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Direct External Evidence - Reflections on the Testimony of the Eleven Witnesses

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CHAPTER XXI.

DIRECT EXTERNAL EVIDENCE—REFLECTIONS ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE ELEVEN WITNESSES.

Doubtless the Lord had his own purpose to subserve in giving different kinds of testimony—divine and human—to the same truth. The testimony of the Three Witnesses, attended as it was by such remarkable displays of supernatural power, he knew would be opposed from the very circumstance of its being supernatural. It cannot be but that God fore-knew of the rise of that so-called “Rational Criticism” of divine things which would resolve inspired dreams, visions, revelations and the administration of angels into hallucinations, brought about first by an inclination to believe in the miraculous, (and “ordinarily,” argue the “Rational Critics,” “expectation is the father of its object.”)^b supplemented by the theory of self-deception, self-hypnosis or hypnotic influence of others. This particular school of philosophers took its rise in the last century, and in the twentieth is much in vogue.

It will be remembered that the starting point with “Rational Criticism” (and in that term is included the so-called “Higher Criticism”) is unbelief in what is commonly called the miraculous, and if the followers of that school do not deny the possibility of the miraculous, they at least say that it has never been proven; and further, they hold that “a supernatural relation”—such as the testimony of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, for instance—“cannot be accepted as such, that it always implies credulity or

^bRenan, “The Apostles,” p. 67 and note 46.

imposture.”^c What chance, then, would the testimony of the Three Witnesses have with those who regard it as “an absolute rule of criticism to deny a place in history to narratives of miraculous circumstances?” This, they hold, “is simply the dictation of observation. Such facts have never been really proved. All the pretended miracles near enough to be examined are referable to illusion or imposture!”^d Nor is this the climax of their absurdity, but they hold that the very “honesty and sincerity” of those who testify to the miraculous make them all the more untrustworthy as witnesses! I know this seems incredible; but what will be thought when I set down my authority for the statement, and it is learned that I quote no mere blatant declaimer against religion, nor any one of the many careless, or ill-informed writers of the so-called “Rational School of Critics,” but the sober-minded, and earnest man of science, the late Professor Huxley? The statement quoted is from his paper on “The Value of Witnesses to the Miraculous.”^e In the course of treating upon some statements made by one Eginhard (eighth century A. D.), concerning miraculous events connected with SS. Marcellinus and Petrus, the professor takes occasion to bear testimony to the high character, acute intelligence, large instruction and sincerity of Eginhard; then speaking of him as a witness to the miraculous, makes this astonishing statement:

It is hard upon Eginhard to say, but it is exactly the honesty and sincerity of the man which are his undoing as a witness to the miraculous. He himself makes it quite obvious that when his profound piety comes on the stage, his goodness and even his perception of right and wrong make their exit.

^cRenan, “Life of Jesus,” introduction, p. 14; also *New Witnesses*, Vol. I., chapter i.

^dRenan, “The Apostles,” p. 37.

^e“The Nineteenth Century,” March, 1889.

In another paper to the same magazine, three months later, the professor, writing practically on the same subject, says:

Where the miraculous is concerned, neither undoubted honesty, nor knowledge of the world, nor proved faithfulness as civil historians, nor profound piety, on the part of eye witnesses and contemporaries affords any guarantee of the objective truth of their statements, when we know that a firm belief in the miraculous was ingrained in their minds, and was the presupposition of their observations and reasonings.^f

This school of critics—and its following is much larger than is generally admitted—in this arbitrary way gets rid of the miracles of both the Old and the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus, to them, is but a figment of the overwrought minds of his disciples; and has no better foundation than the dreams and light visions of women, foremost among whom is Mary of Magdala,^g the once possessed. The glorious departure of Jesus from the midst of his disciples, on Mount Olivet—after the resurrection—is merely a collective

^fThe Nineteenth Century, June, 1889. Professor Huxley's papers quoted here will also be found in Agnosticism and Christianity, pp. 84 et seq. and 96 et seq.

