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## The "Book of Mormon," the Story of Its Discovery—Its Construction—The Testimony of the Witnesses—The Internal Evidences of Its Truth

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**Abstract:** An LDS tract that describes Joseph Smith's encounter with Moroni, the contents of the Book of Mormon, the role of the witnesses, and presents some of the book's internal evidences.

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THE  
“BOOK OF MORMON,”

The Story of Its Discovery—Its Construction--The  
Testimony of the Witnesses—The Internal  
Evidences of Its Truth.

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A LECTURE,

DELIVERED IN THE SALT LAKE ASSEMBLY HALL,  
MARCH 24, 1897, BY

N. L. MORRIS.

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**THE DESERET NEWS,  
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH.**

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# “THE BOOK OF MORMON.”

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## INTRODUCTORY.

IN putting before the scrutinizing world a brief treatise on the Book of Mormon, we are not unmindful of the obstacles it has to meet, nor are we forgetful of the mountains of prejudice which, for more than half a century have surrounded what the world calls Mormonism. We know too, that while the material of those mountains is of the very hardest, the silent forces of nature, united with living streams and torrents have dissolved the rugged heights of the earth, until from the Alps, the Adirondacks and the Andes, vast, fruitful plains have been built. Mormonism too is a living stream, an active force beating down upon these mountains of prejudice and bringing into perfect harmony and grace that which is rugged and foreboding in human nature. Populous and prosperous valleys are now found amid the Rocky Mountains of the west, and there also is found a people of unparalleled prosperity *all* of which *must* be traced to the Cause they espoused, as Eastern prejudice drove it to the western wilderness. It strikes us that the results as at present seen by the world afford an ample vindication of the Cause, for a corrupt fountain cannot give forth pure water and a tree is known by the fruit it bears.

In this present enterprise, then, there is but one real fear as we see it, and that is, that the Cause shall not be thoroughly and closely investigated; that people at



large will be carried by the customary opinions, and never know for themselves regarding this matter. And we feel that we were absurdly modest and unjust to the Cause, were we to confine its importance to local concern. It must not be viewed from the "village belfry"; for if America and humanity ever had a question, this is one and time is fast proving it.

The attitude of a very large portion of the religious world in relation to Mormonism is well depicted in the following illustration we once heard used: "One morning I emerged from my door and found the earth enveloped in a fog. Upon the side of an adjacent hill, I saw in the mist a gigantic object of monstrous proportions. It moved, and I moved towards it, when in process of time I was surprised to find it to be a man. I drew nearer—still nearer, and to my astonishment it proved to be my own dear brother." So with Mormonism. Men have so long and persistently viewed it through the magnifying mist of prejudice, that it to them seems monstrous; but if they will draw nearer to it, they will find it not what they at first esteemed it, and still nearer it will prove to be kith and kin to their better natures,—the truth as God manifests it in his love for his children.

To those, then, who are not intimidated by the clamor of popular opinion, and who dare draw nearer to the monster in the mist, these few pages are hopefully given and not to that timid puerile class who think not for themselves, and have not courage enough to strike the lance with error for fear they be found at fault.

## THE STORY OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

On the night of September 21, 1823, Joseph Smith, after having retired to bed, was engaged in prayer. In his own words, he was petitioning the Throne of Grace

“for a forgiveness of all his sins and follies, and also for a manifestation that he might know of his state and standing before God.” While he was thus engaged, a light appeared in his chamber, which increased until it became as bright as the noon-day sun. Thus gloriously enveloped, there appeared a personage standing in the air beside his bed. Fear was soon dispelled from the young man’s soul, and a rapturous calm prevailed when the visitor announced himself a messenger sent from God, and his name to be Moroni.

The Angel, predicting for the young man a world wide reputation for evil, said with other things, that there was a book written upon gold plates giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting gospel, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants of this continent, was contained in the record; and further that there were two stones in a bow called the Urim and Thummim by means of which the book should be translated.

In addition to this, the Heavenly Messenger made a review of scriptural prophecies relating to this great latter-day dispensation, and told Joseph they were about to be fulfilled. In particular, those which he quoted were from Malachi, last chapter and last two verses. They related to the restoration of the priesthood and the establishment of the Church of Christ, as a preparatory work to the dawn of the Millennium and the second advent of the Son of Man. He said that at the proper time the plates would be given to Joseph for translation, but that he would be allowed to show them to none except by special command of the Lord. While they were thus engaged, the vision was opened so that Joseph distinctly saw the hill where the sacred record was deposited.

The Angel made his exit and left the boy musing and marveling on the singularity of the scene and the extraordinary messenger, when, to his surprise, the same brilliancy again returned, and with it the personage. All former instructions and information were re-



peated to him, with the additional statement that great desolation and awful judgments were about to be poured out upon the human family.

