



Type: Magazine Article

Salvation: A Second Dialogue between Elder Brownson and Mr. Whitby

Author(s): John Jaques

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 15, No. 40 (1 October 1853)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 649–653

Abstract: This two-part series gives an imaginary dialogue between two individuals. Jaques tells the story of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, gives a brief description of the book's contents, and names the languages into which the book has been translated. The first part begins the series.

selves in preaching the Gospel, and in warning the people, who, however, seemed to evince a lamentable indifference to the truths laid before them.

Truly, in many places the people seem as though a spirit of deep sleep was upon them. They have eyes but see not, ears but hear not, hearts but do not understand. It seems to require all the energies of the Priesthood, backed up by the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and the judgments of the Almighty, to waken up even a few to realize the true position of the world. What an amount of time, labour, and means has been expended in publishing the everlasting Gospel in this dispensation, and yet few have listened, fewer have come to any understanding, and fewer still have treasured up the word of life, and sought to aid the great restitution of Israel. But will Satan ever triumph over this creation? Will the restitution be prevented? Will the purposes of Jehovah fail? Will the prophecies come to naught? No. There is a God in the heavens, whose attention is now directed to the world on which we dwell. He has set His hand to work, and there is none to say unto Him, "What doest thou?" If the inhabitants of the earth neglect the great salvation which His servants are now offering, how great will be the condemnation! God will wake such dreamers up by still more terrible judgments than they have yet seen, or heard of, and by more marvellous manifestations of His power than history records. And if these displays restore not men to a proper state of mind, they will be removed from the earth to give place to those who fear the Lord and work righteousness. But the way of the Priesthood and the Saints is clear—to do their duty in warning the people, and leave the event in the hands of the Almighty, who, in His own due time, will assert and effectually establish His right to speak and to be obeyed, from the river to the ends of the earth. May that good time come speedily.

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE—*Malta*.—August 19th, Elder Thomas Obray writes. The Saints were well, and rejoicing in the truth. It was intended to hold a Conference on the 12th of August.

THE SPIRITS.—The extracts from Judge Edmonds' statement concerning Spiritual Manifestations, will be perused with interest by our readers. This statement is the production of a cultivated mind, and shows how unauthorised spirits—spirits unconnected with the Priesthood, are interesting themselves in the affairs of men, and to what extent, in America, these spirits are gaining power over the intelligent, thinking, and educated portions of the community. The day of decision certainly approaches. The enemy is preparing the world for the contest. The Judge concludes that the manifestations are the operations of more than mortal intelligencies, and are not "at irreconcilable variance with revelation." He also states that he is publishing a book on the subject.

SALVATION.

A SECOND DIALOGUE BETWEEN ELDER BROWNSON AND MR. WHITBY.

Elder B. Good morning, sir. How do you do to-day?

Mr. W. O! good morning, sir. How do you do? I hope you are well. I am happy to see you. Come, walk in and sit down. I have been expecting you, and wishing you would come. I have many things of which to ask you to-day, if you will be kind enough to inform me concerning them. Since you were here last

week, my mind has been much exercised respecting your principles. What I heard from you then, has appeared to me as near the truth as anything I ever heard before. If I had any prejudice against the Latter-day Saints previous to my meeting with you, I think it is now well nigh gone. Still there are some things connected with your people, of which I wish to learn a little more. I had not opportunity last

week to name these things to you, as our time was short, and we seemed to occupy it so well with other conversation, that many questions which I wished to put to you, I really was obliged to postpone till a more favourable opportunity. But after dinner, I took my pipe, as I generally do, and sat in the corner, canvassing and weighing over what we had conversed upon, and other things which we had not. When I get my pipe, I reckon myself in my study, so I puzzled for full two hours over matters relating to your people. Finally, I thought I should have the privilege of seeing you again in a few days, when I could inquire of you more fully. Now you are here, for which I am glad. Would you first of all give me a brief description of the origin, progress, and present position of the Latter-day Saints, and of the organization and different officers of your Church?

