

Is the Book of Mormon History?

LINKS:

<http://mormonscripturestudies.com/>
<http://www.realmormonhistory.com/>
<http://www.help4rlds.com/>

Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the Mormon founder, claimed to have had golden plates given to him by an angel. To back up this extraordinary claim, he had to have witnesses to silence people who thought that the plates never existed. He chose three witnesses who said they saw the plates as an angel turned the leaves for them to have a look. They testified also that Smith's miraculous translation of the plates was correct. Then he chose eight witnesses who said that they saw the plates close up. This testimony led to the foundation of the Church of Christ which later became the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The translation is called the Book of Mormon.

HISTORICAL "ERRORS"

The Book of Mormon claims to be a record of life in ancient America that God revealed to Joseph Smith the founder of the Mormon Church in the 1830's. But there are many reasons for denying this. The book makes serious historical blunders.

Be careful that you do not see historical errors in the Book of Mormon that are not there.

Alma 7:10 predicts that Jesus will be born in Jerusalem when it should be Bethlehem according to the Bible. But the verse speaks of Jerusalem as the name of a land. It is just what the Nephites called the land they came from therefore there is no contradiction. Also, the Book of Mormon never says Jesus was born at Bethlehem and claims that the Bible has been changed and corrupted. Was the Bethlehem birth one of the corruptions?

Helaman 14:20 is supposed to make the error of saying the whole world will be cloaked in darkness for three days at the time of the death of Jesus. But the verse never actually says that the entire world will see it but that all America will be cloaked in darkness.

HISTORICAL ERRORS

In 1 Nephi 16 we are told that Nephi and his companions began to starve because their bows and arrows became useless for hunting in the wilderness. He complains that it is exceedingly hard to get food until it occurs to him to make new bows and arrows. Is this believable?

2 Nephi 5 says that there was a huge abundance of precious metals in the land where Nephi and co landed in America. It says that a temple was built but which was not as grand as Solomon's for not enough precious things were found for it. This seems to be a contradiction.

Mormons explain that there was a great abundance but not enough for the temple or not enough was accessible. Nephi says that the temple was like that of Solomon which does not mean that it was necessarily the same size as Solomon's. But maybe it did contradict itself? The solutions are just speculation. There is no evidence that the solutions were intended therefore at worst there is a contradiction and at best we don't know if there is one or not which undermines credibility. When God could not manage to be clearer and avoid this imperfection it shows that there probably is a contradiction for the account is purely man-made.

There is a problem with a few men arriving in America making swords on the basis that it takes a lot of work to make them. Mining, smelting, fluxing, forming and grinding require hard work and a lot of equipment.

The story is implausible for the swords were not needed. Mormons reply that they needed the swords because the Lamanites were beginning to separate from the Nephites making both sides enemies (2 Nephi 5:14). This still makes no sense. Didn't they hear of clubs? Besides we still have only a small number of people here.

Presumably God gave them the equipment to make the swords. But the story doesn't say that. If we assume miracles all the time to explain contradictions or implausibilities we will not be able to see contradictions when they are staring us in the face. It's an irrational thing to assume miracles for miracles by nature must be very improbable. Christians agree that they

are improbable and that that is why they are called miracles.

Some Mormons say it is easier to assume that the swords were crude metal ones so the long process of making them wasn't needed. But they still needed to mine for the metal and that is hard work. Why go to all that trouble? Was America not big enough for the Nephites to get away from the Lamanites?

The Liahona was the compass the Nephites used to reach the Promised Land long before Jesus was born. But compasses didn't exist before Jesus and not for centuries after. Mormons say this would not be an anachronism if there is a God for he would know how to make a compass before man would find out. Again this is assuming miracles something that even God cannot ask us to do.

And Mormons may then say that the Liahona was able to point the Nephites to the places where food was to be found in the wilderness therefore it was not a real compass for a compass works by magnetism. This was a ball with magic pointers in it and not a compass. But the Book of Mormon calls the device a compass (2 Nephi 5:12).

Mormons will then answer, "Some have a problem with this. But say the Nephites called it a pointer there would be nothing wrong if Smith or God chose to translate it as compass a modern word for that is what it is."

