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The Influence of the Brass Plates on the Teachings of Nephi

Robert L. Millet

The Book of Mormon bears testimony of the critical nature of record keeping and particularly of the necessity for scriptural records in the development and preservation of a civilization. One of the earliest but most poignant lessons of the Nephite record is the power of scriptural records to prevent a nation from dwindling and perishing through both illiteracy and unbelief (1 Nephi 4:13; Omni 1:17). King Benjamin explained to his sons that “were it not for these [brass] plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God” (Mosiah 1:3). Alma likewise explained to his son Helaman that the brass plates “have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls” (Alma 37:8).

The brass plates are an integral part of the story and message of the Book of Mormon. Nephi had to kill a man to obtain them and was instructed that in so doing he had helped to

achieve the Lord's righteous purposes (1 Nephi 4:13). The brass plates contained the Pentateuch and Law of Moses, thus tying the Nephites to their Old World kinsmen in both cultural practice and belief (1 Nephi 4:15-16). They contained, in addition, a listing of the fathers back through Joseph of old (1 Nephi 5:14), thus linking the Lehite colony genealogically with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and thereby perpetuating the patriarchal covenant in a new hemisphere. Finally, the brass plates contained a more extensive account of Old Testament peoples and events than we have in the Bible (1 Nephi 13:23), and many precious remnants of those things are to be found in the Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter JST) of the King James Bible. This paper will discuss briefly the nature of the brass plates and then concentrate upon what they must have contained as reflected in the doctrinal teachings found in 2 Nephi.

The Nature of the Brass Plates

There is no specific reference in the Book of Mormon to the origin of the brass plates. Nephi explained that "Laban also was a descendant of Joseph, wherefore he and his fathers had kept the records [the brass plates]" (1 Nephi 5:16). Exactly how long before the time of Laban the brass records were begun is unknown. The record was probably kept in the tribe of Ephraim, and thus Laban may well have been of that tribe (see Gen. 48:5, 13-20; 1 Chron. 5:1-2). In suggesting how it was that the families of Ephraim and Manasseh (from whom Lehi and Ishmael were descendants) came to settle in Jerusalem, Sidney B. Sperry has written:

The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians when its capital of Samaria capitulated to Sargon II in 722 BC. The forebears of Laban may have fled to Jerusalem to prevent the sacred records from falling into alien hands. Lehi's grandfather or great-grandfather may have left his northern home for Jerusalem in order to prevent his children from intermarrying and making religious compromises with the foreigners brought into the land by the Assyrians (43-44).

Brother Sperry then asked the following question in regard to this matter: “What happened to the keeping of sacred records when the Israelites became sharply divided on political grounds—so much so that the two nations were enemies?” He then suggested an answer:

The prophets in both nations probably paid little attention to the political lines of division, but it is improbable that all of them had their words recorded in the scriptures of both nations. From the time of the division until the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, the Brass Plates may well have been the official scripture of the Ten Tribes. It is probable that some prophets wrote on these plates whose writings may not have been recorded in the records kept in Judah. Were Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias (1 Nephi 19:10; Hel. 8:20) among them? They were all Hebrew prophets known to the Nephites, but their names do not appear in our current Old Testament. It is also possible that the writings of some prophets in Judah were not placed on the Brass Plates during the period under consideration, but of this we have no way of knowing (43-44).

The fact that Lehi’s genealogy could be traced back to Joseph—specifically Manasseh (Alma 10:3)—also implies that the record had its origins in the Northern Kingdom rather than in Judah in the south (1 Nephi 3:3, 12; 5:14-16). In one of the prophecies of Zenos are found these words: “And *as for those who are at Jerusalem . . .*” (1 Nephi 19:13; emphasis added), suggesting that Zenos was speaking from somewhere other than Jerusalem. Further, note Mormon’s words concerning the prophets Zenos and Zenock:

Behold, I say unto you, Yea, many have testified of these things [signs of the death of Christ] at the coming of Christ, and were slain because they testified of these things.

Yea, the prophet Zenos did testify of these things, and also Zenock spake concerning these things, because *they testified particularly concerning us, who are the remnant of their seed* (3 Nephi 10:15-16; emphasis added).

This passage certainly suggests that Zenos and Zenock were both of the tribe of Joseph (Millett 421-23).