The vision was given the third time with great solemnity and impressiveness. Soon after the final departure of the Angel, the young man was surprised to find that the greater part of the night had been spent in these three heavenly visitations. Joseph soon arose, however, and attempted to perform his daily toil in the field with his father, but found himself so exhausted that he was unable to work. The father, perceiving his son's weakness, told him to go home and rest. In compliance, the young man started toward the house, but while attempting to climb over a fence which crossed the field, his strength gave way and he fell prostrate on the ground in a faint. He was first awakened to consciousness by the presence of the Angel with whom he had spent the preceding night. Again was repeated to him in the most impressive manner all the former information, and in addition he was told to inform his father of what had occurred. Joseph did so, and was told by his father to obey the messenger, as he was sent of God.

Joseph went to the place where the plates were deposited, which he at once recognized from the vision of the previous night. It was on a hill of considerable size, the most elevated in the neighborhood, standing near to the village of Manchester, Ontario County, New York. Near the top, on the west side, a little above the surface of the ground, lay a stone with a rounding surface. Having removed the soil from the edges of the stone, with a lever he raised it and laid bare a stone box beneath, which contained the gold plates, the Urim and Thummim, and other articles as stated by the Angel. Joseph made an effort to take them from their resting place, but was forbidden by the Angel, who told him that the time had not yet come for the bringing forth of the holy record, neither would it until four years from that date. But he was told to come to that

spot precisely one year from that day, and meet the Angel and thus continue to do until the time should arrive for the delivery of the plates into his charge.

Accordingly, Joseph met the Angel each year on the sacred spot, and received such instructions as was necessary to prepare him for the great work he was ordained to perform.

Like Paul, from Damascus to three years' preparation in Arabia, thence to Jerusalem and his mighty ministry; like Jesus, from Jordan's baptism to the wilderness to be tempted, tried, and ministered to by angels, after three years of preparation, before undertaking his wondrous work; Joseph, after the lapse of four years of waiting, toiling, persecution, and prayer, presented himself ready for his great mission. On the twenty-second day of September, 1827, the custodian of the plates placed the sacred volume in the hands of the Prophet, with the solemn warning that if he were to permit them to go from his possession he would be cut off, but that if he would be true to the responsibility and preserve them with all vigilance, they should be protected and the Angel would call for them after they were translated.

In this event, we see the literal fulfillment of a few ancient prophecies, notable among which are the following: Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Remembering that the holy record contains "a fullness of the everlasting gospel" we see the fulfillment of John's vision as recorded in Revelations 14th, 6-7, which was to be an event of the latter days: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, fear God and give glory to him; for the time of His judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water."



In this event is realized that which the spirit of prophecy breathed through the Psalmist:

“Mercy and Truth are met together,  
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other,  
Truth shall spring up out of the earth,  
And Righteousness shall look down from heaven.”

Said the great Isaiah in his beautiful description of this event, “Drop down ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: Let the earth open and let them (the heavens and the earth) bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together.” And the same prophet in the twenty-ninth chapter of his book, speaking of a branch of the house of Israel, says: “And thou shalt be brought down and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.”

One of the peoples of which the Book of Mormon is a history was a branch of the house of Joseph, which inhabited this great Western Continent. Could prophecy be more explicit? Could detail be more accurate? Here then is the weight of prophecy to prove the Book of Mormon true. Within two years of the transfer of the custodianship of the plates they were translated and published to the world. Many translations into other languages have been made, and from that day to this the book has been going forth disseminating truth and light, or in other words preaching the gospel unto “nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples.”

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BOOK.

That the reader may obtain a more perfect understanding of the book, we deem it necessary that he have the correct idea of its construction, for upon this division of our subject many have been misled.

The Book of Mormon was not originally one book, as the present name implies, but a collection of books—

a library very much like the Bible. Those separate books were written by a number of authors, at different times and places, running through a period of nearly two thousand years. In these books we have histories, biographies, law codes, sermons, prophecies, communications to peoples and to individuals, and the gospel message. But these various books have been abridged by one author (whose name the compilation consequently takes) which fact gives it a general sameness in style and language. This fact will dissolve at once the absurd objection, that the Book of Mormon is an imposition for the reason that it is the work of nearly a score of authors and yet the whole is written in precisely the same style and manner of expression.

The earlier part of the record relates the experience of a colony of people that left the Tower of Babel at the time of the distribution of the races over the habitable parts of the globe. This particular colony, by divine direction, traveled westward and peopled the great western hemisphere—their land of promise. The voyage across the ocean is described by the historian as a remarkable exhibition of faith. This company was one of the colonies described by Josephus, Book 1, chapter 5; “After this they were dispersed abroad on account of their languages, and went out by colonies everywhere; and each colony took possession of the land which they light upon, and unto which God led them, so that the whole continent was filled with them, both the inland and the maritime countries. There were some also who passed over the sea in ships and inhabited the islands.”

