

THE BOOK OF MORMON TRUE OR FALSE

IN the May issue of the "S.S." I wrote an article entitled 'The Book Of Mormon' which was intended to provide a general gist of what the B. of M. contained and which, hopefully, would be of interest to those previously completely unacquainted with that book. Mormon missionaries are still very active in the country and it behoves us to be able to meet them in discussion. I know of one person in this area interested in the Mormon church, who was previously a member of the Lord's church, and so you will understand why we should take the matter seriously. Personally, when dealing with Mormon missionaries, I would not spend time discussing doctrines which are fairly confined to the Mormon faith, such as polygamy, apostolic succession etc., because I believe that the true and basic issue is related to the origins of the B. of M. itself - i.e. is it from God or is it the invention of man? If the B. of M. can not be shown to be from God (but indeed can be shown to be a fraudulent invention of man) then, when it falls all of its attendant doctrines fall with it. Mormons, when asked to supply proof that their book is from God, reply, 'Pray to God about it and He will reveal to you that it is true'. It should be noted that this method of differentiating truth from error is not advocated in the scriptures but is recommended by the B. of M. itself. When one asks Mormons just how God will reveal this important information to us, the suggestion is that it will take the form of a 'warm glow in the chest'. This method of deciding the truth of a matter must surely rank as unique in the annals of sacred history, and must certainly be fraught with uncertainty, especially if one is a regular sufferer from indigestion. In last month's 'S.S.' some facts were given regarding the kind of men who were the witnesses to the alleged divine origin of the B. of M. and how all three left the Mormon Church. The following is the first instalment of some notes on the coming into being of the B. of M. and how difficult it is to accept it as having come from God. There is every reason to believe that the New Testament was God's last revelation to man and so we are expecting or requiring any further revelation from God. Thus when someone claims further revelation we are well to be critical in our examination of such a claim, and must give the claim the most careful scrutiny. In 1830, when the B. of M. was published, the publisher Joseph Smith had, in order to have the book accepted by members of the public, to be liberal, if not extravagant, in his claims for the infallibility of the book. It was 'the most perfect book' whereas the Bible was acceptable to Mormons only as far as it was correctly translated. Joseph Smith claimed that he was under the inspiration of God and by 'the power of God' gave the world God's latest revelation (and that angels had visited the world many times during the production of the B. of M. to make sure that it would be faultless). The Bible is a translation and subject to the problems of translation from one language to another - but the claims for the B. of M. is that it was a revelation (directly from God to Joseph Smith in the English language) and during the writing of it Joseph Smith was not allowed to proceed

except at a few words at a time (one sentence not being written until the previous sentence divinely approved as being exactly correct). These claims were made at the time by 'God's Prophet and Seer' Joseph Smith but the claim has been his own undoing owing to the vast number of mistakes and glaring inaccuracies of the book, and nowadays Mormons like to 'play-down' the claimed infallibility of the book and to say that the mistakes are due to the lack of schooling on the part of Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith claimed complete infallibility for the book and if he lied on this score can anyone believe the product of the lie - the B. of M? If there is just one inaccurate or erroneous statement in the B. of M. then is Joseph Smith a fraud and the B. of M. a tissue of lies. If we miss this point, then we miss all.

