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The Book of Mormon as a History

Author(s): James A. Little

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Abstract: Briefly discusses the Book of Mormon as inspired history.

and near this bridge we see houses. Thus there are three roads in the engraving, one above another; two for the cars, and one for ordinary travel.

The change that has been made by the building of railroads is most wonderful, and yet it seems but a short period since they were first used. It was in October, 1849, that the Liverpool and Manchester Company offered a premium of \$500,000 for the production of the best locomotive. Four were brought forward to compete. Mr. George Stephenson's *Rocket* won the prize. It traveled twelve and one half miles an hour, with three times its own weight attached; and twenty-nine miles an hour when running alone. Up to that time railways had been looked upon as only suitable for the carriage of goods; but new ideas then took possession of the people, and they saw that it was possible for passengers to travel in that way, with ease and swiftness. The performance of this locomotive excited the admiration of all civilized people. As far back, however, as 1804, Richard Trevithick ran a steam locomotive on a railway at Merthyr Tydvil, in Wales; it was one which he built and patented. But this was for freight.

When it was stated that locomotives could be built to move freight-cars at the rate of ten miles an hour, many scientific men smiled, and declared it impossible. After, however, the *Rocket* had been built, and it was found that a speed far superior to that of horses could be reached, men indulged in many speculations, and some even ventured to hope that they might, at some period in the future, travel at the rate of twenty miles an hour! At the present time that rate of speed is deemed very slow. We have traveled, while on a mission in England, ninety miles in an hour and a half, or at the rate of a mile a minute, including stoppages.

In 1831, the average speed of the passenger trains in Great Britain was seventeen miles an hour. This was gradually increased until in 1848 it was thirty miles an hour. The speed of the fastest trains, which in 1831 was twenty-four miles an hour, was, in 1848, on the Liverpool and Manchester lines, forty miles an hour; and on the Grand Junction, and the Liverpool and Birmingham, fifty miles an hour. The number of trains, which pass from point to point, has gradually increased every year from their first adoption up to the present time; and the weight drawn by locomotives has also increased.

On the Union Pacific, locomotives are exceedingly large, and enormously strong, especially upon this end of the line, because they have to climb such steep grades. Generally when going up Weber canyon there are two locomotives put on each train.

Sometimes, in order to preserve the straightness of a railway, *skew* bridges are required at points where the railway intersects other roads. This is the case in our engraving. Hence, in crossing such a road by a *skew* bridge, the connections over and under the bridge form equal angles with each other. In consequence of this many beautiful examples of brick and masonry-work are constructed; and these structures exhibit in a wonderful manner the skill and ingenuity of man.

Steam has done wonders in the world; and it is aiding in a wonderful manner in bringing the Saints from afar. We heard an Elder, at our late Quarterly Conference, who had returned from a mission, bear testimony and give his experience. He said that he and the company he traveled with had come in eighteen traveling days from Liverpool, England, to this city. This is truly wonderful. When the Saints lived at Nauvoo, it required weeks and months to make the journey from England to that place. And now we are here in these

mountains, and in this short space of time the Saints are transported from one hemisphere to the other. The Lord's ways are truly wonderful; and He will fulfill all that has been spoken concerning His work, and concerning the great and wonderful events of the last days.

THE BOOK OF MORMON, AS A HISTORY.

BY J. A. LITTLE.

THE Book of Mormon is as exclusively the history of the western hemisphere as the Bible is of the eastern. The history of the former, since the flood, commences in the 11th chapter of Genesis, with the scattering of the people from the tower of Babel. This event happened, according to received chronology, about 2247 B. C. From that to the birth of our Savior, and until 1492, when this continent was discovered, we have the long period of over 3,700 years, during which we know of no record whatever of the myriads of the human family who have lived on this portion of the globe, except what is given in the Book of Mormon. This is a very limited account, but none the less precious because limited. It tells of their revolutions, their governments, their laws, their political economies, of their joys and sorrows. The ruins of cities, the remains of pyramidal structures, of fortifications, of supposed historical and monumental mounds, and of depositories of the dead, tell their tale of departed greatness, and serve to elucidate a few general facts regarding the past, but otherwise, to those who have no faith in the Book of Mormon, they have been the subject of endless conjecture. A. D. 420, Moroni closed the record of Mormon. From that time, for 1,000 years, the history of the American continent is a blank except what we can learn of its prophetic future, from the writings of the first Nephi. Adding 2,247 years before Christ, to 1,877 after, we have 4,125 years, during which, the only history we have of this continent, aside from the Book of Mormon, is the modern—that of the 385 years that have transpired since its discovery, or for less than one tenth of this long period. These facts plainly indicate the great importance of this book as a history.

The unreliable nature of all history, that is not written with the clear-sighted comprehension of divine inspiration, adds greatly to the importance of the sacred records. The same kind of honest boldness which characterized the prophet Nathan, when he said to King David, in the height of his power: "thou art the man," is seen in the writings of all the inspired men who have assisted in recording the historical facts of the Bible and Book of Mormon.

By way of illustration, let a latter-day Saint and a learned divine of to-day, each write a history of the life of Joseph Smith, the prophet, and each would represent a character entirely different to the other. Each would claim that he had written the truth. Let these two biographies descend to the next generation, and those who read them would need revelation to discern between the true and the false.

