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A New Witness for God, Chapter IX

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Abstract: A discussion of prophecies in the Book of Mormon that have been fulfilled including those concerning the Three Witnesses, the Christian claim that there can be no more Bible, the words of Charles Anthon, and the martyrdom of some of its witnesses.

 THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

 MONDAY, JULY 9, 1888.

 A NEW WITNESS FOR GOD.

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CHAPTER IX.

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. xix, 21, 22).

But on the other hand, if the thing which the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord is fulfilled as time brings it due, the plain, just inference from the above Scripture is that the Lord spake through the prophet—the word is of God.

To go further into the consideration of the internal evidences of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon than merely consistency of detail with the general plan of the work will carry us, I here call the attention of the reader to a number of prophecies in the Book of Mormon which either have been fulfilled, or are in course of fulfillment. And such is the character of these prophecies that the reader, I think, will be constrained to admit that something more than human wisdom or foresight enter into their composition.

I first call attention to the prophecies relating to the special witnesses to the Book of Mormon:

Wherefore, at that day when the book* shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book and the things therein. And there is none other which shall view it save it be a few according to the will of God to bear testimony of his word to the children of men: For the Lord God hath said, That the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead (II Nephi xxvii, 12, 13).

Moroni in the fifth chapter of the Book of Ether, makes the same prediction; that is, that his father's collection of plates which he concealed in Cumorah would be shown to three special witnesses by the power of God, and to a few others who should assist in bringing forth the work. That this

* Book of Mormon. See the whole chapter quoted.

† Joseph Smith.

prophecy has been fulfilled is evident from the testimonies of the three special witnesses and the eight witnesses published in connection with every copy of the Book of Mormon, the credibility and peculiar force of which we discussed at some length in chapter vii, to which I refer my readers for proof of the fulfillment of the prophecy now under consideration.

It might be an easy matter for an impostor to predict that three special witnesses should behold the plates from which he averred he was translating a divine record; but it is beyond the power of an impostor to cause an angel from heaven to come before those witnesses in the broad light of day, and while the glory of God shone around, exhibit those plates and the Urim and Thummim to them; allowing the witnesses to examine the characters engraven on the plates, or to cause the voice of God to break through the stillness and declare the work was true, and command them to bear witness to the world of that fact—this, I say, is altogether too much for the power of an impostor, be he ever so artful, to accomplish. Nor is there any possibility of them being mistaken in what they say they heard and saw—their testimony cannot be resolved into delusion or mistake. And to that testimony, as we have already stated in chapter vii, they remained true throughout their lives, as well when out of the Church as when in it. There it stands, their testimony, unimpeached and unimpeachable: and the fulfillment of that prophecy which foretold that such witnesses would stand for God and the Book of Mormon, is an evidence of no mean order that the book containing it is divinely inspired—is what it claims to be.

Speaking of the time when God would proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder in the earth by bringing forth the record of the Nephites, the Lord is represented as having said:

And because my words shall hiss forth, many of the Gentiles shall say, A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible (II Nephi xxix, 3).

It is well known that the great objection urged against the Book of Mormon has ever been that it is a new revelation from God. The Gentiles have made the whole earth ring again with the cry, "we have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible, nor any other revelation than that which is contained in it." The absurdity of this doctrine, together with its being not only *unscriptural* but also *anti-scriptural*, and likewise contrary to the mercy and justice of God, was discussed in chapters II and III, and consequently we need not stop to consider those phases of this question here. All I wish to call attention to is the fact that the manner in which the Book of Mormon would be received was predicted before ever it was published to the world, and that it has been received in just the manner described—largely rejected because it purports to be a new revelation.

Again, in speaking of the time when the Book of Mormon would be revealed, the first Nephi, living in the sixth century B.C., is represented as saying:

The Lord God will proceed to bring forth the words of the book. . . . But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book, Take these words which are not sealed and deliver them to another, that he may show them to the learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee. And the learned shall say, Bring hither the book and I

will read them: and now because of the glory of the world, and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God. And the man shall say, I cannot bring the book, for it is sealed. Then shall the learned say, I cannot read it. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that the Lord God will deliver again the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned; and the man that is not learned shall say, I am not learned. Then shall the Lord God say unto him, The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee (11 Nephi xxvii, 14—20).

That this remarkable prophecy has been fulfilled is proven by the following circumstances: Between December 1827 and February 1828, Joseph Smith copied a number of the characters from the plates with their translation, and in the said month of February delivered them to Martin Harris, who started with them to the city of New York. For what took place there I give Martin Harris' own account:

I went to the City of New York, and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Anthon, a gentleman celebrated for his literary attainments. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which were not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyric, and Arabic, and he said that they were the true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him. He then said unto me, Let me see that certificate. I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying that there was no such thing now as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him, he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them; he replied, "I cannot read a sealed book." I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation (Pearl of Great Price, pp. 68, 68).