^gRenan closes his treatise upon this subject as follows; "The glory of the resurrection, then, belongs to Mary of Magdala. After Jesus it is Mary who had done most of the foundation of Christianity. The shadow created by the delicate sensibility of Magdalene wanders still on the earth. Queen and patroness of idealists, Magdalene knew better than any one how to assert her dream, and impose on every one the vision of her passionate soul. Her great womanly vision: 'He has risen,' has been the basis of the faith of humanity. Away, impotent reason! Apply no cold analysis of this chef d'oeuvre of idealism and of love. If wisdom refuses to console this poor human race, betrayed by fate, let folly attempt the enterprise. Where is the sage who has given to the world as much joy as the possessed Mary of Magdala?" "The Apostles," p. 61.

hallucination, an illusion—"the air on these mountain tops is full of strange mirages!"^h The display of God's power on the day of Pentecost as revealed in the Acts of the Apostles," is a thunderstorm.ⁱ The speaking in tongues by the apostles on the same occasion and thereafter in the Church, is but the ecstatic utterance of incoherent sounds mistaken for a foreign language; while prophecy is but the fruit of mental excitement, a sort of ecstatic frenzy.^j

With views such as these quite prevalent in Christendom, relative to miraculous events, it is but to be expected that the testimony of the Three Witnesses would be accounted for on some similar hypothesis. The early anti-Mormon writers generally assumed a conspiracy between Joseph Smith and the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and hence

^hRenan. He thus tells the story of the appearing of Jesus to the five hundred brethren at once: "More than five hundred persons were already devoted to the memory of Jesus. In the absence of the lost Master, they obeyed the chief of the disciples, and above all, Peter. One day when following their spiritual chiefs, the Galileans had climbed one of the mountains to which Jesus had often led them, they fancied they saw him again. The air on these mountain tops is full of strange mirages. The same illusion which had previously taken place in behalf of the more intimate of the apostles [he refers to the transfiguration, Matt. xvii] was produced again. The whole assembly imagined that they saw the divine spectre displayed in clouds; they fell upon their faces and worshiped." ("The Apostles," p. 76).

ⁱRenan. This is his "rational" (!) conception of the event: "One day when they were assembled together a thunder storm arose. A violent wind burst the windows open—the sky seemed on fire. Thunder storms in those countries are accompanied by wonderful illuminations, the atmosphere is furrowed, as it were, on every side with garbs of flame. Whether the electric fluid had penetrated into the very chamber itself or whether a dazzling flash of lightning had suddenly illuminated all their faces, they were convinced that the spirit had entered, and that he was poured out upon the head of each one of them under the form of tongues of fire." "The Apostles," p. 95.

^jRenan, *The Apostles*, p. 98 et seq.

accorded no importance^k to the testimony of either group—the Three or the Eight. Later, however, the force of the testimony of the Witnesses persisting, and pressing for an explanation which the theory of conspiracy and collusion did not satisfy, there began to be advanced the theory that probably Joseph Smith had in some way deceived the Witnesses and thus brought them to give their testimony to the world. “Either these Witnesses were grossly deceived by a lying prophet,” says Daniel P. Kidder, who wrote an unfriendly book against the Church in 1843, “or else they wickedly and wilfully perjured themselves, by swearing to what they knew to be false. “The former,” he adds, “although not very creditable to their good sense, is yet the more charitable opinion, and is rendered probable by the fact, that hundreds have been deceived in the same way. It is confirmed, moreover, by the well-known mental phenomenon, that to individuals accustomed to disregard the laws of veracity, truth and falsehood are alike. They can as easily persuade themselves of the one as of the other.”^l

Also the Rev. Henry Caswell, professor of divinity in Kemper College, Missouri, writing in 1843, said:

He [Joseph Smith] then persuaded Martin Harris to believe, that in some sense he actually beheld the wonderful plates. There was a worthless fellow named Oliver Cowdery, residing in the neighborhood, a school teacher by profession, and also a Baptist preacher, who, together with one David Whitmer, was familiarly persuaded by our ingenious Prophet.^m

^kThus Alexander Campbell in *Millennial Harbinger*, Vol. II., (1831), pp. 86-96. Also Howe's *Mormonism*, (1834). He thinks the Witnesses incompetent, “Nor will any one disagree with us, when we shall have proven that the Book of Mormon was a joint speculation between the “Author and proprietor.” [Joseph Smith is alluded to] and the Witnesses,” ch. vii.

^l“Mormonism and the Mormons,” by Daniel P. Kidder, pp. 54, 55.

^m“Prophet of the Nineteenth Century,” p. 46.