The Brass Plates: An Ancient Scriptural Testimony of Christ

The non-biblical prophets mentioned in the Book of Mormon (whose prophecies we suppose were drawn from the brass plates) are named as Zenos, Zenock, Neum, and Ezias. Other than the fact that they lived “since the days of Abraham” (Hel. 8:19), we know very little if anything about their backgrounds, places of residence, or times of their ministries, and are only aware of their existence because their words or works are in many cases mentioned in passing by Nephite leaders. Of Ezias we know only that he prophesied of the coming of the Messiah (Hel. 8:20). Neum spoke prophetically of the crucifixion of the Son of God (1 Nephi 19:10).

Zenock bore repeated witness that redemption would come only in and through the atoning sacrifice and death of Christ (Hel. 8:18-20; 3 Nephi 10:16); that he would be lifted up by wicked men (1 Nephi 19:10); that the anger of the Father was kindled against those who do not recognize the cost of the Lord’s atonement; and that he was put to death because of the poignancy of his messianic witness (see Alma 33:15-17).

We have more details of the oracles of the prophet Zenos than any of the other non-biblical prophets of the brass plates. Nephi and Jacob quoted Zenos extensively (1 Nephi 19, 22; Jacob 5), and Alma utilized his words on worship and prayer in speaking to the Zoramites (Alma 33:3-11). Nephi called him simply “the prophet” (see 1 Nephi 19:11-16), much as we refer to the Prophet Joseph Smith today. “I do not think I overstate the matter,” observed Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “when I say that next to Isaiah himself—who is the prototype, pattern, and model for all the prophets—there was not a greater prophet in all Israel than Zenos. And our knowledge of his inspired writings is limited to the quotations and paraphrasing summaries found in the Book of Mormon” (“Doctrinal Restoration” 17). Nephi, the

son of Helaman, explained that because of his testimony of the Redeemer, Zenos also was slain by unbelievers (Hel. 8:19).

Among the gems of perspective that have been revealed to the Latter-day Saints is the nature of Christ's eternal gospel, the realization that Christian prophets have taught Christian doctrines and administered Christian ordinances since the days of Adam (see D&C 20:25-26; Jacob 4:4-5; Alma 39:17-19). Elder McConkie has thus observed that "what interests us more than the books included on the brass plates is the tone and tenor and general approach to the gospel and to salvation that they set forth. *They are gospel-oriented and speak of Christ and the various Christian concepts which the world falsely assumes to have originated with Jesus and the early apostles*" ("Doctrinal Restoration" 17; emphasis added). Whereas the Old Testament prophecies of the Christ are missing or at best veiled, the prophets of the brass plates are bold in testifying of the coming of Jesus Christ and are specific as to his ministry. Note the words of Nephi concerning the death of Christ:

And the God of our fathers, who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him, yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, *to be lifted up*, according to the words of Zenock, and *to be crucified*, according to the words of Neum, and *to be buried in a sepulchre*, according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning *the three days of darkness, which should be a sign given of his death. . . .*

For thus spake the prophet [Zenos?]: The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice, because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power, by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up.

And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos. And the rocks of the earth must rend; and because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the Spirit of God, to exclaim: The God of nature suffers (1 Nephi 19:10-12; emphasis added).

Zenos and Zenock present a view of the Godhead which is consistent with the knowledge revealed to the Prophet Joseph

Smith, and which therefore establishes the distinct and separate personalities of the Father and the Son, the separate functions of each, and the role of Christ in reconciling man to God. This knowledge, restored through the Book of Mormon, reaffirms that the correct idea of the nature of God was had anciently. Alma and his missionary colleagues had been working strenuously to build faith in Christ within the hearts of the Zoramites. The poorer Zoramites, having been dismissed from the synagogues because of their poverty, desired to know how to plant the seed of faith in Jesus Christ when in fact they had no place to assemble. Alma assured these people that appropriate worship of God does not require an elaborate hall of assembly, nor does it presuppose a particular setting. He then said: "If ye suppose that ye cannot worship God [as you do now], ye do greatly err, and *ye ought to search the scriptures*; if ye suppose that they have taught you this, ye do not understand them" (Alma 33:2; emphasis added). Alma then proceeded to quote at length from Zenos a sermon dealing with worship and prayer. This beautiful statement is itself a prayer and dramatizes the fact that God is eager to hear all prayers—those uttered in the wilderness, in the fields, in closets, in houses, and those offered by the rejected and disconsolate. Indeed, Zenos acknowledged before the Lord, "thou art merciful unto thy children when they cry unto thee, to be heard of thee and not of men" (v. 8). And then, emphasizing the centrality of Jesus as the Advocate and Mediator for men, Zenos continued: "And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity; and *it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me*, therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions, for in thee is my joy; for *thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son*" (v. 11; emphasis added). He then asked the Zoramites: "Do ye believe those scriptures which have been written by them of old?" (v. 12). Alma then quoted from a written record of Zenock, who said: "Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because they will not understand *thy*

mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son”
(v. 16; emphasis added.)