It also gives the history of a colony of Israelites that left Jerusalem about 600 B. C., and who dwelt on this continent as a populous race for nearly a thousand years. A little more than a century before the advent of the Messiah an exploring party belonging to the last named people discovered a record of the former inhabitants. The two races had no knowledge of each other, for the earlier race had flourished and fallen to complete extinction about the time the latter race



reached their vast and desolate domain. Draper in his "Intellectual Development" says, that all eminent authorities agree that the ancient Mexicans lived in total ignorance of the Peruvians, showing that the Book of Mormon statement that two separate and distinct races inhabited this continent without any knowledge of each other is sustained by similar conditions in later American history.

Of the Jewish tribe the American Indian is a degenerate descendant, and if space were afforded we could produce evidence of the highest and strongest character which lead to the belief in the Israelitish descent of our Indians. We must add, too, that to this latter tribe Jesus appeared after his resurrection, revealed himself and established his church among them. He said in Jerusalem, "I come not but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And did he not also say, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold?" In this latter remark he was mindful of that branch of Joseph which was a "fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall, etc." (Gen. 49; 22-26).

In literary form, the Book of Mormon must not be expected to resemble to the Bible. If it did, that would be a strong evidence against its genuineness. Its style is original and just such as would be produced under the circumstances which brought it forth. This is a fact the value of which cannot be over estimated, for it proves that the book is the production of a people separated from European and Asiatic learning.

The Book of Mormon is not so rich in metaphor, so pleasing in poetry, so extravagant in legend, as the Bible, for these are characteristic of the literature of the East; but for simplicity in narrative and expression, for plainness of doctrine and fulness of inspiration, it is matchless. And these, we take it, are the true ends of a language, be it written or orally delivered.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE THREE WITNESSES.

While the prophet was translating, with Oliver Cowdery as his scribe, they discovered in the holy record the prophetic statement, that there would be three special witnesses who should bear witness of the divinity of the book. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, who had been associated with the prophet, asked him to inquire of the Lord if they might not become these three witnesses. The divine approval was received; and in the month of June, 1829, Joseph and the three went into the woods to pray, hoping to obtain the fulfillment of the promise given, that they should view the plates and bear testimony thereof to the world. After each had engaged in vocal prayer, no answer being received, Martin Harris proposed that he withdraw, believing that his lack of faith was the cause of their failing to receive an answer. Accordingly he withdrew, and the remaining three prayed again. This time their petitions were heard and answered. An angel appeared before them. He held in his hand the gold plates, and turned over the pages one by one, so that they could distinctly see the engravings thereon. Then a voice from above said, "THESE PLATES HAVE BEEN REVEALED BY THE POWER OF GOD. THE TRANSLATION OF THEM WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN IS CORRECT, AND I COMMAND YOU TO BEAR RECORD OF WHAT YOU NOW SEE AND HEAR."

Joseph then left the two brethren and found Martin still engaged in prayer. The Prophet joined with him, and the same vision was opened to his view, Martin cried out, "'Tis enough, mine eyes have beheld! Hosannah!"

Having thus received the manifestation by the grace and power of God, the three, desiring to obey the divine injunction drew up the following document:



“Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and peoples unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken; and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates, and they have been shewn unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true; and it is marvelous in our eyes, nevertheless the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

OLIVER COWDERY,  
DAVID WHITMER,  
MARTIN HARRIS.

We will consider briefly the lives and characters of these three men; and, from the evidences afforded, place an estimate upon the value of their testimony, and make such logical deductions as the nature of the evidence permits.

### OLIVER COWDERY,

Was born in Vermont, October, 1805. His family moved to New York, in which State he was occupied, first as a clerk in a store, then as teacher of a country school. His school was attended by a number of the Smith children. He boarded with the Smith family, who related to him the story of the discovery of the gold plates. In this narrative, solemnly told by an intelligent and trustworthy family, he became deeply interested, and determined to investigate the matter to his own satisfaction. Being a devout man, he sought divine guidance in connection with his investigation, and received what he considered a manifestation by which he was assured that what he had been told was the truth.

