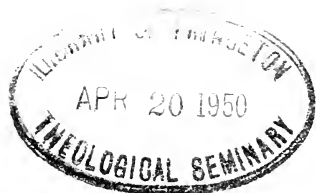


T. C. Smith

The Credentials of the
Book of Mormon and
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THE CREDENTIALS OF THE **Book of Mormon** and Mormonism

A CRITICAL
STUDY



August 1912
No. 1

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237 WEST FIRST AVENUE, DENVER, COLORADO

To the Reader

This work is a Compendium of Mormonism, its history, its prophet, its book and its status of today. It proposes to put into the hands of Christians, in a cheap and portable form, such data as will be an answer to the claims of the Mormon Missionary and an antidote to his doctrines.

The American people are stolidly indifferent to the persistent Mormon propaganda carried on among them. Twelve to fifteen hundred missionaries, constantly at work, have distributed 175,000 copies of the Book of Mormon and millions of pieces of literature, in the United States. Something of their activity may be demonstrated by any minister asking his congregation how many have been called upon by the Mormon Missionary, and seeing the great number of hands that will go up.

Another and indeed a principal purpose in writing this work has been to make it a missionary force in Utah. One thousand copies of this number have been set aside to send to Mormon readers as soon as their names and addresses can be obtained. The Latter Day Saints may help further this purpose by sending names of friends whom they would like to have read them. The number is limited, and "first come first served."

The pamphlet form has been chosen instead of a book because of the advantage it offers of wide distribution. Each number will have a completeness, or finality of its own, so that each will be a definite message. Ten to fifteen copies of this number may be sent out for the price of a book, speaking to ten times as many people.

And many people will be persuaded to buy and read a pamphlet, who would not think of buying the book.

The writer has many friends among the Mormons. Some of them will remember the friendly tilts they had with him, both in public and private. They will not be offended at receiving this, for it is the message of a friend, not the attack of an enemy. Read it, and answer back in kind, if the spirit moves to do so.

INTRODUCTION.

The writer offers no apology for this book. Mormonism is a perpetually live question, and will remain so for years. It has an impressive vitality. It is bold, aggressive, intolerant. It can make no compromise with Christianity, nor Christianity with it. They are incompatible, as much so as freedom and slavery. The Mormon church is founded upon theocracy, the church of God upon democracy. No freedom of discussion is possible under a priesthood that graduates up from the lowest to the highest, which highest is God's sole mouth-piece. When God speaks, all discussion must cease. It is either submission or apostasy.

This study goes far beyond any preceding attempt to get at the origin, character and matter of the Book of Mormon. It confines itself as closely to that one thing as the nature of the examination will permit.

Joseph Smith comes under investigation as author and his history is given and his character delineated only so far as his history reflects light on his book, and his book reveals him. The later history of the people, their peculiar customs, the political questions involved, the system of religious socialism which binds the members together and their peculiar doctrines and practices are discussed incidentally, and only where they elucidate the book under examination.

The objective point is the Book of Mormon. Is it **true**, or **false**? If true, Mormonism is true and invulnerable. If false, neither logic, nor faith, nor prayer, can save it. Mormon writers have often conceded this. They accept the alternative; so must we all.

"If the origin of the Book of Mormon could be proved to be other than that set forth by Joseph Smith; if the book itself could be proved to be other than it claims to be, * * * then the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and its message and doctrines, * * must fall; for if that book be other than it claims to be; if its origin be other than that ascribed to it by Joseph Smith, then Joseph says that which is not true; he is a false prophet of false prophets; and all he taught, and all his claims to inspiration and divine authority, are not only vain, but wicked; and all that he did is not only useless, but mischievous, beyond human comprehension."—Eld. B. H. Roberts: Preface to **New Witness for God**.

There are two ways of stating a case or of arguing a matter. One is the method of the controversialist, who is striving for victory, but not searching for truth. We do not follow that. The other is the method of the seeker after truth. He is calm, dispass-

sionate, clear, fearless, but never vindictive nor supercilious. He gives his opponent credit for honesty as to his convictions and faith, and weighs his reasons conscientiously.

This study may be, doubtless will be, a disappointment to the ultras of both sides. There is no malice in it, no vituperation, no invectives, no hysterics. It would be useless to claim that prejudice has no place in it. Our prejudices are our second nature. They are inevitable. A presentation of a matter of this kind, without influence from former convictions, would be superhuman, divine.

Mormons will not like the book, for it takes a straight course through a tangled maze, having for its one aim, the discovery of the eternal boundary lines.

Truth and error, though they may be mingled in human statements, never lie within the same limitations; they always occupy different and antagonistic positions.

The arguments that Mormons advance to justify their belief, have been carefully considered, weighed, and their values estimated. These have not been taken up, specifically, except in a few instances, but they all have their place in the general argument.

The Book of Mormon must come to us not only untainted by proved fraud or deception, but also free from the suspicion of it. There must be no room for imposture. For if it be true, its appearance in the world is as momentous a fact in human history, as that of the New Testament. A world's salvation by restoration, depends upon it. Its credibility, therefore, as a divine revelation, must be absolutely unimpeachable.

At every step of this investigation we are virtually asking this question: Could Joseph Smith, with the help of other men, or without it, have written or done this? Was God a necessary part in the transaction?

If we find that the Book of Mormon can be accounted for by human agency, without divine assistance, if its marvels rest upon mere credulity and are not sustained by sound reasons—that is if one must lay aside his common sense and stultify his intelligence to believe them—the book must and will be rejected by people of intelligence.

This first number is the preface to our Study. It is an examination of the External Evidences of the Book of Mormon, a critical survey of the history preceding and accompanying its coming forth. We take up the book itself in the next number.

The designation, Mormon, is used in no invidious sense, but because it is short, expressive and accepted by that people.

In writing, the members of the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Utah are in mind.

I.

THE COMING FORTH OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

It is only fair that one accused as Joseph Smith has been, should be permitted to speak for himself. We, therefore, give his own account of himself and his book, abridged somewhat, but not to the prejudice of his story—as we find it in his Autobiography:

“I was born Dec. 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vt. My father, Joseph Smith, moved to Palmyra, N. Y., when I was in my tenth year; after about four years in Palmyra, he moved to Manchester in the same county.

“Some time after we moved to Manchester, there was an unusual religious excitement, beginning with the Methodists, but soon became general among all sects. The whole country was affected and great multitudes united with the different churches.

“This created no small division among the people, some crying, ‘Lo, here!’ and others ‘Lo, there!’ These converts expressed great love for one another and the clergy manifested great zeal to get everybody converted, yet when the converts began to file off, some to one party and some to another, these good feelings were shown to be more pretended than real, priest contending with priest and convert with convert, and their good feelings, if they had any, were entirely lost in strife of words and contest of opinions.

“I was at this time in my fifteenth year, and my father’s family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, four of them, my mother, Lucy, my brothers, Hyrum and Samuel, and my sister. Sophronia, joining that church.

(1) “I was called to serious reflections and suffered great uneasiness. Still I kept myself aloof from all parties, though I attended meetings as occasion would permit.

“In time I got somewhat partial to the Methodists and I felt some desire to join them; but so great was the confusion and strife, that it was impossible for a person as young as I was and unacquainted with men and things to come to any certain conclusion who was right and who was wrong.

“In the midst of this tumult I often said to myself, what is to be done? Who of these parties are right and who wrong, or are they all wrong? If any one of them is right, how shall I know it?

“While laboring under this difficulty, I was one day reading the

Epistle of James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Never did any scripture come with more power to the heart of man, than this to mine. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any one needed wisdom from God, I did.

"At last I came to the conclusion that I must remain in darkness, or else ask of God. This I determined to do.

(2) "In accordance with this determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods on the morning of a beautiful day in the spring of 1820. It was the first time in my life I had ever made such an attempt, for amid all my anxiety I had never as yet made the attempt to pray vocally.

"Reaching the place I had in mind to go, and looking around to see that I was alone, I kneeled down and began to pray.

(3) "I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, so great indeed as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak.

"Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time I was doomed to sudden destruction. Exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me, just when I was ready to sink in despair, just at this moment of my greatest alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.

(4) "Immediately I found myself delivered from the enemy that bound me, and I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spoke to me, calling me by name, and, pointing to the other, said, 'This is my beloved Son, hear him.'

"No sooner could I speak than I asked them which of all the sects was right, and which I should join. His answer was that I must join none of them for they were all wrong; their creeds were an abomination and those professors were all corrupt.

(3) "When I came to myself again, I found myself, lying on my back and looking up to heaven.

"A few days after this vision, I gave a Methodist preacher an account of it. I was greatly surprised at his behavior, for he treated my story not lightly, but with contempt, saying it was all of the devil, there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days.

(5) "My telling the story excited much prejudice against me among professors of religion, and caused me much persecution. And although I was only an obscure boy, yet men of high standing took

sufficient notice to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution. It caused me serious reflection and often has since, that an obscure boy doomed to get his livelihood by daily labor, should be thought a character of sufficient importance to attract the attention of the great ones of the most popular sects, in such a manner as to excite the spirit of the most bitter persecution.

"Nevertheless it was a fact that I had seen a vision and I felt like Paul, who related how he saw a light and heard a voice, although few believed him.

"So it was with me. I was hated and persecuted for saying I had seen a vision, yet it was true. And while they were reviling and persecuting me, I said in my heart, 'Why persecute me for telling the truth?' Who am I that I could withstand God?" . . .

"I continued to perform my common vocations of life until Sept. 21, 1823, all the time suffering persecutions.

(6) "During the time from the vision to 1823, having been forbidden to join any religious sect and being of tender years, persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have entreated me kindly, and if they believed me to be deluded to have endeavored kindly to have reclaimed me, I was left to all kinds of temptations; and mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into diverse temptations, offensive in the sight of God. Often I felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; when on the evening of the above mentioned 21st of September, after I had retired to my bed, I betook myself to prayer to Almighty God for forgiveness, and also a manifestation of my state and standing before Him.

(4) "While in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light in my room, increasing in brilliancy until the room was lighter than noonday. Immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air. He had on a loose robe of whiteness above anything earthly I had ever seen, and his whole person was glorious beyond description.

(7) "He called me by name, and said he was a messenger sent from God, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good or evil among all nations, kindred and tongues.

"He said there was a book written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent and their origin, and containing the fulness of the gospel; also two stones in silver

bows fastened to a breastplate, called the Urim and Thummim, were with the plates. The possession of these stones constituted a "seer" in ancient times and they were for the purpose of translating the plates.

"He quoted prophecies of the Old Testament, first the third chapter of Malachi, and also the fourth chapter with a little variation from our Bible. In addition to these he quoted the 11th chapter of Isaiah, saying it was about to be fulfilled; also the 22nd and 23rd verses of the 3rd chapter of Acts.

"He also quoted Joel 2:18 to close, saying this was not yet fulfilled but soon would be. He told me that when I got those plates, for the time was not yet, I should not show them to any person, neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim, except as I should be commanded; if I did I should be destroyed.

"While he was talking, I saw in a vision the place where the plates were deposited. The light of the room grew dim and I saw him ascend in a conduit of light and disappear.

(The vision and charges with some additions, were repeated three times.)

"Again he ascended, the cock crowed, and I found our interview had lasted the whole night.

