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Fulfilled Prophecy

New Evidence of Divine Inspiration in the Prophet Joseph Smith

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“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. 18:21, 22).

And conversely, if the thing which the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord comes to pass, then the prophet has spoken the thing commanded him by the Lord—he has not spoken presumptuously, and the people are under obligation to respect his message, since he has furnished them the highest possible evidence of his divine inspiration.

Of the value of the fulfilment of prophecy as evidence of divine inspiration, it is scarcely necessary to speak. It has ever been recognized, and that properly, as a species of miracle; and therefore has been accorded all the value attached to miracles as evidence of Divine Power. The Lord himself has recognized the value of the evidence of prophecy; for when he would have Israel distinguish between himself and the gods of the heathens, he issued this challenge to them:

“Produce your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declared us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods” (Isaiah 41:21-23).

From this it appears that the power to foretell future events is regarded peculiarly as one belonging to God alone, or that spirit which emanates from him; and those who possess that power, and can point to the fulfilment of their prophecies in attestation of

their inspiration and divine authority, may be looked upon as possessing evidence of special and peculiar force in their favor.

In the light of these scriptures and principles, I would like to submit to the readers of the ERA the account of the fulfilment of a prophecy made by Joseph Smith, two days before his martyrdom, and which, so far as I know, has never been pointed out, but which adds an item of great importance to the constantly growing volume of the evidences of divine inspiration of the Prophet of the New Dispensation. How it has escaped attention until now is a matter of astonishment to me, but surely it will not be the less welcome because of it's late appearance.

The Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, on the 25th of June, 1844, had been presented to the militia companies from McDonough county, being introduced by Brigadier General Miner R. Deming, of the state militia, as General Joseph Smith and General Hyrum Smith of the Nauvoo Legion—at which the Carthage Greys, acting as escort, revolted, and had to be put under arrest for their insubordination. Shortly after this incident, a number of the officers of other militia companies, and other gentlemen curious to see the Prophet, crowded into the hotel at Carthage—the Hamilton House. President Smith took occasion to ask them if there was anything in his appearance to indicate that he was the desperate character his enemies represented him to be. To which they replied, “No, sir, your appearance would indicate the very contrary, General Smith; but we cannot see what is in your heart, neither can we tell what are your intentions.” To which President Smith promptly replied:

“Very true, gentlemen, you cannot see what is in my heart, and you are therefore unable to judge me or my intentions; but I can see what is in your hearts, and I will tell you what I can see. I can see that you thirst for blood, and nothing but my blood will satisfy you. It is not for crime of any description that I and my brethren are thus continually persecuted, and harassed by our enemies, but there are other motives, and some of them I have expressed, so far as relates to myself; and inasmuch as you and the people thirst for blood, I prophesy in the name of the Lord that you shall witness scenes of blood and sorrow to your entire satisfaction. Your souls shall be perfectly satiated with blood, and many of you who are now present shall have an opportunity to face the cannon's mouth from sources you think not of, and those people that desire this great evil upon me and my brethren shall be filled with sorrow because of the scenes of desolation and distress that await them” (Church Historian's Compilation of data, *Millennial Star*, Vol. 24, p. 358).

This prediction was fulfilled to the men of Western Illinois during the Mexican war in which the 1st and 2nd Illinois regiments led by Cols. John J. Hardin and William H. Bissel, and the Kentucky 2nd regiment, led by Col. McKee, were nearly annihilated in the Battle of Buena Vista. The event is described by Gregg, the author of the *History of Hancock County*, as the

"saddest, and for Illinois, the most mournful event of that battle-worn day," the 23rd of February, 1847, the day on which the principal engagement of the battle of Buena Vista was fought.

It will be remembered that in 1846 the president of the United States called upon Illinois to furnish four regiments of volunteers to engage in the war with Mexico, that number being Illinois' quota of the 50,000 troops authorized by congress for the war with that country. "This was no sooner known in the state," says Gregg, "than nine regiments, numbering 8,370 men, answered the call, though only four of them, amounting to 3,720 men, could be taken." These served chiefly under Taylor in northeastern Mexico, and the 1st and 2nd regiments, as stated above, took a prominent and disastrous part in the battle of Buena Vista. For the part taken in that battle by the two regiments named, and the overwhelming disaster which befell them, I give the narrative of Colton's *History of the Battle of Buena Vista*, quoted by Gregg in his *History of Illinois*, included in his *History of Hancock County*, pp. 120-124.

