

The Golden Bible; OR,

Book of Mormon. Is it From God?

CHAPTER I.

BOOK OF MORMON COMPARED WITH THE BIBLE.

The Book of Mormon lies at the foundation, is the corner stone of the Mormon Church:

“We consider the Bible, Book of Mormon, Book of Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price and Sayings of Joseph, the Seer, our guides in faith and doctrine. The first four have been adopted as such by a vote of the saints in general conference.”—From preface of “A Compendium of the Doctrines of the Gospel.”

“We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.”—Art. 8 of “Articles of Faith.”

It is claimed for the Book of Mormon that it is superior to the Bible in several particulars:

a. It was translated by Divine inspiration; the Bible was not. The translation of the Bible was the work of

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fallible men, and therefore liable to many errors ; the Book of Mormon was translated through “Urim and Thummim,” helped by an angel sent from heaven, and therefore free from the errors that necessarily attach to a human translation.

“And we know also that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for His voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a certainty that the work is true.”—Affidavit of “The Three Witnesses.” See preface to Book of Mormon.

“The tablets or plates were translated by Smith, who used a small, oval or kidney-shaped stone, called Urim and Thummim,

that seemed endowed with the marvelous power of converting the characters on the plates, when used by Smith, into English, who would then dictate to Cowdry what to write.”—Statement of David Whitmer. See “Myth of the Manuscript Found,” p.83.

Martin Harris “explained the translation as follows: By 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 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.”—Myth of the M. F., p.95.

b. It possesses other advantages.

“There are many predictions in the Book of Mormon relating to the great events of the last days which the Bible gives us no information about.”

“There are many points of the doctrine of Christ that are far more plain and definite in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible, and many things revealed in relation to doctrine that never could be fully learned from the Bible.”—“Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” by Orson Pratt. pp.235-6.

*Martin Harris wrote a small portion of the book only. The major portion was written by Oliver Cowdry. But see chapter IV.

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“And when it (the Bible) proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew, it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord, of whom the twelve apostles bear record...and after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable Church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold they *have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious:* and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away,...and after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles,...and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb, which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb; I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them in mine own power much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb, for behold, saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them which shall be plain and precious.” Book of Mormon*, pp. 25-6, (N. Ed. 27-8.)

This last sentence refers to the Book of Mormon—and indicates its estimate of its own superiority to the Bible in

the points mentioned.#

The Book of Mormon is then, we are told, superior to the Bible in at least the following particulars:

- a. It was infallibly translated.
- b. It has many important predictions not found in the Bible.
- c. Many points of doctrine more clearly revealed.

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*Two editions of the Book of Mormon are used in this work. First, the edition published by David O. Calder, Salt Lake City, in 1876. Second, a new edition, just now published by the Deseret Publishing Co., Salt Lake City.

#For a consideration of the historical untruth presented in the above extract from the Book of Mormon, see Appendix A.

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d. It restores the “many parts, plain and most precious,” which were eliminated from the Bible at the close of the first century after Christ.

And this view of the superior merits of the Book of Mormon was evidently shared by the great prophet and seer, Joseph Smith, himself.

“Nov. 28th, 1841.—In council with the twelve apostles, Joseph Smith said: “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts than by any other book.”—Compendium, p.273.

The fact is the “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints” grew up out of the Book of Mormon. It is, as the prophet Joseph aptly puts it, “the keystone of our religion.” The whole superstructure of Mormonism rests upon this foundation, and must stand or fall with it. If the Book of Mormon is proven a fraud, then the whole thing was conceived in a fraud, and Joseph Smith was an impostor. His claims to be a prophet of the Lord rest upon and are bound up in the question at the head of this chapter— “Is the Book of Mormon from God?”

The Apostle Orson Pratt in the following earnest and incisive words evidently takes this view:

“This book must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God to man, affecting both the temporal and eternal interests of every people under heaven to the same extent and in the same degree that the message of Noah affected the inhabitants of the old world. If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked, bold, deep-laid impositions ever palmed upon the world; calculated to deceive and ruin millions who will sincerely receive it as the word of God, and will suppose

themselves securely built upon the rock of truth until they are plunged, with their families, into hopeless despair.

“The nature of the message in the Book of Mormon is such that, if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it, if false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it. Therefore, every soul in all the world is equally interested in ascertaining its truth or falsity. In a matter of such infinite importance, no person should rest satisfied with the conjectures or opinions of others. He should use every exertion himself to become acquainted with the nature of the message; he should carefully examine the evidences of which it is offered to the world; he should, with all patience and perseverance, seek to acquire a certain knowledge whether it be of God or not.

