

BOOK OF MORMON - AGAIN

BACK in 1978 I wrote in this magazine some articles entitled 'The Book of Mormon - True Or False'. These engendered a certain interest and I had requests for copies from as far away as the Shetland Islands. I have never quite been able to understand why many of the intelligent people in the Mormon faith cannot see the falsity of many aspects of the B. of M. even when it is pointed out to them. In the many discussions I have had with young Mormon evangelists I have always been unable to get straight answers to the many questions induced by the claim that the B. of M. came directly from God through Joseph Smith. With this in mind I wrote recently to the Mission President of the Edinburgh Headquarters of the Mormon Church and asked for the answers to six fairly straightforward questions. I could have asked another dozen questions quite readily but I wanted to keep the task within reasonable proportions. It should be remembered that Mormons say that the Bible can be accepted only insofar as it is correctly translated - (and most of us might agree with this,) but the implication in this statement is, of course, that no such problem arises with the B. of M. because *it is correctly translated*. Indeed Mormons claim that the B. of M. is unique and of unparalleled distinction in that it was translated by 'the gift and power of God'; that a miraculous device called the 'Urim & Thummim' was supplied to Joseph Smith by God (and delivered by an angel) in order to perform the super-natural wonder of translating the book from the unknown 'Reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics' into English. Furthermore an angel was sent from God no less than fifteen times to *make certain* that the B. of M. was *properly translated and printed*. Joseph Smith himself said that the B. of M. was '*the most correct of any book on earth*' and a man would get nearer to God by its precepts than any other book (including the Bible no doubt). It should also be remembered that when Joseph Smith was 'translating' the B. of M. from the letters on the golden plates he first put the magic 'seer stone' into a hat and then put his face in the hat to exclude the light. In the darkness the 'spiritual light' shone and something resembling parchment would appear, and on that the writing. One character at a time would appear and under it was a sub-title in English. Joseph Smith would read this through a curtain to Oliver Cowdery (the principal scribe) who, when he had written the word would repeat it to Joseph Smith to see if it was correct. If it was correct it would disappear and another character with its English interpretation would appear. "Thus", says David Whitmer (one of the 3 witnesses

to the B. of M.) as he describes the procedure during the translation, "Thus the B. of M. was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man". It will be seen from all the above that the B. of M. *should* (according to all the claims for it and 15 visits of the angel) have been infallibly correct in every tiny detail. Indeed it was not so much 'a translation' as it was a direct revelation. If indeed it was translated 'by the gift and power of God' we would expect it to be complete and perfect in every detail. This super-natural volume - (result of the miraculous 'Urim & Thummim' sent specially by God) was published in 1830. The edition of today however bears little resemblance to the original edition of 1830 because the Mormon church have had to make some three thousand alterations to it (not little things but big things - changes to the sense and wording of sentences, words added, words omitted, phraseology, spelling, grammar and punctuation). Indeed on page 52 alone there have been made over fifty-three changes. The Mormon Church cannot deny this because *they* themselves have seen the errors and *they* have corrected them. Another very important point to remember is that the plates from which Joseph is alleged to have translated the B. of M. were said to have been placed in a hole in the earth some 400 years A.D. and remained there, quite undiscovered, until Joseph Smith was told by the angel where they were and to go and dig them up (just prior to their publication in 1830). Thus the contents of the B. of M. were placed on plates long prior to 400 A.D. and *did not see the light of day* from 400 A.D. until God and Jesus (both together) visited Joseph Smith in 1820, (so the story goes). In view of all this my questions (which I am here abbreviating to save space) were as follows:-

- (1) Why is the B. of M. incomplete? The 1830 edition states in a 'Preface (omitted from today's version) that 116 pages of Joseph Smith's manuscripts were stolen - notwithstanding the 15 angelic visits to 'make sure it would be properly translated and *published*'. (1) Why did God *fail* in His bid to get the Book properly printed & published? (2) Was there anything of importance on these 116 pages? (3) if 'Yes' how can we do without them? (4) If nothing of importance was on them are there *other* pages in the Book with nothing important on them? (5) Why could J. Smith not repeat them? (6) Why has this 'Preface' been dropped from today's edition?
- (2) Why were golden plates with hieroglyphics necessary if, at the translation, J. Smith had his hat drawn over his face and could not see the plates but had 'subtitles' (each word placed before his eyes in the darkness) in English?
- (3) If the B. of M. 'most correct book on earth' and by verbal inspiration direct to J. Smith 'by the gift and power of God' (not forgetting the 15 angelic visits) how is it that the Mormons have found it necessary to make over 3,000 corrections to errors in the Book. Is God's '*power*' as weak as all this suggests? Was God's angel completely incompetent?
- (4) The Book of Mormon (Chap. 9:32-34) gives an explanation as to why the text on the gold plates was in 'Reformed Egyptian' (whatever that was) and why another language such as Hebrew was not used and states, "But the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also *that none other people knoweth our language*; therefore he hath prepared means of interpretation thereof". In view of the fact that "None other people knoweth our language" (Reformed Egyptian) why:-
 - (a) Why did J. Smith allow Martin Harris to take copies of the translation of plates to experts in languages when *he knew* they could not possibly translate the so-called 'Reformed Egyptian' since it was a language 'None

other people knew', and since only J. Smith with the magical 'Urim & Thummim' could decipher it.

