

CHAPTER 6

THE BOOK OF MORMON

The author of "Mormonism and Masonry," in his introduction, Book 1, says:

"The present writer is convinced that the years which saw the preparation and publication of the GOLDEN BIBLE of this new faith witnessed the pre-natal influence of Masonry upon Mormonism, proof of which lies thickly sprinkled over the pages of the Book of Mormon."

From Book 2, chapter 1, we quote as follows:

"In this environment, and during these years when the flames of hatred and bigotry and religious intolerance burned fiercest, Joseph Smith brought to light and published his GOLDEN BIBLE."

Since the time when the first edition of the Book of Mormon was published mockers in derision have referred to it as Joseph Smith's Golden Bible. The book has been ridiculed, and the assertion made that it was regarded by the Mormon people as superseding the Bible as the authorized word of God to his children who are here upon earth. Every means which the mind of man could conceive has been resorted to in order that the book might be discredited and that un-informed people might be led away from the truth.

The fact that the record which was translated by Joseph Smith was written upon plates of gold has been referred to as an absurdity, and by some writers an impossibility.

Three distinct records are referred to in the Book of Mormon, all of which are said to have been written upon metal plates, as follows:

First: The Brass Plates which were brought from Jerusalem by Lehi and his party.

Second: The plates of Nephi, which the record tells us were made from smelted ore.

Third: The twenty-four plates, said to have been made from pure gold, which contained the brief history of the people of Jared, who came to this continent from the Tower of Babel.

II

WERE METAL PLATES USED BY THE ANCIENTS AS WRITING TABLETS

That metal plates were used anciently, upon which the record of important events was inscribed, is a well established fact.

In the First Book of Maccabees, chapter eight, we are told that "Judas Maccabeus sent Eupholemus, the son of John, the son of Accos, and Jason, the son of Eleazar to Rome to make a league of amity with the Romans. And this is the copy of the epistle which the Senate wrote back again in tables of brass, and sent to Jerusalem."

Here follows the full text of the treaty which was entered into between Rome and Judea.

Again, from chapter fourteen of the same work we quote the following:

"So then they wrote it in tables of brass which they set in pillars in Mount Zion."

Here follows the copy of a long statement which concludes as follows:

"So they commanded that this writing should be put in tables of brass, and that they should be set up within the compass of the sanctuary, in a conspicuous place, and that the copies thereof should be laid up in the treasury, to the end that Simon and his sons might have them."

From the above and other similar evidences which might be quoted, it is clearly shown that brass plates were used anciently as writing tablets.

From a letter recently received, written by Dr. John A. Widtsoe, who is at present in Europe, we quote as follows:

"I spent an hour before train time in the British Museum. At random I entered a large room dedicated to Oriental Manuscripts. I noticed at once in the first case to the right, a series of very thin silver plates, perhaps three inches wide and eight inches long, held together by a silver ring. The plates were beautifully engraved with characters which, the accompanying legend stated, gave Buddha's first sermon and other religious matters.

"In the next case was a sheet of thin gold, likewise engraved on both sides, which, according to the legend, was a letter from one native ruler to another."

III

DID THE AMERICAN INDIANS POSSESS GOLD AND HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF ITS USE?

At the time of the discovery of America by Columbus, two great empires or kingdoms existed. One was the Aztec Empire of Mexico, and the other the kingdom of the Incas in Peru.

The conquest of Mexico was effected by Fernando Cortez, and of Peru by Francisco Pizarro. In each of these countries the Indians were in possession of vast quantities of both gold and silver. These metals were used by the people in the industries rather than as a circulating medium of exchange. The vast amount of loot collected by the Spanish conquerors will never be known. All historians agree that in the treasury of Montezuma, at the City of Mexico, there was a large amount of treasure.

Bernal Diaz, who was with Cortez, a close and trusted friend says that on the Noche Triste, (the night of sorrow) when Guatemoctzin, the last emperor, drove the Spaniards from the City of Mexico, the gold and silver which had been collected was brought into a large room and placed upon the floor. After one-fifth had been weighed out, which was the amount allotted to the crown of Spain, Cortez said to his 815 Spanish soldiers, and forty thousand Indian Allies, that they were at liberty to take all they desired of that which remained. Bernal Diaz says that after they had loaded themselves with treasure, the notary was called to affirm that there was treasure to the value of "seven hundred thousand dollars left upon the floor, which they were unable to carry away."

Prescott places the amount of this loot at six million three hundred thousand dollars. The collection consisted of helmets, breast plates, and other accoutrements of war, vessels for domestic use, and other articles made from gold and silver, and gold in bars and

sheets. All of this was thrown into the melting pot and ruthlessly reduced to bars to be sent away to Spain. A greater quantity of gold was taken from Peru than that taken from Mexico.

In 1920, a book of 264 pages was published by the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, of which Marshall H. Saville, one of the foremost authorities on the subject treated, is the author. The title of the work, which is elaborately illustrated, is "The Goldsmith's Art in Ancient Mexico." The author tells us that the Mexican goldsmith was very expert in his profession.

Motolina, one of our most reliable authorities, says: "To smelt a piece and make a cast, they took preference over the silversmiths of Spain, inasmuch as they could cast a bird, with movable tongue, head and wings, and even more, they could take out a piece, one-half gold and silver, and cast a fish with all its scales, the one of gold and the one of silver."

Bernal Diaz says: "Even the goldsmiths of Spain were compelled to admire their work."

Cortez, writing to the king of Spain, says: "Let not what I say appear fabulous to your majesty, because in truth all the things created on land as well as in the sea of which Montezuma had ever heard were imitated in gold in such perfection that they appeared almost real."

The silversmiths of Mexico declared that they had acquired the art by teachings which had been handed down to them from their ancestors.

Is it strange or unreasonable that people who possessed gold in abundance, and understood its character and use as these people did, should use it upon which to record the sacred history of their people, that which they most desired to preserve, and which to them was most sacred? It would have been more strange had they not done so.

Gold is one of the most indestructible of metals. It does not tarnish. It is among the most ductile of metals, almost as soft as lead, an ideal metal upon which characters may be engraved. It was used by the ancients as writing tablets.

In the "Goldsmith's Art in Mexico," Saville says:

"Padre Gay mentions that the Mixtecan Indians sold to European antiquarians very thin plates of gold, evidently worked with the hammer, which their ancestors had been able to preserve, on which were engraven ancient hieroglyphs."

The messenger who delivered to Joseph Smith the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated stated that they were of gold. Eight witnesses testified that they saw and handled the plates, and that they had the appearance of gold.

The Book of Mormon is not a Golden Bible. It does not supersede the Bible nor take its place. The Bible contains the sacred history of the ancient inhabitants of the Old World, and the ministry of Christ our Lord among them. The Book of Mormon contains the history of the Nephite and Jaredite people, ancient inhabitants of America, and the ministry of Jesus Christ on the American continent.