JOSEPH SMITH A TRUE PROPHET.

A Lecture delivered by Elder Andrew Jenson before the Skidmore Society, in Lee Social Hall, Salt Lake City, Friday evening, January 16, 1891.

INTRODUCTORY.

I will take for my text the following words of the Prophet Moses spoken to the children of Israel while they were journeying in the wilderness of Arabia.

"The prophet who shall presume to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken; but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him." (Deut. xviii 20-22.

The passage which I have read may be taken as a key by which to distinguish a true prophet from a false one. The first definition of the word prophet, according to the standard dictionaries is, "one who prophesies; one who foretells future events; a predicter; a forecaster; a seer." In this light we shall proceed to test the claims of Joseph Smith, whom the Latter-day Saints claim to be the great Prophet of the Nineteenth Century. We claim for him that he was visited by holy beings, who restored to him the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with authority to administer in the ordinances of the same; that he received from the angel Moroni certain gold plates that had been hidden in the earth for fourteen hundred years, and that he translated the engravings upon these plates into the English language by the gift and power of God, the result of which was the Book of Mormon. We further claim that he organized the Church of Christ once more upon the earth, and that he received by direct revelation a code of laws and commandments by which to govern the affairs of this Church, according to the original pattern given by Jesus and His twelve apostles nineteen years ago. We further claim that it is of the utmost importance to all people who desire eternal salvation to know whether these things are true or false. If Joseph Smith is what he professes to be: A true Prophet of God, no one can reject his testimony without being condemned, while on the other hand, if he was an impostor, or a false prophet, we can reject him without fear of Divine punishment, and the condemnation will rest upon the man who assumes to speak in the name of the Lord presumptuously. In this lecture I shall confine myself to his prophetic and inspired utterances by proving their fulfilment and truthfulness mostly from a historic standpoint.

JOSEPH'S FIRST VISION.

One of the first declarations made by Joseph Smith, when he was only a boy between fourteen and fifteen years of age, was that the world and Christian world had gone astray, and that the true Church of Christ was not to be found upon the earth. What a startling declaration! Could anything be more presumptuous on the part of a common uneducated farmer's boy than such an assertion? Preachers of the various denominations for ten generations back were the boy raised became enamoured and at once denounced him as an impostor. He found, A boy who had seen nothing of the world, save the tract of country in Vermont, where he was born, and the western wilds of the State of New York, where he now resided with his parents. A boy who had perhaps never been even introduced to any of the prominent divines of the day, who had never crossed the threshold of any educational institution of learning, who had never thoroughly examined the creed of any one denomination, boldly, too having a knowledge of them all, who had never crossed the ocean to acquaint himself with the great learning of Europe, with its thousands of preachers and its universities and institutions of learning. What did he know about the creeds and organizations existing among the millions of Christians in Europe and America, that to the names them all without further ceremony. Why, even Luther, the great reformer of the sixteenth century, with his profound learning and thorough knowledge of the Catholic creed, did not denounce the Roman Catholic Church in such a manner as that. He did not say it was rejected as a whole and that it was not the Church of Christ; he simply contended that it had incorporated into its system doctrines, ceremonies and ordinances which were not true and not warranted in the Bible. Luther simply desired to reform the Church, to purge it and remove from it erroneous doctrines and wicked practices. But Joseph Smith without any more knowledge of the religions of the world than what opportunities his attendance of the numerous revival meetings held in his immediate neighborhood had given him, denounced them all as false. Whence, then, his authority for the sweeping declaration he made as to the condition of the so-called Christian churches. The story is simple, plain and unmistakable one. He tells it in his own straightforward manner how, after attending the different revival meetings without being able to endorse which of the denominations was the right one for him to join, went into the woods to pray to the Lord for that wisdom which the Apostle James promised shall be given to the humble believer. The result was an attack of the power of darkness which threatened him with destruction, then a light far above him in the sky, then an overpowering of his light which descended upon him, then a vision of two glorious personages standing above him in the air, one of whom speaking to him, while pointing to the other, said: "This is my beloved son, hear him." Here, then, was Jesus Christ being introduced by His Father to Joseph Smith, the praying boy, who next was informed by the Great Reformer Himself, that all the sects of the day were wrong, that all their creeds were an abomination in His sight, that the modern professors and teachers taught for doctrine the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; that he (Joseph) should join none of these churches, but that the true church should be revealed to him at some future time. This then was Joseph's authority. Jesus Christ himself, the Redeemer of the world, the son of God, He that was crucified and put to death on Mount Calvary, but who arose triumphant from the grave, the founder, the organizer, the head, the President of the Christian Church, explained to Joseph Smith the condition of the world. There is no higher authority than He. If anyone in heaven or earth has a right to say what is true Christianity, and what is not Christ himself, the founder of the church, has that right. With that authority to back him, Joseph smiths lost no fear that his declarations would be met with universal contradiction. There is only one question that can present itself in our minds in that connection, and that is: Did the boy Joseph see Deity? Did he really converse with Jesus Christ, or was it an imagination of a troubled and excited mind? We shall proceed to answer this question. We will first introduce the Prophet's own testimony concerning this his first vision. He says in his history:

