

## Doctrines of Salvation Joseph Fielding Smith

A Voice from Cumorah Witnesses of Book of Mormon Chapter 12

WHY PLATES WERE RETURNED TO MORONI. The question has been asked many times of our elders: Where are the plates? Does the Church have in its possession the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith?

When the answer is given that the plates were received again by the Angel Moroni, who through the centuries since they were hid up unto the Lord has been their special guardian, the reply is generally made: What a wonderful aid it would be to your people in convincing the world of the truth of your story if you could show the plates to prove that Joseph Smith really had them.

Perhaps it is natural for a man who hears for the first time the story of Joseph Smith and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon to propound such a question and to think that the plates, if they had been placed in some museum where the public could examine them, would have added much to prove the authenticity of the Prophet's story. With deeper reflection we discover that this would not have been the case, for it is not the way the Lord proves his truth, now or at any other time. However, in surprise, and in some cases with an incredulous smile, the propounder of this question turns away feeling that such an answer as he has received is an admission that Joseph Smith never had the plates and practiced a fraud upon the public.

EXISTENCE OF PLATES WOULD NOT PROVE DIVINITY OF BOOK. It is well in considering this matter to remember the words of the Lord to Isaiah: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."[1](#)

If the Lord had followed the thoughts of men and had commanded Joseph Smith to place the plates in some repository where they could have been inspected by the curious public, it would have led to endless disputations. Enemies of the Church would not have been convinced and would have contended most bitterly that the plates were spurious. No one could have read them for the characters engraved on them are unknown to the savants of the present age.

The Lord does not convince men of his truth by placing before their eyes and in their hands tangible evidence, as a lawyer may do before the court, marking it exhibit A and exhibit B, and then expect it to be accepted. The Lord expects the searcher after truth to approach him with a contrite spirit and with sincerity of purpose; if he will do this and keep the commandments of the Lord, he shall receive the witness through the Holy Spirit and shall know the truth. This testimony will come with such force and clearness that it cannot be denied. For this reason the Lord said, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."[2](#)

WITNESSES OF BOOK OF MORMON TO BE RAISED UP. Nephi, one of the earliest prophets of the Israelitish colony, predicted nearly 600 years before the Christian era, that when the records containing the history of his people should be revealed from the dust, it would be in a day when the people would "deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel," and they would say: "Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men."[3](#) Again, many among them would say when presented with a new volume of scripture containing the history of the people of this western world: "A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible."[4](#)

Because of this attitude towards this new record the Lord promised to raise up “as many witnesses as seemeth him good,” to “establish his word; and wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God.” In that day when these things should be accomplished the Lord would proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder which would prove to be a testimony against those who “seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord.” [5](#)

Moreover, this new volume of scripture was to be a witness, not only for Christ and to contain the everlasting gospel, but was also to be a witness for the Jewish scriptures, the Bible; and these two records-according to the prophesying of Nephi, his father, and also Joseph, son of Israel-were to grow together bearing testimony of the everlasting gospel. [6](#) As such a witness these records stand today testifying of the truth to the condemnation of all who reject their teachings. [7](#)

THE THREE WITNESSES. The three men called to serve as special witnesses of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon by the power of God are Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris.... They were associated with Joseph Smith in the establishing of this marvelous work in this dispensation. Later all three witnesses became estranged and left the Church. [8](#) Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris came back humbly seeking membership in the Church and both died in full fellowship. David Whitmer remained out of the Church; however, all three of these men remained faithful to the testimony they gave to the world which is found in each copy of the Book of Mormon.

Their testimony is that they received a visitation of an angel from the presence of the Lord, who laid before them the golden record from whence the Book of Mormon was translated, and who also instructed them. They beheld the engravings upon the plates as the leaves were turned one by one before them, and the voice of God was heard by them declaring from the heavens that the translation was by the gift and power of God and commanding them to bear record of it to all the world. [9](#) These three witnesses, through adversity, persecution, and all the vicissitudes of life, always remained true to their testimony that they beheld the plates in the presence of an angel and heard the voice of God speaking to them from the heavens.

TOTAL OF TWELVE WITNESSES. There were eight other witnesses who also beheld the plates, handled them, and examined carefully the engravings upon them as they were shown them by Joseph Smith. Their testimony is also given to the world and appears in each issue of the Book of Mormon. All of these eight men remained true to this testimony until death.

