

Articles of faith, creeds they are called in some instances, and disciplines in others, and so on. What are the objects of these? They are not revelation; God had nothing to do with giving them, men wrote them out of their own uninspired hearts, but they were all very careful to take up the ideas inculcated in the days of King James, namely, that the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament were to be their rule of faith, and be their guide and nothing else was to be received as inspired. Oh, how blind! If they did but know it these very declarations in these articles and creeds would cut them off from all authority. But they were just simple enough to receive such a false doctrine; just simple enough to accept their want of authority before God; and thus by their own acknowledgment, by their own printed works they prove to the whole world that God did not establish their churches, that God did not establish among them the ancient order of things; for the ancient church of the living God was never destitute of the spirit of revelation.

If the Lord had left us in this condition, we would have been wandering in darkness to this day. The people who are here assembled, this afternoon, would be no better off than the Protestant denominations, no better off than the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches that have existed from generation to generation, during many long centuries of apostasy. But God, having looked upon the darkness that covered the earth, and the minds of the people, having looked upon the people that were honest in heart, and seeing the dilemma in which they were placed—without inspiration, without any knowledge that comes from heaven in their day, without any one who has the right and the authority from heaven to baptize—concluded to fulfill that which was predicted by the ancient apostles, namely, to send an angel again to the inhabitants of the earth. It was a long time for the earth to be left without angels. Perhaps some of you may inquire, "Why did the Lord leave the people so long? Why did so many generations pass away, and no Church of Christ on the earth, no prophets, no revelators, etc.?" It was because of the apostasy of the people; and then after the apostasy commenced, near the close of the first century, they killed off the apostles, prophets and revelators—killed off the Saints who embraced the true gospel, and the world became so exceedingly wicked and corrupt that the Lord did not see proper to send them any other message. But perhaps you may inquire, must all those people who have lived so many generations ago, go down to an endless perdition in the eternal worlds, because no one had authority on the earth to administer gospel ordinances to them? No; the Lord is more just than this. Every man and every woman that has not had the privilege of hearing the gospel in this life, preached by one holding divine authority, will have the opportunity of hearing it in the world to come; so that there is no partiality, so far as the preaching of the gospel is concerned. But, says one, there is a little partiality, it seems to me; for some have the privilege of hearing the gospel in this life, instead of waiting till the next. But the Lord in looking upon the various generations upon the earth, judges after this wise: that when a people become so darkened, through their own apostasy, through their own wickedness, through their shedding the blood of righteous men, the Lord sees proper, because of this, to make them wait. If the true authority had been revealed, during the time of the administration of these corrupt men, the gospel would have been banished again from the earth. For instance, if God had sent the angel in the second century of the Christian era, to renew his church on the earth, what would have been the consequence? There would have been no place upon all the face of the globe, where the people would have suffered such a church to exist. If he had sent the angel in the third century, or in the fourth, or in any of the centuries intervening, before religious liberty was established, the consequence would have been the shedding of the blood of apostles, prophets and saints again, and in order that they might not bring upon themselves this great condemnation the Lord saw that it was far better to postpone the sending of the angel, until he should prepare, among the political governments of the earth, a nation where the church could exist, and have a little degree of safety. And even our nation, the best nation on the

earth, having the wisest laws, laws that are calculated, if put into execution, to protect all religious denominations, laws founded upon justice and principles of equity—even in our nation, it has been just as much as the Lord could do, without destroying the agency of man to get his Church once more established on the earth. See what persecution has attended it! See what hatred! See the Saints fleeing before infuriated mobs; men, women and children, murdered; prophets, patriarchs, apostles and revelators martyred. The Saints could scarcely find a resting place for the soles of their feet, after all the preparation that was made by the establishment of a great and free government. No wonder, then, that the Lord did not begin it two or three centuries ago; no wonder that he did not begin it in the days when Catholicism and the Greek church had universal sway over the eastern continent. The Church of the living God, if it had been established then, would have been immediately rooted out from the earth; and great would have been the condemnation resting upon the nations if such had been the case. But now it lives. Circumstances have changed, and though the saints have been driven from their homes, and from their farms, though they have been persecuted, and the lives of many of the Saints destroyed, and their prophets put to death, yet, notwithstanding all this the Lord has preserved his Church, until the present time. Fifty years have rolled away, and upwards since the Lord commenced this great work.

