



By Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931)
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BUILT UPON THE ROCK

There is no book big enough or good enough to preside over this Church.

Many years ago there came to Utah a learned prelate of [another] church. . . . He had been to a “Mormon” sacrament meeting and had much to say in criticism of our method of administering the Lord’s Supper, particularly our use of water instead of wine on such occasions. He said it made him shudder when he saw the people sipping the water; and he pointed out the fact, for it is a fact, that according to the Bible, the Savior, when He instituted the sacrament among the Jews, used wine, declaring that it was His blood or that it represented His blood. I could add that the Book of Mormon also states that the Savior used wine when He introduced the sacrament among the Nephites.

My . . . friend, whether he knew it or not, had hit upon the great distinguishing feature that differentiates God’s Church from all other churches under the sun—in this, that while they are founded upon books and traditions and the precepts of men, this Church is built upon the rock of



Christ, upon the principle of immediate and continuous revelation. The Latter-day Saints do not do things because they happen to be printed in a book [of scripture]. They do not do things because God told the Jews to do them; nor do they do or leave undone anything because of instructions that Christ gave to the Nephites.

Whatever is done [officially] by this Church is because God, speaking from heaven in our day, has commanded this Church to do it. . . . That is the constitution of the Church of Christ. If we use water instead of wine in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, it is because Christ has so commanded [see D&C 27:1–4].

Divine revelation adapts itself to the circumstances and conditions of men, and change upon change ensues as God’s progressive work goes on to its

destiny. There is no book big enough or good enough to preside over this Church.

In saying this, I speak with all due reverence of the written word of God, that which is printed in the books, part of which may be obsolete, having fulfilled its purpose and been laid upon the shelf [such as animal sacrifices; see 3 Nephi 9:19–20], while the other part is virile, full of life, and applicable to our present state—our present degree of development. But even this part must be interpreted aright. No man ought to contend for what is in the books, in the face of God’s mouthpiece, who speaks for Him and interprets His word [see D&C 1:37–38]. To so contend is to defer to the dead letter in preference to the living oracle, which is always a false position.

What the Lord said to the Jews and Nephites 2,000 years ago or what He said to the Latter-day Saints 50 or 60 years ago has no force whatever at this time unless it agrees with present-day revelation, with the Lord’s most recent instructions to His people through His chosen or appointed servants or servant; and they who ignore this fact are liable to get into trouble. ■

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