

spirits gone forth into the world and there are many influences brought to bear upon the minds of the children of men. There are many creeds, doctrines and views propagated industriously by those who entertain them, and unless we cling to the truth and pursue the path which our Heavenly Father desires His children to walk in, with all our claims, and the promises which have been made unto us, we are as liable to go astray as any other people. If we treat these things as matters of no importance, and are careless and negligent in relation to that which we believe, and to those whom we follow, we are sure to err.

There are some principles which have become firmly rooted in the minds of the Latter-day Saints. It is a difficult thing to cause them to doubt in relation to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, baptism for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. These principles seem to be clearly understood, and in them the people are apparently fully indoctrinated; and though men may deny the faith, in one sense, and turn away from the path of righteousness, and dissolve their connection with the church, yet they will cling, in most instances, to what we term the first principles of the Gospel of Christ; and it is a very rare thing to see those who have been members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints turning away and joining what we call sectarian churches. If they leave this church, it is an exceedingly difficult thing for them to connect themselves with other denominations, because the scriptures are so familiar to them, the principles contained therein are so plain to their understanding that, unless there is some speculation, some mercenary or other end to be gained by their alliance with people of other creeds, they are very apt to stand aloof; that is, where they have a thorough understanding of the principles of the gospel.

But there are other principles more advanced with which the people are not so familiar, and of this the adversary seeks to take advantage; and when men deny the faith, they are apt to deny these principles; and when they get into the dark, there is probably no point upon which they differ more frequently than that which relates to the authority that is exercised in presiding. This is a point that the adversary always aims at. I suppose it was so in ancient days. We read of false prophets then, and also of men turning away; and there is no doubt but what the rock upon which they split was the question of the right and authority of those presiding over them.

It seems as though the adversary, in the day in which we live, seeks, by every means in his power, to undermine the influence and the authority of the man whom God has called to preside over His people. If you will observe, you may perceive in what direction the shafts of the adversary are aimed. In the days of Joseph, he was the man against whom all the enemies of truth hurled their malicious shots; his life was sought, his character assailed, and his influence was derided. He was the target at which every arrow of calumny and hatred was aimed, and the man to whom all eyes were directed. He was held up before men as an object worthy only of their hatred and derision, to be scoffed at, despised and killed.

Did anybody hear then of others who are now prominent? Yes, President Young's name was talked about, but not as at present; but Joseph's name occupied every tongue. His deeds, or rather his misdeeds, as his enemies were pleased to call them, occupied every one's attention. His actions were scrutinized and misrepresented, and everything pertaining to him was made the subject of comment and reproach. It was the case from the hour that he received the plates of the Book of Mormon, until the day of his death. All those who were members of the church during his lifetime, can bear testimony to this. Other Elders were comparatively lost sight of; they were merely looked upon as satellites. He was the great object of suspicion. His name was the watch-word of the foes of the Kingdom of God; and mobs banded themselves together in unholy compacts, in order that they might bring to pass his overthrow and shed his blood, imagining that, if they could only kill him, this work, which men call "Mormonism," would crumble to pieces, because there would not be cohesiveness enough in the system to hold it together after the master-mind had disappeared. But no sooner did he pass away than all this hatred, all the derision, animosity, calumny and slander, which had been directed to Joseph, was transferred to Brigham Young, and he was made the object of vituperation; and the target at which every wicked man should shoot. His deeds and character were paraded abroad, and everything pertaining to him was canvassed and held up, in many instances, to public scorn and ridicule. Such has continued to

be the case from the days of the prophet Joseph up to the present time.

There were others during Joseph's day, who professed to have the authority which he possessed, or, as they said, which he had once possessed. At one time, in the early days of the church, there was a number of elders, among whom were some of the Twelve Apostles and one or two of the First Presidency who banded themselves together and declared that Joseph was a fallen Prophet, that he had taught correct doctrines, that he had been the instrument in the hands of God, of revealing the truth and of bringing forth the Book of Mormon, restoring the holy priesthood and of organizing the church; but that he had fallen. The doctrines which he had first taught were correct, they said, and the position which he first assumed was acceptable in the sight of God; but through some cause, he had strayed from the path and had become a fallen prophet. Said they, "we now have the right and the authority which he once had. We have the right to organize the Saints, to build up the church and carry out the work of which Joseph was the founder, but which, through transgression, he has forfeited the right to lead."

There was one peculiarity, however, connected with these pretenders, which distinguished their course from that pursued by Joseph: Instead of being the subject of all the evil remarks, all the calumny, all the hatred, slander, bloodthirstiness and denunciations applied to the prophet Joseph, singular to state, when you take into consideration the pretensions of those men, the wicked hailed them as brethren, consorted with them, became very brotherly, very fraternal, and looked upon them as very good, clever fellows. But the hatred towards Joseph did not diminish, in fact their conduct only tended to increase it and to make his life, and his every deed more odious in their estimation, and in the estimation of those to whom they published his deeds. This was also a peculiarity which attended all who aimed to lead the church without having the authority so to do.