- (b) Mormons claim that one of these language experts, Professor Anthon, declared that these said copies shown him by Martin Harris were true and genuine. J. Smith said, 'Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, moreso than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian.' (The same Professor denied that he had said any such thing - rather the reverse). Please explain how the Professor could have said the translation was genuine if 'Reformed Egyptian' was a completely unknown language needing a 'Urim & Thummim' for its decipherment?
- (5) The B. of M. came direct from 'golden Plates' contained in a language called 'Reformed Egyptian' (exclusively understood by the Nephites) and these plates did not see the light of day from 400 A.D. to 1820. Yet when translated they contain large chunks of the King James Version (indeed 27,000 words from the K.J.V.) For example Mosiah 14 is a direct copy from Isaiah 53 in the King James Version (including the words in italics - interpolated by the 1611 translators). Please explain this apparent absurdity? How could words written in 1611 get on to plates secreted in the earth in 400 A.D. (long before the English language had even been formed)? Translators of the K.J.V. placed the word 'easily' in 1 Cor. 13:5 without any justification - i.e. "love is not, *easily* provoked". The Revised Version and the American Standard Version omit the word 'easily' because it ought not to be there. The writer of the B. of M. was obviously unaware of this for Moroni Chap. 7:45 quotes the K.J.V. and includes the word 'easily'. Does not this prove that the writer of the B. of M. copied straight from his copy of the K.J.V.?
- (6) On June 1st, 1978, the Presidency and Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church voted to permit *black people* to hold office in the Mormon Church. Some say that this was due to public pressure. Prior to that time Mormons taught that "*one drop*" of negro blood was sufficient to bring a person under curse and bar him from the Priesthood." Indeed, did not Brigham Young say, "... the first Presidency, the Twelve, the High Council, the Bishoprick, and all the Elders Of Israel, suppose we summon them to appear here, and here declare that it is right to mingle our seed with the black race of Cain, that they should come in with us, and be partakers of all the blessings God has given us. *On that very day*, and from the hour we should do so, the Priesthood is taken away from this Church and kingdom, and God leaves us to our fate. The moment we consent to mingle with the seed of Cain, the Church must go to destruction - we should receive the curse which has been placed upon the seed of Cain, and never more be numbered with the children of Adam who are heirs to the Priesthood until that curse be removed." Now that Mormons are mingling their seed with the cursed 'black race of Cain' will the predictions of Prophet Brigham Young come to pass i.e. that 'from that very hour' the Priesthood will be taken from the Mormon Church and the church must go to destruction? Or was the Prophet mistaken?

The above is the gist of the questions I sent to the Mission President in Edinburgh on 24/4/83. I received no reply and 2 months later I wrote to ask if he would, at least, tell me if he had received my letter. On 2/7/83 I received an apology for not replying and another apology for having lost my letter but offering to call and answer the questions verbally. On 6/7/83 I re-sent the questions declining the offer of a personal visit and asked specifically for a written reply. I wanted not the opinion of some of their young men (I have had these many times) but I wanted a

fairly authoritative answer from the Mormon Church. On 7/7/83 two young men arrived on my door-step, quite unannounced, at 8 p.m., to verbally answer my questions. I declined to agree to this but invited them in. they said my questions would not be answered in writing as 'I might later take them out of context', but they would be happy to explain them verbally. I replied that when they were gone I would have no record of what they had said, but they explained that I could take notes. I replied that perhaps I conceivably might take their *verbal* statements 'out of context' and that later they might dispute my notes. I then asked them to send me a letter explaining they they could not give me answers in writing. At least I would then have a tangible record of their refusal. This request they also refused. I asked if there was anyone in the Mormon Church who would answer my questions and they said that the President in Utah might (but he is such a busy man). After some difficulty I obtained from them the President's address in Salt Lake City and so I will now write to him. As it was we only dealt lightly with one of my questions although our talk lasted until 11.30 p.m. I did not bother to 'take notes' albeit the two men, under pressure, admitted that Joseph Smith was only a fallible man and that the B. of M. might indeed *be full of errors* (an admission I was not likely to get in writing). They also admitted "Yes, there were over 3,000 errors in the B. of M. - Yes there is a quotation from Shakespeare in the B. of M. and a few Frenchwords - Yes, the King James Version is quoted in the B. of M." but what does all that matter - God has, after all, told them that the Book of Mormon is true. That to them is all that matters. Clearly these young men would have said the same thing even if I could have shown that there were Nursery Rhymes in the Book of Mormon. Readers, however, might like to ask these kind of questions (as roughly outlined under the above six headings) of any Mormon 'missionaries' who may arrive at the door, and might also ask for an answer in writing. Meanwhile I shall keep readers informed of the President's reaction from Salt Lake City, or lack of it.

EDITOR