

SERMON BY ELDER JOSEPH LUFF,

At Logan, Iowa, October 9, 1892.

Subject, GOD IS.

FROM the third chapter of Ecclesiastes, we select the fourteenth and fifteenth verses: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past."

In connection with this we read a portion of the ninth verse of the sixth chapter of Matthew's record concerning the gospel: "Our Father which art in heaven."

One of the main objects that we as ministers have in preaching to the people is, to impress their minds with a knowledge of the fact that God *is*. The majority of them believe that God *was*, and that God *is* to be again some day, but the thought that God *is*, is another question. In the two sermons delivered from this stand to-day, there were noticed prominently two portions of Scripture that I may have occasion to use to-night; the object being not so much to avoid the track or road that has been canvassed or covered by previous speakers, as to reach the minds and convince, if possible, the judgment of the people as to the truth of the work we represent. We have no particular ambition that looks in the direction of making people recognize us as able speakers, but we have an ambition that we believe is warranted by the Almighty who has appointed us: it is to convince the people of the important fact that God has directly and specially authorized us to do just what we are doing. And what makes it of interest to us may also make it of equal interest to those who hear; and if to-night I shall by supplemental remarks follow somewhat in the line of the speakers preceding me on this stand to-day, what shall be said in that line will be with a view to emphasizing one or two important thoughts, and, perhaps by other means or methods of presentation, reach certain minds that may thereby be more readily affected than by others: and in pursuit of this thought impress them with the fact that God *is*. In making this effort we have found it necessary to directly appeal to the counsel of God given in

time past, emphasized by what is called to-day, modern revelation.

In the first place, we believe that God *is*, because he has told us so; and if God was worthy of belief in any age of the world he ought to be worth believing now; and if he declared in earlier years that he was unchangeable, no man living at any later period of the world's history should have any reason for refusing to accept the evidences of that unchangeability when they are proffered of that God. As Latter Day Saints we have accepted the announcement made in the Scripture in regard to this important fact, and we have given evidence of this willingness by holding our hands open before him to receive the tokens of the correctness of that claim when he has shown himself willing to furnish them to us; hence you find us willing to freely proclaim in the hearing of the people that such things as characterized the experience of Christians eighteen centuries or more ago are characteristic of the experience of those whom we represent now. In fact, we know of no other way of identifying God, the unchangeable God, than by the very landmarks that he has furnished us for that purpose. If God should act in any other way to-day than he acted eighteen hundred years ago, after furnishing us with information as to how he acted then, we could not identify him; we would most naturally suppose it was some one else doing the work, because it was so unlike anything that God had ever inspired men to record with reference to himself. And it seems most reasonable to your speaker, to say the least, that when a people making a claim of this kind appears in your midst there ought to be a disposition of heart and mind on the part of the populace to carefully read and examine what is presented by way of certificate as to the claims being urged.

I believe what is recorded in the New Testament Scriptures regarding the Almighty not simply because the men who bore that record are all dead. I would just as soon believe a live man as the testimony of one who has been dead a thousand years; but I accept this testimony because it has been handed to

me or has reached me through channels that have along the line of these men furnished evidences of its authenticity; and it makes an appeal to me in a way that is reasonable, and suggests that if I am in anywise disposed to question the matter after I have read the word, or what is therein set forth, God, the claimed author of what is set forth therein, has placed it within my power to test the matter for myself; and the reason why ministers and members of the Latter Day Saints Church are found to-day so earnestly engaged in what is called the bearing of testimony, is because they have accepted this challenge, if you will; they have honored the gauge that was extended to them by the Almighty by which it was made their privilege to learn whether or not the great God of the heavens, who so kindly dealt with a portion of his family eighteen hundred years ago, is or is not still *our* Father.

