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## How Joseph Smith Obtained the Book of Mormon

Author(s): B.H. Roberts

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## CHAPTER IV.

### HOW JOSEPH SMITH OBTAINED THE BOOK OF MORMON.

The Book of Mormon was published in the town of Palmyra, Wayne County, State of New York. It issued from the press of Mr. Egbert B. Grandin; and was published for Joseph Smith, the Prophet. The exact date on which the book issued from the press cannot be ascertained. Most likely, however, it was some time in the month of March or of April, 1830; for in the Prophet's history we have him saying that "During this month of April; I went on a visit to the residence of Mr. Joseph Knight, of Colesville, Broome County, New York." This Mr. Knight had been acquainted with the Smith family for some time. He had visited them at their home near Manchester, New York, on several occasions;<sup>a</sup> and during the period occupied in translating the Book of Mormon, had rendered some material assistance to the Prophet by supplying him and Oliver Cowdery with provisions.<sup>b</sup> Soon after this visit the Prophet informs us that he returned to Fayette, Seneca county,—evidently in the same month of April—and then adds:

"The Book of Mormon \* \* \* had now been published for some time, and as the ancient propnets predicted of it, "it was accounted a strange thing.'"<sup>c</sup> In the *Evening and Morning Star* for April, 1883, published at Independ-

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<sup>a</sup>History of Joseph Smith the prophet by Lucy Smith, chapters xxi, xxiii.

<sup>b</sup>History of the Church, Vol. I, p. 47.

<sup>c</sup>History of the Church, Vol. I. p. 84.

ence, Missouri—the first periodical published by the Church—occurs the following: “Soon after the Book of Mormon came forth, containing the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church was organized, on the 6th of April (1830).”<sup>d</sup> This fixes approximately the date for the publication of the book. It issued from the press either very early in April or in the month of March, 1830; most likely some time in March. The first edition was five thousand copies.

Naturally enough the book was “accounted a strange thing.” Joseph Smith, for whom it was published, was an unlettered young man, who from the time he was ten years of age until the Book of Mormon was published—when he was twenty-four—had lived in the vicinity of Palmyra and Manchester township. His father having met with a series of misfortunes in business ventures and land purchases, the family was in straightened circumstances through all these years, and Joseph had been under the necessity of working among the farmers in and around Manchester to aid his parents in the support of their large family. About the last thing to be expected of a young man reared under such circumstances would be that he become the publisher of a book. The fact that he had published one was of itself sufficient cause for astonishment; but it was not the fact that an unlettered youth, who had spent his life in toil among them, had published a book that was regarded as so strange a thing by the people. It was the account he gave of the book’s origin, and the nature of the book itself that constituted it such a “marvel and a wonder.” Joseph Smith disclaimed being its author<sup>e</sup> in any other

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<sup>d</sup>Evening and Morning Star for April, 1833, p. 167.

<sup>e</sup>The fact that on the title page of the first edition, Joseph Smith is called the “Author and Proprietor,” is considered in Part IV of this work.

sense than that he was the translator of it by miraculous means. The original Book of Mormon, the translation of which he had published, was written, or rather engraven, upon gold plates, according to his representations; which plates had come into his possession in the following manner:

Early in the spring of 1820 Joseph Smith received a revelation from God in which the apostate condition of Christendom had been made known to him, coupled with a promise that at some future time the gospel of Jesus Christ would be restored to the earth and that he, if faithful, would be an instrument in the hands of God in accomplishing some of his great purposes in the last days.<sup>f</sup>

After this first revelation, Joseph Smith was left for three years without any further direct manifestation from God. At the expiration of that time, however, being oppressed with a sense of loneliness and longing for further communication with the heavens, and burdened with an anxious desire to know of his standing before the Lord, on the evening of the 21st of September, 1828, after having retired for the night, he betook himself to prayer that he might receive once more a manifestation from God. The rest of the narrative is best told in his own words :

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noon day, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant; his hands were naked and his arms also a little above the wrist; so also

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<sup>f</sup>See *New Witnesses for God*, Vol. I., Chapters x and xi, for a full account of this revelation. See also Wentworth letter, *History of the Church*, Vol. IV., Ch. xxxi.

were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His neck and head were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom. Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him I was afraid; but the fear soon left me. He called me by name, and said unto me, that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent,<sup>g</sup> and the source from whence they sprang. He also said, that the fulness of the everlasting gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants [of America]; also that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted seers in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.

