



Type: Magazine Article

Internal Evidences of the Book of Mormon

Author(s): George Reynolds

Source: *Juvenile Instructor*, Vol. 17, No. 16 (15 August 1882), pp. 251–252

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

Abstract: Cites historical consistency, absence of anachronisms, purity of doctrines, harmony with Bible and Indian traditions, prophecies of the Book of Mormon that have been fulfilled, and scientific truths that accord with the Book of Mormon. Refutes criticisms and polemical arguments.

quota of dark brown bread. At noon they have soup, potatoes, meat and occasionally vegetables: while in the evening they eat their bread, together with anything they may have purchased with their own money. If, at the end of the week, they have not eaten all the bread they received, they are at liberty to sell or give it away to the many poor people who gather around the barracks on the evenings when the soldiers receive their rations. The army is, of course, uniformed at the expense of the government, and each private receives daily an amount equal to about three cents, which is sufficient to furnish him with one large glass of beer. With such pay you can easily realize that a person could scarcely live, and it is therefore expected that every one entering the army shall receive either from his parents or relatives some money for his sustenance until the term of service has expired.

The duties and exercises of a soldier are varied. Aroused about daylight, his first duty is to make his toilet and clean up his room. He then receives his breakfast, after which the exercises of the day, drilling, target shooting, gymnastic exercises, etc., are commenced. During his spare time he must clean and repair his clothes, clean his weapons and do anything else required of him by his officers. The usual time for retiring is nine o'clock, and those remaining out after that time must have a special permit.

This enforced discipline and order is very good for young men, and gives them a training which is of great benefit to them in after life, if they do not allow the temptations which surround a soldier's life to overcome them.

INTERNAL EVIDENCES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

BY G. R.

WE will now consider for a short time some few of the internal evidences of the genuineness of the Book of Mormon, or the proofs in itself that it is what it claims to be, a record of God's dealings with the former inhabitants of this continent.

Among the more prominent internal evidences of its genuineness may be mentioned:

- 1st. Its historical consistency.
- 2nd. The entire absence of all anachronisms, or confusion in its chronology, and of conflicting statements with regard to history, doctrine or prophecy.
- 3rd. The purity of its doctrines, and their entire harmony with the teachings of our Savior and His inspired servants as recorded in the Bible.
- 4th. Its already fulfilled prophecies.
- 5th. Its harmony with the traditions of the Indian races.
- 6th. Its entire accord with scientific truth; none of its geographical, astronomical or other statements being contrary to what is positively known in these sciences.

There is nothing in the entire historical narrative of the Book of Mormon that is inconsistent with the dealings of the Almighty with mankind, or conflicting with history as far as the history which has been handed down to us in other records deals with events referred to in the Book of Mormon. On the other hand, the whole scheme of human salvation, as developed in the dealings of the Lord with the Jaredites, Nephites and Lamanites, gives us the most exalted ideas of His love for His mortal children and His condescension towards the erring

sons and daughters of Adam. Even if the Book of Mormon were not true, it deserves to be so, from the sublimity of the ideas that it conveys with regard to God's providences and His ways and methods of leading, directing and preserving His children. No nobler monument to the glory, the mercy and the long-suffering of our Heavenly Father than this wonderful Book was ever presented for the consideration of mankind.

It requires a great deal more credulity to believe it possible that any author, ignorant or learned, be he Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon or Solomon Spaulding, could, without the inspiration of the Almighty, bring forth such a work as the Book of Mormon, than to believe that it is what it claims to be, a revelation from the Almighty.

Hengstenberg, in his work on the Pentateuch, says:

"It is the unavoidable fate of a spurious historical work of any length to be involved in contradictions." This is obviously true. No thinking person will deny that it would be one of the most difficult of all literary feats to compose a historical work extending over thousands of years and dealing with hundreds of individuals without introducing some blunders as to time, place or circumstance, or permitting egregious contradictions to pass unnoticed. But the Book of Mormon is entirely free from all blunders of such a kind. This alone stamps it as of more than human origin. For more than fifty years, the bigoted and skeptical have been endeavoring to find errors, inconsistencies or impossibilities within its contents. But in this they have utterly failed. Not one of all their pretended discoveries of errors has stood the test of investigation. It has been found, without exception, that in such cases the objector has either dishonestly garbled the text, put an impossible construction on good, plain English, or presented his own private interpretation of the words of the book instead of the words themselves. The writer of this having perused the Book of Mormon many times, confidently asserts that there is no conflict of dates, no contradiction of details, no discordant doctrine, no historical inconsistency, from the commencement of the First Book of Nephi to the end of Moroni. All is a plain, simple narrative, occasionally somewhat unpolished in its style, and here and there at variance with the strict rules of grammar, but throughout maintaining its unities and harmonies and bearing upon its face indelible marks of its divine origin.

We now come to the doctrinal portions of the work.

It is readily admitted on all hands that no sectarian preacher like Mr. Spaulding would write doctrines, such as the Book of Mormon contains, these doctrines being at variance with the creed that he professed; and, indeed, in many respects different to those of every creed then extant upon the face of the earth. The Book of Mormon, be it human or divine, is a new revelation on religious matters to this generation, and its entire accord with the revelations of the Almighty contained in the Bible is a proof so strong of its divinity that none have been able to gainsay it. It is utterly ridiculous to imagine that Joseph Smith, unlettered as he was, could have written a work in such entire harmony with the holy scriptures and entering into many new particulars, as it frequently does, with regard to doctrines only slightly touched upon in the Old or New Testaments; it not only harmonizes with the scriptures but it explains them, makes clear the meaning of many an obscure passage, and while it never conflicts with, it often develops, truths of the utmost importance to humanity.