He then visited the prophet, meeting him for the first time, April 5th, 1829. Oliver soon forsook his daily avocation and lent the prophet his aid as scribe—the assistance Joseph most needed at that time. A few months later, the vision of the plates was given to Oliver. He became very prominent in the Church after its organization, and preached the first public sermon of this dispensation in the house of Father Whitmer, in Fayette. He was actively engaged in missionary work, and established, with the prophet, several branches of the Church. He was, in 1832, appointed one of a committee, whose office it was to select, revise and prepare for publication, such of the revelations as it was deemed wise to publish at that time. He was a High Priest, standing at the head of the Church in Missouri; and at Kirtland he was put in charge of the printing press, and re-commenced the publication of the “Evening and Morning Star.” He was, however, afterward appointed Church recorder. He, with the prophet, witnessed several miraculous manifestations, and was ordained to the Priesthood under the hands of an angel. In 1837 he was appointed assistant counselor to the first presidency of the Church. A year later, however, before the High Council of Far West, Elder Seymour Brunson preferred the following charges against him, which were sustained: I. For persecuting the brethren by urging on vexatious lawsuits against them, and thus distressing the innocent. II. For seeking to destroy the character of the prophet, Joseph Smith, Jr., by falsely insinuating that he was guilty of adultery. III. By treating the Church with contempt by not attending his meetings. IV. For leaving his calling in which God had appointed him by revelation, for the sake of filthy lucre, and returning to the practice of law. V. For disgracing the church by being connected with the bogus business, as common report says. VI. For dishonestly retaining notes after they had been paid; and finally for leaving or forsaking the cause of God and returning to the beggarly ele-



ments of the world, and neglecting his high and holy calling according to his profession.”

Three other charges were made, but not sustained, and Oliver Cowdery was deposed as an officer and excommunicated from the Church. He then returned to his profession in Michigan. For years he pursued his daily avocation, and did not identify himself with any re-religious body. A gentleman upon one occasion addressed him thus: “Mr. Cowdery, I see your name attached to this book (the Book of Mormon); if you believe it to be true, why are you here in Michigan?” Then, reading the names of the three witnesses, he asked, “Mr. Cowdery, do you believe this book?” “No, sir,” was the reply. “Very well,” continued the gentleman, “but your name is attached to it, and you declare here that you saw an angel and also the plates from which the book purports to be translated, and now you say you do not believe it. Which time did you tell the truth?” Mr. Cowdery replied with emphasis, “My name is attached to that book; and what I then said is true. I did see this, I know I saw it, and faith has nothing to do with it, as a perfect knowledge has swallowed up the faith which I had in the work, knowing as I do that the work is true.”

At a special council held in Kaneshville, Iowa, Oct. 21, 1848, presided over by Apostle Orson Hyde, Oliver Cowdery was present. He was permitted to speak, and, rising to his feet, said: “My name is Cowdery, Oliver Cowdery. In the early history of the church I stood identified with her, and one in her councils. \* \* \* I wrote with my pen the entire Book of Mormon, save a few pages, as it tell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated it by the gift and power of God, by means of the Urim and Thummim. I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the plates from which it was translated. I saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the holy interpreters. **THAT BOOK IS TRUE. SIDNEY RIGDON DID NOT WRITE IT,**

MR. SPAULDING DID NOT WRITE IT, I WROTE IT MYSELF, AS IT FELL FROM THE LIPS OF THE PROPHET!"

A few weeks later, a high council meeting was called to consider his case; and upon his expressing a desire to come back into the Church, "as a humble member, seeking no station," no objections being made, the council decided that the sacrament of baptism might be administered to him, and he was accordingly admitted into the Church in full fellowship.

From the testimony of such as Phineas H. Young, Samuel W. Richards, Lucy P. Young, and Edward Stevenson, we have the solemn and trustworthy assurances, that to his latest breath this man remained a firm and strong witness to the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

### DAVID WHITMER

Was first attracted to the Prophet by the common public talk about the discovery of the gold plates. Later he visited his friend, Oliver Cowdery, and upon investigation, was convinced of the truth of the Book of Mormon, and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. He offered to Joseph and his scribe a home wherein they could prosecute their labors without molestation.

Mr. Whitmer shared in the persecutions of 1832. In the year following, he was driven by a mob from his home in Jackson Co., with the rest of the saints. In 1834 he was appointed president of the High Council of Clay Co., which was organized by the Prophet. For four years he was one of the leading Elders of the Church, and at Far West was sustained as president of that branch. But, falling into transgression, he was rejected, and finally, on April 13, 1838, he was excommunicated from the Church by the High Council at Far West, the following charges being sustained against him: I. For disobedience to the Word of Wisdom; II. Unchristian-like conduct in neglecting to attend meetings; in meeting with and possessing the same spirit as the



dissenters; III. The writing of letters to the dissenters in Kirtland unfavorable to the cause and the character of Joseph Smith; IV. In neglecting the duties of his calling and separating himself from the Church, while he held a name among us; V. For the signing himself President of the Church, in an insulting letter to the High Council, after he had been deposed from the Presidency.

