

a certain course, and to receive certain teachings and doctrines regardless of their own wishes and will. But God has sent us here, and has given to every one of us our agency, as much so as he has his. I, in my sphere, have my agency, as much as God, my Eternal Father, or as Jesus, my elder brother, has in his. I can do right or I can do wrong; I can serve God or reject him; I can keep his commandments or violate them; I can receive his Spirit or reject it. This agency God has given unto man, and hence it is that when he sends his truth, and his servants to declare it unto the people, he does it in such a way that man is left to the free exercise of his agency in receiving or rejecting them; at the same time we are assured that whoever receives that truth will also receive the convincing power of the Spirit of God to bear testimony to him that it is divine; and this is the reason why, as the Apostle says in the chapter I read to you, the ancient Saints, though they were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword; though they wandered about in sheepskins and in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted and tormented, were able to endure to the end. They had received a testimony from God through obedience to his Gospel in the exercise of their agency in the right direction, and this enabled them to endure all these things cheerfully, looking forward, as Paul says Moses did when he fled from Egypt, to the recompense of reward.

In this manner the servants of God have gone forth in every age and preached the Gospel. To bring the matter down to our own day—when Joseph Smith commenced to preach the Gospel, to tell the people that God had once more spoken from the heavens, a great many said, “Where are the signs, or evidences

that God has done this? Can you not show some sign or work us some miracle that shall convince us that this is true? If you will work us a miracle, if you will walk on the water, raise the dead, or do some other miraculous work, then we will believe that he has spoken to you, and that the words you testify to are true.” They wanted signs, and yet they had the Bible in their midst. The position of those to whom Joseph taught the Gospel was very similar to that of the Jews in Paul’s day, only the former were more blessed than the Jews were unto whom Jesus came. They had the Prophets and Apostles, that is, they had their words. They had the record of the Gospel as taught by Jesus and his Apostles, with the account of the miracles wrought by them; they had a form of godliness, and they thought they were on the road of salvation. But they did not believe in miracles, they did not believe that God was a God of revelation, hence they would not receive the testimony of the Prophet Joseph, but they wanted miracles to convince them. In this they made a great mistake, as many others have done in other ages of the world in relation to this matter. It is written of Jesus that he did not do many mighty works in Galilee because of the unbelief of the people; and he said it was a wicked and adulterous generation that demanded a sign, and none should be given them. When the people demanded miraculous signs of Joseph Smith to convince them of the truth of his testimony, they would not, or did not exercise their agency, but wanted some overpowering evidence to convince them.

The Lord does not operate in that way among the children of men. He sends forth his servants with the truth, and he makes this promise—he made it through Joseph Smith—