



Type: Book Chapter

The Book of Mormon - Origin of the American Indians, &c

Author(s): Parley P. Pratt

Source: *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People, Containing a
Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day
Saints, Commonly Called Mormons*

Published: New York; W. Sandford, 29 Ann-St, 1837

Pages: 121-139

Abstract: No abstract available.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOOK OF MORMON—ORIGIN OF THE
AMERICAN INDIANS, &c.

YE gloomy scenes! far hence, intrude no more!
Sublimar themes, invite the muse to soar
In loftier strains, while scenes, both strange and new,
Burst on the sight, and open to the view.

Lo! from the opening heavens, in bright array,
An Angel comes, to earth he bends his way:
Reveals to man, in power, as at the first,
The fulness of the Gospel long since lost.

See earth obedient, from its bosom yield,
The sacred truth, it faithfully concealed.
The wise confounded startle at the sight,
The proud and haughty tremble with affright.

The hireling priests, against the truth engage,
While hell beneath, stands trembling, filled with rage;
False are their hopes, and all their struggles vain,
Their craft must fall, and with it, all their gain;
The deaf must hear, the meek their joy increase;
The poor be glad, and their oppressions cease.

While darkness covered the earth, and gross
darkness the people, every man was walking
in his own way, and looking for his gain from
his quarter; the Lord having for a long time

holden his peace, and the people fondly flattering themselves, that the voice of Inspiration would never again sound in the ears of mortals, to disturb or molest them in their sinful career; while a few were looking for the consolation of Israel, and crying to God, for the ushering in of that long expected day, when an angel should fly through the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth. Suddenly a voice is heard from the wilderness, a cry salutes the ears of mortals, a testimony is heard among them, piercing to the inmost recesses of their hearts, when all at once the heathen begin to rage, and the people to imagine a vain thing; the clergy lift a warning voice; crying, impostor, false prophets, beware of delusion, &c.; while the professor of religion, the drunkard, the swearer, the learned, and the ignorant, soon catch the sound and reiterate it, again and again. Thus it re-echoes from one end of our country to the other for a long time, and if any one should be so fortunate as to retain his sober senses, and should candidly inquire, what is the matter? the reply is, we hardly know any thing about it; but suffice it to say, some fellows have made their appearance, Paul like, who testify something about the ministering of angels, or some Revelation or Inspiration; just as though the religion of ancient days, and the faith once delivered to the saints, was about returning to the earth in this enlightened age, so that not only this our craft is in danger; but our modern

systems of religion, built upon the wisdom and learning of men without direct inspiration, are like to be spoken against, and her great magnificence despised whom all the world worship. And then all again cry with a loud voice, saying, great is the wisdom of man, great are the systems of modern divinity, great is the wisdom of uninspired priests who come unto us, with excellency of speech, and with man's wisdom, determined to know nothing among us, save the opinions and creeds of their own, and their speech, and their preaching, is with enticing words of mans wisdom. Not in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, for that is done away, that our faith should not stand in the power of God, but in the wisdom of man. And besides all this, says the objector, there is another feature which is very alarming concerning these impostors, which testify such wonderful things; and that is, they are counted as the very offscouring of all things, they are ignorant and unlearned, and of the lower class, and not only so, but all manner of evil is spoken against them, and the world hates them, and all sects and parties join in persecuting them, and casting them out of their company; and this is precisely what Christ said would always be done to his followers, and it is precisely what was done to the blessed Jesus and his followers, eighteen hundred years ago, and therefore we have reason to fear that God has sent them, and O what a pity would it be if the people should happen to find it out, and go after them, for they

