

CHAPTER IV.

SOME INTERESTING HISTORY.

A. *Four improbable statements.*

The Book of Mormon sets out with *four* very improbable and really absurd statements.

I. The first is that Lehi and his family used the *Egyptian language*.

“I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.”—(Page I.)

There are a multitude of reasons that make such a statement altogether improbable. In the first place, Lehi had lived all his lifetime, “in all his days” (page 3), in the city of Jerusalem, surrounded constantly by those who spoke only the Hebrew language. Had he been an Egyptian by birth, and with loving tenderness clung to his native tongue, the above statement would have a very different look. But Lehi was a Hebrew, a pure Hebrew, was born and reared in the city of Jerusalem, with family relationships and social surroundings all Hebraistic. In the second place, the Jews hated the Egyptians with a bitter hatred, and it is therefore inconceivable that a true-born Jew, a real lover of his own people, loyal and patriotic as he professes to have been, would have been willing thus to insult his people, or that the Jews around him would have endured the in-

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sult. In the third place, the ancient Jew had an unusual *veneration* for his mother tongue, the sacred Hebrew, the most ancient language upon earth, as he believed; the loved tongue of his illustrious ancestry; the language in which God himself had spoken from Sinai; the language in which all their sacred books had been written—the law, the prophets and the Psalms; the language in which the daily services at the temple were conducted. And this man Lehi is presented to us as a leader and a teacher among his people, a most devout and careful observer of the law of Moses, in fact, a prophet of the Lord, a prophet mighty in word and in deed. Now that such a man with such a venerated lan-

guage could have accepted instead the Egyptian tongue, which was associated only with ignominy and dishonor, is the height of absurdity. But in the fourth place, God’s will had been very clearly expressed upon a multitude of occasions as to the propriety of having any intercourse with the Egyptians or longings for anything to be found there. (See Numb., 11:5, 6, 18-20; Deut., 17:16; Is., 31:1; Hos., 11:5, etc., etc.) It is not therefore conceivable that so earnest a lover of the Lord would be willing thus to offend God; or, if willing, that God would choose such a man for the bestowment of the rarest favors and honors.

2. The second statement is still more objectionable—that there were found in the possession of a man by the name of Laban, a relative of Lehi’s, and also a resident of the city of Jerusalem, certain *brass plates* upon which were engraven, in the *Egyptian language*, the five books of Moses, containing the law, the entire

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history of the Jews from the first down to Laban’s time, including the Psalms, and all the prophets who had written down to the same date, the beginning of King Zedekiah’s reign, not omitting a portion of Jeremiah’s prophesies. In other words, these brass plates contained all of the Old Testament as we have it, that had been written up to that time, six hundred years before Christ. In addition to this, these brass plates were said to contain a full genealogical record of Laban’s and Lehi’s ancestry quite back to Joseph in Egypt, from whom they were descended. All this engraven in the Egyptian Language (pp. 10, 11, N. Ed., II, 12). This is more improbable and absurd than the first statement. All the objections urged against the first would be equally valid against this, while it also supposes a series of devout men belonging to the most honored family in Israel to have perpetuated from the beginning this insult to the Hebrew language, and this disregard of God’s express will.

We have positive evidence from the Bible, that this statement in this particular case is *exceedingly improbable*.

Only twenty-two years before, in this same city of Jerusalem there had occurred a wonderful revival of pure religion. Josiah had been King of Judea for eighteen years. He was a devout man, a lover of the Lord, and a careful observer of the law of Moses so far as he understood it. But during the wicked reign of his wicked father Ammon and his grandfather Manasseh *every copy of the law* had been destroyed, as was supposed. So that he had reigned as King eighteen years without seeing a copy of the law; and was therefore ignorant of many of its requirements, and especially

of its threatened penalties. In the 18th year of Josiah's reign the good High Priest Hilkiah, by an apparent accident, discovered a copy hid away in some obscure room in the temple, and this discovery was the beginning of a new era in the history of the nation. For a full account see 2d Kings, 22d and 23rd chapters. Also 2d Chron., chapters 34 and 35.

Well, now, this statement in the Book of Mormon supposes that a *complete copy of the law of Moses* had during all these eighteen years of Josiah's reign been in the City of Jerusalem and that no one knew it—and yet this copy of the law had attached to it a *genealogical record* of certain prominent families, families of wealth and position living in the city. All genealogical records were common property in a certain sense: that is, they were open to the constant inspection of the public; like the books of the County Recorder of Deeds to-day,—to be carefully inspected whenever a transfer of real estate is to be made. Among the Jews anciently all real estate inhered in the *family*, and could never be alienated—hence genealogical records were very important documents, were carefully preserved and often examined. Here, then, are brass plates containing a copy of the law which, because of a genealogical record attached, are necessarily open to the inspection of a multitude of interested relatives, some of whom were devout observers of the law—and yet, according to the statements of our Bible, for eighteen years the entire nation including the priests are left to suffer a *famine of the word of God*. Such a supposition is simply absurd. No reasonable person can for a moment entertain so unlikely and preposterous a statement.

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3. But the third statement is equally absurd and ridiculous. It is that *Lehi* a wealthy, prominent public spirited man, *did not know to what tribe he belonged* until he had stolen these brass plates from Laban and had read them over!! This is the statement. p. 11. (N. Ed. 11,2):

“And it came to pass that my father Lehi also found upon the plates of brass a genealogy of his fathers; *wherefore* he knew that he was a descendant of Joseph; yea, even that Joseph, who was the son of Jacob, who was sold into Egypt. . . . And thus my father Lehi did discover the genealogy of his fathers.”

The angel who inspired such a preposterous statement must have been as ignorant as a babe of Biblical genealogies or Jewish carefulness upon this point. See 1st Chron., chaps. 1-10 and Ezra 2. Lehi could as easily have been ignorant of his own name, or the equal of “Topsy” who “never had a mother”!

David Whitmer confesses that Joseph Smith was “but little

versed in Biblical lore did not even know that Jerusalem was a walled city.” And who will want better evidence that the *angel* and *Mr. Smith* are one and the same person, than such a statement as the above—that Lehi, a highly educated and devout Hebrew, a highly privileged and wonderfully enlightened prophet of the Lord—did not *know to what tribe he belonged*, when every man's family inheritance inhered in his own tribe, and could never be alienated, and when tribal relations were considered more sacred and valuable than any other earthly relationships. A sad “give away” this, for a book pretending to be inspired by God himself.

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4. But there is still another statement that equally stamps this whole account as a fraud, and the man Lehi as a creature of the imagination, a person who never had a *real* existence; and that is the *prophetical character and work ascribed to him*.

Upon the second page (Book of Mormon) we are treated to some of the marvelous things this man was permitted to see and hear and read : First, a “pillar of fire” comes out and dwells upon a rock before him. Next the heavens open and he is permitted to see God sitting upon his throne, surrounded “by numberless concourses of angels:” then came one descending out of the midst of heaven whose “lustre was above that of the sun at noonday, followed by twelve others whose “brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.” The first one “came and stood before my father and handed him a book.” In this book he read “many great and marvelous things.” After all this he had remarkable dreams, and from dreams and book together he had gathered up the following among a vast number of *prophetical* facts of great interest if true. See page 17, (N. Ed. 18,9):

“Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews; even a Messiah; or, in other words, a Saviour of the world. And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world. Wherefore all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be, save they should rely on this Redeemer.