After telling me these things he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi,<sup>h</sup> and he quoted also the fourth or last

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<sup>g</sup>America.

<sup>h</sup>This undoubtedly would be the first part of the third chapter of Malachi, as that part of the chapter has undoubtedly a direct bearing on the coming forth of God's work in the last days. It reads as follows: "Behold, I will send my messengers and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming. And who shall stand when he appeareth. For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years."

chapter of the same prophecy, though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bible [the English authorized version of the Jewish Scriptures]. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books he quoted it thus: "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them saith the Lord of Hosts; that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus: "Behold I will reveal unto you the priesthood, by the hand of Elijah, the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." He also quoted the next verse differently: "And he shall plant in the hearts of the children, the promises made to the fathers and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers; if it were not so the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

In addition to these, he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying, that is was about to be fulfilled.

He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament.<sup>i</sup> He said that that prophet was Christ; but the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice, should be cut off from among the people," but soon would come.

He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty-eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated, the fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here. Again, he told me that when I got the plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled, I should not show them to any person; either the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did, I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly, that I knew the place again when I visited it.

<sup>i</sup>For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.—Acts iii:22, 23.

After this communication, I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so, until the room was again left dark, except just around him, when instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended until he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance.

I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling greatly at what had been told me by this extraordinary messenger, when, in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again at my bedside. He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at his first visit, without the least variation; which having done he informed me of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence; and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things, he again ascended as he had done before.

By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard; but what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before, and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me, in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family, to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God; and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building up his kingdom; otherwise I could not get them. After this third visit, he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced; when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that our interviews must have occupied the whole of the night.

I shortly after arose from my bed, and as usual, went to the necessary labors of the day; but in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable. My father who was laboring along with me, dis-

covered something to be wrong with me, and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house; but in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless on the ground, and for a time, was quite unconscious of anything. The first thing that I can recollect, was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name; I looked up and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father, and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received.

I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I

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*Relative to the circumstances of the young Prophet's vision on the 22nd of September, when he was on his way from the field to his father's house, before his first visit to Cumorah, his mother in her "History of the Prophet Joseph" gives the following interesting details which the prophet does not record. It would seem according to Lucy Smith's statement, that during the interviews with the angel Moroni the night before—September 21, 1823—the young Prophet had been instructed to inform his father of what he had seen and heard; but this Joseph failed to do. "The next day, says Lucy Smith's account, "My husband, Alvin, and Joseph, were reaping together in the field, and as they were reaping Joseph stopped quite suddenly, and seemed to be in a deep study. Alvin [this was an elder brother—died a little more than a year later], observing it, hurried him, saying, 'We must not slacken our hands, or we will not be able to complete our task.' Upon this Joseph went to work again, and after laboring a short time, he stopped just as he had done before. This being quite unusual and strange, it attracted the attention of his father, upon which he discovered that Joseph was very pale. My husband, supposing that he was sick, told him to go to the house, and have his mother doctor him. He accordingly ceased his work, and started; but on coming to a beautiful green, under an apple tree, he stopped and laid down, for he was so weak he could proceed no further. He was there but a short time, when the messenger whom he saw the previous night, visited him again, and the first thing he said was, 'Why did you not tell your father that which I commanded you to tell him?' Joseph replied, 'I was afraid my father would not believe me.' The angel rejoined, 'He will believe every word you say to him.'*

Joseph then promised the angel that he would do as he had



left the field and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctiveness of the vision which I had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there. Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size; and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above ground, but the edge all round was covered with earth. Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay, was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones cross-wise of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them. I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger, and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived, neither would it, until four years from that time; but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates.<sup>k</sup>

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been commanded. Upon this the messenger departed, and Joseph returned to the field where he had left my husband and Alvin; but when he got there his father had just gone to the house, as he was somewhat unwell. Joseph then desired Alvin to go straight way and see his father, and inform him that he had something of great importance to communicate to him, and that he wanted him to come out into the field where they were at work. Alvin did as he was requested, and when my husband got there, Joseph related to him all that had passed between him and the angel the previous night and that morning. Having heard this account, his father charged him not to fail in attending strictly to the instructions which he had received from this heavenly messenger." (Joseph Smith, the Prophet, by his mother, Chap. xix.)

