



Type: Book Chapter

The Necessity of a New Revelation - The Arguments of Modern Christians Against It Considered

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

Source: *New Witnesses for God: Volume I - Joseph Smith, The Prophet*

Published: Salt Lake City; Deseret News, 1911 (2nd Edition)

Pages: 139-161

CHAPTER IX.

THE NECESSITY OF A NEW REVELATION—THE ARGUMENTS OF MODERN CHRISTIANS AGAINST IT CONSIDERED.

I shall take it for granted that those who have followed me to this point are convinced that the world has need of New Witnesses for God; that the Church of Christ was destroyed; that there has been an apostasy from the Christian religion so complete and universal as to make necessary a new dispensation of the gospel.

I have already remarked, in noticing the Protestant claim that the Church of Christ was re-established by the Reformers of the sixteenth century, that the gospel having been once taken from among men, and divine authority lost, the only way that either one or the other could ever be restored would be by the Lord giving a new revelation, and re-commissioning men with divine authority, both to teach the gospel and administer in its ordinances. This is a proposition so obvious to reason that I can scarcely persuade myself that it requires either argument or proofs to sustain it.

If there are those, however, who think that the plan of salvation might be clearly defined from the fragmentary documents which comprise the New Testament, without the aid of more revelation, I ask them to consider the Protestant effort to accomplish that task. The Protestants accepted the Bible as an all-sufficient guide in matters of faith and morals and church discipline. But when they undertook to formulate from it a creed that should embody the whole plan of salvation, and prescribe a government for their church, it was found that well nigh each doctor understood the Bible

differently. One saw in it the authorization of the Episcopal form of church government; another the Presbyterian form; and another the Congregational. One saw in the Bible authority for believing there was a trinity of persons in the God-head; another that there was but one. One saw authority for believing that God had predestined an elect few to be saved; another that salvation was equally within reach of all. One saw that baptism was essential to salvation; another regarded it indifferently. One said that baptism must be administered even to infants; others that it should be administered only to those capable of repentance, and understanding its purpose. Some saw in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper a sacrifice, in which was the real presence of the Lord Jesus; others saw in it only the symbols of the Lord's body and blood, and a memorial of our Lord's passion. And so on through all the vexed questions that have distracted Protestant Christendom and divided it into a hundred contending sects.

It must be remembered that to this effort to construct from the New Testament scriptures a creed which would embody all the principles and ordinances essential to salvation, and re-construct the Church of Christ, all the zeal and learning that we can hope to see brought to such a task was possessed by Protestant "Reformers," and they failed miserably; for the confusion grows greater by the constant multiplication of sects, led by men making the vain attempt to re-construct the Church of Christ and define the gospel by their own wisdom from fragmentary Christian documents.

But if the theory of salvation could be clearly defined from the scriptures, by the wisdom of man; if all the doctrines to be believed and all the ordinances to be obeyed could be formulated, where, without further revelation, is the divinely authorized ministry to teach the gospel or administer

its ordinances? However distinctly the gospel as a theory might be defined from the New Testament, the dead letter authorizes no one to perform its ceremonies, or even teach its doctrines. The New Testament writers have recorded in a number of places how Jesus called his apostles and commissioned them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, saying in one place, that "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned;"^a and in another place, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."^b But to say this authorizes anyone else but those to whom the commission was directly given is to advocate the stealing of other men's commissions, and presumptuously attempting to act in the name of God without divine appointment.

A case of this kind is related in the Acts of the Apostles, the result of which should be a warning to those who would advocate such a course now. Among the Jews who witnessed the power of God displayed through the administrations of Paul—the Holy Ghost imparted by laying on hands, the sick healed and unclean spirits cast out—were seven sons of one Sceva, a chief priest among the Jews, who took it upon themselves to call over one possessed of an evil spirit the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. * * * And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."^c

^a Mark xvi.

^b Matt. xxviii.

^c Acts xix.