would bring another storm of persecution equal to ancient days, for you know the apostles testified that if any would live godly in Christ Jesus, he should suffer persecution; whereas, before these men made their appearance we had modified the religion of Jesus, by taking away that part from it which always gave offence to the world, such as inspiration and the power of God; in short we had heaped to ourselves teachers who gave us fables instead of truth, because truth might give offence, and disturb the world too much; and thus with a form of godliness, denying the power and instituting human wisdom in its stead, we had ceased to give offence to the world, in short we became just like the world, and the world loved us, and even helped on with the spread of our various gospels to the heathen. But now, alas, if it is true that God has spoken, and sent men as in days of old, they will be constrained to testify the truth, and that will disturb and frustrate all our plans, and turn out of employ thousands of hireling priests, who never would have engaged in so arduous an undertaking as preaching, had it not been for the riches and honours of the world; but something must be done, and as they have received wisdom from some quarter, which none of our learned men are able to resist, by fair argument and investigation; let us not attempt to meet them with argument lest we be disgraced, for they have both scripture and reason on their side; but let us shut our synagogues, our houses, our pulpits, and all our public places

against them; and above all stop our ears, and shut our eyes, and withall publish every falsehood concerning them, and make the people believe that these men preach up a new religion contrary to the Bible; while ours is the religion of the Bible, only altered in a few non-essential points to suit the times, and this will be the most effectual way to stop the spread of truth. But if truth still prevails, let us do as did the Jews on a similar occasion in days of old. Make a law, that whosoever goes to hear them shall be cast out of the church; and if this will not do, our last resource will be to mob, kill, and destroy all that believe in that way; for if we let them alone, truth will finally prevail, and knowledge cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and if this should be the case, farewell—a long farewell, to all our greatness, our creeds, our tracts, our sermons, our books of divinity, our commentaries, our opinions; our commandments, and traditions, would all be laid aside as useless, or brought together and burned, as the disciples burned their books of magic in days of old, our temples would be deserted, and our merchandize laid aside, and great Babylon would be a desolation, and all our merchants, and great men would stand afar off and weep, for no man would buy their merchandize any more. And besides all this, we have reason to be alarmed still more, for these men tell us about a new book, brought to light by the ministering of angels, and translated by Inspiration, as God formerly has done, when he

has sent truth into the world, and although many tell us it is all a fable, yet thousands are testifying of its truth, and tens of thousands are believing it, through all parts of our country; and indeed the prophet Isaiah in his 29th chapter, tells us of a book which should make its appearance, as a marvelous work and a wonder, causing the wisdom of the wise to perish, and the understanding of the prudent to be brought to nought, the meek to increase their joy, and the poor among men to rejoice, and that too at a time just like the present, when the people were drawing near to God with their lips, and honouring him with their mouths, while their hearts are far from him, and their fear towards him, is taught by the precepts of men, just as we now see it. And this book, Isaiah tells us, should cause those that erred to come to understanding, and those who murmured to learn doctrine, and that the house of Jacob should be gathered at the same time, and all that scoffed at, and rejected it, should soon be cut off from the earth; and now we know that no former book has had these great events follow its coming forth, therefore, we have reason to fear that this is the book of Mormon, which is such a marvel in the world; at any rate we would do well to be on our guard. And there is one way in which we can prevent its general circulation perhaps more effectually than any other, and that is, to teach the people, that the Bible contains all which God ever did reveal to man, or ever will; but there is some difficulty in this

too, for the people will read for themselves; and in looking over the old prophesies, they will find something like fourteen books, actually quoted by the prophets, which are not found in our English Bible; such for instance, as the book of Shemeiah the prophet, the book of Ahijah the prophet, the book of Jasher, and many others. And in reading the New Testament, we find the apostles quoting several epistles, which are not found among the New Testament writings, and we know too that there is nothing secret which shall not be revealed, neither hid, that shall not be made known, for the Saviour has told us so, and Jeremiah has told us, that when the Lord gathers Israel, he will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth, and in short all the prophets and apostles have given us to understand, that the dispensation of the fulness of times for the gathering of Israel, will be the greatest day for Revelation and Miracles, that the world ever witnessed, and the people will read and understand these things, and be looking for their fulfilment; unless we can persuade them that the prophecies are a great mystery, which none can understand. Notwithstanding, the apostles have told them that whatsoever was written afore time, was written for our profit, and learning, &c. But if the people get their eyes open to see all these things, then we will try to get them to believe that the book of Mormon comes in contact with the other scriptures, and is intended to do them away, and is a silly mess of stuff, not worth

