

## Conclusion

Many scholars have realized that there are problems regarding the claim that it is a history of peoples of ancient America that would place the Book of Mormon and its people in a Christian setting. To begin, the Book of Mormon states it is an account of what actually happened to those mentioned in the book otherwise it would be a piece of fiction. This is the issue in regard to the questions which have been raised concerning the book. If this question can be solved only in part it would bring a new look on a book which has been considered as a guide of how ancient people lived and practiced their religion.

The Book of Mormon not only Christianizes the Old Testament portion of the work, but incorporates an interpretation that goes far beyond what the biblical text actually says. Most modern versions of the Bible permit the Old Testament to stand on its own and do not compromise its integrity by transforming it into a Christian product. Gordon Irving has stated it correctly:

Mormons naturally developed a view of the past which held that the gospel of Christ as presented in the New Testament had been preached to all men since the beginning of the world and that whenever God's church had existed on earth, it had enjoyed the same gifts as the apostolic church. The order set up in Jesus's day was thus projected both backward to Adam and forward in time to the Mormon themselves and on beyond to the Millennium. This much was accepted by all Mormons, although individuals might differ somewhat as to details and implications of the idea.<sup>1</sup>

By dictating the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith Jr. expressed some of his religious beliefs through the text of the book. A few examples are: (1) America is a promised land, a land of liberty, a Zion; (2) the Bible was brought to America; (3) the Bible was brought to the Indians; (4) the ordinance of baptism is to be performed by immersion; (5) infants are not to be baptized; (6) the name of the church is to be the Church of Christ; (7) Hebrew/Israelite origin of American Indians; (8) the book of Isaiah was important to the Indians; (9) visit of Christ to America after his crucifixion; (10) the Sermon on the Mount used to help document this event; (11) there is one God; (12) current Christian churches were corrupt and have false teachers and doctrines; (13) a New Jerusalem is to be built in America with the help of the Indians; (14) Christianity existed in America prior to the birth of Christ; (15) revival experiences; (16) the Bible has been tampered with; (17) Isaiah 29 a prediction of the Book of Mormon; (18) a seer to be raised up by the name of Joseph, after his father's name. These are some of the many ideas embodied in the text of the 1830 Book of Mormon.

After the claim of finding gold plates, the plates were not known to have been used by Smith in the dictation process. None of the scribes or any one of the eleven witnesses of the Book of Mormon saw physical plates in the possession of Joseph Smith Jr. while he was dictating the text of the book. If the plates were not used in the dictation process, as all careful evidence and research indicates, then there would be no point in having witnesses to what was never used for the text of the Book of Mormon. If the text was to have been revealed by revelation then no plates were needed. While some have considered the Book of Mormon to be an ancient record we today can look at the book in light of modern research. It is because the Book of Mormon's historical, religious, and doctrinal ideas are known to be drawn from a nineteenth century setting rather than an ancient setting that a new position can be made. The teachings of the Book of Mormon, archeology, geography, Hill Cumorah, gold plates, and angel all go together. With the new understanding the Book of Mormon can now be put on a shelf and take its place as an artifact of the Restoration movement and be a part of the Latter Day Saint heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon I. Irving, "Mormonism and the Bible, 1832-1838," (Senior Honors Project Summary, University of Utah, August 1972), 4-5; see also *Brigham Young University Studies* 13 (Summer 1973):474.