

Council of Carthage, Anno 397, examined how sufficient or insufficient the tradition of the church was, which recommended those books for scripture, about which there was so much doubt and contrariety of opinions. They found all the books contained in our canon, of which you account so many apocryphal, to have been recommended by tradition, sufficient to found faith upon. For on this ground (Can. 47) they proceeded in defining all the books in our canon to be canonical. Because, say they, we have received from our fathers that those books were to be read in the church. Pope Innocent the First, who lived Anno Domini 402, being requested by Exuperius, bishop of Toulouse, to declare unto him which books were canonical, he answers, (Ep. 3) that having examined what sufficient tradition did demonstrate, he sets down,—What books are received in the canon of the Holy Scriptures, in the end of his Epistle chap. 7. To wit, just those which we now have in our canon, and *Though He Rejects many other Books, yet he rejects not one of these.* [See Mumford's Question of Questions, sec. 3, pars. 4, 12.]

The Pope of Rome gathered together these contending persons in the form of a council and they sat in judgment upon various manuscripts professing to be divine. That quarrel and contending council decided that a certain number of books should be admitted as divine, and should form the true canon of scripture and that no other books should be added. We are informed that this council rejected a vast number of books. Some of these rejected books were considered by part of the council, of divine origin.

The manuscripts of the New Testament which these ancient apostates in the Third Council of Carthage pronounced canonical have never reached our day. The oldest manuscripts of the New Testament which this age are in possession of are supposed to date from the sixth century of the Christian era. We have none of the original manuscripts written by any of the apostles, or inspired writers. We have five manuscripts in existence that were supposed to have been written as early as the sixth or seventh century after Christ. Three of these you will find deposited in the Royal Library of Paris:—

1st. The Vatican Manuscript, noted 1209. This was probably written by the Monks of Mount Athos: first heard of as being in the possession of Pope Urban the 8th. Some of the leaves are wanting; the ink in some places faded. The letters have been retraced by a skilful and faithful hand. [See Unitarian Editors of the Improved version of the New Testament, and Marsh.]

2nd. The Clermont or Regises Manuscript, 2245. This dates from the seventh century. It was found in the monastery of Clung; called Clermont, from Clermont in Beauvais, where it was preserved; thirty-six leaves of it were stolen by one John Aymon and sold in England, but since recovered. It is Greek and Latin and contains the Epistles, but that to the Hebrews by a later hand; like other Greek-Latin Codices, the Greek has been accommodated to the Latin. [For authority refer to Wetstein, Unitarian Editors, Professor Schweyhausen, quoted by Bishop Marsh, vol. 2, page 245.]

3rd. The Ephrem Manuscript. This also is said to have been written in the seventh century. It was first discovered by Dr. Allix, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is in great disorder; many leaves lost, many wholly illegible, and the whole is effaced to make room for the works of Ephrem, the Syrian, under which the sacred text may be perhaps deciphered by transparency. [See Unitarian Editors of the Improved New Testament.]

The Vatican, Clermont, and Ephrem Manuscripts will be found in the Library at Paris.

4th. The Alexandrian Manuscript. This was probably made in the sixth century. Cassimer Oudin says the tenth. It was deposited in the British Museum in 1753. Cyril, patriarch of Constantinople, presented it to Charles the First, in 1623, by his ambassador, Sir Thomas Roe. It was written by the Monks for the use of a monastery of the order of Acemets, i. e., vigilant, never sleeping. Its original text is no longer visible; written with uncial letters; no intervals before the words; it has been altered from the Latin version and was written by a person who was not master of the Greek language. [For authority, see Cassimir Oudin, Wetstein, &c., &c., as quoted by Bishop Marsh in his *Michæ's* Introduction, vol. 2, page 185, and following.]

5th. The Cambridge Manuscript, or Codex Bezae. Concerning this, Bishop Marsh says: "Perhaps of all the manuscripts now extant this is the most ancient." Theodore Beza used it for his edition of the New Testament. It was found at Lyons in the monastery of St. Irenæus, A. D. 1562. Beza himself owns of it, that it should rather be kept, for the avoiding of offense of certain persons, than to be published. It was deposited in the University Library at Cambridge, England. Uncial letters; no intervals between the words, it is very ungrammatical. It varies from the common Greek text in a greater degree than any other. [See Unitarian Editors, Bishop Marsh, vol. 2 page 229.]

