

wisdom by the inspiration of the Almighty. The inestimable truths which he has so ably developed in his writings, will prove an invaluable treasure to thousands, and live in the memory of all future generations. We are happy to inform the Saints that brother Spencer will, if his health permits, tarry in this land yet a few months, and we hope to see many articles from his pen upon various subjects, feeling assured that they will be hailed with delight by the anxious multitudes, many of whom have already tasted the soul-cheering knowledge he has formerly communicated, which has served to greatly sharpen their appetites for more.

As I now enter into this great field of labor, I hope that by the assistance of God, through the prayers of the Saints, and by my own faithful exertions, to be a benefit to you and the cause of God in this country. In all my future labors I shall seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and I shall endeavour to counsel you, from time to time, as I receive counsel from the proper source. May the God of ancient Israel, who delivered them out of severe bondage, and made them a nation unto himself, also look upon his poor, afflicted Saints in England, and send them speedy deliverance, and bring them forth into his holy mountain, and establish them unto himself a peculiar people, is the prayer of your humble servant,

ORSON PRATT.

Liverpool, August 15th, 1848.

WAS JOSEPH SMITH SENT OF GOD?

A few days since, Mrs. Pratt and myself, together with some others, were kindly invited to take tea with a very respectable gentleman of this town (Liverpool), who, though not connected with our church, yet was, with his family, sincerely enquiring after the truth. They seemed to be fully convinced in relation to the most important features of our doctrine, and were desirous of extending their investigations still further. We hope that their researches may happily result in a full conviction of the truth, and that they may obtain that certainty, so much to be desired, as to the *divine* authority of the great and important message *now* revealed from heaven—a message which must assuredly prove a savor of *life or death* to the generation now living. This message is beginning to awake the attention of the honest, virtuous, and upright among all classes of society. They seem to be aroused from the slumber of ages.

A message of simple truth, when sent from God—when published by divine authority, through divinely inspired men, penetrates the mind like a sharp two-edged sword, and cuts asunder the deeply-rooted prejudices, the iron-bound sinews of ancient error and tradition, made sacred by age and rendered popular by human wisdom. It severs with undeviating exactness between truth and falsehood—between the doctrine of Christ and the doctrines of men; it levels with the most perfect ease every argument that human learning may array against it. Opinions, creeds invented by uninspired men, and doctrines originated in schools of divinity, all vanish like the morning dew—all sink into insignificance when compared with a message direct from heaven. Such a message shines upon the understanding like the splendors of the noon-day sun; it whispers in the ears of mortals, saying, “this is the way, walk ye in it.” Certainty and assurance are its constant companions; it is entirely unlike all plans or systems ever invented by human authority; it has no alliance, connexion, or fellowship with any of them; it speaks with divine authority, and all nations, without an exception, are required to obey. He that receives the message and endures to the end will be saved; he that rejects it will be damned. It matters not what his former righteousness may have been—none can be excused.

As a specimen of the anxious inquiry which now pervades the minds of many in relation to this church, we publish the following letter, which was kindly read to us during our afore-mentioned visit, by the gentleman who received it from his friend in London. We were struck with the apparent candor, the sound judgment, and the correct conclusions of the author of the letter, and earnestly solicited the privilege of publishing it. Permission was granted, on condition that we would

withhold names. We here present it to our readers, and shall endeavour, in the same spirit of candor, to answer the all-important inquiries contained in it.

July 15th.

My dear Sir,—I have been expecting, time after time, to be able to return you the "Letters" you so kindly left with me. As I informed you in my last, I cursorily read through the Letters, and then handed the book to Mr. ——. With him it is at the present time. The impression made thereby on his mind is very remarkable, and he requests me to inform you, that if you will allow him, he means to keep the book, if you will please to let him know the price thereof. He and I concur in our view of Mormonism at present. Do you enquire what that view is? I will then proceed to state it. We consider that the proofs which Mormonism gives of the apostacy, are without question, clear and demonstrative; we entirely concur also in the personal appearance and reign of our Lord; we are persuaded that all the preachers and teachers of the day are without *authority*—that their teachings and interpretations are uncertain as to the truth—that the translations of the Scripture, being done without inspiration, are also uncertain. All is uncertain! melancholy thought! a deplorable picture but a true one!—the different teachers doing the best they can!—all jarring—all contending! The result—division, multiplied division! And they have a right if they think proper to divide from an authority *merely human*. But their multiplied division is a multiplied proof that they are wrong—that they are without that SPIRIT who guides into truth, *and truth is ONE!*

My dear sir, the "Saints" have made out a strong and irrefragable case to show that "*authority to teach*" is no where, if not with them; but the proposition that *they have authority to teach, interpret, &c.*, is one that at present does not create a conviction in Mr. — or my mind. We admit that it is very reasonable to suppose that, under such circumstances, God would raise up and send *one invested with authority*. Whether Joseph Smith was such an one is the all important question. I also admit, that so far as I am acquainted with his history, there is something very remarkable about him; perhaps I should be fully convinced if I were more fully read in writings relating to him. I wish I lived near to you, and then I would read more fully on the subject; I confess my mind is much concerned to arrive at a clear conclusion upon the point.