“And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah to prepare the way of the Lord; yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness, prepare ye the way

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of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my

father concerning this thing.

“And my father said he should baptize in Bethabary, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should baptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water. And after he had baptized the Messiah with water, he should behold and hear record that he had baptized the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.

“And it came to pass after my father had spoken these words, he spake unto my brethren, concerning the Gospel which should be preached among the Jews; and also concerning the dwindling of the Jews in unbelief. And after they had slain the Messiah, who should come, and after he had been slain, he should rise from the dead and he should make himself manifest by the Holy Ghost unto the Gentiles.”

Now will the reader please consider these statements for a moment. Here is a professed prophet of the Lord who is *far in advance* of any other Old Testament prophet. Jeremiah was living and in high repute at this time, but he knew nothing of Jesus Christ or his forerunner, in comparison with this man Lehi. Just think of it, Lehi can tell the *very date* when the Messiah should appear, the place of his baptism, and who should be the administrator, can tell us the very words John the Baptist shall use, tell us of Christ’s resurrection and all that. No other old Testament prophet, not all of them together, had secured such *definite* knowledge of the future, and yet we are asked to believe that this man has lived and labored in Jerusalem all his lifetime; and not *one syllable* regarding him is found in the Old Testament. Jeremiah is mentioned, and Ezekiel and other prophets of that age, who wrote and who did not write,

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but the very chiefest of them all is passed by in entire silence. And more than this, for all his wonderful revelations are passed in silence, not a lisp of them by the later prophets. In fact the whole nation plod on in blissful ignorance of these great truths about the coming Messiah, and Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi, and all who came after this man Lehi furnish no hint that such important data had been furnished them. Who can believe it possible that so brilliant a star should go out and not a trace be left? that so great a philosopher should utter truths so divine, and both himself and his truths never be heard of more? This is taxing our credulity beyond measure.

There are other statements made at the beginning of Nephite history that are equally absurd and unreasonable, but the above four must suffice as samples.

B. *Slightly Bombastic.*

King Jacob tells us on page 120 (N. Ed. 135), that

“A hundreth part of the proceedings of this people, which now began to be numerous, cannot be written upon these plates, but many of their proceedings are written upon the larger plates, and their wars and their contentions and the reigns of their kings.”

Fifty-five years before this statement, Jacob’s father, Lehi, left Jerusalem with his wife and four boys, all unmarried. Another family, consisting of Ishmael and wife, two sons and several daughters, were induced to accompany them. One other man, Zerum, who had been a slave of Laban, made up the total number of colonists.

During the first ten years, those four boys and the slave appear to have married those girls, while two

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other boys, Jacob and Joseph, are added by birth to the original family of Lehi. If during the next ten years each of the five young families multiply as rapidly as possible, we cannot count more than from thirty to forty young children, and during the next ten years, the third decade, the largest possible increase would not reach fifty more children. So that at the end of *thirty* years we have twelve grown people and from seventy-five to ninety children—of whom there are possibly from ten to fifteen who have reached the age of twenty years, and may possibly have intermarried.

It was during this last decade, between twenty and thirty years after leaving Jerusalem, probably about twenty-two or twenty-three years after, when there was a possible population of between fifty and sixty persons, nearly all of whom are small children, that this company divide into *two nations*. The two oldest brothers, Laman and Lemuel, with their families, and the two sons of Ishmael, under the general designation of *Lamanites*, remain in the southern portion of South America, and elect a king while the balance, under the direction of Nephi, at the command of God, strike off into the wilderness in a northerly direction, choose Nephi as their king, and assume the name of Nephites! And before the first thirty years have expired, that is, in about seven or eight years, this little colony have subdued the forests, become wealthy in flocks and herds, been taught by Nephi to—

“Build buildings; and to work in all manner of wood, and of iron, and of copper, and of brass, and of steel (?), and of gold and of silver, and of precious ores, which were in great abundance.”

And in addition to all this, he had built and completed a *temple*:

“And I did construct it after the manner of the temple of Solomon, save it were not built of so many precious things; for they were not to be found upon the land*; wherefore, it could not be built like unto Solomon’s temple. But the manner of the construction was like unto the temple of Solomon; and the workmanship thereof was exceeding fine.”

Pretty good for three men and a few boys! Solomon’s temple was *seven* years in building, and required 153,000 laborers and 30,000 overseers—see 1st Kings 5: 13-16, and 6: 37-38.

After the completion of this magnificent temple, Nephi consecrates his two youngest brothers, Jacob and Joseph, though scarcely more than twenty years old, to the office of the priesthood:

“And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did consecrate Jacob and Joseph that they should be priests and teachers over the land* of my people.”

In doing this he directly broke two very plain requirements of the Mosaic law. 1. That none but the tribe of Levi were eligible to the priesthood—these men being from the tribe of *Mannaseh*. 2. That no one should be permitted to discharge the duties of a priest till *thirty years of age*. We should remember, however, that this small nation had but little timber as yet to select from. Nephi himself was king and general high priest—his brother Samuel and the slave

*He has *all manner* of wood, iron, copper, brass, steel, gold, silver and precious ores in great abundance precisely what “precious things” he needed aside from all these, does not clearly appear.

*They certainly had plenty of *land* to be priests and teachers over, but the people were scarce.

Zerem were the subjects, and so these two boys, Jacob and Joseph, were all there were left for priests except the small children who had been born within the two previous decades!

And it is during the next twenty-five years that these two imposing nations, the Nephites and the Lamanites, had so many wars and contentions, shed so much blood, and made so much history, that Jacob tells us in the passage above quoted that—

“A hundredth part of the proceedings of this people cannot be written upon these plates and that many of their proceedings are written upon the larger plates, and their wars, and their contentions and the reigns of their kings.”

A love of the marvelous, combined with a somewhat stoical indifference to the ridiculous, must surely have been a prominent and important factor in the mental make-up of our author! For we may find almost any number of illustrations of this angel’s strange propensity to exaggerate at the expense of common sense, and frequently of the truth itself. For instance, on page 132 (N. Ed. 148), we are told:

“And it came to pass that on the morrow the *multitude* were gathered together.”

This is during the lifetime of Jacob, who was born just after the family left Jerusalem. His age is not given—but as he lived several years after this occurrence and seems to have been in his prime, and as there were altogether five men who have been married anywhere from thirty to sixty years, the reader can form his own estimate of how great the *multitude* would be!

On the next page we have a statement that needs to be read with the same large allowance for exaggeration:

“And it came to pass that many means were devised to reclaim and restore the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth; but it all were in vain, for they delighted in wars and bloodshed, and they sought by the power of their arms to destroy us continually; wherefore, the Nephites did fortify against them with their armies, and with all their might, trusting in the God and rock of their salvation.”

Big talk with small capital—for not over fifty men, grown men, could have been found in that entire nation!

And this statement about the Lamanites seeking to “destroy us continually,” is, to say the least, very puzzling. The reader will bear in mind that Lehi and his company landed upon the western coast of South America, in about *latitude* thirty degrees south, not far from the modern city of Valparaiso, in Chili.

