

WILLIAM BICKERTON' S

TESTIMONY

Extract from
*A History of
The Church of Jesus Christ*

also

A Portion of History from
The Ensign

Submitted by
Joseph Calabrese, Apostle

William Bickerton was a member of the Methodist Church, until he heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached, in the year of our Lord 1845. He says, 'I was convinced of the doctrines of Christ, viz., Faith, Repentance and baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit and its effects is according to St. Paul's writing. There is but one Holy Spirit, and whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, we have been all made to drink of the same spirit, for to one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, by the same spirit, and so forth and Jesus says; 'signs shall follow them that believe, in my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.' And I was never taught such a gospel; so I left them as a member in good standing, and was baptized into Christ and put Him on. I received the gift of the Holy Spirit at the laying on of hands, and the signs have followed me. I have spoken with new tongues, and have had the interpretations, and I have seen the sick healed, and I have been healed myself, so that I know that the Gospel is the power of God. I entered the Church under Elder Rigdon's organization, I was called by the Holy Spirit to be an Elder. I received ordination and the power of God came down and sealed that office upon me, I went forward preaching to all that would hear. I was afterwards called into the quorum of seventies. I received ordination the second time, but the Church became disorganized. Here I was left to myself. I paused to know what course to pursue. I knew my calling was from Heaven, and I also knew that a man cannot build up the Church of Christ without divine commandment from the Lord, for it would only be sectarianism, and man's authority.

But the Lord did not leave me; no, He showed me a vision, and in the vision I was on the highest mountain on the earth; and He told me that if I did not preach the Gospel I would fall into a dreadful chasm below, the sight thereof was awful. I moved with fear, having the Holy Spirit with me. Here I was, none to assist me, and without learning, popular opinion against me, and the Salt Lake Mormons stood in the way. I could not turn back unto Methodism again. No, I knew they had not the Gospel. I stood in contemplation. The chasm was before me, no other alternative but to do my duty to God and man. I went ahead preaching repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some believed my testimony and were baptized, and we met together. The Lord met with us and we could many times sing with the poet, 'the Spirit of God, like a fire is burning, the latter-day glory begins to come forth. The visions and blessings of old are returning. The Angels are coming to visit the earth.' We had not as yet partaken of the Lord's Supper, when the Lord appeared in vision, and told me to administer it. We met together from time to time, and I felt it to be the will of God to call and ordain other Elders. I did so and they

assisted me in helping forward the good work of God. We also met together in council, and the Lord revealed himself unto us in divers ways.

One evening after I had baptized three, I retired to rest, and a glorious vision appeared before me. I saw a beautiful table spread over, with everything that was desirable of the rich bounties of Heaven, and the Saints feasting themselves; there was no end to it, as far as I could see. I saw myself sitting at the head of it; and while in the vision the glory of God filled the room. No mortal man can tell what I felt on that occasion, while a cloud of divine glory rested upon me. To the world this might appear to be imagination, but to me a reality, a divine reality, that years cannot erase from my memory. I might fill up pages of what we have received, but we give our testimony to the world, that we know that there is a God in Heaven, and He changes not, and that He does reveal himself in this our day and generation, as He did in days of old. Yes, blessed be His high and Holy name for ever, for His unchangeableness; for as our Saviour said, while here on earth, if any man will do His will, He shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or I speak of myself. And again, the Prophet Joel says, speaking of the last days, 'and it shall come to pass afterwards, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions, and also upon the servants and upon the hand-maids in those days will I pour out my spirit, and I will show wonders in the Heavens and in the earth; blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.' And while waiting before the Lord in a sacrament meeting, the word of the Lord came unto me saying, 'I accept of you this day as my Church to whom my servant John was commanded to write, while in the spirit, on the Lord's day, and to the angel of the Church of Philadelphia write; these things saith he that is Holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works; behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it, for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet; and to know that I have loved thee, because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of My God which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from my God, and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear let him hear what the spirit saith unto the Churches.' Again, shortly after, while we were

assembled together, the word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, 'the Lord I am God, the Lord I am God, therefore you are of them that will not turn aside, therefore will I bless you.'