Besides these, there are above twenty manuscripts of later date in large letters, of different portions of the New Testament; and some hundreds in smaller characters. It appears from the superscriptions of very many manuscripts of which we are in possession, that they were written on Mount Athos, where the Monks employed themselves in writing copies of the Greek Testament. Some manuscripts, ascribed to the highest antiquity, have been discovered to be the composition of impostors as late as the seventeenth century, for the

purpose of foisting in favorite doctrines, and imposing upon Christian credulity. The Montford and Berlin MSS., for instance. [See Marsh, vol. 2, page 295.]

All the most ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, known to the world, differ from each other in almost every verse. And the same is true in relation to those of the Old Testament also. One of the ancient Christian writers, Jerome, in his commentaries upon the prophets, complains of the corruption of his manuscript Greek copies. Bellarmine testifies that the Greek copies of the Old Testament are so corrupted that they seem to make a new translation, quite different from the translations of other copies. All, therefore, is uncertainty, not only in relation to the Hebrew manuscripts, but also the Greek. If, soon after the beginning of the Christian era, the Old Testament manuscripts were by the Jews partly destroyed, lost, burned and torn in pieces, so that the learned of that early age could not obtain anything but the names of the lost books, it is not to be supposed that we who live some seventeen hundred years later, are in possession of copies more pure and genuine than Jerome, Bellarmine and other ancient writers.

In relation to the manuscripts of the New Testament, Mr. Cressy writes in these words:—"In my hearing, Bishop Usher professed that, whereas he had of many years before a desire to publish the New Testament in Greek, with various lections and annotations, and for that purpose had used great diligence and spent much money to furnish himself with manuscripts, yet, in conclusion, he was forced to desist utterly, lest, if he should ingeniously have noted all the several differences of reading which himself had collected, the incredible multitude of them almost in every verse, should rather have made men atheistical than satisfy them in the true reading of any particular passage." [See Exomol. Ca. 8. Nu. 3.]

The learned admit that in the manuscripts of the New Testament alone, there are no less than one hundred and thirty thousand different readings. [See Encyclopædia Britannica, Eighth Edition.] It is true that many of those differences are of no particular consequence, as they do not materially alter the sense. But there are many thousands of differences where in the sense is entirely altered. How are translators to know which of the manuscripts, if any, contain the true sense? They have no original copies with which to compare them—no standard of correction. No one can tell whether even one verse of either the Old or New Testament conveys the ideas of the original author.

Just think! 130,000 different readings in the New Testament alone! How our translators could separate the spurious from the genuine is more than I can tell. How they could distinguish between the original communicated to the ancient prophets and apostles and 130,000 different readings that were introduced in the dark ages by copyists, is not easy to determine.

But, admitting that we had an ancient copy of the Bible—or the Old and New Testament; supposing the translators by some means were put in possession of such a copy, and that the individuals whose names are attached to many of those books professed to be inspired, yet how are this generation to determine whether those authors, if they were indeed the authors, were inspired men? How do we know they were inspired to write those books? The Latter Day Saints believe that the Bible, in its original, was the word of God and was written by divine inspiration; but we do not believe it because history informs us of this, or because tradition tells us so; but we believe it, because the Book of Mormon, confirmed by the ministry of angels, informs us of the fact.

But how are this generation to know that those ancient authors were inspired of God?—Do they bear testimony of their own inspiration? Bishop Chillingworth, Hooker, and many other learned commentators, have told us that the Bible cannot bear testimony of its own inspiration. If the Bible cannot prove its own inspiration, how are people in the present and past ages to know that these books are inspired? It is true, we are informed that some individuals wrote by commandment and some we are told wrote according to their own opinions. How are we to detect that part which they were inspired to write, from that part which was wrote according to their own opinions? We cannot without new revelation; without some testimony of a higher nature than tradition we never can learn these matters.

Having made these few remarks in regard to the Old and New Testaments in their present condition and bearing, and having learned that they are very imperfect in their present state and that they have been translated from manuscripts that can not be depended upon, that there are no original copies in this day with which the world are acquainted; having established these facts, now let us turn to the Book of Mormon and see if it rests upon evidences of the nature of these I have already presented to this congregation.

