

The Lord Hath Spoken

By B. H. ROBERTS

NUMBER THREE

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.
(Isaiah 1:2.)

God's first revelation in these last days, as might have been expected—"since all things are done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things,"—revealed that which all the world, did it but know a revelation was to be given, would most anxiously look for—God revealed himself, and his Son, Jesus Christ. He gave the knowledge which concerned man most to know, and concerned God most to impart—

The Truth About God Revealed

It was on a bright morning early in the spring of 1820 when the first revelation, developing the truth about God, was given. During preceding months a great religious revival had been in progress at Palmyra, in the state of New York. The interest in these union meetings of the several churches was very great and religious fervor ran high.

When the converts obtained by the united efforts of the several Churches conducting the revival came to select the church in which they respectively would hold their fellowship, a spirit of sectarian bitterness developed, and contention was rife, under which the Christian charity and good will, which previously seemed to exist, were utterly dissipated.

Standing somewhat apart from, but watching with intense interest this religious excitement, and wondering greatly at the confusion and strife attendant upon it, was a lad fourteen years old. His mind was stirred to serious reflection, accompanied with great uneasiness, on account of the sec-

tarian strife so incessant and so bitter. He felt himself incompetent to decide who was right and who was wrong. "What is to be done?" he would often ask himself. "Who of all these parties is right?" "If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it?" Young as he was, his native intelligence taught him that something was radically wrong with all this contention over religion. It was clear even to his young mind that God could not be the author of all this confusion.

Influenced by these reflections he refrained from joining any of the sects, and in the meantime studied the scriptures as best he could for himself. While thus engaged his attention was attracted to that passage in James which says:

A Golden Text

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. (St. James 1:5.)

That passage was like the voice of God to his spirit. "Never," he was wont to say in later life—"never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart." He reflected upon it again and again, and as he did so the impression grew stronger that the advice of the ancient apostle offered a solution to his perplexities. He resolved to put it to the test and did so. He selected a place in a grove on his father's farm as the place where he would make the effort to obtain "wisdom." The rest of the experience is condensed from his own narrative:

No sooner had he begun calling upon the Lord than there sprang upon him a being from the unseen world, who so entirely overcame him, and bound his utterance, that he could not speak. Despair filled his heart. He was about to abandon himself to destruction when at the moment of his greatest alarm he saw a pillar of light exactly over his head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon him. No sooner did this light appear than he was free from the enemy which had held him bound. As the light rested upon him he saw within it two personages whose brightness and glory defy all description. They stood

above him in the air, and one of them pointing to the other said:

Joseph, This is my beloved Son. Hear Him.

The object of the lad in going to that place to engage in secret prayer was to learn of God which of all the sects was right that he might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did he recover his self-possession than he asked the personage to whom he was thus introduced, which of all the sects was right, and which he should join. He was answered that he must join none of them: for they all were wrong. "They draw near me with their lips," said the personage, talking to him, "but their hearts are far from me; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men; having a form of Godliness but they deny the power thereof."

Many other things were said to him on that occasion which the Prophet has not recorded, except to say that he was promised that the fulness of the gospel would at some future time be made known to him.

The main purpose of this lad in calling upon God was to learn which of all the Christian sects was right, and he received that knowledge; but the greater thing, and the one which was most fundamental was the fact that

He Had Found God!

And henceforth he must be a witness for him. The vision had made it manifest that God is not an incorporeal being, without body, or parts; on the contrary he appeared to the Prophet in the form of a man, as he did to the ancient prophets. Thus after centuries of controversy the simple truth of the scriptures, which teach that man was created in the likeness and in the very image of God, was made plain.

The vision corrected the error of the theologians respecting the oneness of the persons of the Father and the Son. Instead of being but one person, and yet more than one, as the theologians taught, they proved to be-The Father and The Son-distinct in their persons, as much so as any father and son on earth; and the "oneness" of the Godhead referred to in the scriptures, must have reference, then, to unity of purpose and of will, the mind of the one being the mind of the other, and so as to the will and other attributes. In other

words, the Godhead is made up of harmonized, but personal divine intelligences.

By this vision all the rubbish of theological speculation respecting God and the relationship of the personages of the Godhead was swept aside; and God, as personage, stood revealed; and definite meaning was restored to the scriptures which declare that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." (Gen. 1:27); that the Son of God was not only the brightness of God's glory, but also the "express image of his person." (Heb. 1:1-3); that Jesus Christ who had been "justified in the spirit; seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," was very God "manifested in the flesh." (1 Tim. 3:16).