Another case in point is the incident of Uzziah stretching forth his hand to steady the ark of God without authority—"And God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."^d

King Uzziah's presumption in this case also points a warning. Made king when but sixteen years of age, he was wonderfully blessed of the Lord, and his fame went abroad until he was feared or honored by all the surrounding nations. In the height of his glory he presumptuously entered the temple of God and essayed to exercise the functions of the priest's office—to burn incense before the Lord. Azariah, the chief priest, withstood the king's usurpation, saying, "It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from the Lord God." The king was not inclined to yield to the admonition, and while he was yet angry with the priests the leprosy arose in his forehead, and he lived a leper the remainder of his life, separated from his people and from the house of the Lord.^e

If the usurpation of authority to act in the name of the Lord in casting out an evil spirit, in steadying the ark of God and burning incense called forth such pronounced evidences of the divine displeasure, would usurpation in administering the more sacred ordinances of the gospel meet with divine approbation? If men by usurping authority could not drive out an evil spirit from one possessed through calling over him the name of Jesus, just as they had seen Paul do, would there likely be any more efficacy attend upon their administrations if they baptized in the name of the holy

^d See II Samuel vi, in connection with Numb. iv: 5-15.

^e II Chron. xxvi.

Trinity for the remission of sins, or laid on hand to impart the Holy Ghost? The reasonable answer is obvious.

“Every high priest taken form among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God; * * * and no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”^f Aaron was called by revelation, and ordained by one already holding divine authority.”^g It amounts to nothing to say that this particular passage relates to high priests of the Mosaic law. The principle is announced in it that those who officiate for men in things pertaining to God must be called of God by revelation through a divinely established authority; and that holds good in the gospel as well as in the Mosaic law; aye, and more abundantly is it true; for as the gospel is more excellent than the carnal law, so is it to be expected that more care will be taken to have it administered by a divinely authorized ministry. “You have not chosen me,” said Jesus to the Twelve, in Judea, “but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye may bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”^h This sounds the keynote relative to an authorized ministry for the gospel. Men are not to take it upon themselves to administer in things pertaining to God. They must be called as Aaron was, as the Twelve were, as Jesus himself was; for even “Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee * * * Thou are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedek.”ⁱ

But I must not be drawn into an argument on a point

^f Heb. v: 1-4.

^g “And take unto thee Aaron, thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office.”—Word of the Lord to Moses, Ex. xxviii: 1.

^h John xv: 16.

ⁱ Heb. v: 5, 6.

that is obviously true, namely, that the gospel of Christ having been taken from among men and divine authority lost, the only way of regaining them is by a re-opening of the heavens and a re-commitment of them to man from God. This, of course, would constitute a new dispensation, a new revelation; and as all Christendom, both Catholics and Protestants, hold that the volume of scripture is completed and forever closed—that divine inspiration, prophecy and revelation, together with the visitation of angels has ceased forever, and this belief more abundantly prevailed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, just before the commencement of Joseph Smith's ministry, than in the twentieth century—I think it necessary to inquire into those reasons that are assigned for such a belief, or rather unbelief.

It is a necessity to inquire into this question; for disbelief in new revelation bars the way to a consideration of the claims of the New Witnesses I am introducing. The case stands thus: The Christians in the early centuries of our era having turned heathens again, thereby losing the gospel and divine authority, it seems reasonably clear that the only way these precious things can be regained is through a new dispensation of the gospel, by means of a new revelation, which shall restore all that was lost. But since all Christians have been persuaded that the volume of the scripture is completed; that God will give no more revelation; and that the Bible sustains that view of the case, it becomes necessary to investigate the reasons given for this doctrine.

I apprehend that this Christian belief respecting the discontinuance of revelation came into existence as an excuse offered for the absence of revelation. Ministers of apostate churches in the early Christian centuries, found themselves without communication with God, either through the visitation of angels or direct revelation. Finding themselves with-

out these powers so abundantly possessed by the servants of God in an earlier age of the church, they attempted a defense of their own powerless state by saying these things were no longer needed. They were extraordinary powers only to be employed at the commencement of the work of God, in order to establish it in the earth, and afterwards to be put aside as childish things.

