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A New Dispensation of the Gospel

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CHAPTER XII.

A NEW DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL.

The true test of moral courage is to stand alone against the world and maintain what one believes or knows to be the truth. It is easy enough to join in the chorus that cries "Amen" to orthodox doctrines, or even to lead in advocating opinions that the multitude by very force of tradition accept with applause. Even unpopular opinions are maintained and that stoutly by men whose moral courage falls very far short of the sublime, if only they are supported by a following. Just as men of indifferent physical courage will sometimes show a spirit of desperate daring, and rush into the jaws of death, borne up against the danger by the sheer consciousness of moving upon it with a large number of their fellows. Examples are furnished by armies in battle. Not a few of those who charge the enemy with apparent reckless bravery are borne along by the strength which comes from the support of numbers. The charge upon the enemy, therefore, even in the face of a galling fire, is not the truest test of the courage of the soldier. A better evidence of courage is given by the solitary sentinel upon his beat; when alone under the quiet stars he walks the path of danger, uncertain where it may be lurking or from what quarter it may come; when the shouts of his comrades are hushed in slumber; when the soul-stirring drum and ear-piercing fife are silent; when the excitement which comes from action, and the tumult of glorious battle no longer sustain him—then if his spirit fails him not, and he calmly and alone faces the danger and does

his duty, he gives his commander a better evidence of his courage than he will ever give in the mad recklessness of the charge.

As dogs best hunt in packs, so men best fight in armies; and so, too, do men best stand by their convictions when strengthened by that moral support which comes from the approval of their fellows. But, as I remarked, the truest test of moral courage is to stand alone and maintain what one either knows or believes to be the truth against the sneers and ridicule of the world.

When the one who stands alone against millions is young, and the influences brought to bear against him are the most powerful that can be employed; if he break not down, but steadily holds to the assertion or principle which gives offense, his courage and integrity must stand as presumptive evidence that he either has the truth or what he believes to be the truth, for out and out falsehood has no such heroes. The truth alone, or what is honesty taken for it, can support men in such an issue as this. And more especially is this the case if the one undergoing the trial, in addition to tender years, is also unschooled in the vices of the world, is of quick sympathies and easily persuaded.

Such was Joseph Smith when he received that vision of the Father and the Son described in the preceding chapter. He had but just completed his fourteenth year. The conditions amid which he spent his childhood—not yet ended—were such as to keep him innocent; and his deep filial love and strong affection for brothers and sisters gave evidence of the existence in him of those quick sympathies which in later life developed into that deep universal love for his fellow-men so characteristic of him; while the disposition to yield to the persuasion of his friends was so prominent in him as

well nigh to amount to weakness.^a Thus in him were all those qualities of character, and about him were all those conditions, which make his stand for the truth of his story of such great force as presumptive evidence of its correctness; for notwithstanding his youth, his inclination to yield to the persuasions of friends, his deep sympathetic soul, which was pained at the abuse heaped upon his parents as well as upon himself for asserting that he had seen a vision—notwithstanding all this, he never could be induced either by persuasion, by threats, by scoffs, by scorn or ridicule, or religious influence, or abuse heaped upon himself and family, to

^aAfter the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated were delivered to the Prophet Joseph, the Lord had occasion to reprove him several times for his disposition to yield to the persuasion of men. When he received the record of the Nephites the Lord put him under a covenant to show them to no one except to those to whom the Lord should command him to show them (Doc. & Cov., Sec. v: 3). When he had translated enough to make 116 pages of old foolscap manuscript, Martin Harris continually importuned him to be allowed to show that much of the work to his friends. This the Lord forbade, but Harris continuing his importunings, and Joseph in turn petitioning the Lord at Harris' request, permission was at last granted, and the MS. was stolen. Joseph, for thus yielding to the persuasion of Martin Harris after the word of the Lord was known, lost for a season his gift to translate, and the plates were taken from him. When they were returned, and permission given to continue the work of translation, the Lord thus reproved him for his disposition to yield to persuasion: "Behold, you have been intrusted with these things, but how strict were your commandments; and remember, also, the promises which were made to you, if you did not transgress them; and behold, how oft you have transgressed the commandments and the laws of God, and have gone on in the persuasions of men!" (Doc. & Cov., Sec. iii.) And again the Lord said to him: "And now, I command you, my servant Joseph, to repent and walk more uprightly before me, and yield to the persuasions of men no more; and that you be firm in keeping the commandments wherewith I have commanded you, and if you do this, behold I grant unto you eternal life, even if you should be slain." (Doc. & Cov., Sec. v.) But this characteristic was only manifested early in his career. Or if it appeared later in life, it was only in relation to things indifferent—that is, in things that did not involve a sacrifice of principle.