At Joseph's death a crop of these pretenders sprang up. There was Sidney Rigdon, who contended that he had the right to lead the people. The Church was fourteen years of age, he said, and it had the right to choose a guardian, to lead the people and conduct its affairs as its President, and he would be that guardian. James J. Strang also aimed at the same object. He had angels, he said, to visit him; I do not know but he told the names of the angels; but, if my memory serves me right, he affirmed that Joseph appeared to him, blessed him and bestowed upon him the keys and the authority. He also showed a letter bearing the postmark of Nauvoo, which he pretended had been written by Joseph, giving him (Strang) the authority to preside over the Church, in the event of anything happening to him. Others stood up in a similar manner: John E. Page, Lyman Wight, William Smith, and afterwards, Charles Thompson.

All these men arose, claiming that it was their right and privilege, by ordination or by special appointment, to take charge of the Church. But the Church then, as on many occasions previously and since that time, was able, through the light which its members possessed, to discriminate between the voice of the true and false shepherd. Still this peculiarity,—being hailed as brethren by the wicked, characterized them, in Nauvoo, as their predecessors in New York, Kirtland and Missouri. Instead of being hated and calumniated, and men seeking their lives and persecuting them, they were hailed with seeming pleasure and satisfaction. Men bade them "God speed" and urged them forward to claim the rights they called their own. But against Brigham Young, our President, the old feeling of animosity, that had been entertained against Joseph, existed with as great bitterness and intensity in the minds of the enemies of the Kingdom of God as had it existed during the lifetime of Joseph against him.

President Young, according to the statements of the wicked, re-enacted all the evil deeds, as they were termed, that had been attributed to Joseph, and for which they killed him. Brigham became the inheritor of all that animosity and hatred that had been manifested towards Joseph during his lifetime; and when Joseph slept in a bloody grave, the enemies of the Church turned their attention to Brigham Young, his legal successor.

If the Saints had wanted evidence in relation to who was the right man and who had the authority, the very fact that the world hated, reviled and persecuted Brigham should have been sufficient evidence that he was taking the path which Joseph had trod, and that his course was pleasing in the sight of Heaven, and consequently hateful in the sight of Hell.

There are rules, my brethren, which were given in the early days of the Church, respecting the Presidency of the Church. In the revelation which I have just read in your hearing, the Lord plainly sets forth to the Church what course He would have it take in relation to the keys that had been bestowed by Peter, James and John upon Joseph; and that we may not be deceived He gives this rule:

"But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him, for if it be taken from him, he shall not have power except

to appoint another in his stead; and this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; and this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me. For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received, and shall receive through him whom I have appointed."

The Lord here made express provisions as to who should hold the keys of the kingdom, and how those keys should be held, and the manner in which the authority should be exercised. Men have pretended that angels have visited them, and that, in consequence they must have authority. This was the pretence made by James J. Strang. But he did not understand that the oracles had been given through Joseph, according to the revelation given in March, 1833, to the Church. Others had also had the keys given unto them to enable them to exercise the power and authority which Joseph held. Now we may come to this conclusion: that God, having once bestowed the keys of the holy priesthood on man here on the earth for the up-building of His Church, will never take them from the man or men who hold them and authorize others to bestow them. If you will read the history of the Church from the beginning, you will find that Joseph was visited by various angelic beings, but not one of them professed to give him the keys until John the Baptist came to him. Moroni, who held the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim, visited Joseph; he had doubtless, also, visits from Nephi and it may be from Alma and others, but though they came and had authority, holding the authority of the priesthood, we have no account of their ordaining him, neither did Joseph ever profess, because of the ministration of these angels, to have authority to administer in any of the ordinances of the Kingdom of God. He never baptised anybody, nor attempted to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost; and, in fact, he never attempted, that we have any account of, to exercise any of the functions of the holy priesthood. He was a prophet, it is true, but a man may be a prophet and yet not have authority to administer in the priesthood. The prophetic gift, to some extent, is distinct from the priesthood. Joseph had received the prophetic gift and he exercised it and he acted as such prior to his ordination. But when the time came for him to be baptised, then a man who held the keys of that priesthood came to him and laid his hands upon Joseph's head, and upon Oliver Cowdery, and set them apart, and gave them authority to officiate in the Aaronic Priesthood, which priesthood held the keys of baptism and so forth.

John had the right to baptise when he was upon the earth; he held the keys of that priesthood. He baptised Jesus by virtue of the priesthood which he held; and those keys had not been taken from him. At the time when Joseph Smith was ordained, there was no man on the face of the earth that held the keys of the priesthood and the authority to ordain him. If there had been a man in the Greek, Roman, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal or any other church extant upon the face of the earth, who had the keys of the priesthood, Joseph Smith would not have been ordained by an angel, because the keys would have been here and been bestowed by the man who held them. But you might have searched from pole to pole and traversed the wide expanse of the earth from continent to continent and visited all the nations of the earth and enquired of them if there was a man in their midst who had the keys of the holy priesthood and who claimed the authority which was exercised in olden times by Peter, James and John, and the rest of the servants of God; but you would of heard no response in the affirmative. None would have stood up and said: "I have this authority." Throughout christendom, throughout the entire Mahomedan and Pagan world, you could not have found a man who professed to have this authority. No; it had been driven from the midst of mankind by the violence of wicked men, who, shed the blood of those who held those keys and that authority; and it had gone back to God who gave it, and dwelt there; for the men who held it dwelt in the presence of the Almighty.

