

By the Hand of Mormon

I have had very little to do with Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons till this year. I recently help set up a website for a local evangelist who engages with them.

<http://www.cults-investigated.com>

I went to my local library and found this book "By the Hand of Mormon" by Terry L Givens (Oxford University Press, 2002). So I got it out.

There is so much about Mormonism that I did not know.

Before learning new things, I find it useful to spell out what I already know. Regarding Mormonism, all I knew was

- It was very American
- Young American Male Mormons go on two year missions, often abroad
- There was a large march to Salt Lake City, to escape persecution
- The founder claims to have been visited by an Angel
- They have a religious book unique to them called The Book of Mormon

So below is what I have learned. The founder was called Joseph Smith. Born 1805 and dies 1844. The Book of Mormon was published in 1830. He did not have an educated background. He lived in an era when folk spirituality was a big part of Christianity and prophecy and visions were very popular.

As a young boy, there was a lot of interest in finding gold or treasure. Joseph smith used 'seer stones' in helping to look for treasure but was unsuccessful.

At the age of 14 or 15 he has a vision of God and Jesus. God says to him 'this is my beloved Son'.

At one point, he asks God which church to join. Then God the Father and Jesus the Son of God appear and tell him that all the churches are corrupt and he shouldn't join any of them.

The book of James is very important to Joseph – especially the verse about asking for wisdom. Apparently Joseph asked for wisdom before his visions. Many later Mormon testimonies say something similar – they asked for wisdom, read the Book of Mormon, and had some special feelings.

The angel Moroni tells him about a Golden Bible which he finds at Cumorah a drumlin in Manchester, New York, United States. It was in a buried stone box. It is on Golden plates and the writing is in reformed Egyptian.

Joseph Smith translates this Bible using the Urim and Thumin. His first translation however is lost.

He does another translation using a Seer Stone and that one is the current Book of Mormon.

Very few people actually see the Golden Bible. Though there are about 8 that testify to having visions. These testimonies were included in the Book of Mormon, at the front and back.

The Book of Mormon itself says that Jews emigrated to America at the time of the Tower of Babel and around 600BC, and they had quite advanced civilisations. At first the belief was that the Native Indians were descendants of those Jews. I'm not sure if that is still the case. When many amazing archaeological finds were happening in South and Central America, the Mormons believed this was proof of the Book of Mormon.

Books from the Book of Mormon

1 Nephi
2 Nephi
Jacob
Enos
Jarom
Omni
Words of Mormon
Mosiah
Alma
Helaman
3 Nephi
4 Nephi
Mormon
Ether
Moroni

An interesting literary device found in the book of Mormon is the Chiasmus. Basically the stanzas are constructed so that the first is in parallel with the last, the second in parallel with the penultimate and so on. Devices like this are said to have been unlikely to have been made up by Joseph Smith.

Biblical passages with a chiastic structure:

Gospel of John (including 6:36–40; 15:7–17; 16:16–31; 18:28–19:16a; 19:16b–42).⁴⁵ and Matthew 27:62–28:20.⁴⁶

The Chiasmus of John 1:1–18:50

A The Word with God the Father (1:1–2)
B The Word's role in creation (1:3)
C God's Grace to mankind (1:4–5)
D Witness of John the Baptist (1:6–8)
E The Incarnation of the Word (1:9–11)
X Saving Faith in the Incarnate Word (1:12–13)
E' The Incarnation of the Word (1:14)
D' Witness of John the Baptist (1:15)
C' God's Grace to mankind (1:16)
B' The Word's role in re-creation (1:17)
A' The Word with God the Father (1:18)

http://www.onthewing.org/user/BS_Chiasmus%20-%20McCoy.pdf