Later revelations brought out the doctrines which harmonized this conception of God as personage with the great and scriptural doctrine that God is also everywhere present, and everywhere present with power-creative power, world sustaining power, vital force, intelligence inspiring power, the light of truth, "in and through and about all things"-God immanent in the world.

This revelation of God, now in mind, places an emphasis upon the everywhere-ness of God-and everywhere-ness with power. The revelation speaks of the glory of the church of the first-born, of Jesus Christ, saying:

He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he (the Light of Christ) is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. . . As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made. And the light which now shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 88 :6-1 1.)

Here are described creative power, and presence of that power "in and through all things;" and the identity of that creative power with "the light of truth," which light shineth, that is, makes truth apparent-reveals it-with more to follow; but now for the source of this everywhere creative, and sustaining power and light of the whole universe-"this light of truth"—

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space. The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things; which is the law by which all things are governed; even the POWER OF GOD who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 88:12-13.)

There it is: God revealed, God as a personality-and proceeding from his divine person and presence, the "Light of Truth," called also, and beautifully, "The Light of Christ," the vital force of the universe also, "which giveth life to all things;" the power also by which all things are "sustained and governed"—"even the power of God, who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things;" from whose presence creative, and sustaining, and intelligence-inspiring power, and light "proceedeth forth to fill the immensity of space."

And thus, without at all destroying the conception of the personality of God, in the sense of his being an Individual, as was and is the immortal Christ, and as undoubtedly the Father, revealed in the Christ, is—we have God as "the sleepless, active energy and will, which yesterday, today, and forever actuates all things." This is Paul's Deity—

That hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being. —(Acts 17:26-28.)

Even as men may live and move and have their being in the sunshine. And also "we are his offspring." (Id.)

This God immanent in the world is also David's God from whose presence he could not escape. "For if I ascend into heaven," he says, "Thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps. 139.)

God is everywhere present; and God is also personal, up to the point of being Individual. He is our loving Father who is in heaven; but also he is so extended by his Spirit that he fills the "immensity of space" with his presence, and

hence God with us, and about us, our present help in time of need.

Joseph Smith the Prophet

It was to Joseph Smith, generally known as the "Mormon Prophet," that the foregoing revelation of God—both immanent and personal—was given.

Joseph Smith was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor County, in the state of Vermont, A. D. 1805. When he was about ten years of age his parents moved to Palmyra, New York State, and there, and in Manchester township adjacent, he lived with his family up to the attainment of young manhood.

It was in the early spring of 1820 that he received the vision of God set forth in these pages. He was then about fifteen years of age.

In subsequent revelations the existence of the Book of Mormon was revealed to him; and ultimately given into his hands to be translated into the English language by the gift and power of God. Of which more will be said in Number Four of this series.

Following the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon came visitations of other heavenly messengers who bestowed upon Joseph Smith divine authority; also revelations were given directing him and his associates to proceed with the organization of the Church of Christ in the earth. This organization was effected, on the sixth day of April, 1830. From a humble beginning that organization continued a development until now in it may be found all the officers, and councils, and gifts, and powers and graces that are traceable in the Church of Christ as described in the New Testament, and in apostolic times.

Great opposition attended upon the development of this work. The Church in the interest of its own peace removed successively from New York, where it was founded, to Kirtland, Ohio; thence to the western part of Missouri; thence to western Illinois, where the Saints founded Nauvoo. Here persecution which had followed the Church at every stage of its development, culminated in the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, the prophet of the New Dispensation—he attested the divinity of his mission by sealing his testimony with his own blood, and henceforth it is of force in all the world:

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator; for a testament is of force after men are dead, otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. (Heb. 9:16-17.)

Subsequently the Church, followed by continued persecution after the Prophet's death, removed to the Rocky Mountain valleys where it abides in peace; and is from thence sending forth its message to the world.

Truth Gems

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF JOSEPH SMITH

The glory of God is intelligence.

It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.

Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.

There is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated; and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

This is the work and glory of God: to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy.

The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. Jesus was in the beginning with the Father; man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.

The spirit and the body is the soul of man, and the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.

It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God; and to know that man (as Moses), may converse with Him as one man converses with another.

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