reading, and that none but the ignorant who do not understand the scriptures, pretend to believe it. But here again, we will be in danger, for the book of Mormon is written in plain English, and published to the world, and its friends are determined to give it a general circulation among all nations, and bye and bye, the publick will begin to venture to look it through, and if they do, they will see that it not only agrees with the other scriptures, but comes in direct fulfilment of Prophecy, and that it contains some of the most sublime truths ever revealed to man; and that too on subjects entirely original; no other work on earth containing sufficient information on the subject; and thus we seem in danger, turn which way we will; what shall we do? I will tell you friend, you had better repent of all your sins at once, and come to the light, that your deeds may be reprov'd, for you cannot turn the right hand of the Lord to the left, nor frustrate the work of the Almighty, who has set his hand the second time to gather Israel; his arm is stretched out and none can turn it back. But what is that wonderful book about which there is so much said? what do these strange men testify, that causes so much excitement? let them speak for themselves?

Well, hearken my reader. The Book of Mormon was found in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, in Ontario county, New-York. Was translated and published in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and thirty. It contains the

history of the ancient inhabitants of America, who were a branch of the house of Israel, of the tribe of Joseph; of whom the Indians are still a remnant; but the principal nation of them having fallen in battle, in the fourth or fifth century, one of their prophets, whose name was Mormon, saw fit to make an abridgment of their history, their prophesies and their doctrine, which he engraved on Plates; and afterwards being slain, the Record fell into the hands of his son Moroni, who being hunted by his enemies, was directed to deposit the record safely in the earth, with a promise from God that it should be preserved, and should be again brought to light in the latter days, by means of a Gentile nation, who should possess the land. This deposit was made about the year four hundred and twenty, on a hill then called Cumora, now in Ontario county, where it was preserved in safety, until it was brought to light by no less than the ministry of angels, and translated by Inspiration. And the Great Jehovah bore record of the same to chosen witnesses who declare it to the world.

Well now, says the objector, if it were not for the marvellous, your book would be considered one of the greatest discoveries the world ever witnessed. Had you been ploughing, or digging a well or cellar, and accidentally dug up a record containing some account of the ancient history of this continent, and of its original inhabitants, together with the origin of the Indian tribes who now inhabit it; had this record nothing to do with God, or angels, or inspiration,

it would have been hailed by all the learned of America and Europe, as one of the greatest and most important discoveries of modern times; unfolding a mystery which had until then bid defiance to all the researches of the learned world. Every newspaper would have been filled with the glad tidings, while its contents would have poured in upon the world, a flood of light on subjects before concealed in the labyrinth of uncertainty and doubt. But who can stoop in such humility as to receive any thing ("in this enlightened age, renowned for its religion and learning,") from the ministering of angels, and from inspiration? This is too much; away with such things, it comes in contact with the wisdom and popularity of the day. Ah! well, I reply, the Lord knew that before he revealed it; this was one principal object he had in view, it is just the manner of his dealing with the children of men, he always takes a different course from the one marked out for him by the wisdom of the world, in order to confound the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent; he chooses men of low degree, even the simple, and the unlearned, and those who are despised, to do his work and to bring about his purposes, that no flesh shall glory in his presence. O! ye wise, and ye learned, who despise the wisdom that comes from above! know ye not that it was impossible for the world by wisdom, to find out God? know ye not, that all your wisdom is foolishness with God? know ye not, that ye must become as a

little child, and be willing to learn wisdom from the least of his servants, or you will perish in your ignorance? But what are the evidences which we gather from Scripture, concerning the coming forth of this glorious work? We shall attempt to prove—first, that America is a promised land to the seed of Joseph; second, that the Lord would reveal to them his truth as well as to the Jews; and third, that their Record should come forth and unite its testimony with the Record of the Jews, in time for the restoration of Israel in the last days.