The Brass Plates and the Writings of Isaiah

Nephi taught his people from the plates of brass “that they might know concerning the doings of the Lord in other lands, among people of old” (1 Nephi 19:22). He read at length from the Pentateuch, but in order that he “might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (v. 23). Later, in speaking to his people, he reminded them that “there are many things which have been spoken by Isaiah which may be likened unto you, because ye are of the house of Israel” (2 Nephi 6:5).

Isaiah’s ministry covered a period of over forty years (c. 742-701 BC), and his influence was felt in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. The record keepers of the brass plates saw to it that Isaiah’s words were included in their volume of scripture. Though scholars have for centuries been eager to partition the book of Isaiah and assign, at the very least, chapters 40-66 to later authors,¹ the Book of Mormon serves as a historical check and balance against such interpretive extremes. Both Nephi and Jacob, in America, quote from the latter chapters of Isaiah—chapters 48-49 (1 Nephi 20-21) and 50:1-52:2 (2 Nephi 6-7); these are chapters which many Old Testament scholars assign to the period of Babylonian captivity—a period some years *after* the Nephites left Jerusalem with their brass treasure.

¹ The creation of the hypothetical “Deutero-Isaiah” (Isaiah 40-55) or “Trito-Isaiah” (Isaiah 56-66) is based upon two main factors: (1) different vocabulary and thematic structure in the second half of the book; and (2) the specific mention of the name and mission of Cyrus the Persian some two hundred years before his time. For Latter-day Saint responses to the “Isaiah Question,” see Sperry 73-97; Nyman 253-58; Ludlow 541-48; Adams 14-28. See also Nibley 137-52 for a brief discussion of the possible role of Isaiah’s disciples in preparing his oracles after his death.

Even a superficial perusal of the Book of Mormon (brass plates) text of the Isaiah material reveals many differences from the King James Version, showing that Joseph Smith did not simply copy everything directly from the King James or Authorized Version when he came to these passages. Sidney B. Sperry wrote:

The text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon is not word for word the same as that of the King James version. Of 433 verses of Isaiah in the Nephite record, Joseph Smith modified about 233. Some of the changes made were slight, others were radical. However, 199 verses are word for word the same as the old English version. We therefore freely admit that Joseph Smith may have used the King James version when he came to the text of Isaiah in the gold plates. As long as the familiar version agreed substantially with the text on the gold plates [taken from the brass plates], he let it pass; when it differed too radically he translated the Nephite version and dictated the necessary changes (92).

In regard to the differences between the two texts, Brother Sperry has also noted:

The version of Isaiah in the Nephite scripture hews an independent course for itself, as might be expected of a truly ancient and authentic record. It makes additions to the present text in certain places, omits material in others, transposes, makes grammatical changes, finds support at times for its unusual readings in the ancient Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions, and at other times no support at all. In general, it presents phenomena of great interest to the student of Isaiah (97).

Nephi, Malachi, and Zenos

In the midst of his prophetic commentary upon the writings of Isaiah (Isaiah 48-49), Nephi said: “For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned” (1 Nephi 22:15). These words are unmistakably similar to those of Malachi, the Old Testament prophet in about 400 BC. Note Malachi’s prophecy of the Second Coming: “For behold, *the*

day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 4:1; emphasis added).

Later in Nephi's sermon writing we find him defining the wicked as

all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet.

And the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory (1 Nephi 22:23-24).

A number of years later Nephi prophesied concerning the coming of the Savior to the Americas: "Wherefore, all those who are proud, and that do wickedly, the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, for they shall be as stubble" (2 Nephi 26:4). The righteous, on the other hand, "are they which shall not perish. But the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him" (v. 8-9). Again, note Malachi's words: "But unto you that fear my name *shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall*" (Malachi 4:2; emphasis added). Inasmuch as Nephi's oracle was uttered some 200 years before the time of Malachi, how do we explain the similarity of language? Elder Bruce R. McConkie has explained:

Our understanding of the prophetic word will be greatly expanded if we know how one prophet quotes another, usually without acknowledging his source.

