

## ELDER BRUCE R. McCONKIE

*Of the First Council of the Seventy*

We are laying the foundation for, and have already actually commenced, the greatest missionary undertaking ever destined to occur in any age of the earth's history. We are going forth by command of Deity to carry the knowledge of God and of his saving truths to all nations, to preach the gospel to every creature, and to give in due course, in this life or in the next, every living soul the opportunity to hear and obey these saving principles.

The ultimate end of this missionary work will be to see the knowledge of God and his saving truths cover the earth ". . . as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9.) The ultimate end of this missionary work will be reached when the day arrives in which it will no longer be necessary for every man to say to his brother or neighbor, "Know the Lord," for all shall know him from the greatest to the least. (See Jer. 31:31-34.)

Now, since we are engaged in the greatest missionary undertaking that has ever been planned as part of Deity's program, he has also placed in our hands the most effective, compelling, and persuasive missionary tool ever given to any people in any age. The name of this tool is the Book of Mormon.

It goes without saying that conversion in all ages, for all peoples, is dependent upon their receipt of the Spirit. No one gets a testimony of the divinity of the Lord's work unless he gains it from the Spirit—that is, unless it comes by the power of the Holy Ghost. But the Book of Mormon is the means, the tool, the way which has been ordained and given so that men can get their hearts and souls in a frame of mind, in a condition where they can hearken to the testimony of the Spirit.

It was of this book that the Prophet said: "I told the Brethren [meaning the Twelve, with whom he had that day met] that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abid-

ing its precepts, than by any other book." (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 461.)

This is precisely what we want people to do. We want them to get so near to the Lord that they will come down in the depths of humility, repent of their sins, and accept Christ for what he is, the Son of God. We want them to come to the truth, join the kingdom of God on earth, and have performed for them the ordinances of salvation and exaltation under the hands of those legal administrators whom the Lord has appointed in this day and generation.

Shortly before the Church was organized, April 6, 1830, writing by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon, which he had translated by the gift and power of God, was ". . . a record of a fallen people, . . ."; that it contained ". . . the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews . . ."; that it was ". . . given by inspiration, . . ."; that it had been ". . . confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, . . ."; that it had been ". . . declared unto the world by them—" all for this purpose—and note the purpose: To prove ". . . to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old;

"Thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. . . ." (D&C 20:6-12.)

In other words, the Lord has given the Book of Mormon in this day as the absolute, sure, positive witness of the divinity of his work. We go out in the missionary cause, and we bear testimony in soberness and in truth, knowing the verity of what we say, that the heavens have been opened and that God has spoken again; that angels have ministered to men; that the gifts, powers, and graces had anciently have been restored anew; that the gospel and the plan of salvation are again on earth in all their ancient beauty and glory.

But this witness which we bear is not

left to stand alone. The Lord sends with us a written record, a means, a missionary tool, which can be used by any person to gain a knowledge of the divinity of the work. The Prophet's expression that "the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion" means precisely what it says. The keystone is the central stone in the top of the arch. If that stone is removed, then the arch crumbles, which, in effect, means that Mormonism so-called—which actually is the gospel of Christ, restored anew in this day—stands or falls with the truth or the falsity of the Book of Mormon. Thus our program and our purpose, as witnesses of the Lord in this day, ought to be to devise ways and means and to create inducements that will persuade those who are not of us to read the Book of Mormon and to read it according to the revealed pattern.

Moroni has left us in the Book of Mormon itself the recorded promise that if anyone will read it ". . . with real intent, having faith in Christ, . . ." and will ask ". . . God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, . . ." whether it is true, he shall get a knowledge of its truth and divinity by personal revelation. (See Moroni 10:3-4.) This promise is true. It has been tested by thousands and tens of thousands of people in the world, and they have received this personal revelation. Further, by his own voice, the Lord himself testifies of the truth of the Book of Mormon in these words: ". . . as your Lord and your God liveth it is true." (D&C 17:6.)

Now, our message to the world centers around three great truths. The first, the divine Sonship of Christ; the second, that in this day the knowledge of Christ and his saving truths have been restored through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith; and the third, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth, the organization through which salvation, hope, and peace are offered to all men.

