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A LETTER TO THE REV. MR. OSBORNE,
MINISTER OF
DARLINGTON STREET CHAPEL, WOLVERHAMPTON.

BY JAMES BELL,

AN ELDER OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS.

WOLVERHAMPTON, JUNE, 1849.

REVEREND SIR,

It is from the purest of motives, and with the greatest respect, that I take in hand to address to you a few lines, which I trust will be received in the same spirit as that by which they are penned. Think not that I do so from any captious spirit of dictation, or from blind bigotry, but give me credit for a kindlier motive while you read my epistle, and while you candidly consider the interrogatives I shall finally propose.

I was induced to write to you from the fact of my having heard you lift up your voice in reprehension of the principles and doctrines of the Latter Day Saints, and too hastily join in the popular cry of "delusion," "false prophets," "heresy," and so forth. My determination was the more fully matured by a consideration of your popular character as a practical Christian, and mine one impression of your personal piety, aided by a remembrance of the old proverb, "Good men may be mistaken." I was truly sorry that you should so readily trust in flying rumours, newspaper reports, and that uncertain rule popular opinion; when you must be aware of the fact that malice may conceive, the press bring forth, and popular opinion exaggerate the lie, which by their joint agency is thus palmed upon the public.

I am, alas! too sensible of the fact that there have been, and still may be, some among us who are a disgrace to any people; but remember, the conduct, or rather misconduct of Judas, Ananias, or Saphira, was not the result of the system they had embraced, but of their own cupidity, and carnal minds: as it was then, so it is now; evil men will creep in, and stay with us, until their deeds are manifest, and excommunication becomes absolutely necessary. Be it known we neither protect nor patronise crime; on the contrary, if, after due warning, the offence is not removed, the offender himself is cut off from our society. In conclusion of my epistle, I would just observe that the conduct of an individual is not always the characteristic of the community; I would also be bold enough to affirm that the Latter Day Saints generally are a people who can be advantageously compared with any or all religious bodies extant, for consistence of faith and conduct.

I will now propose a series of questions, arranged in such order as shall give you some idea of the constitution, &c. of our Church.

1.—Did Jesus and the apostles teach the true gospel? and have we a sufficiently correct account of the same in the New Testament?

2.—Is the true gospel a perfect law of liberty? (a)

3.—Is a godlike and perfect law capable of any human improvement? (b)

4.—Is the church or kingdom of God *unchangeable* in its *priesthood, powers, doctrines, and blessings*? (c)

5.—If so, where is the *apostleship* now? with its *Prophets, Elders, Priests, &c.* and where is the *power, to bind and loose, (d)* to *cast out devils and heal the sick*? and how many of the multitudinous *doctrines* now extant are the pure, unadulterated principles of truth? and what has become of the Saviour's promise of divine gifts?—Mark, xvi. 17, 18, verses.

6.—Did Jesus set these *officers, powers, and gifts* in the church, for the *work of the ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come in the unity of the faith, &c.*? (e)

7.—Has the work of the ministry *come to an end*? are we all *perfected*? have we all come in the *unity of the faith*?

8.—If not, what is the reason that these officers and powers *have ceased*, and other forms of godliness devoid of power substituted in their stead? (f)

9.—Is it not the result of *apostacy* on the one hand, and *persecution* on the other, (g) both of which began while the church was yet in its infancy, and continued until it was driven into the wilderness, (h) and the priesthood was caught up unto God who gave it, (i) there to remain until the time of restitution, when righteousness should look down from heaven, and truth should spring out of the earth.

10.—In other words, did the Gentile church continue in the goodness of God? (j) or did it eventually fall away (k) and become corrupt, until at last it was united to the state, and thus became the great "Whore of Babylon," because it had committed fornication with the Kings of the Earth? (l)

11.—If the latter be the case, is not any human improvement or reformation like putting "new cloth on an old garment," or new wine into old bottles?

12.—If it took divine power, and immediate revelation to institute the gospel in the first instance, is not divine power needed to perpetuate the same?

13.—If the *Everlasting Covenant* has been broken, (m) and the "prophets and seers covered," until darkness and doubt, dissent and

a Psa. xix. 7.

b Gal. iii. 15

c Heb. vii. 16, 17, 24; John, xx. 21.

d Matt. xviii. 18; Mark, xvi. 17, 18.

e 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.

f 2 Tim. iii. 5; 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

g 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4; Matt. xi. 12; Dan. vii. 21, 25.

h Rev. xii. 6.

i Rev. xii. 5.

j Rom. xii. 22.

k 2 Thess. ii. 3.

l Rev. xvii.

m Isa. xxiv. 5.

heresy, and all other kinds of abominations have overspread the earth "and all has become as the words of a sealed book," *can it be renewed without an express revelation from God?* or will it be maintained that *human agency* alone will suffice to reform the errors of the age, to combat the impetuosity of crime, or stay the principle of moral evil?

14.—Are we living in a day rife with the consequences of this great apostacy, such as are foretold in the 24th and 59th Isaiah and 24th Matthew?