Mr. — wishes you, if you will be so good, to select a few books that you think clearly prove the divine mission of Joseph Smith, and send them in a parcel to him with the prices; he will feel much obliged, and will send you a post-office order for the amount; he believes your selection will be a judicious one. I have heard Mr. Banks twice since I saw you, and other individual teachers also. There is much in their public services I approve. I am struck with the simplicity of their celebration of the ordinances. Mr. Banks and the others *assert strongly* the divinity of Joseph Smith's mission; this is, however, not enough: the church of the early saints had proofs to give by inspired apostles like Peter, inspired deacons like Stephen, inspired evangelists like Philip, inspired prophets like Agabus, and inspired prophetesses like Philip's daughters. All this was the result of the *Spirit* being in and with them *in authority and power*. The church of the latter day ought to be the same, if having the *same spirit of authority and power*. The sects are without these proofs, therefore they are sects groping in the dark, and hoping, and thinking, and guessing they are right, and all this convinces that they are not "the Church, the body of Christ;" bodies they are of their doctors and founders sure enough! Now I think the Church of the Latter-day Saints must resemble the original, or it is at once proved to be only a sect. One result of my conversation with you and Banks, and perusing the Letters, is, that I can be no longer connected with any sect. So far as I see, I can without difficulty confound in argument—plain scriptural argument—any into whose company I am at any time thrown. The Methodist *system* I am convinced is the worst, because its pretensions are highest. I stand, therefore, fully alone. I declare I should be glad to be convinced that Mormonism is what it professes to be; I would join it to-day if my mind could be convinced that its elders had *authority to baptize me for the remission of sins, and to lay hands on me for the gift of the Holy Ghost*. These sacred ordinances I would obey gladly, if I knew men having authority to administer them! To have these ordinances administered without divine authority is mere child's play. Thus you see my position. A Methodist leader, an old friend, said to me the other day, "Are you connected with the Church of Christ now? —I hear you are not with us now." I answered, "Where is the Church of Christ?" He replied it is found among the different sects. I then inquired, "Are you in the church of Christ? for if you are, you must be a member of all the sects." This rather puzzled him. I then asked him "Shew me the sect that resembled the church at the beginning; does any one of them, or do they all put together resemble the church of the beginning?" He said certainly not. I enquired why not? He was shrewd enough to be silent and to see that his own mouth must condemn his sect and all the sects. Observe, in the absence of the spirit, men must do as well as they can. This I am trying to do, only I confess that I

am poor, and blind, and naked, bereft of the glory of the *certainty of the authority and truth of the church of Christ*. The sects, however, are satisfied, though "poor, blind, and naked," to boast of increase of goods, chapels, rich friends, preachers, &c., &c. So much for my present views and standing.

I suppose by this time you have acted on your convictions, and are joined to the Saints; in all honesty you ought, I confess. The moment a conviction that *divine authority and certainty of teaching* is with them, that moment will I join them. In the absence of this, all is mere guess-work; and I can guess as well for myself as any other mere man can guess for me. There is one point in reference to Mormonism which I am surprised at, it is this—the Saints, I understand, were, by *revelation from God*, directed to go to Nauvoo—to build a temple there—and that Christ would come and reign there! Is this so? Thus the Saints, in confidence and faith, left their countries and went to Nauvoo; but what has become of Nauvoo, and all the great things that were to be seen and done there? All is a mere abortion!! vanished like a dream of night!! Nauvoo was Zion. All were to go there. Now Nauvoo is not Zion. California is Zion. All are to go there. Perhaps California may turn out worse than Nauvoo. I hear hundreds of the Saints have been slaughtered in conflict with the Indians; all this to me seems singular, because in connexion with a *divinely guided church*, or one that professes to be so. I read the address of the Apostles from America; I thought it singularly unlike Paul and Peter's epistles. It recommended Saints to bring fire arms and powder, &c., with them when coming to America. Does this advice approve itself to your mind? This may be all right; perhaps it is; perhaps further knowledge would show it to be right.

Farewell. My respectful regards to Mrs. —, and ever believe me, my dear sir, yours very truly —.

