

same place, but was not then permitted to take plates. He was commanded to visit the same place in the following year, and in the fall of 1825 he again had an interview with the angel. In 1826 he had another interview, and on the night of the 21st of September, 1827, the angel again appeared to him, and on that occasion permitted him to take the plates from the place of their deposit. He was then lacking a few months of being twenty-two years old, and even then, after having passed through all these experiences, he could not with the least propriety be denominated "Old Joe Smith."

Having received the plates he occupied a portion of his time during the next three years in farming, and a portion of it in translating this record, for he it known he was not able to sustain himself without labor, he was not a rich or wealthy man, and therefore had to labor with his hands. The work of translation was done with the Urim and Thummim, for Mr. Smith was not a learned man, and in fact was scarcely in possession of an ordinary common school education. He could write a little, but was by no means an expert penman, and, in the work of translation, he had to employ first one and then another to write the words of the record as he translated them with the Urim and Thummim, consequently the manuscripts of the Book of Mormon were written by different scribes. Not long before the time he obtained the plates, Mr. Smith got married, and he employed his wife to write some of it. Martin Harris also wrote some portion of it; but the greater part was written by Oliver Cowdery—a still younger man than Joseph—and that the manuscript is in his handwriting, anyone can satisfy himself by appealing to the original. When about two and a half years had passed away the record was translated, and the book was in print before the spring of 1830.

Here let me give you a little further external evidence of the truth of this work beyond that which depends upon the testimony of Joseph Smith alone. The Lord would not permit the Book of Mormon to go forth to this generation without giving further evidence of its truth than that of its translation. Consequently three other men, by the names of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris had a testimony concerning the divine authenticity of this work, not by seeing the plates, merely; that would not have been sufficient. What was their testimony? They have left it on record, and it is printed and bound with the Book of Mormon to be sent forth to all nations, peoples and tongues under the whole heavens. These three men testify in words of soberness that the angel came down from Heaven in their presence, and spoke to them and took the plates and passed them before their eyes, and turned over their leaves one after another and showed them the engravings upon the plates; and while he was doing this they testify that they heard a voice from Heaven saying unto them "these have been translated by the gift and power of God," and commanding them to bear record of it to all nations, kindreds, tongues and people to whom the work should go. That is the reason they have given their testimony and prefixed it to the Book of Mormon.

Could they have been deceived when they saw the plates in the hands of the angel, and saw him turn them over leaf after leaf? There was no deception there; they actually did know, and have testified to that which their eyes did see. Here then are four witnesses to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon,—Joseph Smith, Martin Harris, David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery. Are there any living in our day and generation who can bear testimony to the divine authenticity of the Old and New Testaments? We have the testimony of persons who lived anciently, whom none, living in this generation, ever saw or heard. The "Mormons," we were told this forenoon, believe in the Old Testament; but I will say that we not only believe in it, but we know, by the gifts of the Spirit of God, by revelations sent down from Heaven, by the visions of the Almighty and by the ministrations of holy angels, that the Bible is true; we know it to be a record from Heaven. Have you any such testimony? No, you have not. Then we present the Book of Mormon to you with a testimony such as you can not bring in relation to the Bible, unless you appeal to the Latter-day Saints as witnesses.

I have already cited you to four witnesses to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon; but are these all the witnesses the Lord raised concerning this work, or were there any others

who saw these plates? Yes, there were eight others, making twelve in all, who have given their testimony and names, to go wherever this book goes, that they did actually handle these plates and that they did see the engravings thereon. They send forth their testimony in words of soberness to all people to this fact. Can any one in this generation come forth and declare that he ever handled the tables of stone on which the law of Moses was written? I never have heard of any such man. You have not got the tables of stone, neither can you exhibit the original of any one of the books of either the Old or New Testament; hence when you come to external evidence the Latter-day Saints can produce far more in proof of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon and of the scriptures than it is possible for the Christian world to bring.