Either Isaiah or Micah copied the prophetic words of the other relative to the mountain of the Lord's house being established in the last days with all nations flowing thereto. Their ministries overlapped, but we assume that the lesser Micah copied from the greater Isaiah and then appended some words of his own about the Millennial Era.

Some unnamed Old Testament prophet, who obviously was Zenos, as the Book of Mormon testifies, spoke of the day when the wicked would be destroyed as stubble; when the righteous would be “led up as calves of the stall”; when Christ should “rise from the dead, with healing in his wings”; and when the Holy One of Israel would then reign on earth.

Malachi, who lived more than two hundred years after Nephi, uses these very expressions in his prophetic writings. *Can we do other than conclude that both Nephi and Malachi had before them the writings of Zenos? . . .*

Once the Lord has revealed his doctrine in precise language to a chosen prophet, there is no reason why he should inspire another prophet to choose the same words in presenting the same doctrine on a subsequent occasion. It is much easier and simpler to quote that which has already been given in perfection. We are all commanded—including the prophets among us—to search the scriptures and thereby learn what other prophets have presented (“Doctrinal Restoration” 17-18; see also *New Witness* 402, 563).

The Brass Plates and Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible

Nephi saw in vision the time when plain and precious truths, as well as many covenants of the Lord, would be taken from the Bible. Fortunately, however, Nephi learned that by means of the truths contained in the Book of Mormon, as well as “other books, which [would come] forth by the power of the Lamb,” a major doctrinal restoration would commence and thereby bring back that which had been lost (1 Nephi 13:20-40). Latter-day Saints would certainly acknowledge the revelations and instructions contained in the Doctrine and Covenants as fulfilling this prophecy. In addition, the JST is a godsend to the last dispensation, a means by which ancient scripture has been restored and clarified in modern times. To Sidney Rigdon, the primary scribe in that Bible translation, the Lord explained in 1830 that “the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect” (D&C 35:20).

There is a fascinating similarity in subject and specific language between the brass plates and the JST. According to Robert J. Matthews: “It is very clear that the contents of the JST,

having received the touch of restoration through the hand of the prophet of God, resemble the doctrinal content of the brass plates more fully than do those of any other Bible” (22). We will now consider some specific illustrations from 2 Nephi wherein the texts of the two works will be compared.

1. *The Fall of Lucifer*. One of the most profound doctrinal sections of the Book of Mormon is a father-son discussion between Lehi and Jacob. For our purposes, the account begins as follows:

And I, Lehi, *according to the things which I have read* [presumably on the brass plates], must needs suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.

And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind (2 Nephi 2:17-18; emphasis added).

Biblical references to the fall of Lucifer in pre-mortal times are, of course, scarce (Isaiah 14; Rev. 12), and are only to be recognized and understood as a result of modern revelation on the subject.

JST Gen. 3:1-5 (Moses 4:1-4) is an account of the Grand Council in heaven wherein the plan of the Father was discussed by his spirit children, Jehovah was selected and acknowledged as the Savior and chief advocate of the plan, and Lucifer was cast from heaven for rebelling against the will of the almighty Elohim. Lehi pointed out that the diabolical one “became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God” (2 Nephi 2:17). The JST is remarkably specific about his malevolent motives: “He came before me [God], saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor” (Moses 4:1). Regarding Lehi’s observation that Satan had “sought also the misery of all

mankind” (2 Nephi 2:18), we note from the JST that “he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken to my voice” (Moses 4:4).

2. *Creation, Fall, and Atonement.* From the same chapter in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 2), we are able to learn invaluable truths through Lehi’s teachings concerning the plan of salvation. He explained to Jacob that “if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end” (2 Nephi 2:22). The great Nephite patriarch is here alluding to the paradisiacal and Edenic state, the *spiritual* state—a state in which things were not yet subject to death (see Alma 11:45; D&C 88:27; 1 Cor. 15:44)—which existed with regard to man and all forms of life on earth before the Fall. From Moses’ account of the creation in the JST, we learn a similar truth. In speaking of the earth in the morn of creation, the Lord said that “it was spiritual in the day that I created it; for *it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God, created it*” (JST Gen. 2:11; Moses 3:9; emphasis added).

