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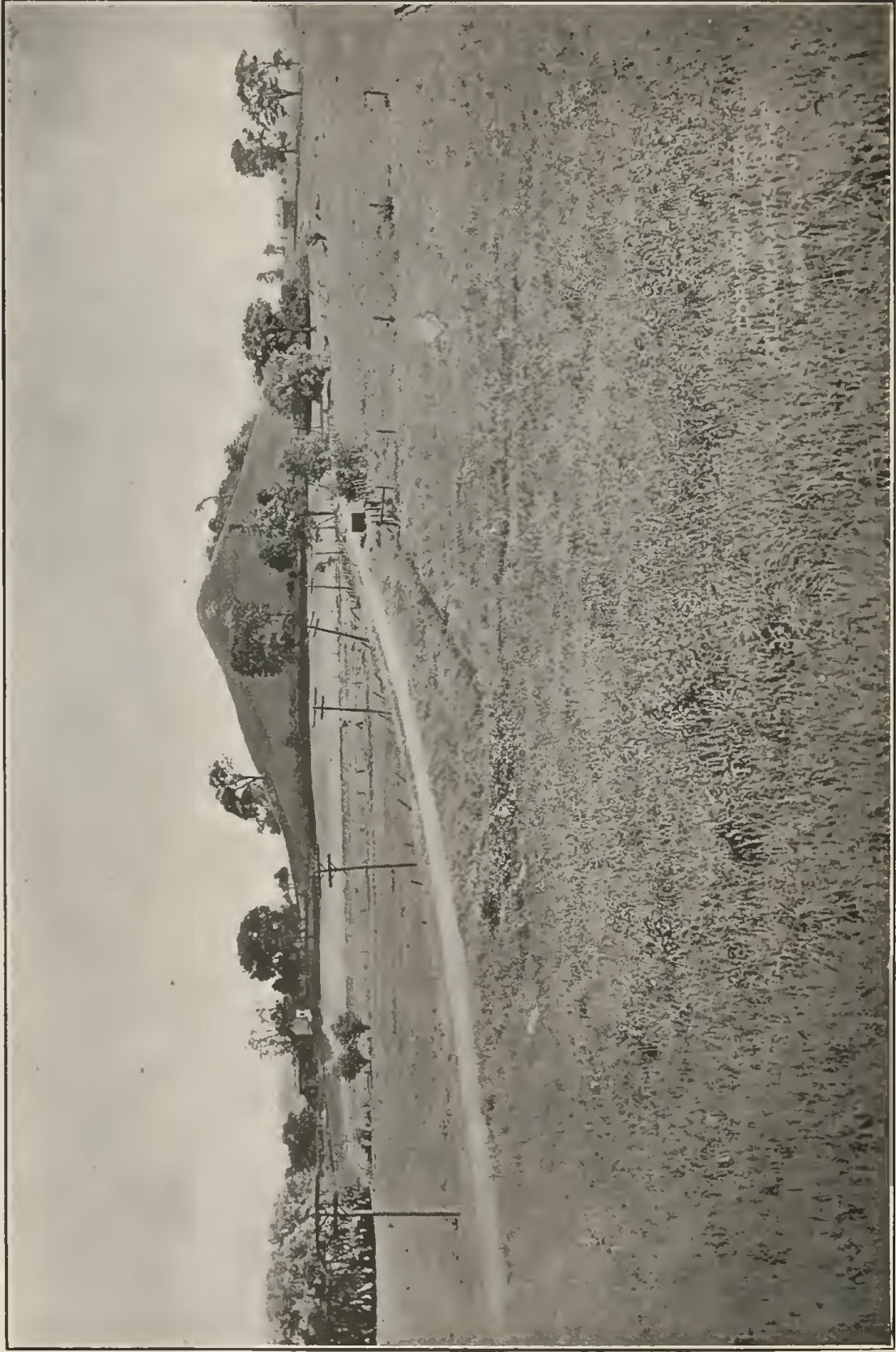
The Hill Cumorah

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Abstract: A report reviewing historical events dealing with the Hill Cumorah. The author recounts the history of the Nephite plates from the time Nephi began inscribing on them to when Ammaron turned them over to Mormon, followed by Moroni's acquisition of the plates and their placement in Hill Cumorah. Reference is also made to the sealed plates yet to be translated.