First, Gen. xlviii., Jacob, while blessing the two sons of Joseph, says, "Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth:" and in the same blessing it is said of Ephraim, his seed shall become a multitude of nations. Now put the sense of these sayings together, and it makes Ephraim a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth. In Gen. xlix. it is prophesied concerning Joseph, (while Jacob was blessing him,) that he should be a faithful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall, the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him, yet his bow abode in strength. Again he further says, "the blessings of thy Father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." Now I ask, who was Jacob's progenitors, and what was the blessing they conferred upon him? Abraham and Isaac were

his progenitors, and the land of Canaan, was the blessing they conferred upon him—or that God promised them he should possess. Recollect that Jacob confers on Joseph a much greater land than that of Canaan; even greater than his fathers had conferred upon him, for Joseph's blessing was to extend to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. Now reader, stand in Egypt, where Jacob then stood, and measure to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, and you will land somewhere in the central part of America. Again, one of the prophets says, in speaking of Ephraim, "when the Lord shall roar, the children of Ephraim shall tremble from the west." Now let us sum up these sayings, and what have we gained: first—that Ephraim was to grow into a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth; second—Joseph was to be greatly blest in a large inheritance, as far off as America; third—this was to be on the west of Egypt or Jerusalem.

Now let the world search from pole to pole, and they will not find a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth, who can possibly have sprung from Ephraim, unless they find them in America; for the midst of all other parts of the earth is inhabited by mixed races, who have sprung from various sources; while here an almost boundless country was secluded from the rest of the world, and inhabited by a race of men, evidently of the same origin, although as evidently divided into many nations. Now the Scriptures cannot be broken, therefore, these

Scriptures must apply to America, for the plainest of reasons—because they can apply no where else.

Now secondly, we are to prove that God revealed himself to the seed of Jacob or Ephraim, (as we have already proved,) dwelling in America. For this, we quote Hosea, viii. 12, speaking of Ephraim, he says by the spirit of prophecy, “I have written unto him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.” This is proof positive and needs no comment, that the great truths of Heaven were revealed unto Ephraim, and were counted as a strange thing.

Third.—Were these writings to come forth just previous to the gathering of Israel? answer, they were, according to Ezekiel, 37th chapter, where God commanded him to take one stick and write upon it for Judah, and for the children of Israel, his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions; and join them one to another, into one stick, and they shall become one stick in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, wilt not thou show us what thou meanest by these things, 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 be one in mine hand: and the

sticks whereon thou writest, shall be in thine hand before their eyes." And say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, "Behold 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 lands; 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 be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

Now nothing can be more plain than the above prophesy: there is presented two writings, the one to Ephraim, the other to Judah: that of Ephraim is to be brought forth by the Lord, and put with that of Judah, and they are to become one in their testimony, and grow together in this manner, in order to bring about the gathering of Israel. The 85th Psalm, is very plain on the subject of the restoration of Israel to their own land: it says, "Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and Righteousness shall look down from Heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of his steps." Now the Saviour while praying for his disciples, said, "sanctify them through thy truth—thy word is truth." From these passages we learn that his word is to spring out of the earth, while Righteousness looks down from Heaven. And

the next thing that follows is that Israel is set in the way of his steps, and partaking of the fruit of their own land. Jeremiah xxxiii., 6—speaking of the final return from captivity of both Judah and Israel, says, “I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.” And Isaiah speaking of the everlasting covenant which should gather them, makes this extraordinary and very remarkable expression: “their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people.” Now, reader, let me ask, can any one tell whether the Indians of America are of Israel, unless the Lord should reveal it? Therefore this was a hidden mystery, which it was necessary to reveal in time for their gathering.

So much then we have produced from the Scriptures, in proof of a work like the book of Mormon, making its appearance in these days; to say nothing of Isaiah xxix., which we have already noticed in a former part of this work.—But says one, what use is the book of Mormon, even if it be true?—I answer, first it brings to light an important history before unknown to man. Second, it reveals the origin of the American Indians, which was before a mystery. Third, it contains important prophecies, yet to be fulfilled, which immediately concerns the present generation, and their very existence depends on an immediate understanding of them. Fourth, it contains much plainness in regard to points of doctrine, insomuch that all may understand, and see eye to eye, if they take pains to

