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A New Witness for God, Conclusion

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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Abstract: A review of the prophecies concerning the Book of Mormon, the evidence of its authenticity, and the author's testimony to its truthfulness.

A NEW WITNESS FOR GOD.

CONCLUSION.

I SAID in the chapter in which the consideration of these minor evidences of the truth of the Book of Mormon commenced, that about all I should be able to do would be merely to indicate the existence of such evidences rather than to discuss them; and I doubt not but the reader after having finished the last chapter, and observing the rapidity with which I passed over the prophecies quoted, will be convinced of the truth of what I then stated. The reader must not think I have even indicated all the prophecies contained in the Book of Mormon. That sacred volume is replete with prophecy, all of which are interesting and instructive; but the reader must remember that a good portion of that volume was written a number of centuries B.C., or else condensed from records that were written in centuries preceding the coming of the Messiah, and many of the prophecies of that book relate to events of those times—to the coming and mission of the Son of God, and the fate of the Nephites. Others there are relative to the restoration of the House of Israel to favor with God, and the establishment of the heavenly kingdom in power on the earth—but as these are not yet fulfilled, I could not cite them in evidence of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, though I may say in passing that they go hand in hand with the predictions of many of the Jewish prophets on the same subject.

The prophecies which I have pointed out as bearing testimony to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon have this to commend them to the reader: (1) There can be no question but what the predictions preceded the events which fulfilled them: (2) The events fulfilling these predictions have occurred, and that in our own day, or are now in progress—so that we know they are really prophecies, the predictions being made public before the events transpired, and the events fulfilling the prophecies having occurred or are now transpiring: (3) The fulfilment of these predictions was altogether beyond the power of those who

were instrumental in bringing forth the Book of Mormon, and were fulfilled, at least many of them were, independent of them, so it was not a case of making predictions within their own power to perform, and then claiming for them the virtue of inspiration.

By way of recapitulation, and to conclude this division of my subject, I ask those who still insist upon believing that the Book of Mormon had some other origin than that claimed for it by Joseph Smith—was it not rather a hazardous prophecy for an impostor to make that three witnesses should behold the original records by the power of God? when to fulfill these things was beyond his power—things that it would require the co-operation of God to bring about? Think, I pray you, how fatal to the pretensions of divine authority for the Book of Mormon if these prophecies had failed. Again, I ask, how did Joseph Smith happen to know that “many” would believe the words of the Book of Mormon; carry them to the American Indians—the Lamanites; or that they would receive them as a blessing from God and rejoice; or that the blood of the Saints would cry from the free soil of America to God for vengeance? Yet all these things were foretold in the Book of Mormon, and have been fulfilled, and beyond all doubting, prove that the ancient prophets who recorded those words “saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass,” and set it down for our instruction, and a testimony for the truth.

By way of negative argument in favor of the Book of Mormon, I may say:

“If the historical part of the Book of Mormon be compared with what little is known from other sources, concerning the history of ancient America, there will be found much evidence to substantiate its truth; but there cannot be found one truth among all the gleanings of antiquity that clashes with the historical truths of the Book of Mormon.

If the prophetic part of this wonderful book be compared with the prophetic declarations of the Bible, there will be found much evidence in the latter to establish the truth of the former. But though there are many predictions in the Book of Mormon, relating to the great events of

the last days, which the Bible gives us no information about, yet there is nothing in the predictions of the Bible that contradicts in the least, the predictions in the Book of Mormon.

If the doctrinal part of the Book of Mormon be compared with the doctrines of the Bible, there will be found the same perfect harmony which we find on the comparison of the prophetic parts of the two books. Although there are many points of the doctrine of Christ that are far more plain and definite in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible, and many things revealed in relation to doctrine that never could be fully learned from the Bible, yet there are not any items of doctrine in the two sacred books that contradict each other, or clash in the least.

