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The Evidence of Scriptural and Perfect Doctrines

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE EVIDENCE OF SCRIPTURAL AND PERFECT DOCTRINES.

Continuing to follow the line of presumptive evidence I call attention to the fact that the doctrines taught by Joseph Smith are scriptural and perfect in every particular. I do not mean this to apply to all that he is alleged to have taught and that is to be found in imperfectly reported discourses or handed down by the still more uncertain vehicle of word of mouth tradition; but those doctrines which he taught *ex cathedra*, by which I mean those doctrines that he taught in his official capacity as a Prophet and witness for God, as the President of the Church of Christ.^a

I do not wish to be understood as saying that Joseph Smith did not teach doctrines which perhaps are not to be found in the Bible; for since the Bible itself is fragmentary, containing at most but part of that which God has revealed to man, it does not contain all the truth; nor does it contain a fullness of the truth concerning some of those matters of

^aI have been careful thus to limit the teachings of the prophet which I call "scriptural and perfect in every particular" to those doctrines that he taught officially as the word of the Lord; for the reason that there are some things accredited to him by individuals that I feel sure they must have misunderstood at the time, or unconsciously changed through imperfect recollection of what the prophet said. Even some of his published sermons do him an injustice; for the reason that they are not accurately reported nor from the nature of the circumstances could they be. They were not reported by stenographers, but by men writing down what they could in long hand during the course of delivery, and published with such additions and corrections as could be made afterwards from memory. These published sermons therefore are little better than synopses of what the prophet said, and necessarily imperfect.

which it treats; and hence in the revelations which the Lord has given to Joseph Smith, there are many truths in respect to which the Bible is silent; and in other instances the modern revelations contain the truths spoken of in the Bible in greater fullness. But since the Prophet recognized the Bible as the word of God; and imperfect only so far as imperfection may result from its being fragmentary and marred through faulty translations, his revelations and teachings must be in harmony with the truths of the Bible. The Bible thus becomes, in some measure, at least, a standard by which to test the truths of Joseph Smith's claims and work. Speaking broadly, his doctrines must be in harmony with the Bible, and while much that he teaches may go beyond that which was written in the Jewish scriptures, yet between his doctrines and those of the Bible, so far as the latter treats of the same themes, there must be substantial agreement.

The doctrines which our Prophet teaches as the revelations of God, must be perfect in every particular; for since he claims to have received them from the Lord Almighty at first hand, by revelation, there is left no room to plead the error of historians or of translators, and certainly the Lord would not reveal erroneous or untrue doctrines.

The force of the argument in favor of the genuineness of the claims of Mr. Smith derived from the fact that his doctrines are scriptural and perfect in every particular, as in the case of the argument based upon the fitness there was in the order of the development of the great work, is best seen from the negative side, that is, by contemplating what the result would be if his doctrines were absolutely contrary to the Bible, and imperfect in some particulars. If such a thing could be demonstrated, it would prove fatal to the validity of his pretensions; and therefore, if on the one hand the finding of unscriptural and imperfect doctrine would be so disastrous

to his pretensions, on the other, if it can be shown that his doctrines are in harmony with the Bible and perfect in every particular—such a fact should be accepted as a strong presumptive evidence that he was a true witness and prophet sent of God.

With these considerations in mind, let us examine his doctrines. I wish to say, however, that some of the doctrines briefly noticed here will receive, because of their importance, special attention in subsequent chapters devoted to them.

First, then, Joseph Smith taught the existence of God, the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, in whose name the Father is to be worshiped; that the Holy Ghost is a witness for the Father and the Son, and that these three constitute the Godhead or Grand Presidency of heaven and earth.

Second, he taught that God the Father so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for the redemption of mankind; that Jesus Christ suffered temptations but gave no heed to them; that he was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; that he ascended into heaven to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of God. This is all so perfectly in harmony with the well known teachings of the Bible that I do not deem it necessary to give reference to particular texts in proof of it.