“If, after a rigid examination, it be found an imposition, it should be extensively published to the world as such. The evidence and arguments upon which the imposture was detected should be clearly and logically stated, that those who have been sincerely, yet unfortunately, deceived may perceive the nature of the deception, and be reclaimed, and that those who continue to publish the delusion may be exposed and silenced.”—Introduction to “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon.” Pages 124-5.

This central, *vital* place demanded for the Book of Mormon by the book itself—by the prophet who gave the book to the world—and by the Church that grew up out of the book—is quite a sufficient excuse for asking the reader’s attention—his candid, most earnest attention to a consideration of its claims to *divine authority*.

WHAT, THEN, IS THE BOOK OF MORMON ?

It professes two things—*First*, to be a true record or history of three different colonies that came over from the old world to this country in ancient times, and lived and flourished here for a period of twenty five hundred years.

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Second—It professes to contain the fullness of the gospel of Christ, a fuller and more complete presentation of the plan of salvation than is found in the Bible, either in the Old or the New Testament.

I. As for its history. It is divided into fifteen books, after the method of the Bible. The next to the last book, called the Book of Ether, contains the earliest record.

This book tells us of a party numbering between twenty and thirty, under the direction of the brother of Jared, leaving Asia at the command of God, about one hundred years after the flood, just after the confusion of tongues, as related in the Book of Genesis. They embark in eight strangely constructed arks or barges; and after drifting 344 days across

the Atlantic Ocean they land upon this North American Continent, where they and their descendants remained for fifteen hundred years; became very numerous, spread over the greater portion of the continent and developed a somewhat advanced civilization. But dividing into two powerful parties or nations, able to muster and thoroughly equip an army of two million soldiers each—they became involved in a fierce war of extermination, which resulted in the entire annihilation of both nations, leaving the country a desolate waste—one man alone surviving the terrible destruction—whose name was Coriantumr.

About the time this terrible war was desolating North America, a *second party*, made up of two families, Lehi and Ishmael, leave the City of Jerusalem, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah, six hundred years before Christ, and after wandering eight

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years in the desert of Arabia, embark in a ship of peculiar construction, drift across the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, and land upon the Western shore of South America. These two families having intermarried, begin rapidly to multiply. Within twenty years, however, they also divide into two rival nations, known for a thousand years afterwards as the Nephites and the Lamanites, named from the two brothers Nephi and Laman, who led in the quarrel and divided the two families.

About nine years after Lehi and his company leave Jerusalem, a *third party*, headed by one of King Zedekiah's sons, also leave Jerusalem, cross the ocean and settle in the land of *Zarahemla*, somewhere in the region of Central America, or the northern coasts of South America.

After four hundred years they are accidentally discovered by a party of Nephites, who are traveling northward; and after a time the two nations become one under the old title of Nephites. All these peoples rapidly increase; the Lamanites eventually covering the entire South American continent, while the Nephites gradually extend northward until the greater portion on North America is occupied by them.

The Book of Mormon, with the exception of the single Book of Ether already mentioned, is the professed history of these two peoples. The Lamanites, at the very beginning of their separate history, were cursed by the Almighty with a "skin of blackness"—became a wild, ignorant, ferocious people, and the *ancestors of the present Indian* races. While the Nephites are represented as God's greatest favorites, enjoying advantages and

favors such as no other people under heaven ever enjoyed—furnishing a list of kings, judges, prophets, apostles and martyrs such as have never been found upon earth in any age or country. Christian churches were organized, baptism by immersion administered, and all the blessings and privileges of the New Testament dispensation enjoyed, with the peculiar gifts of speaking with tongues, prophesying, performing miracles, and such like, hundreds of years before the appearance of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

A few days after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection and ascension in Judea, he appeared to His people upon this continent in his human body, and remained here *forty days*, preaching, performing miracles, ordaining twelve apostles, and otherwise establishing the faith of His people. And a few years after the whole country is reported converted—the entire population of both continents, the Lamanites of South America and the Nephites of North America are enrolled in Christian churches. And for nearly two hundred years a regular full blown millennium is enjoyed. The arts of war being forgotten, peace, purity and religious culture are universal. But increased wealth and prosperity brought religious declension, and by and by apostasy from the faith. The apostates assumed the old name of Lamanites, and their old hatred of religion and religious people. This opposition increased in numbers and in power, until war, relentless and cruel, again filled the land with bloodshed and desolation. This resulted, in the year 384 A.D., in the complete destruction of the Nephites and all there was left of the religious element—leaving the infidel Lamanites, who had already

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become wild, barbarous, and bloodthirsty, in full possession of both continents, where they were found upon the discovery of America by Columbus.