If the various books which enter into the collection, called the Book of Mormon, be carefully compared with each other, there will be found nothing contradictory in history, in prophecy or in doctrine.

If the miracles of the Book of Mormon be compared with the miracles of the Bible, there cannot be found in the former any thing that would be more difficult to believe, than what we find in the latter.

If we compare the historical, prophetic and doctrinal parts of the Book of Mormon, with the great truths of science and nature, we find no contradictions, no absurdities, nothing unreasonable. The most perfect harmony, therefore, exists between the great truths revealed in the Book of Mormon and all other known truths, whether religious, historic or scientific."—*Orson Pratt's 'Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,' chapter iv.*

Aside from all these considerations, however, I find an argument in favor of the Book of Mormon based upon the broad foundation of the mercy and justice of God that appeals at once, not only to my reason, but to my sense of what is fair and right in what we call the hand-dealings of God with His children. The Jewish Scriptures represent God as being no respecter of persons, "but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Furthermore, it is represented by the whole tenor of Holy Writ that all mankind are the offspring of the selfsame God; it assigns to all races of men a common origin, so that all mankind are brethren and have equal claims upon the God of heaven if they but seek Him and strive to obey His laws. With these

considerations then as basic principles, that is, the impartiality of God, and the common origin and consequent brotherhood of man, fixed in the mind, the thought that God had left whole nations—a whole continent of people—people, too, that were capable of developing a very high order of civilization—to leave these to perish in ignorance of Him, of His attributes, of His relationship to them, of His designs in the creation of the earth and placing them in common with the rest of mankind upon it—leaving them in ignorance of the great Redemption wrought out for all men through the death and suffering of the Messiah, without the pleasing assurance of eternal life beyond the grave, without the Gospel, the Church, prophets or the comforting presence of the Holy Ghost—always was and is to me a thought so absurd, so derogatory to the character of Deity, that when I come to investigate the claims of the Book of Mormon to divine origin, there is no one circumstance of evidence which appealed with greater force to my mind than this:—The attributes of mercy and justice in the character of Deity, demand that some such revelation as the Book of Mormon describes should have been given to the inhabitants of the Western Continent. And a failure to have communicated any such revelation, would in my way of thinking, leave the character of God stripped of those noblest and best of attributes—attributes in which we must devoutly trust—mercy and justice, without which God would cease to be God. Bold language this perhaps, but no more bold than true.

Nor can the force of the arguments in the last paragraph be broken by citing the fact that there are places in Central Asia and Africa where the light of God's revelation has never penetrated. The Jews were centrally located on the Eastern Continent; and there, too, Messiah proclaimed His mission, organized his Church, and commissioned His disciples to go and teach all nations. Asia and Africa were as contiguous to Palestine as Europe, and as directly in contact with those who held the truth as Europe.

But in the case of the Western Continent it was different. Its existence was unknown to those to whom the precious revelation pertaining to man's salvation was given; it was separated from them by two vast oceans, the extent of which they were ignorant of; and there could be no possible inter-communication between them for centuries. Meanwhile, if the modern Christian theory that the Bible contains all the revelations of God to man be accepted, the nations of the Western Continent, powerful and intelligent, and children of one God, rose and fell, and with their magnificent civilization became extinct, without the knowledge of God or any of His purposes!—a proposition too abominable for belief.

My pleasing task now draws to a close; I have sought to introduce to my readers this New Witness for God—the Book of Mormon. In considering the items of evidence which sustains its claim to being of divine origin, I have made no reference to the prophecies of the Bible which doubtless refer to this record—contained chiefly in the 29th chapter of Isaiah and the 37th of Ezekiel—these and a number of other passages of like import are treated by an abler pen than mine, and to that exposition of these prophecies I refer my readers.*

The presentation I have made of the subject is based upon the following considerations:

I. The necessity of such a witness to receive an active faith in God and Christ, stem the tide of infidelity, and evangelize the world—especially the Jews who for nineteen centuries have had before them all the testimony that Christians could collect and arrange with all the skill of scholarly ingenuity, and yet it makes no perceptible impression upon their minds:

II. The existence of such a witness, and its being brought to light through the revelations of God, is in nothing inconsistent with the word of God as delivered to the Jews, though it may come in conflict with some of the vain traditions and false notions of men.