Elder B. I will do so. About the year 1820, there was a great revival excitement among the religious societies in the town of Manchester, Ontario county, New York. This revival was kept up with spirit by a series of camp meetings, in which preachers and people of all denominations joined. A multitude of converts was the result. But as they began to attach themselves to this or that society, a scene of strife and confusion prevailed, which contrasted strangely with the professions and former demeanour of both priests and people. In this town lived a young man, then in his fifteenth year. His father's family clung to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined that body. This young man was deeply impressed during the above excitement. But the divisions and contentions of the religious societies puzzled him, and he reflected seriously upon their conduct, asking himself who, amidst all the strife, was right, and whom he must join. While in this anxious state, he one day opened his Bible, and read that golden counsel given by James—"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth unto all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."—i. 5. This precious passage came with great force to the mind of this young man. The teaching exactly suited his case. He was unlearned, he was ignorant, he lacked wisdom. The preachers all claimed to be right, though, at the same time, they differed, and strove with each other. It was therefore folly

to go to them to learn the truth. He wisely resolved to follow the advice of James, and "ask of God." Accordingly, this young man retired to a secluded spot, and kneeling down began to pray earnestly to the Almighty for guidance. The youth had scarcely done so, when he was suddenly seized by an invisible power, which rendered him speechless and helpless. Darkness seemed to hover around him. However, he exerted all his power to ask deliverance from the Lord, when a pillar of light, surpassing the brightness of the midday sun, appeared above the youth, and descended gradually till it fell upon him, and he felt released from his distressing bondage. When the light rested upon him, he saw two most glorious personages standing above him in the air. One spoke to him, pointing to the other, saying—"This is my beloved Son, hear him."

Mr. W. Then this young man actually saw and spoke to the Lord, and to his Son Jesus Christ!

Elder B. Yes. The young man asked the latter person, which of all the religious societies was right? In answer, the youth was informed that all were teaching incorrect doctrines, and that he must join none of the sects. To a certain extent this satisfied his mind. But on the evening of the 21st of September, 1823, he again prayed to the Lord for a manifestation from Him. While thus engaged, a light appeared in the room, which increased till it became brighter than noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at the bedside, standing in the air.

Mr. W. A second vision!

Elder B. Yes. The personage had on an exceedingly white robe. His person was very glorious, and his countenance like lightning. Around him shone a halo or light superior to that which filled the room. He said he was a messenger from God, and was named Nephi. He called the young man by name, and told him that God had a work for him to do, which should cause his name to be good and evil spoken of among all people, and that a book, written upon gold plates, and giving an account of the ancient inhabitants of America, was deposited in the earth, and with the book two stones in silver bows fastened to a breast-plate, which were called anciently the "Urim and Thummim," and by which God re-

vealed intelligence to His people. See Ex. xxviii. Lev. viii. 8. Deut. xxxiii. 8, I Sam. xxviii. 6, xxx. Ezra ii. 63.

Mr. W. I recollect reading of the priests using the Urim and Thummim among the children of Israel.

Elder B. Just so. On these plates was engraven the fulness of the everlasting Gospel, as Jesus Christ taught it to the ancient inhabitants of America. These sacred things were not to be shown to any person, except by commandment from the Lord. The place where they were deposited was shown to the young man's mind in this vision. After giving many more instructions, the messenger withdrew. While the young man lay musing on what he had seen and heard, the same messenger appeared again to him, repeating the former instructions, and adding others. A second time the messenger withdrew. Before morning he appeared a third time, and repeating what he had before communicated, added still further instructions, cautioning the youth to beware and not be led astray. Whilst in the field the next day, the same messenger again stood before him, commanding him to go and tell his vision and the commandments he had received to his father. The youth obeyed, and his father told him that he must do as he was told by the angel, as it was of God. The young man accordingly went to the place where the records were deposited in a stone box, covered over by another stone, the middle part of the top of which was just visible above the ground. He raised the stone, and beheld the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breast-plate. He made an attempt to take them out, but the messenger again appeared to him and forbade him, telling him the time had not yet come, but it would be four years longer. He was commanded to go to the place once a year, until the time appointed, and was informed that the messenger would meet him there. This commandment the youth obeyed, and received instruction and intelligence each time.

Mr. W. Though he was young, he certainly underwent a considerable course of experience before he was entrusted with the commission of the work.

