



Type: Magazine Article

Book of Mormon Readings

Author(s): Joseph A. Vance

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 72, No. 14 (7 April 1910)

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

Page(s): 212–215

Abstract: This article advances two explanations of how Joseph Smith was provided with duplicate texts covering the material in the lost 116 pages of translation.

ling, should sound a piercing note of warning to every sectarian Christian.

In conclusion, let us inquire how the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called "Mormonism," will stand the test which our Lord Himself has proposed for our guidance when we try to determine which one of all the numerous Christian institutions among men is acceptable to Him. From remarks already made it is evident that the apostate condition of the Catholic church on the one hand, and the "patched" garments of Protestantism on the other, forbid all hope that either of these great branches of the Christian faith can win this distinction, and here the question narrows itself to one respecting the standing of this Church; for if "Mormonism" is not the work of God, then are we without any religious institution which He does recognize as His own.

Proceeding to test the divinity of the work which Joseph Smith accomplished, on the grounds we have in view, we find that the deadly pitfall of reforming an apostate or already reformed system of religion, and setting it up for the Church of Christ, holds no "Mormon" victim. "Mormonism" is not a "reformed" something that has gone before it. It has never claimed to be; and the Almighty has so worked out its founding that its opponents from the first to the last, from the least to the greatest have been constrained to testify that it is not of them, nor of their kind. It has no common origin with any other institution among men. It is not reformed Methodism. It is not reformed Catholicism. It is a *restoration* of the primitive Church, and as such it stands alone. It is without father, without mother, brother or sister in the great family of modern religious societies.

Joseph Smith claimed that the numerous denominations of modern Christendom had all departed from the ways of the Lord, and were no longer acknowledged by Him as His Church, and if he were an impostor we plainly see how natural it would have been for him, in view of the numerous examples around him to "reform" one of them and in that condition set it up for the fold of the Redeemer. What restrained him from the commission of this deadly error? Thank God for "Mormonism" just as it stands.

Flagstaff, Arizona.

THOMAS W. BROOKBANK.

BOOK OF MORMON READINGS.

FOUR months ago I set for myself the task of again reading through in consecutive order the Book of Mormon, and having just completed it, will set down a few of my gleanings, as my memory and a few notes may serve me.

I am deeply impressed with the divinity of the book, and I arise from its perusal altogether satisfied that it is not the product of

deception by one man or by a set of men, but instead that the original was set down in truth under inspiration of the Holy Spirit as bestowed by Providence, and that the translation was by inspiration of God. I have corrected a wrong impression obtained from earlier readings and teachings as to the manner in which Joseph Smith was enabled to supply the needed history for the first part of the book, covered by the one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript lost by Martin Harris. There are two slightly different views held as to the manner employed in supplying this missing material. The first is that another set of plates, not abridged by Mormon, was bound in supplemental to the abridged portion, so that Joseph Smith had but to continue on consecutively without other than the one bound volume of plates before him, in order to complete his translation, and give us the work without break or mar in the story, as we have it in the Book of Mormon.

The other view is that Mormon's book of plates was made by his own hands for the special purpose of carrying an abridgment, and that all the writings thereon down to his son's, Moroni's, writings, were done by Mormon; that on coming to Nephi's "small plates," so choice and rich in spiritual teachings, etc., he made a verbatim copy (transcript it would be called) of the "small plates," but thereafter kept to his original purpose without further marked duplication.

Those of the first view, and I believe they are correct, say that because in the Doc. and Cov., Sec. 10, the Prophet Joseph Smith was forbidden to "translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands," he must have had supplied to him (bound in the book of plates before him, presumably,) the "small plates of Nephi." This view seems further sustained by this revelation which informs the Prophet Joseph that upon the plates of Nephi (the small plates) is a more particular account, which the Lord would bring to the knowledge of the people, than the lost manuscript contained. "Therefore you shall translate the engravings which are on the plates of Nephi (small plates) down even till you come to the reign of king Benjamin, or until you come to that which you have translated, which you have retained." This done, Joseph Smith took up the account in its abridged form as Mormon had it set down from the larger plates of Nephi. Mormon does not resume his abridging, however, until first adding a chapter of his own to explain his disjointed abridgment. This explanation he offers under the caption of "The Words of Mormon" (p. 158, Book of Mormon), where he says: "I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things, but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore, He worketh in me to do according to His will." This chapter by the abridger discloses to the reader the explanation for what

was virtually a duplication, had the lost manuscripts been retained by the translator and used as part of the Book of Mormon.