These twelve witnesses, four of whom beheld angels and had heavenly visions, and eight who beheld the record as it was shown to them by Joseph Smith, are all, it appears, that the Lord deemed necessary to establish the truth of the Book of Mormon, as he promised through Nephi that he would do. “And wo be unto him that rejecteth the word of God!” [10](#) The testimonies of these men more than satisfy the law. [11](#)

ALL MEN MAY BECOME BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES. These are not all the witnesses who can speak of the divine mission of Joseph Smith, or of the truth of the Book of Mormon. The promise is made in the Book of Mormon that all who desire to know whether it is true and contains the word of the Lord may know that it is true if they will ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, for he will reveal it to them by the power of the Holy Ghost. [12](#) There are hundreds of thousands who have put this promise to the test and can in all sincerity say that they have received that knowledge. [13](#)

I am just as firmly convinced that this Book of Mormon is the word of God and was revealed, as Joseph Smith declared it was revealed, as I am that I stand here looking into your faces. Every soul on the face of the earth who has intelligence enough to understand may know that truth. How can he know it? All

he has to do is to follow the formula that was given by the Lord himself when he declared to the Jews that they who would do the will of his Father should know of the doctrine, whether it was of God or whether he spoke of himself. [14](#) My witness to all the world is that this book is true. I have read it many, many times. I have not read it enough. It still contains truths that I still may seek and find, for I have not mastered it, but I know it is true.

I know that the testimony of these witnesses recorded in each copy of the Book of Mormon is true, that they stood in the presence of an angel of God who declared unto them that the record as it was translated was correct, that their testimony that God spoke to them from the heavens calling upon them to bear witness of that fact is true, and there is not a soul who cannot receive that testimony if he desires to receive it. By reading this book prayerfully and faithfully, with a desire to know the truth as Moroni has declared by revelation, he shall know the truth regarding the restoration of this scripture given to the ancient inhabitants of this continent. [15](#)WHERE IS THE HILL CUMORAH?

SPECULATION ABOUT BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY. Within recent years there has arisen among certain students of the Book of Mormon a theory to the effect that within the period covered by the Book of Mormon, the Nephites and Lamanites were confined almost entirely within the borders of the territory comprising Central America and the southern portion of Mexico—the isthmus of Tehauntepec probably being the “narrow neck” of land spoken of in the Book of Mormon rather than the isthmus of Panama. [16](#)

This theory is founded upon the assumption that it was impossible for the colony of Lehi’s to multiply and fill the hemisphere within the limits of 1,000 years, or from the coming of Lehi from Jerusalem to the time of the destruction of the Nephites at the Hill Cumorah. Moreover, they claim that the story in the Book of Mormon of the migrations, building of cities, and the wars and contentions, preclude the possibility of the people spreading over great distances such as we find within the borders of North and South America.

EARTH POPULATED RAPIDLY. If we are willing to accept the Bible record, which is confirmed by the Doctrine and Covenants, the entire civilization of the earth was destroyed in the flood except Noah and his family. [17](#) Moreover, this destruction took place less than 5,000 years ago, and today the population of the earth, notwithstanding wars and destructions, is estimated at over 2,000,000,000 souls.

The population of Europe, based upon the best records available, is vastly increased over that at the time of the discovery of America; yet upon this hemisphere are to be found hundreds of millions of people, descendants of European and Asiatic ancestors who knew nothing of this land before the discovery by Columbus. The rapid increase of posterity is known to every genealogist who has traced the record of the early settlers in this western country.

LOCALE OF CUMORAH, RAMAH, AND RIPLIANCUM. This modernistic theory of necessity, in order to be consistent, must place the waters of Ripliancum and the Hill Cumorah some place within the restricted territory of Central America, notwithstanding the teachings of the Church to the contrary for upwards of 100 years. Because of this theory some members of the Church have become confused and greatly disturbed in their faith in the Book of Mormon. It is for this reason that evidence is here presented to show that it is not only possible that these places could be located as the Church has held during the past century, but that in very deed such is the case.

It is known that the Hill Cumorah where the Nephites were destroyed is the hill where the Jaredites were also destroyed. This hill was known to the Jaredites as Ramah. It was approximately near to the waters of Ripliancum, which the Book of Ether says, “by interpretation, is large, or to exceed

all.”[18](#) Mormon adds: “And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah, and we did pitch our tents round about the hill Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains; and here we had hope to gain advantage over the Lamanites.” [19](#)

**EARLY BROTHERS LOCATE CUMORAH IN WESTERN NEW YORK.** It must be conceded that this description fits perfectly the land of Cumorah in New York, as it has been known since the visitation of Moroni to the Prophet Joseph Smith, for the hill is in the proximity of the Great Lakes and also in the land of many rivers and fountains. Moreover, the Prophet Joseph Smith himself is on record, definitely declaring the present hill called Cumorah to be the exact hill spoken of in the Book of Mormon. [20](#)

Further, the fact that all of his associates from the beginning down have spoken of it as the identical hill where Mormon and Moroni hid the records, must carry some weight. It is difficult for a reasonable person to believe that such men as Oliver Cowdery, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, Orson Pratt, David Whitmer, and many others, could speak frequently of the Spot where the Prophet Joseph Smith obtained the plates as the Hill Cumorah, and not be corrected by the Prophet, if that were not the fact. That they did speak of this hill in the days of the Prophet in this definite manner is an established record of history.