Elder B. Truly so. The magnitude, importance, and sacred character of the work to which he was chosen, required the simplicity and obedience of youth, combined with the soberness and

wisdom of maturity. Had an old man been chosen, he might have been too much indoctrinated with the opinions of the age, to readily obey the instructions of the heavenly messenger. Had not the youth been qualified for his great work, by a course of instruction and preparation, he might have been liable, in the lightness and thoughtlessness and inexperience of youth, to trifle with the sacred things committed to his charge.

Mr. W. Very true.

Elder B. On the 22nd of September, 1827, the angel placed the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breast-plate, in the youth's hands, charging him with the responsibility of their safe keeping. The plates were near eight inches long by seven wide, and a little thinner than ordinary tin. Engravings of the Egyptian hieroglyphic species filled both sides of the plates. They were bound together by three rings, at one edge, and were altogether about six inches thick. A part of the plates were sealed. The youth immediately prepared for their translation, which was done by means of the Urim and Thummim, as the language in which the plates were engraved was peculiar to the ancient inhabitants of America, and unknown to the present generation. About this time, he suffered much persecution, chiefly from religious persons, who had heard of his having visions, &c. He was compelled to flee for safety from Manchester, New York, to Pennsylvania. He continued to translate the record until he had finished those plates which were unsealed. All the plates were then delivered up again to the angel. After the translation, the Lord, by a heavenly messenger, showed the plates to three witnesses—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. The youth also showed the plates, by commandment, to eight other persons—Christian Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, jun., John Whitmer, Hiram Page, Joseph Smith, sen., Hyrum Smith, and Samuel H. Smith. The testimony of these eleven witnesses precedes the translation, which is entitled the Book of Mormon, the first edition of which was published in 1830.

Mr. W. I have heard much concerning this Book of Mormon, and have always understood it to be of an apocryphal or a fabulous nature. Your history of it is certainly strange, but, to be candid, I

cannot say that it is any more improbable than many things which are contained in the Bible. It is not right to hastily condemn any thing that may appear strange, for it is truly said that "truth is strange—stranger than fiction." Could you give me a short description of the contents of this far-famed book?

Elder B. I know that many rumours and false statements are actively circulated concerning that book. Its true history I have just related. The book contains accounts of two separate and distinct races of people. The first were called Jaredites, and they emigrated from the tower of Babel. Being a righteous people, their language was not confounded, and they were led by the Lord over the ocean to the continent of America, where, occupying the northern portion principally, they became a numerous, powerful, civilized, and refined nation, and had Prophets living among them. But they finally degenerated and became corrupt, so much so that, after inhabiting the land about fifteen or sixteen centuries, the Lord utterly destroyed them. The records of this people were engraved on twenty-four gold plates which were found by the second race who peopled this continent. This last race consisted of two colonies. The first were descendants of Joseph, and left Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, about six hundred years before Christ, being directed by the Lord. They travelled by the borders of the Red Sea, then struck for the ocean, crossed the Pacific, and landed in South America. This colony, in the early part of their career, became divided into two parties. One party were termed Nephites, and were a righteous and enlightened people. The other were termed Lamanites, and became a wicked and ignorant people. The second colony were composed partly of the tribe of Judah. This people left Jerusalem in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, when the Jews were being carried captive to Babylon. These emigrants landed in North America, and soon after removed to the northern parts of South America, where, about four centuries after, they were discovered by the Nephites, in a partial state of civilization. These two peoples amalgamated, and became one great and enlightened people. Prophets existed among them. Jesus Christ himself visited them, after his resurrection, healed their sick,

called twelve Apostles, and established his Church in the land, in partial fulfilment of what he said to the Jews—"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." John xiv. 16.

Mr. W. But he did not bring them, and make them of one fold with the Jews, having one shepherd. I have always understood that this passage related to the Gentiles.

Elder B. The Gentiles were not reckoned sheep then. Besides Jesus said, at another time, that he was "not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matt. xv. 24. So he would not be likely to speak of ministering among the Gentiles. He went to the Nephites, and they heard his voice, and many followed after him. They will not be brought into one fold with the Jews, until all scattered Israel are gathered together, and "made one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." The union of the stick or record of Joseph—the Book of Mormon, with the stick or record of Judah—the Bible, will be instrumental in producing this grand and glorious effect. Ezek. xxxvii.