“The course that Lehi and his company travelled from Jerusalem to the place of their destination:

“They travelled nearly a south southeast direction until they came to the nineteenth degree of north latitude; then, nearly east to the sea of Arabia, then sailed in a southeast direction and landed on the Continent of South America, in Chili, *thirty degrees south latitude*.” Revelation to Joseph the Seer. See Compendium, page 289.

Within twenty years the little colony divided into two nations as already learned—Nephi and his company fled into the wilderness, journeying to the *northward*, as supposed. Page 65 (N. Ed. 70).

“And we did take our tents and whatsoever things were pos-

sible for us, and did journey in the wilderness for the space of many

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days. And after we had journeyed for the space of many days, we did pitch our tents. And my people would that we should call the name of the place Nephi; wherefore we did call it Nephi.”

How *many* days journey, or *how far* they traveled we are not informed. But we learn afterwards that this city Nephi was about twenty days journey from the land or the City of Zarahemla. (See pages 191 and 194; N. Ed. 213 and 218.) And Zarahemla is supposed to have been situated near the Isthmus,* at the extreme north end of the continent. So that beginning near the north border of South America and traveling southward twenty days journey, perhaps five hundred miles, we must reach the land of Nephi. But this would place the land of Nephi more than *two thousand* miles north of the original settlement, the home of the Lamanites, thirty degrees south latitude, through trackless forests, over almost impassable mountain ranges of the mighty Andes, whose table lands often reach an altitude of *fourteen to twenty thousand* feet above the sea level! And yet, we are asked to believe—*first*, that this handful of Lamanites, while consisting of four men and their children are cursed with a *black skin*, in order that they may not be enticing to God’s pets, the Nephites, who have placed two thousand miles of trackless forests and monster mountain barriers between the two nations, and then *secondly*, we are asked to believe that these Lamanites are continually harassing their Nephitian brethren—hounding their tracks, and

* “The land of Zarahemla is supposed to have been north of the head waters of the river Magdalena, its northern boundary being a few days journey south of the Isthmus.” Foot note in New Edition of Book of Mormon, page 155.

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watching as a lion for his prey, ready upon almost a moment’s notice to leap *two thousand* miles upon them, so that the people of Nephi were obliged to “fortify against them with their armies”!

But we shall have occasion further on to discuss, more at length the *geography* of the book.

C. *A choice bit of prophesy.*

We call the reader’s attention to a curious piece of history, that claims the dignity of a *prophesy!*

The old man Lehi, imitating the example of the patriarch Jacob, calls each of his sons before him to receive his dying blessing. When he comes to his youngest son Jo-

seph, who happens to be the namesake of Joseph in Egypt, and also of the great modern prophet Joseph Smith—the good old man fairly “boils over” in his excess of blessing. It seems, according to the Book of Mormon, that the Elder Joseph, of Egyptian fame, had left a very important and voluminous prophesy in reference to his seed. A prophesy that reached down to the latest times, including in its wide sweep not only Lehi and his children, especially this youngest son Joseph—but was remarkably full in regard to these latter days and to this latest scion, the author and proprietor of the Golden Bible. Among other things this Elder Joseph tells Joseph Lehi the following about his last and most illustrious name-sake, Joseph Smith (pages 60 and 61). (N. Ed. 65-6.)

For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins. Yea, Joseph truly said, thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice

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seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work. And he shall be great like unto Moses.

“. . . . Wherefore the fruit of thy loins (Joseph Smith) shall write; and the fruit of the loins of Judah (authors of the Bible) shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines.”

“And thus prophesied Joseph, saying; Behold, that seer will the Lord bless; and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise which I have obtained of the Lord, of the fruit of my loins, shall be fulfilled. Behold, I am sure of the fulfilling of this promise*. And his name shall be called after me:

and it shall be after the name of his father” (Joseph Smith, Sen., &c., &c., not forgetting Bro. Sidney Rigden, Mr. Smith’s spokesman.) . . . “And the Lord said unto me also, I will raise up unto the fruit of thy loins: and I will make for him a spokesman.

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“And now, behold, my son Joseph, after this manner did my father of old prophesy. Wherefore, because of this covenant thou art blessed; for thy seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book. And there shall rise up one mighty among them, who shall do much good, both in word and in deed, being an instrument in the hands of God, with exceeding faith, to work mighty wonders, and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass much restoration unto the house of Israel, and unto the seed of thy brethren. And now blessed art thou Joseph.”

This tells us positively, as the reader can see, that Joseph Smith, the modern prophet, was to be the descendant,

in the direct line, of the Elder Joseph, and

*Alas for our prophet. This special promise about which he is so sure signally failed. Poor Joseph was killed by a mob in Carthage jail (ILL.), and his murderers have never even been brought to trial!

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this, too, through the line of Lehi and his youngest son Joseph. And now since the Nephites were all destroyed in the year 384 A.D., and only the Lamanites remained upon this continent, and their descendants, if they have any, are the various Indian races of today—it follows that Joseph Smith must have been an *Indian*, or this prophesy is a failure. But Joseph Smith's mother, in her biography of her son (the first full and authentic account of the life of the prophet by one who ought to know) tells us that his ancestry came from England. She gives us the names of his "progenitors" for *six generations* back to Robert Smith, who flourished in England 250 years ago! (See "Joseph Smith the Prophet," pp.38-44.)

We are aware our Mormon brethren contend that this prophesy of the elder Joseph has had a sort of *spiritual* fulfillment in the case of Joseph Smith, as of all good Mormons: the theory being, that every person who becomes a real and *true* Mormon, is brought into a spiritual relationship to the ancient Nephites, by which he obtains their sacred books, their lands, their unfulfilled promises, and the like. Hence, he is reckoned as their seed! But to any matter of fact person this is the thinnest of subterfuges. There is nothing very *spiritual* or even *etherial* in the declaration so often repeated, "*the fruit of thy loins.*"

D. Sherem. Whence came he?

(The time between fifty and seventy-five years after Lehi left Jerusalem.)

On page 130 (N. Ed. 147), Book of Jacob, we are

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told of the appearance of a stranger by the name of Sherem—a learned man, having a perfect knowledge of the spoken language of the Nephites. This man was a sort of semi-infidel; pretended to be zealous for the law of Moses, but denied the Christ who was to come—and being a man of much power of speech sought to turn away the people from the faith. Jacob, however, withstood him—and at his suggestion, God smote the man to the earth, that he died.

The only query we wish to raise concerning this man is—*where did he come from?*

a. He of course could not have been a Nephite—for he was a *stranger*.

b. He could not have been a *Lamanite*, for the same reason—all the Lamanite men and boys old enough to act such a part as this man Sherem acted, were personally known to Jacob and all the older Nephites. Besides, had he been a Lamanite his *black skin* would easily have betrayed him and barred the door against him, and the Lamanites, as we shall presently see, had already become wild, ignorant savages—while this Sherem was a well educated, exceptionally intelligent man.

c. He could not have belonged to the people of Zarahemla, for

1. He could not have understood the Nephite language which was Egyptian.

2. The Nephites did not know of the existence of such a people for more than two hundred years after

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this time, which could not have been the case had this man come from Zarahemla.