We have also the testimony of Professor Anthon himself that Martin Harris called upon him with such characters in his possession. He says:

Many years ago, the precise date I do not recollect, a plain-looking countryman called upon me with a letter from Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell, requesting me to examine and give my opinion upon a certain paper, marked with various characters, which the Doctor confessed he could not decipher, and which the bearer of the note was very anxious to have explained. A very brief examination convinced me that it was a mere *hoax*, and a very clumsy one, too. The characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, and presented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew, and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, either through unskilfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican Zodiac.—The Church Record, Vol 1, No. 22.

The silence of Professor Anthon respecting the certificate he gave to Martin Harris and then afterwards destroyed, together with his reference to the characters presented to him as a "hoax," is easily accounted for from the fact that he became an avowed enemy to the Book of Mormon. But a perusal

of the foot note* I here subjoin, taken from the "Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon," by O. Pratt, pp. 296-7, will convince the reader that Professor Anthon unwittingly placed upon record a very strong proof that the characters presented to him by Martin Harris were genuine characters, such as were employed by the ancient Mexicans in their writings, and thus one who sought to destroy the work of God has been made to give a strong testimony in its favor.

I quote another prophetic passage:

And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book of which I have spoken shall come forth, and be written unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, there shall be many which shall believe the words which are written; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed. And then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews. And the gospel of Jesus Christ shall be declared among them; wherefore, they shall be restored unto the knowledge of their fathers, and also to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was had among their fathers. And then shall they rejoice; for they shall know

* Professor Anthon no doubt thought that this statement would militate against the Book of Mormon; but we consider it a great acquisition of evidence, confirmatory of the truth of that book when compared with the discoveries of the glyphs and characters among the ancient ruins of America. The celebrated antiquarian, Professor Rafinesque, in speaking of the glyphs discovered on the ruins of a stone city in Mexico, says:—"The glyphs of Otolum are written from top to bottom, like the Chinese, or from side to side, indifferently, like the Egyptian, and the Demotic Lybian. Although the most common way of writing the groups is in rows, and each group separated, yet we find some formed, as it were, in oblong squares or tablets, like those of Egypt."—*Atlantic Journal* for 1832, by Professor Rafinesque.

Two years after the Book of Mormon appeared in print, Professor Rafinesque, in his *Atlantic Journal* for 1832, gave the public a fac-simile of American glyphs, found in Mexico. They are arranged in columns, being forty-six in number. These the learned professor denominates "the elements of the glyphs of Otolum," and he supposes that by the combination of these elements, words and sentences were formed, constituting the written language of the ancient nations of this vast continent. By an inspection of the fac-simile of these forty-six elementary glyphs, we find all the particulars which Professor Anthon ascribes to the characters, which he says "a plain-looking countryman" presented to him. The "Greek, Hebrew, and all sorts of letters," inverted and in different positions, "with sundry delineations of half-moons," planets, suns, "and other natural objects," are found among these forty-six elements. This "plain-looking countryman," according to Professor Anthon's testimony, got some three or four years the start of Professor Rafinesque, and presented him with the genuine elementary glyphs years before the *Atlantic Journal* made them public; and what is still more remarkable, "the characters," Professor Anthon says, "were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing," which exactly corresponds with what Professor Rafinesque testifies, as just quoted, in relation to the glyphs of Otolum. We see nothing in Professor Anthon's statement that proves the characters presented to him to be a "hoax," as he terms it; unless, indeed, he considers their exact resemblance to the glyphs of Otolum, and their being arranged in the right kind of columns, is a "hoax." But as Joseph Smith was an unlearned young man living in the country, where he had not access to the writings and discoveries of antiquarians, he would be entirely incapable of forging the true and genuine glyphs of ancient America; therefore we consider this testimony of Professor Anthon, coming as it does from an avowed enemy of the Book of Mormon to be a great collateral evidence in its favor.

that it is a blessing unto them from the hand of God; and their scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes: and many generations shall not pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people. And it shall come to pass that the Jews which are scattered, also shall begin to believe in Christ; and they shall begin to gather in upon the face of the land; and as many as shall believe in Christ, shall also become a delightsome people. And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall commence his work, among all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, to bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth. And with righteousness shall the Lord God judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked; for the time speedily cometh, that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people; and the wicked will he destroy: and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire (II Nephi xxx, 3—10).

It will be observed that this quotation contains several prophecies, some of which have been fulfilled, others are in course of fulfillment, and still others that have not been fulfilled because the wheels of time have not yet brought their fulfillment due.