I do not know that I am particularly interested in learning just what was the condition or what were the experiences of the people referred to in this New Testament, so much as to learn whether or not, as an individual living centuries later than they lived, I am in any way interested in the question that interested and affected them so favorably. I can read some things in profane history that are interesting; I learn a great many things therefrom in regard to good that was enjoyed by men of former times; but that which attends *me* in this life, that which surrounds me and forms my present environments, forbids my hope for their repetition, and suggests to me the important fact that personally I need feel no direct interest therein; but when I take the Bible, which professedly contains a message from God, I want to know who this God is, and why I should be particularly interested in him. Ministers stand up and ask the question: "My dear sir, is it possible that you are so pitifully ignorant as to find it necessary to ask a question of that kind?" They say, "God is *your* Father and *our* Father—*our* Father." "How do you know?" I ask. "Because the Book tells us so." "What! Is God equally responsible for my creation, my personal existence upon the earth, with the existence of those of whom this book speaks?" And they tell me yes, and in proof of it they call attention to the verse found in the seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, certifying that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined [make the language] the

times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." When those men who are interested in my spiritual welfare present this scripture to me, expecting me to believe it, I analyze it and learn from it that God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth, and beforehand determined the times and the bounds of their habitation. This pledges me at once, when I believe it, to the conclusion that God is just as much responsible for Joseph Luff being born in 1852 as he is for Peter, or James, or John, living in the first century of the Christian era. The times were determined beforehand, and not only is he equally responsible for my living at this time and being born when I was, with their birth and the times and circumstances thereof, but he is also equally responsible for the fact of my being born *where* I was. The *bounds* of their habitation is included in this foreordination or provision that is referred to here; and I naturally come to the conclusion that if he is a wise God and if wisdom is an attribute of this Father, then I am pledged further to the conclusion that God caused the creation and the coming into existence of Peter, and Matthew, and Paul, and James, eighteen hundred years ago, because it was wiser and better in his sight that they should live then than that they should live on the earth at any later period; and the same kind of reasoning pledges me to the belief that God thought it would be better for your speaker of to-night to live just in the age, and at the time, and in the country that he has been born in and has lived in, than it would have been for him to have lived eighteen hundred or more years ago.

Now, all of this, to your speaker's mind, follows naturally enough while pursuing the legitimate line of thought that has been started by reading just such a passage of Scripture as I have called your attention to, announcing the fatherhood of God and the common brotherhood of man. One year ago, here, under this same tent, I called your attention to a statement made by the Almighty through the Prophet Malachi, recorded in the second chapter and the ninth and tenth verses of that record. It is in the nature of a complaint that God urges against the priests there for having presented him before the people in such a way as to make the impression that he was partial in the law, that he had pets among his people. He says: "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" Why, then, are you "partial in the law?" Where, in other words, is the authority under the government instituted by the Almighty, for believing that God has any special favorites, or what we would call in common parlance of to-day, "pets," among those whom he has created? Why should he love a son of to-day less than

a son he brought into being eighteen hundred years ago? Is it to be simply on the ground that he was born later? If there is any sin in that, the sin belongs to God, for he ordained it beforehand; the text says, he determined the bounds and the times of their existence, and he should not hold me accountable for any mistake he may have arranged to make himself: and when persons put the Bible in my hand as a channel of information to me, I ask the question of them, How far does it appear that I am interested in this work? they instantly refer to such passages as I have called your attention to, which certify to the unchangeability of the character of God, certify to the fact that God is impartial, or in his own language, "is no respecter of persons," and in regard to Jesus Christ, as an elder brother, that he is "without variableness or shadow of turning."

It seems, then, that all the speaker of to-night, representing this part of our philosophy, is under obligation to do in order to prove what he stated at the outset; viz., that God *is*, is to pick up this record in which they professedly believe and from it gather such testimony as will fix in their minds the fact that God *was*. Why, when the Almighty spoke to man and gave him information as to the message that he was to bear, he did not say to him, "I was," or "I will be," but he says, "I am." The eternal significance belonging to that utterance has its relation here to-day. If God will select his Moses as a deliverer of the people from the spiritual bondage under the thralldom of which they may be found suffering, it seems to me that in appointing this messenger and giving information in regard to his divine purposes in relation to this part of his creation, he could use no better language than he did when appointing the former Moses. "I AM hath sent me unto thee." Hence, turning to this record and finding statements of this character, I want to learn further as to what were the characteristics, what was the disposition of this unchangeable, impartial God; and learning of them, I want to know what attitude was the most pleasing unto him in the day that our information dates from, what attitude on the part of those he was dealing with on earth was most pleasing to him; and learning of this, of course I am pledged to the belief that an unchangeable Father will deal in like manner with all of the children later born, providing they will assume and retain that same acceptable and pleasing attitude in his sight. Now, have you any logic under heaven, have you any reasoning that you can introduce here to-night that would gainsay such a conclusion as this in the face of these announcements? If you have, I would like to hear of it.