retract his declaration that he had seen a heavenly vision in which he beheld both God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

He made no secret of the vision. Only a few days after receiving it, being in company with a prominent Methodist minister, he gave him an account of the revelation which he had received from God, when to the boy's astonishment the minister railed most viciously against it. Writing of those early experiences later in life the Prophet said:

"He treated my communication not only lightly but with great contempt, saying it was all of the devil, that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days; that all such things had ceased with the apostles, and that there would never be any more of them. I soon found, however, that by telling the story I had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continue to increase, and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution, and this was common among all the sects, all united to persecute me.

"It caused me serious reflection then, and often has since, how very strange it was that an obscure boy, of a little over fourteen years of age, and one, too, who was doomed to the necessity of obtaining a scanty maintenance by his daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects of the day, so as to create in them a spirit of the most bitter persecution and reviling. But strange or not, so it was, and it was often the cause of great sorrow to myself. However, it was, nevertheless, a fact that I had beheld a vision. I have thought since that I felt much like Paul when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light and heard a voice, but still there were but a few who believed him; some said he was dishonest; others said he was mad, and he was ridiculed and reviled; but all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had,

and all of the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew and would know to his latest breath that he had both seen a light, and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

“So it was with me; I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely, for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute for telling the truth? I had actually seen a vision, and who am I that I can withstand God? Oh why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision. I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God and come under condemnation.”^b

This statement the boy maintained alone (save such support as came from the belief of his own family, none of the immediate members of which, so far as I have learned, ever doubting his story), against the world for three years; without even the encouragement of a further spiritual manifestation. It would be improper, as I believe, to say that God did this to prove him. The Almighty, who is also All Knowing, knew before the test was made that he would endure it. God knew his spirit and its nobility and strength as he knew Messiah's or Abraham's; he knew it as he knew the spirit of Jeremiah and ordained him, too, to be a prophet to the nations before he was born.^c But if God needed no new

^b Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith, “Pearl of Great Price,” (1902 edition always quoted), pp. 86-87. Also “History of the Church,” Vol. I, ch. i.

^c “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”—The Lord to Jeremiah (Jeremiah ch. i: 5).

evidence of the strength of character possessed by his New Witness; if he needed no proof of his integrity, his devotion to the truth—the world did; and during that period of three years of sore trial, when alone he maintained the truth against scoffing priests, the gibes of his companions, and the sneers, ridicule and unbelief of the world, he gave to the generation in which he lived and to all generations succeeding, such evidence of his integrity to the truth, or what at least he believed to be true, as ought and will secure the respectful attention of sincere men to the testimony he bears for God.

The constancy of the lad, under all the circumstances, laid deep the foundation for faith in the man, and in the work which, under God, he founded. There were so many interests—the peace of himself and family; his own and his family's good name and standing in society; the applause of religionists who would have hailed with delight his renunciation of the vision as a delusion of the devil—all these things cried out, "Renounce it!" But the fact that to all such demands the lad shouted back, "'Tis God's truth, I saw the vision!"—will go far towards making men believe that he did; for had he been base enough to invent such a story, when he found that it made against his interest and brought nothing but reproaches, without doubt, he would have denied it; for men seldom persist in conscious falsehood which works only to their disadvantage. And in this instance the renunciation would have been so easy by calling it a delusion wrought by the adversary of men's souls, by which he had been deceived. But neither ease of denial nor the seeming advantages to accrue from it moved him; against it all he was supported by the consciousness of having told the truth. Unless indeed we can believe him so insane as to have been

a candidate for disgrace, and ambitious of the contempt of his fellows.