**OLIVER COWDERY PLACES CUMORAH IN WESTERN NEW YORK.** The first reference of this kind is found in the Messenger and Advocate, a paper published by the Church in 1834-5. In a brief history of the rise of the Church prepared by Oliver Cowdery, he makes reference to this particular spot in the following words:

“By turning to the 529th and 530th pages of the Book of Mormon you will read Mormon’s account of the last great struggle as they were encamped round this hill Cumorah. [21](#) In this valley fell the remaining strength and pride of a once powerful people, the Nephites—once so highly favored of the Lord, but at that time in darkness, doomed to suffer extermination by the hand of their barbarous and uncivilized brethren. From the top of this hill, Mormon, with a few others, after the battle, gazed with horror upon the mangled remains of those who, the day before, were filled with anxiety, hope, or doubt. A few had fled to the south, who were hunted down by the victorious party, and all who would not deny the Savior and his religion, were put to death. Mormon himself, according to the record of his son Moroni, was also slain.

“But a long time previous to this national disaster it appears, from his own account, he foresaw approaching destruction. In fact, if he perused the records of his fathers, which were in his possession, he could have learned that such would be the case. Alma, who lived before the coming of the Messiah, prophesied this. He, however, by divine appointment, abridged from those records, in his own style and language, a short account of the more important and prominent items, from the days of Lehi to his own time, after which he deposited, as he says, on the 529th page, [22](#) all the records in this same hill, Cumorah, and after gave his small record to his son Moroni, who, as appears from the same, finished, after witnessing the extinction of his people as a nation....

**HILL RAMAH IN WESTERN NEW YORK.** “This hill, by the Jaredites, was called Ramah; by it, or around it, pitched the famous army of Coriantumr their tents. Coriantumr was the last king of the Jaredites. The opposing army were to the west, and in this same valley, and near by, from day to day, did that mighty race spill their blood, in wrath, contending, as it were brother against brother, and father against son. In this same spot, in full view from the top of this same hill, one may gaze with astonishment upon the ground which was twice covered with the dead and dying of our fellowmen....

“In this vale lie commingled, in one mass of ruin, the ashes of thousands, and in this vale was destined to consume the fair forms and vigorous systems of tens of thousands of the human race-blood mixed with blood, flesh with flesh, bones with bones, and dust with dust.” [23](#)

PROPHET APPROVES OLIVER COWDERY’S VIEWS. The quibbler might say that this statement from Oliver Cowdery is merely the opinion of Oliver Cowdery and not the expression of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It should be remembered that these letters in which these statements are made were written at the Prophet’s request and under his personal supervision. Surely, under these circumstances, he would not have permitted an error of this kind to creep into the record without correction.

At the commencement of these historical letters is found the following: “That our narrative may be correct, and particularly the introduction, it is proper to inform our patrons, that our Brother J. Smith Jr. has offered to assist us. Indeed, there are many items connected with the fore part of this subject that render his labor indispensable. With his labor and with authentic documents now in our possession, we hope to render this a pleasing and agreeable narrative, well worth the examination and perusal of the saints.” [24](#)

Later, during the Nauvoo period of the Church, and again under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, these same letters by Oliver Cowdery, were published in the Times and Seasons, without any thought of correction had this description of the Hill Cumorah been an error. [25](#)

TESTIMONY OF DAVID WHITMER TO HILL CUMORAH. Another testimony of interest is that of David Whitmer given to Elders Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith in September 1878, when they paid him a visit at his home in Richmond. To these brethren he said: “When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver, all of us riding in the wagon. Oliver and I on an old-fashioned wooden spring seat and Joseph behind us-while traveling along in a clear open space, a very pleasant, nice-looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, ‘Good morning, it is very warm,’ at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand. We returned the salutation, and, by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way; but he said very pleasantly, ‘No, I am going to Cumorah.’ This name was something new to me; I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and as I looked around inquiringly of Joseph, the old man instantly disappeared, so that I did not see him again.”

Joseph F. Smith asked: “Did you notice his appearance?”

David Whitmer: “I should think I did. He was, I should think, about five feet eight or nine inches tall and heavy set.... His hair and beard were white, like Brother Pratt’s, but his beard was not so heavy. I also remember that he had on his back a sort of knapsack with something in, shaped like a book.” [26](#)

GLAD TIDINGS FROM CUMORAH.” Who can read the words of Joseph Smith as recorded in section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants and not feel that he had reference to the Hill Cumorah in western New York?

