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Was Joseph Smith Sent of God?

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Abstract: In this series, Pratt states that the Book of Mormon was revealed through Joseph Smith, that it contains the everlasting gospel and the writings of the tribe of Joseph. He explains Ezekiel 37:18-21 and Isaiah 29. The Book of Mormon explains that America is the land of promise of Joseph. Thousands and tens of thousands of witnesses have accepted the Book of Mormon and witness concerning its truthfulness. The fourth and final part gives the eighth through eleventh evidences.

The Latter-Day Saints'

MILLENNIAL STAR.

HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES.—Rev. ii. 7.

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VOL. X.

WAS JOSEPH SMITH SENT OF GOD?

Eighth.—In the Book of Mormon are given the names and locations of numerous cities of great magnitude, which once flourished among the ancient nations of America. The northern portions of South America, and also Central America, were the most densely populated. Splendid edifices, palaces, towers, forts, and cities were reared in all directions. A careful reader of that interesting book, can trace the relative bearings and distances of many of these cities from each other; and, if acquainted with the present geographical features of the country, he can, by the descriptions given in that book, determine, very nearly, the precise spot of ground they once occupied. Now, since that invaluable book made its appearance in print, it is a remarkable fact, that the mouldering ruins of many splendid edifices, and towers, and magnificent cities of great extent, have been discovered by Catherwood and Stephens in the interior wilds of Central America, in the very region where the ancient cities described in the Book of Mormon were said to exist. Here then, is a *certain and indisputable evidence* that this illiterate youth—the translator of the Book of Mormon, was inspired of God. Mr. Smith's translation describes the region of country where great and populous cities anciently existed, together with their relative bearings and approximate distances from each other. Years after, Messrs. Catherwood and Stephens discover the ruins of forty-four of these very cities, and in the very place described. What, but the power of God, could have revealed beforehand this unknown fact, demonstrated years after by actual discovery?

Ninth.—The fulfilment of a vast number of prophecies delivered by Mr. Smith is another infallible evidence of his divine mission. Out of the many hundreds of fulfilled predictions uttered by him, we select the following as examples.

1. Soon after Mr. Smith found the plates, he commenced translating them. He had not proceeded far before he discovered from his own translation of the prophecy of Nephi, as before quoted, that "THREE WITNESSES," besides himself, should behold the book by the power of God, and should know and testify of its truth. Some length of time after this, or in the month of June, A.D. 1829, the Lord gave a revelation, through Mr. Smith, to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, promising them that if they would exercise faith, they should have a view of the plates, and also of the Urim and Thummim. This prediction was afterwards fulfilled; and these three persons send forth their written testimony, in connexion with the Book of Mormon, to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, declaring that an angel of God descended from heaven, and took the plates and exhibited them before their eyes; and that, at the same time, the voice of the Lord from the heavens testified to them of the truth contained in Mr. Smith's translation of these records. Now an impostor might indeed predict the raising up of "THREE WITNESSES," but he could never call down an angel from heaven, in the presence of these "WITNESSES," to fulfil his prediction.

2. Before the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" had any existence upon the earth, the prophecy of Moroni was translated and printed in the Book of Mormon. It is expressly predicted in this prophecy, that in the day that that book should be revealed, "*the blood of the Saints should cry unto the Lord from the ground*" because of the wickedness of the people, and that the "*time should soon come when,*" because of the cries and mourning of "*widows and orphans,*" whose husbands and fathers should be slain by wicked hands, "*the Lord should avenge the blood of his Saints.*" And again, in August, 1831, the word of the Lord came to Mr. Smith, saying that "*the Saints should be scourged from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue,*" and that but "*FEW*" of those then in the church should "*stand to receive an inheritance.*"—(See Book of Doctrine and Covenants, page 151.) The blood of many hundreds of Saints who have been slain and martyred in this church, is an incontrovertible evidence of the truth of the prediction. Surely Mr Smith must have been a prophet of God to have foreseen not only the rise of the church of the Saints, but that their blood should cry aloud from the ground for vengeance upon the nation who should perpetrate these bloody deeds. No human foresight could have seen the bloody sceneries that were to take place after the rise of the church. All natural appearances in the United States were against the fulfilment of this dreadful prediction. Every religious society throughout the whole country was strongly guarded against persecution and religious intolerance by the strong arm of the civil law. The glorious constitution of that great and free people proclaimed religious freedom to every son and daughter of Columbia's soil: yet, in the midst of that boasted land of freedom and religious rights, where universal peace seemed to have selected her quiet dwelling place, the voice of a great prophet is heard predicting the rise of the Latter-day Church, and the bloody persecutions that should follow her "from city to city, and from synagogue to synagogue." Never were there any prophecies more literally and palpably fulfilled since the creation of the earth. If the foretelling of future events that could not possibly have been foreseen by human wisdom—events, too, that to all outward appearances were very unlikely to come to pass: if the predicting of such events and their subsequent fulfilment constitutes a true prophet, then Joseph Smith must have been a true prophet, and, if a true prophet, *he must have been sent of God.*

