

the keys of that authority. So great a prophet was he, and held in such high esteem by heaven, that he was selected out of all the children of men to baptize the Son of God. No greater prophet was ever born of woman. Yet it is said of him that he did no miracles. Why was he such a great prophet? Because he had the distinguished honor of leading the Son of God himself into the waters of baptism and immersing Him in the waters of Jordan, to fulfill all righteousness. He was beheaded, but he held this authority; and he was sent to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and they solemnly declared that he laid his hands upon them and ordained them to the same authority that he held. No one else on the earth held it at the time.

But John the Baptist said, after he baptized the Jews, "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He did not profess to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. That did not belong to the authority which he held, and John the Baptist did not transcend his powers any more than any other servant of God will. He did not pretend to bestow a blessing that he was not authorized to bestow. Many men would say, "If I have the authority to baptize, I have the authority to do something else." But John the Baptist did not. He kept within the prescribed limits of his authority. He had the authority to baptize in water for the remission of sins. He had not the authority to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. He bore testimony, however, to the mission of the Son of God, who held that authority. Joseph Smith received the authority to baptize, and men and women who were baptized by him received, if they were baptized according to the conditions prescribed, the remission of their sins. But this was not all. It was necessary that more authority should be given. There was yet remaining to be received the authority to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. And who should come to bestow that? Where could it be obtained on the earth, it having been taken from among men? For the same reason that John came, it was necessary that other angelic beings should come. The Son of God while on the earth ordained Apostles. On one occasion he said to Peter, after Peter had borne testimony that He was the Christ, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." He gave Peter these keys and authority. It was great power. You will remember that when the people of Samaria received the Gospel and were baptized by a man who had the authority to baptize, but not to confer the Holy Ghost, some of the Apostles were sent to Samaria, and they laid their hands upon the Samaritans who had been baptized, and they received the Holy Ghost. Now, Peter, James and John had this authority, and these three Apostles, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery testified, came to them, laid their hands upon them and ordained them to the same authority that

they had—that is, they ordained them Apostles; so that once more upon the earth the Apostleship existed, and this Apostleship embraced all the authority that God gives to man on the earth. And Peter gave to Joseph Smith the keys that he held, in order that the authority might be once more among men by which the gift of the Holy Ghost could be bestowed.

No sooner did this authority rest upon these men, and they began to baptize, than a storm of persecution—the same storm that had attended the exercise of that authority in ancient days—again began to rage. It is a strange thing that in this enlightened age the same spirit that had sought to destroy the work of God should again appear among men. Everything evil that could be said about Joseph Smith was said. He was persecuted. His kindred and everyone that embraced the Gospel as he taught it were persecuted. And, as I have said, his sole crime consisted in teaching the Gospel as it is recorded in the books that have come down to us. He said to men: "If you will believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, be baptized for the remission of them by one having authority, and have hands laid upon you, you shall have the Holy Ghost, and your sins will be remitted." What was there about that doctrine that men should get angry at it? Is it not the same doctrine that was taught by the old Apostles, and for which they were persecuted and slain? It is precisely the same. He did not say, "I am some superior being; worship me; look upon me as your Savior." Men might have got angry at a statement of that kind. But he said, "I am a humble follower of Jesus Christ. He has chosen me to be His servant. He has given me the authority to promise to you that if you will repent of your sins and be baptized, you shall have the remission of them, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost." And he said further, "If you doubt my words, ask God, in the name of Jesus, for a testimony, and you shall receive it." What more could any human being say than this? Yet this persecution continued to rage, and the people who believed in his teachings became the objects of it. A strange thing to say, that in our day men and women who believed such a doctrine should be driven from their homes, their property taken possession of, and their lives threatened! As I have said before, it would seem incredible if we did not know that such things had occurred. We can read of them in bygone times, and the wonder arises in our minds, in reading such events, how it was possible for people to become so excited and have such deadly hatred to men who taught and believed in such pure doctrines. Yet it is a matter of record, attested by numerous witnesses, that such was the case in ancient days. We know that those who then believed in Jesus were subjected to all manner of persecutions—to the most violent tortures and the most dreadful deaths. And as we read about this we wonder at the cruelty and the blindness of the people who were guilty of such atrocious deeds. The names of the men who perpetrated these things have come down to us and we execrate their memories. When we wish to

give strength to a description of cruelty we use the names of these persecutors of the followers of Jesus. Would it not seem incredible that in our day, with all these illustrations that have come to us, in this very land of ours, and under this glorious form of government, similar persecution should be practiced, and that men and women should suffer death because of their belief in the principles which Jesus and His Apostles taught? Yet such is the case. The Latter-day Saints were compelled to leave Ohio because of the persecutions that they endured. It was as much as their lives were worth to stay there. Joseph Smith had almost to leave the State by stealth. Brigham Young, who had achieved some prominence at that time, had to leave in a similar manner, besides numbers of others; and they had to flee to Missouri to escape the vexatious attacks of those who hated them. In Missouri they were treated in a similar manner. They were driven from Jackson county into Clay county, their houses burned, their property destroyed; from Clay into Caldwell county, and from Caldwell county out of the State. Many of them died through the suffering they had to endure. They were driven out in the midst of an inclement winter, and some of them shot down like so many wild beasts. And what was it for? Because they believed that God had spoken from the heavens, that the Gospel had been restored in its primitive purity, and that the gifts of the Gospel were again enjoyed by men who obeyed the commandments of God; because they sought to walk in the old paths, and contended for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Of course, all manner of falsehoods were told about them. They were blackened, because it was necessary to do so, just as, in the days of Rome, it was necessary to blacken the Christians. The Christians were accused, when they met in secret to partake of the sacrament, as we have done today, of sacrificing children and partaking of a cannibal feast. That was one of the stories circulated to excite the prejudices of the populace and to justify the atrocities that were practiced upon them. So in our day it has been necessary to blacken the characters of the Latter-day Saints, to accuse them of the vilest crimes, to attribute to them the most base conduct, to make that which was done to them appear justifiable in the eyes of the world. We used to be accused of living by theft, before we came to these valleys, and that we were a lawless band. That was the cry that went out from Nauvoo, and it was said that travelers were not safe. These stories were told to justify the terrible wrongs that were practiced upon us. We had to be driven out, and what excuse could men have for driving an innocent people? Lies had to be told, just as they were about the early Christians. Their names and their characters were made as odious as possible, in order that all men would hate them, and that there would be no sympathy for them. It has required generations to vindicate their memories and to clear away the mists of misrepresentation and falsehood which surrounded them. We proved when we came here that we were not thieves, and that we could live without stealing. Then something