"It was often remarked to me in future years, both by those who knew me and those who were a stranger, it was that in my youthful days I was a little given to visions of one kind and another, and that I was in the habit of relating them to my mother and family. Whether this was the foundation of the great name of the most popular writer of the day, or not, it seems to have been a source of the highest pleasure and exulting. But strange as it may, it is true, and was often made to my great sorrow to myself. However it was, nevertheless, a time came, I felt, and I relate it now, I have thought since, that I felt much like Paul when he came to make his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light and heard a voice speaking to him. Some laughed at my tale, all treated it with contempt, but it was true, it was nevertheless true, and though I was but a young lad, only fourteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make me of no account in the world, still I was well aware of what I had seen, and could not deny it, for I was at that time as much a light and heard a voice speaking to him, and all the world could not make me believe to the contrary. (Hist. Jos. Smith, p. 2.)

"For 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 unto me; yea, or one of them did, 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 of me, for so doing, I was led to say in my heart, Why persecute for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision, and who am I that I can withstand God? Or why does the world think to make me deny what I know to be true? For I have seen a vision, I know I have, and I know that God knows it, and I could not deny it, neither dare I do it, at least I know that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation."

Since the time Joseph had this vision the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have traversed the globe, they have visited all the so-called Christian nations of the earth; they have examined the creeds and organizations of the Christian sects of every land and every clime, and have learned beyond doubt that the true Church of Christ was not upon the earth at the time Joseph made his sweeping declaration, and that it does not exist outside of the Church organized under the direction and authority of the Redeemer Himself by Joseph Smith.

THE WORDS OF THE ANGEL.

On the 22nd of September, 1823, Joseph Smith, after spending the previous night under the influence of the angel Moroni, was again visited by that holy personage on the hill Cumorah in the western part of the State of New York, and was shown the plates, which were delivered to him four years later and from which he translated the Book of Mormon. While standing on this hitherto hill, with the angel at his side, he again received glorious instructions and warnings, and among other things was told that when he should bring forth the Book of Mormon, the workers of iniquity would seek his overthrow. Says the angel:

"They will slander (slander) you and persecute you, and will hate you, and cast out your name as evil (evil), and shall revile (revile) and say all manner of evil against you (you) for my name's sake. Blessed are you (you) if you can bear it (it), for what you (you) have borne for my name's sake; for you shall be (be) purified (purified) and your reward (reward) is with God (God). Be patient (patient) in afflictions (afflictions), for you (you) have endured (endured) a little (little) as yet, and if you (you) do (do) my commandments (commandments) and hold (hold) out faithful (faithful) you shall be (be) exalted (exalted) in the last day (day). Amen (Amen)." (Hist. Jos. Smith, p. 28.)

We will refer to another prediction on the same subject, which was made by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, only a few days before he was martyred. A member of the officers of the troops, then stationed in Carthage, and other persons came to see Joseph, to visit him in his room. Joseph asked them if they was anything in his appearance which indicated that he was the desperado character his enemies represented him to be. The answer was:

"No, sir; your appearance would indicate the very contrary; General Smith, he was a man who did not look as you look; neither can we tell what are your intentions."

