

Now, because we make this declaration our Christian friends take exceptions to our course, and look upon us as being exclusive, narrow, bigoted, and accuse us of "unchurching" them. Well, we will have to bear the accusation of being narrow, and contracted, and bigoted; but this is the truth. If it is not true, let me repeat, Mormonism is a deception and a fraud, and is not what it pretends to be. But is Mormonism a Christian religion? If to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as God manifested in the flesh—if to accept Jesus Christ as the means by and through which we shall obtain salvation, and whose atonement was necessary to bring redemption to the children of men—if hope in Jesus Christ as the means of the resurrection and the power thereof, and through whose atonement we are not only set free from the transgression of our first parents, but through whom also we receive forgiveness of our sins on condition of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel—if to accept this thoroughly and altogether, constitutes a people Christian, then the Latter-day Saints have first right and claim to be considered Christians; for these doctrines concerning Christ we accept in their full height, and breadth, and depth, and we believe as fervently as any of them—aye, and more abundantly too—that there is no other name given among men whereby we can be saved, except the name of the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth.

The position of the Catholic Church is that from the days of Jesus Christ and His Apostles until now there has been a continuation of divine authority in the line of succession to that authority which Christ conferred upon Peter, which gave him power to bind on earth and to have it bound in heaven, and to loose on earth and have it loosed in heaven; that while there may have been periods of great wickedness, and here and there a corrupt Pope, yet there has been a continuation of all necessary doctrines in the Church for the salvation of the people. They believe that these conditions have prevailed from the days of Jesus until now—from Peter to Pope Leo XIII.

Protestants, on the other hand, maintain that while the Church of Christ was established; that while Jesus organized His Church, and delivered to men His precepts and His commandments, and gave them hope of eternal life, yet during the dark ages men corrupted the Gospel, the Popes became very anti-Christ, sat in the temple of God, usurped powers and authority which were contrary to the will of God and His hand-dealings with the children of men, and corrupted the Gospel. So that if the Mormon people, to use the Utah Presbyterian phrase, unchurch them, the Protestants in turn unchurch their Catholic brethren; and if they had not found it necessary to so unchurch the followers of the Bishop of Rome, there would be no excuse whatever for the existence of the Protestant sects. Their position, however, is this: that while the Gospel was corrupted, and its divine precepts bidden under the rubbish of human tradition, and Catholic Bishops had become anti-Christ, or his agents, yet during the period of the reformation in the sixteenth century such men as Luther, Zwingle, Carolstadt, Calvin and Knox revived the

simple religion of Jesus Christ. But their position is weak as water, for the reason that if divine authority was lost, if the Gospel of Jesus Christ had become corrupted and taken from among men, then the only way under heaven by which there could be a restoration of these things was by the re-opening of the heavens, committing a new dispensation of the Gospel to the earth, and reconferring divine authority upon some of the children of men by those who held the keys and powers thereof in former ages. This became an absolute necessity; and if they contend, as they do, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was corrupted and divine authority lost, they themselves must see how illogical is their position when they undertake to say that men by their own wisdom and learning restored that which they had not the power to restore.

The position of the Latter-day Saints upon this question is this: They believe, as fervently as either Catholic or Protestant, that the religion of Jesus Christ was founded by Him; that to the Apostles He gave a commandment to go into all the world to preach the Gospel. But they believe, too, with the Protestants, that the time came when through a combination of circumstances—through the bitter and relentless persecutions which came upon the early Christians, both from the heathens and from the Jews, by which persecution, continuing through three long centuries, the servants of God were slain, and naught but weak and timorous men were left to maintain the truths which God had revealed, and that these men, when Christianity came into favor, as it did in the reign of Constantine, were easily induced to engraft upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ heathen nations of God, and accepted part of the heathen mythology and blended this with fragments of Christian truth still held by them, until the plain and simple Gospel, as delivered to the people by Jesus and the Apostles, lost all semblance of its former self. Thus a reign of prosperity and of luxury following upon the heels of their persecution swamped them in a mixture of truth and error; and through successive trials of this character and constantly increasing corruption men who had received divine authority were withdrawn from the people, and the world was left in darkness. We believe that. But we believe that in this dispensation the God of heaven, in fulfillment of numerous predictions of holy writ, has restored both the Gospel in its fulness, and the power and authority to administer in its ordinances, and made men witnesses for God in the earth. This dispensation of the Gospel is the dispensation of the fulness of times, into which will be blended all the former dispensations, even as all streams find a unity in the ocean into which, directly or indirectly, they at last flow. This is the work committed unto us. This is the work that rests upon us to establish in the earth, and which shall grow and increase until it fills the whole earth.

Now I want to defend this work against the charge of its being narrow, and those who accept it as being bigoted; for with these things are we charged; and they stand in the way of our reaching the world, and even our friends that are about us. Is this Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ that we have received a bigoted religion? For the life of me, I have never been able to regard it in that

light. On the contrary, I have found more liberality, more hope, more humanity in it than in any of the sects or religions that it has been my fortune to examine. You take, for example, a statement in the Book of Mormon where the Prophet Alma, in one of those moments of ecstasy which came to him by reason of his success in the work of the ministry, when his heart was filled with a desire that he might with the tongue of an angel proclaim the Gospel to all peoples; and while in the very midst of his joy the Spirit of the Lord seemed to reprove him, for he says,

Why should I desire that I was an angel, that I could speak unto all the ends of the earth?

For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word; yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have, therefore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.

I may challenge all that has ever been written by Christian priests, however broad and liberal, that will equal in its liberality this single passage in the Book of Mormon. I now understand why it was that among that great horde of God's children in Asia a Confucius was raised up to teach them, if not a religion, at least a philosophy that should stand in very good stead of a religion, containing nearly all the primary virtues of morality taught by religion. I can understand now why it was that among the people of India a Buddha was raised up to teach them divine precepts, which, if not embracing the fulness of the truth, at least contained enough to bring them from midnight darkness into the twilight of truth. I can understand now why it was that among the Arabians, descendants of Abraham, a Mahomet was raised up to take the people from worshipping images of wood and stone and lead their minds to greater heights, to better conceptions of God and His attributes. And so among the nations of Europe I can understand why a Luther, a Wesley, a Calvin and a Knox, and all the reformers who have struggled towards the light, were raised up. I can see that God has been dealing mercifully with all His children, leading them along and giving them that portion of the truth which they could receive, and which they would not reject. I say, here is breadth, here is liberality, here is disclosed the wisdom of God, and the fatherhood of God, in caring in a wise manner for all His children. Tell me, where is there anything narrow or contracted in this?

Then again, I read in the revelations of God concerning the nations and generations of men who have lived on the earth when neither the Gospel nor the divine authority to administer it was here, and I am taught that where no law is given there the people will be judged without the law, according to the mercy and the grace of God. Our choir sometimes sings,

Seek no crop where 'twas not planted,
Nor a day where reigns the night.

We look not for men to be judged by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in those generations that have lived not under its precepts and commandments. But broader grows the view as you approach the subject. If the religion of the Latter-day Saints is the narrow, contracted and bigoted religion that it is believed to be, how is it that it teaches that the very heathen shall have part in