The first item we call attention to in the foregoing quotation is the statement that many shall believe the words of the book—having reference, of course, to the Book of Mormon. To prove that this prophecy has been fulfilled, we have but to call attention to the present membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, numbering some 200,000, all of whom are believers in the Book of Mormon. To them must be added the thousands who have died in the faith; those who have been expelled from the Church because of transgression—numbering not less than half the present membership of the Church—but who still retained their faith in the Book of Mormon; and, to them, the tens of thousands who have been convinced of the truth of the book, but who through fear of the world have not had the moral courage to act in accordance with their convictions, and have never joined the Church. Let it be remembered, too, that these people have received that book in spite of the force of the traditions which prejudiced them against new revelation. And let it be further borne in mind that the experience of Joseph Smith, arising from the manner in which his first declarations of having received a heavenly vision, would by no means lead him to expect that there would be "many" who would receive that which he maintained was a new revelation from God. His experience would lead him to expect the reverse of all this. The prophecy, however, has been marvelously fulfilled.

The passage under consideration also says that those who received the book among the gentiles should carry it to the remnants of the seed of Levi, that through it they should learn of their origin, the Gospel of Christ should be declared among them; they should rejoice in it, acknowledge it as a blessing from the Lord, the scales of darkness should begin to fall from their eyes, "and not many generations should pass away among them, save they shall be a white and delightsome people." This last clause of the prophecy has not yet been fulfilled, being one of those items that the wheels of time have not yet brought its fulfillment due. The dark skin was brought upon the ancestors of these Lamanites because of their transgression; it was a curse upon them (see II Nephi, v., 21-25); but in the mercies of God it will

in a few generations be removed. It is well known that the elders of the Church of Jesus Christ in the early days of the Church began their labors among the American Indians ; that they took the Book of Mormon to them, the record of their forefathers, and taught them the Gospel. In this work they have been hindered not a little by the agents of the Government and sectarian priests stationed at the Indian agencies, who have followed the mistaken policy of preventing, to the extent of their power, the labors of the elders among them. But notwithstanding that opposition, some thousands of them have received the truth as contained in the record of their forefathers, and rejoice in it. Especially of late years the work among the Indian races has been prosperous.

Another item in this prophetic passage is to the effect that the Jews who are scattered shall also begin to believe in Christ, and shall also "begin to gather in upon the face of the land, and as many as shall believe in Christ shall also become a delightsome people." Although I cannot point to any great number among the Jews who have yet received the Book of Mormon, still I may say that "coming events are casting their shadows before," and the work is moving in their direction. It is repeatedly stated in the Book of Mormon, and the revelations of the Lord to Joseph Smith, that that book is to go first to the gentiles and then to the Jews ; and, as I say, the work is moving in their direction. Not long since, the attention of the Jewish Rabbi, Dr. Isaacson, late of Germany, was called to the claims of what the world calls "Mormonism." He investigated the subject thoroughly, and at last accepted it as the true religion of Jesus Christ—as who will not under such circumstances ; for we may say, as Turtullian, one of the early Christian fathers, is reported to have said, "who ever investigated our religion who did not embrace it?" Dr. Isaacson has not only become converted himself, but seems to have a strong desire that his Jewish brethren should also become converted, and to that end is now engaged in translating the Book of Mormon into the Hebrew-Jewish language—the language known most extensively among the Jews, being spoken in Germany, Austria, Russia, Servia and Roumania. And thus the way is being prepared to introduce this new witness of God and Christ to the Jews. Furthermore, it seems to me that those who are watching the events occurring among the nations—who witness the feverish anxiety among all classes of society ; the undefined dread of expected revolutions ; the active preparations for war among all nations, while all the time the cry is "Peace, peace ;" the restlessness of the lower stratas of society ; the complications constantly arising between capital and labor ; the increase of secret organizations pledged to the destruction of governments and the overthrow of civilization—all this must be convincing that a climax is reached, a crisis is at hand. In my judgment that crisis is the outpouring of God's wrath upon the nations of the earth for their wickedness, His judgments that shall cleanse the earth of unrighteousness, as foretold by the prophets, to be succeeded by a reign of peace and liberty. And the anxiety and restlessness above alluded to are but promonitory shudderings warning the nations of what is coming upon them—some of the surface indications that the work of the Lord is commencing among all nations to "bring about the restoration of His people upon the earth."

I am not prepared just here to conclude my remarks upon this class of evidence—prophetic—in support of the claims of the Book of Mormon ; but I cannot help stopping just long enough to ask the reader to consider how minutely these items of prophecy have been fulfilled ; and from the vantage ground which that consideration gives me, I ask him to believe that the other items in this connection which still remain unfulfilled will all come to pass as time shall bring them due.

