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A New Witness for God: Chapter II

Author(s): B. H. Roberts

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Abstract: Bible passages are used in this article to show that revelation from God has not ceased, that prophecy continues in modern times, and that the Book of Mormon is a new witness for Jesus Christ brought forth through this modern revelation. Bible passages that have been used to cast doubt on the Book of Mormon are explained and the arguments refuted.

 THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

 MONDAY, MAY 12, 1888.

 A NEW WITNESS FOR GOD.

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CHAPTER II.

“And because my words shall hiss forth, many of the Gentiles shall say, a Bible! a Bible! we have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.”—*Word of the Lord to Nephi* (II Nephi xxix, 3).

THE new witness of which I have spoken is one that has been brought to light through the revelations of God to man in this our age. And here, on the very threshold of this subject, I meet with an obstacle that must needs be removed before I can hope to secure the attention of the reader. I refer to the almost universal belief among Christians that the canon of Scripture is closed, and that no more revelation is to be given. Had I been able to say that the New Witness had been unearthed by the researches of man; that by some such fortunate discovery as the finding of the Rossetta Stone, there had been brought to light additional evidence to the truthfulness of the Jewish Scriptures; or that learned scientists by means of microscope or telescope had found new facts which tended to confirm the revelations contained in Holy Writ, no doubt what I would then have to say would be listened to with some degree of attention. But among Christian sects the belief that God will give no more revelation to man is so general, that to say our New Witness has been brought to light through a modern revelation, is to raise against it all the prejudice existing toward what is called new revelation. Hence, I say, this obstacle, meeting us at the commencement of our subject, must be discussed and removed.

Nothing could be more untrue, or out of all harmony with the spirit and teachings of Holy Writ, than that doctrine which teaches that the stream of revelation from God stopped nineteen centuries ago, and will no more be renewed. Any one who will take the pains to read Act ii, 38, 39, will admit, no doubt, that a universal promise of the Holy Ghost is there made to those whom God shall call to obedience to His Gospel; the language is—

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 to as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

I know not how a promise more universal than that could well be made. It extends to all people, and to all ages. If men realize the fulfillment of this promise made by one commissioned to speak with authority in the name of God, they would enjoy the powers of that spirit; and one of its powers is to make known the things of God, and to show things which are to come. Here is the passage which proves it:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, [which is the Holy Ghost] is come, he will guide you unto all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak: and *he will show you things to come*. . . . All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you (John xvi, 13—15).

Furthermore it is said of this Spirit, that it will testify of Christ (John xv, 26), and Paul says that—

No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. xii, 3).

From this it appears that the Holy Ghost is a witness for Christ, a testimony for Jesus; and it will be remembered that when John the Revelator fell at the feet of the angel and was about to worship him, the angel said:

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* (Rev. xix, 10).

And since, as we have seen, the Holy Ghost is the "testimony of Jesus," therefore the Holy Ghost is the spirit of prophecy. It was under the influence of that Spirit that what Scripture we have was written. Says the Apostle Peter:

For prophecy came not in olden time by the will of God, but holy men of God spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter i, 21).

And that which these holy men spake was written down and became Scripture.

Seeing, then, that the Holy Ghost is the source of divine inspiration and revelation, and that a universal promise of the Holy Ghost is made to those whom God shall call to yield obedience to His Gospel, as well to men in this age as to those who lived in former ages, how comes it that men revolt against the idea of God giving through revelation a new witness for Himself in this unbelieving generation? We shall see. But we desire to show here that this doctrine of a cessation of revelation is directly contrary to the word and promises of God.

The Apostle Peter in refuting the charge of drunkenness laid upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost by the multitude who heard them speaking in tongues and prophesying, quoted from a prophecy of Joel's, which he read as follows:

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* (Act ii, 17, 18).

I am aware that many will contend that this prophecy of Joel's was fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles on the day of

Pentecost. But this is not the case, as will appear by a second reading, and a careful noting of the terms of the prophecy. In the first place it is worthy of note that the outpouring of this Spirit is to occur in *the last days*; second, the outpouring of the Spirit is to be upon *all flesh*, upon the handmaidens of the Lord as well as upon His servants. But on the day of Pentecost the Spirit descended upon the apostles only, instead of upon *all flesh*; upon some of the servants of the Lord, but not upon his handmaidens. Hence on the day of Pentecost the terms of Joel's prophecy were not fulfilled, nor will they be until that happy time shall come when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and all enmity between man and the brute creation has departed, and they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountains. How then are we to understand Peter's reference to this prophecy of Joel's in connection with the Holy Ghost descending on the apostles, for he says: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." The apostle simply meant that that which the people then witnessed was the manifestation of that same Spirit spoken of by Joel, which eventually will be poured out upon all flesh; upon God's handmaidens, as well as upon His servants. Hence we conclude from the Scriptures that in the last days there is to be a more wonderful outpouring of the spirit of prophecy upon the people than has been yet known among men.