First.—The author of the above letter has carefully examined the present state of the world, and declares himself fully convinced of the awful apostacy which now so universally prevails. He unhesitatingly admits that all authority to teach—to administer ordinances—to build up the church of Christ, has entirely ceased from the earth—that "all is uncertain." He also admits that "it is very reasonable to suppose, that under such circumstances, God would raise up and send *one invested with authority*." Whether Joseph Smith was such an one is the all-important question." Yes, indeed, it is an important question, and one that involves the fate of the present generation. If Joseph Smith was not sent of God, this church can not be the church of God, and the tens of thousands who have been baptized into this church are yet in their sins, and no better off than the millions that have gone before them. *The form*, without the power and authority, is no better than the hundreds of human forms that have no resemblance to the ancient pattern; indeed, it is more dangerous, because better calculated to deceive. Other churches do not profess to have inspired apostles, prophets, prophetesses, evangelists, &c.; hence we *know*, if the New Testament be true, that they cannot be the church of God. But the Latter-day Saints profess to have all these officers and gifts among them, and profess to have authority to administer in every form, ordinance, and blessing of the ancient church; hence we know, that so far as the offices, doctrines, ordinances, and ceremonies are evidence, this church can exhibit a perfect pattern. In these things, then, both ancient and modern Saints are exactly alike. By the New Testament then we cannot be condemned.

If the Latter-day Saints are not what they profess to be, one thing is certain, that no one ever will be able to confute their doctrine by the scriptures; however imperfect the people may be, their doctrine is *infallible*. Can this be said of any other people who have existed on the eastern hemisphere during the last 1700 years? No. Their doctrines have been a heterogenous mixture of truth and error, that would not stand the test one moment when measured by a pattern of inspiration; some disparity could be seen and pointed out—some deviation either in the organization or in the ordinances of the gospel, could be shown to exist. And now after so many centuries have elapsed, and when human wisdom has been exerted to its utmost strength, and the most exalted and gigantic talents displayed to lay a stable foundation whereon to build, we awake and behold all an empty bubble—a vain show—a phantom of man's creation, with scarcely a vestige of the ancient *form*, to say nothing of the *power*. In the midst of all this thick darkness, a young, illiterate, obscure and inexperienced man announces a message from heaven, before which darkness flees away; human dogmas are overturned; the traditions of ages

are uprooted; all forms of church government tremble like an aspen leaf at its approach, and the mighty fabric of popular sectarianism is convulsed and shaken to its very foundation. How happens all this? If Joseph Smith were an impostor, whence his superior wisdom? What power enervated his mind in laying the foundation of a church according to the ancient order? How could an impostor so far surpass the combined wisdom of seventeen centuries as to originate a system diverse from every other system under heaven, and yet harmonise with the system of Jesus and his apostles in every particular? What! an impostor discover the gross darkness of ages, and publish a doctrine perfect in every respect, against which not one scriptural argument can be adduced! The idea is preposterous! The *purity* and *infallibility* of the doctrine of this great modern prophet is a presumptive evidence of no small moment in favour of his divine mission.

We do not pretend that a *perfect doctrine* is an *infallible* evidence in favour of the *divine authority* of the one who teaches it. We can conceive it possible, though not probable, for a man to teach a doctrine unmixed with error, and yet be without authority to administer its ordinances. Swedenborg, Irving, and many others taught doctrines in some respects true, in other respects false; hence their authority should be rejected, even though they should perform miracles. We have no examples on the records of history, of a doctrine, perfect in every respect, being taught by any person or persons, unless they were inspired with divine authority. If Joseph Smith taught a doctrine in any respect false, he should be rejected as an impostor, though he should, like the magicians of Egypt, turn rivers of water into blood, or create frogs in abundance, or even raise the dead like the witch of Endor. On the other hand, if he taught a true and perfect doctrine, he might be sent of God, though he himself should perform no miracle, like John the Baptist, or the prophet Noah, or many other prophets of the Old Testament.

In ancient times, many great prophets were sent of God, and we have no record of their doing miracles, yet their respective messages were of infinite importance, and could not be rejected without condemnation. Where is there a man, no matter how great his attainments, that can show Mr. Smith's doctrine to be false? Did the ancient Saints teach baptism to the penitent believer for the remission of sins? So did Mr. S. Did they teach the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit? So did Mr. S. Did the Former-day Saints teach that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, deacons, bishops, elders, &c., all inspired of God, were necessary in the church? So did Mr. S. Did the ancient Saints teach that dreams, visions, new revelations, ministering of angels, healings, tongues, interpretations, and all other spiritual gifts were necessary in the church? So did this modern prophet. Where then is the discrepancy between the ancient and modern teaching? No where. The teaching of the one is as perfect as the other; and we again assert that this perfect coincidence in teaching, in every point, is a strong presumptive evidence that *Mr. Smith was sent of God*.

