

He had retired to bed; after praying he saw a light again descending from heaven. In the midst of this light was a personage of glory, who presently stood at his bedside. The heavenly visitant told Joseph that his name was Moroni, that he was an angel from the presence of God, that once he had been a Prophet upon this American continent and was the last of a race of Prophets who ministered unto a people called the Nephites, whose ancestors came from Jerusalem in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah, 600 years before the birth of the Savior. Moroni told Joseph that in a hill some distance from the place where he lived were hidden some golden plates or records, giving a history of the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their wars, their civilization; the birth, growth, decline and death of their nation, and telling how the Savior, after He had been crucified at Jerusalem, came to this land and established His Church, with Apostles and Prophets, with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the workings of miracles, and the same principles that were preached on the eastern hemisphere, at Jerusalem and other places. He told him that these records were to be translated by the gift and power of God, that interpreters would be found hidden with the plates, and that these records were the stick of Joseph, spoken of by the Prophet Ezekiel, which should be joined with the stick of Judah, the Bible, and should grow together in the last days for the putting down of false doctrine and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

The speaker next related the visit of the Prophet Joseph to the hill Cumorah and the finding of the plates as directed by the Angel Moroni.

Unlike the Book of Mormon, he said the Holy Scriptures have for hundreds of years passed through the hands of uninspired men, who have taken away from the Bible some of the plainest and most precious parts, and involved the rest in mystery, so that people are confused and bewildered regarding their meaning. This is one cause of the dissensions and differences of opinion which prevail in the Christian world today.

Joseph Smith, the speaker showed, received many visitations of angels, including John the Baptist, who bestowed upon him the Aaronic Priesthood, the authority to preach the Gospel of repentance and baptize by immersion in water for the remission of sins; also a visitation from Peter, James and John, who conferred upon him the Melchisedek Priesthood, with power to lay hands and bestow the Holy Ghost, until he was fully equipped in knowledge, wisdom and authority to build up, with his associates, the Church and Kingdom of God. On the 6th April, 1830, in the little town of Fayette, Seneca County, New York, six men met together agreeable to the laws of the land, which required at least that number for such an undertaking, and organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

I need not rehearse here in detail the experience of the Church since then—gathering from New York and Pennsylvania, and the eastern lands to Kirtland, Ohio; abandoning Kirtland because of persecutions and apostacies, and going to Missouri only to be cast out and expelled in the depths of winter before the inhuman decree of Governor Boggs, who commanded the militia of the State to exterminate the "Mormons" or drive them from the land. Suffice it that 15,000 men, women and children were driven forth from their plundered homes, leaving their bloody footprints on the hard-crusted snow, their path made bright before them by the light of their burning dwellings and ravaged fields, flying in haste from Missouri and throwing themselves upon the hospitality of the kind-hearted people of Illinois—for at that time they were kind-hearted, and nobly opened their arms to receive the homeless refugees. But the clouds of persecution again gathered. The heavens again filled with blackness, the tempest of man's wrath burst over the heads of God's people, and finally they were again compelled to forsake their homes, driven before the bayonets and cannon of a ruthless mob, and performing a journey, unparalleled in history, of 1,500 miles from the borders of civilization, until the inspired mind of Brigham Young, halting on the bench east of this city exclaimed, "This is the place; here the Temple of God will be built, and here the Saints will be gathered and become a great and mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains." This was in fulfillment of a prophecy left on record by the Prophet Joseph in the summer of 1842.

We are here in the mountains of Ephraim, in the chambers of the everlasting hills, according to the words of the Prophets, ancient and modern, and they who have driven us from place to place have only fulfilled the prophecies, pushing us, though with a bloody hand, with a mailed arm of oppression, on to our great destiny.

We are suffering for our religion, and we expect to suffer for it, just as men and women in all ages have had to suffer who have been brave enough, independent enough, free enough from the traditions and prejudices of the world around them to rise up and say, "I am willing to forsake all—father, mother, husband, wife, children, home, possessions, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ through good and through evil report." This is the spirit that has gathered to these mountains, from nearly every nation under heaven, this people called Latter-day Saints—people who were once Methodists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, infidels, or what you will, all having been baptized into one spirit, and, instead of quarreling and contending among themselves, receiving for their God the true and living God, for their faith the ancient faith restored, for their baptism the true baptism, and have taken as their guide the Holy Spirit which

has been poured out upon them from on high.

The world thinks the Latter-day Saints are deluded, that it is the cunning and wisdom of man that has brought this aggregation of people of different creeds and climes together and moulded them into one homogeneous mass. But they are mistaken. It is because each member of the Church of God has received for himself or herself a knowledge that these things which I am now telling you are true; they know that Joseph Smith did receive a visit from the Father and the Son; they know that he did receive the Book of Mormon in the way that he declared. They have received the testimony of the Spirit of God, though they dwelt among nations far over the sea; received under the hands of the servants of God, who have power to bestow the Holy Ghost, this testimony which they now bear to the world.

The cunning and the shrewdness of man could not bring such a people together. Why, if it were earthly considerations that had brought this people here, they would have been scattered to the four winds long before now; they would have followed the example of craves and cowards, traitors and apostates in all ages. They would fly over to the stronger side at the first approach of danger and persecution. Earthly considerations! No; these are not the inducements that have brought the Latter-day Saints together, although many of us seem to give the lie to this declaration. We are too prone to seek after the things of this earth, and neglect our high calling and forget the great example which we should set to the world; but down deep in the hearts of all true Latter-day Saints there is a knowledge, a testimony—whatever little inconsistencies their actions may manifest when compared with their claims and professions—that these things are true. This is the secret of their unity. This is the binding power which welds them together—not the hope of gold, silver and merchandise—not the hope of earthly gain, or of worldly popularity.

Notwithstanding the boasted claims of this generation, to freedom, independence, and liberality, I expect to see the time when the spirit of intolerance will prevail to a much greater extent than it does even now. It may yet be as much as a man's life is worth, to say, "I know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God." But we won't anticipate trouble; we will wait and pray God that we may have strength for every trial. God will not permit this work to be destroyed. There may fall martyrs for the truth, but this Church, this kingdom which was predicted by Daniel and all the holy Prophets who have gone before, will stand, and never be thrown down or given to another people; no matter who may apostatize, whoever may fall, whoever may suffer martyrdom. "Blessed are dead who die in the Lord," and blessed are they who live in Him, in order that they may be prepared to die whenever death shall come.