HILL RAMAH—HILL CUMORAH
Recently purchased by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

The Hill Cumorah*

BY PRESIDENT ANTHONY W. IVINS

I FEEL very grateful to the Lord, my brethren and sisters, that, through his mercy, all of us who are assembled here this morning enjoy the opportunity of meeting together in general conference, upon the ninety-eighth anniversary of the organization of the Church.

Reference has been made by the President of the acquisition by the Church of the spot of ground in the state of New York known as the hill Cumorah. It appears to me to be an event of such importance that I desire to devote the short time which is at my disposal this morning to a discussion of that subject. There have been some differences of opinion in regard to it, and in order that I might be correct in the statements which I make I have this morning finished a short manuscript which I would like to read—the first time, I believe, in my experience, that I have ever addressed a congregation in this manner, and I do it for the purpose stated.

AN IMPORTANT EVENT

The purchase of this hill, which President Grant has announced, is an event of more than ordinary importance to the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The memories of the remote past which cluster round this sacred spot, its close association with the opening of the present gospel dispensation, which has resulted in bringing together this congregation of people, for without it this tabernacle would not have been erected, nor would we have been gathered here in worship today, and the thought which we entertain of the possibilities which its bosom may unfold, make the acquisition of this hill almost an epochal accomplishment in the history of the Church.

If our Bible chronology is correct, and it is at least the best we have, it was in the year 599 before the birth of Christ, our Lord, that Zedekiah was chosen to be king of Judea. His reign was of short duration, extending over a period of only eleven years. He was in rebellion against the Babylonian kingdom, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, with his armies, overran Judea, made Zedekiah prisoner, put out his eyes, killed his sons, and carried the king away captive to Babylon.

It was during the reign of this king that Lehi and his family,

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Ishmael and members of his household, and Zoram, who had been a servant to Laban, left Jerusalem and began the journey which, in time, brought them to the American continent.

As a guide to their spiritual life these people brought with them that part of the Holy Scripture known to us as the Old Testament, which contained the first five books of Moses, the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and others of the ancient prophets. These records were engraved upon plates of brass.

TWO SETS OF PLATES

Soon after the arrival of these people and their establishment upon this continent, Nephi, the son of Lehi, was commanded to make other plates, on which a record of the history of his people was to be written. Two sets of plates were made from metal which was smelted from ores that abounded in the new world to which the Nephites had come; upon them Nephi commenced to record the history of his people. Both of these sets of plates which were made were called the plates of Nephi. Upon one set, which was called the larger plates of Nephi, the secular history of the people was kept, the reign of their various kings, their system of democratic government under the judges who were chosen by the voice of the people, and their wars and contentions. A smaller set was made, on which the religious history of the people was kept, their faith in God and the service rendered to him, their idolatry, the hand-dealings of the Lord among them, the predictions of their prophets, and the persecutions which they suffered because of their faith in, and adherence to, the doctrines taught by their fathers.

It was principally from these latter plates that Mormon made the abridgment which constitutes the volume known as the Book of Mormon. These records were carefully preserved, and passed through the hands of many different custodians before the history closed, which was more than four hundred years after the birth of the Redeemer of the world.

Besides these two sets of the plates of Nephi, and the brass plates which were brought from Jerusalem, there were twenty-four plates of gold, upon which was recorded a brief abridgment of the history of a people who came from Babylon to this continent long before the arrival of the Nephite colony. They left the old world at the time of the building of the Tower of Babel, about 2,200 years before the birth of Christ. It was from these latter plates that Moroni, the son of Mormon, transcribed that portion of the Book of Mormon known as the Book of Ether.

It was three hundred twenty-one years after the birth of Christ that all of these records came into the hands of Ammaron, who received them from his brother Amos, who was the son of Nephi, who

wrote the fourth book of Nephi, which appears in the Book of Mormon, as the following shows (I am quoting here, as I shall continue to quote, from the Book of Mormon itself);

“And it came to pass that when three hundred twenty years had passed away, Ammaron, being constrained by the Holy Ghost, did hide up the records which were sacred—yea, even all the sacred records which had been handed down from generation to generation, which were sacred—even until the three hundred twentieth year from the coming of Christ. And he did hide them up unto the Lord, that they might come again unto the remnant of the House of Jacob, according to the prophecies and the promises of the Lord. And thus is the end of the record of Ammaron.”

AMMARON TO MORMON

One year later Ammaron called Mormon to him and gave him the following instruction:

“And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon. And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me, (I being about ten years of age, and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people) and Ammaron said unto me: I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe; therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age go to the land Antum, unto a hill which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord all the sacred engravings concerning this people.

“And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.

