

The choir sang the hymn, "Thanks be to God," by Mendelssohn.

PRESIDENT ANTHONY W. IVINS

I do not remember, my brethren and sisters, a period in my life's experience in the Church when I felt my dependence upon the Lord to a degree greater than I do this morning. Should I follow my own inclinations, I would not attempt to make remarks at all, but to gain wisdom and knowledge and understanding by listening to the remarks of my brethren and communing with the Spirit of the Lord which is here this morning. I feel the necessity of wisdom, of sound judgment, of the help of the Lord in expounding the scriptures, and teaching the Latter-day Saints, and in discharging the responsibility which has come to me, as I have never felt it before.

THE CHURCH AFTER NEARLY ONE HUNDRED YEARS.

We are here to review the condition of the Church, after nearly an hundred years of its existence. We are here that we may determine whether or not progress is being made, to hear the scripture expounded, and the order of the Church explained, that we may determine whether or not in the administration of its affairs, we are adhering closely to the word of the Lord. The Lord has declared to us that all scripture is given by inspiration from God, that it is of great value to us as a means of proper exhortation, a means of reproof and of correction where correction may be necessary, and he has reminded us that it must always be expounded and explained in a spirit of righteousness. The Lord has admonished us to search the scripture, because in it we think we have everlasting life, and that it is the scripture which testifies of him. I have been thinking, my brethren and sisters, while listening to the remarks made, that it was through obedience to this latter admonition of the Lord, that Joseph Smith found the key which opened this gospel dispensation. He searched the scriptures and in them found the path which leads to everlasting life, to all of those who care to enter in through faith in God our Father, and in Jesus Christ, his Son.

OPENING OF THE LAST DISPENSATION.

At the time that Joseph Smith went to the written words for light, the scripture which I have quoted was understood to apply, and he undoubtedly so understood it, to the Bible, this book which I hold in my hand. It was the only book which was accepted by the world as containing the fundamentals of Christianity, and of the hand-dealings of the Father, as they applied to his children who were here upon earth. Through the prayer which he offered, and to which reference has been made by President Penrose, the faith which he exercised in

obedience to this admonition of the Lord, he received that first glorious manifestation, when the Father and the Son appeared to him, now more than a hundred years ago, at which time he was not yet fifteen years of age. This glorious manifestation, with the great importance which attaches to it, carried with it no authority to act in the name of the Lord, neither in the opening of this gospel dispensation, the organization of the Church, nor in the administration in the ordinances thereof. As time passed and the boy gradually approached manhood, he waited and, undoubtedly, wondered when the time would come for the accomplishment of the greater work which had been outlined in this first manifestation which came to him from the Lord. On the night of September 21, 1823, after he had engaged in prayer and retired for the night, Joseph Smith states that he observed that light began gradually to appear in his room, which increased in brilliancy until the room was lighter than at noon day, when a personage appeared at his bed side, who declared that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God and that his name was Moroni. He declared to Joseph Smith that the Lord had a great work for him to perform, a work which would make his name known among all nations and people, that among some it would be held in honor, among others it would be held in reproach. He declared many important things to Joseph Smith, but the principal purpose of his visit appears to have been to announce to him that there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, which contained the history of the ancient inhabitants of this continent, and the source from which they came, and that it contained the fulness of the everlasting gospel, as it was delivered to the ancient inhabitants of this continent by the Redeemer of the world, and that means had been provided by which the inscriptions upon the plates might be translated into the English language. Joseph Smith visited the locality and readily recognized the place where the plates were deposited but was not permitted to take possession of them until four years later, at which time he was in his twenty-second year, when the plates were entrusted to his care by the same messenger who had first appeared to him. [The work of translation was commenced and continued until completed, when the plates were returned to the messenger from whom he had received them, and Joseph Smith proceeded to publish their contents to the world in the form known as the Book of Mormon.

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THE BOOK OF MORMON.