But we will not stop here. After the Book of Mormon was printed, in the spring of 1830, of what use would it have been to this generation if God had not sent down from heaven authority to administer in His ordinances as taught within its pages and in the scriptures? None, whatever. We could have read, it is true, a great many good principles, and we might have understood the doctrine of Christ more fully and plainly by reading the testimony of the prophets and apostles who lived on the American continent 1800 years ago, and of those who lived here before Christ; we might also have learned a great many things, but what would all this have availed us without authority sent from Heaven to administer in the ordinances of the gospel? It would have availed us nothing; it would have been like spreading a good, substantial meal before a hungry man and depriving him of the power to partake thereof; it would only have aggravated his appetite. This would have been the position of the people in regard to the Book of Mormon if it had been merely translated and left there. But the Lord our God, who had determined in His eternal purposes, and had revealed and foretold by the mouths of His ancient prophets that in the latter days, He would establish His kingdom on the earth, did condescend to send from heaven, angels to confer the authority to administer in the ordinances of the gospel of His Son.

Who were sent from heaven for this purpose? Peter, James and John, some of the principal of Christ's ancient apostles; men who held the apostleship themselves; men who were able to give the authority, because they held it themselves; and by them this authority was again restored and conferred upon men here on the earth. But I must mention that the Lord had commenced by restoring the lesser authority or priesthood. On the 15th day of May, 1829, nearly a year before the organization of this church, while Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were engaged in translating and writing the record contained on these plates of which I have been speaking, they read that the people on the American continent, anciently, were baptized by immersion, and how important it was for every person who had come to years of accountability to be born of the water as well as of the spirit; and having learned that no man in all the Christian churches was possessed of authority to administer any of the ordinances of the gospel of Christ, they were at a loss, just as Joseph was, when fourteen years old, about which church to join. Consequently, they stopped the work of translation, (their anxiety to attend to the ordinance being so great), and they went out into the wilderness and inquired of God what they should do in relation to their baptism. When they had prayed a while behold a messenger was sent from the heavens, and he came and stood before them clothed in brightness and glory. What was his object in coming? Was it to teach them the mode or order of baptism? No, but it was to restore to the earth the authority to administer the ordinance. This messenger laid his hands upon the heads of these two individuals, and gave unto them the lesser or Levitical priesthood, the priesthood of Aaron, the same that was held by John the Baptist,—a regular priest of the lineage of Aaron,—when he baptized for the remission of sins. Who was the angel that thus restored this priesthood to the earth? He said his name was John, the same who came to prepare the way of our Savior at His first coming, and that he was sent to confer this lesser priesthood upon His servants in answer to their prayers in order that there might be authority on the earth to baptize, saying to them further, while his hands were still upon their heads, that "this authority which I now confer upon you shall not be

taken from the earth until the Lord shall come."

Let me here inquire if there is anything in the scriptures that will warrant us in believing that the priesthood of Levi is again to be restored to the earth. Hitherto I have given you a history of the rise of this church, without appealing to many passages of scripture; but now let me for a few moments cite your minds to the nature of that priesthood which John the Baptist held, and whether or not it is to be on the earth in the latter times.

In the first place, you may go to all the religious sects and societies throughout all Christendom and inquire if they have the Levitical priesthood among them, and they will tell you they have not. The Church of England, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, or any or all these societies do not even pretend to any such priesthood; neither does the Roman Catholic, or the Greek church. You inquire, furthermore, of all these Christian societies if the Jews, themselves, have the Aaronic priesthood, and they will tell you that the Jews lost that authority by their apostasy, and that the Kingdom of God was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Consequently, according to the testimony of all Christendom there is neither Jew nor Gentile now upon the face of the earth who has the priesthood after the order of Levi, or the Levitical priesthood. If that be the case, if it ever returns to the earth, it must be restored. Now the question is will it return to the earth? Is there a promise in the scriptures of the restoration of such a priesthood to the children of men? If so it must come from Heaven, for according to the testimony of all Christendom neither they nor the Jews possess it.

There is not time on the present occasion to turn particularly to the passages referring to this subject, but I think I can direct your minds to a few. In the testimony given in the 40th chapter of Exodus, verse 15, we find that this priesthood was to be confirmed upon the heads of the children of Levi unto the end, throughout all their generations. Again we find another testimony in the case of the grandson of Aaron, Phinehas. In consequence of a certain work he did in the midst of the congregation of Israel an everlasting priesthood was confirmed upon him and his seed throughout all their generations, Numbers 25: 13; that is, they were intitled to it. They might lose it through apostasy; but they were entitled to it throughout all their generations. Again, when we refer to the last chapter of Isaiah we find a prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled only in part, where the Lord says "I will set a sign among the people and I will gather the children of Israel from all nations upon horses, upon mules, in litters, upon swift beasts back to my holy mountain Jerusalem, and I will take of them for priests and Levites saith the Lord." Indeed! Is the Lord going to have priests and Levites after gathering Israel from all nations? Yes. "I will take of them for priests and Levites saith the Lord."