<sup>k</sup>Lucy Smith has a very interesting account in her History

“Accordingly, as I had been commanded I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there, and received instructions and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days. \* \* \* At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim and the breast-plate. On the 22nd 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 me with this charge; that I should be responsible for them; that if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off; but that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve

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of the Prophet concerning his report of this interview at Cum-  
orah with Moroni, she says:

The ensuing evening, when the family were all together, Joseph made known to them all that he had communicated to his father in the field, and also of his finding the record, as well as what passed between him and the angel while he was at the place where the plates were deposited. Sitting up late that evening in order to converse upon these things, together with over exertion of mind, had much fatigued Joseph; and when Alvin observed it, he said, “Now, brother, let us go to bed, and rise early in the morning in order to finish our day’s work at an hour before sunset, then if mother will get our supper early, we will have a fine long evening, and we will all sit down for the purpose of listening to you while you tell us the great things which God has revealed to you.” Accordingly, by sunset the next day (Sept. 23rd), we were all seated, and Joseph commenced telling us the great and glorious things which God had manifested unto him; but before proceeding he charged us not to mention out of the family that which he was about to say unto us, as the world was so wicked that when they came to a knowledge of these things they would try to take our lives; and that when he should obtain the plates, our names would be cast out as evil by all people. Hence the necessity of suppressing these things as much as possible, until the time should come for them to go forth to the world. After giving us this charge, he proceeded to relate further particulars concerning the work which he was appointed to do, and we received them joyfully, never mentioning them except among ourselves, agreeable to the instructions which we had received from him.” (History of the Prophet Joseph, by his mother, Chap. xix.)

them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they would be protected.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In relation to the matter of the Prophet Joseph obtaining the Nephite record on the morning of the 22nd of September, 1827, his mother gives a number of interesting details in her History of the Prophet. It appears that both Joseph Knight of Broome County, New York, and also a Mr. Josiah Stool were present at the Smith homestead on the night of September the 21st, 1827. And now Lucy Smith:

“On the night of the 21st, I sat up very late as my work rather pressed upon my hands. I did not retire until 12 o'clock at night. About 12 o'clock, Joseph come to me, and asked me if I had a chest with a lock and key. I knew in an instant what he wanted it for, and not having one, I was greatly alarmed, as I thought it might be a matter of considerable moment. But Joseph discovering my anxiety, said, 'Never mind, mother, I can do very well for the present without it—be calm—all is right.' Shortly after this Joseph's wife passed through the room with her bonnet and riding dress and in a few minutes they left together taking Mr. Knight's horse and wagon. I spent the night in prayer and supplication to God, for the anxiety of my mind would not permit me to sleep. At the usual hour I commenced preparing breakfast, my heart fluttered at every footstep, as I now expected Joseph and Emma momentarily, and feared lest Joseph might meet with another disappointment.

“When the male portion of the family were seated at breakfast table, Mr. Smith inquired for Joseph, for he was not aware that he had left home. I requested my husband not to call him, for I would like to have him take breakfast with his wife that morning. 'No, no,' said my husband, 'I must have Joseph eat with me.' 'Well now, Mr. Smith,' I continued, 'do let him eat with his wife this morning; he almost always takes breakfast with you.' His father finally consented and ate without him, and no further inquiries were made concerning his absence, but in a few minutes Mr. Knight came in quite disturbed. 'Why, Mr. Smith,' he exclaimed, 'my horse is gone, and I can't find him on the premises, and I wish to start for home in half an hour.' 'Never mind the horse,' said I, 'Mr. Knight does not know all the nooks and corners in the pastures; I will call William, he will bring the horse immediately.'

