



Type: Magazine Article

The Book of Mormon Plates

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Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 68, No. 33 (16 August 1906)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 524–527

Abstract: Broadbank argues that an exhibition of the gold plates would not convert nonbelievers to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Few people would have access to, or would be able to read the plates. The testimonies of the witnesses were never revoked. The second part concludes the series.

- Romans 16: 26; Hebrews 9: 14; Rev. 10: 5, 6; I Nephi 11: 21, 32; Doc. and Cov. 20: 28; 39: 1; 76: 4; 88: 41; 132: 20; Moses 1: 3; 7: 35; Abraham 6: 35.
2. Eternal Covenants. Ex. 31: 16, 17; Ezek. 37: 26; Rom. 11: 25-29; Doc. and Cov. 1: 15, 22; 22: 1-3; 45: 9, 10; 49: 9; 66: 2; 76: 101; 78: 11, 12; 82: 15-21; 84: 39-41, 48; 88: 131-133; 101: 39; 104: 1-6; 132: 4-27, 41, 42.
6. Eternal life. Dan. 12: 2, 3; Luke 18: 29, 30; John 3: 14-16; 10: 28; 12: 25; 17: 2, 3; Romans 2: 7; 5: 21; 6: 23; Galatians 6: 8; Titus 1: 2; Heb. 5: 9; I John 2: 17, 25; 3: 15; Revelation 22: 5; Mosiah 5: 15; 16: 10, 11; Doc. and Cov. 6: 7; 14: 7; 45: 8; 6: 50-70; 88: 15-20; 132: 19 24; Moses 1: 39.
4. Eternal punishment. Matt. 12: 32; Mark 14: 21; II Thess. 1: 8, 9; 10: 26 31; II Peter 2: 17-21; I John 3: 14, 15; 5: 16, 17; Mosiah 16: 10 12; Doc. and Cov. 19: 3-12.

THE BOOK OF MORMON PLATES.

BY ELDER THOMAS W. BROADBANK IN THE "DESERET NEWS."

(Concluded from page 502.)

The question of reliance on human testimony in some of its phases shall be taken up later; but a pause is now made to remark that a public view of the plates would serve no good purpose in particular that the translation of their records does not now effect, while the latter offers many advantages that the plates do not and never can possess. Thus, for instance, the translation and publication of those records in cheap book form in several different languages, substantially places within reach of everybody the originals themselves, and, consequently the principles contained in them can be examined at one's leisure. By this plan we have investigation substituted for a transitory view of unintelligible writings, and every one can at small cost engage in the work. Were it taken up and carried out faithfully, it would reveal the fact that the Book of Mormon offers principles of salvation to mankind identical with those contained in the New Testament Gospel. This identity is so perfect throughout in greater or in lesser particulars that it is immaterial to "Mormon" missionaries whether new members come into the Church in compliance with the New Testament Gospel or under Book of Mormon principles. Candidates can have their choice. From this standpoint it appears that the proposition for a view of the plates of the Book of Mormon does not spring from any real desire to get at the truth and embrace it. People who do not accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ as written originally in Greek, and afterward translated into their own tongue, can not be expected to accept the same principles of salvation when offered to them in ancient characters or hieroglyphics engraved on gold plates. Some might have a preference, but there are not many of this class—not enough of them to

cause the Saints much disturbance of mind over the number of souls that reject the book because the said plates are not on exhibition.

Thus far this question has been reviewed in a general way only, and there yet remains to be considered its bearing on some of the specific statements of Joseph Smith respecting the plates. Among them we find in substance the following:

1. They were delivered to him by an angel.
2. They were translated by divine aid.
3. They were sacred.

1. With respect to the first of these assertions the exhibition of the plates would afford no evidence whatever that they were delivered to him by an angel. There is no necessary connection between gold plates of ancient and curious graving and angel's visits to this world for any purpose. We could not therefore decide with anything like satisfying assurance that because we saw certain gold plates in the possession of the "Mormons" they were originally received from an angel. Joseph Smith himself is dead, and if his testimony be rejected, the testimony of others under the proposed plan would have to be substituted in its stead; that is, second hand testimony would take the place of direct, and in course of time it would degenerate into, "they say," etc.

To be sure, the angel who delivered the plates to the prophet might be put on exhibition, too, to verify the "Mormon" claims; and to some, such a display would seem to be all-sufficient. But how would the case stand under these apparently favorable conditions just as soon as the doctors would raise the question of his angelic genuineness? Since every one could not conduct for himself a scientific examination of this celestial visitor as it ought to be done, some one competent would have to be employed, and then we would be obliged to accept human testimony again to help us out of our troubles. But these scientific troubles will be the least of our perplexities, for about the time the doctors got through with their work, the preachers would raise the question whether the vouching visitor was a good or a bad angel—a problem much harder for mankind in general to solve than the other. Allowing that the angel looked all right, many could not say that he was not Satan himself transformed into an angel of light.