III. Mercy and justice, well known to be attributes of Deity, demand that some such revelation as the Book of Mormon gives an account of, should of right have been made to the peoples inhabiting the Western Continent. And since it was made, it is but natural that it was carefully preserved and at last revealed to the glory of God, the strengthening of the Saints, and the confounding of all scoffers:

IV. The traditions of the aboriginal inhabitants of America incontestably prove that at some time or other their forefathers were in possession of the great truths of the Christian revelation; and the history contained in the Book of Mormon is sufficient to account consistently for the existence of those facts in American mythology.

In the way of evidence to support the claims of the Book of Mormon to divine origin, I have introduced—

I. The direct, positive and unimpeachable testimony of three witnesses, who saw the original records from which the Book of Mormon was translated, in the possession of the angel who revealed their existence to Joseph Smith, and also heard the voice of God declare in the broad light of Day, and beneath the dome of heaven alone, that the record was true and the translation thereof correct, and accomplished by the power of God. And also the testimony of eight other witnesses who were shown the original records by Joseph Smith, and who had the privilege of handling them as well as seeing them.

II. The fact that every other theory for the existence of the Book of Mormon than that presented by those believing it of divine origin breaks down under examination, from which fact springs the argument, negative in its character, but strong nevertheless, that Joseph Smith's account of its origin must be true.

III. The internal evidence of the book itself, which consisted of consistency of detail in the construction of the book as a whole, and the fulfilment of numerous prophecies—prophecies, too, which have been fulfilled since the publication of the book, and that were beyond the

* See "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," by Orson Pratt, chapter vi.

power of those who are looked upon as its authors to bring to pass—events that no human wisdom unaided by the inspiration of heaven could have foreseen, and that none but God could bring to pass.

Here I might rest my case, and without egotism claim that I have presented an array of facts and testimonies in favor of divine origin of this New Witness for God that cannot be gainsaid; that neither the ridicule of the learned, nor the bigoted scoffing of the ignorant will explain away, or weaken in the minds of those who humbly and thoughtfully seek the truth. But I have one more evidence to introduce, and I introduce it near the close of what I have to say, partly because of its strength, and partly because it is of such a character that it brings it within the reach of all who become acquainted with the Book of Mormon, to find out for themselves beyond all doubting whether it be true or false. Moroni, when closing up this record of the Nephites, in giving his last exhortation to those unto whom that work might come, says:

“And when ye shall receive these things (the records he was then about closing), I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” (Moroni x, 4, 5.)

Here, then, is a means by which every person into whose hands the Book of Mormon falls may find out for himself, not from human testimony, not from the deductions of logic, but through the power of the Holy Ghost, whether the Book of Mormon is of divine origin or not. This test must be final, either for or against it, to every individual who complies with the conditions enjoyed by Moroni. Those conditions are, that they into whose hands the record falls shall inquire of God with a sincere heart, with real intent, and having faith in Christ; and to those who so proceed He promises without equivocation that they shall re-

ceive a manifestation of its truth by the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, if these directions are complied with faithfully and honestly, and the manifestation follows not, then they may know it is not of God. If the manifestation comes, of course the divine origin of the book is confirmed, for the Holy Ghost would not confirm, by any manifestation of its power, an imposition. Scores of thousands of the Latter-day Saints, who have put this test to the trial, with united voice bear testimony that the Holy Ghost has borne witness to them that the work is of God.