In support of the theory that the volume of revelation is closed forever, the following passage in the Book of Revelation is usually quoted:

“I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”^j

As this passage occurs in the last book of the New Testament—and also the last book of the Bible—in the last chapter, and the last but two of the closing verses of the chapter, it has been argued that it is a formal closing up of God's revelation to man. No more is to be added—nothing is to be taken from it, it is completed and sealed up, and therefore no more revelation is to be given after that.

Upon this it should be observed. *first*, that it was not by the arrangement of the inspired writer himself that the Book of Revelation was made the last book of the Bible; nor is that book the last inspired book of the New Testament collection that was written. It is the prevailing opinion of the early Christian writers that the Book of Revelation was written while the apostle John was an exile on the isle of Pat-

^j Rev. xxii: 18, 19.

mos, and that he did not write his book called "The Gospel according to St. John," until after his return from Patmos.^k "The weight of evidence now tends to prove," says Canon Farrar, speaking of the Book of Revelation, "that it is *not* the last book in chronological order; that it was written nearer the beginning than the end of St. John's period of apostolic activity amid the churches of Asia; that the last accents of revelation which fall upon our ears are not those of a treatise which, though it ends in such music, contains so many terrible visions of blood and fire; but rather those of the gospel which tells us that the 'Word was made flesh,' and of the epistle which first formulated the most blessed truth which was ever uttered to human hearts—the truth that 'God is love.'"^l And again:

"Some may think it an exaggeration to say that this closing of the Holy Book with the Apocalypse has not been without grave consequences for the history of Christendom; but certainly it would have been better both for the church and for the world if we had followed the divine order, and if those books had been placed last in the canon which were last in order of time. Had this been done, our Bible would have closed as the Book of God to all intents and purposes did close, with the epistle and solemn warning of the last apostle, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.'"^m

If the words in the last chapter in the Book of Revelation mean that no more scripture or revelation was to be written after the prohibitory words under consideration, then John himself became a violator of the word of God which he himself had written; for according to the testimony here

^k "Vide Biblical Literature" (Kitto), Art. "Book of Revelation."

^l "Early Days of Christianity," ch. xxvii.

^m This would make the First Epistle of John the closing book of the canon.

adduced his gospel and first epistle were written after the Book of Revelation. Such an alternative as makes the divinely inspired writer a violator of his own supposed inhibition of further revelation is so absurd, so unlike the conduct of an inspired apostle, that it is sufficient in itself to overthrow the theory that the passage in the last chapter of the Apocalypse intended to close the volume of revelation:

Second: Since the Apocalypse had no connection with the other books of the New Testament for many years after it was written, its prohibitory clause under the most liberal construction could only have reference to itself—it forbade men adding anything more to that particular book of prophecy, the Apocalypse, not to a volume of scripture with which, at the time, it had no connection.

Third: A careful reading of the passage discloses that it is only *man* who is prohibited from adding anything more to that book of prophecy, not God. While man may have added to him the plagues which are written in the book if he presumptuously adds to the words of the prophecy and passes them off for the word of God, yet God would still be left free to give revelation *ad infinitum*. I must needs think that this is the proper view to take of the prohibition, since in Deuteronomy I find it recorded: “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.” To give to this passage the same interpretation that is placed by modern Christians on the passage under consideration from the Apocalypse (and it is just as reasonable to place such an interpretation on the passage in Deuteronomy as to place it on the one in Revelation) would result in rejecting all scripture that was given after the prohibitory clause in the writings of Moses—which would be the greater part of the Old Testament and all of the

“ Deut. iv: 2.

New. The same is true of the prohibitory passage in Proverbs: "Every word of the Lord is pure. * * * Add thou not unto his words lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar."^o There can be no doubt that these passages mean only this: Man must not add his own words to the revelation of God and pass them off as God's word. To say that they mean that no more revelation is to be given after they were uttered is to condemn all the scripture written subsequent to that time. What those passages mean the passage in Revelation means. Man must not add to the words of Deity; but God is left as free to give more revelation as he was before this prohibition to man was placed on record. The passage in question does not in the remotest refer to the close of the volume of revelation.