Now, the commander in chief of the Nephite forces was a prophet by the name of *Mormon*. Before this exterminating war had ended, Mormon gathered up all the records of his predecessors, the kings and prophets and judges who had been inspired of God to write either history or prophecy, or vision or exhortation—and made a careful abridgment of their writings down to his own time; and engraved this abridged record upon golden plates. These plates he turned over to his son Moroni, who commanded one division of the Nephite army under his father. This son finished his father's record, and, when completed, hid the whole in the sacred hill Cumorah, near Palmyra, New York. There they remained fourteen hundred years, until discovered by the prophet Joseph Smith, and by him translated

into our language.

This accounts for the name of the book, the *Book of Mormon*—while the book gives the name to the people—the *Mormons*. Moroni was raised from the dead in the form of an angel for the special purpose of showing Mr. Smith where said plates had been hid, and assist him in translating them into our language.

On May 8, 1838, Joseph Smith, when asked, “How and where did you obtain the Book of Mormon?” gave this answer:

“Moroni, who deposited the plates (from whence the Book of Mormon was translated), in a hill in Manchester, Ontario County, New York, being dead and raised again therefrom, appeared unto me, and told me where they were, and gave me directions how to

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obtain them. I obtained them, and the Urim and Thummim with them, by means of which I translated the plates. And thus came the Book of Mormon”—“Compendium,” p. 305.

This is a brief outline of the history contained in the Book of Mormon.

If, now, the reader would secure a complete birdseye view of this strange book, let him imagine such a history filed in upon almost every page with strange visions, with astounding miracles, with Bible incidents worked over and embellished and enlarged, with accounts of remarkable conversions, with revelations imitating those of the Apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, with men almost eclipsing the Lord Jesus Christ in their wonderful powers, and their divine insight into human hearts, with prophesies that throw into the shade every Bible attempt to forecast the future, and all this sweetened and made practical by a plentiful supply of sermons and exhortations, many of which are so earnest and apparently so evangelical, so full of loyalty to Christ, breathing such a spirit of piety and devotion, so many real good things in them that the bitterest opponent of the book is often half won in spite of himself, and feels almost willing to forgive the pious frauds that are apparent to him upon almost every page, the monster assumptions of divine authority, the constant reiteration that an angel from heaven inspired it all—and to allow the good Mormon brother who says: “The Book of Mormon is good enough for me”—to enjoy unmolested his misplaced, yet evidently sincere, confidence in his golden Bible.

IS THIS BOOK INSPIRED OF GOD?

Every good honest Mormon says “Yes,” and believes it fully. He believes that the Book of Mormon is a true historical record of God’s dealings with this ancient people upon this continent; that its contents were “given by inspiration of God,” and “confirmed by the ministering of angels;” that the men who composed its pages wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; that Joseph Smith translated it “by the gift and power of God;” that it is, and was designed to be, a revelation of God’s will to men, and a “guide in faith and practice.”

But after a very careful study of the book, a conscientious and painstaking examination of all the evidences he has been able to gather both for and against it, the author of these pages has been forced to reject every one of the above claims. He is compelled to believe that no such people as are described in the Book of Mormon ever lived upon this continent; that no such records were ever engraved upon golden plates, or any other plates, in the early ages; that no such men as Mormon or Moroni or any other of the prophets or kings or wise men mentioned in the book, ever existed in this country; that Jesus Christ never appeared upon this continent in person, or had a people here before its discovery by Columbus. In short, that no such civilization, Christian or otherwise, as is described in the Book of Mormon ever had an existence upon either North or South America.

On the contrary, the book is altogether, and in every part of it, except so much as is borrowed from the Bible,

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a modern fabrication, without any foundation in fact—but had its origin, simply and solely, in the brain or brains of men in our own day, without any help whatever from God or from an angel of God.

