

William E. McLellin on the Book of Mormon

"Mormonism," *New-Hampshire Gazette* 76 (October 25, 1831):4, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, emphasis retained.

Mormonism. The following article from the Illinois Patriot, will give some idea of the absurdities of this new faith.

The Mormonites.—A Preacher of this sect¹ visited us last Saturday.² We heard a part of his lecture, which occupied more than two hours. From his account, this sect came into existence a little more than a year since in the following manner:—A young man about 23 years of age somewhere in Ontario county, N. Y., was visited by an *angel!* (here the preacher looked around him apparently to see if the credulity of the people in this enlightened age, could be thus imposed on) who informed him three times in one night that by visiting a certain place in that town he would have revealed to him something of importance. The young man was disturbed, but did not obey the summons until the following day, when the angel again visited him. At the place appointed he found in the earth a box which contained a set of thin plates resembling gold, with Arabic characters inscribed on them. The plates were minutely described as being connected with rings in the shape of the letter D, which facilitated the opening and shutting of the book. The preacher said he found in the same place two stones with which he was enabled by placing them over his eyes and putting his head in a dark corner to decypher the hieroglyphics on the plates!—This we were told was performed to admiration, and now, as the result, we have a book which the speaker informed us was the Mormon Bible—a book second to no other—without which the holy bible, he seemed to think, would be of little use.

It appears from his statement, that three of the offspring of Joseph, by his youngest son Ephraim, whose names were Laman, Nephi and Lehigh, as near as we could understand, were the persons from whom sprang Mormon.—Laman and Nephi rather declined from walking in the right way, but Lehigh was firm in the faith. Mormon, who was a prophet, led them eastward until they came to the sea, as we suppose, where they built a ship and came to the western world. To prove this, the preacher referred us to Genesis, 49th chapter and 22d verse, and said the branches running over the wall was neither more nor less than the progeny of Joseph, leaving their own and coming to this country! He went into a detail of the reasons which induced him to join himself to this people—that on account of so many sects being in the world, and the discrepancies in their opinions, he became sceptical—that hearing of these people in July last, he joined himself to them, believing them to constitute the true Church—and that he came this way to meet a convocation of elders in Jackson county, Missouri, which is to be their New Jerusalem, but was disappointed in not seeing them there.

He insisted on the bible being joined with his book, by quoting the 16th and 17th verses of the 37th chapter of Ezekiel, and comparing the bible and Mormon's book to the two sticks there spoken of. We thought this part of his subject too ludicrous to be refuted by any man in his right mind. We cannot now enter into the merits of his discourse, nor should we have given this hastily written sketch, had we not been requested to say something on the subject. Some of these men may be sincere; but does this prove they are in the right? The worshippers of Juggernaut are

¹ William E. McLellin (1806-1883)

² September 10, 1831

sincere, or they would not sacrifice their lives by throwing themselves under the wheel of its life destroying car. As far as we are acquainted with the bible we now have, we are satisfied that the Mormonites are a deluded sect of men, whose doctrines are not only dangerous—but, notwithstanding all their professions, they are calling down the curse of God on their own heads.

William E. McLellin to “Beloved Relatives,” August 4, 1832, Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, P13, f6, Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri

The following is an excerpt from the letter of William McLellin.³

. . . Some time in July 1831. Two men⁴ came to Paris & held an evening meeting, only a few attended, but among the others, I was there. They delivered some ideas which appeared very strange to me at that time.

"They said that in September 1827 an Angel appeared to Joseph Smith (in Ontario Co. New York) and showed to him the confusion on the earth respecting true religion. It also told him to go a few miles distant to a certain hill and there he should find some plates with engravings, which (if he was faithful) he should be enabled to translate. He went as directed and found plates (which had the appearance of fine Gold) about 8 inches long 5 or 6 wide and alltogether about 6 inches thick; each one about as thick as thin paste Board fastened together and opened in the form of a book containing engravings of reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphical characters: which he was inspired to translate and the record was published in 1830 and is called the book of Mormon. It is a record which was kept on this continent by the ancient inhabitants."

Those men had this book with them and they told us about it, and also of the rise of the church (which is now called Mormonites from their faith in this book &c.)

³ William E. McLellin (1806-1883)

⁴ Samuel H. Smith (1808-1844) and Reynolds Cahoon (1790-1861)