When the last act of indignity which the wicked ingenuity of his persecutors could suggest was perpetrated on the Son of God, Jesus bowed his thorn-crowned head and exclaimed "It is finished." By some who contend against new revelation it is held that this means that no more revelation is to be expected—revelation is finished! Such a construction would exclude the inspired revelations, visions, dreams and revelations given to the apostles after the crucifixion of Jesus and abundantly testified of in the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and the Apocalypse. It is so clearly evident that the exclamation, "It is finished,"^p had reference to the suffering of the Son of God, that it is not necessary to enter further into a refutation of the claim that it means the revelation of God to man was finished.

Again it is contended that Paul predicted that prophecies should cease:

"Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there

^o Proverbs xxx: 6.

^p St. John xix: 30.

be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away."^q

Unfortunately, however, for those who see in this passage a prophecy of the discontinuance of revelation, Paul tells us *when* prophecy or revelation (for prophecy must needs always be founded on revelation) will cease; that it is not in this mortal life, but "when that which is perfect is come."

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. * * * For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then [when that which is perfect is come] face to face. Now I know in part, but then [when that which is perfect is come] shall I know even as also I am known."^r

That this refers not to this life, where the best and purest only see in part and know in part, but is to be looked for in that future and perfect existence where men shall see as they are seen and know as they are known, is too obvious to need comment. That prophecy, and the revelation on which it is based, was designed to continue with the saints in this mortal existence is evident from the fact that in the opening verse of the succeeding chapter^s the apostle admonishes the saints to "follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."

The whole genius of the gospel contemplates continuous

^q I Corinth. xiii: 8.

^r Ibid, verses 9-12.

^s It should be remembered that the division of the Epistle, and for that matter the whole of the New Testament, into chapters and verses was not made by the writers of it, but is quite a modern work. The verse with which the fourteenth chapter opens is a direct and close continuation of the subject with which the thirteenth chapter closes, and ought not to have been separated from it into another chapter. It is an instance of how clumsily the work of dividing the New Testament into chapters and verses was done.

revelation in the church; and so far is the Bible from justifying the belief that the time will come when it will cease, that on the contrary it teaches that revelation will increase more and more, especially becoming abundant in the last days.

Revelation is the very "rock" or principle upon which the Church of Christ is founded. "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?" was the abrupt question which Jesus once put to his disciples. The answers given were varied. "But whom say ye that I am?" Then Peter answered: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," was the Lord's reply, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."† That is as if the Master had said: "Blessed art thou, Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed unto you that I am the Christ, the Son of the living God, but my Father which is in heaven; and I say unto thee, Peter, upon this principle of revelation will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

This I hold to be the plain meaning of the passage, and not the interpretation given it by the Catholic Church, which is as follows: First let me remind the reader that when Peter was introduced by his brother Andrew to the Lord Jesus, the latter said to him: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone."‡ Therefore when on the occasion above referred to Jesus said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, thou art

† Matt. xvi.

‡ St. John i: 42.

Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church," Catholics say that "the words of Christ to Peter, spoken in the vulgar language of the Jews * * * were the same as if he had said in English: 'Thou art a rock, and upon this rock will I build my church,' so that by plain course of the words, Peter is here declared to be the rock upon which the church was to be built, Christ himself being both the principal foundation and founder of the same."^v But this interpretation strikes wide of the real truth. To say the least it is a far-fetched assumption to hold that Jesus when He addressed Peter on this occasion had any reference to the name He had given him on a former occasion, which, by interpretation, meant a stone. If the Master meant to announce his intention to build his church on Peter, one cannot refrain from asking why he did not explicitly say so? The passage would then doubtless have read: 'I say unto thee, Peter, that thou art a stone, and upon *thee* I will build my church.' Unfortunately for the Catholic contention such is not the reading, and it is only by juggling with the words that such a meaning can be read into the passage. The subject under consideration was not Peter, but the principle upon which he had learned that Jesus was the Son of God—revelation, and on that principle, and not on Peter, the Lord promised to build his church.

