

that you will take no advantage of his open and frank confession. If he can obtain your fellowship, he wants to come to Commerce as soon as he can. But if he cannot be received into the fellowship of the church, he must do the best he can in banishment and exile.

Brethren, with you are the keys of the kingdom: to you is power given to "exert your clemency, or display your vengeance." By the former, you will save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins: by the latter, you will forever discourage a returning prodigal, cause sorrow without benefit, pain without pleasure, ending in wretchedness and despair.

But former experience teaches that you are workman in the art of saving men: therefore, with the greatest confidence do we recommend to your clemency and favorable consideration the author and subject of this communication.

"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;" Brother Phelps says, *he will*; and so far as we are concerned, we say he *MAY*.

In the bonds of the covenant,

ORSON HYDE,  
JOHN E. PAGE.

To Presidents Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Sidney Rigdon, &c.

#### THE BOOK OF MORMON.

The following article was forwarded to President Joseph Smith, by A. G. Gano, Esq., of Cincinnati. It originally appeared in the "New-Yorker," and is from the pen of "Josephine," supposed Gen. Sandford's daughter. We consider it one of the most candid articles that has ever appeared in relation to our people; though there is one error into which the learned and impartial authoress has fallen—it is in comparing the Book of Mormon to the Koran of Mahomet. Mahomet had not the advantage of the Urim and Thummim by which the ancients were constituted seers—the article, however, is candid, and from the pen of a ready writer, and gives the most indubitable evidence that persons of taste, and high literary acquirements, are willing to give us an impartial

hearing. Truth, naked truth, is all we ask, and we are ready for trial at the bar of reason.

#### THE BOOK OF MORMON.

One of the greatest literary curiosities of the day, is the much abused "Book of Mormon." That a work of the kind should be planned, executed and given to the scrutiny of the world by an illiterate young man of twenty—that it should gain numerous and devoted partizans, here and in Europe, and that it should agitate a whole State to such a degree that law, justice and humanity were set aside to make a war of extermination on the new sect, seems scarcely credible in the nineteenth century, and under this liberal government; yet such is the fact.

The believers in the Book of Mormon now number well nigh 50,000 souls in America, to say nothing of numerous congregations in Great Britain. They style themselves Latter Day Saints, as it is a prominent point in their faith that the world is soon to experience a great and final change.—They believe, and insist upon believing, *literally*, the Old and New Testament; but they also hold that there are various other inspired writings, which, in due season, will be brought to light. Some of these (the Book of Mormon for example) are even now appearing, after having been lost for ages. They think that in the present generation will be witnessed the final gathering together of all the true followers of Christ into one fold of peace and purity—in other words, that the Millennium is near. Setting aside the near approach of the Millennium and the Book of Mormon, they resemble in faith and discipline the Methodists, and their meetings are marked by the fervid simplicity that characterizes that body of Christians. It is in believing the Book of Mormon *inspired* that the chief difference consists; but it must be admitted that this is an important distinction.

This is their own declaration of faith in that point: A young man named Joseph Smith, in the western part of New York, guided, as he says, by Divine Inspiration, found, in 1830, a kind of stone chest or vault containing a number of thin plates of gold held together by a ring, on which they were all strung, and engraved with unknown



characters. The characters the Mormons believe to be the ancient Egyptian, and that Smith was enabled by inspiration to translate them—in part only, however, for the plates are not entirely given in English. This translation is the Book of Mormon, and so far it is a faint and distant parallel of the Koran. In much the same way Mahomet presented his code of religion to his followers, and on that authority the sceptre-sword of Islamism now sways the richest and widest realms that ever bowed to one faith. But the Mormons have a very different career before them: their faith is opposed to all violence, and, from the nature of their peculiar doctrines, they must soon die of themselves if they are wrong.—If the appointed signs that are to announce the approach of the Millennium do not take place immediately, the Latter Day Saints must, by their own showing, be mistaken, and their faith fall quietly to the ground. So, to persecute them merely for opinion's sake is as useless as it would be unjust and impolitic.

The Book of Mormon purports to be a history of a portion of the children of Israel, who found their way to this continent after the first destruction of Jerusalem. It is continued from generation to generation by a succession of prophets, and gives in different books an account of the wars and alliances among the various branches of the lost nation. The Golden Book is an abridgment by Mormon, the last of the prophets, of all the works of his predecessors.

The style is a close imitation of the scriptural, and is remarkably free from any allusions that might betray a knowledge of the present political or social state of the world. The writer lives in the whole strength of his imagination in the age he portrays. It is difficult to imagine a more difficult literary task than to write what may be termed a continuation of the Scriptures, that should not only avoid all collision with the authentic and sacred word, but even fill up many chasms that now seem to exist, and thus receive and lend confirmation in almost every book.

To establish a plausibly-sustained theory that the aborigines of our continent are descendants of Israel with-

out committing himself by any assertion or description that could be contradicted, shows a degree of talent and research that in an uneducated youth of twenty is almost a miracle in itself.

A copy of the characters on some of the golden leaves was transmitted to a learned gentleman of this city, who of course was unable to decipher them, but thought they bore a resemblance to the ancient Egyptian characters.

If on comparison it appears that these characters are similar to those recently discovered on those ruins in Central America which have attracted so much attention lately, and which are decidedly of Egyptian architecture, it will make a strong point for Smith. It will tend to prove that the plates are genuine, even if it does not establish the truth of his inspiration, or the fidelity of his translation.

In any case our constitution throws its protecting ægis over every religious doctrine. If the Mormons have violated the law, let the law deal with the criminals; but let not a mere opinion, however absurd and delusive it may be, call forth a spirit of persecution. Persecution, harsh daughter of Cruelty and ignorance, can never find a home in a heart truly republican. Opinion is a household god, and in this land her shrine is inviolate. JOSEPHINE.

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## CONFERENCE MINUTES.

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*Minutes of a Conference held in the city of New York, on the 4th of December, 1840.*

At a Conference meeting, of the branch of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the city of New York, held at the house of Elder G. J. Adams agreeably to previous appointment, on the evening of December 4th, 1840. Elder Orson Hyde was unanimously chosen Chairman of the meeting, and Elder L. R. Foster, Clerk.

The meeting was opened by singing, "Guide us O, thou great Jehovah," &c. and by the President addressing the throne of grace.

The President then read from Rev. 2nd chap. 12th verse, and onward: after a few preliminary remarks the President proceeded to give his reasons for believing that the spirit which had