But if Mr. Sherem was neither a Nephite, a Lamanite, nor from Zarahemla—then he was a *myth*, and the Book of Mormon a fable—for it tells us positively that no other people existed upon either of these two continents, they being reserved by special promise of God for this people alone until they had fulfilled their mission (see page 54 (N. Ed. 58-9) and other places).

E. Chronology slightly mixed.

On page 136 (N. Ed. 152), we have these words:

"And it came to pass, that I began to be old, and a hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem."

This statement is by Enos a son of Jacob; and made when he "*began to be old.*" Two thousand years before Enos' time when men lived far into the second century, such a statement might possibly have been true. But in Enos' time human life had become very short—shorter, in fact, than today in Christian countries. Long before Enos' time the Psalmist had said, "The days of our years are *threescore years and ten*; and if by reason of strength they be *fourscore years.*" David himself was called an old man, broken in health, and worn out with age several years before he had reached *seventy*. Solomon was an old man at *fifty-eight*. Not one of the Judean or Israelitish kings lived

to be seventy years old. But here we have a Chronology that beats all those Old Testament Kings by at least a hundred years. Jacob was born while Lehi

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and family were in the wilderness, just after leaving the City of Jerusalem—and here, at least one hundred and seventy-five years after Jacob's birth, we find *his son Enos just beginning to be old!!*

F. *How is this for an angel?*

On page 139 (N. Ed. 155, 6), we are told of a party of Nephites, under the leadership of one Mosiah, who fled out of their own land, and, after wandering a long time through the wilderness, discovered a land called the land of Zarahemla, inhabited by a people who came out from Jerusalem only a few years after Lehi and his company; and, like Lehi, had been brought across the great waters, settled on this continent, and increased until they had become a numerous and wealthy people. And please note the following statement:—

“And they (Mosiah and his company) discovered a people who were called the people of Zarahemla. Now there was great rejoicings among the people of Zarahemla; and also Zarahemla (the king) did rejoice exceedingly because the Lord had sent the people of Mosiah with the plates of brass which contained the record of the Jews.”

In the very next sentence the author, evidently forgetting what he had just said, flatly contradicts it:

“And at the time Mosiah discovered them . . . their language had become corrupted; and they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator; and Mosiah nor the people of Mosiah could understand them.”

In the first sentence Zarahemla and his people rejoice because the *Lord* had sent this party of strangers to

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them. In the next sentence we are told that Zarahemla and his people “*denied the being of their Creator.*”

In the first sentence we are still farther informed that the special reason of their rejoicing was because Mosiah and his company *had brought the brass plates* containing the record of the Jews.

In the next sentence we are told that their *language* had become *so corrupted that neither Mosiah nor his people could understand them!*

Reader, do you think this part of the Book of Mormon

was inspired by God ?

G. *A useful, practical gift (?)*

Amaleki, in his old age, delivers his plates of record into the hands of King Benjamin:—

“ Exhorting all men to come unto God, the Holy One of Israel, and believe in prophesying, and in revelations, and in the ministering of angels, and in the gift of speaking with tongues, and in the gift of interpreting languages, and in all things which are good.” p.140. (N. Ed. 157).

As there was but one language at that time spoken upon the continent and would not be for hundreds of years afterwards, the gift of speaking with tongues and the gift of interpreting languages does not seem to be of special utility. It is true that a few years before this the people of Zarahemla had been discovered, speaking a language that Mosiah could not understand. But his gift of “speaking with tongues” or of “interpreting languages” did not prove of practical value then, for the statement is plain, that “neither Mosiah nor the people of Mosiah *could understand them.*” And they

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never did understand them until “Mosiah caused that they should be taught in his language. And it came to pass that *after* they were taught in the language of Mosiah, Zarahemla (the king) gave a genealogy of his fathers.” But having learned the language of Mosiah, that is, the Reformed Egyptian, the two peoples united together with Mosiah as their King; and ever afterwards remained one people with only the one language upon the continent. The above wonderful gift, then, proved a failure when there were two languages, and when there was but one language was more ornamental than useful.

H. *Ignorant of the Bible.*

“And they also took of the *firstlings* of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifices and burnt offerings *according to the law of Moses.*” p. 145 (N. Ed. 162).

According to the law of Moses the *firstlings* of their flocks were *never* offered as *burnt offerings* or *sacrifices*. All *firstlings* belonged to the Lord, *de jure*, and could not be counted as a man's personal property—whereas, all burnt offerings, or sacrifices for sin of every kind, must be selected from the man's own personal property, or be purchased with his own money for that purpose, while all *firstlings* of the flock, as the Lord's property, came into the hands of the high priest, and by him could be offered up as a *peace offering*, not as a *burnt offering* or a *sin offering*, himself and family eating the flesh. (See Ex. 13: 2, 12 and 22: 29, 30; Numb. 3: 13; 2d Sam. 24: 24; Numb. 18: 15-18

and other places.)

This one little blunder, then, proves beyond the

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chance of question that the Book of Mormon could not have been inspired by the Holy Spirit or by an angel of the Lord. This passage is precisely such a passage as Joseph Smith or any other ignorant man like him might have written; it could not have been found in the book, if God, or any angel of the Lord, had had to do with its preparation.

Precisely the same conclusion must be reached regarding other Biblical blunders found in the Book of Mormon. God cannot contradict himself.

Some of the *types* presented in the Book of Mormon contradict the plain teachings of the Bible.

For instance, the Bible *type* for the word of God is *water*, *pure living water*. It is used thus, probably, in a hundred places. So complete is the type, that we are able to trace its likeness through nearly all the various uses of water.

Water is used for *cleansing purposes*—so the word of God.—See Psalms 119: 9; 2nd Cor. 7: 1; 1st Peter, 1: 22; John, 17: 17, and 15: 3; Eph. 5: 26, 27, and others.

Water is used for *quenching thirst*—so the word of God.—See Isaiah, 55: 1; John, 7: 37, and 4: 10, 14, and 6: 35; Rev. 21: 6, and 22: 17, and others.

Water is used for *reviving nature*—so the word of God.—See Isaiah, 55: 10, II; Ezk., 47: 1-12; Psalms, 1: 2, 3; 1st Cor., 3: 6, compared with Acts, 18: 24, 28.

Now please bear in mind, that God never uses a word by chance, never puts a word in simply to fill up, or round out a sentence as we often do. Every type chosen is carefully and wisely chosen. And God never mixes things, never confuses by using a typical word in a

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variety of senses, making it mean one thing in one passage and another thing in another passage. If pure living water is found to be a type of the word of God in one passage, then we have found a *key* that will unlock every passage where pure living water is used in a typical sense. It always means the word of God, never anything else.

But on page 20 (N. Ed. 22), we have this statement:

“And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.”

At least *three* errors in this one sentence. 1. He makes a rod of iron a type of the word of God, and repeats the same statement on page 31. 2. He makes living water a

type of the *love* of God, and then: 3. Immediately mixes types by saying that the tree of life represents the love of God.

But upon page 32 (N. Ed. 35) he changes his mind as to the meaning of water:

“And they said unto me, what meaneth the river of water which our father saw? And I said unto them that the water which my father saw was filthiness: and so much was his mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water.”

