



Type: Magazine Article

Questions and Answers - Were All the Unsealed Records of the Book of Mormon Translated?

Author(s): Matthias F. Cowley

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 5, No. 5 (March 1902), pp. 393-395

Published by: Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association

If there be graduation from the lower to the higher spheres, there must, to render the situation consistent, be graduation within the degrees to the highest point of exaltation. The divine fiat, expressed in the quotation from section 131, is against it. If the barrier applies to two classes within the celestial degree, it certainly must also be applicable to all beneath them. The subject is of such a character that one break in the line of progressive climbing through one degree of glory to another is fatal to the theory that the inhabitants of the lower are transferable to the higher degrees.

Were all the Unsealed Records of the Book of Mormon Translated?

A stake president asks the ERA the following question, sent to him by a class teacher in his stake:

“What is meant by the unsealed portion of the plates of the Book of Mormon, being delivered to the angel?” The enquirer then adds: “It is generally supposed that all the unsealed portions were translated, but it seems they were not, from reading on page 73, History of Joseph Smith.”

The question is answered by Elder Matthias F. Cowley in these quotations and comments:

Let us first give a description of the plates as found in Orson Pratt's Works:*

These records were engraved on plates, which had the appearance of gold. Each plate was not far from seven to eight inches in width and length, being not quite as thick as common tin. They were filled on both sides with engravings in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a volume as the leaves of a book, and fastened at one edge with three rings running through the whole. This volume was something near six inches in thickness, *a part of which was sealed.*

The characters or letters upon the unsealed part were small and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction as well as much skill in the art of engraving. With the records was found a curious instrument, called by the ancients

*Remarkable Visions, page 6.

the Urim and Thummim, which consisted of two transparent stones clear as crystal, set in the two rims of a bow. This was in use in ancient times by persons called Seers. It was an instrument, by the use of which they received revelation of things distant, or of things past or future.

Respecting the Urim and Thummim, it was also used in the translation of records, and was thus employed by the Prophet Joseph in translating the Book of Mormon. The sealed part of the record, the Prophet was informed was not to be translated and published to the world, at that time, but if the people who should receive the unsealed portion were faithful to the things contained therein, they should receive, in the due time of the Lord, the contents of the sealed record. The Savior said to the Jews: "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." (Luke xii, 2.) After obtaining the plates, Joseph the Prophet copied a few characters and sent them by Martin Harris to Professor Anthon, who certified that they were genuine Egyptian. Then he asked Martin Harris to bring him the plates, and he would translate them. When the latter informed him that he could not do that, and that a portion of them were sealed, Professor Anthon answered with a jeer of contempt that he could not read "a sealed book" and thus, unwittingly, the learned man fulfilled the words found in Isaiah xxix.

After the Prophet had translated the unsealed plates and made ready the manuscript of the Book of Mormon, he returned the plates to the librarian and custodian of those sacred records—the angel Moroni. Concerning this the Prophet Joseph writes:

At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. On the 22nd day of September, 1827, having gone as usual at the end of another year, to the place where they were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge, that I should be responsible for them; that if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off; but that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected. I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep them safe, and why it was that the messenger had said, that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them; for no sooner was it known that I had them, than the most strenuous exer-

tions were used to get them from me; every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose; the persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible; but, by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him, and he has them in his charge until this day, being the 2nd day of May, 1838.*

Thus was returned to the angel Moroni, all the plates, sealed and unsealed, which had been entrusted to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

No other conclusion than that all the unsealed portions were translated can be drawn from the quotation above referred to (Cannon's Life of Joseph Smith). It reads:

After the work of translation was ended, Joseph recommitted his charge to the care of the angel of the record; and Moroni received it back into his keeping, to bring forth the yet unsealed portions of it only when God shall so decree.

It is self-evident that the words, "the yet unsealed portions" have reference to the portions that were sealed.

NOTES.

Hurry not only spoils work, but spoils life, also.—*Lubbock*.

Ignorance shuts its eyes and imagines it is right.

"Truth and justice are no protection against malice. Envy is blind to all objects save other men's happiness."

Say what you will of the coldness and selfishness of men, at the last we long for companionship and the fellowship of our kind. We are lost children, and when alone and the darkness begins to gather, we long for the close relationship of the brothers and sisters we knew in our childhood, and cry for the gentle arms that once rocked us to sleep. Men are home-sick amid this sad, mad rush for wealth, and place and power. The calm of the country invites and we would fain do with less things, and go back to simplicity, and rest our tired heads in the lap of mother nature.—*Elbert Hubbard*.

*Pearl of Great Price, pp. 67, 68.