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THE BOOK OF MORMON.

HAVING in our last number of the STAR given as our opening article, a piece entitled "A Voice of Warning," explanatory of the introductory principles of Christianity, or, in other words, the law of adoption, by which the alienated sons and daughters of men may become the legitimate children of God, heirs of him and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; we now come to treat of other principles and truths immediately connected with the great work of God in the last days.

On the declaration of the first principles of the gospel by the servants of the Lord, many have been compelled to acknowledge their truth, and that they were certainly in perfect accordance with the written word of God; but at the same time have justly remarked, that in reference to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there were other principles and peculiarities of belief and doctrine still in the back ground, and especially the fact of believing in another book, held by them in equal estimation with the acknowledged scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, on which subject they were desirous of obtaining some understanding. This is perfectly right, and we have always felt a pleasure, as much as in us lies of satisfactorily explaining this subject. The object, therefore, of the present article will be to effect this purpose, not by entering into every minutia of argument that might be adduced, but on broad and general principles, yet such as to give satisfaction to those who are sincerely in search of truth.

We would introduce our remarks by endeavouring to remove a very common prejudice amongst the professors of modern Christianity respecting the scriptures, comprising the Old and New Testaments, being the only word that God through the instrumentality of his servants ever gave for the guidance and direction of the human family with regard to their eternal salvation. If individuals verily believe the scriptures to be works of truth, they must necessarily believe that other works than what are therein compiled have existed, inasmuch as the Bible and New Testament bear testimony of the same. Without enumerating the whole of what we know once were extant, we shall refer to a few to establish this important fact. For instance, in the epistle of Jude, we find a reference to the book of the Prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, and also a quotation therefrom, which necessarily proves the existence of such a work and its authenticity. We discover also, from the same author (Jude) that he had formerly written an epistle to the Saints on the common salvation which most undoubtedly would be as orthodox and as scriptural as that which he was then inditing.

The apostle Paul likewise wrote another epistle to the Corinthians of which we have no copy, but most certainly every admirer of the talent of the great apostle of the Gentiles would be glad of its discovery (1st Corinthians v. 9). We will also enumerate a few others for the satisfaction of those who before time may have staggered at the idea:—Book of Jasher—*Joshua* c. x. v. 13. Book of the Acts of Solomon—*1 Kings* c. xi. v. 41. Book of Nathan the prophet, Book of Gad the seer—*1 Chron.* c. xxix. v. 29. Book of Nathan the prophet, Book of the Prophecy of Ahijah, Book of the Visions of Iddo the seer—*2 Chron.* c. ix. v. 29. Book of Shemaiah the prophet, Book of Iddo the seer—*2 Chron.* c. xii. v. 15. "Written in the Story of the prophet Iddo"—*2 Chron.* c. xiii. v. 22.

And in addition to these we might refer to the various prophecies that were delivered for the guidance and direction of the Saints in the days of the apostles, which, certainly, as being delivered under the influence of the spirit of God, would be as much scripture or divine truth as any portion we have left on record. So much then for the possibility of other books written by the servants of the Lord, or, in popular phraseology, inspired men, being in existence, as well as the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

We shall now enter upon our apology for the claims which the Book of Mormon has upon the credence of the world at large; and in the first place we will state what, as a people, we believe the Book of Mormon to be, which is neither more nor less than a history of God's dealings with the inhabitants of the western hemisphere, together with prophecies of the future, exactly similar to what the Bible is with regard to the Jewish family and the inhabitants of the eastern hemisphere. Having made this statement of our belief, let us now look at the plausibility and rationality of the matter.

We know that it is now some four hundred years since the American continent was discovered by Columbus, and that previously the eastern world (however it might be in very remote antiquity) had no knowledge of the existence of the same. Yet we find, and that beyond all question, by the almost unequalled ruins of mighty cities, that that continent was populated by a highly civilized and numerous people. Here then we would remark that the advent of the Messiah had transpired, that he had suffered, died, and made an atonement for the sins of the world. And is it by any means irrational to suppose that this great event, so important to the human family in all time, should be made known to that portion of them which populated the western world? It is just as reasonable to suppose that the coming of the Messiah, and the great work of redemption, should be communicated by the inspiration of prophets to foretell the same, or by the ministration of angels, as that such agencies should be employed for the same purpose in the east; and especially when we assert that America was populated by the seed of Abraham as well as the land of Judea. But as we wish to make no assertions without some effort to establish the same as facts, we shall endeavour to illustrate the subject by a reference to scripture truths.

We read in the 48th chapter of Genesis, that Joseph took his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to Israel, his father, that they might receive his blessing; in connexion with which he prophesied that they should become a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth. Now, in the understanding of scripture language, we are at all times desirous of exercising simplicity, and of wresting nothing from its simple and original meaning. For instance, the term nations we wish to understand it in its true and simple meaning, as large bodies of people, living together as a portion of the human family, yet as distinct from other portions similarly formed and associated together in like manner.

