

ELDER RUDGER CLAWSON

My brethren and sisters: It is a thrilling, yes, an almost overpowering experience, to stand before a great congregation such as is assembled here, and endeavor to preach to them the word of God. We have had some very wonderful meetings during the past three days, and now we have come to the last session of the conference. These general conferences recur at regular periods; nevertheless, they always come with a freshness and variety of instruction that is very delightful.

It is not expected of me to present to you any new doctrine. I have no new doctrine to offer, and if there were any such to be given to the Church, it would be the duty and privilege of the President of the Church to announce it, he being the man who holds the keys. This is a principle that ought to be well understood by the Latter-day Saints.

WE ARE DECIDEDLY A CHRISTIAN CHURCH

President Ivins in his remarks yesterday alluded to the fact that the "Mormon" Church is sometimes referred to in the world as being an un-Christian church, that we are not a Christian people. If I remember correctly, and perhaps President Ivins mentioned the fact that in 1893, at the great parliament of religions, the "Mormon" Church was denied admission because it was regarded as not being a Christian church. Now it appears to me that with the facts which are readily at hand and within reach of any investigator, it is easily seen that we are decidedly a Christian church. Ours is the only Church that bears the name of the Savior. It is called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and that alone, if we are sincere in our belief, and we are, is sufficient proof that we are Christians.

OUR STANDARD TEXTS

I have here on the stand the standard works of the Church—the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. These are the works that will be found upon almost every pulpit in the Church, in all our places of worship and in the temples also as well as in the homes of the Saints. Let us pause for a moment and as briefly as possible consider these wonderful books. What is the Bible? The Bible is a book of scripture that contains the word of God as transmitted to his people on the eastern hemisphere; and not only a book of scripture, but a book of historical character, because it deals with the purposes of God and his providences in the journeyings and travels of his people. It covers a period from Adam down to Christ and his Apostles. Somebody might say, "Is that the only Bible you have in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?" The answer is, Yes, that is the only Bible we have. We have other books of scripture, but they are not known and not referred to under that title.

THE HOLY BIBLE

I am free to state on this occasion, in the midst of this great congre-

gation, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts the Bible for what it purports to be. We hold it in reverence, and to us it is a holy book; and a couplet that is very often used in connection with the Bible is very pleasing to us, namely: "Holy Bible, book Divine, precious treasure thou art mine." The Bible sets forth in clearness the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is perhaps its main value. I speak of this because the gospel involves principles that are everlasting in their character. They always existed, and they will always exist. For that reason these principles of salvation are applicable to all times and all nations throughout the world. It must be apparent to anyone who studies the Bible that there were certain commandments given therein, very important and sacred commandments, which do not apply to us. This cannot be said, however, of the Ten Commandments. They are of a general character and their application is general, and, as stated here by one of the speakers, the Ten Commandments form a basis for all law. If they were local commandments they would not apply to us, and would, perhaps, have no particular value in guiding our movements. That fact alone naturally suggests that the Church of God, whenever it is upon the earth, is in need of direct revelation. People require the word of God that is suited to their day and time. The Bible represents very great authority, but it does not impart any authority. Here is a distinction that should always be borne in mind.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon is also a record of scripture. We prize it very highly. We study it and search it, for we claim it to be the word of God. It was written by the hand of Mormon, who was a prophet among the people of the western hemisphere, or America, as it is now known. He was a great prophet among the people in the day in which he wrote. The Book of Mormon had its beginning about 600 years before Christ, and its ending about 420 years after Christ, covering a period of about 1,000 years. Surely anyone who will give the Book of Mormon a careful study will be driven to the conclusion, if he is sincere-minded, that wonderful things were accomplished during that period. The people of the Book of Mormon were called Nephites, after one of their first prophets. Nephi was the son of Lehi, who was the founder of the nation, and surely it was a great nation. The Nephites themselves as a people passed away about 1,400 years ago; nevertheless, they have some representatives still upon the earth. The Lamanite who stood here this morning and bore his testimony, and a very wonderful testimony it was, is a descendant of Lehi through one of his sons who was called Laman, who was a brother of Nephi. The descendants of these men are called Lamanites, otherwise known as American Indians. So we had a Lamanite here to speak to us this morning, and he bore a faithful testimony. It was very wonderful to hear him. He spoke in his own language and it was interpreted by the Bishop of his ward.

Now the principal value of the Book of Mormon, as a standard work of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, lies in the fact

that it contains an account of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is set forth in very great clearness. It is learned through this sacred record that the Savior after his crucifixion visited the people of Nephi. It is not to be wondered at that he visited them, because the Nephites were of Israel, being descendants of Jacob, and could properly be called a branch of the house of Israel. Since the Savior deigned to appear to his own people after his resurrection at Jerusalem, is it to be wondered at that he visited this branch of the house of Israel? Well, the account says that he did visit them, and the record further tells us that he organized his Church among them, and strange to say—and yet I ought not to use that expression—gave to his Church in this land twelve apostles. He also gave to the Church such other officers of the priesthood as were given to the Church in his day. He ordained high priests, seventies and elders, priests, teachers and deacons. The Church of the Nephites, corresponded exactly in every detail with the Church of Christ in the land of Palestine.

Now I tell you, brethren and sisters, there is something very beautiful in a comparison of this kind, something that is faith-promoting, something that is very enlightening.

In addition to the plan of redemption, or, the everlasting gospel, that was given to the Nephites, we have in the Book of Mormon a brief history of their travels and of the ministry of their prophets. It is a book that is published to the world. If anybody should ask me: "Well, isn't it a Bible, isn't it your Bible?" I would answer, "No. It is our Book of Mormon. We do not call it the Bible. There is only one book which has that title. This is the Book of Mormon." If they should say, "Well it is a book of scriptures, isn't it?" We answer: "Surely it is, and we put it forth as such."

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Coming down to our own day we form a distinct and separate people from those great nations that have gone before; namely: the Israelites of the eastern hemisphere and the Nephites of the western hemisphere. We have received the gospel of Jesus Christ in this day and time, and it came to us direct from heaven. We did not get it from any other church or denomination under heaven. We have another book of scripture that is very precious indeed. It has been referred to, as have been these other books in this conference. It is the Doctrine and Covenants, which contains seventy-two to seventy-six revelations, given to the people of our day through the Prophet Joseph Smith and is declared to be the word of the Lord to his Church. Strange to say, and yet I must not use the word "strange," the book of Doctrine and Covenants in its doctrines corresponds exactly with the teachings of the Book of Mormon, and corresponds exactly with the teachings of the Bible. I am, therefore, justified in saying that the Latter-day Saints have three powerful witnesses of the truth of the gospel.

HOW THE BOOK OF MORMON BEARS UPON THE SUBJECT

Now, in conclusion, permit me to read just a few words from the Book of Mormon which have a bearing upon this topic, and are very instructive. Nephi, the Prophet to whom I have referred, II Nephi 28 and 29, uses language somewhat like this:

"Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!

"Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received and we need no more!

"And in fine, wo be unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

"Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!

"For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have."

And again briefly:

"And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible and there cannot be any more Bible.

"But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember the travels and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the gentiles?

"O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, I will return all these things upon your own heads, for I the Lord have not forgotten my people.

"Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?

"Know ye not that there are more nations than one? Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?

"Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also."

God bless you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.