Tenth.—There are many thousands of living witnesses who testify that God has revealed unto them the truth of the Book of Mormon, by dreams, by visions, by the revelations of the Holy Ghost, by the ministering of angels, and by his own voice. Now, if Mr. Smith is an impostor, all these witnesses must be impostors also. Perhaps it may be said, that these witnesses are not impostors, but are deceived themselves. But, we ask, can any man testify that he *KNOWS* a false doctrine to be true, and still not be an impostor? Men frequently are deceived when they testify their *opinions*, but never deceived when they testify they have a *knowledge*. Such must either be impostors, or else their doctrine must be true. Now would it not be marvellously strange indeed, if even three or four men who were entirely disconnected, being strangers to each other, should all undertake to deceive mankind by testifying that an angel of God had descended before them, or that an heavenly vision had been shown to them, or that God had in some other marvellous way manifested to them the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon? If the testimony of three or four impostors would appear marvellous, how infinitely more marvellous would appear the testimony of tens of thousands of impostors in different countries, widely separated from each other, and who never saw each others faces, and yet all endeavouring to palm upon the world the same great imposition! If many thousands of witnesses do testify boldly, with words of soberness, that God has revealed to them that this is his church or kingdom that was to be set up in the last days, then we have an overwhelming flood of collateral evidences to establish the divine mission of Joseph Smith.

Eleventh.—The miracles wrought by Joseph Smith are evidences of no small moment to establish his divine authority. In the name of the Lord he cast out devils, healed the sick, spoke with new tongues, interpreted ancient languages, and predicted future events. Many of these miracles were wrought before numerous multitudes of both believers and unbelievers, and upon persons not connected with

our church. And again, the numerous miracles wrought through the instrumentality of thousands of the officers and members of this church, are additional evidences that the man who was instrumental in founding the church *must have been sent of God*. The thousands of sick that have been miraculously healed in all parts of the world where this gospel is preached, give forth a strong and almost irresistible testimony that Mr. Smith's authority is "*from heaven*." Although the great majority of mankind consider miracles to be an *infallible* evidence in favor of the divine authority of the one who performs them, yet we do most distinctly dissent from this idea. If miracles be admitted as an *infallible* evidence, then all that have ever wrought miracles must have been sent of God. The magicians of Egypt wrought some splendid miracles before that nation; they created serpents and frogs, and turned rivers of water into blood. If miraculous evidence is *infallible*, the Egyptians were bound to receive the contradictory messages of both Moses and the magicians as of divine authority. According to this idea, the witch of Endor must have established her divine mission beyond all controversy by calling forth a dead man from the grave in the presence of Saul, king of Israel. A certain wicked power described by John (Rev. xiii chap.) was to do "*great wonders*" and "*miracles*," and cause "*fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men*." If miracles are infallible evidences, surely no one should reject the divine authority of John's beast. Again (in Rev. xvi. chap.) John "*saw three unclean spirits like frogs*," which he expressly says, "*are the SPIRITS OF DEVILS WORKING MIRACLES, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty*." The learned divines and clergy of the nineteenth century boldly declare that "*miracles are an INFALLIBLE evidence of the divine mission of the one who performs them*." If so, who can blame the "*the kings of the earth*," and these learned divines, and all their followers for embracing the message of these divinely inspired devils? For according to their argument, they should in no wise reject them, for they prove their mission by evidences which they say are infallible. We shall expect in a few years, to see an innumerable host of sectarian ministers as well as kings, taking up their line of march for the great valley of "*Armageddon*," near Jerusalem, and thus prove by their works that they do really believe in the *infallibility of miraculous evidence*. Devils can work miracles as well as God, and as they have already persuaded the religious world that miracles are infallible evidences of divine authority, they will not have much difficulty among the followers of modern christianity in establishing the divinity of their mission. But the "*Latter-day Saints*" do not believe in the infallibility of miraculous evidence. We believe that miraculous gifts are absolutely necessary in the church of Christ, without which it cannot exist on the earth. Miracles, when taken in connexion with a pure, holy, and perfect doctrine, reasonable and scriptural, is a very strong collateral evidence in favour of that doctrine, and of the divine authority of those who preach it. But abstract miracles alone, unconnected with other evidences, instead of being *infallible* proofs are no proofs at all: they are as likely to be *false* as true. So baptism "*for the remission of sins*" is essential in the church of Christ, and when taken in connexion with all other points of doctrine embraced in the gospel, is a presumptive evidence for the divine authority of the person who preaches it. But baptism "*for the remission of sins*," unconnected with other parts of the doctrine of Christ, would be no evidence either for or against the divine authority of any man. The many thousands of miracles wrought in this church, being connected as they are with an infallible doctrine, and with a vast number of other proofs, have carried an almost irresistible conviction to the minds of vast multitudes, who have, in consequence, yielded obedience to the message, and become in their turn the happy recipients of the same power of God, by which they themselves can also heal the sick and work by faith in the name of the Lord; thus demonstrating to themselves the truth of the Saviour's promise, viz:—that certain miraculous "*signs should follow them that believe*."—(See Mark, chap. xvi.)

