

are we removed from God. There is no better test within our reach than this to judge as to the condition of an individual or a community.

I know some people think this unnatural, and, in fact, impossible. They are especially opposed to it because, in order to have such a condition as this, there must be authority and power from God recognized in the community. I cannot conceive of a condition of society like this that does not have an authority in it that is recognized as the authority of God. Were it not so, it would be every man for himself.

Now, the question is, is it a bad condition of society for one man or a number of men who are united, and who have authority from God, to be recognized in a community as authority, and their words to be recognized as words of weight, because of their being inspired of God? Is a community in a dangerous condition with an authority of that kind, and which it recognizes? This is an important question that we as Latter-day Saints have had to ask ourselves a great many times of late, because it has been openly avowed that such an authority in the midst of this people is a dangerous authority, and one that should not be countenanced or obeyed. This has been told us time and again, until many of our own people, especially the young and inexperienced, have almost become convinced that the statement is a correct one. If it is correct, then how are we to bring to pass that which the Lord has promised? How are the grand results to be achieved of which Prophets, and even poets who never pretended to be inspired, have written? There is an almost universal desire among men for a better condition of things than exists now on the earth. Every man that I as had any desire for the welfare of his fellow man has dreamed of it; has indulged in hopes that by some means, incomprehensible perhaps to him, a change would be wrought in the affairs of the earth, and the evils under which mankind groan would be corrected. There is no righteous man that ever lived that has not had this desire and this anticipation. And by what means shall it be accomplished? Shall God Himself come down from heaven among men? He did once, in the person of His Son, and He was slain. He has come down also through angelic messengers. They could not be slain; but those whom they visited, and unto whom they imparted their power, have been slain. The inhabitants of the earth have seemed determined that no man claiming the authority necessary to bring about a better condition of things should live upon the earth. They have wared against every man of this kind, in almost every age, until they have been extirpated from the face of the earth.

But God in these last days has again stretched forth His hand to accomplish His work. God himself has visited the earth, accompanied by His Son Jesus! He has sent holy messengers from on high to restore the key that has been lost, the power and the authority that has been taken from the earth, by means of which these great changes and these glorious ends may be accomplished. And as soon as men were ordained to receive this power the evidences of its divine origin immediately appeared. The spirit of union to which I have referred descended upon the people, producing a union unexampled in the earth,

a union that had not been seen for centuries, which holy men had desired, but had not been able to obtain. What was it, my brethren and sisters, that brought this change? It was the authority of the Son of God—the authority of the everlasting Priesthood. It was that authority that transformed a mortal man, possessed of all the weaknesses common to mortality, into an agent of the Almighty, and gave him almighty power; for nothing short of the power of God would have been sufficient. Angels who held the authority and power, by the laying on of hands endowed men with it. These men were touched, as it were, by the finger of God, and powers were bestowed upon them that no mortal man possessed. In that sense they became as gods in the midst of the people; for that which they did God confirmed and sealed, and their words were fulfilled to the very letter, so long as they confined themselves to this power. Up to that time Joseph Smith, the Prophet of God, had been a translator and a seer. He had received revelations; but he had not power to give unto men the Holy Ghost. He did not have the gift himself, although he was a seer and a revelator; and, of course, not having received it himself, he could not impart it to others. And when the angels laid their hands upon his head, as I say, he became transformed into an agent of the Lord, an ambassador, fully empowered to act in the name of heaven, having authority to seal upon the heads of his fellow men, if they complied with the requisite conditions, the necessary blessing to make them the children of God. Strange and marvelous, is it not? to think that a man endowed as he was, a man that had beheld the face of God, a man that had been ministered unto by angels, a man that had such great and precious gifts, never presumed to have authority that he did not have—the authority of the Melchisedek Priesthood. But when he received the Melchisedek Priesthood, then he was able to seal that precious gift of the Holy Ghost upon the heads of those unto whom he administered. All those unto whom he and his fellow Apostles administered received this gift. And from that day to this it has spread. Men of the most humble origin, unassuming, and without anything in their appearance to convince people that they were more than ordinary men, have gone forth carrying the message of salvation and promising the people, without a doubt ever entering their hearts that the promise might fail, that if they would repent of their sins, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized, their sins should be remitted, and if they had hands laid upon them they should receive the Holy Ghost. How wonderful! How Godlike! One man baptize another, and through the administration of that ordinance the sinner have his sins remitted! Lay hands upon a man, and that man receive the Holy Ghost, that grand gift which was so mighty in the days of the ancient disciples!

Now, this thing has been done in our day, and is being done. By this power the nations of the earth are being warned, and the honest in heart are being gathered. They are drawn to Zion by a magnet, if I may use that illustration, —a magnet that is irresistible—drawing them here from all lands, and everyone that receives it bearing witness that it is from God. They testify that they have a spirit within them that they never

had before, and that the Bible seems like a new book to them. So in relation to other things: they look upon everything pertaining to God in an entirely new light. They testify that they know for themselves that this is the work of God. They do not say they believe; they say they know. Of course, there is a difference in individuals. Some receive a stronger testimony than others. Some are moved upon in a different manner to others. Some are convinced from the very moment that they hear the voice of the servant of God. I have known instances where they recognized men as servants of God before they even knew they were preachers. Others have said, "I have seen you in a dream, and when I met you I knew you were a man of God." Others are slow in receiving a testimony. Still others are very cautious and do not, for fear of deception, open their hearts to believe all at once. They perhaps want something unusual; they would like an angel to come and minister unto them—as though angels had nothing else to do; or they would like some great manifestation of power, not esteeming the presence of the Holy Ghost as a sufficient evidence. We find this difference existing among the people. But speaking generally, the Latter-day Saints have received a testimony concerning the Gospel. They know it to be true. They know it by every sense; in fact, it seems as though a new sense were developed within them. It is not the sense of sight, not the sense of hearing, not the sense of touch, not the sense of taste. It is outside, or inside I may say, of all the senses, more convincing than all of them combined, and something that they cannot explain, only they know it is there, a gift from God, which assures them that the Gospel is true. They are convinced that this is so, and they cannot be persuaded otherwise, because the power and testimony they have is irresistible, and they know it is not from man. And that sense remains with every Latter-day Saint so long as he or she is pure. Here is another evidence that this is the work of God. As long as men and women are pure, that sense to which I refer will always remain with them, because it is the Spirit of God, and it dwells only where purity exists. It will not dwell as one of old said, in an unholy tabernacle. Hence you see this remarkable thing in this Church: men who have testified that they knew this was the Church of Christ have fallen away from it, and sought it. Cases of this kind are almost too numerous to mention. They are familiar to all the people. Men in the humbler walks of life, men who have been preachers of the Gospel, men who have occupied leading positions in the Church, men who have been looked up to as guides, as prophets and apostles—men of every class, where they have lived impure lives and grieved the Spirit of God, have lost that sense to which I refer, and they have been left to depend upon their natural senses, resulting in their going into darkness.

Union constitutes our great strength and our acceptance with God. The Latter-day Saints cannot be united without purity. They would be as weak as water if they were impure. I want to say to you all this afternoon, as a warning, that it is impossible for you to remain in possession of the Spirit of God,