

HISTORIAN'S OFFICE  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints *No. 3*  
47 E. South Temple St.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

# Ten Years Before The Mast.

*1888?  
FLAKE*

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SHIPWRECKS AND ADVENTURES AT SEA I

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*Religious Customs of the People  
of India and Burmah's Empire.*

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**HOW I BECAME A NORMAN AND WHY I BECAME  
AN INFIDEL!**

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somewhere, about the origin of Christianity, and a great many statements in the Bible that were harder to believe than the taking of all the sailors to hold the captain's hair on his head during a rather severe gale. Elder Blair, of the Josephite church, called to see me at Hyde Park about this time, and he advised me to read Gibbons, and other authors, on ancient history, who wrote on Christianity as it was in the days of Christ and His apostles. I discovered that one author, Gibbon, I think, made the statement "that he was very careful not to write anything that would militate against the church." I considered that historian as unreliable, after making such a statement.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

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#### AN INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN HARRIS.

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Martin Harris, who was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, was living in Smithfield, Cache Valley, with his son Martin. I called to see him and he gave me his history from his youth up. This occurred in the winter of 1875-6. Following is the history as related to me, including all his connections with Joseph Smith, the pretended prophet and the founder of the Mormon church: He told me all about the translating of the Book of Mormon, and said he had given \$5,000 towards its publication. He said: "I never saw the golden plates, only in a visionary or entranced state. I wrote a great deal of the Book of Mormon myself, as Joseph Smith translated or spelled the words out in English. Sometimes the plates would be on a table in the room in which

Smith did the translating, covered over with a cloth. I was told by Joseph Smith that God would strike him dead if he attempted to look at them, and I believed it. When the time came for the three witnesses to see the plates, Joseph Smith, myself, David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdery, went into the woods to pray. When they had all engaged in prayer, they failed at that time to see the plates or the angel who should have been on hand to exhibit them. They all believed it was because I was not good enough, or, in other words, not sufficiently sanctified. I withdrew. As soon as I had gone away, the three others saw the angel and the plates. In about three days I went into the woods to pray that I might see the plates. While praying I passed into a state of entrancement, and in that state I saw the angel and the plates." Harris told me about his trip to New York and what Prof. Anthon told him. He (Anthon) said the characters were translated correctly. After Harris had told the professor how the plates had been found, the professor said that it was his opinion that he (Harris) was being duped by sharpers, and advised Harris to take care of himself. I asked him if he knew what the prophet Isaiah had said about that event. He said, "No," but that Joseph Smith had shown that chapter to him after his return.

Harris told me that Smith had permitted him to take home a part of the translated manuscript to show his wife and a few friends. It consisted of several chapters. He said that the manuscript was taken out of the house and never returned. That part which was stolen was never embodied in the Book of Mormon. Soon after this happened Joseph Smith had a revelation from the Lord for Martin Harris, threatening Harris with the destruction of himself and property, and misery was to be his eternal doom. Harris further told me that none of this revelation ever came to pass. See Doctrines and Cove-

nants, Sec. 18, par. 5, or in some of the books Sec. 41, revelation to Martin Harris. Harris said that *Joe* Smith (he never called him *Joseph* in my presence) commenced having false revelations soon after, and, in fact, before the church was organized. In or about the year 1833, the servant girl of Joe Smith stated that the prophet had made improper proposals to her, which created quite a talk amongst the people. Joe Smith went to Martin Harris to counsel with him concerning the girl's talk. Harris, supposing that Joe was innocent, told him to take no notice of the girl, that she was full of the devil, and wanted to destroy the prophet of God; but Joe Smith acknowledged that there was more truth than poetry in what the girl said. Harris then said he would have nothing to do in the matter, Smith could get out of the trouble the best way he knew how. Harris further stated that the Kirtland Bank was a swindle, and he would have nothing to do with it. About that time Harris began to lose confidence in Joe Smith, as a man of truth, honor and principle, yet he believed him to be a prophet of God. I asked him how he could reconcile *such* conduct with what *should* be the conduct of a prophet of God. He then showed me what the prophet Isaiah had said: "That God would choose the base things of this life to bring to note things that are," and claimed that that prophecy had been fulfilled in Joe Smith. Harris had good evidence that Joe Smith was practicing polygamy as early as 1838, five years before the revelation on polygamy was received by the prophet. He also claimed that polygamy, baptism for the dead, and such endowments as were given Nauvoo and Salt Lake City, were no part of Mormonism. I asked him why he had taken his endowments when he arrived in Salt Lake City. He answered that "his only motive was to see what was going on in there." This was said in the presence of James Bowman, of Soda Springs, Idaho, and myself.

Martin Harris asked me to look on his face and see how it was wrinkled with old age. I never knew his correct age, but I understood him to be about ninety years old at that time. He then read that part of the prophet Isaiah, which speaks of some man "whose visage was so marred, more than any other man's, so shall he sprinkle many nations." Harris said, "I am that man," and that the vigor of youth would yet return to him, and that he would yet lead the faithful of all the Latter Day Saints back to Zion, in Jackson County, Missouri, and "I know it will come to pass, as well as I know that Mormonism is true." About two years later Harris died. Harris never believed that the Brighamite branch of the Mormon church, nor the Josephite church, was right, because, in his opinion, God had rejected them; but he did believe that Mormonism was the pure gospel of Christ when it was first revealed, and I believe he died in that faith.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

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#### DAVID WHITMER'S LETTER.

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In March, 1887, I wrote a letter to David Whitmer, requesting him to explain to me the condition he was in when he saw the angel and the plates, from which the Book of Mormon is supposed to have been translated. In April, 1887, I received a letter from David Whitmer, dated on the second of that month, replying to my communication, from which I copy, verbatim, as follows:

"In regards to my testimony to the visitation of the angel, who declared to us three witnesses that the Book of