We then began to increase in numbers and formed ourselves into Conferences. Elders were called and ordained, and the Lord being with us, the signs followed the believers, the gifts of the Spirit being made manifest in tongues and interpretations of tongues, prophecy, wisdom, knowledge, visions, dreams, faith, discerning of spirits, and the sick healed, and pains removed, so that we began to grow up into the knowledge of the Son of God, and the Lord our God made a Covenant with us, that he would lay a groundwork by us to perform a great work; and we are the stem, and every party that splits from us shall come to nothing. We now copy from the records of this Church the revelations and commandments that the Lord has given unto us as far as is requisite for this history and leave it with the reader. While waiting in conference before the Lord, the word of the Lord came unto us saying, 'try me and prove me, and see if I will not open unto you the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing, so that there shall not be room enough to contain it.' And on the following Sabbath while we continued to wait before the Lord, the word of the Lord was fulfilled in our midst. for there were some completely overpowered by the power of God; and at this Conference several of the brethren had visions, one of which we'll give. 'I saw in the vision the road that the Saints were traveling on; the foot of which road was in the waters and ascended gradually up to Heaven. It was as a straight and narrow road, so narrow that there was not room to turn either to the right or to the left; and on each side of the road was all manner of different kinds of beautiful flowers to tempt the Saints to pluck them, but under the flowers lay a great depth of mud, and the prettier the flowers the deeper the mud, so that if anyone stepped aside to pluck any of the flowers, they were sure to stick fast in the mud; also, the road itself was so firm that many cannon balls that were fired at the road, could not even as much as make a mark upon it.' Therefore, we must exclaim with the poet:

'How firm a foundation, ye Saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word;
What more can He say, than to you he hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.'
And
'Come see the road His hand has raised,
And made the pathway plain.
Nor need the travelers ever err,
Nor ask the track in vain.'

And again, in conference, the word of the Lord, as it was given, 'Hear O my people, this is the word of the Lord unto you today, the Church must be one, and my people one, for unto you is committed the work of God, in these last days, and you my servants feed the flock of God, over which I have made you overseers, for great is the responsibility that rests upon you; for unto you are given the keys of this last ministry, and to lift the last warning voice to the world; therefore, be faithful to the end of your calling, Amen.' Therefore, we went from place to place, as the Spirit directed us, and the Lord confirmed our word, by the power of His spirit with the signs following them who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and obeyed his commandments.

Again, in Conference July 4th, 1860 it was felt to be the will of God that we meet again tomorrow in fasting and prayer, that the will of God might be fully made known unto us. Therefore, on the 5th of July, we met according to the will of God, in prayer and fasting, and the power of God was made manifest in our midst in various ways, and a vision was given to one, which we will relate. 'I saw in a vision a woman, dressed all in white, come into the house, with a crown in her hand. In the crown were twelve stars; and she laid the crown upon the stand and said, 'This crown belongs to this Church,' and then disappeared.' And again, in Conference July 9th, 1861, the power of God was made manifest in the gifts and callings, for there were twelve of our number, chosen and called by the Holy Spirit to be Apostles of Jesus Christ in this last dispensation, and the power and spirit of God accompanied their callings, for we were made to rejoice with that joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. Hear also the word of the Lord given previous to the vision. 'Hear ye the word of the Lord God of Hosts today, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I sent forth my servant Joseph, with a message of glad tidings to this generation; Him have they slain saith the Lord, my people have they persecuted, scattered and driven out, yet once again I have raised up another like unto Joseph, to lead forth my people; Him shall ye hear in all things. I decreed that I would set up an ensign, and raise up a standard; that ensign has been lifted, that standard raised, and now I have called forth my servant William Bickerton to lead forth my people and they shall go in and out and find pasture, and the world shall know that there is a God in Heaven; therefore, touch not mine anointed, saith the Lord Amen. (We wish it to be understood that this Church will only hearken unto the things that are presented by man, inasmuch as they are consistent with the teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; as He is our great Law Giver.)

Yes, blessed be the Lord for His goodness towards us, in calling another like unto Joseph to carry on this glorious work, in these the latter days for as the Lord hath said, Behold I am God, and I am a God of miracles, and I will show unto the world that I am the same

yesterday, today and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith.

Therefore, awake, awake, O ye people, and give heed to what is contained in these pages. As we are aware that some will startle at such ideas and be surprised that men should believe in revelation in these last days. But they cannot be more surprised at our principles on this point, than we are at theirs. We wish it to be understood distinctly, that the organization of this Church came by express commandment and revelation from the Almighty. (To the Church; We, the committee, have thus far given this history word for word as given by Brother Bickerton in the 'Ensign.' He now gives the minutes of July Conference 1862, and we will give from now on only what seems to us the most interesting events that are recorded in said 'Ensign.') The twelve Apostles were ordained in this Conference and a number of Evangelists, and the power of God was in their midst. At a later event the same calling of Apostleship, was laid upon William Bickerton and his two counsellors.

Brother Bickerton says in some other writings of his, that at a Conference held in 1861 that the revelation of God was given that He (the Lord) accepted this Church as He did the Church of Alma.

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