The Almighty has so ordered affairs in this world that men must rely on the testimony of their fellows to a great extent. This fact is not peculiar to religious concerns, but is met with in all the affairs of life. In some instances the testimony of a few chosen servants is all that He offers us directly. Such is the case in regard to His own existence. He makes no public exhibition of Himself to gratify the desire or whims of any man or set of men. We can reason the proposition of His existence out to an affirmative conclusion if we wish to; and the question of the existence of the original plates of the Book of Mormon rests on an equally solid foundation. God has given to the world the testimony of a few faithful witnesses who saw them, and if men will set themselves honestly at the task they can reason this proposition out satisfactorily also in the affirmative. Mankind ought to be satisfied if God puts the credentials of a work that He does on the same footing as those that relate to His own existence. Some men do not believe that God does exist; but

that sad condition of mind is not chargeable to a lack of evidence that He does, but to something else. So, too, those who deny the existence of the Book of Morimon plates, do so because they will neither accept the unimpeachable testimony of those who saw and handled them, nor impartially examine and weigh the corroborating evidence. There is an abundance of it at hand. If people will not believe under existing conditions, they would not do so though one rose from the dead to testify.

2. Another statement we have to consider is that the records were translated by divine aid, and for this assurance we feel doubly grateful. But how could a view of the plates affect this statement in the least degree? How could a sight of the originals afford any one a particle of evidence that the alleged translation was made from those records, or that it had been faithfully performed by any agency, divine or human? Here is where the need of a competent and faithful translator becomes very apparent. Certainly, were the plates produced, a scientific commission might be appointed to review, and if thought necessary, revise God's work, and their word would put an end to all doubt. So some may think. But the troubled skies would by no means be cleared up. They appear as lowering as before, for the element of human testimony has not been set aside. The testimony of a commission of scientific men would be substituted for the testimony of a commission of religious men, who declare that the case in point was tried before the court of high heaven, and the decision of the Almighty Judge is that the translation was faithfully performed. All that a scientific commission of review could do would be to affirm that the Book of Mormon records agree in religious principles with those of the New Testament; but they would have to leave unsolved the great question of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon history. That matter would still be open for investigation and proof or disproof just as it is now. The substantiating evidence that could be found to support the statements of a scientific commission of translation, is all now obtainable to support the statements of a religious commission of translation. Unless people should accept the scientific dictum as the end of controversy, the case would stand practically as it does now.

But some one may retort that there would be no greater blunder made in accepting without question a scientific dictum than in accepting a religious one blindly.

But the "Mormon" people do not purpose doing anything of this kind. A beginning is made with the statements of Joseph Smith respecting the plates. Then to this they add the testimony of three witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris, every one of whom seceded from the Church, who solemnly declared that they saw the plates and that the voice of God Himself approved the translation. And, let it be remembered, too, that under the most alluring circumstances these three men could never be induced to revoke a single word of their testimony. As a third rock in their foundation the "Mormons" have the testimony of men who sat by divine appointment on this case so far as the real existence of the plates is concerned. Besides all this, the "Mormons" carry the question into the field of rational and scientific researches, so far as it is inoffensive to God, and gather from various sources evidence of the most convincing character that the records of

those plates are true, and hence must have existed; and finally in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of God-fearing men and women the Holy Spirit of God has testified that Joseph Smith's statements are true. That is the "Mormon" foundation, and no scientific commission that was ever formed, or that ever might be formed could hope to offer a better one. For convenience, satisfaction, and universal appreciability no plan can be devised by man that is comparable to the one adopted by the Almighty Himself, which among other things provides for the testimony of the Holy Spirit to every faithful Saint that the work founded by Joseph Smith is the work of God.

3. As to the statements that the plates were sacred, it is immaterial what the world may think about this point; they were so in the sight of Joseph Smith, and are so esteemed by every Latter-day Saint, and had the angel not taken them in charge, again this single characteristic is sufficient of itself to prohibit forever a public exhibition of them. Were they now in possession of the Church authorities, it would be strange if any of them could be snared in the trap of profaning that which is sacred. As well might men ask for the exhibition of the Dove that descended on the Savior to prove the existence of the Holy Spirit, as to demand the exhibition of the sacred plates of the Book of Mormon to prove their existence. Both of these matters can be determined very satisfactorily in other ways, and neither the one nor the other will ever be put into the hands of unbelievers and wicked men for any purpose.

SENATOR SMOOT AND THE LADIES.

A DELEGATION of earnest Washington women went to the capitol one day to see about the unseating of Reed Smoot, the Mormon apostle, who is a senator from Utah.

They sent in for Senator Proctor of Vermont. When Proctor came out, the leader of the committee said:

"Senator Proctor we want you to expel Mr. Smoot from the Senate."

This was rather a big job for the Vermont man, and he hemmed and hawed a bit, and sought to find a way out. After he had explained that he, personally, was but a member of the senate, and that it was a matter to be considered gravely, and all that, he suggested:

"Wouldn't you like to meet Mr. Smoot!"

The crusaders were thrown in a flutter at that, and while they were debating it, Senator Proctor sent in for Senator Smoot, and Smoot came out.

"Ladies," said Senator Proctor, "this is Senator Smoot of Utah."

Smoot bowed and smiled pleasantly, and waited for some one to speak.

"We were telling Senator Proctor," spoke up one of the brave woman, "about our memorial temple we are building."

Then she gave the astonished apostle a full description of the enterprise.

After she had finished, Smoot, who had listened intently, took out a \$20 bill, pressed it into the hand of the speaker, smiled and said:

"A very worthy object. I trust you will allow me to contribute something?"

He smiled again and bowed and vanished into the senate chamber, leaving the delegation breathless.—*Saturday Evening Post*.