The first Nephi, speaking of the time when the record of his people, the Book of Mormon, should come to the knowledge of the world, predicts that it should be at a time when many churches should be built up, but not unto the Lord, and they would be saying, "Behold I, I am the Lord's ; and others shall say I, I am the Lord's ;" and their priests would contend, and teach by the power of learning and deny the Holy Ghost, and deny miracles, claiming that God had finished His work. Many others would say, eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die ; and still others would claim that men would be justified in committing a little wrong, etc. :—

Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner false and vain and foolish doctrine, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord ; and their works shall be in the dark ; *and the blood of the saints shall cry out against them* (II Nephi xxvii).

The Prophet Mormon also prophesied of these things saying :—

And behold their prayers (prayers of the ancient Nephites) were also in behalf of him that the Lord should suffer to bring these things (record of the Nephites) forth. And no one need say, They shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it ; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it ; and it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away ; and it shall come even as if one should speak from the dead. And it shall come *in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord*, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness. Yea, it shall come to pass in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts ; yea, even in a day when the leaders of churches, and teachers, in the pride of their hearts, even to the envying of them who belong to their churches ; yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands ; and there shall also be heard of wars, rumours of wars, and earthquakes in divers places ; yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollutions upon the face of the earth ; there shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations ; when there shall be many who will say, do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity (Book of Mormon, viii., 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31).

I need not trouble you by pointing out that the Book of Mormon did come forth in a day when the Church of Christendom was just in such a condition as described by Nephi and Mormon ; those who have listened to the Babel of confusion existing in the religious world know how vivid is the description of these ancient prophets. Nor need I stop to consider the fact that the Book of Mormon has come forth in a day noted for wars and rumours of wars, for tempests, cyclones, and earthquakes. Neither is it necessary to call attention to how these things are increasing ; the fact is patent to all. The

part I more especially call attention to is that which indicates that persecution is to follow the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, falling upon those who should receive it—the Saints of God—their blood is to cry from the ground unto God for vengeance. Now let it be remembered that the said book was brought forth in the nineteenth century—in an age when it is boastingly claimed that the intolerance and bigotry of past ages have been left in the dim distance, together with the horrors of the inquisition and other acts of violence that disgraced the race. Moreover, it came forth in the United States—the boasted asylum of the oppressed out of all nations—where in the most positive terms religious freedom is guaranteed in the fundamental law of the land—the Constitution; and the most unlikely thing to happen in that land, one would think, would be persecution for conscience sake; and he would be considered a bold prophet who would predict the shedding of blood in this age, and in that land, for the sake of religion. Yet, what are the facts? Why, that in the State of Missouri alone four hundred* laid down their lives for the religion of Jesus Christ—as contained in the Book of Mormon. Dying through the cruelties, either directly or indirectly, of mob-violence, and many of them were murdered outright. The blood of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, which made crimson the soil of Illinois, together with the blood of a number of others that were killed a short time afterwards in the same State, and also the blood of Elder Joseph Standing, killed in Georgia, Elders John Gibbs, Wm. Berry, and the two Condor brothers killed in Tennessee as late as the year 1884, for the truth's sake, bears witness that this prophecy in the sacred pages of the record of the Nephites has only been too truly fulfilled. R.

* This is the estimate of P. P. Pratt; see his Autobiography.

LETTERS.—There are letters in this Office, from Utah, for Henry Pattenden and J. G. Wilkin.

OFFERINGS RECEIVED FOR MANTI TEMPLE.—Thomas Carr, 13s. 6d.; Jos. Siney, 2s. 6d.

Robert Lindsay, a returning missionary, and six of the Saints from Iceland left Liverpool on Saturday morning, July 7, 1888, per S.S. *Wisconsin*, en route for the Rocky Mountains, the gathering place of the Saints of God.

Messrs. Guion & Co. inform us that the company of Saints which left Liverpool on the 23rd ult. per S.S. *Wyoming*, in charge of Elder H. E. Bowring, arrived in New York on Tuesday morning the 3rd instant at 10 o'clock and left there at 3 p.m. on the 4th.

EMIGRATION NOTICE.—There are some railway stations in the United Kingdom from which emigrants, who are *steerage* passengers, are entitled to obtain transportation to Liverpool at less than the ordinary fares, by showing the steamship ticket, and on production of a special order which can be procured at this Office. The names of such stations may be ascertained by enquiry of the Conference Presidents. To secure the steamship ticket for this purpose, a deposit of £1 is required for each adult, and 10s. for each child, the balance to be paid on arrival of passengers in Liverpool. The special order alluded to, entitling the holder to reduced fare on the railway, will be given with the steamship ticket.