When Joseph Smith dictated the B. of M. under the power and inspiration of God', as claimed by Mormons, he did so with his face plunged into his hat with the brim pulled tight up to his ears. In the hat was the two stones set in the silver bow (termed by the biblical 'Urim and Thummim) which elsewhere is described as a large pair of spectacles. The breadth of the spectacles were too broad for the head of Joseph Smith and so he looked through just one eye of the spectacles. The spectacles were necessary for the reading of the golden plates although when the revelation of the B. of M. was actually made Smith had a hat on his face and one wonders how he could see the plates or if he saw the plates. Smith himself said that he dictated the B. of M. to a scribe (Oliver Cowdery) through a curtain (why the curtain was necessary we are not told, but can perhaps guess) and that one or two words came before his eyes (in English) and he dictated them to the scribe; The scribe was then required to repeat the words he had written, to ensure that no mistakes were made, and that the new words would not appear before him until the present ones had been correctly transferred to paper. This is of course, not a translation, but a revelation - (verbal inspiration). In view of the fact that the B. of M. was allegedly given to man in this careful fashion (so that there might not be any fault or mistake in it) why is it full of mistakes, bad punctuation and faulty grammar? Mormons should also explain why the present edition of the B. of M. bears no resemblance to the original edition printed by Joseph Smith in 1830. Orson Pratt (a Mormon apostle) said in the "Divine Authenticity of the B. of M." that "...the nature of the message of the B. of M. is such that if it is true no one can possibly be saved by rejecting it. If false, no one can possibly be saved and receive it" Joseph Smith himself said that "it was the most correct book" in existence. An angel is said to have made fifteen visits to earth to make sure that the B. of M. was perfectly produced Yet countless mistakes exist in the B. of M. and countless changes have been made since the original edition was published. It is said that there are over fifty mistakes in grammar and punctuation on one page alone. The original golden plates alleged to have been the B. of M., written in "Reformed Egyptian", are not to be found. Neither are the original pages upon which Oliver Cowdery wrote the B. of M. from the dictation of Joseph Smith. We have no evidence at all therefore that the plates ever existed or that the language was "Reformed Egyptian" apart from the say-so of the witnesses - men who were not known for their integrity. Why should the plates be written in "Reformed Egyptian" if Joseph Smith was to be given the big spectacles with which to read the writing? Why also, should the plates be written in "Reformed Egyptian" if, by virtue of the Urim and Thummim and by the direct revelation of God, Joseph Smith was given a vision of the text - in English? Everything about the B. of M. speaks of a giant hoax. Regarding the absence of the plates - Mormons say that these were taken back by the angel. This must, (if it took place) have taken place a long time after (years in fact) from the time of the 'translation' of the plates. So we have no plates; but what happened to the copies of the plates that Joseph took? Where are they? Joseph Smith took copies and sent them to experts in languages. Where are these copies today? Surely they should have survived the passage of 135 years or so. The New Testament is about 2,000 years old and there are some 4,000 pieces of manuscript evidence of the Greek books. In any case, what was "Reformed Egyptian". What documents exist today written in that language? Egyptologists assure us that Egyptian hieroglyphics remained unchanged from the fifth century B.C. until the fourth century A.D. Moreover the experts themselves were unable to decipher ordinary Egyptian inscriptions until the discovery of the Rosetta stone. Witness Martin Harris was approached by Joseph Smith for money with which to publish the B. of M. and, to put his

mind at ease, Joseph Smith gave him the copies of the writing on the plates to take to a language expert, just to confirm that it was not a hoax. Martin Harris went to a Dr. Mitchell, who apparently could make nothing of the hieroglyphics (probably understandably and Dr. Mitchell sent Him to Professor Anthon of Columbia University. Joseph Smith said that Professor Anthon declared that the language was genuine and that Smith's 'translation' was accurate. Professor Anthon says that this is quite untrue and that he did not in any sense approve the manuscripts. The professor said in a letter, which can still be seen today, addressed to Mr. E. D. Howe of Painesville. Ohio, dated 17th February, 1834, "The whole story of my having pronounced the Mormonite inscription to be 'Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics' is perfectly false. Upon examining the paper in question, I soon came to the conclusion that it was all a trick, perhaps a hoax ... crooked characters disposed in columns, evidently prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets, Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arrayed in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle, divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calendar given by Humboldt..." Martin Harris went on to explain to professor Anthon how he had come by the manuscripts, the gold plates and the spectacles with which Joseph Smith had 'translated' the writing and how that he had been asked to contribute money to the printing of these pages and that he intended selling his farm to pay for it. Professor Anthon states "On hearing this odd story, I changed my opinion about the paper, and instead of viewing it any longer as a hoax upon the learned, I began to regard it as a scheme to cheat the farmer of his money and I communicated my suspicions to him, warning him to beware of rogues..." So much for the "Reformed Egyptian". Was professor Anthon lying? It is worth remembering that his letter was written only three years or so after the publication of the Book of Mormon and his evidence clearly removes the very foundations of the Mormon faith and shows that the whole religion, like many others, is built upon a false premise The Mormons say that the professor approved the hieroglyphics but he certainly does not do so in this letter – and the Mormon Church have never challenged the evidence of this letter in an American Court of Law, and clearly would not dare to do so.

(To Be Continued) Editor.