Think of it! A man inspired by the Holy Spirit and helped constantly by an angel of God, having his mind so much “swallowed up in other things” that he entirely mistakes the character of the water which he saw; and it is left for this young son of his, inspired by the same spirit and helped by the same angel, to *correct his father's mistake!*

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But the young man, Nephi, has a very fruitful mind. After telling us that the river of water meant filthiness, immediately concludes he has not yet exhausted his subject, and therefore adds

And I said unto them, that it (this river of water), was an awful gulf which separated the wicked from the tree of life, and also from the saints of God.”

Now to the careful student of the Bible, who learns how exceedingly careful its statements, how wisely chosen, and then how uniformly adhered to from Genesis to Revelation are its types and symbols, this one instance of mixture and change and uncertainty is sufficient to brand the book as a fraud, when it pretends to have come from the all wise and unchangeable God.

I. *Anotherer clincher.*

On page 325 (N. Ed. 360) we have these words:

And thus the Nephites were compelled, alone, to withstand against the Lamanites, who were a compound of Laman and Lamuel, and the sons of Ishmael, and all those who had dissented from the Nephites, who were Amalekites and Zoramites, and *the descendants of the priests of Noah*. Now *those descendants were as numerous, nearly, as were the Nephites.*”

This states positively that the descendants of the priests of Noah were *as numerous nearly* as were the Nephites. On page 185 (N. Ed. 206) we learn that a certain number of priests, during the reign of King Noah, had been obliged to flee into the wilderness for their lives, leaving families and possessions behind them. But let us read:

“Now there was a place in Shemlon, where the daughters of the Lamanites did gather themselves together to sing, and to dance, and to make themselves merry. And it came to pass that there was one day a small number of them gathered together to sing, and to dance. And now the priests of King Noah, being ashamed to return to the City of Nephi, yea, and also fearing that the people would slay them, therefore, they durst not return to their wives and their children. And having tarried in the wilderness, and having discovered the daughters of the Lamanites, they laid and watched them; and when there were but few of them gathered together to dance, they came forth out of their secret places, and took them and carried them into the wilderness; yea, *twenty* and *four* of the daughters of the Lamanites they carried into the wilderness.”

This, according to the accepted chronology (see Compendium, page 290-1), occurred about *fifty-five* years before the statement we are considering when the descendants of the priests of Noah are found to be nearly as numerous as the Nephites. That is, in fifty-five years, these priests of Noah, with *twenty-four wives*, have increased to tens and hundreds of thousands!! The most rapid possible increase would not have given them more than from *two hundred to three hundred grown men* able to take up arms.

From the description given us as to the methods pursued by Mr. Smith when translating the Book of Mormon we can easily account for such monster mistakes as the above. He looks into his “Urim and Thummim,” or upon the “peep-stone” in the bottom of his hat, and the English word or sentence appears in full view, is called out, and written down by his scribe, and then immediately disappears. He cannot be expected to carry all the statements and all the various incidents

of his story in his memory day after day. A good many days pass away in the work of translating, after he has made the statements on page one hundred and eighty-five—days crowded with mental effort. It is natural for him to make large statements, statements that sound well, make a good showing; and when he reaches page three hundred and twenty-five, he recalls Noah’s priests, but forgets how few the years that have elapsed since he mentioned them far back thirty or fifty days before—and hence, easily commits the blunder above recorded, without the remotest suspicion that the two accounts when brought together, are not only supremely ridiculous, but utterly annihilate his whole theory of divine assistance in his work. We can account for such a multitude of similar self-contradictions in the Book of Mormon upon no other satisfactory theory. But whatever the theory, one such egregious

blunder places an insuperable difficulty in the way of accepting the book as from God—since the lowest possible conception of the character or the attributes of God is infinitely too high to allow him any participation in such absurdities.

J. A Plurality of Wives.

The Book of Mormon gives forth no uncertain sound upon the subject of *polygamy*. Strange as it may appear in view of the almost unanimous acceptance of the doctrine by the Mormon church today, the Book of Mormon is as clear as a sunbeam upon this one sin. The following are the most important of its deliverances upon this subject.

“And now it came to pass that the people of Nephi, under the reign of the second king, began to grow hard in their hearts, and indulge themselves somewhat in *wicked practices*, such as like unto David of old, desiring many wives and concubines, and also Solomon, his son.” pp.115, 6. (N. Ed. 129, 130).

And Jacob, as a faithful king and councilor, felt constrained to openly rebuke them for this abomination, as he calls it. After talking to them earnestly for a time about their pride, he proceeds thus—pp. 118-120. (N. Ed. 132-134):

“And now I make an end of speaking unto you concerning this pride. And were it not that I must speak unto you concerning a *grosser crime*, my heart would rejoice exceedingly, because of you. But the word of God burthens me because of your *grosser crimes*. For behold, thus saith the Lord, this people begin to *wax in iniquity*; they *understand not the Scriptures*; for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon, his son (how much like modern Nephites!) Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was *abominable* before me, saith the Lord; wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I, the Lord God, will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord; for there shall not any man among you have, save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none; for I, the Lord God, delighteth in the chastity of women. And whoredoms are an abomination before me; thus saith the Lord of Hosts. Wherefore, this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of Hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes, Behold ye have done greater iniquities than the Lamanites, our brethren. Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. . . .

“Behold, the Lamanites, your brethren, whom ye hate, because of their filthiness and the cursings which hath come upon their skins, are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our fathers, that they should have, save it were one wife; and concubines they should have none; and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. And now this commandment they observe to keep wherefore, because of this observance, in keeping this commandment, the Lord will not destroy them, but will be merciful unto them; and one day they shall become a blessed people. . . .

“O, my brethren, I fear, that unless ye shall repent of your sins, that their skins shall be whiter than yours, when ye shall be brought with them before the throne of God.”* See also page 535 &c., &c.

We believe in giving even the devil his due, and hence we record to the praise and credit of the Book of Mormon, that it gives forth no uncertain sound upon this subject.

But now the funny thing, and the very unfortunate thing about it is—that all this earnest talk upon the subject of *polygamy* occurred in the beginning of King Jacob’s reign, between *fifty-five* and *sixty* years after the

* We take great pleasure in presenting upon the opposite page, a *facsimile page* of the original manuscript from which the Book of Mormon was printed. It is in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdrey, Mr. Smith’s scribe during the greater portion of the translation. This cut will please our Mormon readers, inasmuch as it gives the lie to the base and unwarranted slander that the Mormon Church have altered the Book of Mormon since its first publication, to make it conform more perfectly to their present practices.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. I have seen *two copies* of the *first edition* of the book, published in Palmyra, N. Y., in 1830—and a brief comparison with the latest edition will satisfy any reasonable person that the church have never ventured to change a sentence—except the title page, as already mentioned.

The book of “Doctrines and Covenants” has been changed by the authorities of the church—that is, a goodly number of professed revelations published in the *first edition* have been suppressed in later editions, because subsequent events most clearly demonstrated their spurious character. But no such changes have been made in the Book of Mormon.

The entire original manuscript is in possession of Mr. David Whitmer, still living in Richmond, Mo., and the facsimile we present was taken with his permission in October, 1886, by a correspondent of the “Philadelphia Press” to whom we are indebted for this interesting Mormon relic.