It will be remembered that the Mexican commander in this famous battle, General Santa Anna, confronted General Taylor's little army of less than five thousand men, with a force popularly held to be 20,000, and by Santa Anna's official report acknowledged to be 17,000 (Marcus Wilson's *History of the United States*, subdivision *Texas, Appendix*, p. 684). With this superior force, Santa Anna poured into the valley of *Aqua Nueva*, early on the morning of the 22nd of February. There was intermittent fighting throughout the day, and both armies bivouacked on the field, resting on their arms. Early the next morning the battle was resumed and raged through that day most fiercely. And now, Colton's account of the disaster to the 1st and 2nd Illinois, and the 2nd Kentucky regiments:

"As the enemy on our left was moving in retreat along the head of the plateau, our artillery was advanced until within range, and opened a heavy fire upon him, while Cols. Hardin, Bissel and McKee, with their Illinois and Kentucky troops, dashed gallantly forward in hot pursuit. A powerful reserve of the Mexican army was then just emerging from the ravine, where it had been organized, and advanced on the plateau, opposite the head of the southernmost gorge. Those who were giving way rallied quickly upon it; when the whole force, thus increased to over 12,000 men, came forward in a perfect blaze of fire. It was a single column, composed of the best soldiers of the republic, having for its advanced battalions the veteran regiments. The Kentucky and Illinois troops were soon obliged to give ground before it and seek the shelter of the second gorge. The enemy pressed on arriving opposite the head of the second gorge. One-half of the column suddenly enveloped it, while the other half pressed on across the plateau, having for the moment nothing to resist them but the three guns in their front. The portion that was immediately opposed to the Kentucky and Illinois troops, ran down along each side of the gorge, in which they had sought shelter, and also circled around its head, leaving no possible way of escape for them except by its mouth.

which opened upon the road. Its sides, which were steep,—at least an angle of 45 degrees,—were covered with loose pebbles and stones, and converged to a point at the bottom. Down there were our poor fellows, nearly three regiments of them (1st and 2nd Illinois and 2nd Kentucky), with but little opportunity to load or fire a gun, being hardly able to keep their feet. Above the whole edge of the gorge, all the way around, was darkened by the serried masses of the enemy, and was bristling with muskets directed on the crowd beneath. It was no time to pause. Those who were not immediately shot down rushed on toward the road, their number growing less and less as they went, Kentuckians and Illinoisans, officers and men, all mixed up in confusion, and all pressing on over the loose pebbles and rolling stones of those shelving, precipitous banks, and having lines and lines of the enemy firing down from each side and rear as they went. Just then the enemy's cavalry, which had gone to the left of the reserve, had come over the spur that divides the mouth of the second gorge from that of the third, and were now closing up the only door through which there was the least shadow of a chance for their lives. Many of those ahead endeavored to force their way out, but few succeeded. The lancers were fully six to one, and their long weapons were already reeking with blood. It was at this time that those who were still back in that dreadful gorge heard, above the din of the musketry and the shouts of the enemy around them, the roar of Washington's battery. No music could have been more grateful to their ears. A moment only, and the whole opening, where the lancers were busy, rang with the repeated explosions of spherical-case shot. They gave way. The gate, as it were, was clear, and out upon the road a stream of our poor fellows issued. They ran panting down toward the battery, and directly under the flight of iron then passing over their heads, into the retreating cavalry. Hardin, McKee, Clay, Willis, Sabriskie, Houghton—but why go on? It would be a sad task, indeed, to name over all who fell during this twenty minutes' slaughter. The whole gorge, from the plateau to its mouth, was strewn with our dead. All dead! No wounded there—not a man; for the infantry had rushed down the sides and completed the work with the bayonet."

Surely those Illinois regiments, recruited chiefly from Western Illinois, and among them doubtless a number of those who listened to Joseph Smith's prediction, were surfeited with scenes of blood that day, and faced the cannon's mouth from sources of which they had not thought.

The late President Wilford Woodruff, in his journal, makes reference to the report that reached the camps of Israel, on the Missouri river, respecting the disaster that had overtaken the Illinois regiments, so largely recruited from the western counties of the state. The entry in the journal bears date of October 3, 1847. After referring to the return from the east of Elder William I. Appleby to the camps, and the council of the Twelve Apostles holding a meeting with him, Elder Woodruff says:

"We also learned that many who had been enemies to the Church were dead. Jackson (Joseph H.), who had a hand in the death of the Prophet, died in Mexico with the 'black vomit'. Mr. Eagle [editor of a paper in Nauvoo, at the time the last remnant of the Saints were driven from that city] is also dead. We were informed that General

Hardin, Major Warren and Captain Morgan, with half of the Quincy Greys, were killed in the Mexican war."