“This satisfied him for the time being; but he soon made another discovery. His wagon also was gone. He then concluded that a rogue had stolen them both. 'Mr. Knight,' said I, 'do be quiet; I would be ashamed to have you go about waiting upon yourself—just go out and talk to Mr. Smith until William comes, and if you really must go home your horse shall be brought and you shall be waited upon like a gentleman.' He accordingly went out and while he was absent Joseph returned. I

“I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charge to keep them safe, and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hands, he would call for them; for no sooner was it known that I had them, than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me; every stratagem that could be invented, was resorted to for that purpose; the persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible; but by the wisdom of God they remained safe in my hands, until I accomplished by them what was required at my hands; when, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, [and] I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the 2nd of May, 1838.”<sup>m</sup>

Such is Joseph Smith’s account of the origin of the Book of Mormon: This is the account of its origin accepted by those who believe it to be a divine record, a volume of scripture, containing the word of God, and a history—though a brief one—of the hand-dealings of God with the people of the western hemisphere. This is the account of its origin to be maintained by those who speak or write in the defense of the Book of Mormon. This the account to be maintained as true in these pages.

It will readily be observed that the history given by Joseph Smith concernig his finding the Nephite record is very

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trembled so with fear, lest all might be lost in consequence of some failure in keeping the commandments of God, that I was under the necessity of leaving the room in order to conceal my feelings. Joseph saw this, and said “Do not be uneasy, mother, all is right, see here, I have got a key.” I knew not what he meant but took the article of which he spoke into my hands, and examined it. He took it again and left me, but said nothing respecting the record.” \* \* \* That of which I spoke, which Joseph termed a key, was indeed nothing more nor less than the Urim and Thummim.” (History of the Prophet Joseph Smith by Lucy Smith, Chap. xxiii.)

<sup>m</sup>History of the Church, Vol. I., p. 18; also Pearl of Great Price (1902 Edition) pp. 88-96.

concise; that details are omitted. This is especially noticeable in regard to the efforts of his enemies to get the plates from him; he merely makes general reference to that subject; as also in the matter as to what passed between himself and the angel Moroni at the annual meetings between 1823 and 1827. Of these visits, so interesting and instructive to Joseph Smith, he only says:

I went at the end of each year, and at each time I found the same messenger there and received instructions and intelligence from him at each of our interviews respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner his kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.

Doubtless, however, the instructions then received but only so casually mentioned by the prophet, bore fruit in the progress of the work, in the things which the prophet said and did. The fact that much more happened than is stated in the narrative here quoted is evident; and not only is it evident from what the prophet himself says, but from what has been written by others who were associated with him in the work, and who must have received their information from the Prophet Joseph himself. Among these is Oliver Cowdery, who was the second Elder of the Church, and the first to give to the world any account in detail of these early events connected with the coming forth of the great work of God. This he did in 1834-5, in a series of nine letters to the *Saints Messenger and Advocate*, published at Kirtland, Ohio, under the caption, "Early Scenes and Incidents in the Church." And as these letters were published in the lifetime of the prophet, with his sanction and in a periodical published by the Church, it cannot be doubted that the statements contained in them are reliable. In these letters Oliver Cowdery gives an account of the young Prophet's first visit

to Cumorah that is much more circumstantial than the description of that event by the prophet, and which Oliver Cowdery could only have learned from Joseph himself. It will be remembered that in the account already quoted from the personal history of the Prophet Joseph that he said the angel Moroni had warned him that Satan would tempt him, on account of his father's indigent circumstances, to obtain the plates for the purpose of getting rich; but this he must not do, nor have any other object in view than that of glorifying God; and he must be influenced by no other consideration than that of building up God's kingdom. Otherwise, he could not get possession of the plates. And now Cowdery's account of the young Prophet's first visit to Cumorah. After quoting the instructions of the angel, directing Joseph to go to the hill Cumorah, Cowdery says:

