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Editorial Thoughts - The Book of Mormon Witnesses —Answers to Questions

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Abstract: Offers an explanation why eight of the eleven witnesses were members of two families.

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GEORGE Q. CANNON, EDITOR.

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EDITORIAL THOUGHTS.

The Book of Mormon Witnesses—Answers to Questions.

FAULT-FINDERS with the testimony of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon have urged as an objection to the reliability of their statements that of the eight witnesses four were of one family and three of another, while of the three witnesses one belonged to the same family that the four of the eight witnesses did. These objectors have seemed to think that because eight of the eleven witnesses belonged to two families they were too closely connected to make their testimony reliable. But the circumstances which surrounded the translation of the Book of Mormon explain why so many of these witnesses were members of two families. It would be natural that the relatives of the Prophet Joseph who were with him and knew of the communications that he had received would make suitable witnesses, and also that the Whitmer family, whose house became his home while engaged in the labor of translating, should be the best witnesses of the divinity of the work, especially so when it is remembered that much opposition was manifested on every hand towards the Prophet and his labor.

In this respect, however, the resemblance between the immediate followers of the Son of God, when He was in the flesh, and the witnesses to the Book of Mormon is very striking. Geikie, in his *Life of Christ*, in speaking of the Twelve Apostles whom Jesus selected, says they were His immediate neighbors and relatives. He says: "The Capernaum circle yielded him no fewer than seven of the twelve—Peter, His brother Andrew, James, and John, James the Little and Jude, and Matthew; while Philip belonged to the

village of Bethsaida, in its immediate neighborhood; making in all eight of the Twelve virtually from the same favored place."

At least four of these Apostles—James and John, James the Little and Jude—seem to have been relations or connections of the Savior, so Geikie says; and he adds that, if we accept the tradition which he quotes, he must add Thomas. This tradition is that "Thomas, whose Hebrew name was sometimes turned into the Greek equivalent Didymus, a twin, was the same person as Judas, the brother of Jesus, as if Mary had had a double birth after bearing her eldest son."

Speaking of the Apostles, Geikie says: "We know nothing of the father of Andrew and Simon; but James and John were the sons of one Zabdai (Zebedee); and we know from comparison of texts that their mother was Salome, so honorably mentioned in the gospels. Writers so acute as Ewald have seen in her a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus; and if so, John and James were cousins to their Master."

(See pp. 575 of Notes, being note A, chapter 23 of 1st Vol.)

ONE of our correspondents informs us that an Elder, preaching to the people in the place where he lived, stated that the cause of so much sickness and death among the little ones of that settlement last fall and spring was the non-observance by the people of the Word of Wisdom. Our correspondent states that he had been called upon to part with three of his children, and he asks if the doctrine which the Elder taught is correct, as it causes him to feel very badly, because he has not been a strict observer, he admits, of the Word of Wisdom.

It is a simple but correct answer to this enquiry to say, that parents who have not been strict in observing the Word of Wisdom are not the only ones who have had to part with their children, but parents who have observed that Word with some degree of strictness have also been compelled to follow their children to the tomb.