“And again, what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets-the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book!” [27](#)

While in this statement it is not positively declared that the Hill Cumorah is the place where the plates were obtained, yet the implication that such is the case is overwhelming.

Moroni declaring from Cumorah the book to be revealed!

JOSEPH SMITH LOCATES CUMORAH IN WESTERN NEW YORK. Perhaps this matter could rest at this point, but the question of the territory now embraced within the United States having been in possession of Nephites and Lamanites before the death of Mormon, carries some weight in the determining of this matter. In the light of revelation it is absurd for anyone to maintain that the Nephites and Lamanites did not possess this northern land. While Zion's camp was marching on the way to Jackson County, near the bank of the Illinois River they came to a mound containing the skeleton of a man. The history of this incident is as follows:

"The brethren procured a shovel and a hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot, discovered the skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs the stone point of a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently produced his death. Elder Burr Riggs retained the arrow. The contemplation of the scenery around us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms; and subsequently the visions of the past being opened to my understanding by the Spirit of the Almighty, I discovered that the person whose skeleton was before us was a white Lamanite, a large, thickset man, and a man of God. His name was Zelph. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Onandagus, who was known from the Hill Cumorah, or eastern sea to the Rocky Mountains. The curse was taken from Zelph, or at least, in part-one of his thigh bones was broken by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle, years before his death. He was killed in battle by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites." [28](#)

HEBER C. KIMBALL TELLS OF DEATH OF ZELPH. Elder Heber C. Kimball who was present recorded the following in his journal: "While on our way we felt anxious to know who the person was who had been killed by that arrow. It was made known to Joseph that he had been an officer who fell in battle, in the last destruction among the Lamanites, and his name was Zelph. This caused us to rejoice much, to think that God was so mindful of us as to show these things to his servant. Brother Joseph had inquired of the Lord, and it was made known in a vision." [29](#)

ANCIENT CITY OF MANTI IN MISSOURI. The following is also taken from the history of the travels of the Kirtland Camp: "The camp passed through Huntsville, in Randolph County, which has been appointed as one of the stakes of Zion, and is the ancient site of the City of Manti, and pitched tents at Dark Creek, Salt Licks, seventeen miles. It was reported to the camp that one hundred and ten men had volunteered from Randolph and gone to Far West to settle difficulties." [30](#)

The following account of the same event is taken from the daily journal of the Kirtland Camp, and was written by Samuel D. Tyler: "September 25, 1838. We passed through Huntsville, Co, seat of Randolph Co, Pop. 450, and three miles further we bought 32 bu, of corn off one of the brethren who resides in this place. There are several of the brethren round about here and this is the ancient site of the City of Manti, which is spoken of in the Book of Mormon and this is appointed one of the Stakes of Zion, and it is in Randolph County, Missouri, three miles west of the county seat." [31](#)

NEPHITE AND JAREDITE WARS IN WESTERN NEW YORK.

In the face of this evidence coming from the Prophet Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer, we cannot say that the Nephites and Lamanites did not possess the territory of the United States and that the Hill Cumorah is in Central America. Neither can we say that the great struggle which resulted in the destruction of the Nephites took place in Central America. If Zelph, a righteous man, was fighting under a great prophet-general in the last battles between the Nephites and Lamanites; if that great prophet-general was known from the Rocky Mountains to "the Hill Cumorah or eastern sea," then some

of those battles, and evidently the final battles did take place within the borders of what is now the United States.

There were no righteous prophets, save the Three Nephites, after the death of Moroni, and we learn that Zelph was slain during one of these battles during the great last struggle between the Nephites and Lamanites and was buried near the Illinois River.

In the Book of Mormon story the Lamanites were constantly crowding the Nephites back towards the north and east. If the battles in which Zelph took part were fought in the country traversed by the Zion's Camp, then we have every reason to believe from what is written in the Book of Mormon, that the Nephites were forced farther and farther to the north and east until they found themselves in the land of Ripliancum, which both Ether and Mormon declare to us was the land of Ramah or Cumorah, a land of "many waters," which "by interpretation, is large, or to exceed all." [32](#)

This being true, what would be more natural than that Moroni, like his father Mormon, would deposit the plates in the land where the battles came to an end and the Nephites were destroyed? This Moroni says he did, and from all the evidence in the Book of Mormon, augmented by the testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, these final battles took place in the territory known as the United States and in the neighborhood of the Great Lakes and hills of Western New York. And here Moroni found the resting place for the sacred instruments which had been committed to his care. [33](#)

