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### Revelation: Our Revelation Local, Pertaining to Our Earth and Its Heavens

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## **Revelation: Our Revelation Local, Pertaining to Our Earth and Its Heavens**

*As to revelation in modern times.* It is quite generally the understanding that while God “at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past [un]to the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1), and by the ministering of angels and by his own voice from heaven, and some two thousand years ago gave a supreme revelation through his son, Jesus Christ—it is the general understanding now that revelation in modern times has not only ceased, but is no more to be expected. The volume of revelation is alleged to have been completely closed and the awful voice of God in revelation has been heard for the last time. Since what we have to say in the remaining chapters of this work will rest largely upon revelation in recent times, it is quite necessary that we should call attention to this prevailing belief about the cessation of revelation.

Let the reader be reminded in the first place that there is nothing in the nature of revelation itself that would lead us to think that revelation from God in modern times is impossible, or improbable. If it be conceded that God in past ages spoke to chosen men whom he made his prophets, seers, and apostles, and sent them with a message to mankind, it would be vain to argue that it would be impossible for him to do the same now. To think of revelation as now impossible, would be to deny God’s power to do what he afore time did. Belief in God at all will certainly include belief in his power to reveal himself when and how [it] will please him.

Moreover, there is nothing in the revelations that have been given, and that are contained in the Old and New Testament, that gives any warrant for saying that revelation would ever cease. True, God has cautioned men at various places in his revelation that they must not “add to” or “take from” the particular revelation given of God. One such caution was given to ancient Israel, wherein God said:

“Ye shall not add unto the ⟨words⟩ [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. 4:2). But this was no general proclamation that revelation would cease. Indeed we know that the great volume of Israel’s revelation was given after those days.

Written in the last book of the New Testament as at present compiled, in the last chapter and in the closing verses, is St. John’s solemn warning: “I testify [un]to 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.” Per contra: “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” (Rev. 22:18-19). This being within one of the last verses of the Bible, has been held by expositors to represent the formal closing up of the whole volume of revelation! The inhibitions, however, are limited to the book of St. John’s revelation—the few leaves that make up the book of that prophecy—and have no reference to the whole Bible or the whole volume of revelation. St. John’s book of Revelation is well known to have been written before his gospel, and if John’s gospel is to be held as an inspired book containing a revelation, then the apostle himself would be guilty of violating his own prohibition of further revelation from God if the inhibition of adding to the word of God contained in the last chapter of the revelation is held to mean a prohibition of all further revelation from God.

There is the further consideration also, namely, the language of St. John’s book is if any *man* shall add to the words of the prophecies of this book, then calamity shall follow. This merely forbids man to add to God’s word, it makes no attempts to forbid God to add to his own revelations for the enlightenment of the children of men.

The reader may fix it in his mind as a settled conviction founded upon reason that (1) there is nothing in the nature of revelation itself to prevent God from giving revelation in modern times as well as in times past; and (2) there is no inhibition pronounced in what has been revealed in past ages that would estop God from giving revelation in modern times, or in any times, however far in the future. The power and the right to give revelation is within the sovereign power and will of God. God will speak when he will and how he will; and it is vain in man to undertake to set limitations for God in the matter of his giving revelations.

All the implications of the scriptures are to the effect that we may look for revelations in dispensations later than those whose history is given in the Bible, later than the dispensation of two thousand years ago, namely the Christian *or Meridian* dispensation. St. Peter, for instance, addressing himself to the Jews on a somewhat momentous occasion in which he witnessed that Christ had fulfilled the things predicted by the previous prophets, gives then this admonition to the listening multitude of the Jews:

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of ~~the~~ restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:19-21)

Mark the words of this chief of the apostles “whom the heaven must receive,” this referring to Jesus Christ, “until the times of restitution of all things.” This is clearly a promise of some future unfolding and enlargement of God’s work of revelation in the earth. The “time of restitution of all things” that God had in mind, which he has committed to his servants the prophets and seers, and all these things in the future, God here promises to gather together and unite in one splendid whole, which will disclose his purposes with reference to the whole earth and the inhabitants thereof. A prominent feature of this future dispensation will be that God will again send Jesus Christ, which before had been preached unto the Jews, but whom now the heaven must receive until the time promised: “the time of the restitution of all things.” This unquestionably has reference to some mighty revelation subsequent to the apostolic days of St. Peter.