In addition to this very ample fulfilment of the Prophet's prediction to the men of western Illinois, there was the further fulfilment of the prophecy by the terrible casualties to the men of that state in the war between the states. Doubtless because the president of the republic "during the war was from Illinois—Abraham Lincoln—and because the greatest general developed in the war on the side of the north—U. S. Grant—was also from that state, Illinois furnished a larger number of soldiers for the federal armies, in proportion to her population, than any other state of the Union, save Kansas; and she stands fourth in rank in the number of men furnished to the federal armies by any of the states, being exceeded only by the states of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio" (*The Making of Illinois*, Mather, p. 200). The following "summary" of the volunteer troops organized in Illinois for the war, and the casualties which befell them, is taken from the Adjutant General's Report, quoted by Gregg in his *History of Illinois*, in *History of Hancock County*, pp. 129-130:

"The number of the regiment, name of original Colonel, call under which recruited, date of organization and muster into the United States' service, place of muster, and aggregate strength of each organization—from which we find that Illinois put into her one hundred and eighty regiments 256,000 men, and into the United States army, through other states, enough to swell the number to 290,000. This far exceeds all the soldiers of the Federal Government in all the war of the Revolution. Her total years of service were over 600,000. She enrolled men from eighteen to forty-five years of age when the law of Congress in 1864—the test time—only asked for those from twenty to forty-five. Her enrollments were otherwise excessive. Her people wanted to go, and did not take the pains to correct the enrollment; thus the basis of fixing the quota was too great, and the quota itself, at least in the trying time, was far above any other state. The demand on some counties (as Monroe, for example), took every able bodied man in the county, and then did not have enough to fill the quota. Moreover, Illinois sent 20,844 men for one hundred days, for whom no credit was asked. She gave to the country 73,000 years of service above all calls. With the one-thirteenth of the population of the loyal States, she sent regularly one-tenth of all the soldiers, and in the perils of the closing calls, when patriots were few and weary, she sent one-eighth of all that were called for by her loved and honored son in the White House. Of the brave boys Illinois sent to the front, there were killed in action, 5,888; died of wounds, 3,032; of disease, 19,496; in prison, 967; lost at sea, 205; aggregate 29,588. As upon every field and upon every page of the history of this war, Illinois bore her part of the suffering in the prison-pens of the South. More than 800 names make up the awful column of Illinois' brave sons who died in the rebel prison of Andersonville, Ga. Who can measure or imagine the atrocities which would be laid before the world were the panorama of sufferings and terrible trials of these gallant men but half unfolded to view? But this can never be done until new words of horror are invented, and new arts discovered by which demoniacal fiendishness can

be portrayed, and the intensest anguish of the human soul in ten thousand forms be painted."

In these appalling figures one sees further fulfilment of the prophetic words of Joseph Smith, to the men of Illinois, that 25th day of June, 1844. They certainly witnessed scenes of blood and sorrow to their entire satisfaction; their souls, in the experiences at the battle of Buena Vista, and in the many battles of the war between the States, in which the men of Illinois figured so largely in suffering and sacrifices, became "perfectly satiated with blood." They had ample opportunity to "face the cannon's mouth" from "sources they thought not of;" and were filled with sorrow because of the scenes of desolation and distress that overtook them.

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Another item of interest in relation to the prophecies of Joseph Smith, on the subject of the wars in the last days, was recently called to my attention, by one of the brethren, in the following statement and question: In the *History of the Church—Journal History*, by Joseph Smith—where the revelation on War is given (Vol. I p. 302) there is a slight verbal alteration to be noted in paragraph three of the revelation. In the Doctrine and Covenants, current edition, in the revelation, it is represented that Great Britain shall call upon other nations, "in order to defend themselves against other nations, and 'thus' war shall be poured out upon all nations." But in the *History*, cited above, it is written that Great Britain shall call upon other nations "in order to defend themselves against other nations, and 'then' war shall be poured out upon all nations." The question is, was the change made advisedly or was it a typographical error in the published *History*? The change was made advisedly; when the committee was comparing a number of the many editions of the published copies of the revelation, they found that in the manuscript *History of the Church*, from which the copy for publication must first have been made, the word "then" was used, and the change was made by the historians of the Church accordingly, and was published in 1902. The same correction should be made in all future editions of the Doctrine and Covenants.