



Type: Magazine Article

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## The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 26, No. 11 (September 1923)

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

Page(s): 953–957

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**Abstract:** This article claims that Moroni's visits to Joseph Smith in September 1823 stand second only in importance to the First Vision. It is significant that Moroni's visitations preceded the restoration of the priesthood and the organization of the Church.

# IMPROVEMENT ERA

Vol. XXVI

SEPTEMBER, 1923

No. 11

## The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon

*By President Charles W. Penrose*

About one hundred years ago one of the most extraordinary events in the world's history occurred in the town of Manchester, New York State, and it is now being observed by the Latter-day Saints in centennial commemoration. On the 21st day of September, in the year 1823, Joseph Smith, Jr., who afterwards became the prophet, seer, revelator, and president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, while lying on his bed after having knelt in prayer confessing his faults and imploring the blessing and guidance of Deity; who had received a glorious divine manifestation in the early spring of 1820 and was contemplating the experiences of that time with a subdued and humble recognition of his own negligence in serving the Lord, was startled in noticing a gradual accumulation of light in the room which increased with such great rapidity in brightness, until he saw standing in the midst thereof a full form and figure of a man. His feet some little distance from the floor, his head and neck bare, his body encompassed with a robe of exceeding great whiteness; he spoke to him calling him by name and announcing himself as Moroni, a Nephite Prophet many centuries previous, but now, as a resurrected being, coming as a messenger from the Most High. At first Joseph was afraid, but his fear departed from him and he listened with eager attention to the words of the Angel of the Lord.

He was the guardian of the record of the Nephite prophets, back to the time when Lehi and his colony emigrated from Jerusalem, about six hundred years B. C., and founded a new colony

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*Entered at the Post Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, as second class matter. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 2, 1918, \$2 per annum.*

*Address Room 406 Church Office Building, Salt Lake City, Utah.*

upon the American continent. He announced that the time had come for the bringing forth of that record for the benefit and salvation of the House of Israel; that the record was written on metallic plates in hieroglyphics; that with them was buried an instrument called by the Angel, Urim and Thummim, by means of which the characters engraved on the plates could be translated. He showed Joseph in vision the place where they were deposited and told him that by the power of God he could perform the great work of translation. He informed him that if he was faithful to his work his name would be had for good and evil throughout the world, among all peoples. He further quoted to him a number of passages of scripture contained in the Old and New Testaments, relating to the work of the Latter days, which the boy Joseph was called to inaugurate. When he had finished his message the light commenced to disappear and the personage who had been speaking appeared to arise until a conduit of light received him up into the heavens.

In a short time the manifestation was repeated. The former announcements and instructions were given the second time with some added directions as to the course that should be pursued by the young man receiving the instructions. Moroni again departed as before and on the third time returned and went again over the disclosures and teachings he had given before and added still more injunctions as to the duties which the young man would be called upon to perform, with promises of great blessings if he were faithful and true to his calling.

Subsequently the boy Joseph met the Messenger at the place described; cleared away the earth that covered the stone box in which he saw the plates, the Urim and Thummim and breast plate to which the instrument was attached. But, when he attempted to remove them, he was informed that he was not yet in fit condition of mind and spirit to do the work assigned to him and would not be until he had visited the spot four consecutive years, at the end of which, if considered suitable to his task, he would receive the plates and be guided of the Lord in the work assigned to him. The story of this manifestation cannot be told fully in any better form than that given by the Prophet Joseph himself, as published in the *Pearl of Great Price*, the latest version of which has a few verbal changes which do not affect the sense of the original and which have been made for grammatical improvement.

This divine manifestation stands only second in importance to that which is known as the "First Vision" when the Father and the Son appeared to the boy Joseph in the grove near his father's house where he had retired for vocal prayer. That wonderful vision stands first on the list of the revelations of the last dispensation as it discloses the separate personal-



Near the wilderness where the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored

ities of God the Father and God the Son; that proclaimed to the world the universality of the apostasy which had taken place from the early Church established by Jesus of Nazareth and his apostles and proclaimed the opening of the last dispensation for the fulfilment of ancient prophecy and restoring communication between Deity and humanity.

The manifestation through Moroni a hundred years ago unfolded the only authentic record of the origin of the American Indians. It bears testimony of divine communication to prophets on the western hemisphere, relates the history of a still more ancient people than the Lehi colony and opened the path to the reestablishment of the true Church of Christ and the restoration of the authority of the former Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods. It was while engaged in the work of translating the reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics inscribed on the golden plates into such English as was at the command of Joseph, the Seer, that he and Oliver Cowdery were led to retire to the woods to pray in regard to the ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins as practiced by the early inhabitants of this continent. There and then it was that they received a visitation of John the Baptist, who ordained them to the authority

of the Aaronic Priesthood and bestowed upon them its keys which he had held while in the flesh. It was then and there that they received the first intimation in regard to the coming of Peter, James and John, bearing the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood which they afterwards received by the laying on of hands. These ordinations preceded the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints "for the last days and for the last time" with all the officers, ordinances, gifts, blessings, powers, revelations, endowments and glories that appertain thereto.

Tracing back the wonderful events that have occurred dur-



On the Susquehanna where the Aaronic Priesthood was restored

ing the past centennial of the coming of Moroni, we can perceive clearly that upon that extraordinary revelation rests the beginning and foundation of the marvelous work and a wonder which has been performed in association with this divine organization. To me that vision was a veritable reality. From my first reading of this account, through all the years of my long experience to the present day, it has been a turning point in the history of God's dealings with mankind, affecting the great future; the coming in of the Millennium; the establishment and building up of the Kingdom of God; the overturning of the false creeds and systems invented by men involved in what is

called the "end of the world." That manifestation was as real as anything material or tangible or within the grasp of human understanding. Well may the great occurrence be celebrated on the arrival of its centennial. We commemorate the events in the progress of the world of very far less importance to humanity. I have no more doubt of the positive truth of the statement of the boy Joseph Smith concerning what he saw than I have of anything that has been brought to my positive knowledge by the sight of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, the comprehension of what is called natural senses, or of anything which I know and understand by reason and experience of ordinary life and being. My heart is made glad by the testimony that is come to me concerning that glorious vision, in journeys over many lands and sailing over many seas, in the midnight hour with mind clear and soul softened by the guidance of the Divine Spirit; in the peace and joy of home and comforts and friends, or in the turmoil and difficulties of mortal life; in various conditions through which I have passed, my spiritual insight has been brightened and the strength of my immortal spirit has been invigorated by the story of that remarkable manifestation. God be praised for his kindness in making such things clear to my soul.

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## Men of the Hour

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If you would be men of the hour,  
Do not wait till the hour is past;  
Go work with your strength and your power,  
And you will be conquerors at last.

If you have a dear loving friend,  
Whom you owe kind greetings of cheer,  
Go send him some token at once  
While he still holds your memory dear.

If you plan some kind, loving deed,  
To inspire, to encourage and cheer;  
Wait not for the morrow, take heed,  
Act now while the dear ones are here.

If light, that inspires all the great,  
Permits you a vision of power,  
Let not opportunity wait;  
Act now, be a man of the hour.

*Oakland, Calif.*

*Annie G. Lauritzen.*