Accordingly he repaired to the place which had thus been described. But it is necessary to give you more fully the express instructions of the angel with regard to the object of this work in which our brother [meaning of course Joseph Smith], had now engaged. He was to remember that it was the work of the Lord, to fulfill certain promises previously made to a branch of the house of Israel of the tribe of Joseph, and when it was brought forth it must be done expressly with an eye, as I have said before, single to the glory of God, and the welfare and restoration of the house of Israel. You will understand, then, that no motive of a pecuniary or earthly nature, was to be suffered to take the lead in the heart of the man thus favored. The allurements of vice, the contaminating influences of wealth, without the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, must have no place in his heart nor be suffered to take from it that warm desire for the glory and kingdom of the Lord, or, instead of obtaining, disappointment and reproof would most assuredly follow. Such was the instruction and the caution. Alternately, as we would naturally expect, the thought of the previous vision was ruminating in his

mind, with a reflection of the brightness and glory of the heavenly messenger; but again a thought would start across the mind on the prospects of obtaining so desirable a treasure—one in all human probability sufficient to raise him above the level of the common earthly fortunes of his fellow men, and relieve his family from want, in which by misfortune and sickness they were placed. \* \* \* Here was a struggle indeed; for when he calmly reflected upon his errand, he knew that if God did not give, he could not obtain; and again, with the thought or hope of obtaining, his mind would be carried back to its former reflections of poverty, abuse, wealth, grandeur and ease, until before arriving at the place described, this wholly occupied his desire; and when he thought upon the fact of what was previously shown him, it was only with an assurance that he should obtain, and accomplish his desire in relieving himself and friends from want. \* \* \* You will have wondered, perhaps, that the mind of our brother should be so occupied with the thoughts of the goods of this world, at the time of arriving at Cumorah, on the morning of the 22nd of September, 1823, after having been wrapt in the visions of heaven, during the night, and also seeing and hearing in open day; but the mind of man is easily turned if it is not held by the power of God through the prayer of faith, and you will remember that I have said that two invisible powers were operating upon his mind during his walk from his residence to Cumorah, and that the one urging the certainty of wealth and ease in this life, had so powerfully wrought upon him that the great object so carefully and impressively named by the angel, had entirely gone from his recollection that only a fixed determination to obtain now urged him forward. In this, which occasioned a failure to obtain, at that time, the record, do not understand me to attach blame to our brother; he was young, and his mind easily turned from correct principles, unless he could be favored with a certain round of experience. And yet, while young, untraditioned and untaught in the systems of the world, he was in a situation to be led into the great work of God, and be qualified to perform it in due time.

After arriving at the repository, a little exertion in removing the soil from the edges of the top of the box, and a light pry, brought to his natural vision its contents. No sooner did he behold

this sacred treasure than his hopes were renewed, and he supposed his success certain and without first attempting to take it from its long place of deposit, he thought, perhaps, there might be something more, equally as valuable, and to take only the plates, might give others an opportunity of obtaining the remainder, which could he secure, would still add to his store of wealth. These, in short, were his reflections, without once thinking of the solemn instruction of the heavenly messenger, and that all must be done with an express view of glorifying God.

On attempting to take possession of the record a shock was produced upon his system, by an invisible power, which deprived him, in a measure, of his natural strength. He desisted, for an instant, and then made another attempt, but was more sensibly shocked than before. What was the occasion of this he knew not—there was the pure unsullied record, as has been described—he had heard of the powers of enchantment, and a thousand like stories, which held the hidden treasurers of the earth, and supposed that physical exertion and personal strength was only necessary to enable him to yet obtain the object of his wish. He therefore made the third attempt with an increased exertion, when his strength failed him more than at either of the former times, and without premeditating he exclaimed, “Why can I not obtain this book?” “Because you have not kept the commandments of the Lord,” answered a voice, within a seeming short distance. He looked and to his astonishment there stood the angel who had previously given him the directions concerning this matter. In an instant, all the former instructions, the great intelligence concerning Israel and the last days were brought to his mind; he thought of the time when his heart was fervently engaged in prayer to the Lord, when his spirit was contrite, and when this holy messenger from the skies unfolded the wonderful things connected with this record. He had come to be sure, and found the word of the angel fulfilled concerning the reality of the records, but he had failed to remember the great end for which they had been kept, and in consequence could not have power to take them into his possession and bear them away.