[Editor’s note. See “An important note regarding changes in the various editions of the Book of Mormon,” page xvi, in the introductory pages.]

I must speak unto you concerning
 grosser crime my heart would rejoice exceedingly because if you had the word of God
 shown me because of your grosser crimes for behold thus saith the Lord this people began
 to wax in iniquity: they understand not the scriptures: for they seek to excuse themselves
 in committing whoredoms. because of the things which are written concerning
 David & Solomon his son behold David & Solomon truly had many wives & concu-
 bines which thing was abominable before me saith the Lord, wherefore thus saith the
 Lord I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem by the power of mine
 arm that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins
 of Joseph wherefore the Lord God will not suffer that the people shall do like unto these
 of old, wherefore my brethren hear me & hearken to the word of the Lord for there shall not a
 man among you have save it be one wife & concubines he shall have none, for I the
 Lord God delighteth in the charity of women.

company left Jerusalem, when there *were no women in existence upon the continent with whom the men could have indulged polygamous practices except their own daughters, or sisters or first cousins*, and these were very scarce. In fact the men old enough to be married at all were very few, aside from the original five. It is simply another illustration of our author's very peculiar proclivity to make a great ado over a very small matter.

K. *The Stolen Manuscript.*

Strangely enough we find inserted in the middle of the Book of Mormon, pages 141-143 (N. Ed. 158, 9) a little book entitled the "Book of Mormon," or "Words of Mormon." It is by the supposed author or compiler of the entire work, the prophet Mormon. He has a book of his own, in its proper place, near the close of the work, recording his own life, and his connection with Nephite history. And this little affair of only two pages, having nothing whatever to do with the thread of the history that is being recorded, is to an ordinary reader of the Book of Mormon, wholly inexplicable. It becomes, intelligible, however, when read in connection with a certain untoward event that occurred in connection with the translation of the book by Joseph Smith. This event, as related by Mr. Smith's friends, is something like this:

Mr. Martin Harris, who was employed as Mr. Smith's scribe at the beginning of the translation, had written out with his own hand 116 pages of manuscript. By long and persistent coaxing, and the most faithful promises of secrecy, he secured Mr. Smith's permission to

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carry said manuscript to his own house for his wife's inspection—a woman who is accredited with a very irascible temper. Before the precious treasure was returned to its owner, a sad domestic quarrel so thoroughly provoked Mrs. Harris, that in an evil hour she put said manuscript forever out of the way. The general belief was that she *burned it*. But the prophet Joseph evidently was *afraid she had not*, but had secretly hid it, for the purpose of entrapping him, should he ever attempt to reproduce the pages. If the work was really of God, the manuscript could be reproduced word for word without a mistake. If, however, Joseph inspired it himself, his memory would hardly be adequate to such a task, without numberless changes or verbal differences—and thus "give himself away," since he loudly professed to be all the time aided "by the gift and power of God."

The result was, that, in due course of time, there ap-

peared a lengthy revelation purporting to come from God, the substance of which (see *Doctrines and Covenants*, pp. 178-183—Liverpool Edition) is that Satan has put it into the hearts of the enemies of the truth to *alter the words* of that stolen manuscript so that should Mr. Smith reproduce them, they would lie about it, and say the two did not agree together. Therefore, to circumvent said enemies of the truth, the Lord gave Mr. Smith a bit of very precious information.

"And now verily I say unto you, that an account of these things that you have written, which have gone out of your hands, are engraven upon the plates of Nephi; yea, and you remember it was said in those writings that a more particular account was given of those things upon the plates of Nephi.

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"And now, because the account which is engraven upon the plates of Nephi is more particular concerning the things which, in my wisdom, I would bring to the knowledge of the people in this account; therefore, you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi, down even till you *come to the reign of King Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated*, which you have retained; and behold, you shall publish it as the record of Nephi, and thus I will confound those who have altered my words. I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil."

It may be necessary to explain that Nephi is supposed to have recorded his history upon two *sets* of plates, the one was a short abridged record containing the "more part of the ministry," the other set of plates contained a fuller unabridged account of the reigns of the kings, the wars, etc. The first set contained the religious history mainly, the second, the secular.

The old prophet Mormon had taken this second set of plates, the fuller or more secular account, and had condensed it to a very small compass, making it about one hundred times briefer than the original. And it was this abridged record of the secular history of the Nephites that Joseph Smith had laboriously translated with Martin Harris as his scribe. The record was so brief that the 116 pages of the manuscript written by hand brought the Nephite history quite down to King Benjamin's time, whereas the history as now found in the Book of Mormon requires 141 pages of *closely printed* matter to bring the record down to the same period, King Benjamin's time. But now that these 116 pages containing Mormon's abridgment of Nephi's secular history have been stolen and put out of reach,

Joseph is informed in this precious revelation that there is another record he may use, abridged not by Mormon but by Nephi, and that is after all a *great deal better and more desirable* than the stolen record:

“Behold, they have only got a part, or an abridgement of the account of Nephi. Behold, there are many things engraven on the plates of Nephi *which do throw greater views upon my gospel; therefore, it is wisdom in me that you should translate this first part of the engravings of Nephi*, and send forth in this work. And, behold, all the remainder of this work does contain all those parts of my Gospel which my holy prophets, yea, and also my disciples, desired in their prayers should come forth unto this people.”

Now several queries naturally suggest themselves:

1. How could Satan so easily circumvent the Lord? The golden plates from which these 116 pages were translated had been preserved for 1400 years by the special providence of God—had been carefully translated by the gift and power of God. But now, after all this trouble and pains, the Lord is beaten by a wrathful woman, and all this trouble, labor and watchcare proves “love’s labor lost”!

2. How does it happen that neither God himself nor his angel found out Mr. Smith was translating the *wrong plates* until Martin Harris stole those 116 pages?

3. If Joseph Smith was making a sad blunder in translating a second-rate, discarded set of plates, *why* should the Lord so terribly scold him and punish him for letting Mr. Harris take that manuscript home—since it was the best thing that could have happened for the cause of truth ?

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4. Does the Lord Himself come out of this affair entirely unscathed? Either He made a mistake in the first instance, and had to back out and do His work over again—or he perpetrated a fraud in the second case, a trick, a silly trick that has not even the merit of being a sharp one, so “thin,” in fact, that no special acuteness is required to see through it.

But now, dear reader, after learning all these facts, would you suppose Mr. Smith so far lacking in common sense and good judgment as to give himself completely away in the Book of Mormon itself, by making the *old prophet Mormon* a party to the fraud? This is precisely what he does by inserting after page 141 two pages, entitled the “Words of Mormon,” at the precise point in the translation

where he had arrived when Martin Harris carried away those one hundred and six-teen pages of manuscript! Hear what Mormon says:

“And now, I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written; for *after* I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of this King Benjamin of whom Ameleki spake, *I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found these plates*, which contains this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this King Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi. And the *things which are upon these plates pleasing me, because of the prophecies of the coming of Christ*; and my fathers knowing that many of them have been fulfilled; yea, and I also know that as many things as have been prophesied concerning us down to this day have been fulfilled, and as many as go beyond this day, must surely come to pass; “*wherefore I choose these things, to finish my record* upon them, which remainder of my record I shall take from the plates of Nephi; and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people.