Say those of the opposing view, it is evident Mormon did not bind Nephi's small plates into and along with the abridger's plates, notwithstanding his statement, "I shall take these plates (small plates) which contain these prophesyings and revelations, and put them with the remainder of my records, etc." They say these small plates would be nearly or quite eight hundred years older than Mormon's when the desired portion was transcribed; that the eight witnesses would have detected in their scrutinizing examination of the plates, some dissimilarity in size, in age, in character of hieroglyphics or material composition or other misfit worthy of mention.

Philology teaches that language of a people grows and wanes as their civilization goes up or down. The Nephite band, amalgamating with the more numerous Mulekites, whose language was not at first understood, and later with the Ammonites, who had formerly lost all connection with their enlightened brethren, and later by many others after long separations, would, it is plain to see, undergo many changes in their tongue and necessarily, as the chroniclers admit, in their written language.

The last writers, Mormon and Moroni, would be farthest removed from Nephi, the first chronicler in the Nephite records, and therefore, reveal a marked difference in the hieroglyphics, as well as manner of expression, etc., employed by the later writers. Besides, would it be quite correct for Mormon to put on the title page these words, "The Book of Mormon: an account *written by the hand of Mormon*, upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi," etc., unless wholly so done?

Some difference, here spoken for, is, to the careful reader, noticeable between the first one hundred and fifty seven pages, and the following portion of the book, but a striking difference between the literal and abridged portions would partly be lost by translation into the English, in the hands of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

In lecture fourteen of his series on the Articles of Faith Dr. James E. Talmage says, "Of these plates (small plates of Nephi) Mormon attempted no transcript, but included the originals with his own abridgment of the larger plates, making of the two one book."

Mormon's touch of inspiration in separating his fore and after abridgment by dropping in between these portions the "small plates of Nephi" in the manner above described, is like touching a key whose response is not heard until fourteen centuries afterward. Truly it reveals that the "Lord's wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil." Nephi gives as his reason for making them, that, "The Lord hath commanded me to make these plates, for a wise purpose in him: which purpose I know not," etc., which is another like and equal touch of inspiration evidencing that "Known unto

God are all His works from the beginning," etc. It seems apparent all through the Book of Mormon that Mormon is especially emphatic in making appear there is a divine plan for nations as well as individuals to follow, and that happiness, prosperity and union run high as it is adhered to, or low as it is departed from.

Dudley. England.

JOSEPH A. VANCE.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON FOR THEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT.

LESSON X.—PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

From Antioch (Syria) to Antioch (Pisidia.)

Text: Acts 13.

I. THE CALL AND SETTING APART. [SETTING APART FOR SPECIAL CALLINGS.]

1. Prophets and teachers at Antioch. (a) Simeon—nothing known of him. (b) Lucius of Cyrene. (See Romans 16: 21.) (c) Manaen—Foster brother of Herod the Tetrarch.
2. The divine message.
3. The "setting apart."

II. ON THE ISLAND OF CYPRUS.

1. At Salamis. (a) The three missionaries. (b) The preaching.
2. At Paphos, the governor's home. (a) Invitation of the deputy.
 - (1.) How prompted.
 - (b) Elymas, the Sorcerer.
 - (1.) His opposition. (a) Reason for it.
 - (2.) Paul's rebuke.

III. THE JOURNEY CONTINUED.

1. At Perga. (a) John (Mark) leaves them.
2. Arrival at Antioch.

IV. THE PREACHING AT ANTIOCH.

1. On the first Sabbath. (a) Effect.
2. One week later. (a) The crowd. (b) The sermon. (c) The Jews incensed. (d) The Apostles expelled.

"LEARN to limit yourself, to content yourself, with some definite thing, and some definite work; dare to be what you are, and learn to resign with a good grace all that you are not, and to believe in your own individuality."—AMIEL.