Being in an immortal spiritual state, Adam and Eve “would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin” (2 Nephi 2:23). After acknowledging the hand of the omniscient One in the plan of life, Lehi concluded that “Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy” (v. 25). The JST provides an expanded biblical account of Adam and Eve’s retrospective thinking in

regard to the events in the Garden of Eden. Having learned by the ministry of angels (see Alma 12:29-32; JST Gen. 4:5-8 [Moses 5:5-8]) of the mission of the Messiah and the redemption possible through repentance, Adam blessed God, began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, and expressed gratitude for the eternal benefits of the Fall (Moses 5:10). “And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: *Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient*” (JST Gen. 4:9-11 [Moses 5:11]; emphasis added). It was Enoch who later observed simply that “*because that Adam fell, we are*” (JST Gen. 6:49 [Moses 6:48]; emphasis added).

Jacob, drawing upon the teachings of his father (and thus, presumably, the doctrines on the brass plates), taught, “For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfill the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord” (2 Nephi 9:6). This language is unmistakably close to the divine directive to Adam contained in the inspired translation of Genesis:

Therefore I give unto you a commandment to teach these things freely unto your children, saying:

That *by reason of transgression cometh the fall*, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven (JST Gen. 6:61-62 [Moses 6:58-59]; emphasis added).

3. *The Prophecies of Joseph.* In delivering his parting counsel to his son Joseph, the prophet Lehi took occasion

to quote (or read) from the writings of the patriarch Joseph, the one who had been sold into Egypt (2 Nephi 3). In discussing this record, Nephi observed:

And now, I, Nephi, speak concerning the prophecies of which my father hath spoken, concerning Joseph, who was carried into Egypt.

For behold, he truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater. And he prophesied concerning us, and our future generations; and they are written upon the plates of brass (2 Nephi 4:1-2).

Joseph's prophecies (as contained in the Book of Mormon via the brass plates) consist of predictions concerning: (1) the ministry of Moses as a seer and deliverer; (2) the ministry of a "choice seer" of the lineage of Joseph to be raised up in the last days—Joseph Smith, Jr.; (3) the "growing together" of the writings of Joseph and Judah in order to confound false doctrines, lay down contentions, and establish peace among the descendants of Joseph; (4) the choice latter-day seer to be named after his father, his father's name being Joseph; (5) many to be brought to salvation through that which comes forth by the hand of the latter-day seer; (6) Moses being given a spokesman; (7) a spokesman being provided for the representative of the fruit of the loins of Joseph;² and (8) many in the last days remembering the covenants made by the Lord with the ancient fathers (2 Nephi 3:6-21).

These prophecies of Joseph have no counterpart whatsoever in the Bibles known to people outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The JST contains an account of these prophecies with many verses

² Traditionally, this passage (2 Nephi 3:18-19) has been interpreted in terms of Joseph Smith being given a spokesman, either Oliver Cowdery (D&C 28:3) or Sidney Rigdon (D&C 100:9-11; 124:104). More recently, however, Elder Bruce R. McConkie has provided an alternative explanation: the person of the lineage of Joseph who would be raised up to write the record of Joseph (the Book of Mormon) is Mormon; the spokesman of the word is Joseph Smith (see McConkie, *New Witness* 426).

almost identical to those found in the Book of Mormon. Compare the following with 2 Nephi 3:5-7:

And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die, and go unto my fathers; and I go down to my grave with joy. The God of my father Jacob be with you, to deliver you out of affliction in the days of your bondage; for the Lord hath visited me, and I *have obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of my loins, the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch out of my loins*; and unto thee . . . a prophet; (not the Messiah who is called Shiloh;) and this prophet shall deliver my people out of Egypt in the days of thy bondage.

And it shall come to pass that they shall be scattered again; and a branch shall be broken off, and shall be carried into a far country; nevertheless they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, when the Messiah cometh; for he shall be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the Spirit of power; and shall bring them out of darkness into light; out of hidden darkness, and out of captivity unto freedom.

A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins.

Thus saith the Lord God of my fathers unto me, A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins, and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren.

And he shall bring them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers; and he shall do whatsoever work I shall command him (JST Gen. 50:24-28; emphasis added.)

