The Best Attested of All Bibles.

[The Liberator is the title of a journal published in Melbourne, Australia, Joseph Symes being the editor. He is a skeptic in religious matters. The following scrapbook is page in a recent issue of his paper.]

The Book of Mormon is the best attested of all holy books or Bibles. I may go further and say that it is the only Bible that is attested at all, except perhaps the Koran. I must explain.

Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, was born in 1805 and murdered by his Christian contemporaries in 1844. His history is as full of interest as that of any religious leader ever known; and the success of his movement is one of the most remarkable facts in the world's history. Joseph was born in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, U. S., 23rd December, 1805. His father was a farmer and Joseph was reared in the same occupation. When about fourteen the boy reflected upon the importance of preparation for a future life. Finding so much disagreement amongst religious sects as to the plan of salvation, he reflected that all could not be right, that God could not be the author of confusion, and so resolved to investigate the matter. He relied upon the passage in James, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upraideth not."

Here is the first result of his resolve, as penned by himself: "I retired to a secret place in a grove, and began to call upon the Lord. While fervently engaged in supplication my mind was taken away from the objects with which I was surrounded, and I was enwrapt in heavenly vision, and saw two glorious personages, who exactly resembled each other in feature and likeness, surrounded with a brilliant light which eclipsed the sun at noon day. They told me that all the religious sects were believing in incorrect doctrines, and that none of them was acknowledged of God as His Church and kingdom. And I was expressly commanded to 'go not after them,' at the same time receiving a promise that the fulness of the Gospel should at some future time be made known to me."

The "fulness of the Gospel" came to Joseph Smith some years later in the shape of the Book of Mormon; and here is his own account of it: "On the evening of the 21st of September, A. D. 1823, while I was praying unto God and endeavoring to exercise faith in the precious promises of Scripture, on a sudden a light like that of day, only of a far purer and more glorious appearance, burst into the room; indeed, the first sight was as though the house was filled with consuming fire. The appearance produced a shock that affected the whole body. In a moment a personage stood before me with a glory greater than that with which I was already surrounded. The messenger proclaimed himself to be an angel of God, sent to bring the joyful tidings that the covenant which God made to ancient Israel was at hand to be fulfilled; that the preparatory work for the second coming of the Messiah was speedily to commence. . . . I also was told where there were deposited some plates, on which were engraven an abridgment of the records of the ancient prophets that had existed on this continent. The angel appeared to me three times the same night, and unfolded the same things. After having received many visits from the angels of God, unfolding the majesty and glory of the events that should transpire in the last days, on the morning of the 22nd of September, 1827, the angel of the Lord delivered the records into my hands."

"These records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold; each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume, as the leaves of a book, with three rings running through the whole. The volume was something more than six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction, and much skill in the art of engraving. With the records was found a curious instrument which the ancients called 'Urim and Thummim,' which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim on a bow fastened to a breastplate. Through the instrument of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God."

Such is Mr. Joseph Smith's own account of the sources from which he derived the Book of Mormon, and the means by which he rendered it into English. It is not my purpose now to deal with the contents of that curious book or Bible, but to note the external evidence in its favor.

1. The story told above is thoroughly consistent with itself, and in perfect keeping with the leading characters of the Bible. No Christian can consistently refuse to credit it.

2. It is quite as likely that God should reveal himself on plates of metal as on tablets of stone, to Joseph Smith as to Moses, in America or in Western Asia. Here the plates are described, the times Moses received his tablets described, their dates are given; in the Bible important and necessary dates are never given.

3. As no one knows what the Urim and Thummim was, no one can prove that Joseph Smith's description and use of it are incorrect or impossible. In the position and defined statement, what can the Christian oppose?

4. It must be admitted that the world required a divine revelation or revelations quite as much as it ever did, and therefore a correspondent revelation was as likely to reveal itself to Mr. Smith as to Mr. Moses, Mr. Isaiah, etc.

In the next place, let us see what others relate as to Mr. Smith's book. The Book of Mormon was published in 1830. Here is the "Testimony of Three Witnesses," prefixed to the Book of Mormon:

"Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which we testify we have received by the gift and power of God, and bear record that the work is true. And we testify that we have heard the voice of God, and do know that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel descended from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we saw these things, and we bear record that we saw the angel, and that he has spoken unto us; and we know that it is his voice we have heard, and we know of the same of our own selves, that we do not lie, being witnesses of the truth of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

OLIVER COWDERY,
DAVID WHITMER,
MARTIN HARRIS."

Here is another testimony signed by eight witnesses:

"It is known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, unto whom this work shall come, that we have seen the plates which are spoken of in the work, and have hefted them, and we know that they are of the workmanship of gold, and as many of the leaves as our brethren could handle we hefted them; and we testify that we do know that they are engraved with the engraving of a skilful workman. And we testify that we do believe that the engravings thereon, all of which have the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship, are a record of a people who have dwelt upon this land, that has been destroyed; and we testify that we believe that the book which is in the hand of our brother, Joseph Smith, Jun., is the same which is spoken of by many of the holy prophets, that should come forth in the last days, by the power of God, and we testify that we believe that the gift of translating is of God, and we testify that we believe that the work which our brother has done with the gift and power of God, is a work of God, and we testify that we believe that the angel did come down from heaven, and we testify that we believe that he showed unto our brother, Joseph Smith, Jun., the plates of which we have spoken, and we believe that our brother, Joseph Smith, Jun., has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen, and we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

CHRISTIAN WHITMER,
JACOB WHITMER,
PETER WHITMER, Jun.,
JOHN WHITMER,
HIRAM PAGE,
JOSEPH SMITH, Sen.,
HYRUM SMITH,
SAMUEL H. SMITH."

I ask, what would the Jew or the Christian not give to have his Bible attested in the above manner? Of course, the impartial sceptic attaches no importance whatever to religious testimony or to Spiritistic testimony or to Theosophic testimony. We know the value of such evidence too well to be imposed upon by it. But what can the Christians say? His Bible has no attestation whatever, and its pages will not bear honest investigation, or such investigation as the Christian brings to bear upon the Book of Mormon.

But here we find a number of men as illiterate as Jesus and His disciples, who produce and publish a wonderful book; the publication of which is followed by cruel persecution against Smith, and his friends, and the most astounding social and commercial development of our century. This is not a tale of past ages the records of which have grown through many vicissitudes, and were written we know not when, where or by whom; but a contemporary development. Men are yet living who were born before Joseph Smith; women possibly still live who remember him. His work and that of his followers remain in full life and vigor in Utah; and the Mormon missionaries are in many lands.

In a lecture by Elder James H. Anderson we are informed that the first three witnesses quoted above afterwards left the Latter-day Saints, "but nothing could induce them to change their testimony. It was true, and they knew it." David Whitmer died at Richmond, Missouri, January, 1888. "Were on his death-bed, he called his family and friends around him, and made to them a solemn declaration that he knew the Book of Mormon, and his testimony therein, to be true. The witnesses never returned to the Latter-day Church, but still persisted to the last, in stoutly bearing testimony. The other eight witnesses remained to the last true and unshaken in their testimony. Kingdoms Systems of the World. (2nd Ed. London. Scott and Sonnenschein. 1892.)

I need not prolong my remarks. I am no friend to Mormonism—except in so far as it is a system of industry and Progress—and I believe, The Book of Mormon is the best attested Bible in the world, that the Jewish-Christian Bible has no evidence at all in comparison with it.

JOHN SYMES.

* This work has not been issued since commenced in England in my name—but, though not in a finished state, it has been upon the same text as in Sydney, long ago, and, when in 12s. bound, with the application of metallic weights.

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