Moreover we find a number of Scriptures which plainly declare the visitation of heavenly messengers to the earth in the last days—in days manifestly after those in which the apostles lived. Such for instance as—

An angel to visit the earth in the hour of God's judgment, which is connected with the glorious coming of the Messiah, bringing with him the everlasting Gospel, which is then to be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people (Rev. xiv, 6, 7):—

A special messenger to prepare the way for the glorious coming of the Son of God—when he shall suddenly come to His temple—when it will be difficult to abide the day of his coming—when he shall come to purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer an offering in righteousness unto the Lord (Malachi iii, 1—5):—

Elijah, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, whose peculiar mission it is to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and *vice versa* (Malachi iv, 5, 6):—

Angels to gather the elect "from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv, 31):—

Two prophets yet to be raised up in Jerusalem who will have power to shut heaven that it rain not, but who, notwithstanding their great powers, will become martyrs—will seal their testimony with their blood (Rev. xi, 3—14).

Yet with all these events plainly predicted in Holy Writ, all Christendom has been persuaded to believe, contrary to the teachings of the word of God, that no revelations are to be given of later date than those contained in the New Testament. To fix that idea in the mind the professed teachers of religion, instead of following the admonition of Jude, and urging their followers to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints (Jude iii), which was sufficient to bring down a continuous stream of revelation from

God and the visitation of angels—they have sought to make them believe that the Scriptures teach that prophecy is to cease, the visitation of angel forever to be discontinued, and the voice of revelation to be heard no more. I shall briefly examine some of those passages which are supposed to support these views respecting the discontinuance of prophecy and revelation.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, *It is finished*, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost (John xix, 30).

This passage is taken from John's description of the last moments of Jesus on the cross; and the words, "*It is finished*," by the opponents of new revelation, are twisted to mean that the work of Christ being completed, no more revelation was to be given.

That these words wrung from the trembling lips of the expiring God meant no such thing, is proven by the fact that nearly all the revelations in the New Testament were given after those words—"It is finished"—were uttered. Nor can they mean that the work of Christ was finished, for we find Him even after His resurrection laboring forty days among His disciples, teaching them all things respecting the kingdom of heaven (Acts i, 3). What Jesus did mean was that His suffering was finished—He had drank the cup given Him of the Father, and wrung out the dregs in bitterest anguish.

Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away (1 Cor. xiii, 8).

Here it is claimed is a plain declaration that prophecy shall cease; and the opponent of new revelation, without stopping to enquire when or under what circumstances it shall cease, justifies himself in rejecting everything purporting to be a revelation from God which is outside the lids of the Bible. But if those who rely upon this passage as justifying their rejection of new revelation will look at its context, they will discover *when* prophecies shall fail and when the gift of tongues shall cease, etc.—it will be when that which is perfect is come. As Paul remarks—continuing where my last quotation ended—

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 (9, 10 verses); and then goes on to say that at that time, that is in the apostle's own day, they saw as through a glass darkly, but when that which was perfect should come he promised them they should see face to face, and know as they were known—that time did not come in the days of Paul, it has not yet come, and until that perfect state in which we shall see face to face with God, and know as we are known, and all knowledge which is in part shall be swallowed up in a knowledge that shall be perfect, we have need of revelation, the gift of prophecy, and the visitation of angels even to enable us to see as through a glass darkly.

That Paul did not wish to create any idea in the minds of the Saints against the continuation of revelation from God so long as they are in a state where even with the aid of the spiritual gifts of revelation, prophecy and tongues they can see only as through a glass darkly, is evident from the exhortation he gives in the chapter following the one we have just quoted, saying—

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy (1 Cor. xiv, 1).

Now I come to the passage which is supposed to settle the question beyond all doubting. The reader will consider the passages we have dealt with as but the outer walls; and having broken them down, we come to the citadel itself—the stronghold.

For 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.

