

THE BOOK OF MORMON

# *Rays of Living Light*

Church of Jesus Christ  
of Latter-Day Saints

113 SALTERGATE,  
CHESTERFIELD.

Sunday School 3:45 p.m.

Sacrament Service 5:55 p.m.

M.I.A. Wednesday 6:45 p.m.

# THE BOOK OF MORMON

BY PRESIDENT CHARLES W. PENROSE

## THE AMERICAN INDIAN

“Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.”<sup>1</sup> So prophesied the Psalmist. This may be viewed as a figurative expression, but it has been literally fulfilled in the 19th century. In the midst of disputations over the meaning of many parts of the Bible, which have caused so many heart-burnings and bitter feeling among preachers and professors of religion, out of the earth has come forth a sacred record containing divine truth in such plainness and simplicity as to settle in the minds of believers those controversies which have agitated the world of theology. When the American continent was discovered by Columbus and others, who were led to cross the great waters in search of unknown lands, a dark-skinned race, composed of many different tribes but evidently of a common origin, was found in possession of the Western Continent. Varying in their characteristics from the white, the black, the yellow, and all the European, Asiatic and Ethiopian branches of the human family, their origin became a cause of wonder and scientific investigation. The general conclusion arrived at was that at some remote period their ancestors had migrated from some portion of the Eastern hemisphere, but when, or how, or why this emigration had taken place was a profound mystery.

### ANCIENT RECORD DISCOVERED

But in the year 1830 a book was published in the State of New York, claiming to have been translated from metallic plates found in a hillside in that state by a young man who was directed to their place of deposit by an angel of God,

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<sup>1</sup>Psalms 85:11.

and who was inspired in the work of translation to decipher the hieroglyphics inscribed on those plates, being aided in the work by an instrument, discovered with them, called the Urim and Thummim. The plates had the appearance of gold, were not quite so thick as common tin, were about six by seven inches in size, were engraved on both sides, and were fastened together in the shape of a book by three rings at the back. Acting under instruction of the heavenly messenger, the young man, Joseph Smith, proceeded as quietly as possible to perform the arduous task required of him. As he was but a poor scholar, he obtained the assistance of a scribe to write, as he dictated word by word. The news of the discovery, however, became noised around, and ridicule from both preachers and people was followed by attempts at violence, so that the plates had to be concealed, and, with their translator, removed from place to place.

#### CHARACTERS CERTIFIED TO

A farmer, named Martin Harris, who had become interested in the work, received from Joseph Smith a copy of some of the hieroglyphics with their translation. These he carried to New York and submitted them to some learned linguists, among them Professor Charles Anthon, who, after examining them, pronounced them true characters and the translation, so far as he could determine, to be correct. He wrote a certificate to this effect, and gave it to Martin Harris. But questioning him as to how the young man had obtained the record containing these characters, he was informed that it was revealed to him by an angel of God. He then requested Martin Harris to let him look at the certificate he had given him. On receiving it he tore it up, declaring that there was no such thing as angels from heaven nowadays, but said if the book was brought to him he would endeavor to translate it. A portion of the record being sealed, Martin Harris informed him of that fact,

when he exclaimed, "I cannot read a sealed book." As will be seen subsequently, he was, though unwittingly, fulfilling a scriptural prophecy.

### CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

That portion of the record which was not sealed was finally translated into the English language by Joseph Smith and formed a volume of 522 pages, which was published as the Book of Mormon. This title was given to it because a prophet named Mormon, by command of God, about four hundred years after Christ, compiled and abridged the records of prophets who ministered on the American Continent, back to about 600 years before Christ, when a colony of Israelites were led from Palestine across the waters and became a numerous people, the ancestors of the present race of American Indians. The account of their travels, their establishment in the Western hemisphere, the revelations of God to them, their division through wickedness into separate tribes, the manner in which the hue of their complexion was changed, their wars, their works, their buildings, their customs, their language, the words of their prophets, are all given in great plainness in the Book of Mormon. An account is also given of the visit of our Lord Jesus Christ to this people after his resurrection, fulfilling his own prediction recorded in John 10:16: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd." That these "other sheep" were not Gentiles as popularly supposed, is clear from Christ's statement, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel."<sup>2</sup> He established his Church among them, ordaining Twelve Apostles, and giving them the same Gospel, authority, gifts, powers, ordinances and blessings as he gave to his "sheep" on the Eastern hemisphere. Thus the fulness of the Gospel is contained in the Book of Mormon, which stands as a wit-

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<sup>2</sup>Matthew 15:24.

ness of the truth of the Bible; the two records supporting each other, and both united bearing testimony to an unbelieving world that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the Eternal God and the Savior of the world.

