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## Concerning the Book of Mormon Plates

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**Abstract:** This two-part series argues that it would be useless to show the Book of Mormon plates to the public, for a display of the gold plates would not build faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord has already sent a multitude of witnesses to testify of the Book of Mormon. The second part concludes the series.

# THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

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THURSDAY, JULY 10, 1913.

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## EDITORIAL.

### CONCERNING THE BOOK OF MORMON PLATES.

*(Concluded from page 428.)*

RESUMING remarks relating to the matter of the public exhibition of the original plates of the Book of Mormon, it is observed that their sacred character constitutes a valid objection against their use in any such manner, or for any purpose whatsoever. The Bible is not silent respecting the difference which God requires mankind to observe between things which are hallowed, and others that are profane or common. We are not informed of the degree of difference which must exist in our feelings and actions in this regard; but from the inspired history of the Jews we learn that it was so great that some of the things which were associated with their religious life and worship, were not to be viewed except occasionally by the most faithful of God's representatives. Who would not condemn as a gross and unwarranted sacrilege the public display of the tables of stone, for instance, upon which the ten commandments were written by the finger of God? Who would not feel that the religious sensibilities of a people were sunk to a low ebb should they consent to have such a sacred instrument as the Urim and Thummim exposed to be handled by multitudes of fault-finding sinners, or exhibited where the stench of whiskey, the mists of tobacco smoke and the fumes of sin generally would defile them as with the reek of death.

The plates of the Book of Mormon were made under the express command of God. The records upon them were written by the inspiration of God, and they contained the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness, and were thus trebly hallowed as the work of the Almighty. They were so holy in His sight that He purposed never to let them become dimmed by the flight of time. They were consecrated to the accomplishment of purposes which were of special Divine importance; and angels were appointed to keep watchful guard over them for centuries. There is nothing which we can think of of a like character that is of a more sacred nature than those plates; and should such things be displayed to the curious gaze of a single debauchee, blasphemer, infidel or despiser of God's law? No. A thousand times, no; and had Joseph Smith failed in any way or manner to manifest a just appreciation of the sacred character of the Book of Mormon plates, the whole world would have

condemned him as a person unworthy to be entrusted with the holy things of God, or to minister in a sacred calling as His chosen representative.

The spirit which animates the minds of those who make a demand for the public display of the Book of Mormon plates, is the same as that which leads men in general to make use of any argument which they can turn and twist into a weapon of assault against this work. They do this regardless of the fact that, in so many instances, the blows are struck wildly, and have just as much effect against themselves as against us. It is so in this case. If it is a sensible objection that no one should believe the Book of Mormon, as a divine record, unless the plates on which it was originally written are displayed to the people, why should we not also say that no one should believe the Bible unless the original manuscripts on which the different parts were written are produced and exposed to public gaze? Who is demanding that the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught in the New Testament should be established as divine by a view of the original writings? Who does not know that the ten commandments are divinely obligatory upon us though we have never seen the tables of stone upon which they were written? There are other ways by which we may arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, acknowledging the divine inspiration of the teachings which these records contained, and the same may be said respecting the divinity of the Book of Mormon.

We should not attach too much importance to questions relating to what the Book of Mormon principles were written upon, nor in what language, nor how the plates were preserved, nor where they are now, but pitching upon the *translation* of them as given by Joseph Smith, judge of their source and character—of their religious principles—by the acknowledged standard of God's word as found in the Bible, and the effect they have upon men's lives, when faithfully observed. Upon these grounds we defy the world to show that the Book of Mormon is not in harmony with the accepted word of God, or that any one who obeys the Book of Mormon precepts and commandments is not elevated in character, and who does not practice every virtue which the gospel enjoins, or eschew every evil which its teachings condemn. There are thousands of people who have pursued this, or a similar line of rational investigation, and have become thoroughly convinced that "Mormonism" is true, though they have never seen the plates.

The Book of Mormon is rejected and scoffed at by the vast majority of mankind in Christian lands as unworthy the belief of intelligent people, and it is the height of folly for any one to assume that the exhibition of the original plates, upon which the alleged false and abominable doctrines of the Book of Mormon were engraved, would change these views in a single instance, and make any one confess that what he has so generously abhorred is,

after all, the word of God. The opponents of God's work would not act in this manner. The confession would be too humiliating to their pride.