The first edition of the Book of Mormon was issued in the year 1830, under the circumstances and in the style which the time justified, a style which would not be considered appropriate at present. From time to time other editions were issued, the arrangement slightly changed to make the book more appropriate, with chapters, index, footnotes and references added. The existing edition having become exhausted, it recently became necessary to issue a new

one, and the suggestion was made that the style of the book, which still adhered closely to the original, might be so changed that it would be better adapted to the use for which it was intended. A committee was chosen from among the Council of Twelve, who carefully examined all editions, including the original, compared them carefully, compared and checked the footnotes and references, and after making some slight changes in arrangement, we have issued a new edition of the Book of Mormon, which I hold in my hand. The text remains as heretofore, but the book has been printed in double columns instead of single, a change which has resulted in a reduction in size of one hundred pages. The frontispiece remains as heretofore, but there has been added a brief synopsis of the contents of the book and the story of its origin as related by Joseph Smith. The testimony of the witnesses remains as heretofore, and then follows the general text. The name and order of the books contained in the volume are also given; chapter headings have been added; the footnotes have been carefully compared and revised, where revision was necessary; a pronouncing vocabulary has also been added; and a brief synopsis of chapters and a very greatly improved index which facilitates the study of the book. So we have brought out a new edition of this book which is of such great interest to the Church and its members, which we commend to you, my brethren and sisters, and to all other people for study.

The Book of Mormon is the scripture of the American continent, preserved and brought forth by the power of the Lord, that his decrees and purposes might be made known to the people who were to occupy this continent in this dispensation of the fulness of times, the greatest dispensation which the world has ever known, for in it the Lord has said that he will consummate the work commenced in all other dispensations which have gone before it. This book is the strongest corroborative evidence to the divinity of the things contained in the Bible, that there is in the world. It is the strongest evidence of the divinity of the mission of the Redeemer of the world, that can be found, the Bible alone excepted. It contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel, in simplicity, easy to be understood, as it was taught to the people by the Redeemer who established his Church among the Nephites. The code of morals which it teaches is beyond criticism, and if adhered to would redeem the world from the condition of moral degeneracy which now prevails. It teaches ethics in civil government which, if adhered to, would solve the perplexing political questions which bewilder the world today, would remove the burdens of taxation from the backs of the struggling masses, and bring peace to the earth and fraternity among all mankind. It declares the redemption of the remnant of Judah, the gathering of the Ten Tribes, the restoration of scattered Israel, and the fulfilment of the words of the prophets, both ancient and modern. While it strongly denounces wickedness, it holds out great hope to the righteous, and

forgiveness and redemption to the repentant sinner; it unfolds the hitherto unknown past, and outlines to us events of the great future upon the threshold of which we stand. It has been before the world now for nearly one hundred years, during which period it has been subjected to the criticism of the learned and to the ridicule of the ignorant. Not one line in it, not one doctrine which it teaches, not one truth which it sets forth, has been found to be out of harmony with the word of the Lord, as contained in the Bible, and as it has come to us through his inspired servants—a thing which can be said of no other book in the world. It should be an evidence of its truth, that with the closest scrutiny given it by this committee, in the light of the present, with the past behind us, not one single instance was found where it needed correction or amendment.

So, my brethren and sisters, we commend the Book of Mormon to you and to the people, particularly of this country in which we live; for this record is of special and transcendent importance to them. It declares in plainness that this is a land choice above all other lands, that it is dedicated to the service of the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, and it warns the people who occupy this land that whenever the time shall come that they are lifted up in pride above all other nations, when the time shall come that they are full of all manner of iniquity, of secret abominations, of whoredom, and priestcraft, and of all manner of wickedness, that at that time, except they repent and turn to the Lord, destruction shall come to them, as it has come to other nations and people who have occupied the land before them. We ask you, and particularly the people of the United States, to become familiar with its contents. If we will do so and be governed by the doctrines it teaches, we will be redeemed from the sins of the world, will understand the purposes of the Almighty as they apply to us, his purposes in the opening of this great gospel dispensation, the great accomplishments of the past and the immediate future which is before us. It will redeem us from the sins of the world and enable us to live clean and spotless before the Lord, regardless of our surroundings. It is the word of the Lord brought forth through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith for the redemption of mankind, to go with the Bible as an additional evidence and witness to the people of the world that the decrees of the Father are unchangeable, that the words of the prophets will be fulfilled, that Israel will be gathered, and that redemption will come to the covenant people of the Lord. Search the Scriptures, my brethren and sisters, for in them we have eternal life, and they are they which testify of God and of the truth of these things which I have said to you. I pray that we may all become familiar with them, that we may all, through adherence to their tenets, attain to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, Amen.

The closing prayer was offered by Elder Samuel W. Parkinson, President of the Franklin stake of Zion.

Conference adjourned until 2 p. m.