Hence, when Joseph Smith desired baptism, though angels had visited him and had ministered unto him, though he had heard the voice of God and Jesus Christ, though he had been called to be a prophet, he had not the right and the authority to go forth and administer the ordinances of baptism, neither had any living soul, to do it legitimately. It was necessary that he should be ordained; it was necessary that those keys should be restored; and hence how proper it was for John, who held the keys and had had been beheaded by a wicked king, should come and restore them? Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery testified that John came and laid his hands upon their heads and bestowed upon them the power and authority to administer in the holy ordinances of the gospel.

When they were baptized, and had received the authority to administer in that ordinance they did not attempt to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost; that was a separate and distinct power from the Aaronic priesthood. John says, in the third chapter of Matthew, eleventh verse: "I indeed baptize you with water

unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

John did not profess to have the authority to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. We read in no part of the scriptures of his exercising any such authority. He had the authority to baptize, the power which pertained unto his priesthood, being a descendent of Aaron, and baptism was one of the ordinances which pertained to the Aaronic priesthood; but he had not the right to lay on hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. It was necessary that that authority should be conferred; but who held that power in ancient days? Why, Peter, James and John, who had been ordained by Jesus to the Melchisedec priesthood, or the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, and having exercised that authority while on the earth in the flesh, they came bearing the keys of that Melchisedec priesthood, and laid their hands upon Joseph Smith and ordained him to the power which he subsequently held, as the President or head of this great and last dispensation of the fullness of times. By virtue of those keys he was empowered to lay hands on those who were baptized in the name of Jesus, by legal authority, and to confirm upon their heads—upon the heads of the honest in heart, the blessings of the gospel and by virtue of these keys they had the right to build up the church of God in all its ancient purity and glory, and to preach the gospel in its fullness, with its gifts and blessings, and to send men abroad as ministers of life and salvation to the nations of the world, the same as Peter and those associated with him. Said Jesus: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Peter therefore held those keys. What wonderful consistency on the part of the Lord, that He should descend from heaven and confer those keys on men here on the earth!

There are men who say that Joseph was an unlearned imposter; but how strange it is that, if an imposter, he should take the exact course, established in the economy of Heaven for the salvation of mankind; and that he should claim the authority, through the administration,—first of John the Baptist,—and then of Peter, James and John, the apostles.

The keys of this priesthood were bestowed never more to be taken from the earth; hence, in the revelation I have read, provision was made by the Lord that Joseph, in case he should fall, should ordain another in his stead, and he should have authority only, to lay hands on and set apart some one to act in his place, in case he should prove unworthy. Thus, even from the beginning, the Lord seems to have held constantly before him the possibility of his falling away. He was a young man, and like every man, he was apt to get lifted up in the pride of his heart; therefore, God reminded him that he only held the keys as long as he should be faithful to the truth. But in a subsequent revelation, the Lord informed him that he should hold the keys in this life and in the life to come, and they should never be taken from him.

By virtue of the ordination he received, Joseph had the right and the authority to confer this priesthood upon others. He called twelve Apostles, and they were ordained under his authority by the direction of the Lord, and those twelve were endowed with the keys. Previous to his death, the Prophet Joseph manifested great anxiety to see the temple completed, as most of you who were with the Church during his day, well know. "Hurry up the work, brethren," he used to say,—let us finish the temple; the Lord has a great endowment in store for you, and I am anxious that the brethren should have their endowments and receive the fullness of the priesthood." He urged the Saints forward continually, preaching unto them the importance of completing that building, so that therein the ordinances of life and salvation might be administered to the whole people, but especially to the quorums of the holy priesthood; "then," said he, "the Kingdom will be established, and I do not care what shall become of me."

These were his expressions oft repeated in the congregations of the Saints, telling the brethren and sisters of the Church, and the world that he rolled the Kingdom on to the Twelve, and they would have to round up their shoulders and bear it off, as he was going to rest for awhile, and many other expressions of a like nature, the full meaning of which the Saints did not realize at the time.

Prior to the completion of the Temple, he took the Twelve and certain other men, who were chosen and bestowed upon them a holy anointing, similar to that which was received on the day of Pentecost by the Twelve, who had been told to tarry at Jerusalem. This endowment was bestowed upon the chosen few whom Joseph anointed and ordained, giving unto them the keys of the holy Priesthood, the power and authority which he himself held, to build up the Kingdom of God in all the earth and accomplish the great purposes of our Heavenly Father; and it was by virtue of this authority, on the death of Joseph, that President Young, as President of the quorum of the Twelve, presided over the Church.

The enemies of the work of God had