Third, he taught that men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression; that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.^b Joseph Smith

^b In this statement I have grouped together the second and third articles of faith as prepared by Joseph Smith for Mr. John Wentworth for publication in the "Chicago Democrat," in 1842. See also Book of Alma, in Book of Mormon, chapter xi: 4-44. III Nephi (Book of Mormon), ch. xxvii: 12, 13.

teaches that through **and** by the atonement wrought out in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, and without obedience to any conditions whatsoever, all men will be saved from the consequences of Adam's transgression, that is, they will be redeemed through the resurrection of the dead from that death which came upon our race through Adam's disobedience. This teaching is in harmony with the scripture which says: "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam *all die*, even so in Christ shall *all be made alive*."^c

But not alone from the consequences of Adam's transgression does the gospel save men, but also from the consequences of their own sins, on condition of their obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. The beauty and justice of this doctrine is apparent when we regard it in relation to the general salvation from the consequences of Adam's transgression. That transgression was necessary to the general purposes of God in order to bring men into the world, and to bring to pass the conditions under which their earth life was to be lived, hence all men are to be saved from the consequences of Adam's transgression without compliance with any conditions whatsoever; but to be saved from the consequences of their own sins—their personal violations of God's laws, certain conditions are to be complied with because personal sin is not a necessary thing as Adam's transgression was, the agency of each individual is directly exercised in the act of transgression, and justice has a claim upon them and may command their obedience to conditions.

Joseph Smith taught that those laws and ordinances to be obeyed are, first, faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, repentance; third, baptism by immersion for the remis-

^c I Cor. xv: 20-22 and Rom. v: 12-19.

sion of sins; fourth, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."^d

Fourth, he taught that a man must be called of God, by prophecy and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

Fifth, he taught that the Church of Christ should be organized in the same manner—i. e., with the same officers that existed in the primitive church, viz.: Apostles, prophets, seventies, bishops, elders, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.

Sixth, he taught that all the spiritual gifts of the gospel could be possessed and exercised today as well as in former times—the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healings, interpretation of tongues, etc.^e

Seventh, he taught that the Bible was the word of God as far as it is translated correctly and also taught that the Book of Mormon was the word of God.^f Indeed the Prophet taught men to believe all that God has revealed, all that he at present reveals, and also said that the Lord would reveal many great and important things in the future pertaining to the kingdom of God.^g

Eighth, he taught that there would be a literal gathering

^d See fourth Article of Faith. Those desirous of inquiring into the agreement of these doctrines with the scripture may examine the following text: Heb. xi: 6; Rom. 1: 16, 17; Rom. x: 14, 15; James iii; Mark xvi: 15, 16; Acts ii: 38, 39; John iii: 5; Acts viii; Acts xix: 1-6; Heb. vi: 1-6. Also author's "Gospel."

^e Seventh Article of Faith. See also Mark xvi: 15-20; I Cor. xii; James v: 13-15; I Thess. v: 19, 20; John xiv: 12; Acts ii: 17.

^f The eighth Article of Faith. Volume II and III of this work is devoted to the consideration of the Book of Mormon as a witness for God, and the evidences of its divine authenticity there receive attention.

^g Let the reader examine the following passages in evidence of the truth of future revelation from God. Acts ii: 17, 18. See also Mal. iv; Mal. iii; Isaiah xi; Ezek. xx: 33-38; Matt. xxiv: 31; Zach. xiv.

of Israel, and a restoration of the ten tribes; that a city called Zion would be built upon the continent of North America; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth, and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiac glory.^h

Ninth, Joseph Smith claimed for himself and his followers the right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences, but conceded the same privilege to all other men, let them worship how, where or what they may.ⁱ “We believe,” said he, “in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men. Indeed we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul: ‘We believe all things, we hope all things;’ we have endured many things and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praise-worthy, we seek after these things.”^j

This is, of course, but an epitome of the teachings of the Prophet, and as before stated a number of these doctrines will be considered in chapters by themselves; but even in this epitome there may be discerned the outlines of a great work, the harmonious parts of a great and perfect whole; a system which contemplates the completion of the work of redemption for the whole race of men and of the earth itself—a conception of the mighty purposes of God which far out-runs anything which the mind of Joseph Smith unaided by the inspiration of God was capable of perceiving.

^h See tenth Article of Faith. A subsequent chapter is devoted to the gathering of Israel and the other statements of the above paragraph.

ⁱ Eleventh Article of Faith.

^j Thirteenth Article of Faith.