(4) "I rose and went to work as at other times, but was unable for lack of strength; seeing which my father told me to go home. I started, but in attempting to cross the fence out of the field, my strength failed me, and I fell helpless to the ground where I lay for a time, unconscious of anything.

"The first thing I recollect was a voice speaking to me, calling my by name; and on looking up I saw the same messenger standing over me, surrounded by light as before.

"He again related to me all he had related before, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him all

"I obeyed, returned to my father and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He assured me it was of God and told me to do as the messenger commanded.

"I left the field and went to the place the messenger had told me the plates were deposited, which I knew in an instant.

(8) "Near Manchester, Ontario County, New York, is a hill of considerable size, the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of the hill, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates in a stone box. The stone was thick and rounding on the upper side, thinner at the edges, the middle part exposed.

"Removing the earth, I fixed a lever under the edge and raised the rock, and there I saw the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. I made an effort to take them out but was forbidden by the messenger, and was told that the time to get them would not be until four years from that time. I was to come to the place one year from that time when he would meet me again.

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

(9) "* * * In the month of October, 1825, I hired with an old gentleman, Josiah Staal, of Chenango County. He had heard something of an old silver mine once opened by the Spaniards, in Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, and had been digging to discover it. He took me with the rest of his hands, to dig for the mine, at which I continued to work for nearly a month, without success, and finally I prevailed with him to cease digging for it. Hence arose the very prevalent story of my having been a money digger.

"During the time I was thus employed, I was put to board with a Mr. Isaac Hale, and there I first saw my wife (his daughter) Emma Hale. On the 18th of June, 1827, we were married, while I was yet employed in the service of Mr. Staal.

"Owing to my continuing to assert I had seen a vision, persecution still followed me, and my wife's family were very much opposed to our marriage, for which reason we went and were married at the house of Squire Tarbill, in South Bainbridge, N. Y., and immediately went to my father's, and farmed with him that season.

"The time arrived at length for obtainning the plates, the Urim and the Thummim and breastplate, and on the 22nd day of September, 1827, the heavenly messenger delivered them to me.

(10) "I soon found out why I had received such strict charge to keep them safe, for no sooner was it known that I had them than the most strenuous exertions were made and stratagems employed to get them from me. Multitudes were on the alert continually, but by the wisdom of God they remained safe in my hands, and when, according to arrangement the messenger called for them I delivered them up to him and he has them in charge until this day, May 2, 1838."

The foregoing record has been given quite fully, because it covers the most important incidents in the early history of the book. The following further statement as to the plates is appended:

(11) The records were engraved on plates which looked like gold, six inches by eight inches, and not quite so thick as tin, bound together like the leaves of a book, three rings running through the whole. The volume was about six inches thick, and a part of the leaves were sealed. The characters, the engravings, were small but beautiful in form.

With the records was the Urim and Thummim, two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow and fastened to a breastplate.

II.

REVIEW OF FOREGOING STORY.

Having given Joseph the opportunity to speak for himself, since we can not cross-question him, we will examine some parts of his testimony. The figures in parenthesis refer back to like figures in his story. (1) We have here presented to us a boy not fifteen years of age, inexperienced and even non-religious, hitherto, very unlettered, seriously debating in his own mind as to which of the sects was right and which were wrong, with all the gravity and seriousness of a mature man. He does not seek to learn about them, he does not go to any minister or experienced Christian to find out, as would have been most natural for him to do.

Next, he betrays indifference as to his own personal relation to God; he hasn't offered up a single prayer, not so much even as to say, "Lord be merciful to me." There is no sign of repentance or confession. He is in deep perplexity, not as to himself, but as to others. So he goes to God, not to inquire what he must do to be saved, but to find out which church was right. We know, from the character of the preaching of that day, that he had listened to many earnest pleas to repent of his sins and turn to God who will have mercy.

His course was so unnatural, so unusual with youths who are very sensitive to sin, and so affected by the story of Christ's suffering for them, that they have no thoughts about creeds and sects, but simply long to be Christ's. To all these influences, this boy in his fifteenth year, presents an unfeeling heart, and is absorbed in the question, "Which sect is right?"

We must be excused from accepting this as being true about the boy; it was a characteristic after-thought of the man.

Fortunately he gives us the approximate time of writing this—May, 1838. The language confirms us in this opinion, for it is the language of maturity, not of youth.

(2) Passing on further, he assures us he had never before attempted to pray vocally. His mother says he had never read the Bible through in his life and was less inclined to reading books than her other children. If Joseph speaks the truth, his home was not a home of prayer, and his mother had never taught him any of those simple forms of petition, which open the doors to God and fix the habit of prayer, in children.

Evidently he was not fit to join any church, although he assures us he was inclined to the Methodists. He was not, to use his own afterwards often repeated phrase, "born of God."

So, when he did attempt to pray, it was not for a new heart, but "Lord, who is the biggest hypocrite?" The answer he says he got was "they are all wrong, their creeds are an abomination, and these professors are all corrupt."

This is a reflection of Joseph's sentiments of 1830 and onward. His method of warring against all churches, was to arraign them for heresy, to charge them with apostasy and as having no authority from God to minister in His name, and to claim that he alone was the messenger whom Heaven had ordained to restore the lost gospel, to re-establish the church of Christ, to usher in a new dispensation, and to save mankind. For eight years he had been uttering these presumptuous claims, and now, in 1838, he seeks to bring in the testimony of God, to confirm his word. Someone—note that he does not say it was God, although he would have us infer it—declares in unmistakable terms of the whole Christian world, "they are all wrong and corrupt." Then he turns to his followers and says, "Haven't I been telling you so?"

We shall find, in the course of this study, that Joseph manufactured scripture and gave forth revelations to suit himself and to confirm his claims; that he even changed his own revelations, when changed conditions demanded something different.

(3) The physical phenomena accompanying his visions, have raised the scientific question whether Joseph was not, by heredity, subject to some form of epilepsy. The feeling of dread, the spasmodic struggle with the spirit of evil, the appearance of light about him, bright personages and voices, unconsciousness, and his lying upon his back, are suggestive of epilepsy. Prof. Riley has treated this matter fully in his *Psychological Study of Joseph, the Mormon Prophet*.

It is well to remember that Joseph Smith is only one of many comparatively recent persons who have claimed visions of God and revelations fully as remarkable as his, and who have been deceived,

by subjective delusions, or were unmitigated frauds. The religious obsession, either that the person is a special messenger from God, or even God Himself, is a frequent symptom of dementia of the most obstinate and incurable form. Such claims do not call for faith but for scientific investigation. If Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, he differs altogether from those prophets who helped to make up the line of prophets from Samuel to John the Baptist.

One fact impresses us deeply, the omission of independent testimony of his mother who wrote a history of her prophet son, but fails to corroborate his story. What mother would have been so remiss, if these things had been "hid in her heart?"

Yet she contents herself, when it comes to all these marvelous visions, with copying Joseph's own record.

(5) The early persecutions which he pictures in high colors, as following him from 1820, onward, have very little historic basis for belief. He was very likely ridiculed, and became the butt of satirical remarks by his boy companions—if he told that marvelous story—for that would be quite natural. But that "multitudes" conspired to persecute him, that "men of high standing," "the great ones of the most popular sects," excited the country community against him and led them to follow him with harsh persecutions, is incredible. Besides, Joseph's confession that he fell, through mingling with all classes, into sins that were heinous in the sight of God, is a contradiction of his charge.

All of this was written after he got to be a man of 33 with a body of devoted people around him, and so far away from the scenes of his boyhood, that there was little possibility of denial and disproof.

His father does not say he was persecuted, and his mother refers to it in a paragraph of five lines, very much as Joseph had given it. Why did they not give specifications of time, place and persons, if Joseph was persistently hounded by enemies?

(6) The proof that was gathered in 1834 of the general reputation of the Smith family and of Joseph in particular, that he was lazy, untruthful, intemperate and given to exaggeration, demonstrates one of two things; either their charges were true, or the more than sixty witnesses were unconscionable liars.

In this case, the community said the whole family were undesirable citizens, and Joseph, Jr., the worst of all. If it were left so, we might hold our judgment in suspense, but Joseph confesses judgment. He was guilty of things "offensive in the sight of God," which was all the community alleged, the difference being, Joseph plead guilty

to the general indictment, while the community entered specifications.

(7) **Moroni, Joseph's good angel.** This choice was neither a happy nor a logical one. Moroni did nothing more than write the concluding books of the Book of Mormon. He was the son of an illustrious father from whom he received certain plates, and hid them up with his own, in Cumorah, convenient for Joseph, 1,400 years afterwards. When he took his departure from the earth where all his kindred and people were sleeping unburied, it was without any hint he should ever return. On the contrary, he declares "he is soon to rest in the paradise of God until his spirit and body reunited, he is to be brought forth triumphant through the air to meet Jew, Gentile and the Seed of Joseph, at the pleasing bar of God." Moroni, though a prophet, did not expect to appear to Joseph.

The Book of Mormon relates that three of the Nephite disciples of Jesus were left to mingle with men, not seeing death nor translation until their Lord should return; they were to do "great and marvelous works," before that day, "yea, **even among the Gentiles.**" Here was Joseph's chance to be taken into the apostolic office by living apostles; he might also have enlisted the disciple whom Jesus loved, for according to Joseph, John is still waiting on the earth for the advent.

These could have revealed the hiding place of the plates, and given him a flesh and blood ordination as the apostle of "the new dispensation." Joseph seemingly forgot them, and brought in Moses, and Elijah, and Elias, and John Baptist, and Peter, James and John, to give him his "keys."

Joseph does make use of one of these three Nephites, it seems, but it was only to walk and carry one hundred and ninety-four pounds of gold plates from Harmony, Penn., to Fayette, N. Y., a distance of one hundred miles, while Joseph rode in the wagon with young David Whitmer.

Here was their opportunity to introduce a lost salvation to a misguided and lost world. Joseph certainly did them an injustice and failed to fulfill the prophecy spoken of them, by neglecting to call them in.

(8) Joseph's mother, in her interesting history, gives us a side light into the experiences of Joseph, on his second visit to Cumorah, and confirms a piece of the testimony which came out in 1834.

Two of Joseph's companions, young men, gave Joseph's story of his find in the box. As they relate the story Joseph told them, he found the place in "a dream"; Joseph says he saw it "in a vision."

When he attempted to get them, "he was knocked down." On looking up he saw a man, a Spaniard in appearance, wearing a long beard, his throat cut from ear to ear, and blood streaming down, who told him he could not get them alone. That was Joseph's tale to them.

Now, Joseph's mother tells us that, on attempting to get the contents of the stone box "he was hurled violently to the ground." Joseph also related, according to his mother's account, that on another occasion the angel gave him at Cumorah the severest punishment he had ever received in his life. Unconsciously, he confirms the two boys.

(9) Joseph is too modest. He had a reputation far and wide **"as the possessor of means by which he could discern things invisible to the natural eye."** These are his mother's words, to explain why Mr. Stool came from his home over one hundred miles away, to hire him to help find the lost silver mine. And Isaac Hale says that "he looked for the money diggers with the stone in his hat and his hat over his face." "He gave them great encouragement at first, but when they had arrived in digging near to the place where he had stated an immense treasure would be found, he said the enchantment was so strong that he could not see."

That Joseph used a stone which they call a "seer stone," in translating the plates, is conceded by the highest Mormon authority, as we shall show.