This may be considered an extreme case, but it is easily understood because contemporary with us. Its parallel is seen in the history of our Savior, and of prophets and apostles in every age of the past. It is a forcible illustration of the great difference that will be found, when all things are made manifest, between the inspired history of the world and that written by men who are influenced by their prejudices and traditions.

Doubtless, the prophetic history of the world was written by Enoch, before the flood, and since then by the brother of Jared, by Abraham, by Moses and the prophets. When the true narrative of the historical facts of this creation are plainly written they will be evidences of the truthfulness of its prophetic history, as written long before the events transpired.

Biography.

JOSEPH SMITH, THE PROPHET.

(Continued.)

ON the 1st of July, 1841, President B. Young and Elders H. C. Kimball and John Taylor arrived at Nauvoo from their mission to England. Their brethren, who had been with them to England, were detained a few days after them by business, visiting their relatives, etc. They had performed a glorious mission, and they returned with great joy to their families and to the society of the Saints. They had started upon their journey, as our readers will recollect, under very peculiar circumstances. They were sick, their families were sick; and they were compelled to leave them without any visible means of support, and without comfortable places to shelter them. Yet they started; and God proved to them that His promises are sure. He preserved them on their journey, furnished them means wherewith to travel, raised them up friends, healed them, and made them the instruments of bringing thousands to the knowledge of the truth. They now returned strong in body, rich in faith and experience, to find their families alive and well, and to rejoice, once more, in the society of the prophet and Saints of God. And could Joseph not appreciate them? His experience had taught him to place a high value upon men of truth and integrity. He delighted in the faithfulness of the Twelve. They had gone forth without hesitation to fulfill the command of God, and he knew that, now they had returned, they would sustain and be a comfort to him. Under date of August 1st, he wrote:

"All the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who were expected here this season, with the exception of Elders Willard Richards and Wilford Woodruff, have arrived. We have listened to the accounts which they give of their success, and the prosperity of the work of the Lord in Great Britain with pleasure. They certainly have been the instruments in the hands of God, of accomplishing much, and must have the satisfaction of knowing that they have done their duty. Perhaps no men ever undertook such an important mission under such peculiarly distressing, forbidding, and unpropitious circumstances. Most of them when they left this place, nearly two years ago, were worn down with sickness and disease, or were taken sick on the road. Several of their families were also afflicted and needed their aid and support. But knowing that they had been called by the God of Heaven to preach the gospel to other nations, they conferred not with flesh and blood, but obedient to the heavenly mandate, *without purse or scrip*, commenced a journey of five thousand miles entirely dependent on the providences of that God who had called them to

such a holy calling. While journeying to the sea board, they were brought into many trying circumstances; after a short recovery from severe sickness, they would be taken with a relapse, and have to stop among strangers, without money and without friends. Their lives were several times despaired of, and they have taken each other by the hand, expecting it would be the last time they should behold one another in the flesh. However, notwithstanding their afflictions and trials, the Lord always interposed in their behalf, and did not suffer them to sink in the arms of death. Some way or other was made for their escape—friends rose up when they most needed them, and relieved their necessities; and thus they were enabled to pursue their journey and rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. They, truly, 'went forth weeping, bearing precious seed,' but have 'returned with rejoicing, bearing their sheaves with them.'"

On the 7th of August Don Carlos Smith, Joseph's youngest brother, died. He was twenty-five years old at the time of his death. He was a young man of considerable promise, and had been very active and zealous in the work from the commencement. He was one of the first to receive the testimony of Joseph respecting the gospel. The evening after the plates of the Book of Mormon were shown to the eight witnesses, a meeting was held at which all the witnesses bore testimony of the truth of the latter day dispensation. Don Carlos was present at this meeting, and also bore the same testimony. He was ordained to the Priesthood when only fourteen years old, and at that age accompanied his father on a mission to his grandfather and relatives in St. Lawrence county, New York. While on this mission he was the means of convincing a Baptist minister of the truth of the work of God. After this he took several missions, and was very active in the ministry at home, being one of the twenty-four Elders who laid the corner-stones of the Kirtland Temple. Before he was quite twenty years old he was ordained President of the High Priests' quorum, in which capacity he acted until the time of his death. He and his counselors laid the south-west corner-stone of the Temple at Nauvoo. He was a printer, having learned the business in the office of Oliver Cowdery at Kirtland, and when the *Elder's Journal* was published there, he took charge of the establishment. After the Saints removed to Nauvoo, he commenced making preparations for publishing the *Times and Seasons*. To get the paper issued at an early date he was under the necessity of cleaning out a cellar, through which a spring was constantly flowing, that being the only place where he could put up the press. He caught cold at this labor; and this, with administering to the sick, impaired his health, which he never fully recovered again. At the time of his death he was Brigadier General of the first Cohort of the Nauvoo Legion, and a member of the City Council of Nauvoo.

Like Joseph and his other brothers, he was a splendidly-formed man, physically, being six feet four inches high, very straight and well-made, and strong and active. He was much beloved by all who knew him: for he was wise beyond his years, and he appeared to have a great future before him.

His death was a heavy blow to his family and relatives. Joseph felt it severely.

It is cowardice that prompts us when we seek to cast upon others the burdens we ought to bear ourselves; and it is a false philosophy that tries to save the wrong doer from the punishment due to his evil deeds.