#### IMPRESSIONS AT CUMORAH

LORD LED PROPHET'S FAMILY TO CUMORAH-LAND. As I stood upon these sacred places I had peculiar feelings which I cannot describe. I always do have such feelings; I have visited the Hill Cumorah and the Sacred Grove on other occasions. As I stood at the Smith home, I thought of the early struggles of the family, and wondered what means the Lord might have used to get them to move from Vermont or New Hampshire, if they had not been forced from these states by poverty. Their poverty was not the result of indolence, as the wicked have proclaimed, but the poverty and reverses of Providence, sent to give experience and to lead the family to a better land where the Lord could perform his work through the youthful Seer, yet to be raised up.

When the Smith family arrived in Palmyra they immediately bargained for the purchase of 100 acres of land. This is known today as the Joseph Smith Farm and is in the possession of the Church. In that day the land was covered with a heavy growth of timber. This had to be removed before the land could be planted and crops raised to pay for the farm. As I stood upon this ground, I thought of the struggles this entailed. My grandfather, Hyrum Smith, and his older brother, Alvin, were called upon to do much of this laborious task. The younger brother, Joseph, was too young at that time to give much help, being only about 10 years of age. Nevertheless he was called to assist, and a few years later-at the time of the vision-was under the necessity of performing labor required of a man.

The house which stands upon the farm was built by these sons of Joseph Smith, Senior; but it is not the house, as many have been told, in which the Angel Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith. The older house has long since disappeared, and stood several rods to the north of the present home. After the proclamation of the Angel's visit persecution raged, and the family were not permitted long to enjoy the land which had cost them so much to prepare, because of others, who, through wickedness, for a season reaped the fruits thereof.

CUMORAH ONCE SITE OF CARNAGE AND DESTRUCTION.As I stood upon the summit of the Hill Cumorah, in the midst of a vast multitude, only a few of whom belonged to the Church, I tried to picture the

scenes of former days. Here were assembled vast armies filled with bitterness and bent on destruction. I thought of the great promises the Lord had made through his prophets concerning those who should possess this choice land, and how those promises were not fulfilled because the people violated his commandments. Here a people perished because of their extreme wickedness.

There must be something in the destiny of things that would cause a repetition of this terrible scene on the same spot many centuries later. I reflected and wondered if this unhappy time would ever come when another still mightier people would incur the wrath of God because of wickedness and likewise perish. If so, would this same spot witness their destruction? I thought of the prophets, Ether, Mormon, Moroni, and tried to realize the sadness of their feelings as they witnessed the mad onrushing of their peoples to annihilation.

IMPORTANCE OF CUMORAH UNKNOWN TO WORLD. We sang the song, prepared for this celebration, [34](#) Zion-land, and I entered heartily, sincerely, into the spirit of the song:

God bless our Zion-land, Firm may she ever stand, Through storm and night; When the wild tempests rave, Ruler of wind and wave, Do Thou Thy Zion save By thy great might!

For her our prayers shall rise To God above the skies, With Him we stand; Thou who art ever nigh, Guarding with watchful eye, To Thee aloud we cry, God save Thy land.

Here it was that Moroni, commanded by the Lord, hid up the sacred records of his people. Here it was. 1,400 years later, that he, then a resurrected being, came to Joseph Smith and committed these same records to the young man's care. At the time of the Prophet's first visit to the hill, it was covered with trees; today (1923) it is stripped and bare, save for the grass which grows abundantly. This former scene of strife and bloodshed, where two nations perished, later the sacred repository of ancient records, today is the abode of peaceful cattle, reclining and chewing the cud. The many millions of inhabitants of the land, who, because they love darkness rather than light, will not believe, and although an angel has declared it unto them, they appear to have no more thought concerning the wonderful events that have taken place near and on the Hill Cumorah, than have these cattle.[35](#)

#### Notes

1. [Isa. 55:8-9](#).
2. Era, vol. 30, pp. 948-949; [Matt. 12:32](#).
3. [2 Ne. 28:5](#).
4. [2 Ne. 29:3](#).
5. [2 Ne. 27:14](#), 26-27.
6. [2 Ne. 3](#); 4; 25; 26; 27; 28; 29.
7. Era, vol. 26, pp. 958-959.
8. It is well known that Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer left the Church, but it has been generally supposed that Martin Harris was never excommunicated, he Journal History of the Church under date of Jan. 1, 1838, however, tells of his excommunication by the High Council in Kirtland in Dec. . 1837. He was rebaptized Sept. 17, 1870, in Salt Lake City by Edward Stevenson and confirmed the same day by Orson Pratt. Journal History. Sept. 17, 1870.
9. History of the Church, vol. 1, pp. 52-59.
10. [2 Ne. 27:14](#).
11. [Deut. 17:6](#); 19:15; [Matt. 18:15-16](#); [2 Cor. 13:1](#).
12. [Moro. 10:3-5](#).
13. Era, vol. 30, pp. 952-953.



