



Type: Magazine Article

The "Golden Bible" II

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (February 1910)

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

Page(s): 19–42

Abstract: This article is a a discussion of and response to the book entitled *The Golden Bible* by the Rev. M. T. Lamb, where Kenner challenges Lamb's assumptions.

The “Golden Bible.”

BY S. A. KENNER.

II.

The rest of the quotations following that considered, and which are thrown in as a kind of explanation of his first assertion, in order to be fair, are of a piece with it. Unquestionably the gentleman is a better judge of human work than of divine work. There is no denial of the fact that the Book of Mormon was brought forth by human agencies, and thereby the human stamp must in corresponding measure be upon it. He is also on safe ground regarding rainbow tints and the Lord's discourses, the relevancy of which matter might but will not be questioned. He will merely be asked to consider whether or not all the painting accomplished by Divinity is rainbow tinted, or all the verbal emanations from that source were soothing to the ears of those who heard them. How about the thunder clouds which precede the rainbow, darken the landscape and diffuse gloom among the people? What of lightning, which is so glowingly, flashily colored that mortality cannot imitate it, and which strikes without warning, leaving death and destruction in its field of operations? Do not these come from the same hand as that which imparted the beautiful and hope-inspiring hues to the rainbow, and even painted the modest lilies of the field? Nothing in the way of language could be more full of native grandeur and wise admonition than the sayings of the Master to those he sought and died to save; but his words sometimes were terrible to evil-doers, and none of these were considered more evil than those who used his name without reverence or took it upon themselves to say where he was

or where he was not without having knowledge and authority thereto, an offense which Mr. Lamb, as shown above, has come painfully close to sharing in.

The "Golden" writer, however, does not even remotely approach the "top blossom and culmination" of irreverent and inconsiderate reference to Deity in any of the language previously referred to when the same is compared with what follows. Before reading it the reader will please remember that the author of it is professedly a man who lives in both fear and adoration of his Maker and who therefore presumably would not and could not speak to or of him in language other than that of devotion and reverence:

Does the Lord himself come out of this affair entirely unscathed? Either he made a mistake in the first instance and had to back out and do his work over again—or he *perpetrated a fraud* in the second case; a trick, a silly trick, that has not even the merit of being a sharp one, so "thin," in fact, that no special acuteness is needed to see through it.

This will be passed without comment. It is so shocking even to one who makes few professions of righteousness, that a feeling akin to guiltiness exists for having used it at all.

To what desperate resorts does the one who opposes just for opposition's sake sometimes betake himself! What frail fancies he weaves into showy fabrics having no substance or form, and what a flimsy, pointless affair is his polemical lance shown to be when once it is thrust against the shield of reason or the armor of truth! How lacking in system, devoid of consistency, and empty of substance is the whole of any extended "argument" like that of Mr. Lamb, which, even had he maintained his position and established every point for which he contends, would still have resulted in absolutely nothing that is beneficial or helpful to the human mind or soul. The labor of the iconoclast is generally futile enough and bad enough when it is conducted with skill and precision; but when it is merely an inartistically arranged collation of vapid denunciation, threadbare accusation, and jumbled buffoonery -- neither satisfying, entertaining, nor instructive—it is intolerable, inexcusable, and altogether vile. If one had but the time and space, together with the inclination, a review seriatim of

such books as the "Golden Bible" would be a fine diversion for rainy days.

I could scarcely let this opportunity pass without a few words regarding Mr. Lamb's professions of friendly feeling for those whose religious convictions he so ruthlessly assails, disclaiming rancor, prejudice, and everything in that line. Reading these statements and what follows reminds me somewhat of an incident of the same kind occurring in the career of a certain Federal judge of Utah in the early days. A man was before him for sentence, and before pronouncing the formal decree of the court the judge took occasion to tell the prisoner that he was sorry for him—very sorry, indeed, his words of compassion being so pronounced that the convicted man no doubt began to entertain hopes that he would get off easy. But he didn't. He got very nearly if not quite the full measure of punishment permitted by the statute in such case made and provided. This gave rise to a question, that if the man got such a hard deal when the magistrate was sorry for him, what on earth would or could he have got if the judge had been hostile and unfeeling? Now, Mr. Lamb is evidently not a judge—not even of logic, literature or correct controversialism; but on the bench, imposing a penalty upon some one he didn't like because of differing opinions, he could certainly fill the bill in the manner and form last indicated to a nicety.