The Book of Mormon professes to be translated not from manuscripts containing 130,000 different readings, nor by the learning of men who can render a translation as they please.—Neither does it profess to be translated from altered, mutilated manuscripts manufactured by Monks or impostors upon Mount Athos, to impose upon Christian credulity. But it was translated from the original plates themselves—the very plates on which the inspired writers themselves wrote; and they were also translated not by the learning of men, but by the power of God and the inspiration of the Almighty.

We are told, in the beginning of the Book of Mormon, that there men, Oliver Cowdery, Da-

vid Whitmer and Martin Harris, saw the plates, or the original from which this book was translated by Joseph Smith, jun.; he having obtained the plates in the western part of New York through the ministrations of an holy angel, as he testifies, from where they were deposited by an ancient prophet that inhabited America some 1400 years ago; he testifies that he was sent by an angel of God to bring these gold plates to light; that he obtained with them the Urim and Thummin, and translated the book. But, before the Lord would permit the book to go to the nations, he was determined they should have more than one witness. Joseph Smith's testimony was not to go forth alone. Therefore, in 1829, about one year before the rise of this church, or before this book was offered to the world, three other names were called upon by an angel from heaven.

"Perhaps," you may say, "they were deceived." Let us examine whether there was any possibility of their being deceived. They had learned by reading the manuscript from which this book was printed that the Lord, when he should bring this book to light in the latter days, would bear testimony of it in a miraculous and wonderful manner to three witnesses besides the translator. These three men, after having learned this fact, met together and went and saw Mr. Smith and inquired of him whether it would be their privilege to behold these plates and know from heaven that this book was true. Joseph Smith inquired of the Lord concerning the matter; and the Lord gave them a promise that, if they would sufficiently humble themselves, they should have this privilege.

They, in no connection with Mr. Smith, who made the fourth individual, went out into the open field, near a grove of timber, a little distance from the house of Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca co., New York. They bowed down before the Lord in broad daylight, not in the night, so there could be no deception; they humbled themselves before him, called upon his holy name with all their hearts; and while they were thus engaged in calling upon the name of the Lord they saw in the heavens above a glorious light and a personage descending.—This personage came down and stood before them; he laid his hands upon the head of David Whitmer as one of the three witnesses and said, "blessed be the Lord and they that keep his commandments;" and then he took the plates and turned them over leaf after leaf, excepting a certain portion of the leaves that were sealed up, which Mr. Smith was not permitted to translate; but that portion he had translated was turned over leaf after leaf and presented before their eyes and they saw the engravings upon the plates.

This angel, clothed in brightness and glory, stood before them with the plates in his hands showing them the engravings upon them. They also heard the voice of the Lord out of the heavens commanding them to bear record of the things they saw and heard, to all nations, kindred, tongues and people. The testimony which they have borne I have read in your hearing.

Now, was there any possibility of these three men, together with Mr. Smith, who was in their company, being deceived? If they were deceived, then there is the same reason to suppose the Apostles were deceived, who profess to have seen Jesus ascend into heaven from the Mount of Olives. There would be the same reason to suppose that Peter, James and John were deceived when they saw Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration; if these men were deceived then there is no truth nor certainty in anything that ever was beheld; for no persons could bear testimony in stronger language than these three witnesses have done in the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith, jun., could not be deceived himself, for it was by an angel that he was commanded to go to the place where the records were deposited; it was by angel he was told to take them from the place of their long deposit, together with the Urim and Thummin; and it was by the means of the Urim and Thummin, connected with prayer, that he was enabled to translate the plates into the English language; consequently he could not be deceived.

We have proved that the other three witnesses could not be deceived; consequently four men bear testimony that they not only saw the plates but also that they saw an angel of God; they also heard his voice and saw the plates in his hands and the engravings upon the plates, and heard the voice of God out of heaven commanding them to bear their testimony to all people upon the face of the earth to whom the translation should be sent.

Can you find among all the nations and kingdoms upon the earth, one individual that can bear testimony that he has ever seen the original of any one of the books of the Old and New Testament? No. We defy the world to produce a true copy of the original of any book of the Bible and prove it to be such; they may search their libraries from beginning to end and examine all the archives of the nations and they cannot find an original copy or even a copy written centuries after the original writer was known to exist.

The learned have conjectured that some of those five manuscripts I have mentioned, were written in the sixth century, but this is disputed; Cassimir Oudin says, that the Alexandrian Manuscript, instead of being written in the sixth century, was made in the tenth. With regard to the times of their being written no dependence can be placed.