Where did Joseph get that stone? How came he to know it possessed magic power? He does not say, but others do. It was the reputation he got by means of that, long before he thought of translating the book, and while he was using it as a common fortune-teller, that brought Mr. Stool to solicit his help.

(10) How much effort was really made by "the wicked and the ungodly" about him to get possession of his plates, it is now impossible to determine. The pretense of great secrecy, however, on the part of Joseph and his family, is hardly credible. His mother says that the very next day a neighbor came and made inquiries about the plates, but that "no one had ever heard anything from us respecting them, except Joseph's father, two or three years before, had spoken to a confidential friend about them." And this old whispered secret is pointed to as the vent through which the report of the discovery escaped them.

The evidence is very strong to the contrary. The members of the family not only told it but boasted of it; and the news spread

rapidly, east and west, and was the subject of much comment by the newspapers.

Conspiracies were formed, in the wake of these rumors, to get possession of them, so Joseph tells us, but like nearly all his record, it is overdrawn, and the pranks of young men were exaggerated into warlike and hostile attacks upon him by "multitudes."

Joseph was not averse, at any time, to publicity. He knew perfectly well that the advertising he was getting, and the consequent notoriety, would be his chief capital, when his book should come forth. It was his winning card.

(11) Plates of record. This was not an original conception, altogether, yet it was a new thing under the sun to have an entire Bible engraved on brass plates.

The Egyptians had used papyrus, tablets of wax, and flat and cylindrical tablets of clay; the old Babylonians wrote much of their history on clay—on the bricks they built into their walls, or on those kept for public record; the Jews used papyri, and afterwards the skins of animals, for their sacred books and for their chronicles; but extensive records, containing all the Old Testament to Jeremiah, and the genealogy of the tribe of Joseph, inscribed on brass plates; Ether's history of the Jaredites for 1,600 years on gold plates; and the book of gold plates, which Joseph unearthed from Cumorah, containing the sacred things of the Nephites for a thousand years, and the unsealed part to the end of time, was a new thing under the sun. Solomon was wrong. He had not fathomed the fertile imagination of this modern man, who assembled such a magnificent array of metal tablets, brass and gold, as the whole world had never dreamed of before.

The Jews had some plates of brass and gold; brass plates on the base of the laver, and the holy crown of the high priest was a plate of gold fastened to his miter and banded his forehead. On it was engraved, like the engraving of a signet, "Holiness to the Lord."

The Egyptians and Babylonians had gold, but they made their records on cheaper materials. Plates of bronze were used in decorating, here and there, palace or temple, and the Hittite version of the treaty between Pharaoh and the king of the Hittites was upon a tablet of silver, not engraved, but incised, or cut in, so as to leave the characters in relief, as we do on grave stones; but no such method of writing history as Joseph describes has been discovered. The statement lies within the limits of possibility, but its improbability will be seen at a glance. If the Nephites followed the custom exclusively of engraving everything in Egyptian hieroglyphics on plates of

brass or gold, they chose the most difficult, the most laborious and the costliest method possible. They were prolific writers, for we have many plates mentioned; the plates of Laban containing the Old Testament to Jeremiah. The genealogy of the tribe of Joseph; the plates of Lehi; two complete sets of plates by Nephi, one large, the other small; plates of various kings and prophets from Jacob to IV Nephi, covering a period of 1,000 years; plates of Mormon and plates of Moroni; plates of Zeniff; plates of Limhi; plates of the colonists who went northward; plates of Jared; and of writers who followed him for 1,600 years; plates of Ether; and lastly the abbreviated plates of Mormon and Moroni, from which we have the record in the Book of Mormon. Moreover, copies were made of the Scriptures, from the plates of Lehi and Nephi, and widely disseminated among the Nephites and some of the Lamanites. There were, therefore, thousands of them.

Not one of them, however, has ever come to light, to bear its testimony to the Book of Mormon, whereas there ought to have been frequent discoveries of them made, if that book be true.

CART LOADS OF PLATES.

In Journal of Discourses, Vol. 19, P. 36, in a sermon by Brigham Young, we have an account of cart loads of these plates. Here is his statement:

“There were a great many treasures hid up by the ‘Nephites. * * * I lived right in the country where the plates were found. I believe I will take the liberty to tell you of another circumstance that will be as marvelous as anything can be. * * * Joseph did not translate all the plates, there was a portion sealed. * * * When Joseph got the plates, the angel instructed him to carry them back to Cumorah, which he did. Oliver (Cowdery) says that when he and Joseph went there, the hill opened, and they walked into a cave in which there was a large spacious room. * * * They laid the plates on a table; it was a large table that stood in the room. Under this table there was a large pile of plates as much as two feet high, and there were altogether in the room more plates than probably many wagon loads; they were piled up in corners and along the walls.”

III.

JOSEPH'S SEERSTONE.

The first stone Joseph used was the property of Jack Belcher, of Gibson, who obtained it in Salina, N. Y., while hauling salt. He brought it home because he thought it a "seeing" stone. It was green with irregular brown spots on it, a little longer than a goose egg, and about as thick. It was very likely a green jade stone of inferior quality. His little boy was the first to look into it. As he did so, he first said he saw a candle, and the next time he cried out, "I have found my hatchet," lost two years—and immediately went to the place shown and got it. This stone got quite a local reputation and Joseph Smith got it and used it about two years when he changed to the stone found in digging the well of Willard Chase. This last was the stone he used when in the employ of Mr. Staal in trying to locate the silver mine, and this same stone he used in translating the plates, and in making his revelations, up to April, 1830. There is no doubt that Joseph's seer-stone was first used for ordinary fortune-telling and treasurer-hunting, and afterwards for translating. Afterwards he gave it to Oliver Cowdery, saying he had no more use for it. He discarded the instrument of the "seer," for "the spirit of revelation and prophecy."

The stone is said to be in the possession of the Mormon church, in Salt Lake, at this time.

WHAT NEED HAD HE OF THE STONE?

Without the aid of his "interpreters," Joseph afterward "translated and corrected the Holy Scriptures" (our English Bible) and translated the Egyptian rolls, the Book of Abraham, now called the Pearl of Great Price, the fourth "inspired" book of the Mormons, "by the spirit of revelation."

How he explained this translation, if he ever did, we know not, but the question will arise: Did he need the stone, in translating Reformed Egyptian, when he was able, without it, to translate Egyptian? Where was the difference?

Joseph also gave a partial translation by the spirit of revelation of some copper plates, discovered (?) at Kinderhook, Illinois, declaring that they contained the history of the person with whose skeleton they were found, that he was a descendant of Ham through the loins of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, etc. See *Millennial Star*, Vol. 21.

How a son of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and a descendant of Ham, and a king also, got into America, is a nut Joseph did not attempt to crack. Can any Mormon solve the problem? The Kinderhook plates were only a hoax, as was afterwards fully proven.

IV. THE WITNESSES TO THE BOOK OF MORMON.

On opening the Book of Mormon, we find two certificates, following the Preface, one signed by three men, the other by eight.

The first declares "that we, through the grace of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record; . . . and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for His voice hath declared it unto us; and we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown to us by the power of God and not of man. An angel of God came down from heaven and brought and laid (them) before our eyes; 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. * *"

Mormons quote this testimony with that of the eight, which follows, with much assurance; and well they may, for they are the only testimony, outside of Joseph's own word, that is worthy the name of evidence.

But notice:

1. They give neither date nor place, of this revelation. That disqualifies it as legal evidence.

2. They testify to what was not then an accomplished fact. David Whitmer says this occurred the last of June, 1829. Oliver Cowdery began translating April 7, so that the translation had been going on about seventy-five days, subject to interruptions, about nine pages per day, or 4,000 words, if every week day had been so employed.

A fairly rapid penman can write about 800 words per hour, but it is impossible to continue this more than five hours per day. In translating, Joseph kept his face submerged in his hat, read off the

sentences as they appeared, which Oliver copied down; then he read his copy to Joseph to see if it was correct.

This was slow, laborious and painstaking, and could be accomplished only with far less rapidity, than copying from manuscript, lying under one's eyes. Besides, Martin Harris in about sixty days wrote only 116 pages of manuscript, probably 150 pages of the B. M., but not the same matter. It is therefore extremely improbable that the translation was finished by the last of June. Their testimony therefore was not true. The plates were not all translated.

3. The witnesses were instructed in a revelation given that same month, D. and C. 17:1, 5, 6, that they should have a view of the plates, and also the **breastplate**, the **sword of Laban**, the **Urim and Thummim** and the **magical directors**; * * * "And ye shall testify that you have seen them, **even as my servant Joseph has seen them.**" * * *

Therefore their testimony is imperfect, since they do not certify that they saw the other articles named in the revelation.

This is not unimportant, for if the other historic objects had appeared with the plates, it would have strengthened their confidence as to the reality of the vision.

4. The three sign the same certificate, although Martin Harris was not with the other two. This shows Martin a very complaisant witness, and suggests that, if there was deception, Martin may have played the part of the angel.

Note:—The author has in his possession a manuscript written by a man who was once a devout and conscientious Mormon. He emigrated to Utah, leaving his wife in the home land, because she refused to become a Mormon.

He was sent on a mission to Australia, where he married a Christian woman whom he had proselyted to his faith, and returned with a party of converts to Utah.

He spent all that he and his wife had in helping poor saints to make the journey, and they landed in San Francisco with only fifty cents.

For years he observed very conscientiously the requirements of his religion, but was finally convinced that the whole thing was false, by seeing the dishonesty of his neighbors in their tithing, the easy and indifferent life of the higher officials who lived off the tithing of the people, and especially by the teaching of the church as to polygamy and "proxy husbands," which were zealously taught them in their secret priesthood meetings.

He revolted and became as intense in his opposition as he had before been loyal in his service.

In the article referred to, evidently prepared with thought and care, he maintains that Sidney Rigdon acted the part of the angel to these witnesses, and that he got his idea from one of the higher degrees of masonry, where a man plays the part of an angel.

5. By taking the testimony, using D. and C. 17 as our guide in the study of this certificate, we find such qualifications and evasive instructions, as to destroy all its value as testimony.

"It is by faith you shall obtain a view of them, even that faith which was had by the prophets of old."

Abraham **saw** the day of Christ, and was glad. Isaiah **saw** the kingdom of Christ, and prophesied its glory. •

Ezekiel **saw** the flood of gospel waters breaking forth from the threshold of the temple and flowing eastward with ever deepening and accelerated flood.

But none of these prophets saw those things with the natural eyes, but with the eye of faith—a **spiritual** vision.

These witnesses were promised a vision of the plates, **by faith, "even that faith which these prophets of old had."**

Was that what they meant, when they certified, they "have seen the plates" containing the record? If they had respect to the revelation, that was all.

The opening words of the revelation imply the same.

"Behold you must rely upon **my word** which if **you shall do, * * you shall have a view of them.**" "My word," came from Joseph's lips, not from the lips of Jesus Christ.

That they were instructed and coached beforehand, can not be denied. And this obscurity and qualification of statement, makes it doubtful whether they meant a spiritual vision, or a physical seeing.

Even if they used the term "see" in its natural sense, not in a figurative, psychical one,

They Were Incompetent Witnesses.