In the matter of physical demonstration and actual results, and without assuming to speak authoritatively, but rather as an observer who believes in a "square deal" to all, it is proper to say that the "Mormon" Church has accomplished such things in the way of subduing natural conditions and supplanting barrenness with fertility, dreariness with loveliness and savagery with civilization as no other church has ever attempted or perhaps ever thought of; and all of these achievements have been worked out by a people who must themselves have failed but for confidence in their leaders and faith in the work which they were led to perform. Those people and the leaders themselves were not engaged in speculative enterprises, or buoyed up by the hope of great worldly gain, otherwise their time, effort and talent might and doubtless would have been spent upon more inviting fields where the rewards would have been greater and not so far off. Un-

doubtedly they were animated and upheld by something above and beyond the contemplation of work done for its own sake alone, and we do not have to go far to find out what that something was, it being a reliance upon and the advocacy of a development of Christianity—a plan of salvation—partly yet largely disclosed by the very book which Rev. Lamb endeavors so strenuously to belittle and make of no avail. Judging a tree by its fruit ought to be considered a righteous judgment; therefore, as so much that is good and desirable and advantageous are shown as the fruits of the Book of Mormon, we are forced to the conclusion that the judge himself is unrighteous; a conclusion that occurs spontaneously without the slightest strain on the mental faculties.

There are other circumstances worthy of citation in the same line. The "Mormon" missionary, for instance, is rarely a graduate of a high institute of learning; while by no means uneducated or uninformed, he seldom carries a degree, and never one relating to the ecclesiastical department of a college or university. Religion with him is not a matter of secular training; it does not occur in his curriculum, and yet is a matter which enters into and forms a part of his daily life. Without making a business of it, or following it as a profession to acquire means, still religious thought, precept and practice are inseparable from his secular pursuits. His education in that behalf, while largely aided by books and instruction, is not wholly dependent upon either or both, but is derived largely from the faith that is in him and the soulful devoutness with which he walks in the path marked out by the Master. He receives no pay for such labors as he performs in the ministry, at home or abroad, in public or in private. He goes forth on an appointed errand to the peoples of the earth filled with his calling and realizing in every tissue of his mortal fibre the importance, the responsibility of his mission as an ambassador of the Most High. He stands up in public places, beset sometimes by riotous disturbers, scoffers and blackguards, is subjected to interruption, insult and occasionally violence, yet he maintains the dignity of his station and delivers his momentous message to the willing and the unwilling hearer. No amount of money that could be raised for such purpose would for a moment tempt him to endure some of the ordeals or undergo the hardships frequently attendant upon

the performance of his labors, while the honors are not of the kind that the people of the earth as a whole esteem or care to have. He tells them without hesitancy or fear that the testimony he bears is true and cannot be shaken by the machinations or perversions of man. Why? In order that those who hear him may be misled? That they may take upon themselves the vestments of a gospel which has no foundation but error and no outcome but deception? Would he dare to tell them how to test the Book of Mormon if he knew or even believed the test must fail?

The length of this article so far makes it necessary to come to an abrupt close. There are some other citations from the "Golden Bible" which might be used to advantage in this connection, but only two more will be referred to and briefly. Mr. Lamb says in the early part of his work that "the most serious objection to the Book of Mormon is that it undermines faith in the Word of God." As an admission of the tremendous and far-reaching potency of a volume which the reverend gentleman labors through several hundred pages to show is an empty imposture, a palpable fraud, an unskillful humbug, the foregoing assertion is one of the most singular in all his array of very singular expressions. It might be pronounced a solecism, only that something as near to fervor as cold type can convey seems to characterize the sentence, and make it to appear that he has given birth to one honest expression even though it be at the expense of all his other expressions. Of course the statement is a *non sequitur*, wholly fallacious, but that he meant it with all that it implies, is beyond a doubt—an involuntary and misleading but powerful tribute.

This chapter will conclude with what forms part of the other writer's beginning, and in this meeting of extremes we also are brought together and caused to agree for the first, last and only time. He says in his preface (speaking of his work), "there is no other book just like it." That is not to be denied. And to this self-evident and cheerfully conceded distinction, let us add the hope that it may endure so long as we endure at least.

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