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A New Witness for God

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Abstract: Describes why the Book of Mormon is needed as a new witness for God.

 THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

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 A NEW WITNESS FOR GOD,

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Some millions must be wrong, that's pretty clear.

'Tis time that some new prophet should appear,
 Or old indulge man with a second sight;
 Opinions wear out in some thousand years
 Without a small refreshment from the spheres.—BYRON.

THAT mankind is in need of a new witness for God is evident. The irreligion of the times; the steady progress of infidelity in Christian lands; the disagreement among professing Christian people on the principles of religion, resulting in the multiplication of sects; the absence of a living, active faith in God and the Gospel of His Son even among professing Christians, prove our statement to be true.

The position of the Christian world to-day is analogous to that of the Jews at the advent of the Son of God among them. To the forefathers of the Jews had been committed a system of religion, a code of morals, and an order of government which reflected the wisdom, justice, goodness and power of its Author—God. But they and their children perverted that religion, no longer lived in the spirit of its moral teachings, and through transgression were deprived of their God-given government; so that the advent of the Messiah found them in bondage, and following the dead letter of a perverted religion—paying tithes on mint and anise and cummin, but omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; making long prayers on the street corners to be heard of men, but at the same time robbing widows' houses; making the outside of the platter clean, but within they were full of extortion and excesses; garnishing the tombs of the prophets of former days, yet slaying those whom God sent as His messengers to them; boasting themselves of the seed of Abraham, yet neglecting to do the works of Abraham; priding themselves in the law given by God to their fathers, yet making the law of no effect by their traditions:—Such was the condition of the Jews nineteen centuries ago—such is the condition of the Christians of to-day.

To the fathers was the Gospel of the Son of God committed in its purity, simplicity and power; but as years rolled on and the voices of inspired pro-

phets and apostles were hushed in death, the Gospel was perverted. Damnable heresies were privily brought into the Church, and the way of truth was evil spoken of; refusing longer to endure sound doctrine, and having itching ears, the people heaped to themselves teachers, and the truth was turned to fables; of themselves men arose teaching perverse things to draw away disciples after them. And thus were the laws of the Gospel transgressed, its ordinances changed and the covenant broken; and such was the mingling of pagan philosophy with the few truths of the Gospel that remained, that even their lustre was nearly eclipsed.

Succeeding generations floundering in the darkness, multiplied the errors of those who had gone before them; schism seems only to have begotten schism, until the Christian religious world is split up into conflicting factions, nothing but confusion remains, and mankind are being fed upon the dry husks of a man-arranged and dead theology.

I may be charged with severity in making this arraignment of the Christian world, but examination will prove that it is no more severe than it is true. Instead of that unity existing among the Christians which the whole tenor of Scripture leads us to expect will be one of the characteristics of the Church of Christ, and which is one of the signs of her divinity, we find confusion confounded and the whole fabric split up into contending sects. Instead of an inspired priesthood, consisting of apostles, prophets, seventies, elders, bishops, etc., with a direct communication with the heavens either through holy angels or the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we have various forms of church government devised by man, more or less elaborate and learned, but lacking both a commission from God and the inspiration of heaven. Instead of a faith which lays hold of and enjoys the gifts and graces connected with the Gospel of the Son of God, such as the gift of knowledge, wisdom, faith, healing the sick, prophecy, discerning of spirits, etc.; the mistaken ministers of modern Christendom teach their followers that these spiritual powers, so characteristic of the ancient Saints, are no longer to be enjoyed; and to excuse their absence, tell their dupes they are no longer needed. Thus instead of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints, as admonished by the Scriptures to do, they are taught *not* to contend for it; nay, they are told it is not needed. Instead of possessing the Holy Ghost, which not only brings peace, joy, love, gentleness, goodness, meekness and temperance; but also guides into all truth, teaches all things, testifies that Jesus is the Christ—so that man may not be left in uncertainty on so grave a question—takes of the things of the Father and reveals it unto man, and shows him things to come—in fact is the very spirit of prophecy, and the power by which the Scriptures were written—but instead of possessing that spirit, and rejoicing in the manifestations of its highest and noblest powers, Christians, and especially the ministers of Christendom, tell us it was never intended that the Holy Ghost should continuously bestow upon man these extraordinary God-given powers. That, however, is an assumption on their part, pure and simple, for which there is not only no warrant in Scripture, but it is contrary to the whole tenor and spirit of the word of God.

Thus the heaven-born religion of Jesus Christ has been degraded to a mere *form* of godliness lacking the power thereof. Unbelief in the churches is

common and constantly increasing. Proving that the evidence which convinced and satisfied the fathers is not sufficient to produce the same result in the children. Christianity of to-day is losing its power as a religion: it is as a social institution rather than a religion that it exercises whatever of force it still possesses. It stands on nationality, on tradition rather than upon faith.

I would not be understood as saying there is nothing good or true in the religious sects of modern Christendom. Long after the sun sinks below our horizon his light is seen gilding the mountain tops and the clouds floating in the placid sky of evening; and we enjoy for some time the glorious though subdued light he leaves behind. So it is with the religion of Jesus Christ. The Son of God brought such a splendid system of religious and moral truth into the world, that it flooded the whole earth with its glory; and though men corrupted with their vain and false philosophy His Gospel—departed from its principles and precepts, making it of no effect through their traditions, and burying its lustre under the rubbish of human superstition and folly—yet they could not altogether destroy the gems of truth it here and there left behind it. And those truths, like diamonds amid unsightly heaps of *debris*, have attracted the attention of men of noblest minds and superior intellects, who have been so enraptured with the fragments of the Gospel they found that they imagined they had discovered the entire mine, instead of a few detached gems; and have founded systems of religion which incorporate within their structures some of the principles taught by the Son of God. So far, so good. But as all the rays of artificial light which man can create, if condensed into one ray, would not make a sun; so if all the truths held by Christian sects were brought together into one organization, they would not make up that perfect system of truth known as the Gospel of Jesus Christ. None but God can restore that in its fullness.

Nor would I, in the strictures I make respecting the religious world, be understood as even hinting that there are not tens and hundreds of thousands of both men and women in the various sectarian churches who are sincere and devout in their worship, and who are loved of God. But these are cases where individuals rise above their creeds, and whose souls are so deeply stirred by true veneration for God, and an honest effort to act in harmony with the divine will, that in spite of false, dead systems of faith and powerless churches, they hold communion with God and are conscious of His approval.

But, in order to stay the progress of infidelity, and close the mouths of blasphemers; to evangelize the world and bring it to a unity of faith; to strengthen and confirm the faith of professing Christians; and to infuse new life into the religious world—a new witness for God is absolutely needed. And God has given it. R.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Men are constantly receiving the converts or renegades from another religion or party after the manner of the Prodigal Son. They hug him to their hearts and bestow upon him their best apparel, without taking care to ascertain how long it is since he was feeding upon the husks, or how soon he is likely to return and wallow with the swine—it is so easy and pleasant to believe that those who have come round to your way of thinking are excellent and deserving persons. Worthy and devout Protestants—people, too,