Professor J. B. Turner, of Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois, in his "Mormonism in All Ages" (1842), takes practically the same position, but goes a step further and undertakes to explain how the Prophet "deceived" the Witnesses, or how he "persuaded" them to believe, "in some sense," that they had actually beheld "the wonderful plates." In doing this the professor quotes the revelation given through the Prophet, in June, 1829, to Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, previous to their viewing the Nephite plates.ⁿ Also the revelation to Martin Harris in which he is promised that he shall be a witness to the truth of the Book of Mormon.^o In the revelations cited the Lord promises these men that they shall view the Nephite record; and directs what they shall say after they have seen and heard the things promised. Because some of the phraseology of these revelations is found also in the testimony of the Three Witnesses, the professor rushes to the conclusion that the Witnesses never really saw the vision, nor heard the voice of God as promised, but were persuaded to accept these revelations through Joseph Smith as their witness to the truth of the Book of Mormon. In other words Professor Turner's theory is that the Witnesses had no other evidence than the word of Joseph Smith for the existence of the plates and other sacred things connected with them! And he triumphantly exclaims:

Here, then, is the mighty power of God, the angel, and voice of the Lord, which revealed such marvels in 1830, all concentrated in the person and pouring from the mouth of the Lord's Prophet in 1829. * * * The whole, then, of this mighty array of bombast, nonsense, and blasphemy, resolves itself into this: "Joe Smith is not only 'author and proprietor' of the Book

ⁿDoc. and Cov., Sec. xvii.

^oDoc. and Cov., Sec. v: 24-26.

of Mormon, as both he and his Witnesses declare, but he is also 'power of God,' 'angel,' 'voice,' 'faith,' 'eyes,' 'ears,' and 'hands' for the Witnesses themselves; that is all the evidence the world has for the Book of Mormon after all this bluster, is 'Joe Smith's say so.' He says that God instructs him, he instructs the Witnesses, and the Witnesses instruct the world. Quod erat demonstrandum!" (p. 179.)

Undoubtedly the "Illinois College" of the great State of Illinois was to be congratulated upon having as its chief professor, in 1842, a man of such acuteness of intelligence and profoundness of wisdom! Nor was Governor Thomas Ford, when, some years later, he wrote the history of Illinois, to be out-done by a mere professor of "Illinois College;" and therefore advanced what he had heard concerning the manner in which the testimony of the Witnesses was obtained. The Governor's peculiar relation to "Mormonism," no less than his exalted political station in Illinois, as also the fact that he is one of the principal historians of that very great state of the American Union, justifies me in setting down what he has said upon the subject in hand:

It is related that the Prophet's early followers were anxious to see the plates; the Prophet had always given out that they could not be seen by the carnal eye, but must be spiritually discerned; that the power to see them depended upon faith, and was the gift of God to be obtained by fasting, prayer, mortification of the flesh, and exercise of the spirit; that so soon as he could see the evidence of a strong and lively faith in any of his followers, they should be gratified in their holy curiosity. He set them to continual prayer, and other spiritual exercises, to acquire this lively faith by means of which the hidden things of God could be spiritually discerned and at last, when he could delay them no longer, he assembled them in a room, and produced a box, which he said contained the precious treasure. The lid was opened; the Witnesses peeped into it, but making no

discovery, for the box was empty, they said, "Brother Joseph, we do not see the plates." The Prophet answered them, "O ye of little faith How long will God bear with this worked and perverse generation? Down on your knees, brethren, every one of you, and pray God for the forgiveness of your sins; and for a holy and living faith which cometh down from heaven." The disciples dropped to their knees, and began to pray in the fervency of their spirit, supplicating God for more than two hours with fanatical earnestness; at the end of which time, looking again into the box, they were now persuaded that they saw the plates.