It may be asked in turn why is it then that the "Mormons" themselves attach so much importance to the testimony of the eleven witnesses, Joseph Smith himself making the twelfth, who did view plates, handling some of the leaves personally, or, in the case of other witnesses, being shown them by the ministration of an angel. To this it is replied that there is no need for a continuous theatrical rehearsal of the evidences that pertain, for example, to a case in our courts in order that we may feel assured that a just verdict was rendered by the jury which tried it. Further, the affirmation of these witnesses to the existence of the Book of Mormon plates is not all to which they testify. Three of them, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris affirm that they not only saw the plates, but that God by His own voice confirmed the correctness of the translation of the records. Who is there so obtuse in intellect as not to perceive the *dangerous position*—the TRAP we are willing to let every rabid anti-"Mormon" call it—which "Mormonism" assumed, or set for itself, when it made such a claim as that. Who does not see that the truth of this work is not, by this course, made dependable upon a view of the plates, but upon the authenticity of the Book of Mormon HISTORY, upon SCIENTIFIC truth also, as well as upon the harmony of its principles with those of the Bible—with every truth in the whole universe of God. This gives the anti-"Mormons" the whole world over a wide range from which to collect evidences in their attempt to show that that work is false. What more in reason can they demand?

How much more effective it would be to disprove the Book of Mormon on historical or scientific grounds, than it is to berate as fools those who accept it as true? If the Book of Mormon can be overthrown in respect to its claims as an inspired record, as untrustworthy, historically or scientifically, the foundation of this work will be demolished, and the "Mormon" elders will leave these lands and return to their homes. Why is not the work of showing the alleged falsity of the history of that record undertaken? Why not send a scientifically equipped expedition to America, and from the ruins of those vast, ancient cities of which the Book of Mormon speaks, try to dig up a few testimonies to disprove the authenticity of that work? If Joseph Smith was an impostor all his work is false, and the labor of making clear that fact with a lot of alleged historical and scientific rubbish on hand ought not to be very difficult. Why is it not done? and echo answers why?

But it is objected that the witnesses to which reference has been made are not sufficiently numerous—that the people now living know but little about their character for veracity, and as a consequence their testimony is not conclusive. It would be well for

us, however, not to deceive ourselves with the idea that there is nothing conclusive to be learned from the facts in the case just as they stand. Joseph Smith himself, with the other eleven witnesses, if not sufficiently numerous to satisfy the demands of every one are, however, just as numerous as the jury which will sit upon our individual cases if we are ever haled before a court where the issue of our life or death is at stake. The Almighty apparently made the quorum of witnesses—the jury—in this case as large as that to which men, by their own laws, are willing to commit their dearest interest, in order that the objection under consideration might not have a semblance of reason upon which to rest. They are just as numerous as the quorum of the twelve apostles whom Christ sent forth to be especial witnesses for Him in all the world, and scattering as they did over a wide area of country to bear their testimony, not many people could hear more than a few of them at the best.

Respecting the objection that we do not know enough about these men—these witnesses—to be able to say that they were good and true men, and that what they attest is thus worthy of belief, we say, let this be granted, yet we all know that men are true or false—men of integrity or creatures of dishonesty, as the case may be. If we look upon them as being true in this case, that should settle the matter with us, and we need not bother ourselves about getting a view of the plates. If we regard them as untruthful, there are enough of them—twelve—to let us see that the alleged fraud of “Mormonism” was spreading very rapidly in the earliest days of Joseph Smith’s career; and we know enough about human nature to be perfectly assured that if they had any guilty knowledge concerning the Book of Mormon plates, they could not keep it locked up in their own hearts for a lifetime. Sooner or later it was bound to come to the light of day. On the ground that Joseph Smith was an impostor, he, in the very beginning of his work, let eleven men know it, and can we think that they would not have followed his example, and have communicated their knowledge of the non-existence of the plates to a few confidential friends, also, and these, in their turn again to others, until the whole world would know just how the matter stood. But we—friends and foes of this work alike—are waiting for the first disclosure that can implicate Joseph Smith as the perpetrator of a fraud upon those eleven witnesses, or in conjunction with them. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris all left the Church, but they never denied the testimony which they had given to the world, and it is worthy of our serious consideration that in all the infamous attacks which our enemies have made upon us, they never have claimed that these men did deny that they had seen the plates, and it is too late in the day for them to set up any such plea now.