Joseph replied:

"Very true, gentlemen, you cannot see what is in my heart; you cannot see, you are unable to judge me as my intentions; but I can see what is in your hearts, and will tell you of it. Some of you have come here to take my life, and nothing but my blood will satisfy you. It is not for crime of any kind that I am put in jail, but because I am continually persecuted and harassed by our enemies; but there are other murderers besides those who are in this room, as far as relates to myself, and inasmuch as you and the people thirst for blood, I prophesy in the name of the Lord, that you shall witness scenes of bloodshed and sow in your cattle satisfaction. Your souls shall be perfectly satiated with blood, and many of you who are now present shall have an opportunity to see the country's march from western you think not of and those people shall do the great evil upon me, and my business shall be filled with rogues and scoundrels, and I shall be taken from you and be taken from that small time. They shall seek for peace and shall not be able to find it. Gentlemen, you will find what I have told you to be true." (His. Record, page 55.)

On the 17th of December, 1840, nearly 20 years after the vision and revelation on war was given, its fulfilment commenced, for on that day a convention assembled in Charleston, S. C., which, after three days' deliberation, passed a resolution to the effect that the union hitherto existing between South Carolina and the other States, under the compact entitled the United States of America, was dissolved. This was the beginning of the rebellion. By the 1st of February, 1861, six other States had followed the example of South Carolina and withdrawn from the Union, and a new government was formed under the name of The Confederate States of America. Only one more State, South Carolina, the first state to commence the rebellion, but here also, as it is once a double fulfilment of Joseph's prophecy, on April 15, 1861, the first gun was fired from a Confederate battery against Fort sumter standing at the entrance to Charleston harbor.

The witness was that judgment is a matter of history. The Union losses alone, according to the report of the Provost General, amounted to 280,207 men, who were either killed outright in battle or who died subsequently of wounds or diseases, not counting the thousands who were crippled and maimed for life. The loss on the side of the Confederates was about the same. Truly, as Joseph predicted, the United States never witnessed such a scene of bloodshed before. The losses in the revolutionary war, in the war of 1812, and in the war with Mexico in 1846 were only small, when compared with this last and terrible war of the rebellion, so accurately predicted by the Prophet Joseph Smith. This prediction alone and its literal fulfilment should be sufficient to convince every reasonable man and woman who will take pains to investigate the subject thoroughly that Joseph, indeed, was a prophet of the Living God.

(To be Continued.)

If a stranger was doing that which Joseph on that occasion was doing, namely, planting a colony of his followers in one of the most desirable sections of country within the borders of the United States, would he not have enlarged upon the prospects ahead and predicted success and prosperity instead of difficulties and troubles? Most assuredly he would. But Joseph spoke as he was directed by the Lord, and he was desirous of confirming, if any such be possessed, such a spirit in the matter. And now, how about the fulfilment of the prophecy or revelation? No one who is acquainted with the history of the Church will hesitate to testify that since that time the Saints have violent passed through much tribulation. In less than three years after the revelation they was given they were driven from their homes in Jackson County. Three years after that they were forced to leave their temporary habitations in Clay County, Mo., and still two years later, under the exterminating order of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs, they were driven from the State of Missouri. Seven years after their expulsion from that State, which more who first killing the Prophet and Patriarch in cold blood in Carthage jail, drove the Saints from Nauvoo into the wilderness, which was full of savage Indians; and even after coming to Utah the Saints have been subject to violent prosecutions and persecutions. If all this doesn't make "much tribulation," what does it mean?

THE GATHERING OF THE NATIONS.

In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, Sept. 11, 1831, the following occurs:

"Wherefore, I will make you a light unto the Gentiles, and the glory of the Lord shall be upon you. And you shall be an ensign unto the people, and there shall come unto you from the ends of the earth, saying, We pray you that we may hear the word of God in your mouths, and we will write our hearts against your words, and we will also be your friends, that we may be your friends, and do you good in the last days, for we desire to be taught of you in your language, that we may know of your doctrine, that we may walk therein. And it shall come to pass, that those who fear you, shall tremble and be confounded; and those who hate you, shall have no power over your land; and those who have spoken against your doctrine, shall be ashamed. And it shall come to pass, that those who have spoken evil of your doctrine, because of your holy life, that they may behold your good works, and glorify God in the day of visitation, when I shall make my appearance among them, that I may show them that I have chosen you out of the world, that I may bless you forever, and ever, if you will hearken unto my commandments, and walk in the light of the Lord your God, that you may be one, even as we are one, that you may be one in us, that you may be one in the Father, and the Father may be one in me, that we may be one in the Son, and we will be one in you, that you may be one in us, that we may be one in the Father, that you may be one in us, that we may be one in the Father, that you may be one in us, that we may be one in the Father