Shortly after his excommunication he moved to Richmond, Ray Co., which place he made his permanent residence. In September of 1878, he was visited by Apostles Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith, to whom he bore a strong and undeviating testimony of the truth of the Book of Mormon, and he did it not in the presence of these two men alone, but in the presence of a number of witnesses, newspaper men being in the company.

In the Richmond County "Conservator," of March 25, 1881, is the following testimony:

*Unto all nations, Kindreds, Tongues and Peoples unto whom these presents shall come:*

It having been represented by one Jacob Murphy of Palo, Caldwell Co., Miss., that I, in conversation with him last summer, denied my testimony as one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon;

To the end thereof that he may understand me now, if he did not then, and that the world may know the truth, I wish now, standing as it were in the very sunset of life, and in the fear of God, once for all to make this public statement:—

That I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof, which has so long been published with the book as one of the Three Witnesses. Those who know me best will know that I have always adhered to that testimony. And that no man may be misled or doubt my present views in regard to the same, I do again affirm the truth of all my statements as then made and published.

He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear; it was no delusion; what is written is written, and he that readeth let him understand.

And if any man doubt, should he not carefully and honestly read and understand the same, before presuming to sit in judgment and condemning the light which shineth in darkness and showeth the way of eternal life as pointed out by the unerring hand of God?

In the spirit of Christ, who said: "Follow thou me, for I am the life, the light and the way;" I submit this statement unto the world; God, in whom I trust, being my judge as to the sincerity of my motives and the faith and hope that is in me of eternal life. My sincere desire is that the world may be benefitted by this plain and simple statement of

the Truth. And all the honor be to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, which is one God, Amen.

DAVID WHITMER,  
Richmond, Mo., March 19, 1881.

We, the undersigned, citizens of Richmond, Ray Co., Mo., where David Whitmer, Sen., has resided since the year A. D. 1838, certify that we have been long and intimately acquainted with him, and know him to be a man of highest integrity and of undoubted truth and veracity.

Given at Richmond, Missouri, this March 20, A. D. 1881.

A. W. DONIPHAN,  
GEORGE W. DUNN,  
Judge of the Judicial Circuit.  
T. D. WOODSON,  
President of Ray County Savings Bank.  
J. T. CHILD,  
Editor of "Conservator."  
H. C. GARNER,  
Cashier of Ray County Savings Bank.  
W. A. HOLMAN,  
County Treasurer.

Then followed fifteen other signatures, among which were those of the mayor, postmaster, merchants, bankers, attorneys, judges, doctors, and other county and municipal officials.

The "Conservator" of the same issue says editorially: "There is no doubt that Mr. Whitmer was one of the Three Witnesses of the authenticity of the gold plates, from which he asserts that Joe Smith translated the Book of Mormon, and is firmly convinced of its origin. Having resided here for near half a century, it is with no little pride that he points to his past record, and now with the lilies of seventy-five winters crowning him like an auriole, and his pilgrimage on earth well nigh ended, he reiterates his former statements, and will leave futurity to solve the problem that he was but a passing witness of its fulfillment."

Edward Stevenson, in a letter addressed to Daniel H. Wells, dated February 16, 1886, said, David Whitmer, when he was eighty-one years old, bore this testimony to him: "As sure as the sun shines and I live, just so sure did the angel appear unto me and Joseph Smith—and I heard his voice and did see the angel standing before us, and on a table were the plates, the



sword of Laban, and the ball or compass." The bearing of this testimony would revive the old man so that his countenance shone with new vigor and fire of life.

### MARTIN HARRIS,

The third and oldest of the Three Witnesses, was born in Easttown, Saratoga County, New York, May 18, 1783. In the Fall of 1829, he made the acquaintance of the very unpopular and much persecuted Joseph Smith. Mr. Harris, soon after meeting the Prophet, perceiving his indigency, gave him fifty dollars. Later he obtained of the Prophet some copies of the characters engraved on the plates, with the translation of them, and took them to New York City to have them examined by some one familiar with ancient languages. He first showed them to Prof. Anthon, a very learned gentleman, who examined the papers and gave to Mr. Harris a certificate of the correctness of the translation, and, in addition, proffered his services in translating them, but upon learning from Martin that the book was obtained by Joseph Smith from an angel, he demanded the surrender of the certificate and destroyed it before Mr. Harris' eyes. Mr. Harris then submitted the characters and the translation thereof, to a Dr. Mitchell, who affirmed what Prof. Anthon had said regarding the translation.

Martin was permitted to become one of the Three Witnesses in 1829; he subsequently furnished \$3000.00 toward the expenses of publishing the first edition of the Book of Mormon.

When the "United Order of God" was established, Martin Harris was the first one called upon to set an example before the Church in laying his possessions at the feet of the Bishop. He was a member of the High Council which was organized at Kirtland, February 7, 1834; and he assisted the other two witnesses in selecting and ordaining the twelve Elders who were called to constitute the first quorum of Twelve Apostles in this dispensation.