15.—If so, may we not expect that "other labourers" would be sent into the vineyard at this the eleventh hour, (*n*) just before the day of God's wrath upon Babylon, and the pouring out of the latter day judgements, (*o*) announcing that "the kingdom of Heaven is again at hand, (*p*) and crying with a mighty voice,—“Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him;” (*q*) and will they not be informed of his near approach by an holy angel, who shall restore the gospel in these last days; (*r*) and will not the dispensation thus committed be the dispensation of the fulness of times, (*s*) and the kingdom thus announced the one spoken of by Daniel (*t*)

16.—Has any one a right to teach, preach, or administer in the ordinances of the gospel without divine authority; or will the administrations of unauthorised persons be considered legal in the sight of God? (*u*)

17.—In what manner was divine authority given and communicated in any age of the world when God had a church upon the earth?

18.—Was it by one person *assuming* the authority given to another who had preceded him through reading an account of the commission given to this his predecessor, as is done in these days with the commission given to the apostles? (*v*)

19.—Or was it by being either called of God in a *direct* manner, as in the cases of Moses and Samuel, (*w*) or *indirectly* through the medium of one who already holds the priesthood and authority of God, as in the cases of Joshua, Timothy, (*x*) and others? and when so called is not *the laying on of authorised hands* the scriptural mode of communicating the *power and priesthood* unto the person called? (*y*)

20.—Is not assumed authority illegal? and will not those who assume it be punished, sooner or later? (*z*)

21.—Is not an active, living faith, the only true faith? (*a*)

22.—Are not the *Godhead, their attributes*, and the *gospel* the objects on which our faith should be fixed?

23.—If there be but one true and genuine faith, (*b*) will it not always be characterised by these its *objects*, and sealed and certified by the *effects* flowing from it; namely, such as are promised by the Saviour, (*c*) and such as are enumerated by St. Paul? (*d*) did not the ancients by

n Matt. xx. 6. *o* Rev. xiv. 6, 7. *p* Luke, xxi. 31. *q* Matt. xxv. 6.
r Rev. xiv. 6. *s* Eph. i. 10; Acts, iii. 21. *t* Dan. ii. 44. *u* Rom. x. 15.; Heb. v. 4.
v Mark, xvi. 16. *w* Exo. iii. 4, 10; 1 Sam. iii. 4, 11. *x* Num. xxvii. 18, 23;
1 Tim. iv. 14. *y* Acts, vi. 6; Num. xxvii. 18, 23; 1 Tim. iv. 14. *z* Psalms,
50. 16; Jer. xxiii. 21; Acts, xix. 13--16. *a* James, ii. 14. *b* Eph. iv. 5.
c Mark, xvi. 17, 18. *d* Heb. xi.

faith obtain promises, work righteousness, turn to flight the armies of the aliens, and stop the mouths of lions? did not Moses by faith divide the sea, and smite the flinty rock? and shall we now say that the *nature, objects, and power* of faith, have in any way changed or ceased? may we not rather say,—that men have *ceased* to worship the *true God*, in the right way, and have thus lost the spirit which is the source of these blessings? (*d*)

24.—Is not this the ancient faith? and are we not bound to “contend for that faith which was once delivered unto the saints?” (*e*)

25.—Is not sincere repentance a principle of the gospel?

26.—Is not *baptism by immersion* a principle of the gospel? (*f*)

27.—Is it not “*for the remission of sins*”? (*g*)

28.—Is it not mockery in the sight of God to baptise infants, seeing they have never sinned?

29.—Are they not saved by reason of the atonement, and is not this atonement efficacious?

30.—Instead of baptizing them, should we not “take them, in our arms and bless them?” (*h*)

31.—Is not baptism for those only who have become actual transgressors?

32.—Is there a single command, precept, or example of infant baptism?

33.—Is there a single command, precept, or example of sprinkling as a baptism?

34.—Is not the *laying on of authorised hands* the *scriptural mode* of coming in possession of the *gift of the Holy Ghost*? (*i*)

35.—After obeying these first principles, are we not required to go on unto perfection, so that our path may be as that of the just, shining more and more unto the perfect day; and to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded us, such as the sacrament of the Lord's supper?

36.—If we are sick, and nigh unto death, should we not send for the Elders to anoint us, and to pray that the Lord may raise us up? and if we have sinned, can we not be forgiven, inasmuch as we are penitent? (*j*)

37.—Since there is so great a resemblance between our church and that of former days, are not the honest among men bound to join us?

I am, Dear Sir, Yours respectfully,

JAMES BELL.

d 2 Tim. iii. 1--7. *e* Jude, iii. *f* Matt. iii. 16; Mark, i. 10; John, iii. 5, 23. *g* Mark, i. 4; Acts, ii. 38; Acts, xxii. 16; 1 Peter, iii. 21. *h* Mark, x. 13--16. *i* Heb. vi. 2; Acts, viii. 17, 18; Acts, xix. 6. *j* Mark, xvi. 18; James, v. 14, 15