^v Footnote in the Douay Bible on Matt. xvi: 17, 18. The Protestant interpretation is that Christ was the "Rock" and the foundation upon which the Church was builded. "It is most certain that Augustine has said many times that the 'Rock was Christ,' and perhaps not more than once that it was Peter himself. But even should St. Augustine and all the Fathers say that the Apostle is the 'Rock' of which Christ speaks I would resist them, single-handed, in reliance upon the Holy Scriptures, that is, on Divine right; for it is written: 'Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (I Cor. iii: 11). Peter himself terms Christ the chief cornerstone, on which we are built up a spiritual house." Martin Luther's Answer to Dr. Eck, "Hist. Reformation (D'Aubigne), Bk. V, p. 172.

But I said the whole genius of the gospel contemplates the continuation of revelation—a statement incumbent upon me to prove. We have seen that the Lord promised to build his church upon revelation. It is the very life and light of it. The means by which it preserves its correspondence with heaven, and learns the will of God under the constantly varying conditions through which it is called to pass.

The means by which revelation may be communicated to the church or to man are varied. Revelation may be given by direct communication with God, as in the case when the Lord walked with Enoch,^w or talked face to face with Moses, as a man speaks to his friend.^x Or it may be by the ministrations of angels, of which we have numerous instances, both in the Old and New Testaments; but more generally the communication of God's will to man is through the medium of the Holy Ghost.

No one can doubt that prophecy is based upon revelation. No man can truthfully predict the future save God reveals it to him. "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man," writes Peter, "but holy men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost."^y Again, in further proof that the Holy Ghost is the means of revelation and the source of prophecy—"When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that he shall speak; and he will show you things to come."^z This Jesus said of the Holy Ghost. If anything were lacking to prove that the Holy Ghost is a medium of revelation, the very spirit of prophecy, it would be found in the following: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the

^wGenesis v: 24; Heb. xi: 5.

^xExodus xxxiii: 11.

^yII Peter i: 20, 21.

^zJohn xvi: 13.

Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”^a To this Paul agrees: “No man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”^b It is the Holy Ghost, then, that testifies that Jesus is the Christ. Now mark what follows: An angel appeared to John, the Apostle, on Patmos, “and,” says John, “I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”^c This is the sum of my argument: The Holy Ghost testifies that Jesus is the Christ, and that “testimony of Jesus” is the spirit of prophecy; and since prophecy must of necessity be based on revelation, the “testimony of Jesus”—the Holy Ghost must also be the spirit of revelation.

When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, preached the famous sermon by which three thousand souls were converted, he made an unqualified promise of the Holy Ghost unto all who would obey the gospel. Replying to the cry of the multitude, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” he said: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”^d This simply means that the Holy Ghost is promised to all who will obey the gospel. It was promised to those that were listening to the apostle, to their children, to all that were afar off, not only as to distance, but as to time; to those a hundred years off, five hun-

^a John xv: 26—Jesus to the apostles.

^b I Cor. xii.

^c Rev. xix: 10.

^d Acts ii: 38, 39.

dred, or five thousand years off; 'even to as many as the Lord our God shall call"—that is, called to obedience to the gospel. It is a promise that reaches our own generation as well as the first generation of the Christian era.

We, then, are promised the Holy Ghost, the spirit of prophecy and of revelation; and indeed we are instructed by the Master himself that except we are born of the Spirit, that is, receive the Holy Ghost, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.^e So clearly is receiving the Holy Ghost a part of the plan of salvation, that, so far as I know, there is not a Christian sect or church, but teaches the necessity and right and duty of the Christian to possess it. But oh, strange inconsistency of "Christendom!" While teaching that men must be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and must possess it, and walk in the light thereof, they deny to it the chiefest of its powers—revelation and prophecy! Modern Christian teachers have dared, without the warrant of divine authority, to divide the manifestations of the Holy Ghost into "ordinary" and "extraordinary" powers; and then have had the further presumption to tell us that the "ordinary" powers of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, are to remain with men; but the "extraordinary" powers, such as revelation, prophecy, healing the sick, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc., these are to be discontinued! Unhesitatingly I pronounce such unwarranted assumption blasphemous!