Their testimony that they saw plates and engraved characters on them, may be accepted as true, and yet they could not tell whether they were ancient or modern, genuine or counterfeit. There was room for fraud, whether fraud was present or not. Martin Harris was not present with the others, but he was somewhere near.

Another explanation is plausible. The evidence is strong that Joseph continually used hypnotism. His was a strong, masterful,

self-assertive nature, a temperament which qualified him to act the part of such. He knew nothing of hypnotism, as an occult science, but he was proficient in it as an art, as we shall see further along. Anyone who has witnessed the delusions which hypnotists impose upon their subjects, can easily believe that all that the witnesses certify to, as occurring that day, may have seemed to them realities, but were mere delusions.

6. Their testimony was written out for them beforehand. Joseph wrote the certificate, as surely as he wrote Section 17, D. and C., for therein the very form of their testimony is given them. "By your faith you shall have a view of them," and you shall testify it was by the power of God."

"Wherefore you have received the same power, the same faith, and the same gift like unto him," (Joseph)

When, therefore, Joseph wrote out what and how he had "seen by faith," they signed it.

More: Martin Harris was forbidden to give any independent testimony. "He shall say no more unto them concerning these things, except he shall say **I have seen these things** and they have been shown unto me by the power of God, and **these are the words** he shall say.'" Yet he violated that commandment, and certified he saw the angel and heard the voice, and declares "These things are true."

We have an independent testimony of David Whitmer, as given by a reporter of the Kansas City Journal, a part of which we insert here.

"When did you see the plates?"

"It was in the latter part of June, 1829, Joseph, Oliver Cowdery and myself were together and the angel showed them to us. We not only saw the plates of the Book of Mormon, but he also showed us the brass plates (?) of the book of Ether, and many others.

They were shown to us in this way. Joseph, Oliver and I were sitting on a log, when we were overshadowed by a light more glorious than the sun. In the midst of this light, but a few feet from us, appeared a table, upon which were many gold plates, also the sword of Laban and the directors. I saw them as plain as I see you now, and distinctly heard the voice of the Lord proclaiming that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God."

"Who also saw the plates at this time?"

"No one. Martin Harris, the other witness, saw them the same day, and the eight witnesses saw them the next day."

"Smith made fac-similes of some of the plates and sent them by Martin Harris to Professors Anthon and Mitchell of New York. They pronounced the characters Reformed Egyptian, but were unable to read them."

One can not but regret that Joseph did not let these men write out their independent testimonies, instead of confining them to his program. It certainly would have been far more interesting and might have been more instructive, as the above proves.

That there are some errors in the above testimony, is clear. The plates of Ether were gold, not brass.

Prof. Anthon did not pronounce the characters Reformed Egyptian, in his testimony, and Joseph Smith says that Martin reported to him that he said they were true "Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac and Arabic." These characters pretended to be of 600 B. C.; Reformed Egyptian belongs to 400 A. D.

Whitmer says the two professors could not read them, but Martin reported that Prof. Anthon pronounced the translation correct. Here are direct contradictions, and impossible statements.

Had the reporter understood the points in controversy, at that time, respecting the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and had got Mr. Whitmer's answers to questions covering them, we would have testimony of great value, now forever sealed to us.

Or, if a skillful modern reporter had got on Joseph's track during the first few years of his career as a prophet, he would have shown up the whole matter in a convincing light. Joseph's pretensions seemed to the world so preposterous, and himself so insignificant, that they excited nothing more serious than ridicule or contempt, and he was practically let alone. Being let alone, the error grew.

Testimony of Eight.

Immediately following this testimony of three, is another signed by eight men. It follows:

"Joseph Smith, Jr., the translator of this work, has shown us the plates which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as he has translated we handled with our hands; also we saw the engravings thereof, all of which has the appearance of ancient work of curious workmanship.

"This we bear record with words of soberness, that the

said Smith has shown us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that he has got the plates of which we have spoken."

For the first time, and the last, Joseph got his head out of the clouds of mysticism and his feet on the ground, and gave us a purely human testimony. Nothing supernatural, nothing miraculous, no magic nor hypnotism, about that. Let us play him fair, and accept this testimonial for all it is worth. He did not require these men to have faith like unto the faith of the prophets of old, nor were the plates so sacred that they must be shown by an angel who came down from heaven for that purpose; nor was there a voice declaring the translation true. Common, ordinary men saw and hefted the plates which looked like gold, in the sensible way men usually follow in examining things of the earth. The sum of their testimony is that they were permitted to handle the translated leaves, they saw the engravings, and they hefted the book of plates; therefore they say, we know "he has got the plates of which we have spoken." But, two questions arise here, which need to be answered:

(1) Why so much miracle and magic, in the first view of them, since ordinary men saw them in so natural a way, the very next day?

(2) If men who knew nothing of antiquity, who were able to read only English, and therefore could not know the nature of the engravings, were permitted to handle and test the weight of the metal book, why did not Joseph submit the same to men who could have told at once whether they were gold or mere glitter, and whether the engravings were genuine character writing, or mere senseless marks?

To put the two questions into one, why did not Joseph submit his plates to competent witnesses, instead of to men who, from their lack of knowledge, were incompetent to testify in the matter, save that they saw and hefted them? One leaf of the plates, if submitted to the proper witnesses, with the translation, would have been sufficient, either to confirm his claims, or to shatter his dream.

It is not necessary to prove fraud, but simply to show that Joseph pursued a course that protected him from exposure, if he was practicing deception.

If, in answer, our Mormon friends refer us to the fact that Martin Harris did place some of the characters before a learned man, that he pronounced them true characters, the reader is referred to the letters of Prof. Anthon, which are found in all current Mormon literature, the summary of which is as follows:

Harris' Account: Harris submitted two sets of characters to

Prof. Anthon, one of them translated, the other untranslated. Of the first Prof. Anthon declared the translation correct, "more so than any he had seen translated from the Egyptian." Of the second set, Prof. Anthon said they were "Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyriac and Arabic, and were true characters."

He gave Martin a certificate, certifying to the above. As he was leaving, Prof. Anthon called him back and asked how the young man found out that there were gold plates in the box. Upon receiving the answer that an angel of God revealed it, the professor said, "Let me see the certificate." Harris gave it to him, when Prof. Anthon tore it up, saying that there is no such thing as ministering of angels, but if Harris would bring him the plates, he would translate them. Then Harris told him the plates were sealed and he was forbidden to bring them, and Anthon answered him: "I cannot read a sealed book." Harris also states that he then went to Prof. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Prof. Anthon had said as to both the characters and the translation. See **History of Mormon Church, S. L., P. 20.**

Prof. Anthon's Account: Letter to Mr. Howe, in 1834.

"The whole story about my pronouncing the Mormon inscription to be reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics is perfectly false. Some years ago, a plain farmer called on me with a note from Dr. Mitchell of this city, requesting me to decipher, if possible, the paper which the farmer would hand me. Upon examining it, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick—perhaps a hoax. When I asked him how he obtained it he gave the following account: A gold book with an enormous pair of spectacles had been dug up in northern New York. The spectacles were so large that a person could use one of them only, but whoever examined the plates through the glasses, was enabled to read them and understand them. Placed behind a curtain in a garret, and thus concealed from view, the young man to whom this knowledge was confined, looked through these glasses occasionally, and having deciphered the characters and committed some of them to paper, handed copies to those who stood outside. Not a word was said about their being deciphered by the gift of God, but everything was done by the glasses.

"The farmer added that he had been requested to contribute a certain sum of money toward the publication of the

book, the contents of which would, he was told, produce an entire change in the world and save it from ruin; that he intended to sell his farm and give the amount needed to publish the plates. As a last precaution, he had resolved to come to New York and get an opinion of the learned, as to the characters, although no translation had at that time been made by the young man. On hearing this I changed my mind, and viewed the matter no longer as a hoax, but part of a scheme to cheat the farmer of his money. I told him my suspicions, and advised him to beware of rogues.

"He requested an opinion of me in writing which, of course I declined to give. He left, taking his paper with him.

"The paper was a singular scroll; singular characters disposed in columns, evidently prepared by some one who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets, Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes; Roman letters inverted or placed sideways and the whole ended with a rude circle divided into compartments arched with various strange marks, evidently copied after the Mexican calendar by Humboldt, but evidently disguised as to its source.

"The paper contained anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics. Some time afterwards the farmer came again with the printed book, offering it for sale. I referred again to the roguery I had suspected and asked him what had become of the gold plates. He said they were in a trunk with the spectacles. I advised him to go to a magistrate and have the trunk examined. He said the curse of God would rest upon him, if he did. On pressing him to take this course, he told me he would open the trunk if I would take this curse upon myself. I told him I would willingly do so and would incur any risk of that nature, if I could extricate him from the grasp of the rogues. He then left me."

In 1841, Prof. Anthon wrote Rev. T. W. Coit, in answer to some inquiry of his, in which are two seeming contradictions to his first letter. These we quote, because they are emphasized by Eld. Roberts in his **New Witness for God**, and made the basis for impeaching the truth of Prof. Anthon's statements. They follow:

"I have often heard that the Mormons claimed me for an auxiliary, but as no one until the present time has even requested from me a statement in writing, I have not deemed it worth while to say anything publicly on the subject. What

I do know of the sect relates to some of the early movements; and as the facts may amuse you, while **they will furnish a satisfactory answer to the charge of my being a Mormon proselyte**, I proceed to lay them before you in detail."

"On my telling the bearer of the paper that an attempt had been made to impose on him and defraud him of his property, **he requested me to give him my opinion in writing** about the paper he had showed me. **I did so without hesitation**, partly for the man's sake, and partly to let the individual behind the curtain, see that his trick was discovered. The import of what I wrote was, as far as I can now recollect, that the marks were merely the imitation of various alphabetical characters, with no meaning at all connected with them."

First, as to the seeming contradiction between the well-known fact that Prof. Anthon wrote to Mr. Howe in 1834, which letter was published in full in Howe's **Mormonism Unveiled**, and the above statement that "no one until the present time has even requested from me a statement."

If we had the inquiry which Rev. Mr. Coit wrote Prof. Anthon, we would, no doubt, have a complete explanation. Inasmuch as we do not have that, we can only judge of Coit's letter, by the answer Prof. Anthon gave, and that explanation we have in the first paragraph quoted.

The rumor was prevalent, evidently, that Prof. Anthon was a proselyte to Mormonism and working with them to extend the faith. Notice his words:

"I have often heard that the Mormons claimed me for an auxiliary"—that is a confederate, or ally.

"The facts will furnish a satisfactory answer to the charge of my being a Mormon proselyte."

It is clear that Mr. Coit did not ask him about the truth of Martin Harris' report, as to the interview described in Prof. Anthon's first letter, but as to the truth of the claim the Mormons were making that he, Prof. Anthon, had become a proselyte to their faith.

Prof. Anthon's last letter says, in effect, I knew that they were publishing this, but inasmuch as up to this time no one has written me about that, I have not thought it worth while to make a public statement.

That it is false, the facts I now give you, will prove. Then, to clinch the denial, he gives the facts as to Martin Harris' call upon

him and adds: "Of their doctrines I know nothing whatever, nor have I ever heard a single discourse from any of their preachers."

Mr. Howe wrote Prof. Anthon **about Martin Harris' visit**; the first letter of Prof. Anthon's answered **that**. Rev. Mr. Coit wrote asking him **about his becoming a Mormon**; Prof. Anthon's second letter answered **that**.