Additional details from the JST concerning the ministry of Moses are, appropriately, absent from the Book of Mormon account (e.g., Moses' spokesman to be named Aaron—JST Gen. 50:35). Lehi's sermon is an attempt to focus his son's attention upon the future remnant of Joseph, as well as upon the "choice seer" which God will raise up to lead and bless that remnant. His words are obviously excerpts from a lengthier prophetic utterance.

What are we to make of such similarities? Why should the teachings and doctrines found on an ancient source—the brass plates—be reflected in the JST? I for one am thoroughly convinced as to the restorative nature of the JST—that God raised up Joseph Smith to restore knowledge and understanding and scripture which had been lost during the centuries of biblical transmission. The JST and the Doctrine and Covenants surely

constitute at least a major portion of the “other books” which would be divinely delivered in the last days (along with the Book of Mormon) to bring back plain and precious truths, verities taken away and kept back by that church which is great and abominable (see 1 Nephi 13:39-40).

During the Prophet’s translation of the King James Version, the Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century rejoiced in the fact that the Bible was “undergoing the purifying touch by a revelation of Jesus Christ” (*Messenger and Advocate* 229). Joseph Smith regarded his work with the Bible as more than a prophetic pastime; it was an integral “branch of his calling” (*HC* 1:238) as a prophet, seer, revelator, and *translator* (see D&C 21:1; 107:92; 124:125). The Lord himself spoke of the product of this labor as the “fulness of the scriptures” (see D&C 42:15; 104:58). The Prophet Joseph warned the Saints that “except the Church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fall” (*Far West Record* 28). In short, “we have not begun to appreciate the value of the JST, nor have we used it as a textual source the way we could” (Matthews 22).

Conclusion

After searching the brass plates “from the beginning,” Lehi was “filled with the Spirit, and began to prophesy concerning his seed—That these plates of brass should go forth to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people. . . . Wherefore, he said that these plates of brass should never perish; neither should they be dimmed any more by time” (1 Nephi 5:17-19). Indeed, according to Alma, the brass plates were to be “kept and handed down from one generation to another” among the Nephites, “and be kept and preserved by the hand of the Lord” until eventually “they should go forth unto every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that they shall know of the mysteries contained thereon” (Alma 37:4). One of the ways by which the

people of our day have and will be exposed to the message on the plates of brass is through the Book of Mormon. By means of this sacred volume many of the truths contained in that more expanded version of the Old Testament are brought to light. Through the Book of Mormon we are better able to grasp many of the veiled or deficient details of our present Bible.

There is, of course, another way by which the knowledge on the brass plates is to be disseminated—far more extensive in its scope—than through the Book of Mormon. As a part of the doctrinal restoration—the unfolding of intelligence and power which began in the spring of 1820 and will continue throughout the Millennium—the brass plates themselves will be restored to the earth and the knowledge thereon will be available to all who love the Lord and find joy in the truths of his gospel. That is, “someday the Lord will raise up a prophet, who will also be a seer and a translator, to whom he will give the brass plates that they may be translated for the benefit and blessing of those in all nations” (McConkie, “Doctrinal Restoration” 16; *Mormon Doctrine* 103; and *Millennial Messiah* 113).

This paper has attempted to demonstrate the vital role of the plates of brass in the collection we know as 2 Nephi. Lehi and Nephi and Jacob knew full well the value of this sacred record, and their sermons and writings reflect their dependence upon the doctrinal teachings contained thereon.³ The writers on the brass plates were men who were Christ- and gospel-centered, and their messages sought to point men toward the God of their salvation. In describing the brass plates as a confirming witness with the testimonies borne by the Nephite prophets, Nephi himself taught that “the things which have been written upon the plates of brass are true; and they testify that a man must be

³ Other Bible-related matters expounded upon in the brass plates (but which may not have as direct an influence on Second Nephi) include the following: Zenos’ allegory of the destiny of Israel (Jacob 5); the prophecies of Jacob or Israel (Alma 46:11-27); the origin of secret combinations (Helaman 2, 6; cf. John 8:56; JST Gen. 15:9-12); and the ministry of Melchizedek (Alma 13:1-19; cf. JST Gen. 14:26-34); see Millet 423-40.

obedient to the commandments of God. Wherefore," Nephi added, "ye need not suppose that I and my father are the only ones that have testified, and also taught them. Wherefore, if ye shall be obedient to the commandments, and endure to the end, ye shall be saved at the last day. And thus it is. Amen" (1 Nephi 22:30-31).

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