record was revealed and translated by the gift and power of God.

The Book of Mormon was first printed on a little hand-operated flat-bed press in a backwoods village of New York in the year 1830. From that first edition, while critics have published volume after volume in an effort to discredit the Prophet's story, the book has gone through one edition after another. From English it has been translated into thirty-one other languages, and printed in twenty of these.

While its detractors have called it blasphemous, the work of a paranoiac, the outpouring of a myth-maker, the result of a man's environment, the book has gone forth to change for good the lives of men and women in a score of nations. What a concourse of the people of the earth we would have if all of those who have read this book and been influenced by its message were gathered together in one place.

The first edition was comprised of 5,000 volumes. That edition met all demands for a number of years. I think you may be interested to know that during the first nine months of this year,

more than 350,000 copies were sold in English alone. I am satisfied that by the close of the year we shall have sold more than 500,000 copies of the Book of Mormon in various languages, all within a period of a single year. We now distribute every three or four days, more copies than were included in the entire first edition.

The same book which converted Brigham Young, Willard Richards, Orson and Parley Pratt, and many others of the early leaders of the Church, is also converting people in Germany, in the British Isles, in Finland, in Japan, in Tonga, and wherever else men and women are reading it prayerfully and with real intent. The promise of Moroni, written in his loneliness, following the destruction of his people, is being fulfilled every day.

Each time we encourage a man to read the Book of Mormon we do him a favor. If he reads it prayerfully and with a sincere desire to know the truth, he will know by the power of the Holy Ghost that the book is true. And from that knowledge there will flow a conviction of the truth of many other things.

For if the Book of Mormon is true, then God lives. Testimony upon testimony runs through its pages of the solemn fact that our Father is real, that he is personal, that he loves his children and seeks their happiness.

If the Book of Mormon is true, then Jesus is the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, born of Mary, "a virgin most beautiful above all other virgins," for the book so testifies in a description unexcelled in all literature.

If the Book of Mormon is true, then Jesus is verily our Redeemer, the Savior of the world. The great purpose of its preservation and coming forth, according to its own statement, is "to the convincing of the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." (See title page of the Book of Mormon.)

If the Book of Mormon is true, then this land is choice above all other lands, but if it is to remain such the inhabitants of the land must worship the God of the land, the Lord Jesus Christ. The histories of two great nations, told with warning in this sacred volume, indicate that while we must have science, while

we must have education, while we must have arms, we must also have righteousness if we are to merit the protection of God, as Brother Benson has so eloquently indicated here this afternoon.

If the Book of Mormon is true, Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, for he was the instrument in the hands of God in bringing to light this testimony of the divinity of our Lord.

If this book is true, David O. McKay is a prophet, for he holds all of the keys, the gifts, powers, and authority held by the Prophet Joseph who brought forth this latter-day work.

I repeat, if the Book of Mormon is true, the Church is true, for the same authority under which this sacred record came to light is present and manifest among us today. It is a restoration of the Church set up by the Savior in Palestine. It is a restoration of the Church set up by the Savior when he visited this continent as set forth in this sacred record.

If the Book of Mormon is true, the Bible is true. The Bible is the Testament of the Old World. The Book of Mormon is the Testament of the New. The one is the record of Judah, the other is the record of Joseph, and they have come together in the hand of the Lord in fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel. Together they declare the Kingship of the Redeemer of the world, and the reality of his kingdom.

Here is a voice that has spoken from the dust with a familiar spirit, and touched the hearts of men and women in many lands. Those who have read it prayerfully, be they rich or poor, learned or unlearned, have grown under its power.

Let me tell you of a letter which we received a few years ago. A man wrote saying in substance: "I am in a federal reformatory in Ohio. I recently came across a copy of the Book of Mormon in the prison library. I have read it, and when I read Mormon's lamentation, over his fallen people—'O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you! Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. . . .' (Mormon 6:17-18.) When I read this I felt that Mormon was

talking to me. Can I get a copy of that book?"

We sent him a copy. He walked in the office some months later, a changed man. I am happy to report that a boy who had stolen gasoline, and then stolen automobiles, and then done other things until finally he was placed in a federal reformatory, was touched by the spirit of this book, and the report today is that he is now a successful man, rehabilitated, earning a living honestly for himself and family in a west coast city.

Such has been the power of this great book in the lives of those who have read it prayerfully.

I give you my testimony that it is true. That I know by the witness of the Holy Ghost, and that knowledge to me is certain.

Sidney Rigdon did not write it. Oliver Cowdery did not write it. It is not the result of a paranoiac or of a dissociated personality, as some have said. It is not the product of a myth-maker. It is not the result of the environment of a farm boy who grew up in western New York. Joseph Smith did not write it. He, the Prophet of this dispensation, translated the writings of prophets of old under the power of God, to testify in our day.

We invite all men everywhere to read it. Its witness lies within itself.

I so testify. This marvelous record, preserved over fourteen centuries, has confirmed my faith in God, in my Redeemer, in the land in which I live, in the work of which I am a part. I leave you my witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## ELDER HOWARD W. HUNTER

### *Of the Council of the Twelve Apostles*

I do not know what one should say who has been so newly called and sustained, so I will tell you what is in my heart this afternoon.

I love the Church. I want you to know that I love our great leader, President McKay, and with all my heart and soul I sustain him as prophet, seer, and revelator. And I sustain President Clark and President Moyle, President Smith, the President of the Council of

President David O. McKay:

We have just listened to Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve.

The Choir and Congregation will now sing "How Firm a Foundation," conducted by Elder Jay E. Welch, Assistant Choir Conductor. After the singing, we shall hear from Elder Howard W. Hunter.

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The Tabernacle Choir and the Congregation sang the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation," conducted by Jay E. Welch, Assistant Choir Conductor.

President David O. McKay:

Yesterday, it was my privilege to represent the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve, and notify Elder Howard W. Hunter that he had been chosen of the Lord to be a special witness to the divinity of the love, and the labors, the life and death of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of our Father. That was the first he knew about his having been so chosen.

Yesterday, you voted unanimously to sustain him as one of the Council of the Twelve. We welcome him this afternoon to this honored position and pray God to inspire him and to bless him as he goes forth to declare the divinity of this great work and the Sonship of Him who stands at the head of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

the Twelve, each individual member of that Council, and all of the General Authorities.

Not many of you know me, so perhaps you would permit me to be just a little bit personal this afternoon. I have lived most of my life in California, having been born in Boise, Idaho, and having lived there until I was graduated from high school.

I am grateful for a humble home, for