Before any person is prepared to join the Church, he must believe that Jesus Christ is literally the Son of God; that as such he worked out the infinite and eternal atonement whereby all men are

raised in immortality, and those who believe and obey his laws gain the additional reward of eternal life; and that he has ordained and revealed a plan of salvation which enables men so to live as to gain peace here and the fullness of salvation hereafter.

Before joining the Church a person must believe that Joseph Smith was called of God to open this gospel dispensation; that he was indeed a prophet who received keys, powers, authority, and revelation from heaven; that he was the revealer of the gospel and the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of salvation for this age; and that he was commanded by Deity to set up his Church and kingdom again on earth.

Before baptism a person must believe that this Church is true; that it is in fact the Lord's earthly kingdom; that the priesthood and keys are here; that those who now officiate are legal administrators sent of God to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

The Book of Mormon—which has come forth to prove that God inspires men and calls them to his holy work in this age and generation—establishes the verity of these great truths which comprise the message of the restoration. If the Book of Mormon is true, our message to the world is truth; the truth of this message is established in and through this book.

The Book of Mormon is a new, living, modern witness of the divine Sonship of Christ. It testifies of him and of the doctrines of his gospel. It teaches of his atoning sacrifice; it proclaims that through him men are redeemed from the spiritual and temporal death brought into the world by the fall of Adam. It outlines the course men must follow to gain eternal life.

The Book of Mormon stands as a witness of the divine Sonship of Christ; it has come forth for ". . . the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the *Eternal God*, manifesting himself unto all nations— . . ." (Preface to the Book of Mormon.)

This book also is a witness of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the divinity of the Church set up under his instrumentality.

Thursday, April 6

First Day

It establishes and proves to the world that Joseph Smith is a prophet, for he received the book from a resurrected personage and translated it by the gift and power of God. And since the Book of Mormon came by revelation, which included the ministering of angels, then obviously Joseph Smith also received other revelations and was ministered to by other heavenly beings. Among those revelations was the command to organize the Church. The Church is thus the one true Church because it was set up by a prophet acting under command of God. Thus the truth of the message of the restoration is established in and through and by means of the Book of Mormon.

No person can read this book, according to the prescribed pattern, and not know that it is true. No person can read this book, in the way Moroni directed, without getting in his heart the absolute, certain, sure knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. No person can read this book and learn of its divinity ". . . by the power of the

Holy Ghost . . ." (Moroni 10:5), without knowing that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God and that this Church, as now constituted, organized, and set up is God's kingdom on earth.

As one voice among thousands of others, I certify that I know by the promptings of the Spirit that the Book of Mormon is true. As a consequence I have in addition a personal knowledge, also born of the Spirit, of the divinity of Christ, of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and of all things incident to this great latter-day work which are essential for the salvation and exaltation of men.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

#### President David O. McKay:

He to whom we have just listened is Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the First Council of Seventy. Elder Antoine R. Ivins will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve.

### ELDER ANTOINE R. IVINS

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

My brethren and sisters, I am happy again to have the privilege of bearing my testimony to you in the general conference of the Church. I realize I will be able to say nothing that will help you or me unless you give me your faith and prayers that I may enjoy the Spirit of the Lord.

Much has been said during the conference thus far of the missionary responsibility under which we as members of the Church rest. I stand before you, as many of you know, as the grandson of a member of the Twelve who went to introduce the gospel to Europe, starting in Denmark. I am the son of one of eight men who carried the work to the Mexican people, traveling on horseback, carrying their beds on pack horses.

I have lived practically all of my life, all my life in fact, in an atmosphere of Church service, and I trust that to the end of my days, I may be able to acquit

myself in some reasonable way of the responsibility under which I labor.

We are getting reports from many sections and many missions of the great influx of new members into the Church. When I began this service, if a missionary performed a baptism a year in a foreign mission he was considered successful. The harvest is tremendously greater now. It is very, very interesting to contemplate it, and one wonders why, and I cannot quite figure it out except it be that the Lord has seen fit to pour out his Spirit upon a greater number of people than formerly was the case. I cannot believe that anybody has a stronger testimony of the gospel than my grandfather and my father had. I cannot believe that anybody is more susceptible, as a missionary for the Church, to the inspiration and the Spirit of God than the missionaries who went out in the very early days of the Church.