“And I, Mormon, being a descendant of Nephi, (and my father’s name was Mormon) I remembered the things which Ammaron commanded me.”

Fourteen years after this charge had been given to Mormon he writes as follows:

“And now, the city of Jashon was near the land where Ammaron had deposited the records unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed. And behold I had gone according to the word of Ammaron, and taken the plates of Nephi, and did make a record according to the words of Ammaron.”

It will be observed that at this time only the plates of Nephi were removed from the hill Shim by Mormon.

YEARS OF CONSTANT WAR

It was forty years later, as near as we are able to fix the date, that Mormon again visited this hill, under different circumstances, as the following shows: Forty years had passed, forty years of constant war and bloodshed between the Nephite people and their enemies, the Lamanites. The Nephites were fleeing before their enemies, taking all of the inhabitants with them when Mormon says:

“And now I, Mormon, seeing that the Lamanites were about to overthrow the land, therefore I did go to the hill Shim, and did take up all of the records which Ammaron had hid up unto the Lord.”

Mormon, after taking possession of the records, returned to the command of the Nephite armies. The sacred records, which had lain in the hill Shim for more than 50 years, were now in the custody of Mormon, and the Nephite people were fleeing before their enemies. Ten years later, ten years of hopeless struggle, Mormon again writes as follows:

“And I, Mormon, wrote an epistle unto the king of the Lamanites, and desired of him that he would grant unto us that we might gather together our people unto the land of Cumorah, by a hill which was called Cumorah, and there we could give them battle. And it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites did grant unto me the things which I desired. And it came to pass that we did march forth to the land of Cumorah, and we did pitch our tents round about the hill Cumorah; and it was in a land of many waters, rivers, and fountains; and here we had hoped to gain advantage over the Lamanites. And when three hundred and eighty and four years had passed away, we had gathered in all the remainder of our people unto the land of Cumorah.

IN THE HILL CUMORAH

“And it came to pass that when we had gathered in all our people in one to the land of Cumorah, behold I, Mormon, began to be old [this man, at this time, was past 70 years of age and was still the commander-in-chief of the Nephite army]; and knowing it to be the last struggle of my people, and having been commanded of the Lord that I should not suffer the records which had been handed down by our fathers, which were sacred, to fall into the hands of the Lamanites, (for the Lamanites would destroy them) therefore I made this record out of the plates of Nephi, and hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni.

“And it came to pass that my people, with their wives and their children, did now behold the armies of the Lamanites marching toward them; and with that awful fear of death which fills the breasts of all the wicked, did they wait to receive them.”

THE FINAL DISPOSITION

So far as we have information, this was the final disposition which was made of the records given into the custody of Mormon, from the plates of Nephi. This latter, with the addition of the Book of Ether, and the few chapters written by Moroni, constitute the record contained in the Book of Mormon.

All of the remaining records, Mormon tells us, were deposited in the hill Cumorah.

That the hill Cumorah and the hill Ramah are identical is shown by the following: Moroni, in the Book of Ether, says:

“And it came to pass that the armies of Coriantumr did press upon the armies of Shiz [he is telling the story now of this first people who came to the American continent from the Tower of Babel] that they beat them, that they caused them to flee before them; and they did flee southward, and did pitch their tents in a place which was called Ogath. And it came to pass that the army of Coriantumr did pitch their tents by the hill Ramah; and it was that same hill where my father Mormon did hide up the records unto the Lord, which were sacred.”

The passages which I have quoted from the Book of Mormon

and the more extended discussion of this subject by Elder B. H. Roberts which was published in *The Deseret News* of March 3 definitely established the following facts: That the hill Cumorah, and the hill Ramah are identical. That it was around this hill that the armies of both the Jaredites and Nephites fought their great last battles. That it was in this hill that Mormon deposited all of the sacred records which had been entrusted to his care by Ammaron, except the abridgment which he had made from the plates of Nephi, which were delivered into the hands of his son, Moroni. We know positively that it was in this hill that Moroni deposited the abridgment made by his father, and his own abridgment of the record of the Jaredites, and that it was from this hill that Joseph Smith obtained possession of them.

PART OF THE RECORD SEALED

Only a portion of the record which came into possession of Joseph Smith was translated, and is contained in the present edition of the Book of Mormon. Part of the record was sealed, which he was forbidden to translate. The first Nephi, foreseeing that which would occur among the descendants of his father, has this to say:

“And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall bring forth unto you the words of a book, and they shall be the words of them which have slumbered.

