

these doctrines has involved, in many instances, very grave consequences. It has involved loss of friends, the alienation of kindred, the hatred and persecution of those who were not willing to receive the doctrines themselves. Therefore, it has been a matter of the first importance that men and women should know what they were doing—that they should have a testimony from God concerning the doctrines presented to them. And then, in order to gather as they have done to these mountains it was necessary that they should have a testimony concerning that. For this reason, they have been urged continually to seek unto God to know these things for themselves.

This is one of the labors connected with the great mission we have to perform. It is to lay the foundation in the earth again of that faith that was once delivered to the Saints, and which the Apostle said we should contend for; it is to bring God near unto us, or, more properly speaking, for us to draw near unto Him.

The Lord, as I have said, has made great promises: one of these promises is, that if we will draw near unto Him, He will draw near unto us. He has made this promise to every member of this Church; He has made it to this generation. If we will draw near unto Him, He will draw near unto us, He will hear us, He will answer us, He will grant unto us the desires of our hearts, so far as those desires are in righteousness. We are living witnesses of the truth of this. The Church, collectively, has proved that the Lord has spoken the truth in making these promises; for who can read the history of this Church without being compelled to acknowledge this? Think of that which we have passed through from the beginning, the dangers to which we have been exposed, the vicissitudes which we have had to encounter, the many times when it has seemed as though we should be overwhelmed, and when there seemed to be no possible escape, and yet the people have been delivered from every peril and from every danger and have been brought to this present day to witness the peace and quietness which we now enjoy! Thus have the promises of God, made to His servants in the beginning of this work, been literally fulfilled. Never in the history of our race has there been a greater, a more palpable and tangible fulfillment of God's promises unto the children of men than that which this Church in its career has illustrated. Every page of its history sustains that which I say, How often has it been the case, when we have been enveloped in darkness, our path hedged up, and an apparently impassable barrier before us to prevent further progress, environed on every side by dangers, and our destruction threatened—how often, I say, has God, by His miraculous power, opened the pathway and prepared a way of deliverance, and the people have escaped from these perils uninjured! Not only can we say this in regard to the Church, but it has been so in regard to individuals. I suppose the major portion of this congregation, if the opportunity were given them and time would permit, could rise to their feet and testify that this has been their individual experience as well as the experience of the Church. They could testify that they had received the fulfillment of the promises of God themselves, and

that they knew God lives and hears and answers prayer that is offered to Him in faith.

As I have said, it is one of the duties of our mission to establish faith in the earth, and also to set examples to the children of men. Through the lack of faith on the part of our fathers and the traditions which have come down to us from them, we today occupy a very low plane, so far as God and Godliness is concerned. The world has made great progress in many directions; but the spiritual decline of the world is perhaps more apparent than its growth in other matters. There has been a complete decadence spiritually. Faith has declined, spiritual growth has ceased, and God's power is not recognized among men. Men have grown into the belief that there is no necessity for His power. The spiritual part of man in this age is dwarfed, stunted, stifled, and the growth of mankind is altogether one-sided. Now, this is not right, and God will correct it. He will be acknowledged in the earth. The day will come when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him. The cause of this decay in spiritual matters is due to false doctrines, to false teachers, to men professing to be ministers of Jesus Christ and yet denying the power of God. Instead of stirring the people up to seek for the gifts and graces that adorned the Church in ancient days and for the power that the members of the Church possessed, the effort has been apparently to stifle every aspiration of the human soul after higher things and after greater faith. Who of you does not know this? There have been thousands in the various nations of the earth who have felt that they would make any sacrifice if they could only be placed in such close connection with God and with holy men as previous generations had been when the Gospel was preached in its purity. Many of you, before you embraced the Gospel, have had these desires in your hearts, and you have gone to professed ministers of Jesus Christ and asked them concerning the gifts that existed in ancient days and why they were not enjoyed now. What has been the answer? In every instance that I have ever heard of, the answer has been that these things have ceased, there is no longer need for that power; God has given the Bible, after having established His Church by the aid of miracles and extraordinary power, and such manifestations are no longer needed. In this manner teachers professing to be followers of Christ have stifled the aspirations of the human soul, and have done everything in their power to smother the desire that would grow up in the human heart after those things which God revealed to the ancients. The result is, spiritual starvation exists today, and almost universal ignorance prevails concerning God and His purposes, His Gospel, and the plan of salvation. The sources of knowledge have been stopped up by the want of faith on the part of mankind, until today men harden their hearts against these things and reject them.

Now, the Lord has established this Church. The Latter-day Saints do not pretend that they have derived their authority from any human source, nor that the Gospel they teach is from man; it is from God. Men have wondered and been shocked sometimes, at the statement that angels have visited the earth again. It is so contrary to all their traditions and to all the ideas that

they entertain concerning the operations of the Almighty. But when you look at it candidly and understandingly, how else—by what other authority—through what other medium—could men be delivered from the dreadful condition in which the world has been placed? If not from heaven, from what source could men expect to receive divine authority, light and knowledge? Could they get it from their fellow men? Why, they are split up into hundreds of sects, having many forms of belief, and no one with authority to say, "this is the right way."

What avail then would it be for any of the children of men to seek for relief from men? There is no other way that I can see this could be accomplished only by the heavens being opened and angels coming down from God with the authority which had been withdrawn from the earth—the authority to act in the name of God; for every man must perceive, if he reflects a moment, that God is too exalted and occupies too high a position to allow men to act in His stead without receiving authority from Him. How can man presume to do so; for he who does so is most presumptuous, and merits the condemnation, and will no doubt receive the severe punishment of a just God. There was only one way by which this great reform—reform is too weak a word—this great revolution—and that does not cover it exactly—could be effected, and that was by the Lord Himself sending messengers from Himself with the power to give this authority to man. No other way can suggest itself to my mind. It required angelic ministrations. Why? Because so far as mankind knew, there was not a man upon the face of the whole earth who had the authority to administer in the things of God. They had killed every man whom they could find that bore this authority, and everything had gone into darkness, the Church had fled, so to speak, into the wilderness, and the authority which God gave was withdrawn from the earth, because mankind were determined that no man who held that authority should live among them. As I have said, so far as we know there was no man upon the face of the earth that had the authority to administer the ordinances of salvation to his fellow man or to give unto him the authority by which he could act in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was, therefore, perfectly logical and reasonable that if the Priesthood or authority came back to earth again, it would have to be brought by men who once held it in the flesh. Hence John the Baptist came to give unto man the authority of what is known as the Aaronic Priesthood—the same authority that he held while in the flesh, and by which he baptized the Son of God Himself. He bestowed that authority upon his fellow servants, as he condescended to call the two—Joseph Smith and his companion—upon whom he laid his hands. It was proper that he should do this, holding as he did the keys, being a literal descendant of Aaron, and having the authority of that Priesthood by descent as well as by the selection of the Lord. He was designated by the Savior as one of the greatest of the prophets. John the Baptist did no miracle, so we are told, but there was no greater prophet ever lived than John the Baptist; for he had the distinguished and unique honor of baptizing the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

When that Priesthood was restored