The governor then very sagely remarks, with a modesty so worthy to keep company with the exalted intelligence that could stoop to detail such mere drivel as above:

I leave it to philosophers to determine whether the fumes of an enthusiastic and fanatical imagination are thus capable of binding the mind and deceiving the senses by so absurd a delusion.^p

Inadequate as these theories are to account for the testimony of the Three Witnesses, and contemptible as they are for their childishness, they do not fail of more modern advocates. In 1899 a work published by the Appletons, which, while it was a work of fiction, was nevertheless an earnest effort to account for Joseph Smith on some other basis than that of his being a conscious fraud, wickedly bent on deceiving mankind, adopted the theory that "Smith was genuinely deluded by the automatic freaks of a vigorous but undisciplined brain, and that yielding to these he became confirmed in the hysterical temperament, which always adds to delusion, self-deception, and to self-deception half-conscious fraud. In his day it was necessary to reject a marvel or admit its spiritual significance; granting an honest

^pHist. Illinois, (Ford) pp. 257-8.

delusion as to his visions and his book, his only choice lay between counting himself the sport of devils or the agent of heaven; an optimistic temperament cast the die."^q

It remained, however, for the year of grace 1902 to witness the setting forth of these theories under the learned formulas of a scientific treatise, in which the testimony of the Witnesses received special consideration. Mr. I. Woodbridge Riley, the author of the work referred to, after quoting the account of the exhibition of the plates by the angel to the Three Witnesses, as related in the *History of Joseph Smith*,^r regards the duty before him to be to find to what degree the manifestations are explicable on the grounds of subjective hallucination, induced by hypnotic suggestion."^s

^q"The Mormon Prophet," by Lily Dougall, preface, p. vii.

^r*History of the Church*, Vol. I., pp. 54, 55.

^s"The Founder of Mormonism, A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr., by I. Woodbridge Riley, one time instructor in English, New York University," (Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1902). It cannot be denied that Mr. Riley's book is an ingenious work, and bears evidence of wide erudition, and an intimate knowledge of the subject. Mr. Riley's treatise, a book of 426 pages, was offered to the Philosophical Faculty of Yale University as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. His materials were also used in 1898 for a "Master of Art" thesis on the "Metaphysics of Mormonism." The book has an introductory, preface, by Professor George Trumbull Ladd, of Yale University, commending the work by laudatory praise of it. The author himself explains that his aim is "to examine Joseph Smith's character and achievements from the standpoint of recent psychology." He makes a careful pathological study of the ancestors of the Prophet, and reaches the conclusion that Joseph Smith's "abnormal experiences" (meaning his visions, revelations and visitations of angels) are the result of epilepsy. This his working hypothesis in accounting for Joseph Smith, supplemented by what he considers is the Prophet's unconscious liability to self-hypnosis, and his hypnotic power over others sufficient to make them partakers in his own vivid hallucinations. The hypothesis is an adroitly conceived one, and worked out on lines of sophistry that by many will be mistaken for sound reasoning. The whole theory is overthrown, however, by the work of the prophet achieved, the institution he founded

Mr. Riley proceeds to show that the Prophet possessed "magnetic power," and that the Witnesses were "sensitive subjects," and then says:

Given, then, such an influence, and sensitive subjects, and mental suggestion could produce anything in the way of illusion. Thus the explanation is subjective, not objective; it was captivation but not fascination; there was leader and led, and the former succeeded in inducing in the latter all the phantasmagoria of religious ardor. * * * Again, the vision of the plates may be related in a larger way with what has gone before. Of the three classes of hallucinations two have already been explicated. Joseph's father had the ordinary hallucination of dream; his grandfather that which persists into the waking state. The vision of the Three Witnesses is that form of hallucination which may occur either in the normal state, or be induced in the state of light hypnosis. The former is exemplified in day dreams; it is largely self-induced and implies some capacity or visualizing. The latter may also occur with the eyes open, but it is induced by the positive suggestion of another. * * * As the hypnotized soldier will hear the voice of his old commander, or the devout French peasant see his patron Saint, so was it in these manifestations. The ideas and interest when were uppermost in the mind were projected outwards. Harris had received the first "transcription of the gold plates;" Whitmer had been saturated with notions of ancient engravings; Cowdery, for weeks at a time, had listened to the sound of a voice translating the record of the Nephites. When the voice was again heard in the grove, when the four sought "by fervent and humble prayer to have a view of the plates," there is little wonder that there arose a psychic mirage, complete in every detail. Furthermore, the rotation in prayer, the failure of the

the Church, the religion he established, the philosophy he planted; all of which to madness would be impossible besides, as remarked by M. Renan, "Hitherto it has never been given to aberration of mind to produce a serious effect upon the progress of humanity." Life of Jesus, p. 105.