“But behold, *I shall take these plates, which contain these*

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prophecys and revelations, and put them with the remainder of my record, for they are choice unto me; and I know they will be choice unto my brethren. And I do this for a wise purpose; for thus *it whispereth me, according to the workings of the spirit of the Lord which is in me*. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, He worketh in me to do according to His will. . . .

“. . . And now, I, Mormon, proceed to finish out my record, which I take from the plates of Nephi, and I make it according to the knowledge and the understanding which God has given me.”

From all this we learn that Mormon himself, a prophet of the Lord, and led all the time and inspired by the spirit of God, helped too, by an angel from heaven, makes the same mistake that Joseph Smith made. He wearily plods on with his engraving tool, through the larger set of Nephi’s plates, abridging them until he reaches the period of King Benjamin’s reign, when he discovers, what he had not before known, the existence of other and briefer plates of Nephi, more religious in their character, and notably fuller in their statement of Christian doctrine and prophecies relating to Christ. And so laying aside all his previous work, he adopts this newly discovered treasure as *part first* of his great book. But very strangely, from this point forward down to his own time *there are no double sets of plates to select from*; and therefore, as he tells us, he has to go back to his first plan, the laborious work of abridging the fuller but more secular history. Singular, isn’t it, reader, that this old prophet Mormon, fifteen hundred years ago should happen to discover these other plates of Nephi, and thus change the entire *first part* of his book, *at the precise spot in King*

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history where Martin Harris stole the 116 pages of manuscript? And quite as singular is another fact, that from the beginning of the Book of Mormon, in a large number of places, these two sets of plates are carefully distinguished from each other, and very much said about them up to the very same period, the point in the history of King Benjamin where Mr. Harris stole those 116 pages, and from that point onward nothing more is said of a double set of plates, so that Nephi himself, his brother Jacob, and all the writers down to King Benjamin were, as it were, preparing the way for this same great change made necessary by Mr. Harris' theft! But although these double sets of plates are so often mentioned in part first of the Book of Mormon, and the specific character of each clearly stated, yet strangely enough the prophet Mormon did not know of the existence of the one set containing "the more part of the ministry" until he happened to reach that same dangerous point in the history of his nation where Martin Harris' 116 pages ended!*

Nor are these all the singular things that are connected with this affair. For it seems that the old

*"And all these things did my father see, and hear, and speak, as he dwelt in a tent, in the valley of Lemuel: and also a great many more things which cannot be written upon these plates. And now, as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people; for the plates upon which I make a full account of my people I have given the name of Nephi; wherefore they are called the plates of Nephi, after mine own name; and these plates also are called the plates of Nephi.

"Nevertheless I have received a commandment of the Lord that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people. Upon the other plates should be engraven an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people, wherefore these plates are for the more part of the ministry; and the other plates are for the more part of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people. Wherefore, the Lord hath commanded me to make these plates for a wise purpose in him; which purpose I know not. But the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning." (See also pp.44, 63, 138, 139, etc.)

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prophet Mormon, although he had discarded his first effort and adopted the other plates of Nephi as *part first* of his Book, yet somehow he failed in making his son Moroni understand the facts in the case—for Moroni, in hiding these

plates in the sacred hill Cumorah, *had tied up*, with the balance of the book, *his father's first effort* as PART FIRST of the Book of Mormon. The witnesses tell us plainly, in what shape the bundle of plates were found.

"The plates which Mr. Whitmer saw were in the shape of a tablet, fastened with three rings, about one-third of which appeared to be loose in plates, the other solid, but with perceptible marks where the plates seemed to be sealed, and the guide that pointed it out to Smith very impressively reminded him that the loose plates alone were to be used, the sealed portion was not to be tampered with." Myth of the Manuscript Found, page 82.

And Joseph Smith, innocently enough, began his work of translation with this bundle until he had rendered into English the 116 pages, and Moroni, himself, although a son of the great prophet, and now raised from the dead for the special purpose of showing Mr. Smith where the plates were hid, and assisting him in the translation, was evidently just as much in the fog as Joseph, as to the existence of another and better *part first* to the Book of Mormon until he was suddenly brought to his wits end by the theft of Martin Harris, when he discovered, what for fifteen hundred years he obviously had not known, that he had got his father's golden plates badly mixed up—so much so that had it not been for the fortunate theft of Mr. Harris, the whole religious world of to-day would have had palmed off upon them, as *part first* of the Book of

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Mormon, a very inferior article, losing much of the flavor and sweetness of the gospel, and the most precious prophecies of Christ that the book now, fortunately, contains. Truly Mormon's ways were mysterious, and so are Joseph Smith's!

M. Lamanite History a Puzzle.

There are several other historical statements which we designed to notice, particularly the very unnatural and very rapid changes that take place in the record of the Nephites. At one time this tribe are presented to us as composed of the best and purest Christians upon earth, living in delightful harmony and peace, and receiving constant favors from God. In a single year, perhaps, the whole scene is changed and the noble Christian has become a wicked devil, reveling in debauchery and crime. In the same exaggerated strain material prosperity or adversity is recorded. Populations suddenly increase: in a few years an entire continent is filled with a teeming population. Gold, silver and riches of all kinds, including cattle, sheep and what-not, appear or disappear as if by magic—cities spring up, temples and sanctuaries are built with as little dependence upon natural

or physical causes as the magnificent temple patterned after Solomon's, built in three or four years by three men and a few boys, mentioned in the previous chapter. (For illustrations of rapid and unnatural changes, see pp. 218-9, 249, 394, 404-406, 445, 448 and others. In the New Edition, see pp.243, 276, 433-4, 445, 448, 489-492.)

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The limits of this chapter will not allow a full illustration of these sudden and unaccountable changes.

Nephi's two oldest brothers, Laman and Lemuel, together with the two sons of Ishmael, four men with their families, make up the nation of the Lamanites as we find them in South America, twenty-five years after leaving the City of Jerusalem. Laman and Lemuel are confessedly singular boys from the first; naturally smart, active, bold, resolute, but strangely perverse and wicked. However, reared in the City of Jerusalem, with the best education that age afforded, and in a Christian family of rare intelligence, we are hardly prepared for the startling change in their character and surroundings as revealed in the beginning of Enos' reign. p.135 (N. Ed. 151).

"Their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people; full of idolatry and filthiness: feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins, and their heads shaven: and their skill was in the bow, and in the cimeter, and the axe. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us."

Remember, only one generation has passed away. The sons of Laman and Lemuel are now at the head of affairs, boys who during their entire childhood were under constant Christian influences. They were brought up with Nephi, Jacob and Joseph, and with their grandfather Lehi, and familiar with all the refinements of the highest civilization. Is it not, therefore, expecting a large measure of credulity to ask us to believe that boys with such early advantages could

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become so wild and ferocious; could be content to live without comfortable shelter or clothing, and feed upon raw meat?