And with regard to the locality of these nations, it was foretold that it should be in the midst of the earth. We ask then the question, where was the prophecy pronounced? We answer in the land of Egypt, which taking the longitude of Grand Cairo, we find to be 30 degrees east of the meridian of London, and tracing our course east or west 180 degrees, we find ourselves in the midst of the earth, at the termination of the Stony Mountains of North America, near Cook's Inlet. In connexion with this we would also refer to the blessing conferred upon Joseph in the 49th chapter of the same book, where he is told that the blessings of his father, Israel, prevailed or extended beyond the blessings of Jacob's progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. Now we are aware of what the blessing of inheritance conferred upon the progenitors of Jacob, Abraham, and Isaac was, namely, the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; but it is intimated that Joseph was a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall; or, in other words, extended beyond the boundary that confined, as it were, the other branches of the house of Israel. As a further illustration of the greatness of the blessing of Joseph, we would refer to the prophecy and blessing of Moses, pronounced upon the seed of Joseph, as recorded in the 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy, which is, and only can be, illustrated by the extent, abundant fertility, and richness of the western world.

We here then make the assertion that the aboriginies of North America are descendants of the family of Joseph—that they are the multitude of nations prophesied of as hereafter to inhabit the midst of the earth—and that their forefathers came from Jerusalem some six hundred years before Christ, and colonized the land. But we would here remark, that before bringing additional evidence to establish the same, that the continent of America was previously colonized, immediately after the confusion of tongues at Babel, by a race of people who afterwards became extinct by the wars and calamities resulting from the corruptions and wickedness of the people. The history of this race is given by the prophet Ether in the Book of Mormon, who lived to witness their entire destruction, and afterwards deposited his record in the earth, it being subsequently found by the colony of Israelites who came from Jerusalem as before referred to.

These asserted facts are strongly corroborated by the researches and investigations of travellers of modern times, who from the traditions extant amongst the Indian tribes, trace the history, not only of their fathers, but of a mighty race of people who occupied the land before them.

Were it not for extending the limits of the present article beyond the space allowed, numerous extracts might be made of American traditions illustrative of the confusion of language at Babel, and of the colonization of that country by some that were dispersed on that memorable occasion. But this will not be called in question when we find the scriptures asserting that the “Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of *all* the earth.”

Many modern writers, convinced of the Israelitish origin of the American Indian tribes, have written much to establish the theory that they are the descendants of the ten tribes that were carried away captive by Salmanazer, about seven hundred and twenty years before Christ. The revelations of the Lord, however, in the last days, have been instrumental in giving us a more lucid and satisfactory history of their origin. We quote the following from a chapter on their origin by C. Colton, published by him in London, in the year 1833:—“They assert that a book was once in possession of their ancestors, and along with this recognition they have traditions that the Great Spirit used to foretell to their fathers future events; that he controlled nature in their favour; that angels once talked with them; that all the Indian tribes descended from *one* man, who had *twelve* sons. That this man was a notable and renowned prince, having great dominion; and that the Indians, his posterity, will yet recover the same dominion and influence. They believe by tradition, that the spirit of prophecy and of miraculous interposition, once enjoyed by their ancestors, will yet be restored to them, and that they shall yet recover *the book*—all of which have been so long lost.”

“The lamb offered to make atonement for sin, was required by Moses to be ‘without spot and blemish.’ Although the Indians offer dogs, which are not white, yet the victims must have been well fed and the choicest. But on certain occasions, altogether the most solemn, supposed to be the times of burnt offering for atonement, the victim must not only be white, but a single coloured hair or a blemish of any sort would be sufficient to condemn it! Whence these religious and indomitable scruples? And all around the fire, while its blaze consumes the offering, and sends up to heaven the smoke of its incense, they sing and dance, and run the circle, crying with one united simultaneous voice, ee-ee-oo-oo-yeh-yeh-wah-wah. And then with one utterance of each syllable, ee-oo-yeh-vah. Also; yah-ho-he-wah, with a most powerful aspirate, when that element comes in. And who does not see in these examples the Hebrew sacred name—*Je-ho-vah*? They have also the Hebrew *A-loh-heem* in substantial forms, applicable to the Great Spirit. In this dance their feet kept time with the deliberate enunciation of each syllable, making a solemn pause between. Nearly the exact forms of the original combination of the alphabetic elements of the Hebrew names of God, may be distinctly recognized in the religious solemnities of very many of the American tribes. In their sacred songs *Ha-le-lu-yah* is often heard as perfectly as in any christian choir.”

