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Confirmatory Evidences of "Mormonism": The Book of Mormon Plates

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Abstract: Joseph Smith described the gold plates as having “the appearance of gold.” The word “appearance” is significant as plates of pure gold would have been in danger of easy destruction. Most likely it was a gold and copper alloy. The Book of Mormon could have been written in Hebrew on just 21 pages or plates; in Phoenician characters about 45 plates would have been necessary, even taking into account the loss of the 116 pages.

confidence in the future success of the troop under Brother Short's guidance.

This forward step by the West Hartlepool Branch is a resounding challenge to the other branches in the mission. The leaders of the National Scout Movement are willing and anxious to co-operate with the Church in a united effort to extend the field of Scouting in Britain. Their standing offer of help and advice in the organization of troops is open to all those who will take advantage of it.

The aim of Scouting is to teach young boys to become individually efficient, and to apply that efficiency in the service of the Church and the community. Scouting will instil in the minds and hearts of youth the ideal of personal service to their fellow-men. The Scouting programme provides fields of activity that will develop boys into men of real worth. It will fill an important role in completing the list of youth-developing auxiliaries of every branch.

There are more than seventy-five branches in the British Mission. A Scout Troop in every branch—what a splendid goal to work for! Scouts of the West Hartlepool Branch have blazed the way. Will the other branches accept their challenge and provide for their young boys a similar opportunity to gain the development that comes from Scouting?—R. S. B.

CONFIRMATORY EVIDENCES OF "MORMONISM"

THE BOOK OF MORMON PLATES

METAL plates, used in Eastern and Western hemispheres for recording purposes, were also employed for the records of the Book of Mormon. The Prophet Joseph Smith, translator of the Book of Mormon, gives the following description of the plates:

These records were engraven on plates which had the appearance of gold; each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long and not quite as thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings, in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book with three rings, running through the whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction and much skill in the art of engraving. (*History of the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 537.)

Joseph Smith's description of the plates is a clear, straightforward account. It gives the essential points, enabling one to construct a mental picture of their appearance. There is no weak attempt to give a vague or indefinite explanation; the description bears the stamp of veracity by its very simplicity and conciseness.

When the size of the plates is told and the word "gold" is mentioned, the question may arise, "Were they not very heavy?" Indeed, this has been urged as an evidence against the truth of the Book of Mormon, since on several occasions the Prophet carried the plates in his arms. Critics have thought

that if they could make it appear that the Prophet could not have carried the plates, they could remove the entire foundation of the Church. This objection, of course, in their minds, carries more influence, and is of more importance than all the positive evidence for the Church.

About what would the plates weigh? Accepting the Prophet's description that they were $6 \times 8 \times 6$ inches, a cube of gold that size would weigh two hundred pounds, which would be a heavy weight for a man to carry, even though he were of the athletic type of Joseph Smith, of whom Governor Ford says, in his *History of Illinois*, "He was full six feet high, strongly built, and uncommonly well muscled."

It is very unlikely, however, that the plates were made of pure gold. They would have been too soft and in danger of destruction by distortion. For the purpose of keeping records plates made of gold mixed with copper would be better, for such plates would be firmer, more durable, and generally more suitable for that type of work. If the plates were made of 8 carat gold, which is the fineness of gold frequently used in present-day jewelry; and if ten per cent. of their volume—a conservative estimate—be allowed for the space between the leaves, and the gold cut away by engraving, then the total weight of the plates would not be above 117 pounds, a weight easily carried by a man as strong as Joseph Smith. Elder J. M. Sjordahl, basing his conclusions on an experiment with gold coins, comes to the conclusion that "everything considered, the volume must have weighed considerably less than a hundred pounds." (*Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 43-44.) The probable weight of the plates, in the face of criticism, appears as an evidence of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

One unfamiliar with the subject, at first thought, questions the possibility of writing the whole of 522 pages of the Book of Mormon upon a series of gold plates with a total thickness of about two inches (one-third of the whole volume of plates). This point has been thoroughly investigated, and Joseph Smith's claims proved to be true.

Elder Sjordahl asks:

The question before us is, Could one-third (two-thirds being sealed) of a volume of metal leaves $6 \times 8 \times 6$ (the Prophet Joseph) or $8 \times 7 \times 4$ inches (Martin Harris), or $8 \times 7 \times 6$ inches (Orson Pratt), contain a sufficient number of plates, each as thick as parchment or tin, to yield the necessary space for the entire text of the Book of Mormon? If so, what about their immense weight? (*Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, p. 39.)

On pages 40 and 41 of Elder Sjordahl's book, there are two remarkable illustrations, the first in Hebrew, the second in Phœnician. The first is a facsimile of a sheet of paper, 8×7 inches, upon which a Hebrew translation of $14\frac{3}{4}$ pages of the American text of the Book of Mormon has been written in the modern, square Hebrew letters in common use. The Book of Mormon, if written in these characters, could have been written on $40\frac{3}{4}$ pages, or 21 plates. If the Phœnician characters were used (which were known to Lehi and his contemporaries), about 45 plates would be needed, allowing for the known loss of a portion of the first manuscript. On this point Elder Sjordahl says:

Rev. M. T. Lamb (a critic of the Book of Mormon) has allowed 50 plates to the inch, or 200 plates to the four inches (the smallest number). One-third only was translated; that is, 66 plates and a fraction. But we have demonstrated that the entire book, including the lost pages, could have been written on 45 plates. If we allow 66, or even 50, we have ample space for a text engraved in large, legible characters. (*Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, pp. 42-43.)

Thus the capacity of the Book of Mormon plates, when questioned, appears as another evidence of the truth of the Book of Mormon.

These questions, as other questions which may arise relating to the Book of Mormon, the Church, and the Gospel, when studied in the light of reason and available evidence, show additional consistencies in harmony with their claims. To one who voices objections to the Book of Mormon, or to "Mormonism," we could paraphrase an old proverb and say, "Think before you speak." The objections discussed above, as do others which are sometimes loudly proclaimed, disappear in the light of common sense, and reveal new witnesses for the Gospel.—FRANKLIN S. HARRIS, JR.

MARY OF NAZARETH—BY MARY BORDEN

(*Heinemann, London, 7/6*)

A REVIEW

LEGION are the books which have been written around the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. His story as it is recorded in the synoptic gospels has formed the foundation for all of these. Recently published is Mary Borden's beautiful narrative of the mother of the Saviour. She has refused to take cognizance of any theological discussion concerning the family of Jesus and has accepted the facts as stated in the New Testament as the basis of her tale, painting a background behind her characters as she has found Nazareth of Galilee to have been in the days when Tiberias Cæsar was Emperor of Rome and Pontius Pilate was Governor of Judea.

The author is a woman who endeavours to understand and portray the tragic life of a mother.

Mary of Nazareth was a Jewess steeped in the tradition of Israel. She lived in the provincial town of Galilee where women raised families and gossiped and worshipped. She went to the synagoge and taught her children the strict canons of the Mosaic law. When her firstborn—the one so different from the others—revolted into a law of universal love, tragedy came into her life, a heart rending between devotion to the scripture and her mother's love for her boy.

When He returned home and preached in the synagoge where she had taken Him when He was small, the people of the town—those jealous, fanatical people with whom she lived—cast Him out and turned their scorn on her. Though she had witnessed a vision concerning Him and wanted to catch the quiet beauty of His teachings, she could not flout the sacred traditions of her fathers. Nor could she with her mother's love, that went deeper than law or custom or women's talk, fail Him in His hour of