When the Church left Ohio, Martin Harris remained behind, and for many years was separated from the body of the Saints; but, during that long separation, never did he deny his testimony, but was, on the contrary, ever willing and ready to bear it to all mankind. In 1870 he moved to Salt Lake City, and, during his declining years, he did considerable traveling through the various Stakes, and publicly bore his unfaltering testimony, so that thousands still live who heard his simple but convincing statements.

In addition to the testimony of the Three Witnesses, we have the testimony of eight others, who assert that they were shown the plates by Joseph Smith, that they handled the leaves of the same, and saw the engravings thereon, "which had the appearance of ancient and curious workmanship." And they call upon God to witness their solemn testimonies as given to mankind.

There is another witness to this book—the Prophet Joseph Smith. Passing on with mere mention of his sublime character, his remarkable prophecies and their literal fulfilment, saying nothing of his glorious revelations and high moral teachings; nothing of the immensity of the work he accomplished in a few brief years, of the toil, desertion, poverty and persecution in relation to his testimony as attested by his life's labor and life's blood, it might be said he

"Turned from the reed that, breaking disappoints  
The fool that takes it for the oak, and leaning  
On the arm, by which suspended worlds hang  
Innumerable; and eye upturned to where  
The sun ne'er sets, where flows the font of life,  
Beneath the throne of God, unshaken he stood  
By all that earth could do."

Our purpose now is to follow lines of reasoning, and from the testimony set forth draw such deductions as the facts and the nature of the testimony will support.

In the first place the entire story is perfectly consistent with the Christian conception of



divine methods. Angelic visitations are quite in harmony with Christian history. Indeed it seemed to be a common occurrence among the primitive Christians, for Paul gave caution as to the entertainment of strangers, for, said he, "some have entertained angels unawares." And any objection to this part of our story will only give a most desirable emphasis to the preponderous difference we claim there is between the beliefs and blessings of the ancient and modern Christians.

And what is more, the Holy Scriptures contain two emphatic declarations that angelic visitations are to be made and that too toward the latter times. (See Malachi last chapter and Revelations 14th chap.) So that the real evidence is in favor of a present belief in such things rather than to the contrary, that is from a Christian standpoint.

In impartiality it must also be admitted that God would be quite as likely to reveal his will on plates of gold as on tablets of stone; to Joseph Smith as to Moses; in America as in Western Asia.

Here dates and localities are given; with the Bible most important dates are not even hinted at. Joseph Smith used in the translation an instrument called the Urim and Thummim. Such instruments were used by former-day prophets, why may they not be by the latter-day prophets?

"To these positive and detailed statements what can Christians oppose?" asks the impartial inquirer. It must be admitted that the world needed a revelation in Joseph Smith's day quite as much as it ever did. And therefore a compassionate God would be quite as likely to reveal himself to Joseph Smith as to Isaiah.

Then consider the solemn, life-long testimony of these witnesses. Disregard absolutely, if you please, the supernatural part of the story. What would the Jews or Christians not give for such an attestation to their Bible? For with them the Bible is accepted though a very great part of it is acknowledged to be of

doubtful origin, as far as authorship and date of composition is concerned.

Now this wonderful work comes forth from a number of men quite as illiterate as the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet they produce and publish to the world at large this very remarkable book. The publication of it is preceded and followed by a most cruel persecution; and as a result of its coming forth, we already see the most remarkable religious, social, and commercial development of the century. And remember that this affair is not a thing done in a remote and dark corner. It is not a tale or legend of the past, invented by men we know not whom, and in places we know not where. But it is contemporary with us. Thousands still live who knew these witnesses and heard their testimonies; and many still live who knew the Prophet, and by a life's devotion to the work he instituted, they attest in the sincerest and most practical manner their firm belief in his divine calling. This surely is the strongest attestation given to any sacred writing extant.

The Book of Mormon claims to be a history of the ancient inhabitants of America. There is nothing extant that contradicts this claim. That there were ancient inhabitants of America, of course, none can deny. Old ruins, buried cities, crumbling temples, constantly being discovered, makes this fact an undeniable one. Then, since there was a people, is it not likely that they kept a history of themselves? Way down in the earth, lettered papyrus and engraved stones have been found; so it is evident that the ancients had a written language and were capable of keeping a history. We learn from the best authorities on the subject, that during the conquest of Mexico the Spanish priests burned the historical literature of the natives to the shameful extent of thousands of volumes. With these facts at hand how dare Joseph Smith palm on the world a spurious history? Any thinking person would see at a glance that such a work of perfidy would be exposed just as sure as time rolled on. The more discoveries made, the deeper

scientific research goes into the antiquities of America the greater is the satisfaction of the believers in the Book of Mormon, because it comes to them as the willing affirmation of their faith, from the unconscious hands of science.

