

May God bless this great Church and its leaders and all who labor therein, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ELDER LEVI EDGAR YOUNG

Of the First Council of the Seventy

I pray that I may be guided by the Holy Spirit in what I say this afternoon, on a subject that is of great interest to us all.

Just four hundred years ago there was printed, possibly in Zurich, Switzerland, the first complete English Bible. The translation had been made and secreted and carried over to the Swiss people, who at that time had established a free government. The translator was Miles Coverdale, and his translation became the basis of the English Bible that we study today.

The word "Bible" signifies books, and these books, sixty-six in number, are bound into one volume. It took some fifteen hundred years to write these books by the authors, who were prophets of God, and who gave us the basis of our true religion. No inscriptions discovered by the archæologists compare with it in value. As we all know, there are two Testaments, both of which were written entirely by Jews. The Old Testament narrates the history of Israel, as a background. Every phase of human form of endeavor is revealed with unsparing and yet tender realism, and enriched by poetic accomplishments.

The New Testament, filled with allusions to the Old Testament, contains an account of Jesus, his disciples, his teachings, and his founding of Christianity. There are the four gospels or lives of Christ; together with the writings of Peter and Paul and others of the apostles; and the great vision of John the Revelator, who writes of the New Jerusalem, where sorrow and weeping shall be no more. The Bible is thus the work of many minds, writing in different ages.

When William Tyndale, farther back in time than Miles Coverdale, translated parts of the Bible, he went to Belgium and suffered martyrdom for his work. But the work of Tyndale and Miles Coverdale brought about the translation of the Bible in 1611, which required six years for the fifty-six scholars to translate the old Latin and Greek Bible. The Bible at the time of the Savior was in Greek. It had been translated by Greek scholars in the old city of Alexandria about two hundred and seventy years before Christ.

Interesting to you and me today is the fact that one of the earliest translations of the Holy Bible was made by the Ethiopians far back in the fourth century. The Ethiopians are Semitic. They are descendants of Shem as were the ancient Israelites. The man who today is at the head of the kingdom of Ethiopia is a great character. We have on record, according to a European writer, that he has prayed in his heart that if his people are influenced by the spirit of progress of the western nations, that they might be preserved in their traditions and in their religion.

To give an example: One of the loveliest ideas, I think, that we may learn from that great people, though they are still living their primitive lives, is in reference to the holy day of God, or Sabbath Day. Their king has sent out a decree that as they take upon themselves the civilization of the West, that his people will never do anything to desecrate the holy day of God. We do pray for them, for it is interesting to know that they had one of the first Bibles.

It is said that: "The first leaf of the Mosaic record"—these are the words of John Paul, the German—"has more weight than all the folios of men of science and philosophy," "and he is right," says Geikie, "for we owe to it the earliest and grandest revelation of that first principle of all religion, the existence, the unity, the personality and the moral government of God."

Almost contemporary with the Holy Bible is the Book of Mormon, really the Bible of the American continent. Like the Holy Bible, it was written over a period of years, and like the Bible, it was written by divinely inspired prophets, on papyrus, or on metal plates, then finally all brought together on gold plates, to be found and translated through the gift and power of God, by a prophet of these the last days.

These two divinely written books form the greatest message ever given to the human race. In the Bible we have Moses; in the Book of Mormon, Nephi. In the Bible we have Isaiah; in the Book of Mormon, Alma. In the Bible we have Ezekiel; in the Book of Mormon, Mosiah. All were prophets of holiness. All wrote of the supreme beauty, truth and goodness, and the divine gift of life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. These sacred books all point to one great truth, summed up in what the prophet Moses says, at the beginning of the ancient scriptures of the Old World, when he wrote:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, let there be light; and there was light.

And then, some two thousand years later, Jesus of Nazareth gave us the same message in the holiest words he ever uttered, namely, the Lord's prayer, when he called his people and said unto them:

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.

The holy scriptures express the great truth that lies at the very foundation of true religion: "Our Father in heaven."

The American prophet, Mosiah, also wrote the same message when he said:

The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Should we not more and more read the holy scriptures and know them? How shall we know the truth about them? There is but one way. It is the way that was given us by the ancient prophet, Moroni. He wrote, some fifteen hundred years ago, these words:

Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ.

And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Jesus, the Savior, gave us this same truth, and every prophet has given us the same admonition from then until the present hour: "Seek ye the kingdom of God and the word of God, and ye shall know."

This is our message to the world. Knowledge of God can come in no other way but by prayer and revelation. May we go forth, illuminated as we will be by this great conference, and become a light unto the world, and remember in our hearts always that it is our Father in heaven who is directing his holy work, through the priesthood of God which he has established in the world.

That we may be blessed to this end, I ask, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

ELDER DAVID A. SMITH

First Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I am happy this afternoon, my brethren and sisters, in having this privilege of meeting with you. I have rejoiced in this conference from the very first moment. I find here the spirit of peace and of love, the spirit which comes always when men and women are engaged in the work of our Father, our God.

As I sat here yesterday and listened to the music, and thought of the work of the Summit Stake choir that sang for us yesterday, I saw them gathering in little groups in different parts of their stake, driving four, six, eight or ten miles, one night each week, to a meeting place, to prepare themselves to be of service to their fellows in their own stake. A week ago tonight they drove from their homes to this building, where they practiced for two hours.