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## The Book of Mormon Plates

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**Abstract:** Broadbank argues that an exhibition of the gold plates would not convert nonbelievers to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. Few people would have access to, or would be able to read the plates. The testimonies of the witnesses were never revoked. The first part begins the series.

what his parents had sacrificed to keep him at school, a call came for him to go to Europe as a missionary. For two years he labored in Scotland, serving part of the time as president of that conference.

One week after his return from Europe he entered the Weber Stake Academy, where he still retains the position of principal. Scores of young people who have attended that institution have been led to higher and more useful lives by his noble example and teachings. The spirit of love and unity has characterized the life of the school since his connection with it.

He was married in 1901 to Sister Ray Riggs of Salt Lake City, who has been an inspiration in all his work. Two sons, David Lawrence and Llewelyn Riggs have completed the little home circle in which love reigns supreme.

For six years he has labored as second assistant superintendent of the Sunday schools of the Stake, and in connection with Superintendent Thomas B. Evans and Charles J. Ross, has worked energetically and unceasingly for the advancement of the youth. Possibly no other schools of the Church have made greater strides toward perfection than those of Weber Stake. He has the love and respect of all connected with the Sabbath schools, and as a mark of appreciation a party was tendered him in Ogden, May 16th, by the entire body of officers in this organization. They presented him with a beautifully engrossed testimonial and a handsome watch fob set with diamonds.

All his work has been characterized by that energy and entire loss of self that cannot but win the confidence of his associates and the blessing of our Father in heaven. He was ordained an Apostle April 9, 1906. The prayers of his brethren and sisters in Weber Stake will ever ascend in his behalf that in his new field of labor as an Apostle, he may be given strength to fulfill every duty, and continue to be a power for good among the children of men.—*Juvenile Instructor*.

## THE BOOK OF MORMON PLATES.

BY ELDER THOMAS W. BROADBANK IN THE "DESERET NEWS."

MANY of the Latter-day Saints, who, through missionary labors or business requirements, are brought into familiar association with people not of their faith, are aware that the question is sometimes asked why the plates from which the text of the Book of Mormon was translated, were not put on exhibition to prove the truth of Joseph Smith's statements respecting them. Generally, the questioner wishes to know also what was done with them. When informed that they were returned to the angel who delivered them to the Prophet, a smile of incredulity and scorn betrays, in many instances, the feelings with which the reply is received; and it is insisted that the plates should be produced or their non-existence acknowledged.

There are many who think the public exhibition of the plates would be proper and reasonable, and its wisdom is sometimes advocated by Church members. It is with this proposition that we are at present concerned; for respecting what was done with them cannot be determined now further than has been stated already. Before giving reasons why the proposed course would be

neither necessary nor proper, attention should be called to the significance of the question itself. This, by its terms, is substantially a proposition that the production and exhibition of the plates would prove all that the Prophet Joseph Smith claimed for them.

From this standpoint it appears, therefore, that this one item of evidence is all that is yet lacking to turn the scales in his favor, and to put the Latter-day work on a sure foundation. That is to say, though there are but few of these questioners or of others who are in sympathy with them, who can state intelligently half a dozen of the doctrines that the Book of Mormon contains or that Joseph Smith taught, yet, we are to understand, a view of certain gold plates whose engravings not one in many thousands could read, would ensure an acknowledgment that principles of which the confessor knows almost nothing are the truth of God and genuine Gospel doctrines—that a view of these plates would firmly establish the claim of Joseph Smith that he was a man sent with a message from Almighty God to this world; while otherwise he must continue to stand as an impostor before the generality of mankind, and have his religious principles scoffed at and derided as the grossest of errors and delusions—that a sight of the plates would satisfactorily prove the authenticity and inspiration of their own record. Were these things possible of accomplishment by a mere exhibition of the plates, the exercise of human reason would be dispensed with, and a condition to which God never purposed to reduce mankind, follow.

To effect anything of importance by a mere view of the original plates of the Book of Mormon, it must be assumed that whatever is written on gold plates in ancient and curious characters is true and inspired of God, and that the visible possession of such plates proves beyond question the veracity of those who have charge of them, and assures the divinity of the Church work accomplished by their guardians. But such assumptions can find no lodgment in sound minds; nor are the "Mormons" seeking converts who might be secured by the exhibition of gold plates.

Of course those who ask the question we are considering never intended to invest it with the weighty consequences already noticed, and so it must be modified sufficiently to make it mean that the "Mormon" cause would be helped more or less, by the production of the original plates of the Book of Mormon. That is to say, a view of whatever is written on gold plates and in ancient curious characters helps to create a belief that the record is a true one—helps a little to prove the veracity of those who have charge of them—helps a fraction to manifest the divinity of the Latter-day work—helps to make good, pure, and holy that which before was esteemed evil and evil only. Let it be admitted that these shrunken propositions are true; it is evident that the exhibition of the plates is not a matter of such vital importance as some seem to think it is.