At the end of three years' silence, viz., on the 21st of September, 1823, he was blessed with another vision. During the three years he was left to stand alone he lays no claim to perfect sanctity, but freely confesses to have fallen frequently into "foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the corruption of human nature." In consequence of these things he often felt condemned; and on the above mentioned 21st of September, he betook himself to prayer to Almighty God, sought a remission of his sins, and asked for a manifestation of his standing before the Lord.

While thus calling upon God in prayer, the room in which he knelt was filled with light, and an angel stood in his presence, who announced himself a messenger sent from God to inform him that the Lord had a work for him to do; and that his name should be had for good and evil among all nations; or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.^d

Moroni, for such was the angel's name, was one of the ancient prophets who had lived in America; he was now raised from the dead,^e and had come to make known the existence of the record of the ancient inhabitants of the western hemisphere. Besides giving an account of the ancient

^d "Pearl of Great Price," pp. 88, 89.

^e It certainly ought not to be difficult for Christians to believe in the existence of resurrected men; for in Matthew's Gospel we read: 'And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his [Christ's] resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many' (Matt. xxvii: 52, 53). If the ancient saints on the eastern hemisphere who were worthy arose from the dead after the resurrection of Jesus, it is not improbable, but rather reasonable, that the worthy saints who had lived upon the western hemisphere also should be raised from the dead.

peoples who inhabited America, and the source whence they sprang, this record also contained the fullness of the gospel as delivered by the Savior to them. Hidden with the record were two stones in silver bows, and the bows fastened to a breastplate, constituting the Urim and Thummim. The ability to use the Urim and Thummim was what constituted seers in ancient times, and they had been deposited with this record for the purpose of translating it.

After these explanations, Moroni began quoting and explaining a number of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Following are the passages in the order in which he quoted them: Part of the 3rd chapter of Malachi, 4th chapter of Malachi; 11th chapter of Isaiah—saying it was about to be fulfilled; 3rd chapter of Acts, 22nd and 23rd verses, saying that the prophet therein named was Jesus Christ, but the time when those who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people had not yet come, but would soon come; 2nd chapter of Joel, from 28th verse to the last: this was not fulfilled, but soon would be.

Some of the passages he quoted differently from the way they read in our English version. Malachi 3rd chapter, 1st verse, for example, he quoted as follows:

“For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

The 5th and 6th verses he quoted thus:

“Behold I will reveal unto you the priesthood by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers; if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.”

This heavenly messenger appeared to him three times

during that night and each time related the same things to him, the interviews occupying nearly the whole night.

The next day while working beside his father in a field Joseph was taken ill. His father observing it advised him to go to the house. This the boy started to do, but in climbing over the fence, which separated the field from the house, his strength utterly failed him, and he sank to the ground unconscious. He was aroused by some one calling his name, and when he regained consciousness the messenger of the night before stood near him. Again the things of the night before were repeated; and he received a commandment to go and tell his father the vision. This he did and his father encouraged him to do as he had been commanded. He accordingly went as directed in his vision to the place where the record of the ancient Americans was concealed—to a hill called by them Cumorah.

Removing the grass and soil which was about the edges of the stone box that contained the ancient record, with a lever he raised the lid and there saw the gold plates and the Urim and Thummim. He was about to take them from the box, when the angel Moroni again stood before him, and forbade his taking them out, as the time for them to be given to him for translation had not yet come, nor would it come until four years from that date. He was commanded to come at the end of each year to that place, and the angel would meet him to give the necessary instruction.

This Joseph did for four successive years, and each time met the same heavenly messenger and received instruction. On the occasion of the fourth meeting, viz., on the 22nd of September, 1827, the record was given into his hands to translate. This work of translation, through the grace of God, he accomplished, and in 1830 the Book of Mormon was published to the world.