From the lives and statements of these three special witnesses, we can safely draw certain conclusions upon which we base our proposition, thus: They were either IMPOSTORS, who said what they knew to be false with the intent to deceive, or they were ENTHUSIASTS who imposed upon themselves by their own imaginations, or they were DELUDED, victims of some wicked design; or they were truthful men, and what they stated actually took place and the Book of Mormon is true. If they were impostors, they would have had motives such as these: to gain power, reputation, fame or wealth.

FIRST AS TO POWER. Power over what? A flock of sheep shorn and driven to the slaughter? Sheep whose leader was the target of a thousand deadly darts? For power over such an unpopular and unpromising people they would not hazard their lives and their all in the persecution being heaped upon them. It is not probable that love of power could have been the point on which their ambitious designing turned, for it must have been apparent to them that from the very nature of the thing Joseph was the head and leader of the temporal body. And as conclusive proof that it was not leadership or even association with the head that inspired them, witness the three selecting and ordaining the twelve Elders to the quorum of Apostles *and not a place in that lofty circle filled by one of them*. Had power been their desire, or authority their wish, the nature of the institution (which you must accredit to their genius in organizing, if such is your insistence) would have been altogether different. For in that institution, Priesthood is sovereign and it reigns supreme in all the ramifications of the organization. Priesthood is paramount, be it invested in the humble deacon at-



tending to the House of the Lord, or the Apostle enunciating God's word in tones of fiery penetration. A respect bordering on to reverence is paid to priesthood. Man is nothing—Priesthood everything, in point of authority or ecclesiastical jurisdiction. And that sovereign power is not the prerogative of one man or a set of men, but is given to every faithful and deserving male member in the body religious. As in the ancient Church so it is in the modern. "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets." It is a groundless assumption then, to say that these men sought power, for the evidences point unmistakably to the fact that Priesthood is the only sovereign authority and that was most generously distributed to all members.

NEXT AS TO REPUTATION OR FAME. If it were fame they sought it must have been that sort of fame which *persecution* dragged them into. The moment they identified themselves with "Joe Smith," their personal reputations were gone; the most sacred relationships of life were cut asunder by the two-edged blade of bigotry. Friendships ceased and the social comforts of life were almost fatally limited. Reader, if you would rightly sense the keener pangs of ostracism which they experienced, just recall the conception you have had of the followers of "Joe Smith" and Brigham Young, and imagine, if you can, yourself being one of them, and fancy how enduring your fame would be, how wide your reputation, and how advanced your personal credit. They could not possibly have sought for fame from without; and would they, as men of ordinary intelligence, have sacrificed so much for fame that might come from within? From such as this unhappy band of hated and rejected "Mormons" could throw about them? They would have soon discovered, had love of fame been their seductive motive, that there was a far brighter promise of "perpetuity of fame" to be obtained by retracting their testimonies and exposing this fatal imposture or delusion into which they had been pitilessly led. By doing this, they would have broken

down the strongest religious growth of centuries, and in compensation therefor would have received the thanks of thousands. This exposure they never offered to make, though every favorable condition for doing it surrounded each of them for a long period of their lives. They, on the contrary, bore patiently the afflictions, distresses and persecutions, and boldly faced the world to the end, proving that a higher aim than fame attracted the aspirations of their souls.

WAS IT WEALTH? One of the three, the only one that had any possessions worth speaking of, on meeting the Prophet gave him fifty dollars. This act so incensed and annoyed his wife that she subsequently left him for a long period, which separation he patiently endured for the truth of his convictions. A few months later, the same individual advanced three thousand dollars to assist in publishing the Book of Mormon, and finally the same (*avaricious?*) individual laid all his possessions at the feet of the Bishop, hopeful that with this generous example, others would follow and in that manner a temporal equality be brought about among them. If by such a method as this they sought wealth, their ways are past finding out. It was like their seeking power—*they hoped to gain that which they sought by freely giving it to others.*

As long as they remained in the Church it demanded of them almost their exclusive time and few opportunities were afforded them by which to amass wealth. Seeing then that these men did not seek power, reputation, or wealth, they could not have been impostors, practicing a fraud upon others with the intent to deceive.