One portion of the text I have read in your hearing makes the announcement that what God doeth he doeth forever; nothing can be put to it, nor nothing shall be taken from it, and he doeth it that men shall fear before him. Now you will pardon me for putting that in other words, but to give emphasis to the idea or sentiment embodied in it I will state it in this way: that what God did once he never needs to apologize for, and having

done it once, he did it with reference to the race and not with reference to a few pets of his; that he did it in the exercise of infinite wisdom so that no circumstance, no exigency later on in the career of any portion of his family later born, would ever be a surprise to him by revealing the inapplicability of what he once ordained to the necessities of such a case; and if you want my further reason for believing that, I find it in the next verse. I confess that I read that verse when I was representing another religious body and popular church in Canada I suppose as many times as the average reader of the Bible, and to save my soul I could not find anything in it; and even after I came into the church, when there was no specific need, I was not able to make an application of it; but not a great while ago when some of the thoughts I am referring to were passing through my brain and I wondered whether or not there was to be found in the Bible a single text of Scripture that was expressive of the thought that God doing a thing does it forever, and in such a way as to put it past the possibility of his ever needing to apologize or authorize men to apologize for him because of its inadaptation, if you will, or its lack of potency or relation to emergencies that might arise. Now this verse that I refer to says, "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." Well, what does that mean? It means that human necessity in the spiritual sense is always the same; that there will never occur in the spiritual necessities of man, anything that has not already been or that which has not been provided for, "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been;" and there can no condition confront any portion of the human family, the brotherhood of man, the children of God, that has not been provided for in what was ordained at the commencement, when the Almighty conceived of and brought into existence and put into execution a plan of redemption through the mediation of which he was to demonstrate to all who would submit it to the experimental test, that he had made of one blood all nations of men and proposed to take care of all of them alike. He had no favorites among them, but lest men should make any mistake when they reached a conclusion of this kind, he has this clause inserted, and it is found in the last part of the verse as I read it: "And God requireth that which is past." If we expect either in the present or in the time to come that the Almighty will meet the necessities that confront us, we must expect that he shall meet them only in the way in which he met them in the interests of others in the day of which the Bible speaks—when we show ourselves willing to subscribe to the same things that God required in the past; and that is why Latter Day Saints preach baptism for the remission of sins to-day, because God required it in the past and has no apology to offer to you or me for having so ordained it. He did not do it as a specific requirement at the hands of a few, eighteen hundred years ago, but it was an ordinance for the race, and when this Jesus came as the

Mediator of the gospel covenant—came among men—he came fittingly and properly in the meridian of time, and, stretching those arms of his that were to cover infinite and eternal interests—one hand in this direction and the other in that, and in the utterance that he was to voice in their hearing then, he intended that one hand should reach back to the Adamic period, when God sent forth from his plastic hand one whom we look upon as our earthly parent, Adam; the other hand stretches down and it covers the necessities and the interests of all who live or shall live until the crack of doom shall be sounded and the end of earthly probation shall be declared, and when he did that, he assumed this attitude with a view to correct some of the strange impressions that people had entertained regarding God. He had been telling them that some of the features of the Mosaic law were now to be supplanted by that which he was announcing in their hearing, and he corrected certain methods that had been among the Pharisees of his time in praying on the street corners that they might be heard of men, in the hearing of the multitudes. He says: "After this manner therefore pray ye, OUR FATHER." One hand stretches down to the border line of the millennium, the other back to the garden of Eden. Every man therefore who claims that his salvation depends upon the mediation of this Jesus Christ is comprehended in the brotherhood that is summed up in that word, "Our Father;" and I ask this congregation, how can God be *my* father in the sense that was intended of the Savior when he used the word "our," and I, when learning of him, discover that eighteen hundred years ago he favored Brother Peter, and Brother Paul, and Brother James, how can he in the Christ sense be my Father as he was their Father, unless he stands with his hands filled as they then were filled, ready to give unto me on the same conditions as to them, unless I have the privilege of tapping that fountain of God and letting in upon myself not only the power to become, in a peculiar sense, a son of God, but also to bathe myself in the free, in the ample splendor of gospel blessings that deluged them with joy, and peace, and comfort, and infinite satisfaction? I want you to tell me what pride I should feel in carrying my earthly father's name around with me and pointing to that name if all the peculiar favors that came from his hand as a father were so limited in their distribution that I, because of having been born later than the other members of the family, was excluded. I wonder how much pride I should feel when I should hear my brothers talking or alluding to "our father"? I should say to them, Yes, John, Yes, Hattie, Yes, Elizabeth, it is all right for you to feel a pride in talking about our father, but you can count me out, he is not a father to me; he was instrumental in bringing me into existence in the strange providence, possibly, of God, as he was with your being brought into existence, but he so strangely manipulated his affairs that without giving me any opportunity to voice my own rights and privileges or to contend for that which was my inheritance, he excluded