How wonderful a miracle!—much greater than the discovery of the records in the hill Cumorah—that an uneducated youth,

(and neither friend nor foe claims he was educated), could produce a work pregnant with principles connected with the most vital interests of the human family, and treating on subjects that concern man's temporal and eternal welfare, which cannot be refuted by all the learned of the world. Would not this be much more wonderful, calling for a much greater strain on our credulity than to believe that God has again spoken and brought to light this long-hidden treasure? And if it be inconsistent to believe that neither Joseph Smith nor Solomon Spaulding was the author of the religious portions of the Book of Mormon, wherein is it more consistent to ascribe the authorship to Sidney Rigdon. He was as utterly ignorant of many of the doctrines and principles made plain in the Book of Mormon as was Solomon Spaulding or any other uninspired priest of fifty or so years ago. There was no system of philosophy, ethics or religion then known to mankind from which he could have drawn the inspiration to write many of the doctrinal precepts in the Book of Mormon.

To tide over this difficulty, persons unacquainted with the contents of the Book of Mormon (which unfortunately the greater portion of mankind are,) have suggested, that Solomon Spaulding wrote the historical portion (an impossibility as we have heretofore shown,) and that Joseph Smith or somebody else added the religious portion. To those who have read the Book of Mormon this hypothesis is supremely ridiculous.

An objector to the Bible might, with equal consistency, assert that somebody wrote the historical portion of the Old and New Testaments, and somebody else, after the historical portion was all written, introduced the religious teachings. One is as impossible as the other. Every one who knows anything of the Book of Mormon knows that the narrative of events grows out of and is inseparably connected with the religious idea. The book opens with the statement that Lehi was a prophet, bearing Jehovah's unwelcome message of destruction to the inhabitants of the sin-seared city of Jerusalem. They rejected and persecuted him. By divine command he fled with his family into the wilderness and was led by that same inspiration to the American continent. That the reason why the Lord thus delivered him was, that He might raise up to Himself a people that would serve Him. He covenanted to give Lehi and his posterity this most precious land as their inheritance if they kept His commandments. How they fulfilled His law, how they prospered when obedient, how they suffered when disobedient, is the burden of the story of the writers of the Book of Mormon. It is the main idea to which all others are incidental, the controlling thought around which all others concentrate: it is the life of the whole record, the golden thread running through all its pages, which gives consistency to all its parts. A man might just as well attempt to write the gospel of St. Matthew and leave out all references to the Lord Jesus Christ as write the Book of Mormon without its religious theory and teachings.

The creature who invented the idea of the dual authorship of this book must have imagined that the doctrinal portion was dropped in by lumps or "clumsily" inserted between different historical epochs. It is true there are places where liberal extracts from the Bible are quoted, and if these were all, there might be some semblance of consistency in the supposition. But it is not so, the doctrinal and historical portions are, as a general thing, so intermingled and blended that neither could be withdrawn without destroying the sense of the other. If it were possible to conceive of the amalgamation of two separate documents—one religious and the other historical—it would be much easier to believe that the doctrinal

portions were written first and that the historical ideas were afterwards filled in; for, as before mentioned, the historical narrative is but secondary and tributary to the religious idea. But this would not support the theory of the Spauldingites; it would, in fact, entirely upset all their arguments for the reason that they claim that "The Manuscript Found," a historical romance of an idolatrous people, be it remembered, was written by Spaulding not later than 1812, while the Book of Mormon was not published by Joseph Smith until 1829; consequently such an arrangement would be fatal to their hypothesis.

We next glance at the prophecies of the Book of Mormon, a number of which are already fulfilled. These are among the most irrefutable evidences of the divinity of the work; the facts are patent to all the world, they are within the reach of all mankind. Ever since the year 1829, men have had the opportunity of testing the contents of the Book of Mormon, as it has not been hidden in a corner, but has been published in all the dominant languages of Christendom. To say that many of its prophecies have not been fulfilled is to deny history. And it cannot be asserted that these prophecies are happy guesses, as, at the time when the Book of Mormon was published they appeared most improbable, none more so than those which foretell the results that would follow its own publication. For it must be remembered that when it was published there was no Church of Jesus Christ organized upon the earth, and there was no remote probability of the then non-existent church producing the results in itself and to the world that the Book of Mormon declares should follow its establishment, which have been fulfilled, year by year, from the time of its publication to the present. If the Book of Mormon be not true, then these prophecies originated with Joseph Smith, and as they have been fulfilled, he was a true prophet; further, as they were declared in the name of the Lord and the Lord has recognized them by permitting their fulfillment in so many wondrous ways and by such direct manifestations of His divine power, therefore the conclusion is inevitable that the Lord owned and acknowledged Joseph Smith as His servant. On the other hand, if they did not originate with Joseph Smith, then the record is genuine, for the prophecies are true, and they were uttered by the men to whom they are ascribed. If so, Joseph's account of his discovery of the plates is true and he is a seer and a revelator, especially called of God to lay the foundation of the mighty work of the last days.

Those who are so strongly opposed to Mormonism can accept whichever horn of the dilemma they choose. But to our mind the first supposition is utterly untenable, as it is impossible for us to conceive that God who hateth a lie would choose for His servant a man who made such a science of falsehood, or that the Divine One would add the seal of His approbation to a forgery and an imposture, such as the Book of Mormon would be under these circumstances. To believe such a thing would be as consistent as to believe that if there were prophecies contained in "Gulliver's Travels" the Lord would move heaven and earth to bring about their fulfillment; for if the Book of Mormon be not what it claims, then it is as arrant a romance as the celebrated work of Dean Swift, and one is as worthy of credence as the other.

NEVER purchase love or friendship by gifts; when thus obtained, they are lost as soon as you stop payment.