There is no contradiction whatever.

As to the second apparent contradiction, wherein Prof. Anthon says, in the first letter, he declined to give Harris an opinion in writing, and in the second that he did so without hesitation, we have no perfectly satisfactory answer. Prof. Anthon in writing the second time may have forgotten that he did not give it, or in the first that he did give it, a mere lapse of memory. Or Harris may have asked for a certificate twice, once that the characters were true, which Anthon would not give, and a second time in the course of their conversation, he asked Mr. Anthon's real judgment as to the character of the paper, which the Professor willingly gave. An interval of five or six years lies between Harris' visit and Prof. Anthon's first letter, and of seven years between Prof. Anthon's two letters.

Let us examine Martin Harris' testimony as Joseph Smith reported it. .

1. He says Prof. Anthon told him the translation was correct," more so than any he had before seen from the Egyptian."

Prof. Anthon says no translation was given him, as no decipherment had as yet been made.

Martin is too willing a witness, he goes too far This is acknowledged by Eld. Roberts, who, after quoting Harris' statement given above, says: "The writer is of the opinion that there is in this statement too wide a scope given to what Prof. Anthon said of the translation." That is a mild way of putting it. In fact, Harris' statement **could not be true**.

Eld. Roberts gives "too wide a scope" as to what Prof. Anthon said in his letters, concerning the characters. Mr. Roberts: "It will be seen by his letters, that he (Prof. A.) acknowledges that the characters submitted to him were true characters." "Too wide a scope," is too gentle a characterization of that statement. Prof. Anthon says distinctly that "the paper contained anything else but Egyptian hieroglyphics"; "Greek, Hebrew and all sorts of letters, more or less distorted, "intermingled with sundry delineations of half moons, stars and other natural objects, ending with a rude delineation of the Mex-

ican calendar." Read again what Mr. Roberts says and see if he did not misrepresent Prof. Anthon, **with the two letters before him.**

2. Harris reports Prof. Anthon as saying that the characters in the second paper were "Egyptian, Chaldean, Assyriac and Arabic."

Of course Prof. Anthon said no such thing. Look at the "characters" given on page following and you can find almost anything in them, except "Egyptian." Two or three resemble Hebrew letters, some have a resemblance to Arabic; but, inasmuch as the Arabic letters were not in use **until after the plates were buried**, the resemblances were merely accidental, or were copied from a modern book.

3. Harris said he went from Mr. Anthon to Mr. Mitchell, who confirmed what the former said. Prof. Anthon says that Harris came from Mitchell to him, with a note from him requesting him (Prof. A.) to decipher, if possible, the characters.

There is no question as to which is right, as to this fact. Did Harris suffer a lapse of memory, or was he determined to get two certificates that the characters were true, out of one statement that they were meaningless?

Other Proof Should Have Been Demanded.

That the eleven witnesses were incompetent and too credulous is clearly shown in this:

Joseph Smith reported that he found the plates in a stone box on a certain hill. He described the location with exactness.

That box was a very substantial thing and might have been made to bear strong corroborative testimony to the truth of his statement, or to have disproved it.

The box was there, if ever, intact, when the witnesses signed the certificates. They do not seem to have thought it worth while to verify Joseph's statement, by examining the hill—a very easy matter.

Instead, they accepted Joseph's unsupported word, when as prudent, careful, self-poised men, they should have demanded an examination.

Joseph himself should have suggested this test and said to them, "Come and see where these ancient plates were laid."

Mormons lived in the contiguous country for years, yet none of them ever hunted for that stone box.

On the contrary, they seem to have looked upon the hill as "Taboo"—too sacred to investigate.

Eld. Edward Stevenson, in his "Reminiscences of Joseph the Prophet," tells us that this hill, the Ramah of the Jaredites and

Cumorah of the Nephites, was the treasure hill of the two nations; that soon after Smith found the gold Bible a Rochester company searched it for hid treasure, but "the only results of their efforts were the holes they left on the hillside;" then he adds, significantly: "When they (the untranslated plates) are translated much useful information will be brought to light. But till that day arrives, no Rochester adventurers shall ever see them or the treasures, although science and mineral rods testify they are there. At the proper time, when greed, selfishness and corruption shall cease to reign in the hearts of the people, these vast hoards of hidden treasure shall be brought forth to be used for the cause and kingdom of Jesus Christ."

By this he informs us that these treasures are there, but held under some enchantment which protects them from the unbelieving, but will yield them up to some one of the Latter Day Saints, in the fulness of time. How generally this superstition is held by Mormons it is impossible to the writer to say; but it does not commend itself to hard, common-sense people. It sounds too much like the juggler's formula: "Presto! Change! Now you see it; and now you DON'T!"

V.

WHY THE PLATES WERE NOT SUBJECT TO SCIENTIFIC TEST.

Mormons themselves, at least those who intelligently follow the history of the Book of Mormon and are independent enough to ask questions, realize keenly that the story of the plates is open to just criticism, particularly because they were screened from impartial investigation, on the claim that they were too "sacred" for profane hands to touch, or the eyes of the skeptical to look upon; that the reverence and obedience demanded for them, therefore, rests upon credulity and superstition, and not upon scientific proof.

The refusal or neglect to submit them to competent and disinterested men, is a fatal defect in the chain of proof, and subjects the author to the suspicion of fraud. and Mormon writers have been profuse in offering reasons to justify Joseph in his secreting them.

As far as the writer's investigation has discovered them, the reasons given are:

1. It would not validate Joseph's claim to show them to men. Not one in a thousand could read them, very few of the earth could see them, and, therefore, in the last analysis, the

people would have to rest their faith on the testimony of others.

2. Many thousands of Saints are staking their eternal salvation on the principles revealed in the records, are satisfied and happy in their faith in Joseph Smith, and these people are the intellectual and moral peers of those who do not agree with them

3. The church which Joseph Smith founded finds she does not need this independent proof for success; that she is not able to bear off her portion of labor called for to meet all the demands that come to her for help.

4. Many recent scientific discoveries relative to the people whose history the Book of Mormon gives, confirm, unequivocally, the credibility of the book.

5. A half million of devout men and women have risen up during the past few years, to declare, in the fear of God, that they know, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that Joseph Smith was a messenger from God, and, therefore, the plates must have been what he testified they were.

6. There is no reason why the Mormon plates should be singled out as an exception. The Bible goes back only to copies of the originals, and Christians are satisfied with that.

If we had the originals of the Bible, or of the Book of Mormon, the exhibition of them would only pander to a morbid curiosity, and give some an opportunity to display their learning. They could serve no good and wholesome purpose.

7. The plates were sacred, and to exhibit them to the world would be as great a crime, as to make a public exhibition of the Dove, the emblem of the Holy Spirit.

VI.

REVIEW OF ABOVE REASONS.

The foregoing reasons appear in an article in the Semi-Weekly News, March 8, 1906, in a lengthy article, which brings together all the conceivable arguments for withholding the plates from impartial examination. The author, Mr. Thomas W. Brookbank, has given us, in his carefully prepared paper, the strongest presentation that can be made.

Doubtless he satisfied those whose faith in Joseph Smith over

balances their judgment, for we are all easily persuaded to believe what we want to believe; but the honest seeker, who is after the truth only, will answer him readily, with more weighty reasons. Let us first carefully examine the conditions that confront us.

Joseph Smith, professing to be a prophet, declares he is in possession of ancient records, some of them over 2,000 years old, and that their contents overturn all the existing forms of Christianity, and introduce a new dispensation of grace. Because, therefore, their coming forth is fraught with such momentous and universal importance, involving nothing less than a world-wide revolution, his testimonials should be unimpeachable; they should satisfy every honest mind and confound the most skeptical.

What is his astonishment, therefore, to find that while he professed to have these ancient tablets in his possession from Sept. 23, 1827, to July, 1830, he kept them secreted and urged in justification, that they were so "sacred" that God Himself had commanded him to show them to no one except He ordered it, and that they were seen only twice, and only to select companies of his own friends. The claim itself raises the presumption of fraud.

Any honest man, coming into possession of plates of whose antiquity he was absolutely sure, would not only not fear the most searching and critical investigation, but he would invite it; nay demand it.

We might leave the whole answer in this general proposition; but to satisfy the Saints themselves, we take up the reasons for refusing to exhibit their records, seriatim.

1. "It would not validate Joseph's testimony."

That is exactly what it would have done, if Joseph's testimony had been true. But the dilemma is, it would have proved him an imposter, if his testimony was false.

2. The answer to the second reason is easy and cogent. There are other people in the world staking their salvation upon the principles contained in their holy books; not merely thousands of them, but millions.

Mohammedans trust in their Koran; have unquestioning faith in its precepts; prove its authenticity, tracing it historically to Mohammed, their prophet.

Another answer is ready. Mormonism is a corrupted form of Christianity. The **Articles of Faith** it publishes to the world, agree, verbally, with the general faith of Christians. Who probes deep

enough will find the covert errors that hide beneath the fair exterior. But the ordinary mind will not.

There are thousands of Mormons who are far more **Christian** than **Mormon**; whose faith rests just where the faith of Christians is fixed, in Christ. Their hope of salvation is not in Joseph Smith, but in Jesus, and they are trusting Him and Him alone, as their Savior.

Every one who has labored as a Christian missionary in Utah has discovered this fact, and found many to whom Mormonism is only a name, but Christ Jesus is their hope and joy.

3. The writer disputes this reason **in toto**. If there ever was an unpopular religion, it is Mormonism. Its missionaries go out to preach it by compulsion. By that he would not be understood as charging the church with using force, or commanding them to go; but it is undeniable that very, very few of their missionaries go constrained by the love of Christ, or by their faith in Joseph Smith, but because such conditions exist in Utah that custom and the good will of the authorities and one's standing in the community where they expect to spend their lives require them to give the customary time to this work.

When they go, it is to communities that have not called for them and do not want them, and they make thousands of calls at homes where they are kindly told the people do not wish to have any conversation with them about their religion.

4. As to the alleged fact that many scientific discoveries relative to the ancient inhabitants of America have confirmed the Book of Mormon, it is pure "**buncombe**."

The Mormon church is challenged to make a presentation of these proofs and submit it to the scientific world. Many scientists would just as soon Mormonism were true as Christianity, and would be just as impartial to one as to another.

Let Mormon scientific men gather all these discoveries and present them in positive statements, with the proof they have, and if it stands the cold, merciless, analytic examination scientists make of it, merely to determine the cogency of their arguments, and these men who seek merely for truth, approve the presentation, Mormons may then reiterate their claim with some show of probability.

5. The spiritual proof of the truth of the B. M., the inner, unwritten testimony of the Holy Spirit, is without evidential value, **save as to spiritual things**. This is fully discussed under **The Mormon's Ultimate Test of Truth**. Suffice it to say here, the testimony of the

spirit is never proof of **material facts**. To accept it as such is to abdicate reason, and en throne credulity and superstition.

Faith has its foundation in **reason**; credulity is belief, without intellectual proof, or against proof.

6. The sixth reason is a very unfortunate one for the author. No one asks to make an exception of the plates. His illustration of the original autographs of the Bible, is more unfortunate still.