### PEOPLE FROM THE TOWER OF BABEL

This record also contains an account of a colony directed of the Lord to the Western Continent at the time of the scattering of the people from the land of Shinar and the confusion of tongues, at the stoppage of the building of the Tower of Babel. The ruins of their cities and temples and fortifications, discovered by travelers and archaeologists since the publication of the Book of Mormon, are silent but potent witnesses of the truth of the record. Each succeeding year brings forth further evidences of this character, that form a cloud of witnesses to the divine mission of the Prophet, Seer, and Translator, Joseph Smith. The Book of Mormon has since been published in many languages and submitted to the scrutiny of the religious and scientific world, and no one as yet has been able to point out wherein it disagrees with the Jewish Scriptures or with the facts gained by antiquarian research and scientific investigation. Yet it was brought forth in this age by an unlearned youth, not acquainted with the world, reared in rural simplicity, without access to the literature of the time, and without even the ordinary acquirements of the schoolboy of the present.

### PROOF OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

According to the Book of Mormon, the people who journeyed from Jerusalem to the American Continent, taking with them the genealogy of their fathers and writings of the law and the prophets were of the tribe of Joseph through Ephraim and Manasseh, and were led out of Palestine when

Zedekiah was king of Judah. In keeping the record, which was subsequently abridged by the Prophet Mormon, they used the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. Their hieroglyphs and symbols, however, were changed and modified, so that the characters upon the plates revealed to Joseph Smith, where they had lain hidden for about 1,400 years, were a "reformed Egyptian." How this uneducated youth was able to bring forth a work of such magnitude and importance, unless by inspiration of Almighty God, and by the means explained remains a mystery to unbelievers. For a long time it was pretended by enemies of the work that one Solomon Spaulding wrote a Manuscript Story, which in some unexplained manner fell into the hands of Joseph Smith, who worked it over into the Book of Mormon. But that foolish tale has signally failed of its purpose, for in recent years the Spaulding manuscript has come to light, and is now deposited in the Library of Oberlin College, Ohio, and proves to be as unlike the Book of Mormon as "Jack the Giant Killer" is dissimilar to the Bible.

#### ANCIENT PROPHECIES FULFILLED

The colonization of America by the seed of Joseph, who was sold into Egypt, fulfills the blessings pronounced on the head of Joseph and his sons by the patriarch Jacob. (See Gen. 48, also 49, 22-26, also the blessings pronounced by the Prophet Moses, Deut. 33:13-17.) The historical portion of the Book of Mormon shows that the American Continent, possessed by a "multitude of nations," the seed of Ephraim and Manasseh, is the "blessed land" bestowed in addition to his portion in Canaan. There are to be found the "everlasting hills" and the "ancient mountains," "the precious things of heaven, and the precious things of earth," and all of the characteristics of the country unto which the branches of the "fruitful bough" were to "run over the wall," as Jacob predicted. That the word of the Lord was to

be given to the seed of Ephraim, may be seen from Hosea 8:11, 12: "Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." The coming forth of the Book of Mormon is foreshadowed by Isaiah the prophet, Chapter 29:4-19. It is the voice of a fallen people whispering "out of the dust." It has come at a time when the world is "drunken, but not with wine," staggering under the influence of false doctrine, and without prophets and seers. It is part of the "marvelous work and a wonder," which the Lord was to bring to pass for the confounding of those who had turned things upside down, and who worshipped him with their mouths while their hearts were far from him.

#### ISAIAH'S AND EZEKIEL'S WORDS

The words of the book, Isaiah said, were to be presented to the learned, saying, "Read this, I pray thee," and he was to say, "I cannot, for it is sealed." The book itself was to be "delivered to him that is not learned"; and that it was to be read is clear from verse 18: "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." The coming forth of the Book of Mormon as the "stick of Joseph," is also predicted in Ezekiel 37:15-22. The interview of Martin Harris with Professor Anthon, related above, fulfilled one portion of Isaiah's prophecy, the other portions have come to pass in the translation of the book by the unlearned youth and its reception by the meek and the poor among men, and by the restoration of sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, who have seen and heard the words of the book and bear testimony to its divine origin. The "Stick of Judah"—the Bible—is now joined with the "Stick of Joseph"—the Book of Mormon—and, as Ezekiel

foretold, they have become one in the hand of the Lord, as a witness for him and his Son Jesus Christ in the latter days.

### TESTIMONY OF WITNESSES

As a preface to the Book of Mormon the testimony of three witnesses, namely, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, is published, declaring "with words of soberness" that an angel of God came down from heaven and brought and laid before their eyes the plates from which the book was translated; that the voice of God from heaven declared that it had been translated by the gift and power of God, and commanded them to bear record of it. Also the testimony of eight witnesses is given, who saw the plates naturally, handled them, inspected the engravings thereon, turned over the leaves that had been translated. In addition to these witnesses, chosen of the Lord to bear record of these facts, thousands of people, of various nationalities, have received divine testimony that the book is true, and that Joseph Smith, who translated it by the gift of God, was a true prophet, called of God to usher in the dispensation of the fulness of times, proclaim anew the everlasting Gospel, the one plan of salvation, re-establish the Church of Christ on earth, and prepare the way for the coming of him whose right it is to reign, and for the final redemption of the earth from sin and Satan, from darkness and death. And every person who will read the Book of Mormon with an unprejudiced mind and will ask God in faith, in the name of Jesus Christ, concerning it, surely shall receive a witness of its truth and be guided in the way of eternal salvation.

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