Now, then, a few words on the future. Years are to come, as Brother Angus Cannon said to me while sitting on the seat this morning. He came to me, and I mentioned to him that this last year was my fiftieth in the Church—in other words—that I had been in the Church fifty years. A peculiar kind of answer was made by Brother Cannon. Said he, "Brother Pratt, I hope you may have millions of days or anniversaries of your birthday." I thanked him very much. Well, now, let me begin to speak upon this subject. God has promised eternal life to his children. "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." Now, I can see a consistency in the good wishes of Brother Cannon,

upon this subject. I hope for eternal life, I have had this hope for the last fifty years. If I obey the commandments of heaven, if I receive his sayings, and abide in his word, I hope never to die, as it is promised in the New Testament. But, says one, did not Jesus die? and he kept all of his Father's sayings. Did not the apostles die? and they kept the Father's words. And were not all the ancient Saints subject to death? And they kept the sayings of the Lord. Yes, they suffered what is termed the death of the body. There is, however, quite a difference between the death of the outward tabernacle, and the death of the spirit. In other words, the spirit that God has placed within the tabernacle will live forever, and those who have the opportunity of dwelling in the next world, in light, in glory and in a fullness of happiness, get what is termed eternal life; there is no end to it. Consequently it cannot be expressed fully in the language of brother Cannon, that millions of such anniversaries might be enjoyed. But there is something still greater in the expression of eternal life, than that of a few millions of years. It is something that has no end. It may have a beginning. A person may begin to exist in this fleshly tabernacle as I commenced my existence here on this earth sixty-nine years ago to-day. That was the beginning of my existence here in this world; but there is such a thing as a person having a beginning to his existence in the flesh, and yet have no end. Those persons that were translated in the twinkling of an eye in ancient days did not have a separation of body and spirit. They were changed; they were, by the power of Almighty God, wrought upon instantaneously; they were changed from mortality to immortality; but still retain their flesh and bones. Now, I would ask, is there any end to their immortal tabernacles when thus changed? There is a beginning but no end. Their spirits are combined with their bodies forever. I have this hope. You Latter-day Saints have the same hope, so far as eternal life is concerned. You expect it, you pray for it, you desire to have a life that is endless; figures are unable to express the endless duration of ages that are to come. Eternal

life is said to be the greatest gift of God unto the human family. There are many gifts of God, but this is the greatest of all. In the first place, God has given his Son to die for the human family. What a great gift! If it had not been for this gift of our Heavenly Father to the inhabitants of our fallen world, the consequence would have been that we should have had eternal death. What are we to understand by the term eternal death, supposing that there had been no atonement made? What is the meaning of the term? Could you multiply figures enough if you were to take the figures that are now in use and extend them in a line—extend them in a series so that the figures themselves would be as numerous as the particles of the globe—would that express eternal life? or would it express the duration of eternal death, provided there had been no atonement? No; it cannot be expressed. Hence the atonement of our Savior, which is the gift of God to the fallen inhabitants of this creation, lies at the foundation of all the other gifts given unto the children of men. It is because of this gift that we are permitted to repent of our sins. How could there have been an individual upon all the face of the globe who could have repented, provided there had been no atonement? Hence you see that repentance is the gift of God, purchased by the atonement. Again, could baptism have been a holy ordinance if it had no saving power in it? Could it have been for the remission of sins, had it not been for the blood of the atonement? No. Baptism, then, is a gift to the children of men as well as repentance. Would the laying on of the hands have had any effect upon any person of the human family in bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost had there been no atonement? No. Then that is also a gift—the gift of God to man, that his servants should lay their hands upon baptized believers, and that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Could we have been permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper with any effect whatever? No. Then it is also a gift of God unto man. And thus we may go through all the ordinances, that God ordained from before the foundations of the world unto the present time, and all of them can be called the gifts of God unto man on condi-

tions, and some of them without conditions. The atonement came without any condition on the part of man. It was without repentance, without faith on the part of man. The atonement was something given through the pure love of God to fallen man, without any act of good works on the part of man. There are some of the blessings, then, that God has ordained for the fallen inhabitants of our globe which come independent of our works, and this is one of which I have been speaking. Would there have been any light or intelligence, or goodness or happiness, to be partaken of by fallen man, if it had not been for the atonement? None at all; there could have been no righteousness. But then, all the other gifts that we receive are through works, and by faith and works combined, and it is because of the distinction between these two separate gifts that many of the inhabitants of the earth have erred. Some of them profess to believe that they can obtain all the gifts of God without works, because of some of the sayings of the ancient apostles; while others consider that works must be combined with faith. Now both of these ideas are true when taken in their true light. Eternal life is among all those gifts that are promised of God; such as the gift of repentance, baptism, laying on of hands, etc. All these are not to be compared with the greatness of the gift called eternal life. I hope that all the Latter-day Saints under the sound of my voice may attain to this, the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Now, I wish, before taking my seat to bear my testimony before the people here assembled. I do know by the power of God, by the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost upon my heart, by the revelations of the spirit, by the many manifestations of the goodness of God to me, I do know that God has sent his angel from heaven. I do know that he has raised up the great latter-day kingdom predicted by Daniel. I do know that he has called apostles and prophets; that he has sent forth his servants divinely commissioned, with power from on high, to declare to the nations of the earth the great and last message of mercy unto the inhabitants thereof, to prepare all those that are willing to be prepared, for

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