14. [John 7:14-17](#).
15. Conf. Rep., Oct., 1949, p. 89; [Moro. 10:3-5](#).
16. [Alma 50:34](#); 52:9; 63:5; [Morm. 2:29](#); 3:5.
17. [Gen. 6](#); 7; 8; [Moses 7:36-43](#), 51-52; 8:22-30; [Alma 10:22](#); [3 Ne. 22:9](#); [Ether 6:7](#).
18. [Ether 15:8-11](#).
19. [Morm. 6:4](#).
20. History of the Church, 1948 ed., vol. 2, pp. 79-80.
21. [Morm. 5](#); 6.
22. [Morm. 6:6](#).
23. Messenger and Advocate, July, 1835, pp. 158-159.
24. Messenger and Advocate, Oct., 1834, p. 13.
25. Times and Seasons, Apr. 15, 1841, vol. 3, p. 379.

A history of the inhabitants who peopled this continent, previous to its being discovered to Europeans by Columbus, must be interesting to every man; and as it would develop [develop] the important fact, that the present race were descendants of Abraham, and were to be remembered in the immutable covenant of the Most High to that man, and be restored to a knowledge of the gospel, that they, with all nations might rejoice seemed to inspire further thoughts of gain and [and] income from such a valuable history. Surely, thought he, every man will seize [seize] with eagerness, this knowledge, and this incalculable income will be mine. Enough to raise the expectations of any one of like inexperience, placed in similar circumstances. But the important point in this matter is, that man does not see as the Lord, neither are his purposes like his. The small things of this life are but dust in comparison with salvation and eternal life.

It is sufficient to say that such were his reflections during his walk of from two to three miles: the distance from his father's house to the place pointed out. And to use his own words it seemed as though two invisible powers were influencing, or striving to influence his mind-one with the reflection that if he obtained the object of his pursuit, it would be through the mercy and condescension of the Lord, and that every act or performance in relation to it, must be in strict accordance with the instruction of that personage who communicated the intelligence to him first; and the other with the thoughts and reflections like those previously mentioned-contrasting his former and present circumstances in life with those to come. That precious instruction recorded on the sacred page-pray always-which was expressly impressed upon him, was at length entirely forgotten, and as I previously [previously] remarked, a fixed determination to obtain and aggrandize himself, occupied his mind when he arrived at the place where the record was found.

I must now give you [yet] some description of the place where, and the manner in which these records were deposited.

You are acquainted with the mail road from Palmyra, Wayne Co. to Canandaigua, Ontario Co. N. Y. and also, as you pass from the former to the latter place, before arriving at the little village of Manchester, say from three to four, or about four miles from Palmyra, you pass a large hill on the east side of the road. Why I say large, is, because it is as large perhaps, as any in that country. To a person acquainted with this road, a description would be unnecessary, as it is the largest and rises the highest of any on that route. The north end rises quite sudden until it assumes a level with the more southerly extremity, and I think I may say an elevation higher than at the south a short distance, say half or three fourths of a mile. As you pass towards Canandaigua it lessens gradually until the surface assumes its common level, or is broken by other smaller hills or ridges, water courses and ravines. I think I am justified in saying

that this is the highest hill for some distance round, and I am certain that its appearance, as it rises so suddenly from a plain on the north, must attract the notice of the traveller [traveler] as he passes by. At about one mile west rises another ridge of less height, running parallel with the former, leaving a beautiful vale between. The soil is of the first quality for the country, and under a state of cultivation, which gives a prospect at once imposing, when one reflects on the fact that here, between these hills, the entire power and national strength of both the Jaredites and Nephites were destroyed.

By turning to the 529th and 530th pages of the book of Mormon you will read Mormon's account of the last great struggle of his people, as they were encamped round this hill Cumorah. [It is printed Camorah, which is an error.] In this valley fell the remaining strength and pride of a once powerful people, the Nephites—once so highly favored of the Lord, but at that time in darkness, doomed to suffer extermination by the hand of their barbarous and uncivilized brethren. From the top of this hill, Mormon, with a few others, after the battle, gazed with horror upon the mangled remains of those who the day before, were filled with anxiety, hope, or doubt. A few had fled to the South, who were hunted down by the victorious party, and all who would not deny the Savior and his religion, were put to death. Mormon himself, according to the record of his son Moroni, was also slain.

