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Appendix - The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Latter Days

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APPENDIX.

THE COMING FORTH OF THE BOOK OF MORMON IN THE LATTER DAYS.

IN THE course of nature, Moroni died, and in the Lord's due time he was resurrected.* The sacred records, with the other holy things that he had buried in Cumorah, still remained in his care. On him the duty fell to watch that no unsanctified hands disturbed their rest. When the time set in the councils of heaven for their translation came, he delivered them to the instrument chosen by the Holy Ones on high. He, having accomplished his work, returned them to Moroni, who still keeps ward and watch over these treasures.

But was there any fear that the records would be disturbed by unholy hands? We believe there was. It must not be forgotten that the Lamanites of the days of Moroni were not the benighted savages of earlier centuries. They were not the pure blood of Laman and his associates. They were dissenters from the Nephites, apostates from the true church; and they were as well acquainted with the fact that the records existed as the prophet himself. In the days of Mormon he removed the plates from the hill Shim, for the very reason that he feared the Lamanites would get

*Joseph Smith's answer to the question, How and where did you obtain the Book of Mormon?—Moroni, who deposited the plates (from whence the Book of Mormon was translated), in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being *dead and raised again* therefrom, appeared unto me, and told me where they were, and gave me directions how to obtain them. I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummim with them, by the means of which I translated the plates, and thus came the Book of Mormon.

hold of and destroy them. There were the same reasons for fear should they discover their resting place in Cumorah.

The tradition of the existence of these records remained for long ages with the Lamanites; undoubtedly growing fainter and fainter and more confused as the centuries rolled by, but still not entirely extinguished. Indeed the remembrance is not utterly obliterated in the minds of some of Lehi's children to this very day.

So strong was this recollection in earlier days, that we are told of a time when a council of wise men, with royal consent, made an attempt to rewrite them. How successful they were we have no means of telling; but this we know, that when the Spaniards conquered Mexico the land was full of sacred books. These so much resembled the Bible of the Christians that the Catholic priests came to the conclusion that it was a trick of the devil to imitate the holy scriptures, and in this way lead the souls of the Indians to perdition. In their bigoted zeal they burned every copy of these books or charts that they could find, and inflicted abominably cruel punishments upon those who were found concealing them. In this way almost every copy of these valuable works were destroyed.

Though the original records were hidden by the power of God, it is quite possible that many copies of the scriptures remained in the hands of the Lamanites when the Nephites were destroyed. In the Book of Mormon frequent reference is made to the abundance of these copies. No doubt in the last desolating wars between the Nephites and Lamanites but little care was taken of these scriptures. Both people had sunken

deep in iniquity; they cared nothing for the word of God, and probably, as we may infer from Mormon's apprehensions, the Lamanites destroyed all the copies of the holy books that they found. Still, it is not improbable that some few of these works remained untouched; and when the Lamanites had gotten over their first overwhelming bitterness and aversion to everything Nephite, and again began to grow in civilization, they would search for these records, if for nothing else than as valued curiosities; though we think they sometimes prized them much more highly.

The plates having been guarded by the power of God, were translated by the same power. No book was ever translated more accurately; none, by human wisdom, as faultlessly as the Book of Mormon.*

Joseph Smith, the youth whom God honored by making him the instrument in his hands of restoring these precious records to the knowledge of mankind, was born in the town of Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, on the 23rd of December, 1805. When about ten years of age his parents, with their family, moved to Palmyra, in the State of New York, in the vicinity of which place he lived for about eleven years; the latter portion of the time in a village called Manchester. Joseph helped his father on the farm, hired out at day-work, and passed his years very much after the manner common to young men in the rural districts. His advantages for obtaining anything beyond the rudiments of education were exceedingly small: he could read without much difficulty, write an imper-

*In council with the Twelve Apostles, Joseph Smith said, I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.

fect hand, and had but a very limited understanding of arithmetic.

The circumstances attending Joseph's first vision in the early spring of 1820, when he saw the Father and the Son, have been so often published, and must necessarily be so familiar to our readers, that with this bare reference to the fact we will pass them by. It is sufficient for the purpose of our present research to know that this marvelously important event did happen. Then and there the corner stone was laid of the vast fabric to God's glory of which Joseph was the master builder, when mortal beings alone are considered.

On the evening of the 21st of September, 1823, he retired to his bed in a serious and contemplative state of mind. He shortly betook himself to prayer to the Almighty for a manifestation of his standing before him, and endeavored to exercise faith in the precious promises of scripture. We will continue in his own words; he says: On a sudden a light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance and brightness, burst into the room, indeed the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire; the appearance produced a shock that affected the whole body; in a moment a personage stood before me surrounded with a glory yet greater than that with which I was already surrounded. This messenger proclaimed himself to be an angel of God,* sent to bring the joyful tidings, that the covenant which God made with ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled, that the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence; that the time was at hand

*Moroni.

for the Gospel, in all its fulness, to be preached in power unto all nations, that a people might be prepared for the millennial reign. I was informed that I was chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring about some of his purposes in this glorious dispensation. I was also informed concerning the aboriginal inhabitants of this country, and shown who they were, and from whence they came; a brief sketch of their origin, progress, civilization, laws, governments, of their righteousness and iniquity, and the blessings of God being finally withdrawn from them as a people, was made known unto me. I was also told where there were deposited some plates, on which were engraved an abridgment of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on this continent. The angel appeared to me three times the same night and unfolded the same things.

The next day after this glorious appearing Joseph went to the place which the angel had designated. There he found the plates and the other holy things. But he was not permitted by the angel to remove them. They must remain in the stone box in which Moroni had placed them until the time determined, by the heavens, for their removal had arrived. But he was instructed to visit the spot, open the box, and look at the records, on precisely the same evening of each succeeding year until he had liberty given him to take them in his charge. This Joseph did; and on each occasion the angel met him and gave him such instructions, light, and intelligence as the youthful seer needed.

At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the Breastplate. On the

twenty-second day of September, 1827, having gone as usual, at the end of another year, to the place where they were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to him with this charge, that he should be responsible for them; that if he should let them go carelessly or through any neglect of his, he should be cut off; but that if he would use all his endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected.

The same night that Joseph obtained the plates marvelous things appeared in the heavens. It would seem as though all eternity was stirred by the greatness of the events that were about to take place. The powers of light and of darkness were at war; the hosts of heaven were marshaled; Satan's kingdom was tottering; the time had arrived for the commencement of the preparatory work that would usher in the reign of Christ as King over all the earth.

The late President Heber C. Kimball relates that on that eventful night he saw a white smoke arise on the eastern horizon, which formed itself, with a noise like that of a mighty wind, into a belt, as it uprose; eventually forming a bow across the heavens from the eastern to the western horizon. He further says: In this bow an army moved, commencing from the east and marching to the west; they continued marching until they reached the western horizon. They moved in platoons, and walked so close that the rear ranks trod in the steps of their file leaders, until the whole bow was literally crowded with soldiers. We could distinctly see the muskets, bayonets and knapsacks of the men, who wore caps and feathers like those used by the American soldiers in the last war with Britain; and

also saw their officers with their swords and equipage, and the clashing and jingling of their implements of war, and could discover the forms and features of the men. The most profound order existed throughout the entire army; when the foremost man stepped, every man stepped at the same time; I could hear the steps. When the front rank reached the western horizon a battle ensued, as we could distinctly hear the report of arms and the rush.

Thus with signs upon earth and wonders in the heavens was the record of the mighty dead of this continent brought forth again by the power and wisdom of God.