WERE THEY, THEN, ENTHUSIASTS, practicing a fraud upon themselves by their own fevered imaginations? If perchance this could have been their mental condition in the beginning, surely after they had been disappointed in all their hopes, stripped of every vestige of authority among their fellows, publicly humiliated and finally disfellowshipped and left to dwindle in the rear



while the great cause rolled indifferently on; and finding their time, talent, possessions, and characters all spent in a cause which now seemingly forsakes them, we say, surely then their fevered fanaticism would have been chilled, their judgment in forty years of disappointment would have become cooled, and they would have seen their error. Then, if they were not honest enough to retract, they, like all victims of enthusiasm, upon being liberated, would have been more or less vindictive, and would have sought revenge on the men who had misled them and the system that had wrought their downfall. This state of mind they never arrived at, though every condition in their history was favorable to it had they in the beginning been enthusiasts. Thence we find no sound premises upon which to charge them with over enthusiasm.

DELUDED? Is it in the power of man, young or old, learned or ignorant to bring angels down from heaven, or escort men into the presence of heavenly beings? *And then and there command those men in such a manner that throughout all their days they dare not go contrary to that command? Not even though a score of years have passed after the "magician's" death?* If this is a delusion you must ascribe to the boy prophet supernatural power—a power superior to all mankind and that would require more faith than to believe that he was a prophet.

The objector may observe that it was a hallucination of the mind that these three men experienced. It is indeed a most incredible thing that three men of different dispositions and in sound health should each have the same hallucination at the same time, and, under different conditions, each remain the same in relation thereto. To believe such would truly be a most overwhelming hallucination. However if this thing be a delusion the world is openly challenged to reveal the fraud, expose the cheat, and thereby enlighten and disenthral the thousands of honest men and women gathered from nigh "every nation under heaven."

Surely here is a work worthy of the most devoted effort that ever engaged a Christian heart.

And, let us add, since we, after a most thorough and aggressive investigation of this matter, with prayerful hearts and cautious inquiry, have failed to detect the delusion, and as no one else points it out to us, we fail to find any support whatever for the opinion that it is a delusion.

Now if these men were not honest men, they must have been fraudulent knaves, and if the latter they were very strangely engaged in promoting virtue among men. This is a new role for knaves and impostors.

Thus, after a careful consideration of the testimony and lives of these men, we are consistent with the truth only when we aver that they were not impostors, they were not enthusiasts, neither were they deluded, hence **THEY MUST HAVE BEEN TRUTHFUL MEN, AND WHAT THEY STATED ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE, AND THE BOOK OF MORMON IS TRUE.**

Another thought: If the testimony of these three witnesses was a collusion entered into by Joseph Smith and them, it would have been essential to the accomplishment of their design that they stand harmoniously together. If confidence were broken, immediately the offending party would be compelled to make reconciliation under threat of exposure from the offended party. But, contrary to all combinations of fraud and cunning, we find the Prophet openly rebuking the Witnesses. They were publicly charged with offenses, and actually excommunicated from the Church. Thus the institution which depended upon the testimony of these men for its very existence, dared to remove them from beneath it, remove the very foundation and support of the whole structure. Reader, could such a thing be possible in cases of fraud? If it were an imposture, Joseph Smith above all would not have dared to offend his colleagues whom it so deeply concerned him to agree with and please. Accomplices in a fraud are



obliged to show greater regard for each other. *Such freedom belongs to truth alone.*

### INTERNAL EVIDENCES.

In precept and morals the Book of Mormon is lofty. It leaves the mind purer and the heart nobler after reading. It breathes the spirit of love, of meekness and inspires faith. The message it bears to the human soul is that Christ is the light and the way, follow him. This is the best test of a book. And we ask is a book born of such a spirit likely to have been conceived in fraud and imposture?

As an evidence strong enough to evince the truthfulness of the book, we direct your attention to the fact that it expressly states, if the true signs promised by Jesus do not follow the believers they do not possess the true and living faith. No imposture can counterfeit those confirming signs which Christ promised should "follow them that believe." Reader, in perfect Christian candor we ask you to weigh those words of the Master: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall 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; and they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." (16 Mark 17-18.) You know those signs are not enjoyed or experienced by the Christian churches of today. They were anciently, they should be today for the promise is absolutely without limitation in point of time or numbers. Incredible as it may be to the modern Christian mind, it is a fact that those signs follow the believers in the Book of Mormon, and in solemn boldness they so testify to the world. If that book be false, then, we ask, can the vaults of heaven be tampered with? Can imposture and fraud open wide the storehouse of celestial treasure and shower upon the head of delusion gifts which God alone bestows?



*“We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen and ye receive not our witness.”*

Reverend Wace, of Lincoln's Inn Chapel, said, “Thus from first to last the authority of the Scriptures has been equivalent to the authority with which they themselves convince men that they came from God.”

The Book of Mormon goes a step farther and says, that the Holy Ghost shall convince sincere inquirers of its divinity. It says in the last chapter:

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask the Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true, and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, He will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Reader, surely you dare submit this question to your Father in Heaven for solution. A simpler and surer test could not be employed; and remember the book itself not tearfully but hopefully extends to you the key. Will you apply it or will you not?