There is one thing connected with Joseph Smith's message which will at once prove him to be an impostor or else a true prophet. It is a certain promise contained in a revelation which was given through him to the apostles of this church in the year 1832. It reads as follows: "Go ye into all the world, and whatsoever

place ye cannot go into, ye shall send, that the testimony may go from you into all the world unto every creature. And as I said unto mine apostles, even so I say unto you, for you are mine apostles, even God's high priests; ye are they whom my Father hath given me—ye are my friends; therefore, as I said unto mine apostles, I say unto you again, that every soul who believeth on your words, and is baptized by water for the remission of sins, shall receive the Holy Ghost. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall do many wonderful works; in my name they shall cast out devils; in my name they shall heal the sick; in my name they shall open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf; and the tongue of the dumb shall speak; and if any man shall administer poison unto them, it shall not hurt them; and the poison of the serpent shall not have power to harm them. * * * Verily, verily, I say unto you, they who believe not on your words, and are not baptized in water in my name, for the remission of their sins, that they may receive the Holy Ghost, shall be damned, and shall not come into my Father's kingdom, where my Father and I am. And this revelation unto you, and commandment, is in force from this very hour upon all the world." (Doctrine and Covenants, page 86.) Here, then, this great modern prophet has presented himself before the whole world with a bold unequivocal promise to every soul who would believe on his message—a promise, too, that no impostor would dare to make with the most distant hope of success. An impostor might indeed make such a promise to his followers, but they never would realize a fulfilment of it. If these miraculous signs have not followed according to the above promise, then the tens of thousands who have complied with the conditions would know Joseph Smith to be an impostor, and with one accord would turn away, and that would be the end of the imposition. But the very fact that vast multitudes are annually being added to the church, and continue therein year after year, is a demonstrative evidence that the promise is fulfilled—that the Holy Ghost is given, and the miraculous signs also. Dare any other societies in all the world make such a promise unto the believers in their respective systems? No, they dare not; they know full well that it would be the speedy downfall and utter overthrow of their vain, unauthorized, and powerless religions. O, what a wide and marked difference between the religion of Joseph Smith and that of Protestant and Catholic religion—between his authority and that of sectarian divines! The one promises all the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to his followers, the other is as powerless as the dry stubble prepared for the burning. While the followers of this great prophet cast out devils, speak with new tongues, heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, cause the lame to walk, obtain heavenly visions, and converse with angels, the followers of those unauthorized, deluded, and crafty sects not only deny these great and glorious gifts, or impute them in these days to the power of the devil, but they grasp the sword, and fire-arms, and deadly weapons, to kill off the Saints, and drive them from the face of what they call civilized society. While the one class are suffering martyrdom by scores for their testimony, the other class are rolling in all the luxuries and splendors of Great Babylon, with fat salaries of from ten to twenty and twenty-seven thousand pounds sterling per annum.

As we have briefly examined into the nature of the evidences in favour of Joseph Smith's divine mission, it may be well at the close of this number to give a short summary of the proofs and arguments contained in the foregoing.

1. Joseph Smith's doctrine is reasonable, scriptural, perfect, and infallible in all its precepts, commands, ordinances, promises, blessings and gifts. In his organization of the church, no officer mentioned in the New Testament organization is omitted. Inspired apostles and prophets are considered as necessary as pastors, teachers, or any other officer.

2. Joseph Smith's account of the restoration of the gospel by an angel—of his taking out of the ground the sacred records of the tribe of Joseph—of their subsequent translation by the gift of God—and of the great western continent's being given to a remnant of Joseph, where they have grown into a multitude of nations, are all events clearly predicted by the ancient Jewish apostles and prophets, together with the minute circumstances connected therewith. The times and seasons in which these events should transpire, and the purposes which they should accomplish are also all plainly foretold. Joseph Smith presents the world with the fulfilment at the predicted

time—in the predicted manner—and for the predicted purpose as anciently specified.