This passage occurring near the close of the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, it has been argued that it closed the canon of Scripture, and forbids the addition of any more revelation to that contained in the Bible; and upon the authority of this passage, men justify themselves in refusing to accept anything purporting to be a new revelation from God. This argument is but specious, and the conclusion based upon it will be found to be most incorrect, for the following very good reasons:

I. The Book of Revelation in which the passage occurs was not placed in its present position—the last in the Bible—by its author, nor by any person authorized by him, nor by the command of God. The Book of Revelation, like the other books and epistles of the New Testament, existed as a single book or pamphlet for a number of generations, separate and apart from any collection of books such as we find in the New Testament—so that the words quoted, let them mean what they will, refer to the Book of Revelation alone, and not to the whole Bible.

II. If this passage means that no more Scripture is to be written—that the fountain of inspiration thenceforth was forever to remain dried up—then John the apostle himself was a violator of his own prohibition, for it is admitted by all biblical scholars of note that the Gospel of St. John *was written after the Book of Revelations*.

III. The language in the passage is, "If any *man* shall add unto these things," *i.e.*, the things written in the Book of Revelations—"God shall add unto him the plagues," etc. It will be seen from this, then, it is simply *man* who is prohibited adding to the things written in that book, not God. Because the Lord has forbidden *man* to add anything more to a revelation He has given, it by no means follows that the Lord has also closed His own mouth so that He cannot give a further revelation.

Words very similar to these in Revelations are to be found in the writings of Moses—

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you (Deut. iv, 2).

Yet no one believes those words close up the revelations of God to man—indeed volumes of revelations were given after they were written. Still the Jews would have been just as reasonable—as much justified in rejecting the revelations of God given subsequent to the writing down of those words, as

Christians of to-day are in rejecting what purports to be a new revelation from God, because of what is written in the last chapter in the Bible. In both cases man is prohibited from adding his own words to the things which God has revealed, and passing them off as the word of God; but God is free to add revelation to that already given as seemeth Him good.

There is nothing in these passages which are quoted to sustain the idea that no more revelation is to be given from God. It is a subterfuge of man's to aide his own spiritual weakness—to excuse the absence of the powers of God which brings to earth the revelations of heaven. R.

OFFERINGS RECEIVED FOR MANTI TEMPLE.—James Barton, 2s. 6d.; Joseph Young, 1s.; Swiss and German Mission, £1 18s. 10d.; John Crosbie, 13s. 4d.; John Crosbie, jun., 13s. 4d.; Robert Crosbie, 13s. 4d.

SHEFFIELD CONFERENCE.—Meetings of the Sheffield Conference will be held in the Spiritualist Hall, 84, Division Street, Sheffield, on Sunday, June 3, 1888, commencing at 10 30 a.m., 2-30 and 6 30 p.m. President George Teasdale and other Elders from Utah are expected to be present.

RELEASES AND APPOINTMENTS.—President James T. Thorne, of the Glasgow Conference, and Henry E. Bowring, of the Bristol Conference, are released from their labors in this Mission to return home to Zion.

President Robert Davidson is released from the presidency of the Liverpool Conference and appointed President of the Glasgow Conference.

Elder John W. Brown is released from his labors in the Glasgow Conference and appointed President of the Liverpool Conference.

Elder Samuel A. Blair is released from his labors in the London Conference and appointed President of the Bristol Conference.

Elder Thomas Burningham is released from his labors in the London Conference and appointed to labor in the Norwich Conference.

Elder William H. Farnsworth is released from his labors in the Glasgow Conference and appointed to labor in the London Conference.

THE Second Company of emigrating Saints left Liverpool on Saturday the 19th inst., per Guion S.S. *Wyoming*. The company numbered 89 adults, 37 children, 2 infants and 9 returning Elders—total 137 souls. The company is in charge of Elder Wm. Wood. We trust they will have a speedy and safe journey to the home of the Saints—the West.

WE receive encouraging reports from several of the Conferences respecting the extension of the work of the Lord; and also of the power of God being manifest in the administration to the sick. President H. Walsh, of the Sheffield Conference, following the lead of President Williams, of the Welsh Mission, succeeded in getting the Second Coming of the Messiah published in the *Barnesly Independent*, which is said to have a circulation of fifty thousand copies. President Walsh has also began holding out-door meetings, some of which have been very successful. President Williams has published in a late issue of the *Tarian y Gweithiwy* the letter on "Mormonism," written at this office and that was published in the English papers of Wales some time ago. He has also had a number of slips published containing the same letter, and the brethren traveling among the Welsh-speaking people are using them as tracts. By getting these testimonies printed in the papers, we are reaching thousands of people with the Gospel that otherwise would never hear of it; and therefore we hope the Elders will lose no opportunity in getting the printed word before the people.