In the discussion of this important question, the author proposes to say nothing whatever of the various theories that have been propounded to account for the origin of the book. Whether it originated solely in the brain of Joseph Smith, or whether Sidney Rigden helped him in its preparation, or some other person or persons, and whether he or they had either in memory or in possession, as the basis for the historical portion of the book, a certain *romance*, known to have been written a few years previous by an old worn-out clergymen named Solomon Spaulding. These questions as to the real authorship of the book have been worn threadbare. The answers that have been given to them, while perfectly conclusive to the outside world, have never been

accepted by the members of the Mormon Church, and, in the very nature of the case, never will be.

There is, as the author conceives, a far more direct and satisfactory method of reaching a conclusion—that is, by an examination of the book itself.

If a careful examination of its contents shall prove, beyond a possibility of question, that a God of infinite wisdom and purity could have had no possible hand in its preparation, that the book is and must be *modern* in its origin, and not at all what it professes to be—then the question as to who prepared it, whether Smith, Rigden or Spaulding, or all together, or neither of them, is unimportant. Here is a book already loved and revered by at least two hundred thousand souls; a book,

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too, that demands the love and reverence of every other soul upon earth under pain of that soul's eternal loss. Is the *book* a fraud? This is the vital question; a question of unspeakable importance; *who* perpetrated the fraud is of comparatively small consequence.

NO TRACE OF GOD'S HAND.

The first objection to the book to be considered is this: *It has no trace of God's hand upon it.* No divine stamp. Everything about it is human, very, very human.

The ground taken is this: God stamps himself, his own infinite perfections upon everything he undertakes. You, gentle reader, stamp your own individuality upon everything you do and everything you say. If you write a letter to a friend, it will not be just such a letter as your neighbor, or any other person, would write. Your peculiar way of expressing your thoughts, your style of writing, the degree of your skill or culture in the art of composition, whether an experienced hand or a raw recruit, is revealed in the very sentences you compose. The mechanism of the wood-work in your parlor is not more perfectly the tell-tale of the hand who wrought it, whether a skillful mechanic or a blundering beginner—than do our thoughts, written or spoken, advertise to the world not only the degree of our mental training, but quite as clearly the qualities of the soul.

In other words, we stamp *ourselves*, our inner selves, our idiosyncrasies upon what we say or do. And this is only another way of saying that our words and actions are a part of ourselves, that they come right

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out from the inner fountain, and must be toned and colored

by the character and quality of that inner fountain. Just so completely does God stamp *himself*, his own infinite excellencies upon what he does, whether he creates a mountain or the tiniest insect, whether a blade of grass or a drop of water, he displays a wisdom, a skill, a perfection utterly beyond the reach of fallible, blundering, imperfect man. He makes no blunders, does nothing by halves—never has to go back and do his work over again. When he paints a flower or tints the rainbow he does not *daub*—no imperfect work comes from his hand. “All His works praise Him.”

And so the marks of divinity should be seen upon God's *written word*. Whether He records a history, utters a prophecy, or inspires a proverb or a psalm, He should do it in a way that will be true to himself, stamp His own infinite nature upon it. Every thought that expresses His thought should be as pure as perfection itself, “as silver purified seven times,” until all the dross has been eliminated. And hence it is found that a careful examination of the Bible reveals a multitude of characteristics not found in any merely human production. Let us note one or two.

a. *Character Reading:*

Suppose you pick up a blade of grass or a kernel of wheat, or a simple hair, falling from the head, or a single drop of water, and look at it. At first you will say “What of it? I see nothing strange, nothing divine in this.” But begin carefully to study it. Take your microscope and examine it, and you shall

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presently be astonished at the revelations made. Evidences of the handiwork of God appear in every part of it, until it is placed almost as far beyond the reach of man's wisdom and skill and power as is the creation of a world.

So, if you please, turn to one of the short historical incidents found in the Bible, and read it over. At first perusal you may notice nothing at all peculiar about it. It is plain, simple; there is nothing constrained or studied, no apparent effort at crispness or sharpness, or condensation. It is a simple, straightforward, matter of fact statement. And you say, “There's nothing strange about that. Any one could write after that fashion.” But wait a little. Study this little incident carefully, and presently you will begin to discern some strange things about it.