At that instant he looked to the Lord in prayer, and as he prayed darkness began to disperse from his mind and his soul was lit up as it was the evening before, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit and again did the Lord manifest his conde-



scension and mercy; the heavens were opened and the glory of the Lord shone around about and rested upon him. While thus he stood gazing and admiring, the angel said, "Look!" and as he thus spake he beheld the prince of darkness, surrounded by his innumerable train of associates. All this passed before him, and the heavenly messenger said, "All this is shown, the good and the evil, the holy and impure, the glory of God and the power of darkness, that you may know hereafter the two powers and never be influenced or overcome by that wicked one. Behold, whatever entices and leads to good and to do good, is of God, and whatever does not is of that wicked one: it is he that fills the hearts of men with evil, to walk in darkness and blaspheme God; and you may learn from henceforth, that his ways are to destruction, but the way of holiness is peace and rest. You now see why you could not obtain this record; that the commandment was strict, and that if ever these sacred things are obtained they must be by prayer and faithfulness in obeying the Lord. They are not deposited here for the sake of accumulating gain and wealth for the glory of this world; they were sealed by the prayer of faith, and because of the knowledge which they contain they are of no worth among the children of men, only for their knowledge. On them is contained the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it was given to his people on this land, and when it shall be brought forth by the power of God it shall be carried to the Gentiles, of whom many will receive it, and after will the seed of Israel be brought into the fold of their Redeemer by obeying it also. Those who kept the commandments of the Lord on this land, through the prayer of faith obtained the promise, that if their descendants should transgress and fall away, a record should be kept and in the last days come to their children. These things are sacred, and must be kept so, for the promise of the Lord concerning them must be fulfilled. No man can obtain them if this heart is impure, because they contain that which is sacred; and besides, should they be entrusted in unholy hands the knowledge could not come to the world, because they cannot be interpreted by the learning of this generation; consequently they would be considered of no worth, only as precious metal. Therefore, remember, that they are to be translated by the gift and power of God. By them will the Lord work a great and a marvelous work; the wisdom of the wise

shall become as naught, and the understanding of the prudent shall be hid, and because the power of God shall be displayed those who profess to know the truth but walk in deceit, shall tremble with anger; but with signs and with wonders, with gifts and with healings, with the manifestations of the power of God, and with the Holy Ghost, shall the hearts of the faithful be comforted. You have now beheld the power of God manifested and the power of Satan: you see that there is nothing that is desirable in works of darkness; that they cannot bring happiness: that those who are overcome therewith are miserable, while on the other hand the righteous are blessed with a peace in the kingdom of God where joy unspeakable surrounds them. There they rest beyond the power of the enemy of truth, where no evil can disturb them. The glory of God crowns them, and they continually feast upon his goodness and enjoy his smiles. Behold, notwithstanding you have seen this great display of power, by which you may ever be able to detect the evil one, yet I give unto you another sign, and when it comes to pass then know that the Lord is God and that he will fulfill his purposes, and that the knowledge which this record contains will go to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people under the whole heaven. This is the sign: When these things begin to be known, that is, when it is known that the Lord has shown you these things, the workers of iniquity will seek your overthrow; they will circulate falsehoods to destroy your reputation, and also will seek to take your life; but remember this, if you are faithful, and shall hereafter continue to keep the commandments of the Lord, you shall be preserved to bring these things forth; for in due time he will again give you a commandment to come and take them. When they are interpreted the Lord will give the Holy Priesthood to some, and they shall begin to proclaim this gospel and baptize by water, and after they shall have power to give the Holy Ghost by the laying on of their hands. Then will persecution rage more and more; for the iniquities of men shall be revealed, and those who are not built upon the rock will seek to overthrow this Church; but it will increase the more opposed, and spread farther and farther, increasing in knowledge till the saints shall be sanctified and receive an inheritance where the glory of God shall rest upon them; and when this takes place, and all things are prepared, the Ten Tribes of Israel will be revealed in the

north country, whither they have been for a long season; and when this is fulfilled will be brought to pass that saying of the prophet—'And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.'" But, notwithstanding the workers of iniquity shall seek your destruction, the arm of the Lord will be extended and you will be borne off conqueror, if you keep all his commandments. Your name shall be known among the nations, for the work which the Lord will perform by your hands shall cause the righteous to rejoice and the wicked to rage; with one it shall be had in honor, and the other in reproach; yet, with these it shall be a terror because of the great and marvelous work which shall follow the coming forth of this fullness of the gospel. Now, go thy way, remember what the Lord has done for thee, and be diligent in keeping his commandments, and he will deliver thee from temptations, and all the arts and devices of the wicked one. Forget not to pray, that thy mind may become strong, that when he shall manifest unto thee, thou mayest have power to escape the evil, and obtain these precious things."