Here, then, is a restitution or restoration predicted in the last chapter of Isaiah that the Lord will gather the House of Israel from all lands to His holy mountain Jerusalem, and that He will then take of them for priests and Levites. Furthermore let us see what the following passage says concerning the continuation of this lesser Priesthood of Levi: "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I shall make shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain;" or in other words your priesthood, the priesthood which I have conferred upon the seed of Levi, shall remain just as eternal as the new heavens and the new earth. If one comes to an end so shall the other; and if one is to be eternal and never to pass away so will the other. If then, such a priesthood is to be restored to the children of men in the last days when God raises up a people to prepare for the ingathering of the House of Israel, where will it come from? I have already proven to you that according to the testimony of all Christendom neither the Jews nor the Christians possess it. Then how will it be restored? It will be restored by the Lord God, who first established that authority on the earth. I have told you how He has restored it. I have told you that an angel, whose name was John the Baptist, on whom rested that priesthood and authority, came down from Heaven and restored it. I have told you that he laid his hands upon the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and gave them authority to baptize. "But," says one, "how about the laying on of hands? can they who hold that priesthood lay on

hands?" No, they have not authority to do that. John, who held that priesthood, said I baptize you with water, but there cometh one after me, mightier than I, and he, holding a higher priesthood than I, will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. That priesthood is called the Melchizedec priesthood. It was that priesthood which Jesus possessed, and by the authority of that priesthood He called his disciples. That priesthood confers the power to administer in all the fulness of the ordinances of the Son of God; in the spirit as well as in the outward ordinances. Therefore this church never could have arisen had the Lord stopped with the mere translation of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the lesser priesthood. It is true that with the latter we could baptize but it does not impart the power to confer the Holy Ghost; and that this church might have the power to administer in every ordinance of the gospel, the apostleship was again restored, which holds all the keys, authorities and powers to administer, not only in the outward ordinances, but also to confer the spirit of the living God. That is the authority of the higher priesthood, and, like the authority of the lesser priesthood, was sent down from Heaven and restored to the earth in these last days; and of all the religious denominations upon the face of the earth, it is possessed by the Latter-day Saints only. None of the others make the least pretensions to any such power.

When the Latter-day Saints go forth and find people who will repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ, we command them, as the disciples of Jesus did anciently, to be baptized for the remission of their sins, and then we promise them with all boldness and confidence before God, being authorized from the Heavens to do so, that they shall receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands of the elders. We do not say you may receive it, or it is probable the Lord will give it you; but we make a sure and certain promise that if they will faithfully comply with the conditions on which its bestowal is based, that they shall receive it. We make this promise because we are commanded so to do; the Lord has sent us forth to do it, and were we not to do so He would hurl us out of our places and raise up others who would.

The apostleship has been restored by Peter, James and John,—men who held the priesthood of the Son of God, men who had power to seal on earth and it was sealed in heaven. These men, commissioned and sent forth as holy angels, laid their hands upon the heads of the first elders of this church, and gave authority to them to ordain others to the same priesthood and calling and send them forth among the nations. It is because the people have obeyed the ordinances of the gospel and have received the blessings promised that they have gathered here to these mountains. If it had not been for this these vales would still be without inhabitants except the wild savages who formerly roamed over their desert plains.

I have not time to enter into further particulars relative to the rise of this Church, the authority that has been restored and the blessings that are received. That God, who has sent His Angel flying through the midst of heaven, according to the testimony given in the revelations of St. John, with the everlasting gospel to be preached to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, may give you all the blessings of that everlasting gospel sent from heaven by angels, and all the blessings of that priesthood, with its power to seal upon the earth and in the heavens, and that you may overcome and remain faithful to the end, and obtain eternal life in His Kingdom, is my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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