In conclusion I will add my humble testimony, by saying that I have diligently considered all the facts connected with the Book of Mormon. Have read it and re-read it again and again, and weighed carefully all the facts that tend to prove its divine origin, and have examined all the objections that have been, or that I believe can be urged against it; and if I have any power at all to weigh evidence and arrive at a right conclusion as to any matter of fact, I know from the aforesaid investigation that the Book of Mormon is true. But better than that, having followed the advice of Moroni, I can testify to all who read my words that through the power and by the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, I know that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin. And in the name of Jesus Christ I call upon all men to obey the Gospel as contained in that record, accept the testimony it bears to Jesus of Nazareth being the Son of God and the Savior of the world, in whom alone we can hope for salvation; repent of all your sins, and come unto Christ with a broken heart, but with a fixed determination to sin no more; receive baptism at the hands of the servants of God, unto whom the Lord hath committed authority to officiate in His name, and you shall receive a remission of your sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost shall rest upon you, and to those who walk by the promptings of that Spirit unto the end of life, though they be given the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall they be saved in the everlasting kingdom of God; and

they who hear the message and refuse to accept it, will be under condemnation for rejecting the truth of heaven, and

cannot partake of the blessings of the heavenly kingdom.

B. H. Roberts.

A STORY OF ZARHEMLA.

"WHY does Nephi not come? 'Tis past the time, and it is not usual for him to fail."

The speaker was a man of some sixty years, erect and strong, though his hair was gray and care and toil had left their lines in the noble lineaments of his face—a face that you may look upon once and carry it in your memory forever. The forehead was broad at the base and sloped gently backward; the cheek-bones were high, and though the chin and lips were half hidden in the white beard, the former was sufficiently massive and the latter sufficiently compressed to denote firmness of character. The nose was Roman in type and moderately large. The eyes a dark grey, large, quick and piercing: and if, indeed, the eyes are the windows of the soul, the soul that looked from these windows was courageous, frank, intelligent, spiritual and benevolent. He was below the medium height, but the frame was heavy and compact, the limbs massive and well set, and in both form and movement there was a conscious dignity of character. It may be true among the pampered sons of luxury that "time steals fire from the mind or vigor from the limbs," but in this case the sixty-five years of the man's life had done little towards sapping either his bodily strength or mental vigor, for he seemed, aside from the whiteness of his hair and beard, to be rather in the prime of manhood than in its sear and yellow leaf.

Such was Nephi, the son of Helaman, the great grandson of the second Alma, and one of the most remarkable prophets and characters of the Western Continent. Like the second Alma he had given up his position of chief judge of the land, that he might devote himself more completely to the work of the ministry. Such, however, was the wickedness of the peo-

ple that he had great anxiety of spirit in his ministry and small returns for his untiring and constant efforts. Violence and crime of every nature ran riot in the land, and those who administered the laws, for the most part, were either too weak to vindicate them, or were hand and glove with the transgressors.

With a zeal characteristic of the man the prophet labored to bring them to repentance. He foretold the calamities that would overtake them, the destruction of their cities, the desolation of their lands, but all to no purpose, reform they would not; not even the power of God so frequently displayed in his ministry could soften their obdurate hearts or preserve the prophet himself from their hatred. At the very time we begin this narrative, so constantly had the people of Zarhemla sought his life, that for some time he had kept in seclusion.

"Why does he not come?" again broke from the lips of the prophet. "Can it have happened that those who seek my life have fallen upon my son? Oh thou Almighty God! ever my friend and preserver, preserve thou too the life of my son; grant that he might come to me in safety, that he may take from me the great weight of responsibility and let thy servant, unburdened, come to thee in thy kingdom, even as the Spirit whispereth." Calmed by that peaceful influence which ever rests upon the righteous after prayer, the prophet seated himself on a point of rocks near the summit of the hill, and was soon lost in meditation.

It was an expansive landscape which lay spread out before him, the vision limited on the south and west only by a haziness which hung over field and forest, river and plain, and to the northwest by groups of mountains which stood as watch and guard over the wilderness of Hermounts. The grand valley of the