me from the particular benefits that attach to membership in his family; you may say "our" father and point with pride to it, but leave me out. In the sense of family provision, he is not mine.

Now that would be the natural feeling, I say. When, therefore, I turn to this record where Jesus Christ used these memorable words prefacing that prayer that was to be a guide for all years, and when I go around the circle of churches that help form the environments of this life, and when I hear the clergymen and sometimes members of their flock in concert going over these words, "Our Father which art in heaven," I think of the time when Jesus prefaced his prayer with these model words, I think of the wonderful manifestations of kindly fatherhood that were so generously distributed among all that part of his family on earth: I turn then and look at the desolate condition of people who are to-day members of the same family and yet starving from lack of the rich spiritual grace that was given to those eighteen hundred years ago, and I feel like asking, Where are the evidences by which you identify this Father who blessed them, with the Father who is dealing with you now? Where are the evidences upon which you base the right to address him in those words that the Savior used, "Our Father which art in heaven?" The reason why I take pride in repeating the language of the Savior to-day is, because that infinite God who was referred to in this language used by the Son of God has, in answer to the appeal that I have made in the use of the same language, stooped as kindly as he ever stooped eighteen hundred years ago, to meet actual personal necessities of the individual now standing before you as a speaker in the interests of the gospel of Jesus. The reason why these men have been occupying the stand here, filling different appointments since this reunion began, have been advocating the peculiar claims of this form of religion, is, because they have as men learned that Jesus represented the needs of the common brotherhood, and that having entered into a relationship with him through paying respect unto the things that God required in the past, they have found that the provisions made centuries ago by the Almighty for the exigencies of man, were not provided specially for the few who lived in the first, second, or third centuries of the Christian era, but were provided for the RACE; and because they have found the great God whom they have addressed in using the words the Savior put in their mouths authoritatively, they have discovered that "our Father" means as much to-day as it meant to others eighteen hundred years ago.

Again, the thought that I want to impress here forcibly upon your mind is, that the provision made in a gospel way or sense by the Almighty eighteen hundred years ago, or even prior to that time, was not ordained with a view to meeting the particular exigencies that were to characterize that age, but the interests of the race, the necessities of his family, of his children, wherever they might be found. In illustration of this thought I ask you to consider a statement