You may read in the Bible a few short statements about the Patriarch Abraham. Probably not over four or five pages, all told, tell us all we know about Abraham—and yet we are wondrously well acquainted with him—his character stands out prominently in history, his record has told with recognized power upon the whole religious life of the world. He is the father of the faithful. Can you select any prominent character in profane history, whom you know so well,

even with ten times the reading? A dozen verses in the New Testament tell us all we know of the traitor Judas Iscariot, and yet what traitor upon earth has been more thoroughly execrated? Twenty verses in 2d Chronicles, the 28th Chapter, give us so clear and comprehensive a view of the real character of King Ahaz and the sad results of his life, that it is doubtful if any large volume

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of merely human history has ever exceeded it. And much the same might be said of every attempt to portray character in the Bible. A few verses will usually suffice to draw out a man's character to the very life, and yet there will be nothing in the narrative that gives the least impression of studied brevity, or any apparent effort at condensation. On the contrary, the style will be found to be simplicity itself. And the secret of this strange power seems to be the wonderful ability *to select for record only those incidents that reveal the man most perfectly*. As the skillful artist will sometimes, by a few master-strokes of his brush, produce a picture that seems almost to live and breathe before you, so a few master-strokes from the pen of inspiration will probe to the bottom of the human heart, unmask the moral character, and hold it up naked and uncovered where all the world can behold it.

b. *Bible Histories:*

And the same thing may be seen in the *histories* of the Bible. A single verse often will tell of a long and bloody battle. The transactions of a whole campaign are crowded into a few sentences. And yet the description is simplicity itself—not the least appearance of crowding, no seeming effort at condensation or brevity. Imagine a poor cripple made whole by a miracle. Take pen and paper and attempt a description. Give a touching account of the poor cripple's previous history, the time and place of the occurrence; describe the circumstances attending the miracle, who performed it, how it was done, what people thought of it, and how the cripple was affected by it. Describe the

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whole in as few words as you can, without copying from the Bible, and if you compress your story into five or six pages you will do remarkably well. But in the New Testament such a scene is described in five short verses, and so described that the narrative takes hold upon you with wondrous power. It is not only fastened in your memory but stirs your heart, and affects your life.

The life and character and times of the most remark-

able and important personage that has ever appeared on earth, the Lord Jesus Christ, is, by Matthew, beautifully and clearly exhibited in the small compass of thirty-one pages print. And, be it remembered, Matthew is believed to have been an unlettered man, not at all used to writing. This book was his first and last attempt, so far as we know.

Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, has furnished us in thirty-three pages a history of one of the most important religious movements the world has ever witnessed—a movement that revolutionized the religious thought of the world! And in fact, this wonderful comprehensiveness, combined with the most artless simplicity—this strange tact at compression without a seeming effort at compression—this unapproachable ability to say a great deal in a few plain, simple words, prevails all through the Bible. It would appear to be God's way of writing, precisely what we might expect from a being of infinite perfection. We may safely challenge all the doctors of divinity, or skilled writers of the present age, to crowd into *ten pages* every thought and sentiment

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and inference the Apostle Paul, with the greatest grace and simplicity, puts into one page.

A young man in President Wayland's class once flip-pantly remarked about the Proverbs of Solomon, which they happened to be studying: "Why it's easy enough to write *proverbs*; anybody could do that." The Doctor simply replied: "Try a few."

Try your hand at writing history, or biography, or doctrine, or parable, or proverb, and place your production beside God's; and we will abide the result, yourself being the judge. One of our poets has sung:

"Let all the heathen writers join
To form one perfect book;
Great God, when once compared with thine,
How mean their writings look!"

And the same statement will apply with equal force to Christian writers and scholars.

Look at the discourses of our Lord, any one of them, the Sermon on the Mount, for instance: Surely "never man spake like this man." The first eight sentences of that sermon on the mount are by universal consent placed above any other eight sentences ever spoken by mortal lips. Friend and foe, infidel, atheist and Christian, have from the first acknowledged that these verses stand alone amid all the literature of earth, unapproached and unapproachable, not more in their comprehensiveness and sublimity than in their beautiful simplicity:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

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“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” &c., &c.

And, please reflect that sermon was apparently an extemporaneous discourse, and the first extended sermon, so far as we know, preached by the man Christ Jesus—a young man, only thirty years old, whose school privileges had certainly not been extensive, and whose opportunities of studying the art of composition and practicing compression had been limited. But he opens his mouth, and from his lips flow words so divine, both in the thought and in the style of expression, that they have never been approached by mortal man. And the wonder is only increased when we reflect it is the pen of Matthew, the publican, that records this sermon, some *twenty-five or thirty years after it was preached*. If Matthew remembered the exact words of the Savior, and wrote just as they were first spoken, it was a wonderful *miracle of memory*. If he remembered only the substance of the sermon, and clothed Jesus’ thought in his own language, then we have a still greater miracle to account for:—an *unlearned publican, almost infinitely outstripping all the skilled writers on earth!*

It would be easy to multiply illustrations of this thought, for the whole Bible in every part is an illustration.