“They have their various feasts of the first fruits of harvest, &c.—all religious solemnities. They have a sort of daily sacrifice, which certainly is very simple and cheap in its way; namely, that the squaw, when she cooks her meat, will cut off and throw a piece of the fat into the fire very religiously, and watches the incense

with devout attention, until the offering is consumed, and the blaze expires." So it is in smoking the calumet (the pipe of peace) the first exhalation of the fumes of the tobacco are sent upwards as an offering to the Great Spirit.

The existence of prophets amongst them is also a remarkable fact, whilst the power and authority of the same is fully recognized and exercised to a very great degree, as most of their most bloody wars have been instigated or suppressed by prophetic decisions and mandates.

They have also a sacred vessel, *or ark of the covenant*, which is employed on some occasions, and is regarded with the most religious veneration. But lest we should weary our readers, we will conclude narrating these evidences of the Israelitish origin of the Indians, by stating that they maintain the custom of the ancient Hebrews to the very iota: for the private avengement of private injuries—"an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and blood for blood." The nearest of kin is always expected to avenge the death of his relative.

Having given the foregoing evidences of the origin of the American tribes, we shall now endeavour to bring some scripture testimony relative to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and of the great events of which it was to be the precursor. In the first place we would remark that it is positively asserted in the word of God, that the Lord wrote expressly unto Ephraim as recorded in the prophet Hosea, 8th chapter and 12th verse—"I have written unto him the great things of my law, but they were accounted as a strange thing." Again, we have evidence that what was written for Ephraim, was to come forth by divine interposition immediately previous to the gathering of Israel, and the full establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. In the 37th chapter of Ezekiel we read of the prophet being commanded to write upon two sticks, one for Judah and the children of Israel his companions; and the other for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions. He was then commanded to join them one to another into one stick, and they should become one in his hand. And when the children of his people should speak unto him, and ask what was meant by them, he was to say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall become one in thine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes."

Whatever were the peculiarities of that to which the prophet had to attend, the fulfilment of the same was in the future, and was to be the immediate result of divine interposition, for it was the Lord God himself that was to be instrumental in putting the stick or writing of Joseph, which was in the hand of Ephraim, with the stick of Judah, and making them one before the face of the people.

But the Lord himself, after the union of the writings, further adds, "I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." Here is a beautiful propriety in the union of two testimonies thus coming together, to bear evidence of God's faithfulness unto his people, and preparing the way for his ancient Israel to be gathered and inherit the blessings so long withheld from them in consequence of their transgressions. The stick of Judah, or the Bible, has long borne a testimony among the nations of God's dealings with the children of men, when lo! comes forth the history of the western world, so long hid from the knowledge of the people of the east, to unite with the former, and be instrumental in conjunction of introducing the great purposes of God in the establishment of that kingdom which should never come to an end.

Again, we read in the 29th chapter of Isaiah, commencing at the 9th verse, of the condition of the religious world in the last days, previous to the introduction of the millennial era. The condition of the religious teachers of the day is described as a people that are blind and drunken through ignorance, as being covered with a spirit of slumber, and having no vision, their prophets and seers being covered, and the vision of all become as the words of a book that is sealed up, which they

deliver to one that can read, saying, read this I pray thee. Then shall he say, "I cannot, for it is sealed." And the book is given unto him that cannot read, saying, read this I pray thee. And he shall say, I cannot read.

Here is a beautiful exposition of the former declaration of the Lord, which we have quoted, that it should be by his own instrumentality that the stick of Joseph should be brought forth and placed with the stick of Judah. It is also manifest that the stick of Joseph should be in a language that was sealed or unknown to those to whom it should be presented, inasmuch as neither the learned nor unlearned could read the same; therefore the Lord declared that he himself would again do a marvellous work and a wonder, causing the wisdom of the wise men to perish, and the understanding of the prudent to be hid; and this it is evident was to be effected by the translation of the book, for we read that when it was yet but a little while ere Lebanon should be turned into Carmel, and Carmel should be counted as a forest, that in that day the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind see out of obscurity and out of darkness, so that the meek in the Lord should receive joy again, and the poor men rejoice in the holy one of Israel.

We rejoice to bear our humble testimony, that this has been literally fulfilled in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. A copy of a portion of the original characters were presented to a learned antiquary, who acknowledged his incapacity to read the same, in consequence of the language in which it was written being unknown, while he that was unlearned was equally incapable of interpreting it, until qualified so to do by the immediate gift of God.

It would here perhaps be interesting to the inquirer to know something of the origin of the Book of Mormon, for the authenticity of which we have been pleading.—The late martyred servant of the Lord, Joseph Smith, being much exercised in his mind on the subject of religion, when about the age of seventeen, and religious revivals, as they are termed, being the order of the day; yet being dissatisfied with the contradictory nature of the principles of the various religious bodies, he was induced to retire in secret, and making his supplications unto the Lord, ask him for that wisdom which he had promised to give liberally without upbraiding.