The reader has already discovered an attempt to describe the *American Indian*. The theory of the Book is, that the Indian races of today, are the direct descendants of the Lamanites. We may therefore expect to find many attempts to verify this theory. They have already a black skin, have

become ferocious, are without houses, without clothing except a skin girdle, and feed upon raw meat. On page 140 (N. Ed. 156) we have the expression,—"he dwelled with them for the space of *nine moons*." On page 259 (N. Ed. 287) the *Great Spirit* is introduced as a tradition the Lamanites have received from their forefathers,—both of which are well-known Indian terms—but could not have been possible either among the Lamanites or Nephites, who brought from the City of Jerusalem Jewish theology, a knowledge of the true God, and Jewish methods of reckoning time.

But other Indian customs or habits are dragged in. On page 256 (N. Ed. 284), they are described as "indolent people," but delighting in murdering the Nephites, and in robbing and plundering them. On page 326 (N. Ed. 361) their armor is described. They had swords and cimeters, bows and arrows, stones, slings and axes—but no *defensive* armor. On page 330 (N. Ed. 366) a Lamanite general is *scalped* after the most approved Indian fashion, though the plucky fellow refused to retire, and did his most effective fighting afterwards, though minus a scalp!

But let us follow the thread of history. On page

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194 (N. Ed. 216), we find the Lamites greatly improved. Their king appointed *teachers* over them, who gave them instruction in writing, in the use of the Nephite language, in keeping their own records, and other things.

"And thus the Lamanites began to increase in riches, and began to trade one with another, and wax great, and began to be a cunning and a wise people, as to the wisdom of the world; yea, a very cunning people; delighting in all manner of wickedness and plunder, except it were among their own brethren."

But six or eight years after this successful attempt to civilize them, we find them thus described (page 216; N. Ed. 240).

"Now the heads of the Lamanites were shorn; and they were naked, save it were skin, which was girded about their loins, and also their armour, which was girded about them, and their bows and their arrows, and their stones, and their slings, &c. And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers."

And again, page 256 (N. Ed. 284), they are a wild, hardened, ferocious people, delighting in robbery, plunder and murder, a "very indolent people," "many of whom worship idols"! And yet, though wild and naked, they possessed dwelling houses, built great cities in which are found synagogues and sanctuaries and temples (pp.268, 274-5 N. Ed. 297, 304). And though worshipping images they believed in a Great Spirit (259) and many of them had become *Uni-*

versalists. “We do believe that God will save all men.” Page 269 (N. Ed. 298). Absurdly contradictory are the descriptions here given us of this people.

In *battle* our author usually makes them play the *role*

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of the Indian quite successfully—but constantly forgets this character in other relations. In war they are savages, don’t know enough to make shields or helmets or breast-plates or clothing for their persons, and are slain by the tens of thousands for the want of these protections (pp. 326-331; N. Ed. 361-366). At the same time they do know enough to contend sharply for universal salvation, to build dwelling houses, synagogues, sanctuaries and temples, together with magnificent cities, and surround themselves with gold and silver and precious things, to cultivate the ground and raise flocks and herds in abundance!

One of the clearest illustrations of our author’s vivid imagination, as well as his great anxiety to make his pet Nephites remarkable people, wonderful warriors, and receiving innumerable answers to prayer—is the way he *multiplies* the Lamanites. When his Nephites become very wicked and he wants to punish them they are as numerous as the Lamanites, and have as large an army, which is, of course, ignominiously defeated in battle. But usually the Nephites are the *little* army, who, strong in the faith, meet and gloriously conquer an innumerable host of the Lamanites.

The history of all civilizations clearly shows that a savage or barbarous state is least of all adapted to a rapid increase of population. The Indian races of our country have been gradually diminishing ever since they were first discovered. There is nothing in the habits and surroundings of untutored wild races to encourage development and growth. Civilized and Christian nations only have shown a rapid increase of population. But the Book of Mormon directly reverses this lesson

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of the ages. The statement on page 135 that the Lamanites had become wild and ferocious and filthy, wandering about in the wilderness, naked, and feeding upon uncooked beasts of prey, is immediately followed (137) by the statement that they had “become *exceedingly more numerous* than were they of the Nephites.”—and on page 194 they are more than double the combined populations of the Nephites and the people of Zarahemla! While on page 215, they have become “so numerous that they could not be numbered.”

And such like exaggerated accounts frequently occur. It matters not how many times they are defeated in battle, with the loss of tens of thousands in each engagement (217, 287), they suddenly reappear with increasing numbers. At one time a large portion of them are converted (275) and join the Nephites. Yet those who are left exhibit the same “*enormity*” of numbers!

But not to detain the reader with further details, we close this chapter with the climax of all the strange things that are related in the Lamanite history.

Thirteen years after the birth of Christ, a large number of the Lamanites are represented as converted, their curse being removed, their skin became white, as already learned—and they were numbered with the Nephites. In the year 36 A. D., two years after Jesus had been here in person, the statement is—p.492 (N. Ed. 544):

“And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were *all converted* unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and *Lamanites*, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another; and they had all things common among them, therefore

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they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.”

Upon the next page a glowing description of the happy condition of things is given.

“And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God; there were no robbers, nor murderers, *neither were there Lamanites*, nor any manner of ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the Kingdom of God; and how blessed were they, for the Lord did bless them in all their doings.”

This happy millennium-like experience continued for nearly two hundred years. And the query arises: *Where are the ancestry of our Indians?*” Gone, gone! “no more Lamanites, nor any manner of ites.” They have lost their identity, been swallowed up in the people of God; became a white and delightful people. So then all the efforts of the author in the previous portion of the book to play the Indian, to account for his existence, to exhibit the Lamanite as his perfect picture, with his nine moons, his Great Spirit, his indolence, his wild and ferocious nature, his nakedness, his bows and arrows and slings and stones and battle axes, &c., &c., have all proved a failure. Gone! all gone! The many promises of the book, its abundant prophecies to the literal descendants of Laman and Lemuel, of wonderful blessing in the latter days, through the great prophet, seer

and revelator, Joseph Smith, are rendered impossible of fulfillment by this remarkable revival that changes all the Lamanites into Nephites, and blots the nation out of existence forever!

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Have, then, our Indian races of today no ancestry furnished them in the Book of Mormon? No wild, ferocious people, with black skin and savage habits? If so, whence did they come? For two hundred years after Christ there are no such people anywhere upon either continent—not one who bears the least resemblance to the Indian of today? Ah, no—our angel is sharp enough this time, though too thick-headed to discover the utter absurdity of his way out of the wretched blunder he has made. He coolly informs us (p.494, N. Ed. 545) that a small part of the people had revolted from the church.

“And took upon them the name of Lamanites (!), therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land!”

Again upon the next page:

“And it came to pass that they who rejected the Gospel were called Lamanites and Lemuelites and Ishmaelites . . . and they were taught to hate the children of God, even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning.”

Thus installed again as full fledged Lamanites (whether still white, or turned black again, we are not informed) the history continues with increasing wars and troubles until the final annihilation of the Nephites in the year 384 A. D., left the so-called Lamanites in full possession of the two Americas, full fledged Indians, and found Indians still upon the discovery of this country by Columbus four hundred years ago!!

Is there one reader of these pages who can ask for any clearer proof of the unreal and mythical character of the Book of Mormon? What do we here behold but a caricature of history?