“And behold the book shall be sealed; and in the book shall be a revelation from God, from the beginning of the world to the ending thereof. Wherefore, because of the things which are sealed up, the things which are sealed shall not be delivered in the day of the wickedness and abominations of the people. Wherefore the book shall be kept from them.

“And the day cometh that the words of the book which were sealed shall be read upon the housetops; and they shall be read by the power of Christ; and all things shall be revealed unto the children of men whichever have been among the children of men, and whichever will be unto the end of the earth.”

FROM THE BOOK OF ETHER

The footnotes with that which I have read refer us to the book of Ether, from which I desire to read a few paragraphs:

“And the Lord commanded the brother of Jared to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen; and they were forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that he should be lifted up upon the cross; and for this cause did King Mosiah keep them, that they should not come unto the world until after Christ should show himself unto his people. And after Christ truly had showed himself unto his people he commanded that they should be made manifest.

“And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites, and they have rejected the gospel of Christ; therefore I am commanded that I should hide them up again in the earth.

“Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest, than those which

were made manifest unto the brother of Jared. Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the interpretation thereof; wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters, according to the commandment of the Lord. For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.

“And now I, Moroni, have written the words which were commanded me, according to my memory; and I have told you the things which I have sealed up; therefore touch them not in order that ye may translate; for that thing is forbidden you, except by and by it shall be wisdom in God.”

AWAITING THE TIME

This sealed portion of the record which came into the hands of Joseph Smith but was not translated by him so far as we are aware, with the abridgment made by Mormon, the record of Ether, and the other sacred records which were deposited in the hill Cumorah still lie in their repository, awaiting the time when the Lord shall see fit to bring them forth, that they may be published to the world.

Whether they have been removed from the spot where Mormon deposited them we cannot tell, but this we know, that they are safe under the guardianship of the Lord, and that they will be brought forth at the proper time, as the Lord has declared they should be, for the benefit and blessing of the people of the world, for his word never fails.

According to the Book of Mormon, many hundreds of thousands of people fell in battle around this hill and in the immediate vicinity. It was here that two once-powerful nations were exterminated so far as their national existence was concerned. It was here that these nations gathered together for their last great struggles.

UNTIL THE LAST

These people were human, as we are; they carried with them their most precious possessions until the last, and when the end of the mighty struggle came and the result was in doubt, they hid them away in order that they might not fall into the hands of their enemies.

Without doubt, these treasures lie concealed today, some of them, at least, to be brought forth in the not-distant future. How soon this will be we do not know, but this is certain, we are more than a century nearer that time than we were at the time when Joseph Smith took from their resting place, in the hill Cumorah, the plates from which he translated the contents of the Book of Mormon.

All of these incidents to which I have referred, my brethren and sisters, are very closely associated with this particular spot in the

state of New York. Therefore I feel, as I said in the beginning of my remarks, that the acquisition of that spot of ground is more than an incident in the history of the Church; it is an epoch—an epoch which in my opinion is fraught with that which may become of greater interest to the Latter-day Saints than that which has already occurred. We know that all of these records, all the sacred records of the Nephite people, were deposited by Mormon in that hill. That incident alone is sufficient to make it the sacred and hallowed spot that it is to us. I thank God that, in a way which seems to have been providential, it has come into the possession of the Church.

I bear witness to you that the words which I have read here, quoted from the Book of Mormon, which refer to the future will be fulfilled. Those additional records will come forth, they will be published to the world, that the children of our Father may be converted to faith in Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, through obedience to the doctrines which he taught. May God our Father hasten that day, is my humble prayer, and I ask it through Jesus Christ. Amen.

WHAT WE NEED

We need *not* read all of the badness
 The papers report every day;
 Nor cling to the sorrow and sadness
 So common in life's hurried way;
 But we *do* need the strength and the gladness
 We find when we fervently pray.

We need, then, to "pray without ceasing".
 As Jesus our Savior has said,
 Our souls from doubt's shadows releasing,
 Creating heart sunshine instead,
 Pure faith and good works thus increasing;
 So shall we in safety be led.

We need to guard all we are saying,
 That we may "offend not in word",
 The prophet's wise precepts obeying,
 As old and new scriptures record.
 While studying, working and praying,
 We need to live near to the Lord.

We need to accept all his warnings,
 Confessing his hand in the rod
 Which will lead us both evenings and mornings
 In paths which the lowly have trod,
 Towards life in its richest adornings—
 Celestial, eternal, with God.