

resembled each other; and one, pointing to the other, uttered the words once heard by John the Baptist, and also by Peter upon the Holy Mount: "This is My Beloved Son; hear Him." And the person indicated, whom Joseph testified was Jesus Christ, informed him that all the jarring sects had departed from the pure Gospel as anciently taught by the Savior and His apostles, but that the Gospel was about to be restored again in its ancient purity and power; and that all its gifts and blessings should accompany its administration; that further instruction concerning this important work should be given to him hereafter; and the promise was made to him that if he repented of his sins and was faithful, he should be the instrument through which the New Dispensation should be introduced. Thus was the strange and stupendous calling and mission of Joseph Smith announced by the highest authority, both upon earth and in heaven—a calling and mission whose mighty sweep embraces every human being that has lived, that now lives, or that will live upon the earth at any future time; and, indeed, as it is the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, its comprehensive, anallornting influences will affect the material earth itself.

Although the discovery of the plates and the translation of the ancient records was a marvelous achievement, yet this was not the whole, nor the most important part, of the great mission of Joseph the Seer, any more than the receiving of the "moral law" from Sinai by Moses comprised the whole of his mission. The bringing forth, under Divine guidance, of the Book of Mormon was the grand opening and initial achievement of a series of strange, startling, and sublime revelations of lost truth, science, and art; including the opening of the heavens, and the establishing of actual communication between the celestial powers and the inhabitants of this planet; the restoring also of the unadulterated theology of the apostolic age, with the Divine authority to teach and administer its laws and ordinances.

Joseph subsequently received many visits from another heavenly messenger, who informed him that the aborigines of America were a remnant of the House of Israel, who had, in early times, enjoyed the visitations of the Savior, and the ministry of Apostles and Prophets; that records of those events had been

preserved, and also a history of many of the important events connected with their government, their religion, wars, manners and social life; that the people turned from righteousness and degenerated into a degraded and barbarous state; and finally that one of their last prophets and chroniclers hid up these records in the earth, and a promise of the Lord was given that they should come forth in the latter days. The place where the records were deposited was pointed out by the Angel to Joseph, and he visited the spot indicated, which was upon a hill called Cumorah. It is situated in the township of Manchester, Ontario County, New York.

Upon reaching the place, Joseph found part of a large stone projecting out of the ground. The upper part had been rounded off and beveled toward the edges, leaving the topmost part bare, while the edges were under the ground. Probably when placed there it was completely buried some depth below the surface, but the action of the elements had worn away the soil and left a portion of the stone exposed. On raising the stone it proved to be the cover of a chest of the same material, which was made impervious to air and moisture by a peculiar kind of cement around the edges.

Upon removing the cover there was revealed, to the astonishment of the youthful beholder, a number of gold plates not quite as thick as common tin. These plates were laid together like the leaves of a book, and fastened together at the back by rings running through the whole, thus binding them together in a volume, and allowing the leaves to be turned. This metallic book was about seven by eight inches in width and length, and nearly six inches in thickness. Each plate was filled on both sides by small, but beautifully engraved, Egyptian characters.

While the young man was gazing upon the unique treasure, his Divine Meutor appeared at his side and said: "You cannot at this time receive this record. These plates were not deposited here for the sake of accumulating gain and wealth for the glory of this world; they are of no worth among the children of men, only for the knowledge which they contain."

It was four years before the record was permitted to be removed, during which time Joseph received much further instruction and admonition to prepare his mind for the great and

responsible work about to be entrusted to him.

On the 22d of September, 1827, the records were placed in his hands. With the plates he also received an instrument, used by prophets and seers in all ages, called the Urim and Thummim, which was also in the box. By the use of this instrument—the chosen medium of Divine operation—the Prophet Joseph translated the engravings upon the plates. Whether the Urim and Thummim used by Joseph was similar to that possessed by the High Priest among the Jews does not appear, but it is described as consisting of "two transparent stones, set in the rims of a bow." Using this curious instrument as spectacles, the translator gazed upon each character in succession; and first the letters and then the equivalent word in English appeared. And as he spelled and pronounced each word to the scribe, the translated matter faded away, and the import of the next character appeared and was read off. The matter thus translated constitutes the Book of Mormon, and is about as much in English as the Old Testament. The first edition was published by the translator at Palmyra, N. Y., in 1830.

The genuine character of the foregoing recital rests not upon the *ipse dixit* of Joseph Smith. The testimony of eleven others is printed with the book, the last one of whom has but recently passed away. They were frequently interviewed and severely interrogated by unbelievers, but each one of them, to his latest breath, adhered to his solemn avowal of having seen and handled the sacred records.

It is principally the religious ardor associated with the Book of Mormon which repels the scientist and—curiously enough—Christian professors. The super-human agency connected with its discovery and translation, and the claim to Divine authority which accompanies its introduction to the world, is insulting to the wisdom and dignity of the former, and a scathing rebuke—a scourge of excruciating humiliation—to the latter.

Divested of these offensive habiliments, the marvelous and conclusive evidence of the truth of this record in relation to the aboriginal races of this continent would have been hailed with a startling flourish of welcoming admiration, and its fortunate projector would have been loaded with a profusion of wealth and popularity. But the subsequent history of the sacred registers verified