An extended review of Mr. Riley's book will be found in the author's work, "Defense of the Faith and the Saints," pp. 39-61.

first two attempts, the repeated workings of the Prophet over the doubting Harris but served to bring out the additional incentives to the hypnotic hallucination."

Thus "Rational Criticism" would explain away the testimony given by the Three Witnesses. The vision of the plates, of the angel, the glory of God that shone about the Witnesses, the voice of God from the midst of the glory—all was illusion, hallucination produced by mental suggestion, on the part of the Prophet. All was chimerical, a mental mirage!

But what of the testimony of the Eight Witnesses—all so plain, matter-of-fact, straight-forward and real? How shall that be accounted for? Here all the miraculous is absent. It is a man to man transaction. Neither superstition, nor expectation of the supernatural can play any part in working up an illusion or mental mirage respecting what the Eight Witnesses saw and handled. Their testimony must be accounted for on some other hypothesis than that of hallucination. And indeed it is. Some regard it as a mere fabrication of interested parties to the general scheme of deception. This, however, is an arbitrary proceeding, not warranted by a just treatment of the facts involved. Others, impressed with the evident honesty of the Witnesses, or not being able to account for the matter in any other way, admit that Joseph Smith must have had plates which he exhibited to the Eight Witnesses, but deceived them as to the manner in which he came in possession of them. Of the latter class is Pomeroy Tucker, whose home during the coming forth of the Book of Mormon was at Palmyra, where the book was printed, and who claims a personal acquaintance with the Prophet and all his associates in

"The Founder of Mormonism, by I. Woodbridge Riley, pp. 226, 227, 228.

the work at Palmyra. He refers to the fact of metallic plates covered with hieroglyphics having been discovered in various parts of the country, making special mention of some found in Mexico by Professor Rafinesque, and mentioned by the Professor in his Asiatic Journal for 1832; and some others found in Pike county, Illinois, a cleansing of which by sulphuric acid brought out the characters engraven upon them very distinctly. Mr. Tucker then says:

Smith may have obtained through Rigdon (the literary genius behind the screen) one of these glyphs, which resemble so nearly his description of the book he pretended to find on Mormon Hill [Cumorah]. For the credit of human character, it is better at any rate to presume this, and that the eleven ignorant Witnesses were deceived, by appearances, than to conclude that they wilfully committed such gross moral perjury before high heaven as their solemn averments imply."

Rev. William Harris, writing in 1841, while not admitting the honesty of the Witnesses himself, suggests, nevertheless, the possibility of Joseph Smith deceiving the Eight Witnesses by presenting to them plates of his own manufacture:

Now, even admitting, for the sake of argument, that these Witnesses are all honest and credible men, yet what would be easier than for Smith to deceive them? Could he not easily procure plates to be made, and inscribe thereon a set of characters, no matter what and then exhibit them to his intended Witnesses as genuine? What would be easier than thus to impose on their credulity and weakness? And if it were necessary to give them the appearance of antiquity a chemical process could easily effect the matter.^w

^vOrigin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism, by Pomeroy Tucker, p. 75.

^w"Mormonism Portrayed," Rev. William Harris, pp. 4-10.

So Daniel P. Kidder, writing in 1842, says, in commenting on the testimony of the Witnesses:

That these men may have seen plates is very possible. * * * * * That Smith showed them plates, which to ignorant men had the appearance of gold, is easy enough to be believed; and if he had manufactured the same, it would have been no great stretch of ingenuity.^x

Professor J. B. Turner, writing in 1842, adopts the same theory with reference to the testimony of the Eight Witnesses:

We are not only willing, but anxious to admit that Smith did show some plates of some sort; and that they [the Eight Witnesses] actually testify to the truth, so far as they are capable of knowing it.^y

So John Hyde,^z 1857:

Every careful reader must be compelled to admit that Smith did have some plates of some kind. Smith's antecedents and subsequents, show that he did not have genius sufficient to originate the whole conception, without some palpable suggestion. The having chanced to have found some plates in a mound, as Wiley found his, or as Chase discovered Smith's "Peepstone," would be just such an event as would suggest every peculiar statement Smith made about his plates, at the same time account for what is known; and, therefore, it is more than reasonable to conclude that Smith found his plates while digging gold. This entirely destroys all the shadow of argument so laboriously compiled by the Mormon apologists, which, even without this, although their strongest argument, only proves that he had some plates, but at

^x"Mormonism," Kidder, pp. 52, 53.