made in the first chapter of Genesis in regard to the work of God in the creation. While the exact words that I shall repeat are not found in the record, I shall endeavor to carry the same idea that these words would express or represent; viz., that the different ordinations of God in the development of the creative work were made in the interests of all who have inherited the earth; and when I learn from the record that at a certain time the work of creation had so far developed that the divisions of time should be marked by the lights and shades that should occur, the Almighty set—now notice the word please—he set in the firmament the sun to rule the day; in the same verse he says that he set in the firmament the moon to rule the night; and if I go to an astronomer and ask the question, Why, in the light of history and all that has come to you by way of observation, in the light of all that has furnished you information or knowledge in regard to the matter under consideration, why did the Almighty set the sun and the moon in the firmament, the one to rule the day and the other the night? he will enter upon a very learned discussion of the matter; he will tell me of all the seasons that are to come and go in turn, of all the necessities in the way of heat, and vegetation, and moisture; he will tell me of their essential features in the preservation of the atmosphere in certain conditions, of the different gases in their place. I turn to this individual then and ask him the question, “Does the sun still shine?” Why, yes.” “Does the moon still shine?” “Yes.” “Why, God set them away back there about the time of the Garden of Eden, just prior to the creation of Adam; what is that old sun still shining for? why is that old moon still performing the service that it was appointed to perform centuries ago?” Why, he would turn to me and say, “Are you gone so far in the direction of idiocy that you do not comprehend that these were put in the firmament, not to meet the needs of Adam in the Garden of Eden, but in order to meet the necessities of all that would ever inhabit the earth; as long as light is necessary, as long as moisture is requisite, as long as heat is needed, as long as vegetation is necessary for any part of the family of God, they shall remain. God did it *once* and he has never found any necessity to undo that which he did. He did it forever, and that which then was, is now; that which is to be has already been, and that which is to be in the line of physical necessity will be met in or through the provision made in the sun and moon. I care not how long this earth may wag, how long may be extended the periods when these necessities shall continue, the sun will answer and meet them, the moon will meet all the requirements still; God set them there for the race and they remain forever until these necessities shall no longer be known.

Again, if you will turn with me and make an application, (lest I weary you by too extended an effort,) we will come down to the consideration of the subject I announced at the outset; viz., the fact that God is, and that we are representing a philosophy that seeks

to impress specially upon your mind this thought; let me apply this same argument to spiritual concerns in which we are so deeply interested now. I turn and ask the question of those who speak to me about our church work, and compare it with other churches. They say “You people are somewhat bigoted in that you claim to be *The Church*, something special. You use that definite article there in such a way as to somehow discriminate between your organization and the organization of which we or other religionists are members.” They ask me why is it, why is this bigotry, as they call it, characteristic of the Latter Day Saints; and I turn to this man and ask the question, “Do you believe in the necessity for a church?” He answers “yes.” “Then, sir, let me tell you candidly, that instantly you admit the necessity of a church you are committed to a conclusion there is a necessity for *the* church, you claim that necessity exists for a church because man somehow requires an agency by the means of which his relationship with God shall be revealed, shall be preserved, and through which he shall be furnished with the needful help to his growth in grace, to obtain a final acceptance in the sight of God. If, then, you accept this as being correct, will you not admit with me, that only the church that can exhibit the evidence of God’s direct interest in it and its work by revealing his footprints in such way as to make it possible for you to identify him as the God of the Bible, can furnish this help. In which church is the great God interested? If you find that any one of these societies carries the marks by which you can identify the footprints of God after comparing them with the footprints of God as set forth in this record, instantly there you have your question answered with regard to those people who claim to be *the* church; and if you admit, as I have already stated, the necessity for a church, then as a natural consequence, if a church is necessary, because we need the help by which our relationship with God will be revealed or sustained or maintained, then only that church that bears the impress or the marks of identity referred to, can prove that God is a co-worker with those associated in its development; only that church can give you the guarantee that there is a helpful agency at work or being employed to accomplish in your interest that which you are seeking after. If God is not in the church, what is the use of it? If he is interested in church work and there is a variety of influences at work; if there are division lines drawn and one, pointing at the other, finds fault with its philosophy, it is a matter of serious importance to you and to me to know which of these philosophies the Almighty God is interested in, or which of them he is ready to prove himself willing to help forward. A great many of the people tell us, we have more scripture on our side than any other body of religionists on earth, and, that our preachers confine themselves so closely to the Scripture that there is no hope for a man opposing us to answer an argument or to establish a position and crowd it in edgeways between the passages of Scripture we are

