

the administration of these ordinances. How can men expect the Holy Ghost to rest upon them when they do not obey the ordinances which bring that precious gift? How can they expect any other result than that the Lord will withhold the gift of the Holy Ghost when they refuse to obey the ordinances necessary to obtain it?

I have alluded to these ordinances to show that there is some ground for the testimony of the Latter-day Saints that the everlasting Gospel needed to be restored to the earth; that unless something were done to restore it there could be no enjoyment of the gifts that characterized the ancient Church. Hence, if a man were to ask me, "How shall I know which of these various sects is true?" I should tell him that he must look around for a church corresponding in its organization, in its teachings, in its claims, in its gifts and blessings with the ancient Church which Jesus founded.

There is a great diversity of sects at the present time, each one claiming to be the Church of Christ. There is confusion in the world, and men are distracted almost by the claims that are set up by various organizations. It is no wonder that men throw aside religion entirely and say they want none of it, and that thinking men should feel disgusted, so to speak, with the claims that are set forth in behalf of these various denominations. Here in this city of ours we have already quite a number of organizations of this character, each one claiming to be the Church of Christ. Suppose our young men and young women were to go around, if they had not accepted the Gospel as taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and ask which one of these is correct, what confusion would necessarily follow the inquiry! Here is a church organized that denies the divinity of the Savior and the atoning power of His blood. Others believe that His blood is all that is necessary to salvation. One believes that one form of organization is correct; another says that a different form is the correct one. They are known as churches not by the name of Jesus Christ, but by the names of the founders. These zealous men, believing that reforms were necessary, left the bodies with which they were connected and formed new organizations and they were called after their names. And these have multiplied in the earth until there is no end of confusion, strife and contention concerning the plan of salvation and the true path for men and women to walk in to obtain eternal life.

In the words that I have read in your hearing the Apostle had this condition of things in mind. He advised the people to whom he wrote to try the spirits, whether they were of God or not; and one of the signs—a most important one in that day—was whether the spirit would confess that Jesus was the Christ. That was the crucial test in those days, because Jesus had been born a little while before and had been crucified, and He was denounced as an impostor and a man worthy of death. Therefore, the Apostle could well say, "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." But that rule would not apply today with the same force that it did then, because

the belief in Jesus is almost universal. Times have changed. Jesus is now accepted, and there are comparatively few men who will openly avow their unbelief in Jesus. But the same reasons exist now for trying the spirits that did then, to see whether they are of God or not. I hope no one will think I am sacrilegious, or that I am lowering my Savior, when I say that when I hear a man confess that Joseph Smith is a Prophet I think he has some of the Spirit of God within him, because it is a good deal of a test nowadays. A man who will admit that a man who lived such a life as Joseph Smith is reported to have lived, and died such a death as he did, is a Prophet of God satisfies me as to whether he is speaking by the Spirit of God or not. Tests vary according to times and circumstances. That which might have been a very excellent test 1800 years ago might not be so much of a test now. Yet when a man today confesses Jesus he does speak by the Spirit of God. There is no doubt about that. That has not changed. It is the Spirit of God that prompts men to acknowledge Jesus, just as much now as it ever did. But it is not such a test now as it was in ancient days. There were very few then that dare do it; and whenever they did it, they did it, it may be said, almost with the fear of their lives before them, because the whole world was arrayed against the Savior, and ready to pounce upon any man who acknowledged Him to be the Son of God.

But we can test the spirits now. Everything that is good cometh from God, I care not where it may be. Do other churches have good in them as well as the Church of Christ? Certainly. The Greeks had good among them. They had truths among them when Paul and the other servants of God proclaimed the Gospel at Athens. When they preached in Rome there was good among the Romans. It would be folly to say that the servants of Jesus were the sole possessors of all the truth there was in the world, as it would be for us, claiming to be the Church of Christ, to say all the truth of the world is in our possession alone. This would be a preposterous and absurd claim that could not be sustained by facts. There is truth throughout the earth. Men are possessed of it everywhere. Even the pagans possess it, and according to the light which they have and their lives being in accordance with that light, they are accepted of God. Every sincere man who lives up to the light that he has is accepted of God to that extent. Before God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, revealed the everlasting Gospel in this dispensation, there were great numbers of faithful men and women living on the earth, and according to the light they had, lived acceptably to God. You have known them, doubtless. I have heard of them. Among my own ancestors, among your ancestors, among the ancestors of all the members of this Church there were people of this description, living up to the light that they had, worshipping God to the best of their knowledge, receiving from God a portion of His Holy Spirit, filled with good thoughts and holy aspirations, leading moral lives, and doing unto their neighbors

what they would have their neighbors do unto them. The earth had many, many such people in it, and the various sects had these people in them. And so it is today. Our Elders are commanded to go out and find these people; to find the honest, the meek, the humble, and the people who want to know about God. We are sent out with this message to the inhabitants of the earth—to proclaim the glad tidings that the silence which has been unbroken for so many centuries has at last been broken and that God has revealed Himself; that He has restored the everlasting Gospel in its perfection, with the Holy Priesthood; that He has organized His Church according to the ancient pattern. Our Elders constantly bear this message and this testimony to the inhabitants of the earth.

John, in this chapter that I have read, makes a remarkable statement. I was reminded while reading it of a similar statement that is made in one of the revelations that the Prophet Joseph received. John says, "We are of God;" [no question about that in his mind; he says this in no doubtful tone, but in the most positive terms] "he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." In section 84 of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants the Lord, in speaking through the Prophet Joseph, says:

For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit; and every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father; And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world;

And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin;

And by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not unto me.

For whose cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin;

And whose receiveth not my voice is not acquainted with my voice, and is not of me;

Now here is the expression:

And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groaneth under sin and darkness even now.

This corresponds exactly with what John said. The two Apostles received the same ideas, through inspiration from God, and both have recorded those ideas, one upwards of 1800 years ago, the other within sixty years. This is the rule by which we may know that the world groaneth under the bondage of sin.

There is this that every human being who has joined this Church knows: that when he heard the testimony of the servants of God there was a spirit in his heart that bore testimony to him that that was of God, that that voice was of the True Shepherd. Thousands have stifled that feeling within them. I believe there have been thousands who have visited this tabernacle