3. Joseph Smith incorporates in his mission the gathering of the Saints out of Babylon, and every other predicted event that was to characterise the great preparatory dispensation for the second advent of our Lord.

4. The revelation in the Book of Mormon, pointing out the location of many ancient cities, the ruins of which were subsequently discovered by Catherwood and Stephens—the direct and palpable fulfilment of many of the prophecies of Joseph Smith, which no human sagacity could have foreseen, all natural appearances and circumstances being entirely against their expected fulfilment—the raising up of numerous other witnesses who also testify to the ministering of angels and the manifestations of the power of God confirmatory of this message—the performance of many splendid miracles by Mr. Smith and his followers, and the bold unequivocal promise of the miraculous gifts to all who should believe and embrace this message, are all evidences such as no impostor ever has given, or ever can give. They are evidences such as will prove the salvation of every creature that receives the message, and the damnation of every soul who rejects it.

O. PRATT.

15, Wilton Street, Liverpool, September 30th, 1848.

CONFERENCE MINUTES.

EDINBURGH.

This conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was held on Sunday, the 18th June, 1848, at the usual hour of worship, in the Hall, No. 1, Drummond-street.

The meeting was called to order by Elder Gibson, when a hymn was sung; after which Elder Douglas, president of the Glasgow conference, opened the meeting by prayer. It was thereafter unanimously resolved, on the motion of Elders Waugh and M'Master, That Elder Gibson, president of this conference, conduct the business to come before this meeting.

It was also resolved, on the motion of the president and brother Peter Macomie, That Elder Waugh, clerk of the conference, minute the day's proceedings.

The President, after introducing our American brother, Elder Crandell Dunn, the president of Sheffield conference, to the notice of the Saints assembled, hastened to shew that the work of the Lord in these last days continued to progress in this region; noting that in February, 1847, the conference was upwards of five hundred less than at the present time, notwithstanding so many had removed; and called for the representation of the various branches in the following order:—

BRANCH.	REPRESENTED BY	H. P.	ELD	PRS.	TEA	DEA	MEM	TTL.	BAP.	REC	RMV	C. O.	DED	SCT.
Aberdeen	Elder Findlay	0	2	1	0	1	9	13	4	1	0	0	0	0
Biggar	" Waugh	0	0	1	0	0	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black Braes	" Tomkinson	0	0	2	1	1	27	31	17	0	0	0	0	0
Bowness, &c.	" Tomkinson	0	1	1	1	0	28	31	6	18	8	0	0	0
Clackmannan	" Sharp	0	2	1	3	2	102	110	19	8	14	1	0	0
Crofthead	" Deans	0	2	4	2	3	63	74	19	2	1	0	0	2
Dundee	" Findlay	0	1	3	2	2	52	60	12	1	0	1	0	2
Dunfermline	" M'Master	0	1	1	4	1	59	66	24	1	71	4	2	2
East Wemyss	" Cook	0	0	1	1	0	18	20	0	0	0	0	0	0
Edinburgh	" Menzies	1	7	7	5	1	158	179	16	4	5	0	0	22
Falkirk	" Calder	0	2	1	0	1	21	25	0	2	0	0	0	2
Greenlaw	" M'Ewan	0	0	0	1	0	5	6	0	0	11	0	0	0
Hunterfield	" Nibley	0	2	5	3	2	62	74	21	2	2	1	0	0
Lochgelly	" Watson	0	1	3	2	0	27	33	3	11	7	0	0	0
Oakley	" Brown	0	2	1	1	1	44	49	4	0	8	0	0	0
Pathhead	" Currie	0	3	3	4	1	72	83	4	1	3	0	0	3
Perth	" Findlay	0	0	2	1	0	9	12	2	0	0	0	0	1
Slamannan	" Tomkinson	0	0	0	0	0	9	9	0	2	0	0	0	0
Stirling	" Waugh	0	0	1	0	1	15	17	0	0	0	2	0	0
Scattered Saints ..	" Waugh	0	0	0	0	0	34	34	0	0	0	0	0	0
Travelling Elders.	" Waugh	0	4	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Wemyss	" Crookstone	0	1	1	0	0	11	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		1	31	40	31	17	829	949	151	53	130	9	2	34

The above branches are chiefly in good condition, and 151 baptized during the last Quarter. The officers present:—2 high priests, 18 Elders, 11 priests, 8 teachers, and 3 deacons.