St. Paul is no less emphatic in prophesying of a similar dispensation to this—the same in fact—in these terms:

⟨God⟩ Having made known unto us the ⟨mystery⟩ [mysteries] of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. (Eph. 1:9-10)

The “Dispensation of the Fullness of Times” corresponds admirably with St. Peter’s “Times of Restitution of All Things” of which God had spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets.

***The Holy Ghost as a source of revelation.*** It should be noticed also, in passing, that the chief source and means of God's revelation to man is through the Holy Ghost, which is declared in the scriptures to be the "very spirit of prophecy." And the spirit of prophecy can be no other than the spirit of revelation also. St. Peter, officially opening the mission of himself and his fellow apostles upon the day of Pentecost, bore witness to the people that if they would repent of their sins and be baptized for the remission of them they should receive the *gift of the* Holy Ghost; that the promise of receiving this spirit of prophecy, the Holy Ghost, was to all those who heard his word, to their children, to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord should call. Take note that the spirit of inspiration and revelation—the spirit of prophecy—was promised unto all who should receive the gospel. After that pledge of God, to argue for the cessation of inspiration and revelation from God is illogical and leads to the denial of the perpetuation of the powers of the Holy Ghost himself, as well as to a denial of the power of God the Father. Great emphasis was laid upon the powers of the Holy Ghost in this line by the Savior himself. He promised to send to his disciples "another Comforter," that "he may abide with [you] ⟨them⟩ for ever; Even the Spirit of truth," which later he identifies as the Holy Ghost (John 14:16-17). "The Comforter," he continues, "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Again, "when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). And still again, "when he, the Spirit of truth, is come ⟨identified as the Holy Ghost, be it remembered⟩, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). [The Holy Ghost is] identified again as the spirit of prophecy, and the chief source of prophecy is necessarily revelation. And hence it must be that revelation and prophecy will be perpetual where the gospel of the Christ and the church of Christ is; and where these spiritual powers cease to be in manifestation, there neither the gospel nor the church of Christ has been perpetuated. So that when so-called Christianity repudiates continuous revelation in the churches, they do but proclaim their own departure from God and the truth of God.

***The modern world's need of revelation.*** Is there anyone who will question the world's need for revelation in these days on the

great fundamental questions concerning God, the Christ, the Christ's nature, and relationship to God, and to man; the origin of man and his relationship to whatever creative power has produced him; the purpose of his earth life; his future, whether there is tangible, personal immortality for him in a wider, deeper and larger existence? Or only an endless sleep in oblivion—extinction? In respect of positive, authoritative enlightenment the world is in doubt and ignorance in relation to all these questions. Christianity set forth in the New Testament, I know, is supposed to have furnished revealed knowledge concerning these things. But does it? Cite chapter and verse. Review the various interpretations given to such revelations as are therein contained by the several divisions of Christendom, and see what you have. Where is there in any of these divisions and sub-divisions of Christendom a clear-cut, outstanding word or interpretation of these subjects that can be accepted as authoritative and final? Why are such divisions in Christendom, if there is clearness in the original revelation in which they are supposed to have their origin and commission? Why this multitude of “lo heres,” and “lo theres” concerning one revelation, the one gospel, and supposedly the one church? Confusion is confounded in this multitude of various voices proclaiming many faiths and shades of faith over this supposed revealed religion and interpreting the Christ and his mission.

*The limited victory of Christianity.* Then again there is the very limited victory of Christianity, even if we should consent to regard it as essentially one religious movement and one church. After two thousand years of existence Christianity counts in its membership—and that is its nominal membership merely, not active membership—less than one-third of the earth's inhabitants! During that time, two thousand years, though in constant contact with the Jews, Christianity has been unsuccessful in persuading that branch of the house of Israel (Judah) to accept the Christ as their Messiah; and Judah is as much in rebellion against acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as their manifested Jehovah in the flesh, as they were two thousand years ago. And the great mass of humanity are still strangers to God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

All these considerations loudly plead for some further word of God that shall make clear the revelations that have been given; and for such additions to them as will unfold the fullness of truth that shall make it clear to the understanding of men, the meaning of this world of ours; God's purpose in creating it; man's life upon it, and man's future. The world was never more in need of revelation than now. What an infinite pity if no word of God is spoken to meet the world's need!