Mr. W. I certainly never saw so much apparent appropriateness and force in those prophecies before.

Elder B. Perhaps not. But to resume. The Nephites and Lamanites, after the visit of Jesus, ran well for a time. But they became corrupt, as years rolled on, and were often engaged in contention and bloodshed. Finally the Lamanites conquered and destroyed the Nephites, in the beginning of the fifth century after Christ. Their records were hid up in the earth by two of the last Nephite Prophets—Mormon and Moroni, in the hill where heaven directed the young man to go for the plates. The North American Indians are the descendants of the Lamanites, and what few of the Nephites mingled among them.

Mr. W. Well surely, that is a most interesting story. The record of half a world come to light! I must certainly read that book. How does it agree with the Bible doctrinally?

Elder B. Most admirably. Both books being written by inspiration of the

same Holy Spirit, they run of course in complete unison. The Book of Mormon does not coincide with modern apostate religions, which have the form but deny the power of godliness. That book, as may be expected, takes a bold and decided stand with the Bible, and fearlessly condemns all churches which are not backed up by the power and gifts and blessings of

the Holy Ghost as the Primitive Church was. On some vital points, which in the Bible appear ambiguous through mistranslation, interpolation, or perversion, the Book of Mormon speaks in the most plain and pointed language, so that none may misunderstand.

Mr. W. Indeed.

(To be concluded in our next.)

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS.

EXTRACTS FROM A STATEMENT BY JUDGE EDMONDS, OF NEW YORK.

(From the New York Herald, Aug. 7.)

It was in January, 1851, that my attention was first called to the subject of "Spiritual Intercourse." I was at the time withdrawn from general society; I was labouring under great depression of spirits. I was occupying all my leisure in reading on the subject of death, and man's existence afterward. I had, in the course of my life, read and heard from the pulpit so many contradictory and conflicting doctrines on the subject, that I hardly knew what to believe. I could not, if I would, believe what I did not understand; and was anxiously seeking to know, if after death we should again meet with those whom we had loved here, and under what circumstances. I was invited by a friend to witness the "Rochester Knockings." I complied, more to oblige her and to while away a tedious hour. I thought a good deal on what I witnessed, and I determined to investigate the matter, and find out what it was. If it was a deception, or a delusion, I thought that I could detect it. For about four months, I devoted at least two evenings in a week, and sometimes more, to witnessing the phenomenon in all its phases. I kept careful records of all I witnessed, and from time to time compared them with each other, to detect inconsistencies and contradictions. I read all I could lay my hands on on the subject, and especially all the professed "exposures of the humbug." I went from place to place, seeing different mediums, meeting with different parties of persons, often with persons whom I had never seen before, and sometimes where I was myself entirely unknown—sometimes in the dark, and sometimes in the light—often with inveterate unbelievers, and more frequently with zealous

believers. In fine, I availed myself of every opportunity that was afforded, thoroughly to sift the matter to the bottom. I was all this time an unbeliever, and tried the patience of believers sorely by my scepticism, my captiousness, and my obdurate refusal to yield my belief. I saw around me some who yielded a ready faith on one or two sittings only; others again, under the same circumstances, avowing a determined unbelief; and some who refused to witness it at all, and yet were confirmed unbelievers. I could not imitate either of these parties, and refused to yield unless upon most irrefragable testimony. At length the evidence came, and in such force that no sane man could withhold his faith.

Thus far, the question I was investigating was, whether what I saw was produced by mere mortal means, or by some invisible, unknown agency; in other words, whether it was a deception, an imposition, or, what it professed to be—the product of some unknown, unseen cause. To detail what I witnessed, would far exceed the limits of this communication, for my records of it for those four months alone fill, at least, one hundred and thirty closely written pages. I will, however, mention a few things, which will give a general idea of that which characterized interviews, now numbering several hundred. Most of them have occurred in the presence of others besides myself. I have preserved their names in my records, but do not give them to the world, because I do not desire to subject them to the obloquy which seems, most strangely, to be visited upon all who look into the matter with any other feeling than a resolute and obstinate incredulity, whatever the evi-