The cases are not parallel. A good illustration would be where some one claimed to have in his sole possession an original manuscript of one of the books of the Bible, say the autograph letter which Paul wrote with his own hand to the Galatians. Instead, however, of showing it, he hides it away from all except some intimates who never saw an ancient manuscript and know nothing of Greek; claims it "sacred," and finally declares it was taken away by an angel; and to prove he was not guilty of falsehood, but was speaking the truth, he gives out a pretended translation of that letter, which, when examined, proves to be nothing more than a copy of our English translation with a few unimportant changes. What would be that man's standing among Biblical scholars? How much credence would be given his story by men of intelligence?

Just as much as Joseph Smith deserves, who did exactly so as we have supposed this other man to do. He would be a "candidate for ridicule and contempt," and **sure of his election**.

7. The last reason is the most unreasonable of all. The plates were "sacred" and to exhibit them would be a crime. Can you find a parallel in all the dealings of God with his ancient people? The nearest like it is the ark with the tables of the law. But these were seen and handled by scores of people, and for five hundred years offered the opportunity of verification. The law was not hidden in an unknown tongue, but was written in the speech of the people, copied and widely disseminated.

The claim that the plates were sacred is pure fiction. They were made of unsacred gold, or of a metal that looked like gold, by men. (Martin Harris, "that wicked man," declared that he handled the plates on his knees for an hour and a half, one day.) Nearly every one who helped to write the records, made his own plates. The language was not sacred, but the idolatrous language of Egypt.

The engravings were not sacred, for Joseph copied some of them, and showed them to men. In truth he sought to secure a certificate of their genuineness from a learned man, who pronounced them "anything but Egyptian."

What was written on the plates was not sacred, for Joseph hastened to translate it, print and bind it in a book and sell it for \$1.50.

The man himself was not sacred, for he confesses he fell into many foolish errors and was "led into temptations offensive in the sight of God."

The box was not sacred, for it was made of ordinary stones, buried in common earth and covered with a stone.

Nephi does say that he doesn't write anything on them but what he considers "sacred"; that is, he wrote two sets of plates, one the secular, or profane, the history of wars, governments and practices of his people; the other, the small plates, containing the prophecies, the preaching and the ministries of his people. In that sense the plates were sacred—sacred history—but in no other.

VII. THE NEPHITE PLATES.

The Book of Mormon speaks frequently of the plates and the engravings on them. It is said that these characters were in "Reformed Egyptian"; but this can not be true of the first books the original plates of Nephi, for he made the record "in the language of the Egyptians." In the course of a thousand years, the characters may have changed somewhat, so that Mormon can call them "reformed Egyptian."

Joseph Smith says, in his autobiography, concerning them: "They (the plates) were filled with engravings in Egyptian characters." He also gives their size as six by eight inches, and the block of plates, about six inches thick.

This would make a block of gold containing 288 cubic inches. Allowing one-tenth for loss of weight by being separated into leaves, the gold bible would weight one hundred and ninety-five pounds avoirdupois, and be worth \$58,500.

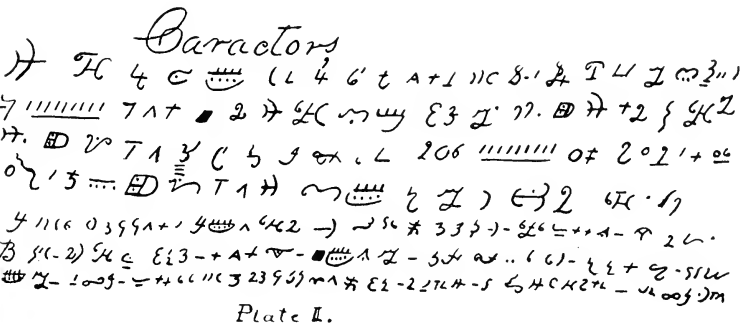
Joseph's story makes it appear that he treated this weight as a light matter. His mother says that he took them from the place where he first hid them, wrapped them in his linen frock, **placed them under his arm**, and started for home; that on his way he left the road and came to a large windfall, when, as **he was jumping over a log**, a man sprang up from behind it and gave him a heavy blow with a gun. Joseph turned around, knocked the man down, and then ran **at the top of his speed**. A half a mile further on, he was attacked again in like manner, knocked this man down also, and ran again. The third time he was assailed, and struck the man, dislocating his own thumb.

When he came near to the house, he threw himself down in a fence corner, to get his breath, and when he reached home he was speechless from fright and fatigue.

VIII.
THE NEPHITE CHARACTERS

We give herewith a fac-simile copy of some of the Nephite characters, which once belonged to David Whitmer, but are now a part of the Berrian collection of Mormon historic works in the Lenox Library, New York. Their genuineness has never been questioned. **Plate I** gives us the characters as they appear drawn by Joseph's own hand. Note the word "Caractors" as he wrote it. By selecting the familiar characters out of those in Plate I we get **A of Plate II**, and by classifying them and combining them we have **B of Plate II**.

Summarizing them we have seventeen letters of the Roman Alphabet; all the Roman numerals except the figure 7; four of our common punctuation marks; three arithmetical signs; eight printer's signs; tally marks of five and ten; the sign of the English pound, and



that of the ounce, Apothecary weight; six combinations of figures; and most convincing of all we have JOE, upside down, and JOS upside down and backwards. When we study the meaningless characters, we find a few that resemble Greek, some Hebrew, some Arabic, but they are all chance resemblances.

These "caractors" are gravely held forth to the world as **Egyptian hieroglyphics**, written 600 B. C.

The Mormons have many educated men, men of wide scholarship and of eminent reputation as men of unimpeachable moral character.

If any one of them will undertake to show that the foregoing is unfair or illogical, or if he prefers to prove them true characters and even near-Egyptian, he may use space in our September number, not to exceed 1,500 words.

Study Plate I carefully, turning in your hand so as to place the characters in columns, and then upside down, and you will make such discoveries as justify Prof. Anthon's characterization of them:

$$H \ 4 \ \text{𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ L \ 4' \ 6' \ t \ A+1 \ '' \ C \ 8-1 \ 4 \ 2 \ 3 \ 0$$

$$\text{𐤀𐤁𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ 1+2 \ ' \ H \ \text{𐤀𐤁} \ \{ \ 3 \ 2 \ '' \} . \ 1+2 \ H \ 2$$

$$\cdot \ D \ 2 \ 3 \ (\ 4 \ X \ L \ 2 \ 0 \ 6 \ \text{𐤀𐤁𐤃𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ C \ 8 \ 2 \ 0 \ 2 \ 1+06$$
A. $0 \ 1 \ 5 \ \text{𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ D \ 1 \ \text{𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ 2 \ 2 \ 3 \ 2 \ H$
 $4 \ 0 \ 9 \ 9 \ A+2 \ 4 \ \text{𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ \wedge \ H \ 2 \ 3 \ 6 \ 4 \ A - L$
B $(-2) \ H \ \{ \ 3 - + \wedge + \ - \ \text{𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ \wedge \ 2 \ H \ \cdot \ (\) - \varepsilon + w$
 $\text{𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ 2 \ \infty \ 3 - + 6 \ 6 \ 3 \ 3 \ 1 \star \ \varepsilon \ \tau \ L \ C \ H \ 2 \ \tau \ L \ \infty \ \tau \ \Delta \ - \ - \ -$
 $A \ B \ C \ D \ E \ F \ H \ 4 \ J \ L \ O \ 2 \ t \ 2 \ w \ v \ X \ 2 \ J \ o \ 2 \ J \ o \ e \ - \ - \ -$

B. $1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 4 \ 5 \ 6 \ 8 \ 9 \ 0 \ 1 \ 8-1 \ 3 \ 0 \ 1+06 \ 9 \ 9 \ 6 \ 6$
 $\text{; : } \cdot \text{' } + - \neq \wedge (\) \ '' - + + \text{𐤀𐤁} \ \text{𐤀𐤁𐤃} \ 2 \ 3 \ \infty \ \infty \ \cdot \cdot$
Plate III

The entire question of the genuineness of the so-called Nephite characters, and consequently the genuineness of the Book of Mormon as the records of the Nephites, might rest here.

The "characters" disprove the claim of Joseph, and fasten upon him the attempt to foist upon the world a set of Egyptian hieroglyphics that dares not meet even a **common sense** test.

IX. THE TRANSLATION.

"Relative to the manner of translating the B. M. the prophet himself has said but little. 'Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God,' is the most extended published statement made by him upon the subject." Roberts.

Joseph did not seem to sense the importance of a clear statement

as to his method of translation, a matter of really great importance. Oliver Cowdery says: "I wrote with my own pen the entire B. M. (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he translated by the gift and power of God, by the means of the Urim and Thummim, or as it is called by that book, 'Holy Interpreters.'"

While Joseph and Oliver both attribute the translation to the aid of the Urim and Thummim, yet the evidence is altogether in proof that this was a late invention. The translation was by the stone.

Oliver Cowdery's statement was made in 1848. The term Urim and Thummim, is found only in later Mormon literature, does not appear in the Book of Commandments, published in 1833, and is disputed by every one of the witnesses.

That he used the stone is the testimony of all who have spoken. He could not translate without his "interpreters."

Had he translated solely by the gift and power of God, without the use of the interpreters, the problem would be simple and two hypotheses only would be necessary: (1) That Joseph himself was inspired of God to understand the characters and to render them into English; or (2) The gift and power of God was directed to the characters, and converted them into English, before his eyes.

Under the first hypothesis, Joseph would have been the inspired translator; under the second, it is God, by means of the stone.

But it was not done in so simple a manner, although that was the method of God's prophets of old, as is seen in the interpreting of the writing by Daniel; but a material medium was necessary to Joseph. Without the stone, he was helpless; by means of it he translated. No reference is made anywhere to the Holy Spirit, as inspiring the man. God had no part in it, personally or independently of the material means. The power was in the stone.

A familiar illustration is found in the art of photography. Just as in the translation we have the man, the interpreters and the plates, so in picture-making we have the man, the camera and the object. The artist is helpless without his instrument, for the power to take the picture resides in that. So Joseph was helpless without the seer-stone, for the power to translate was in that. When, therefore, he says, "I translated the plates by the gift and power of God," he means that the "interpreters" was the gift of God and the power to translate. This is not conjecture, nor hypothesis. The "interpreters" is fully explained in the Book of Mormon. In Mos. 28:13, 14 we learn these facts about it: Mosiah had "wherewith" he can look and translate

all records of an ancient date; and "it (the wherewith he can loo' and translate) is the gift of God."

The magic power was altogether in the interpreters, for any one could look in and "see things," although, if not commanded, "he might look for what he ought not, and so perish."

Whoever was commanded to look in them, could know of "past things and things to come; secret things, and things not known might be revealed."

The "interpreters" had been handed down from generation to generation, **for the purpose of interpreting language.** Mosiah, by its means, translated the plates of Ether from the language of the Jaredites, to that of the Nephites.

This magic instrument is called in the Book of Mormon "a stone," "directors" and "interpreters."

Alma 27:23 affords us another proof. This is a prophecy, in which the Lord said, "I will preserve unto my servant Gazelem, a stone which shall shine forth in darkness unto light." Joseph appropriated the name "Gazelem" to himself, D. and C. 104:26, and he used the stone for the purpose which the Lord named. In translating he put the stone in his hat, and then immersed his face in the hat and drew it close about his face to exclude the light, and "in the darkness a spiritual light shone" and Joseph saw the characters and the translation.