But a long time previous to this national disaster it appears from his own account, he foresaw approaching destruction. In fact, if he perused the records of his fathers, which were in his possession, he could have learned that such would be the case. Alma, who lived before the coming of the Messiah, prophesies this. He however, by divine appointment, abridged from those records, in his own style and language, a short account of the more important and prominent items, from the days of Lehi to his own time, after which he deposited, as he says, all the records in this same hill, Cumorah, and after gave his small record to his son, Moroni, who, as appears from the same, finished, after witnessing the extinction of his people as a nation.

It was not the wicked who overcame the righteous [righteous]; far from this: it was the wicked against the wicked, and by the wicked the wicked were punished.—The Nephites who were once enlightened, had fallen from a more elevated standing as to favor and privilege before the Lord, in consequence of the righteousness of their fathers, and now falling below, for such was actually the case, were suffered to be overcome, and the land was left to the possession of the red men, who were without intelligence, only in the affairs of their wars; and having no records, only preserving their history by tradition from father to son, lost the account of their true origin, and wandered from river to river, from hill to hill from mountain to mountain, and from sea to sea, till the land was again peopled, in a measure, by a rude, wild, revengeful, warlike and barbarous race.—Such are our Indians.

This hill, by the Jaredites, was called Ramah: by it, or around it, pitched the famous army of Coriantumr their tents. Coriantumr was the last king of the Jaredites. The opposing army were to the west, and in this same valley, and nearby, from day to day, did that mighty race spill their blood, in wrath contending, as it were, brother against brother and father, against son. In this same spot, in full view from the top of this same hill, one may gaze with astonishment upon the ground which was twice covered with the dead and dying of our fellowmen [fellow men]. Here may be seen where once sunk to nought [naught] the pride and strength of two mighty nations; and here may be contemplated, in solitude, while nothing but the faithful record of Mormon and Moroni is now extant to inform us of the fact, scenes of misery and distress—the aged, whose silver locks in other places and at other times would command reverence; the mother, who in other circumstances would be spared from violence; the infant, whose tender cries would be regarded and listened to with a feeling of compassion and tenderness; and the virgin, whose grace, beauty and modesty, would be esteemed and held inviolate by

all good men and enlightened and civilized nations, alike disregarded and treated with scorn!-In vain did the hoary head and man of gray hairs ask for mercy; in vain did the mother plead for compassion; in vain did the helpless and harmless infant weep for very anguish, and in vain did the virgin seek to escape the ruthless hand of revengful [vengeful] foes and demons in human form-all alike were trampled down by the feet of the strong, and crushed beneath the rage of battle and war! Alas, who can reflect upon the last struggles of great and populous nations, sinking to dust beneath the hand of justice and retribution, without weeping over the corruption of the human heart, and sighing for the hour when the clangor of arms shall no more be heard, nor the calamities [calamities] of contending armies no more experienced for a thousand years? Alas, the calamity of war, the extinction of nations, the ruin of kingdoms the fall of empires and the dissolution [dissolution] of governments! O the misery, distress and evil attendant on these! Who can contemplate like scenes without sorrowing, and who so destitute of commiseration as not to be pained that man has fallen so low, so far beneath the station in which he was created?

In this vale lie commingled, in one mass of ruin, the ashes of thousands, and in this vale was destined to consume the fair forms and vigorous systems of tens of thousands of the human race-blood mixed with blood, flesh with flesh, bones with bones, and dust with dust! When the vital spark which animated their clay had fled, each lifeless lump lay on one common level-cold and inanimate. Those bosoms which had burned with rage against each other for real or supposed injury, had now ceased to heave with malice; those arms which were, a few moments before nerved with strength, had alike become paralyzed and those hearts which had been fired with revenge, had now ceased to beat, and the head to think-in silence, in solitude, and in disgrace alike, they have long since turned to earth, to their mother dust, to await the august, and to millions, awful hour, when the trump of the Son of God shall echo and re-echo from the skies, and they come forth, quickened and immortalized, to not only stand in each other's presence, but before the bar of him who is Eternal!

With sentiments of pure respect, I conclude by subscribing myself your brother in the gospel. C.

26. Millennial Star, vol. 40, p. 772.

27. D. & C. 128:20.

28. History of the Church, 1948 ed., vol. 2, pp. 79-80. Through error the part of this quotation naming the Hill Cumorah" and specifying that Zelph died in the last great struggle was omitted in editions prior to 1948. It was, however quoted correctly, as written by the Prophet and here given, in vol. 6 of the Times and Seasons of Jan. 1, 1846.

