

darkest Africa, to the lowest—to the most degraded of the children of men, and you shall find this universal tradition of our race. It counts for nothing that it exists under crude forms. It exerts a powerful influence in their lives. They have held to the general idea. From that extreme go to another. Go to the civilized races of men, where education has attained its greatest triumphs; and there you shall find the presence of this tradition in full force. The intelligence, the education of those who hold it has not made it dimmer, but brighter than where you find it among the savages. And between these two extremes, in every land and every clime, humanity has held to this grand old tradition. I pray you, do not hold even the heathen into too great contempt. I grant you that here and there you may find them worshipping at the shrines of stocks and stones. Images, rude and repulsive, carved by their own unskillful hands, seem to receive their homage; but, I pray you, accord even to the idolatrous heathen a better understanding than to believe that he thinks that the mere stock or stone before which he bows is indeed God. Not so; you shall find it but the representative of an idea standing back of the material object: you shall find it standing up before him merely that he may have an object to which he may immediately address himself, an object representative, perhaps, of some one or other of the many attributes which he at heart believes that the Supreme Power possesses. I think I see in this idol worship the proof of the existence of another doctrine that was once stamped upon the minds of man in ages gone by; and that is, the necessity for a medium through which man can approach God; in other words, a mediator to stand between man and God. Think you not that it came from the grand Christian doctrine known from the earliest ages, that God would provide a Mediator for mankind, one through whom they could approach the Eternal Father? A Mediator who should interpret God to them? However much this original idea may have been buried in the rubbish of heathen tradition, I nevertheless believe that this idolatry of the heathen holds in it the evidences that originally man understood that God the Father would have a Mediator between Him and the children of men, even Christ Jesus, the Lord. This line of evidence, founded on tradition, is not to be scoffed at. I know not how unbelievers in God can explain it away. I pray you, young Latter-day Saints, think upon it, respect it, hold to it as the beginning of your reasons for faith in God, and one of the lines of evidences down which testimony of a very positive nature comes to you of the existence of God.

But mark you, the testimony of tradition is not all. It is simply one line of evidence, among others, to which I want to call your attention. But in these lectures on faith the testimony of tradition is exalted by the Prophet Joseph, and he lays it down as a doctrine that it is by means of the teachings of the fathers that men first come into possession of the idea that God exists; but once in possession of this idea, men are prepared to begin to exercise faith in God. The incentive to action, the motive for obedience to God and His laws, is planted in the heart by this tradition, according to the Prophet Joseph; and acting upon the probability created by this belief in God, men sought by obedience, by works of righteousness, to find God, and they found Him. The veil was not sufficient to shut them out from the presence of the Creator. Through it they burst until at last, a Moses stood in the presence of God and conversed with Him as a man converses with a friend, and learned the facts

concerning the creation of this heaven and this earth; and his mind, illumined with this splendid knowledge of the grand reality of God's existence secured to him through faith, he came back to the children of men, his face shining with the inspiration that comes from contact with God, and bore testimony to the grand truth of God's existence. And Moses henceforth was able to describe the character and attributes of God for the instruction of the children of men. So were others who had obtained like privileges both before and since his day. The testimonies of these worthies in various ages of the world come down to us in the holy scriptures. The testimony of Enoch, of Abraham, of Joshua, of the prophets and kings of Israel; and at last the testimony of the Son of God Himself, of His Apostles, and the Elders who labored under His personal direction,—all these as well as Moses testify of God's existence; and their testimonies collected together and preserved by devout souls, come to us through the scriptures. Add those volumes of testimony to the evidence that you find in tradition and behold how the argument becomes strengthened for the existence of God!