using, the Bible seems to furnish us all that we need in the way of weapons for our warfare. Did you ever stop to think when you make a statement of that kind, that there is somebody back of these Latter Day Saints that had to do with creating this Bible; there is not a Latter Day Saint on earth old enough to claim justly or truthfully that he lived in the age when the Bible was introduced. If he who is credited with the authorship of this Bible and the authority that gave it to the world, has furnished more weapons therein for the use of the Latter Day Saints Church than any other, doesn't it prove that the footprints of God were to be more clearly outlined in connection with this work and that he had more interest in that which was in later years to be brought forth than any of the institutions that would antagonize it? That which could furnish us with all the requisites for its introduction, its preservation, and its final outcome and triumph, he certainly must be deeply interested in. Now then, the conclusion that I want to reach as a result of this kind of reasoning is simply this, that if the church is necessary, and it is necessary to learn of the church God is interested in, then what object did the Almighty have in bringing this church into existence. We take it for granted that all who believe the New Testament record will admit, that the Almighty did organize a church; the language of the Scripture is that God hath set some in the church. If that is true, he organized some institution in that day under his favoring watchcare that was worthy of his providence; hence I turn to those so believing and I ask the question, If there is a necessity for the church to-day, how shall I know the church when I find it?

I turn to the twelfth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and there I read the words I have already recited in your hearing, "God hath set some in the church"; remember the same word is employed here that is used in Genesis in regard to fixing the sun and the moon in the firmament. Now "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been: and God requireth that which is past." If God set in the church certain officers, it was because there were necessities existing therefor. I ask you a question now, you Bible readers, What were the necessities? Were they necessities that were especially confined to the people of that age, or were they necessities like the seasons of the harvesting, and the reaping, and the sowing time, and the moisture, and the vegetation, for the sustenance of man, that were to ever remain representative of the conditions of the race? I ask what were the necessities with reference to the race of man? with reference to the children whom God had brought into existence or intended should be brought into existence, the children of his creation? *What were the necessities* that this appointment, this setting in his church were intended to meet? I turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians and in the fourth chapter of it I read, that this Jesus who ascended on high

led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men; some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some teachers. Again I repeat right here the question I have already propounded, *What for?* "For the perfecting of the Saints," not for the perfecting of a few of them who would be found resident in or around Palestine eighteen hundred or more years ago, but to do the perfecting work as long as the church of the living God should have an existence on earth. The saints would need to be perfected until they were past the line that separates this life from that beyond. Next he says, "For the work of the ministry." If the work of the ministry was to be limited to the people among whom Peter, and James, and John figured eighteen hundred years ago, then the argument is good against us, but if the work of the ministry is to be a necessity as long as there is an unredeemed soul on earth, as long as there is an individual who has not heard the gospel sound upon the footstool of God, then that necessity is to be recognized of God and that which he did once to meet that necessity, he did forever, nothing can be added to nor taken from it; and if you want to apologize for it, you may; I have no reason for apologizing for it.

"For the edifying of the body of Christ." Is there necessity for this? Let us see: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Here the necessity is revealed. The necessity for what? The necessity for the work of the ministry being carried on, the edifying of the body of Christ, the perfecting of the saints. The necessity is announced, and for it provision is made. What was the character of that provision? God gave unto the church for the accomplishment of the work, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, and evangelists. Turning back now to first Corinthians, twelfth chapter, we have the language that I have already repeated so many times: "God hath set some in the church, first apostles," to meet these necessities that you all admit still exist; and what God did, he did forever. "First apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."

I want to know if in the mind of the infinite God (who is a little wiser at least than the combination of wisdom that has representation in this body to-night) there was need for this provision, how in our judgment we can possibly bring ourselves to the conclusion that these necessities can be met to-day and the end designed of God in setting these things in the church be reached, if this means so appointed unto that end is removed from the church, and if the manifestation of God, the marks of divine identity, are not to be found in any church of God on earth? O, that

