

that were addressed to them concerning the Deity. They themselves were unable to make explanations, and adopted this method of checking the desire that naturally arises in the human mind to know something concerning our great Creator. In the same manner people were silenced when they asked questions about the gifts and graces, blessings and powers that were enjoyed in ancient days by the people of God. They were told that those things were given in that age for certain definite purposes, but were now not necessary, and that it was improper to expect in these days miracles, gifts, and manifestations of the power of God, such as were enjoyed anciently by the servants of God. In this way the natural inquiries of the people were stifled, and, as I have said, thousands revolted against this, and rejected entirely belief in Deity. Yet with all this there was in the minds of many people great anxiety to know the truth. They were not satisfied with the teachings that they received, and they were eager for more light.

This was the condition of mankind, at least in the English-speaking countries, when the Prophet Joseph received his manifestation from heaven. Through his great faith, and because God had chosen him for this mighty work, he was able to obtain knowledge from on high. He received the most glorious manifestations that any human being ever received upon the earth, so far as we know. God Himself, and His Son, Jesus Christ, condescended to reveal themselves to him and to give him knowledge concerning the course that he should take. It seems now, when we look back and view the condition of the world at that time, that it was absolutely necessary that such a revelation as this should be given. The ignorance that prevailed throughout the world concerning the Deity was such that it seemed necessary that someone should receive just such a manifestation. God chose him as His instrument, and He manifested Himself and His Son Jesus Christ to him. From that time forward, therefore, there could no longer be any doubt as to the personality of God. He showed Himself as a personage of tabernacle, and His Son Jesus Christ was, as the Scriptures say, the express likeness of His Father. This knowledge having been communicated to man, it laid the foundation for faith in God. While men knew not the character of God, knew not the nature of the Being whom they worshiped, it seemed to be impossible for them to concentrate their faith sufficiently to obtain the blessings that were promised. But when it became known that there was a man upon the earth who testified that God was indeed the Being such as the Scriptures described, and that Jesus was like Him, then men could approach Him as they could their father, with the full assurance that He would hear and answer them, and with a certainty as to the character of the Being whom they prayed to and worshiped.

At that time, as doubtless all of you are aware, there was no belief whatever in spiritual manifestations. No one scarcely dared to assert that angels came to the earth. I well remember in my childhood the sensation that was produced within me when I heard the Elders declare that angels had come to the earth. Men were not prepared to believe such a thing possible, and the

moment they heard the Elders declare that angels had come to the earth again they were ready to close their ears and their hearts against anything they might say; for they looked upon it as the grossest fanaticism, emanating from Satan. The Elders of this Church, including the Prophet Joseph himself, had this to contend with to an extent which our young men and women of this generation can scarcely conceive of, because from that day until the present belief in spiritual manifestations has grown until it is now almost universally believed that it is possible for men to receive communications from the spirit world. At that time it was one of the chief charges against Joseph and those associated with him that they believed that angels came to earth; and those who persecuted the prophet most before the Church was organized were men who professed to believe in all that was written in the Scriptures concerning the power of God. The reason for this is very plain when we look back and examine the condition of affairs at that time. It was because men's hearts were filled with the idea that it was an impossibility; that God had withdrawn Himself to such an extent that there would be no manifestation from Him such as had been enjoyed in ancient times; that there was no longer a necessity for it, the Bible containing everything that was necessary; that God had done His work, so far as the inhabitants of the earth are concerned, and had given them the Bible, and by the people believing in that they could obtain salvation.

But, as I have said, there were thousands of people scattered throughout the lands where the Elders visited who were anxiously waiting for God to reveal Himself in some manner so that they might know the truth, and when the Elders went forth they obtained great success in gathering out these souls. It is a remarkable fact that those who have embraced the Gospel from the beginning have been men and women, in nearly every instance, who were waiting to know something about God; who were not satisfied with the churches to which many of them belonged, feeling that there was something deficient in them; and many of them were praying to God for greater light to be given and for power to be manifested such as was enjoyed in ancient days. It is very interesting to listen to the testimonies of the members of this Church concerning their feelings previous to hearing the Gospel—how their minds were exercised and the great desires that they had that they might behold a servant of God who had the authority that was exercised in ancient days by the disciples of the Savior. Questions innumerable were propounded to the teachers of the various denominations, asking them to give reasons for the disappearance of the miracles, gifts and powers of the true Gospel, but no answer was given that was satisfactory to these searchers after the truth. I say it is remarkable how universal this feeling was among those who joined the Church. It was not confined to the United States, but the Elders found it in the British Isles, in Scandinavia, in Germany, in Switzerland, in France and in all the countries where they have visited. I myself, in my labors, have found hundreds of people, not only of our own race, but of other races on the islands of the sea, who have asked the question, "Why do

we not have in these days the gifts and blessings that were enjoyed by those who belonged to the Church of Christ when He was upon the earth?" When Joseph testified that God had restored the Gospel, the only fear in the hearts of thousands who heard it was that it might not be true. They feared it was too good to be true. Under the influence of the teachings that they had heard many were in doubt concerning it and hesitated about accepting it; but there were thousands who, as soon as they heard the testimony of the Elders that the Gospel of the Son of God had again been restored to the earth, were ready to be baptized. In this manner God confirmed the revelation which He had given to His servant. He poured out His Holy Spirit upon thousands of honest souls, so that when they heard the testimony of Joseph and those whom he sent forth they would know for themselves that it was indeed the work of God, and that the testimony concerning the restoration of the Gospel and the organization of the Church upon the earth was indeed true. God raised up, immediately, as it were, a host of witnesses; and those witnesses have increased from that day forward, until now men of almost every nationality can be found who testify that they know for themselves that God did reveal Himself to Joseph Smith, and that Jesus gave unto Joseph the authority to organize His Church upon the earth with the gifts, graces and powers that were enjoyed when He himself was upon the earth.

A great change has been wrought in the earth through the declaration of these truths. Men have had their minds opened, and the Spirit of God has moved upon many to receive the truth. The testimony of God's servants has had the effect to enlarge men's understandings, to increase their faith, and to bring them nearer to God. Now it is the exception for people not to believe in spiritual manifestations. Mankind have received this idea—not in the right way nor attended by the blessings that accompany the true belief; nevertheless, men's minds have become emancipated, to a very great extent, from erroneous ideas concerning the power of God. It is very common now to find people who, while they do not believe in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, believe in spiritual manifestations.

It is difficult, as I said in the beginning of my remarks, to comprehend the greatness of the work that has been accomplished by the revelation of the truth to the people. There was a time when religious people believed that this world was created out of nothing. Joseph taught to the Church and then to the world that matter is eternal. A more startling doctrine could scarcely have been taught at that time. It was as startling in its place as the doctrine that he taught concerning the power of God and the gifts of the Gospel.

The statement that the elements of this earth were indestructible and eternal, and that they were organized by the power of God, and not created out of nothing, produced a profound sensation. Now this belief is almost universal. The religious teacher who would attempt to advocate anything else would be probably scoffed at. The Lord revealed that truth to the Prophet, and he taught it to the people.

The Lord revealed also the truth concerning the place that is known as hell.