Second.—In what manner does Joseph Smith declare that a dispensation of the gospel was committed unto him?—He testifies that an angel of God, whose name was Moroni, appeared unto him; that this angel was formerly an ancient prophet among a remnant of the tribe of Joseph on the continent of America. He testifies that Moroni revealed unto him where he deposited the sacred records of his nation some fourteen hundred years ago; that these records contained the “everlasting gospel” as it was anciently taught and recorded by this branch of Israel. He gave Mr. Smith power to reveal the contents of these records to the nations of the earth. Now, how does this testimony of Joseph Smith agree with the book of John's prophecy given on the Isle of Patmos? John testifies that when the dispensation of the gospel is again committed to the nations, it shall be through the medium of an *angel* from heaven. J. Smith testifies that a dispensation of the gospel for all nations has been committed to him by an *angel*. The one uttered the prediction; the other testifies its fulfilment. Though Mr. Smith had taught a perfect doctrine, yet if he had testified that his doctrine was not restored by an angel, all would at once have known him to be an impostor. How came Mr. Smith, if an impostor, to not only discover a perfect doctrine, but to also discover the precise medium through which that doctrine should be restored to the earth? Did Swedenborg, Irving, Wesley, or any other persons, not only teach a pure

system, but at the same time did they declare that it was committed to them by an angel from heaven? If not, however pure and holy their teaching, they were not divinely authorised to administer in ordinances. If Mr. Smith had professed to have accidentally discovered those records, and that he was inspired to reveal their contents through the Urim and Thummim; or if he had professed to have received a message of the gospel through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or the Urim and Thummim, or in any other way but that of the ministering of an angel, we should, without further inquiry, have known him to be without authority. How came Mr. Smith, if a deceiver, to think of all this? Did Martin Luther, Wesley, Whitfield, Swedenborg, or Irving, think of this? Whence his superior intellect—his depth of understanding—his extensive foresight—that he should so far surpass all former impostors for 1700 years? John testifies that when the everlasting gospel is restored to the earth it shall be by an *angel*. Smith testifies that it was restored by an *angel*, and in no other way. *This is another presumptive evidence that he was sent of God.*

Third.—A revelation and restoration to the earth of the “*everlasting gospel*” through the angel Moroni would be of no benefit to the nations, unless some one should be ordained with authority to preach it and administer its ordinances. Moroni might reveal a book containing a beautiful and glorious system of salvation, but no one could obey even its first principles without a legally authorised administrator, ordained to preach, baptize, lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, &c. Did Moroni ordain Mr. Smith to the apostleship, and command him to administer ordinances? No, he did not. But why not confer authority by ordination, as well as reveal the everlasting gospel? Because in all probability he had not the right so to do. All angels have not the same authority—they do not all hold the same keys. Moroni was a prophet, but we have no account of his holding the office of an Apostle; and if not, he had no right to ordain Mr. Smith to an office which he himself never possessed. He no doubt went as far as he was authorised, and that was to reveal the “*stick of Ephraim*”—the record of his fathers, containing the “*everlasting gospel*.” How then did Mr. Smith obtain the office of an Apostle, if Moroni had no authority to ordain him to such office? Mr. Smith testifies that Peter, James, and John came to him in the capacity of ministering angels, and by the laying on of hands ordained him an Apostle, and commanded him to preach, baptize, lay on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and administer all other ordinances of the gospel as they themselves did in ancient days. Did Swedenborg—did Irving’s apostles—or did any other impostors during the long age of darkness—profess that the apostleship was conferred upon them by those who held it last—by any angel who held the office himself? No; and therefore they are not Apostles, but deceivers. If Mr. Smith had pretended that he received the apostleship by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, without an ordination under the hands of an Apostle, we should at once know that his pretensions were vain, and that he was a deceiver. If an impostor, how came Mr. Smith to discover all this? Why did he not, like the Irvingites, assume the apostleship without an Apostle to ordain him? How came he to possess so much more wisdom than Irving, as to discover that he could not be an Apostle without being ordained under the hands of an Apostle? If Mr. Smith be a false Apostle, it must be confessed that he has exhibited far more judgment than all the false Apostles who have preceded him, learned and talented as they were. Is not this another presumptive evidence of *Joseph Smith’s divine mission*? Such a correctness upon matters of so great a moment, and upon subjects on which millions have heretofore erred, indicates something more than *human*—it indicates the inspiration of the Almighty. The purity of Mr. Smith’s doctrine—the perfect coincidence of his testimony with that of John’s, in relation to the manner of the restoration of the everlasting gospel to the earth, and the consistency of his testimony in relation to the manner of the restoration of the apostleship—are strong presumptive evidences that beautifully harmonize with and strengthen each other; the evidence is therefore accumulative, and increases with every additional condition or circumstance in a multiplied ratio, and seems almost irresistably to force conviction upon the mind.

(To be continued.)