Sunday, June 1st, 1834, We had preaching, and many of the inhabitants of the town came to heart. Elder John Carter, who had formerly been a Baptist preacher, spoke in the morning, and was followed by four other Elders in the course of the day all of whom had formerly been preachers for different denominations.-When the inhabitants heard these elders they appeared much interested, and were very desirous to know who we were, and we told them one had been a Baptist preacher, and one a Campbellite; one a Reformed Methodist, and another a Restorationer, &C. During the day many questions were asked but no one could learn our names, profession, business or destination, and, although they suspected we were Mormons they were very civil. Our enemies had threatened that we should not cross the Illinois river, but on Monday the 2nd we were ferried over without any difficulty. The ferryman counted and declared there were five hundred of us; yet our true number was about one hundred and fifty. Our company had been increased since our departure from Kirtland, by volunteers from different branches of the church through which we had passed. We encamped on the bank of the river until Tuesday the 3rd during our travels we visited several of the mounds which had been thrown up by the ancient inhabitants of this county, Nephite, Lamanites, &c., and this morning I went up on a

high mound, near the river, accompanied by the brethren. From this mound we could overlook the tops of the trees and view the prairie on each side of the river as far as our vision could extend, and the scenery was truly delightful.

On the top of the mound were stones which presented the appearance of three alters [altars] having been erected one above the other, according to ancient order; and human bones were strewn over the surface of the ground. The brethren procured a shovel and hoe, and removing the earth to the depth of about one foot discovered skeleton of a man, almost entire, and between his ribs was a Lamanitish arrow, which evidently produced his death, Elder Brigham Young retained the arrow and the brethren carried some pieces of the skeleton to Clay county. The contemplation of the scenery before us produced peculiar sensations in our bosoms; and the visions of the past being opened to my understanding by the spirit [spirit] of the Almighty I discovered that the person whose skeleton was before us, was a white Lamanite, a large thick set man, and a man of God. He was a warrior and chieftain under the great prophet Omandagus, who was known from the hill Cumorah, or Eastern sea, to the Rocky Mountains. His name was Zelph. The curse was taken from him, or at least, in part; one of his thigh bones was broken, by a stone flung from a sling, while in battle years before his death. He was killed in battle, by the arrow found among his ribs, during the last great struggle of the Lamanites and Nephites.

29. Times and Seasons, vol. 6, p. 788.

On Monday, June 2nd, we crossed the Illinois river. The enemies had threatened that we should not pass over here, but we were ferried across without any difficulty. Here we were counted by the ferryman, and he declared we were five hundred in number, although there was only about one hundred and fifty of us. Our company had increased since we started from Kirtland, in consequence of many having volunteered and joined us from the different branches of the church, through which we had passed in our journey. We camped on the bank of the river until next day.

On Tuesday the 3rd, we went up, several of us, with Joseph Smith jr. to the top of a mound on the bank of the Illinois river, which was several hundred feet above the river, and from the summit of which we had a pleasant view of the surrounding country: we could overlook the tops of the trees, on to the meadow or prairie on each side the river as far as our eyes could extend, which was one of the most pleasant scenes I ever beheld. On the top of this mound there was the appearance of three altars, which had been built of stone, one above another, according to the ancient order; and the ground was strewn over with human bones. This caused in us very peculiar feelings, to see the bones of our fellow creatures scattered in this manner, who had been slain in ages past. We felt prompted to dig down into the mound, and sending for a shovel and hoe, we proceeded to move away the earth. At about one foot deep we discovered the skeleton of a man, almost entire; and between two of his ribs we found an Indian arrow, which had evidently been the cause of his death. We took the leg and thigh bones and carried them along with us to Clay county. All four appeared sound. Elder B. Young has yet the arrow in his possession. It is a common thing to find bones thus drenching upon the earth in this country. The same day, we pursued our journey.-While on our way we felt anxious to know who the person was who had been killed by that arrow. It was made known to Joseph that he had been an officer who fell in battle, in the last destruction among the Lamanites, and his name was Zelph. This caused us to rejoice much, to think that God was so mindful of us as to show these things to his servant. Brother Joseph had enquired [inquired] of the Lord and it was made known in a vision.

30. Millennial Star, vol. 16, p. 296.

31. Journal of Samuel D. Tyler, Sept. 25, 1838, filed in Church Historian's Office.

32. [Ether 15:8-11](#).

33. Church News, Sept. 10, 1938, pp. 1, 6; reprinted. Feb. 27, 1954, pp. 2-3.

34. President Joseph Fielding Smith was attending the first general conference of the Eastern States Mission, convened at the Joseph Smith Farm near Palmyra, New York, on Sept. 21 to 23, 1923-the one hundredth anniversary of the appearance of Moroni to Joseph Smith.

35. Rel. Soc. Mag., vol. 10, pp. 586-587.