^y"Mormonism in all Ages," Turner, p. 178.

^z"Mormonism, Its Leaders and Designs," by John Hyde, Jr., pp. 269, 270.

the same time has no force of proof as to Smith's obtaining them from an angel.^a

Professor Riley, with some other anti-Mormon writers, suggests the possibility of collective hypnotization in the case of the Eight as well as in that of the Three Witnesses: and hypnotization produced both visual and sense illusion; but it is only a suggestion. While maintaining, with the utmost confidence the mental mirage theory, induced by hypnotic suggestion, as an adequate accounting for the testimony of the Three Witnesses, he can only suggest it as a possible solution of the testimony of the Eight Witnesses, and inclines rather to the theory of "pure fabrication." "It is a document," he remarks, "due to the affidavit habit."^b

As for the rest of the anti-Mormon critics on this point, they adopt the pure fabrication theory, or admit that the Prophet Joseph had in his possession some kind of plates which he either manufactured or accidentally discovered in his alleged searching after hidden treasures for some of his employers, and which he really exhibited to the Eight Witnesses. But why have the "pure fabrication" theory to account for the testimony of the Eight Witnesses, and the "mental hallucination" theory to account for the testimony of the Three? If the testimony of the Eight is pure fabrication is not the testimony of the Three pure fabrication also? Or, at least, is it not most likely to be so? For if conscious fraud, and pure fabrication lurks anywhere in Joseph Smith's and the Eleven Witnesses' account of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, would it not exist throughout the whole proceeding? Professor Turner, already twice quoted, in admitting that the Prophet

^b"The Founder of Mormonism," pp. 228-231.

^a"Mormonism, Its Leaders and Designs," by John Hyde, Jr., pp. 269, 270.

had in his possession some sort of plates, which he showed the Eight Witnesses, says that he is anxious to make the admission "in order to keep up the just and charitable equilibrium between the knaves and fools in Mormonism and the world at large. Three to Eight is at once a happy and reasonable proportion. We will not disturb it. It is gratifying to human philanthropy to be able to account for all the facts in the case by this charitable solution." This sarcasm, however, is not a "solution;" nor is it refutation of the testimony of the Witnesses; nor is it argument! nor anything but the fuming of a small mind; yet it is the only "reason" I have ever heard advanced for adopting the hallucination theory in the case of the Three Witnesses, and either the pure fabrication or deception theory in the case of the Eight Witnesses.

The testimony of the Three and the Eight Witnesses, respectively, stands or falls together. If the pure fabrication theory is adopted to explain away the testimony of the Eight Witnesses, there is no reason why it should not be adopted to explain away the testimony of the Three. But every circumstance connected with the testimony of all these Witnesses, as we have seen, cries out against the theory of "pure fabrication." It is in recognition of the evident honesty of the Three Witnesses that the theory of mental hallucination is invented to account for their testimony; as it is also the evident honesty of the Eight Witnesses that leads to the admission by many anti-Mormon writers that Joseph Smith must have had some kind of plates which he exhibited to the Eight Witnesses, though he may not have obtained them through supernatural means.

The theory of pure fabrication of the testimony of the Witnesses is absolutely overwhelmed by the evidence of their honesty.

The hallucination theory breaks down under the force of the matter-of-fact testimony of the Eight Witnesses, from which all possible elements of hallucination are absent.

The manifestation of the divine power, through which the Three Witnesses received their testimony, destroys the theory of deception alleged to have been practiced by the Prophet on the credulity of the Eight Witnesses by exhibiting plates either manufactured by himself or accidentally discovered.

Such, then, is the force of this direct testimony of the Eleven Witnesses to the truth of the Book of Mormon—the testimony of the Three and the Eight when considered together. It is so palpably true that it cannot be resolved into illusion or mistake. It is so evidently honest that it cannot be resolved into pure fabrication. It is of such a nature that it could not possibly have been the result of deception wrought by the cunning of Joseph Smith. There remains after these but one other theory. “The Witnesses were honest.” They saw and heard and handled what they say they saw, and heard, and handled. Their testimony stands not only unimpeached, but unimpeachable.