*Our revelation social local.* The first thing to be observed with reference to those things which are to occupy our attention in these closing chapters of part I, is to note the important fact that such revelations as God has given to man on our earth, pertain to our earth alone, and the heavens immediately associated with it. That is to say, the limited family of worlds to which our earth belongs. This important truth is made known in the book of Moses, the fragment of revelation brought to light by Joseph Smith, as already stated, early in his ministry, shortly after the Church was organized in 1830 (Moses 1).

*God's revelation to Moses in the Mosaic fragment.* God in this fragment is represented as saying to Moses:

Worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son (Jesus Christ) I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. . . . For behold, there are many worlds that have passed away by the word of my power. And . . . all things are numbered unto me, for they are mine and I know them . . . But only an account of this earth (the earth whereon Moses stood), and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you. (cf. Moses 1:33, 35)

Then Moses: "Be merciful unto thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, and also the heavens, and then thy servant will be content" (Moses 1:36).

And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying: The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine. And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words. . . . And now, Moses, my son, I will speak unto thee concerning this earth upon which thou standest; and thou shalt write the things which I shall speak. (Moses 1:37-40)

And again:

It came to pass that the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak. I am the Beginning and the End, the Almighty God; by mine Only Begotten I created these things; yea, in the beginning I created the heaven, and the earth upon which thou standest. And the earth was without form, and void; and I caused darkness to come up upon the face of the deep; and my Spirit moved upon the face of the water; for I am God. And I, God, said: Let there be light; and there was light. (Moses 2:1-3)

Then follows the account of the creation, substantially as in the first chapter of Genesis.

This is a wonderful ~~bit~~ *item* of information, this fact that God's revelations which he gave through Moses, and subsequently of course to all the prophets, are limited to the earth and the immediate heavens with which the earth is associated. The revelations pertain to our earth, to the inhabitants thereof, and to the divine Intelligences which constitute its Godhead, its Creator, its Redeemer, its Witness—the Holy Ghost. The revelations which God has given to our earth-prophets undertake no treatment of the entire universe—the hundreds of millions of suns and their attendant planetary systems with the inhabitants thereof, all which make up the tremendous galaxy of our universe—much less a revelation that attempts to account for those other innumerable galaxies out in the space depths. ~~which through the discovery of science we are just now beginning to find out~~

What science discovers helps us to realize the greatness and wonderfulness of this revelation in the new fragment of the revelation of God to Moses, wherein we are told that “there are many worlds,” so many, that they are innumerable to man; “the heavens they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man. . . . Many worlds have passed away, by the word of God's power; and as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come” (cf. Moses 1:35, 37-38);<sup>a</sup> and there is no end to God's works!

Let it be remembered that these wonderful statements were made by a confessedly unlearned youth, unschooled in the sciences, even of his time, unlearned in the lore of astronomy, and the speculations as to origins; and it is not until recent development that modern science and modern instruments of science have brought to light such fullness of knowledge concerning the universe and the extent of it as is here proclaimed by the Prophet of the new age of revelation in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. That is to say, a knowledge of the immensity of the universe, and the notion of worlds passing away and others created to take their place, or the recreation of those which had passed away coupled with the notion, already referred to, that all this obtains under a reign of law in the universe, holding that the destructive forces—so called—as well as the creative forces in the universe are under the dominion of law, which will conserve and perpetuate through eternity the orderly cosmos.

The thing which I wish to emphasize here, however, in referring to the Mosaic fragments, is the limitation of revelation to our earth

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<sup>a</sup>The phrases are again used out of order. Roberts inserts a paraphrase of verse 35 between the quotations from verses 37 and 38.



and its heavens and its affairs and relationships; all which will have important influence in understanding the great truths we hope to unfold; the importance of which, however, can only be realized as we proceed with the application of the thought to the facts as they are passed in review.

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Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: Pratt, *Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon*, chs. 1-3; Pratt, *Orson Pratt's Works on the Doctrines of the Gospel*; Moses; and Abraham.