Instead of trying to excuse the absence among them of the mighty powers of the Holy Ghost as manifested anciently in revelation and prophecy, by falsely saying it was the design of Almighty God that the Holy Ghost should discontinue the exercise of these "extraordinary" powers, the prop-

^e John iii: 5.

er thing for modern Christendom to do would be to humble itself, and confess that it has strayed from God's ordinances, transgressed his laws, changed his ordinances, broken the covenant of the gospel, and denied the powers of the Holy Ghost, because it receives not the manifestations thereof. How absurd to contend that part of the powers of the Holy Ghost are to be exercised and not the others! What a denying and splitting up of the powers of God are here! One class of his powers to be exercised in one age, but to lie dormant in another, and man presuming to tell which are necessary to be active and which dormant!

So far from leading us to believe in the discontinuance of the "extraordinary powers" of the Holy Ghost in the last days, the teachings of scripture on the contrary lead us to expect an increase of them. Peter, in the sermon already referred to above, says, quoting the prophet Joel:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood and fire and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."^f

I know that the general understanding among Christians is that this prophecy was fulfilled upon the occasion of the Holy Ghost being poured out upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost; because, in replying to the accusation of the multitude that the apostles who were speaking in tongues

^f Acts ii.

were drunk, Peter said: "These are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is *that* which was spoken by the Prophet Joel." Then follows the quotation already given. But that Peter meant by this that the prophecy of Joel was completely fulfilled is out of all harmony with the facts of the case. First, Joel's prophecy relates to "the last days"—not to the days in which Peter was living and speaking; second, according to Joel's prophecy, the Spirit of God was to be poured out upon "all flesh;" on the occasion of its outpouring on the day of Pentecost, it was confined to twelve men; third, both the "sons and daughters" of the people are to prophesy, according to Joel's prediction; young men are to see visions; old men to dream dreams; and on his servants and his handmaidens the Lord promises to pour out of his Spirit "and they shall prophesy."

This describes so general an outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord upon his people that the conditions existing on the day of Pentecost by no manner of means fulfill the prophecy. What then could mean the saying of Peter—"This is *that* which was spoken by the prophet Joel?" It means this: The Spirit that you here see manifestations of is that Spirit spoken of by Joel that will eventually be poured out upon "all flesh;" doubtless in that happy time spoken of by other prophets when "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. * * * They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."⁸ Then and not till then will Joel's great prophecy have its complete fulfillment.

⁸ Isaiah xi.

Moreover, connected with this outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord upon all flesh in the last days, is the fact that God will also “show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood and fire and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come;” but, “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.” These judgments that are to be poured out upon the earth, together with the mercy that shall be shown to those who turn to the Lord, are so nearly identical with those which are described as preceding or connected with the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus in the last days,^h that they must be the same; and these judgments, as also the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God upon all flesh, look to the last days, and not to the days when Peter preached to the people, for their complete fulfillment.

If we contemplate the Church of Christ as having existed, without a moment's interruption from the time it was founded by the Savior and his apostles until now, instead of losing or having any spiritual powers discontinued, the Christians ought to have increased in the enjoyment of them more and more. And instead of saying that the “extraordinary powers” of the Holy Ghost have been discontinued, they ought to be able to say the circle of those possessed of and able to employ all the spiritual gifts of the gospel to their own and the salvation of others, has been marvelously enlarged. The spirit of prophecy and revelation, which, as we have seen, is the Holy Ghost, is absolutely necessary in the church to call its officers. How else shall the church have a divinely authorized ministry? How else shall men be called of God as was Aaron? The church today has as much need of inspired men able to say, separate unto the Lord such

^h See Matt. xxiv.

and such men for the work whereunto God has called them, as it was for the church in Antioch, in the early days of Christianity, to have prophets and teachers who, as they ministered before the Lord and fasted, heard the Holy Ghost say, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."ⁱ