Such the events which took place on the occasion of the Prophet's first visit to Cumorah. It is unfortunate that we do not have a more circumstantial account of the subsequent annual interviews from 1823 to 1827; and likewise a more detailed account of the Prophet's early movements connected with his obtaining the plates, and caring for them.

The place, where the Nephite record was deposited must ever be of interest to those who believe that record to be true, and therefore a description of the hill Cumorah

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"It will be observed by the reader that in the reported interview between Joseph Smith and Moroni, as given by Oliver Cowdery, above there are a number of very remarkable predictions both concerning Joseph Smith and the work he is bringing forth, all of which are considered in Vol I of this work, Ch. xx.

will not be out of place in concluding this chapter. Joseph Smith's brief description of it has already been given.<sup>o</sup>

The writer visited the hill Cumorah on the 22nd of February, 1897, and the same day wrote out the following description of it: The hill Cumorah is on the road between Manchester and the town of Palmyra, in Wayne county, New York, about four miles directly south of the latter place. Approaching it from the north, you are confronted by the bold face of the hill, which rises quite abruptly from the common level of the surrounding country; and as the east and west slopes of the hill, as viewed from the north, are about equal and regular, it looks from a distance as if it might be a huge conical-shaped mound. Ascending its steep north side to the summit dispels the illusion, for one finds that he has but climbed the abrupt north end of a ridge of hill having its greatest extent from north to south, and which from its very narrow summit broadens and slopes gently to the southward until it sinks to the level of the common country. The east side of the hill is now ploughed, but the west side is untouched by the husbandman and about two or three hundred yards from the north end there is on the west side a small grove of young trees, with here and there a decaying stump of a large tree to bear witness that the hill was once covered with a heavy growth of timber. In fact it was so covered by timber when the Prophet Joseph Smith first visited the place in 1823, as indeed much of the surrounding country was at that time.

Unquestionably Cumorah is the most distinct land mark in all that section of country, the highest hill, and the most commanding in what I should describe as an extensive plain sloping northward filled with numerous irregular hills, but which in the main have their greatest extent, like Cumorah, from north to south; and which, also like Cumor-

ah, are generally highest at the north end. I observed this to be the case all the way from Syracuse to Palmyra. It is worthy of note, too, that the lakes of central and western New York, also have their greatest extent from north to south. Indeed, for the most part, they are but long strips of water left in their narrow beds when the great body of water, which in ages long gone by, once covered this whole region, rushed away with mighty force to the northward and gave the same general form both to the lakes and the hills on this northern slope of the water shed which runs from east to west through southern New York, north Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana; and which separates the basin of the great lakes and the valley of the St. Lawrence from that of the Ohio and Mississippi.

West of Cumorah the country is more open than on the south or east. The hills common to the country are fewer and the plain more expansive. Though the country south and east is broken, and the numerous hills higher than on the west, yet such is the commanding height of Cumorah that the view is unobstructed for many miles. Northward some miles the hills are most thickly clustered; between them and Cumorah is located the town of Palmyra, and beyond that, at the foot of the thickly clustered hills referred to, runs what is now called Canagrie creek, really one of the tributaries of the Clyde river, into which it empties at no great distance.

Such is the hill "Cumorah" and its surroundings; the hill "Ramah" of the Jaredites; "Mormon Hill," or "Mormon Bible Hill," as it is called by the people about Palmyra. "On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under the stone of considerable size, lay the plates of the Book of Mormon, deposited in a stone box."<sup>p</sup>

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<sup>p</sup>Joseph Smith, see ante.