Before it was published, the plates of gold on which it had been engraved by the ancient inhabitants of the land, were shown by the angel Moroni to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, together with the Urim and Thummim through which the translation was effected; and their testimony to this fact was printed over their signatures on the fly-leaf of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith himself exhibited the plates to eight other persons, viz.: Christian, Jacob, Peter and John Whitmer; Hiram Page, Joseph Smith, Sen., Hyrum Smith and Samuel H. Smith. The testimony of these eight witnesses to the effect that they had seen, and handled the plates from which the Book of Mormon had been translated, and examined the characters engraved thereon, was also printed in the first and all subsequent authorized editions of the book.^f

It must be understood that during the progress of the young Prophet's work, persecution was continuous; and slander with her thousand tongues was inventing falsehood to destroy the work of God. But while opposition was strong, the Lord from time to time raised up friends to assist him in his labors and share his responsibilities. Among such persons was one Oliver Cowdery, a young school teacher, who while following his profession in the town of Manchester, was boarding in the family of Joseph Smith's parents, from whom he learned of the revelations of God to Joseph, and of his having the record of the ancient inhabitants of America.

The youthful Prophet at this time was living at Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. He had married a Miss Emma Hale and settled there on a piece of land purchased of his father-in-law. Oliver Cowdery went to Harmony to investigate the claims of Joseph Smith, both in re-

^f This is a very brief and imperfect account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. A fuller account is given in Vol. II, Part II, ch. iv. of this work—"New Witnesses."

spect to his receiving revelations from God and having the Book of Mormon. He became satisfied upon both points and remained with him to act as his scribe in the work of translation.

In May, 1829, the work of translation drawing near to completion, they came upon a passage in the Book of Mormon respecting baptism, upon which they held different views. They retired to the woods on the 15th of May to present the matter before the Lord for further light, and while engaged in calling upon God in prayer, a personage appeared to them surrounded by a glorious light, who, as he laid his hands upon their heads, said: "Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."

The Messenger who thus conferred the Aaronic priesthood upon them was named John, the same that is called the Baptist in the New Testament. He had been raised from the dead, and was now sent as a messenger from God to confer the keys of the Aaronic priesthood upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. He told them that he acted under the direction of the apostles Peter, James and John, and that some time in the near future the Melchizedek or higher priesthood would be conferred upon them. He then commanded them to each baptize the other, Joseph to first baptize Oliver, and then Oliver to baptize Joseph. Thus the work of baptizing men for the remission of sins began in the new dispensation.

Some time in the following month, June, 1829, the promise made by John to Joseph and Oliver that the Melchizedek priesthood would be conferred upon them was ful-

filled. In the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna County, Penn., and Colesville, Broom County, New York, on the banks of the Susquehanna River, Peter, James and John conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery the apostleship, the keys of the Melchizedek priesthood, which gave them the right to build up the church of Christ in all the world, and organize it in all its departments.

It is proper here to say a few words upon the subject of priesthood. Priesthood is power which God confers upon man, by which he becomes an agent for God, authorized to act in his name. It may be to warn a city or nation of approaching calamity because of corruption; it may be to teach faith in God, or cry repentance to the wicked; it may be to baptize in water for the remission of sins, or lay on hands, as the ancient apostles did, for the baptism of the Holy Spirit; or it may be to lay on hands for the healing of the sick, or all these things combined. Men who hold the priesthood possess divine authority thus to act for God; and by possessing part of God's power they are in reality part of God, that is, in the sense of being part of the great governing power that extends throughout the universe. This is the authority of men that hold the priesthood, and when those who possess it walk in obedience to the commandments of God, men who honor the priesthood in them, honor God; and those who reject it reject God, even the power of God.

It was doubtless these considerations which led Jesus to say, when sending out his apostles to preach the gospel: "He that receiveth you receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. * * * And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land

of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.”^h

Considered in the light of these sayings of Jesus, the priesthood is a solemn thing. To hold power delegated to one by Almighty God—to have authority to speak and act in his name, and have it of the same binding force as if the Deity himself spoke or acted, is both an honor and a responsibility which few men comprehend. It is an awe-inspiring thing. Yet such authority God does confer upon men. It was bestowed upon the Patriarchs before the flood, upon Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. It was given to the apostles through Jesus; he said to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”ⁱ These mighty keys of authority were conferred, as related in the foregoing, upon Joseph Smith, and by that authority he organized the Church and regulated its affairs up to the time of his death.