The Latter-day Saints are particularly favored with more testimony of the men of God in past ages than any other people on the face of the earth. We sometimes boast a little perhaps of our good works; we boast of our faith; and yet we have no right to boast. We have no occasion for any particular self-congratulation only in the fact that we possess, through the grace of God, more of His word, more of His revelations than the rest of the world have received. In addition to the testimony of the Jewish prophets we have the testimony of the Nephite prophets. These scriptures after slumbering in the dust for ages, lo! the earth is opened, an angel from God reveals their existence—a new volume of scripture is brought forth in the Book of Mormon and we possess double the testimony that the world possesses. And since we possess twice the testimony, ought it not to follow as a logical sequence, that we ought to have more faith than the world, that we ought to have more righteousness than the world? You have increased the causes; shall not the effect be increased? So, Latter-day Saints, you have nothing to boast of. God hath doubly blessed you. You ought to repay Him by twice the faith, twice the devotion and double the good works that are to be found in the lives of other people. I would cry out, shame upon the Latter-day Saints, if they could not point to more achievements for God than the world can point to, seeing that they have double the amount of evidence on which to base their faith. And this does not begin to tell it all, either. You sing sometimes about the half of a thing not having been told. Why, bless your heart, we have scarcely pointed out a fraction of the thing we have in hand. We have the testimony of prophets peculiar to our own age. The stream of inspiration to us did not end at Patmos, no more than it began in Eden. The stream of revelation between the heavens and the earth is renewed in our day. We have prophets and apostles now, an inspired Priesthood, to hear record of the great fundamental truths of the religion of Jesus Christ—of the existence of God—the truth of the Gospel. Add their testimony of tradition, then, to the testimony of the Jewish scriptures, to the testimony of the Nephite scriptures, and do you not stand surrounded by such a cloud of witnesses that it would be a positive shame for unbelief or unfaithfulness to rear its head among the children of the Latter-day Saints? What excuse shall our young people offer if ever they wander from the path

that God has marked out for their feet? And how great must be the condemnation that will rest upon them if ever they prove recreant to the things that God has revealed unto them! And yet, there are those who in the face of all this would dare to deride God and to refuse obedience unto the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints, parents in Israel, how anxious ought you to be if your children go away in unbelief and infidelity under all these favorable circumstances for the establishment of faith!

And yet another line of evidence, which unites with these already pointed out to you. David, in one of his glorious outbursts of inspiration said: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

The testimony of Moses, of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah may be locked up for many generations in the Hebrew language, and may not for a long time become universal testimony for men; the testimony of the Nephite Prophets may be locked up in the mystery of the Reformed Egyptian language used by them; the testimony of Prophets today may for a season be limited to those nations who are visited by them and who can understand their speech; but God, all over the broad heavens, hath written the evidences of His existence; and, as Paul puts it: "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and God-head, so that they [unrighteous men who deny God's existence] are without excuse." And when you turn away from the dome of heaven inlaid with suns and planetary systems, and with the microscope search out the secrets locked up in the world of atoms, you again meet evidences of the existence of God; and also see proofs of His wisdom, power and glory.

Now, my brethren and sisters, unite these three lines of evidence—twist them into a three-fold cord, and you shall find that it is not only not easily broken, but in my judgment, unbreakable. And when you take all these evidences into account is there not laid a foundation for faith in God? Is there not around you and about you that which hymns the great truth of God's existence to your souls? Our text says that the first thing necessary to the exercise of faith in God is the idea that he actually exists. Surely, the evidence of tradition, the testimony of those who have sought and found God, and the evidence of the works of nature lay a sufficient foundation for that idea.

But, "secondly, a correct idea of His character and attributes," is essential to the exercise of faith in God.

I take it for granted that the men and women under the sound of my voice this afternoon know what a struggle after righteousness means. I take it for granted that you know how hard a thing it is to subdue this mortal clay, and make it subservient to the will of God. You know how hard it is to curb a proud spirit and make it walk in proper humility before God. You know how difficult it is to put a check upon the appetites and to refuse to indulge in those things which the appetites suggest. I am speaking to men and women who know how hard a thing it is to control the lusts of the heart and the pride of life, and live in harmony with the Spirit and promptings thereof that come from God,