But here four men actually beheld the original plates, saw an holy angel and heard the voice of God. Are they the only witnesses? No, there are eight other men whose names and testimony I have read before this congregation; persons with whom I am individually ac-

quainted as well as with the translator and the three witnesses, I have already named. I have been at the house where this Church was organized. I have seen the place where the angel descended and shewed them the plates.

Eight other witnesses testify that Joseph Smith showed them the plates and that they saw the engravings upon them, and that they had the appearance of ancient work and curious workmanship. They describe these plates as being about the thickness of common tin, about eight inches in length and from six to seven in breadth; upon each side of the leaves of these plates there were fine engravings, which were stained with a black hard stain so as to make the letters more legible and easier to be read. Through the back of the plates were three rings which held them together, and through which a rod might easily be passed, serving as a greater convenience for carrying them; the construction and form of the plates being similar to the gold, brass and lead plates of the ancient Jews in Palestine.

Thus we see that twelve individuals saw the plates before the contents were placed before the world and before they were called upon to believe in them. Is not this a sufficient testimony and evidence? If the world would not believe twelve men who have seen the originals, handled them with their hands, beheld the engravings upon them, four of whom had seen the angel of God and heard his voice; if they would not believe this, would they believe the evidence and testimony of ten thousand individuals? Jesus declares, "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."

When we appear before the judgment seat of Christ and go into his presence, we are informed we shall be judged by his word. "My word shall judge you at the last day," says Jesus. "The words that I speak unto you shall judge you." If, then, the words which he spake and which he inspired his Apostles and Prophets to declare to the people, are to be the laws by which mankind are to be judged at the last day, it is necessary that they should have some little evidence and testimony concerning his words.

We are presenting this evidence and testimony before you, and if the Lord gave four witnesses and by them condemned the antediluvian world, viz., Noah and his three sons—if their preaching, their testimony and works of righteousness condemned the antediluvians and they were overthrown by the flood, why may we not suppose that four witnesses alone, if God did not see proper to send any more, would condemn any other generation?

We find that Lot was the only witness who was sent to warn the inhabitants of Sodom and to call upon his kinsmen to flee from the midst of those cities, in order to escape the terrible judgments announced against them. He testified an angel of God came to him and told him that the Lord was about to destroy those cities; he said that this angel lodged with him over night and that the Lord had sent him as a witness, and his testimony condemned his kinsmen and the inhabitants of Sodom, and they were overthrown and perished in their wickedness.

Who was sent to the inhabitants of Nineveh to warn them? Only one witness, namely, Jonah; he was sent to a strange nation; to a people that were unacquainted with him; they could not tell by any natural appearance whether he was a righteous man or an impostor. He had a curious story to tell them, that he came part of the way to their country in a ship, and part of the way in the belly of a whale. But how could they know that he came in the belly of a whale, or that he was not an impostor? Yet the Lord told them, through Jonah, that if they did not repent they would all be destroyed in forty days. They concluded to repent and the Lord spared them, which made Jonah angry.

When the Lord sent a preparatory message to prepare the way for his Son, he sent one witness instead of raising up four. John the Baptist went forth into the wilderness, clothing himself in a curious style, living on locusts and wild honey, and began to preach repentance to the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem and to the Jews throughout the land. How were they to know he was a messenger sent to prepare the way before the Most High? Yet they certainly would be condemned for not receiving his testimony. For Jesus himself said, "the scribes and pharisees rejected the counsel of God against themselves in rejecting John."

How did John convince the vast multitudes that he was sent to testify of the first advent of the Son of God? We are informed by one of the evangelists that "John did no miracle," as great a prophet as he was; yet the people were condemned because they rejected the counsel of God against their own souls by rejecting his testimony; how much greater then will be the condemnation of individuals who reject four witnesses instead of one?

If the present generation have the testimony of four witnesses sounded in their ears; if the Book of Mormon, containing their testimony, is published and sent forth in the different languages of the earth, and the people have the privilege of hearing and reading that testimony, will it not produce far greater condemnation upon them than what came upon the Jewish nation in ancient days by rejecting the testimony of one witness only?

We see then that we have the advantage of this generation so far as evidence concerning the Book of Mormon is concerned. There are men now living that have seen the original of the Book of Mormon, that have heard the voice of God. Where is there a man who has heard the voice of God, testifying concerning the truth of King James' translation? Where