The Church of Jesus Christ, in the new dispensation under the direction of revelation from God, was organized on the 6th day of April, 1830. That organization was very simple; it was effected with six members. Joseph Smith was acknowledged as the first Elder of the Church, and Oliver Cowdery as the second Elder; but before the meeting which organized the Church adjourned, the Church was commanded to keep a record in which the Prophet Joseph was to be called “a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, an Elder of the church.”^j The more complete organization of the Church with Apostles,

^h Matt. x.

ⁱ Matt. xvi.

^j Doc. & Cov., Sec. xxi.

Seventies, High Priests, Elders, Bishops, Priests, Teachers and Deacons, was a later development, and will receive attention in a subsequent chapter.

In the month of February, 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon^k were wrapt in vision, in which they beheld the Son of God and conversed with him—let them bear their own testimony:

“We, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the spirit on the sixteenth of February, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two, by the power of the spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God—even those things which were from the beginning, before the world was, which were ordained of the Father, through his Only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning, of whom we bear record, and the record which we bear is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Son, whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision for while we were doing the work of translation, which the Lord had appointed unto us, we came to the twenty-ninth verse of the fifth chapter of John, which was given to us as follows. Speaking of the resurrection of the dead, concerning those who shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth: They who have done good in the resurrection of the just and they who have done evil in the resurrection of the unjust.^l Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit; and while we meditated upon these things, the Lord touched the eyes

^k Sidney Rigdon, born in Pennsylvania, 19th of February, 1793, had been prominently connected with what is known as the “Campbellite” or Reformed Baptist movement in the United States; but was converted to a belief in the restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith, by Elder Parley P. Pratt, who first presented him with the Book of Mormon. At the time indicated in the text he was a prominent Elder in the Church and closely associated with Joseph Smith.

^l In the English version of the New Testament the passage reads: “And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.” St. John v. 29.

of our understandings and they were opened, and the glory of the Lord shone round about; and we beheld the glory of the Son, on the right hand of the Father, and received of his fullness; and saw the holy angels, and they who are sanctified before his throne, worshipping God, and the Lamb, who worship him forever and ever. And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony last of all, which we give of him, that he lives; for we saw him, even on the right hand of God, and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—that by him, and through him, and of him the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.^m

Four years after the vision of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, viz., April 6th, 1836, other visions of Jesus Christ and several mighty angels were given to the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery. The visions occurred during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. The first was of Jesus Christ, who declared his acceptance of the temple. The angels came to deliver certain keys of authority to Joseph Smith. Following is the Prophet's account of the several manifestations:

“The vail was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened. We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us, and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold in color like amber. His eyes were as a flame of fire, the hair of his head was white like the pure snow, his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying I am the first and the last, I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain, I am your advocate with the Father. Behold, your sins are forgiven you, you are clean before me, therefore lift up your heads and rejoice. Let the hearts of your brethren rejoice, and let the hearts of all my people rejoice who have, with their might, built this house to my name, for behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here, and

^mDoc. and Cov., Sec. lxxvi.

I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in the house, yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house, yea, the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house; and the fame of this house shall spread to foreign lands, and this is the beginning of the blessing which shall be poured out upon the heads of my people, even so. Amen.

“After this vision closed, the heavens were again opened unto us, and Moses appeared before us and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north.

“After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying, that in us, and our seed, all generations after us should be blessed.

“After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon us, for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said: Behold the time is fully come, which was spoken by the mouth of Malachi, testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse. Therefore the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands, and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.”