God might in his infinite kindness impress upon the minds of his hearers here and elsewhere that "GOD IS", that "I AM" hath sent the Latter Day Saints unto you! "I am" hath sent me, not "I was," not "I will be." The man who believes that God gave revelations in the past, and will give them in the future, and will introduce miraculous energy to bring about his purposes, and cannot believe that God is manifesting himself with all the characteristics that clothed him then, is a strange anomaly when you consider him from any legitimate basis known to your speaker. "God is," is the thought we want to impress. *My Father, your Father, and the Father of James, and Peter, and Matthew, and Christ, who obeyed when he told them to knock and it should be opened, to ask and they should receive, to seek and they should find.* "Our Father" means to me that when I ask for bread he will not give me, one of his children, a stone, when he gave Peter bread; he will not give me a scorpion when he gave him a fish. Ah, no! If when I ask for such things as he gave to them eighteen hundred years ago he gives me the opposite and you think I should still be satisfied that this is the work of God, please tell me, some intelligent man, how I would identify the Devil? That is what I want to get at. I want to know the divine finger-marks, the divine footprints; if that which is opposite to what God was does not demonstrate the manipulation of an opposite power, in God's name what will do it? How will I know it? That is a serious thought. No wonder that Latter Day Saints are deeply in earnest.

When Adam was placed in the garden of Eden, of course I did not see him, but I believe Adam had hands—a thumb, and four fingers on each hand; he had eyes, mouth, nose, lips, tongue, and I suppose he walked by the use of his limbs; I suppose he saw with his eyes, heard with his ears, etc.; I suppose all of this. And why? Because being a man and right along in the line of posterity, if you will, from that particular period, I find myself possessed of hands, etc. I turn to the Book and make the discovery that such things taught then and enjoined upon him are also enjoined upon me, and I reach the conclusion that God gave him the same members for the same purpose that he has provided them in this body. Although I did not see him, I conclude that he was endowed with these particular members; that he was furnished with an ear and those members connected with it that were so constructed as to enable him to catch the sounds around him and to discriminate between them; so was he furnished with the eye, lip, mouth, and tongue. You tell me at once if I ask why these were given, Because God intended him to walk, to labor, to feel, to see, to hear; he intended him to talk; he placed brains in his physical formation because he intended him to think, to weigh, to judge; he gave him agency intending that it should be used. Will you please tell me why I have eyes, ears, nose, hands, feet, and all of these members such as you have every reason to believe he had if it is not because he wants me to see, to hear, to feel, to labor? These necessities are

eternal, and just as God set the sun in the heavens to meet certain necessities and to produce that which was needful for the sustenance of man, so long as these necessities continue, even so did he, *once for all*, make provision in the physical creation of man, commensurate with all the exigencies of the body thus created. "That which has been is now" in the line of physical necessity, and for that reason, God knowing the necessity, continues the provision.

As long as man will be needed as a toiler, as long as locomotion will be a part of the necessities of his being, as long as man will be required to see, and hear, and feel, and talk, and think, so long will eyes, ears, nose, hands, and feet, etc., be a necessity. He did not ordain them for Adam or Abraham because they were favorites. He ordained them to meet the necessities of the race. And so Paul using man as a figure representing the church says, that as there are many members in the body, so there are members in the church of Christ. He gives an outline of the character and characteristics of that membership, and then gives us to understand emphatically that the necessities of these officers continuing, the provision would be made, so long as man would observe what God had enjoined at his hands in order that he might enjoy the peculiar benefits of that provision. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee," and why? Because a man that had most beautiful eyes and had not an ear could not hear a sound. There might be sounds and commingling of sounds, beautifully blended; and a man might have a pair of eyes that were undimmed by any defect, yet all these sounds around him would furnish nothing by which he could regulate his motion.

But I look upon this audience to-night and find these features that I have referred to, common and characteristic of them all, because God requires of all of them the same service; that which was in Adam's day *now* is; that which will be in the time when Jerusalem shall be rebuilt by the returning hosts of dispersed Judah and outcast Israel; that which shall be in the line of human necessity until the hour when the judgment trump shall be heard, has been in the past; the interests of the race then will be but a repetition of the past and that which hath been is now—one eternal necessity, speaking of it in a collective phrase or form representing the conditions of the brotherhood of man, provided for by the common Fatherhood of God, without reference to pets or favorites, only requiring of men all the things that are past, in order that they might enjoy that which was enjoyed in the past. As in the physical, so in the spiritual realm, the original gospel provision covers all the spiritual necessities.

