

The Antiquity of the Gospel.

B. H. Roberts, *Seventy's Course in Theology*, vol. 2 (1908)

NOTES.

1. **Numerous Dispensations of the Gospel Given:** That there have been many dispensations of the Gospel, many times that divine authority has been conferred upon men, is apparent from the Scripture narratives of such events. And yet, strange as it may seem, in the face of such Scripture narratives, there are those among professing Christians who hold that the Gospel had no earlier origin than the time of Messiah's ministry in the flesh. As a matter of fact, however, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has existed from the very earliest ages of the world. There are, indeed, certain passages of Scripture which lead us to believe that even before the earth was made or ever man was placed upon it the Gospel had been formulated and was understood by the spirits which inhabited the kingdom of the Father; and who, in course of time, would be blessed with a probation on the earth—an earth-life. If this be not true, of what significance is the Scripture which speaks of Jesus as the Lamb ordained before the foundation of the world, but revealed in this day for the salvation of men. What of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world? * And further: "They that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world." "Where wast thou," asked the Lord of Job, "when I laid the foundations of the earth? * * * * * When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" There is evidence in these expressions found in Scripture that before the foundations of the earth were laid the sacrifice necessary to the redemption of men was understood, and the "Lamb" for the sacrifice was chosen, Jesus, the Messiah. There is evidence in these expressions from Scripture of the pre-existence of the spirits of men, and the names of some of them at least were written in the "Book of Life" from the foundation of the world, and it is not unlikely that the shouting of all the sons of God for joy, at the creation of the earth was in consequence of the prospects which opened before them because of the earth-life and the salvation that would come to them through the Gospel—even in the prospects of that "eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." (See the text of this discourse.)

The Gospel, then, is of great antiquity. Older than the hills, older than the earth; for in the heavenly kingdom was it formulated before the foundations of the earth were laid.

The view here presented of the antiquity of the Gospel, as remarked in the foot note at page 100, differentiates the viewpoint of the Latter-day Saints from that of sectarian Christendom, concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It presents that Gospel as "The hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Jesus is 'the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.'" The sons of God shouted for joy when "the foundations of the earth were laid," in prospect of that eternal life promised through the Gospel of the Christ. It is of greater antiquity than the earth itself, then. Older than the hills, or the mountains, or the sea. Is it not older than the stars, since it comes of the love of God, also the Christ love for man; answered by the love of man for God, and or Christ, and or fellow man? In all worlds and in all world-systems does not the same Gospel prevail? Is not eternal law maintained by its constant and eternal vindication, what some call the maintenance of Justice? Does not violation of law involve intelligencies in suffering in all worlds? Everywhere, as here in this world, may not one suffer for another, because bound together in that mysterious sympathy, which proclaims the universal kinship of intelligences, and emphasizes the truth that no man loves unto himself alone? If the implied answer to these questions be true, will there not in some form be an expression of the Christ-love that will offer itself a

ransome for others that the element of mercy may be brought into God's economy of things, even as it was brought into the moral economy of this our world by such an offering? And out of these fundamental realities and universalities will there not grow up all those relations of Redeemer and redeemed; Teacher and the taught; penitance and Forgiver? Will not God be in such worlds reconciling them to himself through the Christ and the Christ spirit that shall be made every where to abound?

To all this I answer undoubtedly. And as in the last analysis of things there is one God-nature into which Intelligencies who are sons of God arise, and in which they live; for there is one Justice and one Mercy and one Love and one Plan of Salvation which saves all worlds—one Gospel and that is from eternity. I say nothing of the forms through which that one Gospel may receive its manifestations in other worlds. I only know the forms through which it is expressed in this world, and that only because of the revelations that God has given in the various dispensations granted to this world, and that is enough. But I am sure that in the last analysis of things the essential principles of the Gospel that are ordained to save our world is the Gospel that will redeem all worlds; for the principle of our Gospel stripped of local coloring are in their nature permanent and universal and hence, not only of great antiquity, but eternal, it is the "Ever Lasting Gospel."

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