X.

JOSEPH USED ONLY THE STONE. AND TRANSLATED WITHOUT THE PLATES.

Those who speak from personal knowledge, all, save Oliver Cowdery above noted, and his testimony dates back to 1848 only, unite in testifying to this fact. Martin Harris, his first scribe:

"By the aid of the **seer-stone**, sentences would appear and were read by the prophet and written by Martin and when finished he would say Written, and if correctly written that sentence would disappear and another would appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used."

Harris wrote one hundred and sixteen pages of the first transla-

tion, the pages that were lost, and is competent to testify from personal knowledge.

Emma Smith, who wrote for her husband before Oliver Cowdery came, gave this testimony to her son Joseph:

"In writing for your father, I frequently wrote day after day, often sitting at a table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, **with the stone in it**, and dictating hour after hour with nothing between us."

David Whitmer, one of Joseph's earliest and firmest friends, in whose father's house much of the translation was made, and whose brother John was one of Joseph's scribes, gives us very clear and very explicit testimony:

"Joseph Smith would put the seer-stone into a hat, drawing it closely about his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness a spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear and under it was the translation in English.

Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Joseph, to see if it was correct, then it would disappear and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the B. M. was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by the power of man."

This testimony was fixed in the faith of the first Mormons and it prevailed for seventy-five years. They believed, they preached and their literature maintained **that the stone translated the Nephite records**. It is inextricably interwoven into their arguments. If there was any error in this early belief, **Joseph never corrected it**.

Eld. Geo. Reynolds makes use of it in his **Myth of the Manuscript Found**, p. 71, to account for the brief time required for the translation of the B. M.

"It must be remembered that the translation was accomplished by no ordinary means. It was done by divine aid. * * * **All was simple as when a clerk writes from dictation. The translation of the characters appeared on the Urim and Thummim, sentence by sentence, and as soon as one was correctly transcribed the next would appear.**"

Other quotations might be given, but this is unnecessary, for all early authorities agree. The stone did it all, and Joseph was merely the reading clerk.

When intelligent men began to read the B. M., no longer bewildered by the glamour of their first enthusiasm, they discovered that the book was crude in style, words were misspelled and used incorrectly, the rules of grammar and rhetoric were flagrantly violated, modernisms were abundant, many plagiarisms marred it as an original message, and whole chapters were quoted literally from our English Bible. Hence they began to ask the reason for these things: and **"Who is responsible?"**

Oliver Cowdery may have been responsible for the misspelled words, but God was responsible for all the rest, for the book **was a correct copy of the language of God.**

The early defenders of the book met these charges and the ridicule which logical criticisms evoked, with sublime indifference. It was God's book and "His own voice had proclaimed that the translation was correct; what is man that he should reply to God?"

Men of better education followed them who were sensitive to these flings, and they sought a way of escape. Recently, Eld. B. H. Roberts, whose skill as a writer and controversialist is recognized by all, the ablest apologist of Mormonism the church has produced, has invented a new theory. He confesses he was driven to this by the necessities of the conditions that confronted him.

Speaking of the old theory as to the translation—which, by the way is not a **"theory"** but a **historical fact** attested by the original witnesses—he declares that "to advocate it before intelligent and educated people, is necessarily to invite ridicule and make of those who advocate it candidates for contempt."

He adds, as if there is no room to dispute his statement, there is **"no use in resisting the matter, the old theory must be abandoned."**

How did he reach this revolutionary conclusion? Has he discovered any new testimony? None whatever. Has he received a revelation from God, correcting some stupid blunder of former churchmen of high and low degree? No; the heavens are shut up again and the "prophets, seers and revelators" have had no message from the Almighty for over sixty years.

He is driven by pure reason, by cold logic, by the fear of ridicule, to abandon one of the strongholds of his church.

In retreating from this position he impeaches the infallibility of the priesthood, "a higher degree of priesthood," to use his own definition, than his own.

If he is correct, then reason, intelligence and a decent respect

for the opinions of educated and intelligent men are a better help to truth, than all their "inspiration." The change is demanded, not by "the spirit of revelation and prophecy" which they claim to possess, but by their sensitiveness to intelligent criticism, from without. The heaven has been a long time working, but it has worked.

Alexander Campbell exposed this absurdity, Eld. John Hyde proved it, and Rev. Mr. Lamb illustrated it.

The Mormon world "do move," and we may hope that in less than another seventy-five years, some other bright, logical mind and sensitive soul will rise up and persuade the Mormon Authorities to abandon another "old theory," one that is much more the subject of ridicule by learned and educated men, viz., that The Book of Mormon is true.

XI.

ELDER ROBERTS' NEW THEORY.

In justice to Mr. Roberts, whom we have named, we give his explanation:

"It should not be supposed, however, that this translation, though accomplished by means of 'Interpreters,' and the seer-stone, was a mere mechanical procedure, that no faith, or mental or spiritual effort was required on the prophet's part; that the instrument did all while he who used them did nothing but look and repeat mechanically what he saw there reflected. * * *

"The translation required the utmost concentration of mental and spiritual force possessed by the prophet, in order to exercise the gift of translation through the means of the sacred instrument provided for that work."

Compare this theory, merely a supposition of Eld. Roberts, with the statement of facts given by Harris and Whitmer, already quoted. Either **his theory** is wrong or **their testimony** is false.

Mr. Roberts is attempting, by the invention of his new theory, to lift the responsibility of the many errors of the book from God and to lay them upon the lack of knowledge and the limited language of Joseph. He realized his dilemma; but his own prophet disputes him:

"November 28, 1841. In council with the twelve Joseph Smith said, 'I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth.'" Compendium, p. 273.

Test the Book of Mormon by either theory of translation and the dilemma is equally fatal.

Nephi, the man that bulks largest in the Book of Mormon, in reporting the revelation of the Spirit to him, records the angel as saying: "Behold the Virgin whom thou seest is the **Mother of God, according to the flesh.**" (1st Ed.)

That this was an error is confessed by the change which has been made by some reviser in later editions, to read, "the Mother of the Son of God."

When Joseph gave that out as the translation of certain characters, Cowdery wrote it and then read it to Joseph, and the magic stone approved it, by the sentence fading away and another taking its place. According to the old theory God was responsible for that untruth, since it was "by His gift and power," the translation was made.

If Mr. Roberts is right and the error was due to Joseph's ignorance of the doctrine of God, it vitiates the credibility of his whole translation. The gift and power of God was not potent enough to keep him from falling into palpable error; then the whole translation falls to the plane of Joseph's limited knowledge. Let us apply the test in another instance. This same Nephi wrote, or Joseph translated it and Cowdery wrote:

"Adam fell that men might be"; how do we know that he was not as much in error there, as in the former translation? Again: Over in the Book of Ether, Joseph found something that he translated thus: "They did make all manner of tools to till the earth, both to plough and to sow, to reap and to hoe, and also to thrash."

Was that in the old Jaredite records, a people who left the rest of mankind at the great tower, Babel, and lived separate from the race, or did Joseph weave in a colloquialism of western New York?

If his translation is true, then long before the Christian era, they had in America, plows and seed-sowers and reapers and hoes and threshing machines, and factories to make them.

Evidently he found nothing of the kind there. It is as flagrant an anachronism, as it would be if attributed to the ancient Assyrians.

Again we find in the Book of Mormon, lengthy quotations from our English Bible. 1st Nephi, 600 to 545 B. C., quotes seventeen chapters of Isaiah. Comparing them with our Bible, we find them so nearly an exact copy, that no other conclusion is possible than that they were copied literally. How does that come? Eld. Robert's ex-

planation is, that the work of translation required the concentration of all powers, mental and spiritual, resulting in mental weariness.

When, therefore, Joseph saw that the Nephite record was quoting the Scriptures, that the Bible and the record paralleled each other, "he adopted our English translation," to **ease himself of the labor of translating, and because "The English translation was superior to his own."**

The first is the recourse of a lazy man, and in Joseph's case was criminal. He was shirking a sacred duty. If the second reason is valid, it is a fatal confession of failure.

Joseph claimed to have a gift from God to translate; but Eld. Roberts concedes that the work of men who had only consecrated learning to aid them, gave a better expression to the Scriptures than he, the heaven-endowed translator, could do.

Mr. Roberts' explanation raises other difficulties. If he did not translate, but copied, how did he know when it ended, and how did he catch those slight changes and variations he introduced?

And how comes it that his principal quotations recognize our modern divisions of the Bible into chapters, the beginnings and endings of our chapters being the beginnings and endings of his quotations? It would be a marvelous thing, if the old Nephite Bible was divided into chapters, and these exactly coincided with the divisions of our Bible made by Cardinal Hugo in the thirteenth century, A. D. Marvelous? Yes, too marvelous for belief.

These contradictions of history with hypothesis, the difficulties which go with both, the conclusions and inferences, which follow, not only bar the way to a belief in the Book of Mormon and the divinity of the mission of Joseph Smith, and make it impossible for men of learning and integrity to become Latter Day Saints, but these questions will also eventually be taken up by higher critics among the Mormons themselves. And, mark this prediction, the result will be to throw over both history and theory, leaving no foundation for Mormon faith to rest upon, but blind infatuation.

XII.

THE STONE SUPPLIED BOTH THE TEXT AND THE TRANSLATION.

The plates were not in the hat when Joseph was translating. They couldn't be put into his hat—Emma says he used "his" hat—if he had tried. The plates were six by eight inches, or twenty-eight inches

around them, and six inches thick. They wouldn't go into any hat but one of very extraordinary size, and then the stone, which was nearly as large as a goose egg, was to go in, too.

Read Whitmer's and Joseph's wife's testimony again, and they prove that the plates could not have been in the hat, although they do not mention them. But Isaac Hale gives positive testimony on this point.

"The manner in which he (Joseph) pretended to read and interpret the plates was the same as when he looked for the money diggers, with the stone in the hat and his hat over his face, while the book of plates was at the same time hid in the woods."

Mr. Hale knew Joseph well for he boarded him while the latter was employed by Mr. Stool to hunt for secret treasure, and Joseph ran away with his daughter and married her.

He knew his method of translating, for Joseph and Emma lived with him for a time after returning from Palmyra, while the translation was going on. His testimony is clear, explicit and convincing.

Orson F. Whitney, one of the apostles, acknowledges (Eighty-second Annual Conference, 1912, p. 49), that Joseph "could sit in his father's humble cottage, while the record was secreted at a distance, and could read what was on the plates."

All of this leads us to the serious question:

What was the use of all that **pother** to get possession of the plates and to keep his enemies from robbing him of them after he had got them; for Joseph could have translated them as they lay in the box, as well as when they were hid out in the woods?

Then, as to his witnesses, after his translation was completed, he could have taken the witnesses out to Cumorah and with Moroni, his angel, with Moses and Elijah and Elias and John the Baptist, and Peter, James and John, the apostles, he could have shown them the whole assortment and received all his "keys" at once, for "the new dispensation."

That would have been a demonstration worth while, and fully as creditable as the program he followed.

XIII.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEPHITES.