We next have to consider the very singular fact that those who are most vitally concerned in having the Book of Mormon records substantiated by every available and proper testimony, are not the ones—except in rare instances—who are clamoring for a view of these plates. There are thousands of good men and women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have endured insult, privation, and distress—who have forsaken almost



everything the natural man holds dear, for, and who are staking their eternal salvation on the principles contained in those records, together with other scripture, and yet they are satisfied and happy under existing conditions. The Church membership does not ask to have the plates produced to confirm their faith in Joseph Smith as a messenger sent from God, nor in his statements respecting the originals of the Book of Mormon, nor in anything else. This is a weighty consideration, and its importance is intensified when we add to it the fact that people who pursue this course are the intellectual and moral peers of those who do not agree with them as to what should be done in this matter. The exhibition of the plates does not, from these facts, seem at all necessary.

Again, when we consider the fierce opposition to the spread of the Latter-day work that has been met on all sides, and the unusual expenses and difficulties that must be met and borne by the Saints in gathering together from all parts of the world—when we think that the missionaries upon whom has devolved the work of carrying the Gospel message throughout the world are generally poor and inexperienced men who have never enjoyed the privileges of skilful training for years in schools of theology; when, we repeat, we think of these things, and many others of a relative character on the one hand, and, on the other, see the rapid progress of the Latter-day work which is already spreading beyond the powers of the Church to bear off its portion of the labor in a manner as effectual as it is desirable, it becomes apparent that the question we are considering dwindles to one of no great importance. Again, since many scientific discoveries, relative to the people who formerly inhabited this country confirm unequivocally the authenticity of the Book of Mormon history; and since, in round numbers, half a million devout men and women have risen up during the past few years to declare in the fear of God that they know by the testimony of the Holy Spirit that Joseph Smith was a messenger sent from God, and consequently that the plates must have an existence, their exhibition becomes a matter of no importance.

To show them publicly would merely pander to the desires of the curious, or give uninspired men an opportunity to display their learning. Results from these sources could not affect to any appreciable extent the present condition.

Here, in turn, the question is asked why the plates of the Book of Mormon are singled out for exceptional treatment. There are extant, for instance only copies of the original manuscripts of the New Testament scriptures, and it seems that fairness and impartiality ought to be observed in these cases; but since those who question us in this matter do not comply with these terms, we shall have to say, by parity of reason, that people ought not to accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ as recorded by the evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, unless the originals of their writings are produced. But such an outrage on the feelings of the Christian world is not seriously contemplated. It serves to illustrate the fact that when men take such a course respecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ as written by Nephi, Alma, and others, something has affected their reason.

Suppose, too, that the plan of exhibiting the originals of the Book of Mormon were put into practice to bring men to a knowledge of the truth, how

many of the teeming millions of this world could find time to go and see them? To a few who might live near the place where they were kept, the necessary loss of time involved would be of little consequence, but when a journey of hundreds or of thousands of miles would have to be undertaken by millions of people the plan would not work at all. To carry it out would prove a task too great for human agencies. It would also effectually bar out most of the poor, who could not afford the expense of the journey required in nearly every case. These form the very class of people for whom, as we are taught by the Savior Himself, the Gospel is specially intended, and from which He gathers a vast majority of His elect children. Any scheme, therefore, we may be sure, that would bar out the poor from any Gospel privilege is not the one that is best. It can not have God's approval, no matter how worthy it may appear in the sight of men.

Again, were the plates put on exhibition there would be but few of those who ever saw them to whom they would not be "a sealed book." How many of the common people could read the characters in which that record is written? Not one. A few learned men might be able to partly decipher them, but the number of these even, competent in every respect to undertake the work, would probably be less than a score or a dozen. The great mass of mankind would be in a position like that of the king of Babylon and his nobles who saw the handwriting announcing their doom written on the walls of the feasting hall, but which none of them could read or understand. The aid of an interpreter had to be obtained before the meaning of that writing could be made clear, and in the case of the originals of the Book of Mormon, the services of an interpreter would be necessary before they could be made of any practical religious or historical benefit to mankind.

At this point we ask, why Joseph Smith could not act in that capacity as faithfully as some other or any other man? Why is it that his testimony is not as good as that of any other person respecting some of these questions? He was a man of unimpeachable veracity. He surrendered his life as a sacrifice, and sealed his testimony with his blood rather than retract a word of what he had spoken about religious or spiritual matters. Let the world suggest, if it can, who could be a more faithful and reliable translator of those sacred writings than Joseph Smith was. A mere view of certain plates would demonstrate nothing but the existence of those plates. Their mere possession by the "Mormons" would afford no assurance that they were not spurious altogether, and to settle this question the world would have to fall back on the "Mormon" testimony, and that is just as reliable now when referring to the manner in which the genuine plates were obtained, as it would be under proposed conditions, to allay suspicion that the plates in view were not manufactured to order. Let the interpretation of the Book of Mormon record be made by Joseph Smith or by a committee of learned men, let the originals be produced or not be produced, the principle of reliance on human testimony cannot be eliminated from the case. The alternatives are for God or angels to appear personally to each and every individual—visits for which some of us are not prepared—or for us to rush at once into the realms of folly.

{TO BE CONTINUED.]