Joseph, the Seer of Palmyra, in 1830 sounded this tocsin as a something around which those things were to cluster, that were to introduce the saving forces in the last days: "I AM hath sent me unto you." It was the announcement of every man who has been appointed of God in the dispensations of the past; and if God is referred to in this

book as an unchangeable being, it is but natural to suppose that whenever he speaks his utterances under like circumstances when compared will show him to be clearly and perfectly in harmony with himself. These very marks of identity will be a challenge to me to accept. I tell you candidly that there are more features connected with this latter-day work that call for the latent powers of this being of mine to exercise themselves in expressing adoration to God, than I can find elsewhere. People complain because we so often quote a passage that is found in the sixteenth of Mark, that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe." This is the part that others can afford to do without. "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." He said he was sending them out in the midst of a hostile world as sheep among wolves. He did not mean that Paul and Peter were to go out and pick up snakes to prove there was a divine power in them, he did not mean that they were to drink poison to show that God was in them and they could not be poisoned; but they were going out among wolves, and the devouring appetite of these wolves would be manifest against them. Men, unwilling and unable to answer or gainsay their message, would resort to carnal means to silence them—to put them to death. Christ intended that they should feel absolutely safe in the simple fact that God was with them, and that while they might be among destroyers, and where special protection would be a necessity, they might feel secure in his promise. "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world." That which God is with cannot be destroyed; it cannot die; the elements of disintegration or death are not there; and for this reason we quote these passages to-night. We have been sent out, and those of you who are most favorable to us, though opposed to our line of faith, know that the Latter Day Saints have had to toil hard and that their present condition has been earned as a result of bitter experience; it has been purchased in consequence of enduring the direst kind of opposition. If you do not know it, the Latter Day Saints do, and when they quote these passages of Scripture they do so because God *is*, because "I am" hath sent them; and the God who provided man against opposing influences that would be introduced to destroy him in the past, guarantees the same kind of security to-day; where the necessities exist the provision to meet them is at hand. God is in the same business to-day as then, but should we go around and make it our business to take up reptiles in order to prove that God was with us, we would be left to reap the natural result of our folly. Should we accept the poison and drink in order to demonstrate that we could not be outdone, that very fact would

prove that we were out of line with the character that God had designed for us. It would show a disposition to gratify that much of self that was in us. God would leave us to meet these self-created necessities ourselves; but such necessities as came to disciples eighteen hundred years ago, if confronting the people of to-day, as they have done in a number of instances, are provided for in that which God did and did forever, and has never found any occasion to apologize for.

These facts are to us important, and I say to you in conclusion that there is a necessity to-day for men arising and bearing witness of the present existence of the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. There is need for testimony somewhere, that the children of men, whatever may be the depths of darkness that surrounds them, or whatever may be the magnitude of the error in which they have been inveigled by people around them in this life, who claim to be teachers, may know that God *is*. If there is a disposition to call upon God to-day, then the benefits intended for man under the promise, "Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened," should be still available under like conditions. The impartial, unchangeable God who made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth, ordained beforehand the bounds and the times of their existence, and provided for necessity, wherever it might occur.

We recommend this God to you. We say we worship him not only because this book bears witness of the fact that he is worthy of our regard, but because the experiences that made glad the pathway of those of whom that book speaks have also lightened up our journey, and that we stand to-night clothed upon with and possessors of the evidences that mark or prove the identity of "Our Father," the "I am" whom Christ referred to eighteen hundred years ago when he authorized that all should preface their prayers in that way; and when a man steps up to-day and tells me I have no right to a revelation, but that Peter had; that I to-day have no right to accept the imposition of hands in any way to heal, but that they had; that I have no right to expect that God will interpose his power for me or mine, but others had that right in Bible times, I tell that man that he must either take back that statement or forever quit telling me to pray, "Our Father." I do not thank an individual to try to magnify the character of God as my Father in his teachings and rob me of the benefits that I am naturally led to expect shall be mine as a child of that Father born by his appointment at the time ordained of him. It is my birth-right, my heritage. I leave these thoughts, therefore, and ask that you consider the position that we are seeking to maintain, the arguments that we offer in support thereof; and until you find that this book furnishes no warrant for this belief, do not pronounce us either fanatical, heretical, or unchristian.