There were numerous other revelations given to Joseph Smith and to others through him; for he was God's mouth-piece to men in this new dispensation, both before and after the church was organized. Some of these revelations were received through the Urim and Thummim which the angel Moroni gave into his possession in connection with the gold plates of the Book of Mormon.^o Other revelations were re-

^o Doc. and Cov., Sec. cx.

ceived through inspiration from God acting directly upon the Prophet. Of the manner in which these last named revelations were received, a prominent writer and officer in the church who was present on several such occasions, says:

“Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each sufficiently long for it to be recorded by an ordinary writer in long hand. This was the manner in which all his written revelations were dictated and written. There was never any hesitation, reviewing or reading back to keep the thread of the subject; neither did any of these communications undergo revisions, interlinings, or corrections. As he dictated them, so they stood, so far as I have witnessed; and I was present to witness the dictation of several communications of several pages.”^p

With the revelations thus received, as well as those received through the Urim and Thummim, we shall have more or less to do in this work; but the visions and ministrations of angels related in this and the preceding chapter constitute the basis upon which the work of God in this new dispensation is founded. From the information and authority received through them comes the organization of the Church of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel in all the world.

The manifestations are of a character which preclude all possibility of the parties who received them being mistaken. If the great work of God in these last days, were founded alone upon the internal inspiration or illumination of the Prophet Joseph, the probability of his belonging to that very large number of well-meaning but mistaken men who have thought themselves inspired of God would be very much in-

^o The revelations known to have been received through the Urim and Thummim are the following: Doc. and Cov. Sec. iii. Ibid, Sec. vi, Sec. vii, Sec. xi, Sec. xiv, Sec. xv, Sec. xvi, Sec. xviii. There were doubtless others received through that sacred instrument, but these are specially mentioned as being so received.

^p “Autb. of Parley P. Pratt,” pp. 65, 66.

creased; for nothing is more common perhaps, in the phenomena of mind than self-deception in such matters. "Mormonism," however, came into existence not alone from internal inspiration, or divine inward illumination of Joseph Smith; but from revelations that had an external source as well; revelations which appeal to the senses—perceptions of the mind, as well as to the inner consciousness. Review them I pray you:

1. God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ are beheld in the full light of day—nay, in an effulgence of light, brighter than the sunlight at noon-day. And a direct conversation is held with them upon a matter-of-fact subject for some length of time.

2. One of the resurrected prophets of ancient America, Moroni, appears three times in one night to the Prophet, and twice the following day; he conversed upon a variety of subjects, but the main purpose of his visitation was to reveal the existence of the record of an ancient people. At the end of each year, for four successive years, this same heavenly messenger repeats his visits, and at the last gives into the possession of Joseph Smith a volume of gold plates, the engravings on which the Prophet translated into the English language.

3. An angel exhibits these same plates to three other men, and permits them to examine the engravings thereon.^q

4. Eight other men see and handle the plates and examine the characters engraven on them.^r

5. Another angel, John the Baptist, also a resurrected prophet, appears in broad day light and lays his hands upon the heads of two men, viz: Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and ordains them to the Aaronic priesthood.

^q See Testimony of the Three Witnesses, published with the Book of Mormon.

^r *Ibid*, Testimony of the Eight Witnesses.

6. Three of the ancient apostles, (Peter, James and John) appear and ordain the same men to the Melchizedek or higher priesthood.

7. Jesus is seen by two men, viz., Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, at the right hand of God the Father, and a protracted conversation ensues.^s

8. Jesus is again seen in the Temple at Kirtland, by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and again his voice is heard.

9. On the same occasion Moses, Elias, and Elijah, the prophet, appeared and conferred certain keys of authority upon two men—Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.

Now all this appeals to the outward senses. It is matter of fact. It is tangible. It all occurred and is a solemn verity, or it is all wicked fabrication. A fabrication it is possible for it to be, but it can never be resolved into a mere mistake—a self-deception. The men who affirm all of it to have taken place may have been villains, bent on deluding mankind; for wicked men still lie in wait to deceive; but they can never be classed as well-meaning but *mistaken* men. Either what Joseph Smith and his associates affirm is true, or they are base and conscious imposters. The manifestations of which they proclaim themselves witnesses are so palpable to the senses—to sight, and touch and hearing; they occur at such times and places, and under such circumstances, and are so frequently repeated, that there can be no possibility of mistake. In the consideration of their testimony, therefore, there is no middle ground between the extremes of absolute truthfulness or absolute falsehood, and I ask the readers of this book to take up the investigation upon which we are about to enter in this spirit.

^s Vision of the Three Glories, Doc. and Cov., Sec. 76.