The Nephites were Jews, inheritors of a thousand years of heredity. Behind them lay a history which began with Abraham, their

father; their people were solidified into a homogeneous nation under the power of the Egyptian oppressor; they had Moses for their leader, their lawgiver, the wisest and strongest ruler time has yet enrolled; theirs were the fathers, who were baptized unto Moses by the cloud and in the sea, who marched from Sinai, where Jehovah had veiled His majesty in thick cloud, and uttered His voice in the thunder that shook the mountain to its foundations, to Jordan, where they crossed over as they had passed through the sea, dry shod; under Joshua they had wrested their land from the Canaanite and builded their cities and developed their lands; David was their king and psalmist, and Solomon, their pride and glory.

Jerusalem, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," was their home. Thrice every year they had seen the tribes come up from near and distant lands, unto the testimony of Israel;" daily, they witnessed the temple service, and its stately worship was one of the most familiar things to them of all their life.

The Nephites shared fully in that momentum which has kept the Jews an unchanged race, although they have become parts of many nations, their religion and their pride surviving two thousand years of dispersion and oppression. But the Book of Mormon represents the Nephites as being of an altogether different fiber of character.

They left Jerusalem and native land without a recorded syllable of regret; they turned their backs upon the promises and prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah of a return and restoration of the nation, with a future glory far excelling even the greatest splendor of the past; they broke away from the old religion, and wandered half the circuit of the earth, to a new, unsettled continent with perpetual isolation from their kindred, and counted it a compensation to have escaped the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of their people. They came to the new world absolutely free to follow in the footsteps of their fathers, to develop to perfection the heritage of their nation's past.

Immediately, however, and without any sufficient cause, they develop two characteristics that were utterly anti-Jewish, viz., they begin to follow Christ, and finally develop a Christian church 150 years before Christ came, and also discard the language in which their Holy Scriptures had always been written, and adopt instead the idolatrous language of Egypt.

They brought, so the Book of Mormon tells us, a freak copy of the Jewish Scriptures, in the hieroglyphics of Egypt, and with it the

genealogy of Joseph's family engraved on brass plates.

Only one person in the colony, Lehi, could read this profane record. Instead of translating it into the language of Abraham and Moses and David and the prophets, he perpetuated the monstrosity and fixed the custom of having all copies of it made in the same idolatrous language, and all records of their subsequent history preserved in the same way. Yet the people used the Hebrew, their "mother tongue," in all their daily life. It follows, therefore, that the Nephites were a bi-lingual people for a thousand years. Now it is a teaching of history that where two languages are forced upon one people, and this has happened many times, a conflict is at once begun which results either in the victory of one tongue over the other, or an assimilation of the two into a third language which supplants both.

Yet the written Egyptian and the spoken Hebrew lived in perfect amity among the Nephites for ten centuries. Another anomalous condition also confronts us, in this supposed event.

The Hebrew was the more expressive and perfect language. Written language was first by means of rude pictures, the written language of primitive man; the last and most perfect form is alphabetic, wherein a sound is represented by an arbitrary sign. Under the first, the meaning is always imperfectly expressed, and is limited to a very small vocabulary. Under the last, every vocal sound of the human voice is registered, and writing becomes co-extensive with human speech.

The Egyptian hieroglyphics are ideographic, a form of writing midway between the two, and therefore imperfect.

The Hebrew was the most versatile, sympathetic language in existence, 600 B. C. It responded accurately to the human voice, so that to read one of the Psalms gave the reader all the meaning and passion of the writer, as perfectly as if he had heard David recite it.

The Egyptian hieroglyphics were utterly incapable of this. We are, therefore, asked to believe that a prophet of God caused his people to degrade their language, to go backward in recording their holy scriptures, rejecting the language in which that scripture had been kept for a thousand years.

The alleged fact would not only be abhorrent and sacriligious to a Jew, but as a de-volution, an evolution backwards, absolutely unthinkable.

Such a change as the Book of Mormon represents must have had a purpose in the mind of the writer. It is not a mere fancy, wrought into a fabulous story without design. What was it? Why is this

unnatural and impossible fact (?) wrought into the very beginning of the Book of Mormon? The answer is found in the anticipated necessities of the coming forth of the book.

The invention was made in 1830 A. D. and not in 600 B. C. The plates must be written in a language which "none other people knoweth," by "means prepared for the interpretation thereof," which means no other man on earth but Joseph Smith could use. It fits into the very necessities of Joseph's venture, albeit it is at war with all the lessons of history and with common sense.

No one could read the characters except Joseph, and therefore no one could dispute his translation.

Do Mormons feel any embarrassment on account of these suspicious conditions? Some do not, but many have a feeling down deep in their hearts, in spite of their hereditary faith, a fear that the Book of Mormon is a deception.

XIV.

JOSEPH AS A TRANSLATOR, A FAILURE.

The first task which Joseph had in hand, after he got possession of his plates, was to translate them into English. For this he had no natural fitness whatever. The natural gift differs altogether from that of a seer, or prophet. It needs no supernatural endowment, or divine gift. It requires a thorough knowledge of the two languages, of their idioms, their genius, their delicate shades of thought, and an ability to transfer the meaning and the literary character of the original into its new dress.

Joseph pretended to none of these natural qualifications of a translator, but he claimed to have a special gift from God. That this gift was inadequate, his work amply proves, for wherever it was possible, he ceased translating, and copied, **because it was better than he could do.**

There are two general objections to his translation. The first has reference to its literary character. As this has been more fully treated in the chapter on the **Book of Mormon as Literature**, it will suffice to say here, that it is impossible to believe that a book written, presumably, by twenty or more different authors, covering the history of a people for a thousand years, could exhibit the uniformly one style characteristic of the Book of Mormon.

Nor does it answer this objection to reply that we do not have the original writings of the authors, but abridgements only, for at

least eight of the books were not touched by Mormon and Moroni. Even if they were all abridged, the objection would hold.

When we compare the writings of which Joseph was the undoubted author, with the above, we find the same style, the same redundancy of words, the same repetitions innumerable, just as the kaleidoscope gives us many figures by means of a few bits of colored glass.

If the plates which Joseph claimed to translate, were filled with the writings of men of individuality and genius, then he has robbed them of all their merit, and by the poverty of his own language and his lack of literary skill, he is a failure, as a translator.

The **second** objection is a more serious one, one that can not be controverted. He failed to appreciate and meet the extraordinary opportunity his plates gave him.

Bible scholars, for centuries, have been seeking to discover authentic and ancient copies of the Scripture. When such a discovery has been made, as that of the ancient manuscript in a monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf in 1859, it creates great excitement in the whole Christian world. Tischendorf, finding himself in possession of this invaluable treasure, **could not sleep**, so great was his ecstasy.

At the first opportunity he, with the help of two others, copied with religious care, the 110,000 lines of the Codex and noted more than 12,000 changes made by later hands. As soon as possible the entire manuscript was printed and given to the world.

Now Joseph Smith claimed to be the sole custodian for more than two years, of the Egyptian translations of twenty full chapters of the Old Testament, a new version of these parts of the word of God, eighteen of them having been brought from Jerusalem 600 years before Christ. Tischendorf's manuscript was not earlier than 340 A. D., or nearly 1,000 years subsequent to the date of Joseph's copy.

Joseph claimed to possess another advantage over the men of Tischendorf's day. They were compelled to depend, for the correctness of their translation, upon their knowledge of the Greek language, and their ability to transfer the contents of the Codex, into English. Their human qualifications and their fidelity in performing their task, no one questions.

But Joseph had "a gift from God" for this work. He was divinely endowed to translate. Therefore, if he spoke the truth as to his plates and himself, we will have from him the inspired translation of these authentic and most ancient Scripture.

Our interest in them is enhanced when we find that two of these chapters, Mal. 3 and 4, got into the Nephite record, through the mouth of Jesus Christ. Therefore these two chapters are not only ancient and genuine, but they have been authenticated by the very highest authority, that of the Son of God.

Joseph sat down to his task, with these precious documents in his possession, and translated them "by the gift and power of God."

When he handed out his work, it was discovered to be a slavish copy—words, punctuations, even italics were included—of the English Bible Joseph owned.

If, as Mr. Roberts says, the old theory of translation must be abandoned, before intelligent and educated people, because it merits ridicule, what, in justice, can be said of this man who meets such a marvelous opportunity of adding to the world's treasury of Bible knowledge, and **does no better than a mere school-boy can.**

The truth, stated in the mildest terms possible, is, Joseph "flunked;" he fell down flat; he was "weighed, measured and "found wanting as a translator. And what adds to our amazement is, the man did not seem to sense his ridiculous failure!

To say that Joseph eased himself from the mental and spiritual concentration the translation required, is not to excuse him, but to **exaggerate his fault.**

Nay! It was more than a fault; it was a crime.

EXPLANATIONS.

That the reader may follow the author intelligently, in this discussion, the explanations of names, etc., are given.

Jaredites. The ancient people who came from the tower of Babel to North America, grew to be a numerous people, and 600 B. C. committed national suicide, annihilating twelve to fifteen millions of people, save two men. This slaughter occurred near Manchester, Joseph Smith's home.

Jared; the man from whom the people were named.

The Brother of Jared; the real leader, the Moses of the Jaredite exodus. His name is not given.

Coriantumr; the commander of one faction, and the only survivor out of millions, who fought at Ramah.

Ether; last of the Jaredite writers. He took no part in the battle, but hid himself in the cavity of a rock. He wrote a comprehensive history of the Jaredites on twenty-four gold plates and hid them in the hill Ramah, where the Nephites found them 400 years afterward.

Nephites; the descendants of Lehi, Ishmael and Zoram, who left

Jerusalem, 600 B. C., in the first year of Zedekiah, migrated to America, and became a great nation.

They soon divided into two nations, known as **Lamanites** and **Nephites**, named for their respective kings. They all were converted to Christ and lived as one Christian people for a century; finally all apostalized, and became "totally depraved," not only in religion but also in morals and civilization. They divided again and fought under their old names, and in 400 A. D. the Nephites were annihilated and the Lamanites were left in full possession of the land.

Their descendants are the aborigines of the two Americas.

Lehi; a Jewish prophet, and the leader of the colony.

Laman; his oldest son, who opposed Nephi, and became the leader of one faction of the divided people and gave them his name.

Nephi; **Lehi's** fifth son, the founder of the Nephite nation, who holds the most conspicuous place in their history.

Alma; the first High Priest, the founder of the Church of Christ in America, about 150 B. C.

Mormon; the last general of the Nephites, who fell with his 230,000 soldiers in the battle of Cumorah, with all the Nephite people, 400 A. D.

Moroni; son of Mormon, who escaped the battle, finished the Nephite record and hid the plates in the hill Cumorah, the Ramah of the Jaredites, two miles distant from Joseph's home.

Book of Mormon; the translation by Joseph Smith of the gold plates he found in Cumorah. The popular edition has 623 pages, containing about 275,000 words.

Book of Commandments; a small book printed in 1833, in Independence, Mo., containing Joseph's revelations to September, 1831. These were destroyed by the mob in July, 1833, only a few copies escaping the fire.

The first edition of the Book of Mormon and the surviving copies of the Book of Commandments are **rara Americana**, and command fabulous prices.

Doctrine and Covenants; a republication of the revelations contained in the Book of Commandments, with changes and additions; first published in 1835. Subsequent editions have appeared.

Pearl of Great Price; the last "inspired" book put forth by Joseph Smith, containing the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham and some of the writings of Joseph.

The Sacred Books of the Mormons are:

The Bible, King James Translation, The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price.

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