And now let us briefly, and yet carefully and honestly, apply these tests of divinity to the Book of Mormon. If God inspired its pages, as he did the pages of

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The Bible, there should be the same plain internal evidences of the fact.

Opening the book at random it matters little where—turn to the 110th (N. Ed. 123) page, and read:

“And now I, Nephi, must make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass. Wherefore, the things which I have written sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore, I shall speak unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying.”

Here are sixty-nine words. If we leave out of the above extract the inelegant and uncalled for repetitions, the unnecessary verbiage, we may still preserve every thought of the writer in a much simpler, neater, and better constructed sentence of only thirty-two words, as follows:

“And now I, Nephi, must close my prophesying, with a few words plainly spoken, according to my custom, concerning the doctrine of Christ; words which I know must surely come to pass.”

Let us try a longer selection on page 95 (N. Ed. 106-7):

“Wherefore hearken, O my people which are of the house of Israel and give ear unto my words; for because the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all those that are filled with the spirit of prophecy. But I give unto you a prophesy, according to the spirit which is in me; wherefore I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me from the time that I came out from Jerusalem with my father: for behold, my soul delighteth in plainness unto my people, that they may learn; yea, and my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the things of the Jews, and I know that the Jews do understand the things of the

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prophets, and there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews, like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jews. But behold, I, Nephi, have not taught my children after the manner of the Jews; but behold, I, of myself, have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about; and I have made mention unto my children concerning the judgments of God, which hath come to pass among the Jews, unto my children, according to all that which Isaiah hath spoken, and I do not write them.

“But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy, according to my plainness; in the which, I know that no man can err; nevertheless, in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled, men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass; wherefore, they are of worth unto the children of men, and he that supposeth that they are not, unto them will I speak particularly, and confine the words unto mine own people; for I know that they shall be of great worth unto them in the last days; for in that day shall they understand them; wherefore, for their good have I written them.”

In all these blundering sentences and inexcusable repetitions what has the writer said farther than this:

“That the prophecies of Isaiah (from which Nephi had just quoted *thirteen* full chapters) are not so plain to ordinary people, as his (Nephi’s) prophecies. Nephi himself could understand them, because he had lived in Jerusalem and knew “concerning

“the regions round about.” But his children had not been sufficiently instructed in Jewish matters to understand. When however all Isaiah’s prophecies have been fulfilled, then everybody can understand them - and hence Nephi records them for the benefit of these later peoples!”

On page 224 (N. Ed., 249,) read the following:

“And now I say unto you, that this is the order after which I am called: yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren; yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both

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old and young, both bond and free: yea, I say unto you, the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again; yea, thus saith the spirit, repent, all ye ends of the earth, for the kingdom of heaven is soon at hand; yea, the Son of God cometh in his glory, in his might, majesty, power and dominion. Yea, my beloved brethren, I say unto you, that the spirit saith, behold the glory of the king of all the earth; and also the king of heaven shall very soon shine forth among all the children of men: and also the spirit saith unto me, yea, crieth unto me with a mighty voice, saying, go forth and say unto this people, repent, for except ye repent ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of heaven.”

What has the author said in all these 187 words? Only this-

“I am commissioned by the spirit, speaking in thunder tones, to preach repentance and the new birth to my brethren, and to all the people of the land, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, when the Son of God, king of earth and heaven, cometh in majesty and glory.” Fifty-one instead of 187 words.

Once more let us try this same author, Alma, the most voluminous writer in the Book of Mormon, page 320 (N. Ed., 354):

“Yea, this bringeth about the restoration of those things of which have been spoken by the mouths of the prophets. The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul: yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body: yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost, but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame. And now, my son, this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets,

“And now, my son, I have somewhat to say concerning the restoration of which has been spoken: for behold, some have wrested the Scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing. And I perceive that thy mind has been worried also, con-

cerning this thing. But behold, I will explain it unto thee. I say unto thee, my son, that the plan of restoration is requisite (?) with the justice of God: for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order. Behold, it is requisite and just, according to the power and resurrection of Christ, that the soul of man should be restored to its body, and that every part of the body should be restored to itself.”