Here we digress to say that this Church sends into foreign fields as missionaries—right from Utah, the most of them—scores, hun-

dreds and thousands of young men who are without experience, unsophisticated in the ways of the world. Many of them have never been on a witness stand in any court; have never had to answer the penetrating, searching questions which learned lawyers and divines are capable of asking, and if our enemies believe that there are GUILTY SECRETS CONNECTED WITH "MORMONISM," why do not some of these experts get the facts from our untrained missionaries as soon as they land on a foreign shore? If this brilliant idea has not occurred to our enemies before, they are now welcome to make all out of it that they can.

Returning to our subject, we find that Joseph Smith claimed that the plates were delivered to him by an angel. That a view of them could not have the remotest effect in establishing that fact must be apparent to all; and it is, therefore, manifest that some questions relating to them could not be solved by a public exhibition of them. It would not do for us to take the ground that anything and everything written on gold plates in curious, hieroglyphical characters comes to earth by angelic ministrations, or is sacred and divine. If we do not assume this senseless position, how could we tell from a view of them that the "Mormons" had not manufactured them? Such a thing might be done.

If they had been placed on exhibition in the early days of the Church, do you think that an examination of them by the most learned Egyptologists of the times would have been of any avail to assure us with certainty whether the plates were written in *reformed* Egyptian or not? The world has had some examples of the ancient American system of hieroglyphical writing in its hands from before the founding of this Church, and all the while the savants of Egyptology were declaring that the ancient American system did not resemble the Egyptian in any particular—that the two systems are wholly unlike. It now transpires that the Bureau of Ethnography at Washington has found that the characters are alike, to some extent, and what is of far more importance, as establishing a common origin, that they have the same significance. Egyptologists who know no more of the ancient American hieroglyphics than these facts disclose, are not competent to tell us whether the Book of Mormon plates were written, not in ancient Egyptian, but in a reformed system based on it, as the Book claims for itself.

If the learned men of our times would not be competent to decide this question relating to the characters on the plates, none of the common people surely could.

Then, too, how many of the latter could afford the time to make a journey of hundreds or thousands of miles in order to get a view of them? How many would have the money to spare to make an investigation of this kind? Further, no matter how we may view this question, it is impossible for us to dispense with "Mormon" testimony on some of the points involved. If that be rejected as

to the actual existence of the plates, so it would be that the plates were given into the custody of Joseph Smith by an angel, that they were not manufactured, that they were written in reformed Egyptian, that they were translated correctly, etc., etc., and we are landed back at the relative positions which this Church and the world occupied in the beginning.

There is no reason in demanding a view of the plates when, as we have already remarked, the "Mormons" have no possible chance to escape from their allegation that the voice of God has approved the translation of the plates as found in the Book of Mormon. Let our enemies prove that that work is not trustworthy, and the day against us is won.

T. W. B.

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### IS IT A SIN TO USE TOBACCO?

WHY not? Using tobacco is an expensive and *wasteful* habit, tobacco costing more than bread; and is not needless waste a sin? What right have Christian men to waste the Lord's money in useless and expensive indulgences? What right have they to burn up that which might feed and clothe the suffering poor?

The use of tobacco is certainly *needless*, for many do without it and are none the worse, many who once used it have abandoned it to their great advantage, and the civilized world got on comfortably without tobacco from the time of the creation down to the discovery of America, when white men learned the nasty habit of the naked savages, giving them in return the devil's fire-water to ruin them body and soul.

Tobacco using is an *uncleanly* habit. The miserable weed nauseates those learning to use it, and makes those who continue to use it an offense to decent people among whom they mingle. A tobacco-using minister going to the bedside of a delicate invalid, supposes himself to be ministering Christian consolation, when in fact he ministers only nausea and disgust. Many a tobacco-using clergyman will fill a room with a stench which is as far from the odor of sanctity as darkness is from light; and as for the smoke of tobacco, if the smoke of the bottomless pit is any worse, let us pray to be delivered from it.

Tobacco using is an *unhealthy* practice. Thousands doubtless are in their graves to-day who might have been alive and well if they had only let this poisonous drug alone. There is now and then a dyspeptic old glutton who thinks that tobacco does him good, and that he cannot digest his food without it; just as there are men who think that they cannot do without strong drink. But if such men were put on short allowance for a little while, and made to earn the little they did eat, their stomachs would soon take care of a reasonable amount of food without the aid of this