The result of his pleadings before the Lord, was the ministration of an angel of the Lord, communicating unto him what was necessary for him to know, and after repeated trials of his own weakness, preparing him to be instrumental in bringing forth the long hidden record of the aborigines of the American continent. The original of which consisting of fine plates, having the appearance of gold, and beautifully engraven in small characters, was discovered by him, deposited in a stone chest, near the summit of a hill anciently called Cumorah, but which is situated in Ontario county, township of Manchester, and state of New York, North America. He was informed by the angel of the Lord, that slander, falsehood, and all manner of persecution would be heaped upon him when the affair became known, but inasmuch as he was faithful, he would be enabled to accomplish the translation of the same, and be instrumental in establishing the kingdom of God again upon the earth for the last time. If any greater proof were wanting to corroborate the authenticity of this work, it certainly is to be found in the unmitigated persecution which the said servant of the Lord has had to endure from the day that the discovery of the records became known, unto the day on which he sealed his testimony with his blood.

It might be remarked by the objector, and apparently with some justice, why could not the servants of the Lord come forth in the last days proclaiming what are called the first principles of the gospel, and leave the subject and dissemination of the Book of Mormon alone, since it has been instrumental in calling forth so much persecution. But we would reply, that the Bible, the stick of Judah alone, was never intended to be instrumental in bringing about the purposes of the Most High; but it was to be by the union of the two witnesses that the great work was to be accomplished. We would wish here particularly to intimate, that in connexion with the divine communications manifested in bringing forth the book of Mormon, the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, so long lost, was restored, and men became qualified, by divine calling and ordination, to go forth to minister in holy things, and proclaim the fulness of the gospel unto the nations, that the end might come.

We might quote also in confirmation of the foregoing, from the 85th Psalm, that when the period should arrive that the Lord would bring back the captivity of Jacob, and turn away his wrath and the fierceness of his anger from them, that truth should spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven; that the Lord should give that which was good, causing the land to yield her increase; that righteousness should go before him (that is Jacob or Israel), and should set them in the way of his steps. Has not the above been literally fulfilled in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon? By truth we understand the word of God, for as the Saviour said, "Thy word is truth," while righteousness in the ministrations of angels has looked down from heaven in order to organize and set on foot that kingdom which should never come to an end.

And now we would address ourselves to our readers, and bear a faithful testimony to the foregoing remarks, in relation to the subject to which they refer.

All truth is harmonious, and we unhesitatingly assert, that if individuals will render obedience unto the requirements of the gospel of Christ, be administered to in the great law of adoption into the kingdom of God, by those who are legitimately called and ordained thereunto, they shall have the privilege of knowing truth for themselves, and inasmuch as the Book of Mormon, the stick of Joseph, is a portion of truth, they shall be able to bear a testimony of the same, and unflinchingly declare their knowledge of its divine origin. We have, then, endeavoured to lay before our readers, what we, as the professed church of Christ, organized in the year 1830, believe the Book of Mormon to be, we have given some evidence, we trust, of the origin of the people to whom it belonged, as well as scripture testimony to the same, and we might add much additional evidence, the result of the researches of various travellers in the regions described by the book itself as the localities of vast cities, that would furnish abundant testimony of the truth of its narrations.

It will be fully perceived, that we are not so limited in our ideas as to suppose that the Scriptures, as commonly received, are all the proof existing of the wisdom and goodness of God, but that on the contrary, while we know that the multitudes of tribes or nations in the western hemisphere are not descended from the ten tribes, but are of the house of Joseph, we also believe in the return of the ten tribes from the land where they are located, and that they also will come as a peaceable people, bringing their records with them, which shall add another testimony to the veracity and faithfulness of God.

In conclusion, we seriously exhort all who wish to arrive at a knowledge of what is truth, to follow the example of him who was the instrument in this great work, by asking God for wisdom in sincerity, and assuredly they shall obtain it. Amen.

EDITOR.

THE Gnostics.

BY MARMION SAVAGE, A. B.

The persecutions against the first professors of Christianity form not only the most melancholy, but the most extraordinary, events in the pages of history. It appears, on undoubted testimony, that they were men of the purest morals, and the most blameless lives; that they "submitted themselves quietly to all the ordinances of man, for the Lord's sake," and yielded none of the ordinary pretexts of which tyrants avail themselves to harass and oppress their subjects. The first persecution, indeed, under Nero, had some shadow of excuse assigned for it; but the history of that transaction is well known:—a capricious and sanguinary despot threw upon the simple professors of the gospel the odium of an atrocity he himself had perpetrated. At no subsequent period, however, was any specific charge brought against them; nor any reason assigned for the cruelty with which they were treated, than a general undefinable prejudice, which, it certainly appears, was very generally entertained by their fellow-subjects.

To account for this dislike, we must suppose some real or apparent cause which cannot be found in the conduct of the genuine followers of the cross: their