The spirit of prophecy and revelation is necessary in the church to direct the officers thereof in the performance of their duties. It is useless to contend that the directions given by the spirit of revelation to the ancient servants of the Lord will answer for God's ministry now. As well might it be argued that the miller today could grind with the water which passed his mill-wheel yesterday. The conditions under which the Church of Christ exists in various ages are constantly changing; and the officers of the church always require divine direction, which can only be supplied by revelation. The revelations given to the patriarchs from Adam to Abraham and Melchisedek were not esteemed sufficient to direct Moses in the management of the dispensation committed to him. Nor were the numerous revelations given to Moses sufficient to guide his successor, Joshua, in leading Israel; but a means for obtaining the word of the Lord was provided for him through the use of the Urim and Thummim, in the hands of the high priest. So also the revelations given to Moses, to Joshua and his successors, the judges and prophets of Israel, were not considered sufficient to direct the labor of the apostles and seventies and elders in the dispensation of the gospel introduced by the Lord Jesus. Nor were the revelations given to the first apostle sufficient to direct the labors of Paul and his associates in the constantly-changing circumstances in the midst of which they found themselves. After having gone throughout Phrygia and

ⁱ Acts xiii.

the whole region of Galatia, Paul, had he followed his own inclinations, would have gone into Asia to preach; but he was forbidden of the Holy Ghost^{*l*}—that is, by revelation. Afterwards he would have gone into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered him not^{*k*}—that is, gave a revelation forbidding him to go into that land. Afterwards, through an inspired vision, he was called into Macedonia,^{*l*} and began that wonderful missionary career which resulted in spreading a knowledge of the gospel throughout Macedonia, Greece and the western division of the Roman empire. In like manner, in all succeeding generations, and no less in our own than in any that has preceded it, the ministry of the Church of Christ stands absolutely in need of the spirit of prophecy and revelation to direct its labors, if those labors are to be efficient and acceptable to God.

The spirit of prophecy and revelation is necessary in the church not only to call its ministers and direct their labors but also to teach, correct, reprove, comfort and warn the members thereof. How else shall they be preserved from error in doctrine, and from the strife and division consequent upon it? Man's ways are not as God's ways; and it seems almost inherent in human nature to wander from the ways of the Lord, to seek out many strange inventions. Human wisdom is not sufficient for this work of correcting errors and reproving saints; for "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;"^{*m*} hence the necessity of the ministry of the church having the spirit of prophecy and revelation.

And then, for another reason should the ministry of the church teach, "not with the enticing words of man's wisdom,

^{*l*} Acts xvi: 6.

^{*k*} Acts xvi: 7.

^{*l*} Acts xvi: 9, 10.

^{*m*} I Cor. ii: 11.

but in demonstration of the spirit and of power;" that the faith of the saints stands not in "the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."ⁿ

Nor is it enough for the ministry to be inspired of God, the lay members of the church no less than the ministry have a right to it—to the people as well as to the priests is the Holy Ghost promised; and the people have need of it as well as the ministry; for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."^o Hence the importance of those who listen being inspired by the same spirit as those who teach. "It is written," says Paul, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. * * * Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."^p If thus the saints in primitive Christian times enjoyed the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, why should not the saints in all succeeding ages also enjoy it, since it is promised to them as well as unto the first Christians, and God is no respecter of persons?^q Why should not Christians in all ages have the spirit of prophecy to enlighten and comfort their souls and warn them of events to come? But the argument is interminable, and I only desired to pursue it far enough to prove that the whole genius of the gospel contemplates the continuance of revelation.

How long I have delayed the direct consideration of my

ⁿ I Cor. ii: 4, 5.

^o I Cor. ii: 14.

^p I Cor. ii: 9, 10, 12.

^q Rom. ii: 11.

Thesis! The foregoing remarks, however, were necessary since the belief that the volume of scripture was completed and forever closed; that the voice of prophecy is no more to be heard; that the visitation of angels is not to be expected; that revelation has forever ceased—all stood as so many obstacles to be removed before we could consider the direct testimony supporting the proposition that the gospel in the last days is to be restored to the earth by re-opening the heavens and giving a new dispensation thereof to the children of men. But now all things are ready. I have shown that since men corrupted and lost the gospel, together with divine authority to administer its ordinances, the only way to regain possession of it is by receiving a new dispensation of it through a revelation from God; that the sectarian teaching that the volume of scripture is completed and closed is based upon assumption merely; that the same sectarian teaching that revelation and prophecy had ceased forever is equally false; on the contrary we have seen that the very spirit and genius of the gospel contemplates the continuation of revelation both to the church and to individuals; therefore it can be neither unscriptural nor unreasonable to expect a new revelation that will restore the gospel.