read it. But what are its proofs, as to chosen witnesses who testify to its translation by inspiration? For this testimony I refer the reader to the last page of the Book of Mormon, he will there find as positive testimony as has ever been found in the other Scriptures, concerning any truth which God ever revealed. Men there testify, not only that they have seen and handled the plates, but that an angel of God came down from Heaven, and presented the plates before them, while the glory of God shone round about them; the voice of God spoke from Heaven, and told them that these things were true, and had been translated by the gift and power of God, and commanded them to bear record of the same to all people: and these are men of unimpeachable character, and their truth and veracity on other subjects, never has been called in question. But blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, he has visited his people, and the day-spring from on high has dawned upon our benighted world once more; for no sooner had the book been translated, - and then men began to bear record of the same, than the angel of the Lord came down from Heaven again, and commissioned men to preach the gospel to every creature; baptizing them in water, and saying unto them, He that believeth your testimony, and repenteth and is baptized, shall receive a remission of sins, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost; and all that endure to the end, shall be saved in the kingdom of God: and no sooner did the people begin to believe their testimony

and be baptized, than the Holy Ghost fell on them, through the laying on of hands in the name of Jesus; and the heavens were opened, and while some had the ministering of angels, others began to speak in other tongues, and prophesy. And from that time forth, were any sick among them, they were often healed by the laying on of the hands, in the name of Jesus, and thus mightily grew the word of God and prevailed, and thus thousands have been raised up to testify that they do know for themselves, and are not dependant on the testimony of any man, for the truth of these things, for these signs follow them that believe: and when a man believes the truth through the testimony of God's witnesses, and then these signs follow not only them, but himself also: if he has the ministering of angels, if he has been healed, or heals others, by the laying on of hands in Jesus name, or if he speaks in other tongues, or prophecies, he knows it for himself; and thus is fulfilled the saying of Scripture: "If any man do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Thus faith comes by hearing, and knowledge by obeying; but hearing comes by preaching, and preaching comes by sending; as it is written, "how shall they preach except they be sent?" But there be many which say, show us a sign and we will believe. Remember faith comes not by signs; but signs come by faith. Gifts were not given to make men believe; but what saith the Scripture, "Gifts are for the edifying of the church." If otherwise, why was it not

written, faith comes by miracles? But it is written, "faith comes by hearing." I always take it for granted that a man or woman (who comes to me demanding a sign in order to make them believe,) belongs to a wicked, and adulterous generation, at least, to say no worse; for any person who will go to Jesus, with a pure heart, desiring and praying in faith that they may know the truth concerning these things; the Lord will reveal it to them, and they shall know, and shall bear testimony; for by the Spirit of God, they shall know truth from error; as it is, written "my sheep hear my voice." And he that will not come unto Jesus in faith, shall never know the truth, until too late, he finds the harvest is over, and the summer is ended, and his soul not saved.

Thus the religion of Jesus, unlike all other systems, bears its own weight, and brings certainty and knowledge, leaving no room for imposition. And now I say again unto all people, come unto the father in the name of Jesus; doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in days of old, and ask in faith for whatsoever you stand in need, ask not, that you may consume it upon your lusts; but ask with a firmness not to be shaken, that you will yield to no temptation, but that you will keep his commandments, as fast as he makes them manifest unto you, and if ye do this, and he reveals to you, that he has sent us with a new and everlasting covenant, and commanded us to preach, and baptize, and build up his church as in days of old, then come

forward and obey the truth ; but if you do not know, or are not satisfied that he has sent us ; then do not embrace the thing we preach. Thus to your own master you shall stand or fall ; and one day, you shall know ; yea, in that great day, when every knee shall bow, then shall you know that God has sent us with the truth, to prune his vineyard for the last time, with a mighty pruning.

—000—

CHAPTER V.

A PROCLAMATION.

*Hear ye ! hear ye ! hear ye ! O ye Inhabitants
of the Earth :*

*For behold ! I bring you glad tidings of great
joy, which shall be to all people.*

The great Jehovah has looked down from heaven, upon the dark and benighted generation, who now stand upon the earth ; he has beheld the confusion, the wickedness, and consequent distress, which every where prevailed ; he has in great mercy and long suffering, visited his people with a manifestation of his will, granting repentance and forgiveness of sins ; and sending a last warning, to all nations, first unto the Gentiles, and then to Israel ; in order that mankind may prepare for the great day of the Lord, which draweth near.