Reader, in all these awkward repetitions embracing 211 words, what has this best of Mormon writers assisted by an angel, said more than this:

“That the final restoration spoken of by the mouths of the prophets accords with the justice of God, and means a final *reunion* of the soul and body, after the body has been raised from the grave complete in every part, even to joint and limb and hair.”

It has been suggested that the blunders in composition, awkward and uncalled-for repetitions, sentences constructed in defiance of all grammatical and rhetorical rules, often covering up and obscuring the thought of the author, must all be explained by the fact that Joseph Smith was an uneducated and unlettered youth.

But, please reflect a moment. These sentences are, professedly, a translation of an ancient record—transferring to our language words and thoughts already written in an ancient tongue. In such a translation the *translator*, if he is a poor English scholar, may *misspell* the words of our language; he may easily make grammatical mistakes in the construction of his sentences; may use unnecessary words in the expression of a single thought; but, he may not repeat a thought three or four times over, as in the above examples, *except those re-*

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petitions are found in the original, from which he is translating.

Either these repetitions were found upon those original, plates, or they were added by Joseph Smith to the translation. If they were added by Mr. Smith, then he has trifled with sacred things, committed the fearful sin of adding to the words of divine revelation; loading down God’s pure words with so much useless rubbish as to cast doubt and discredit upon the whole. And, if he could or would do this in these instances, what warrant have we that he has not *frequently* done it? in fact that the whole book has not been thus altered or embellished to suit his own fancies?

But, the alleged facts are, Joseph Smith did not, him-

self, translate a single sentence. The statements of the eye witnesses are very plain upon this point:

“And we know, also, that they have been translated by the gift and power of God.”-The “Three Witnesses.”

“The tablets, or plates were translated by Smith, who used a small oval, or kidney-shaped stone, called Urim and Thummim, that seemed endowed with the marvelous power of converting the characters on the plates, when used by Smith, into English.”

—David Whitmer.

“By aid of the seer-stone, sentences would appear and were read by the prophet . . . so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates, precisely in the language then used.”

—Martin Harris.

It is plain from these statements that Joseph Smith had no responsibility whatever as to the wording of the translation. The stone itself was endowed “by the gift of God” with the “marvelous power of converting the characters on the plates into English.” The English “sentences would appear on the stone and were read

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by the prophet.” All Mr. Smith had to do, then, was simply to read what appeared on the stone.

We are forced therefore to the conclusion that all these senseless repetitions, this worse than useless verbiage, *is and must have been in the original plates, and not at all the result of Mr. Smith’s ignorance and want of culture.*

And hence we must call in question the divine inspiration of those original plates, inasmuch as such blundering repetitions are directly at variance with all we have learned of God’s manner of writing.

If it be said, by way of excuse for such sins against all the ordinary rules of composition, that the authors of those old sentences, Nephi and Alma, may have been unlettered men, we reply, first: These men were not unlettered men. Nephi claims to have been taught “in all the learning” of his father, and both of them were the leading men, the best educated men of their times—the two together furnishing over one-half the entire contents of the Book of Mormon.

We reply, second: Even if they had been unlettered men, they could not have made such blunders had they been inspired of God. Matthew, the publican, author of the Gospel of Matthew, was an unlettered man. Peter and James, authors of three epistles, were unlettered men. John, author of one of the Gospels, the Book of Revelation, and three brief epistles, was an unlettered man. But where in all their writings or speeches can you find any such egregious blunders in composition as these specimens from the Book of Mormon? On the contrary, under the inspiration

of the Holy Spirit, they made most wonderful use of language,

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exhibiting a style so terse and making choice of words so comprehensive, that they have never been approached by the most skillful writers on earth.*

The author has heard Mormon speakers expose their ignorance of the real facts by suggesting that the beauty and simplicity and yet strange comprehensiveness of Bible language, as we find it in our present English Bible, is due to the English *translators* and not to the original Hebrew and Greek. That while these originals in ancient times may have been as rough and awkward, as full of blunders as the original of the Book of Mormon, the English translation, as we now have it, is the result of a continued and persistent process of polishing, condensing and beautifying by the best scholars of the world for centuries past. This is so far from the truth that all the study of centuries past by the best scholars of the world has as yet entirely failed, even to reach the simplicity and brevity and wondrous force of those ancient originals from which our English Bible has been translated.