At the same time, anybody could write a holy book full of anachronisms and cover up the errors by saying that God knows all things and all about science so the things existed thanks to him before they were invented. The Mormon answers may appear as if they get the book out of charges of having made errors but they leave us very unconvinced. It is easier to believe the Book makes errors than to believe in miracles to solve the errors.

In Jacob 4, the writer says he cannot write much for it is hard to engrave on metal plates and then he says that we labour hard to do engraving for it is so important! A complete contradiction for with all that help he could have got more written!

The Book of Mormon has a theology of the devil as a fallen angel which it claims was fully developed in Old Testament times in America. But this theology did not develop in the Church until New Testament times. The Old Testament gives no hint of the existence of a personal devil.

Alma 12 discusses the atonement made by Christ and understands it in exactly the same way as St Anselm who was born in 1033 AD did, the idea of God being infinite and Jesus being God so anything he did was infinite in merit and he offered his life on the cross which was infinite in merit to pay for our sins in our place. The problem is that Anselm was the first to teach this theology and before that the common view was that Jesus paid the atonement to the Devil.

Alma 56:56 says that in a bloody battle with the Lamanites no Nephites at all were killed. The Mormon Church says that there had been a battle before and the Lamanites were tired and the Nephites defeated them through a surprise attack. But tired or not there had to have been some Nephite casualties. The Church is lying because it can read that the Nephites fought with miraculous strength that was never seen before. This miracle would not have been necessary had the Lamanites been that tired. The Nephites would be tired as well and why not war when both sides are tired?

In Mosiah 2:7 we are told that since the people were too numerous to hear King Benjamin's sermons he had to have a tower built to shout from. Not surprisingly, this did not help much and he had to get his sermons written down and the transcripts handed out. What makes this story so absurd is that he would have known that the tower would be no help from the start. We are told that he began to speak from the tower and the people could not hear. How dumb was he? No wonder he told them that anybody who dies in sin goes to burn in Hell forever and ever (Mosiah 2:38,39).

There were no silkworms or mulberry trees for their larvae to live on in America until Cortez brought them there in 1522. Yet 1 Nephi 13:7; Alma 1:29; Ether 9:17; and 10:24 say that the Nephites made silk. The Mormon answer is that what the Nephites made was like silk but was not silk. Then why could God not say that? Why did he call it silk? What other words in the Book of Mormon cannot be taken literally if God talks like that? God speaks of cumons and we don't know what they are so why could he not use the Nephite word for this substance that was like silk? The episode indicates that there is no supernatural agency behind the words the Mormons say show knowledge of ancient languages that Smith would have known nothing of.

Mormons say that Helaman 12 which cites John's gospel before it was written could have come from a book that Lehi had and John used the same book when writing the gospel. Or they say that God dictated the Bible as well as the Book of Mormon and so similarities were inevitable. But there is no evidence for such a book and besides Lehi and John were continents and centuries apart and copies were rare. It is too unlikely and when the Book of Mormon was translated centuries later it is easier to believe that somebody familiar with John put the verse in during this translation.

Mormons believe that God wrote the Book of Mormon like he wrote the Bible and so are not bothered about the fact that

the book shows great knowledge of the New Testament which it would have known nothing about. Jesus dictated the Sermon on the Mount as it was in the 1611 King James Bible so he might have dictated what he intended the gossellers and co to write before it was written so Mormon was influenced by what he dictated. It is only right to accept all this if you can find evidence that the book is from God. If you can't then you must believe that whoever wrote the book stole from the King James Bible to compose it. Textual evidence is the strongest evidence for it is physical. It is not just testimony or anything like that. So when you see a book written in 1611 being cited in a book that claims to have been finished in 421 AD you know that speculation that this does not refute antiquity is no good for the strongest witness says it is not ancient.

There are many absurd super-miracles in the Book of Mormon. Mormons would not see them as silly so we must show them absurdities of a natural kind.

The scenario of thirty-two people following Shiz battling to near extinction with the twenty-seven followers of Coriantumr (Ether 15:35) is sheer madness. Coriantumr and his band should have fled. Shiz and his cronies were too diminished to be worth fighting any more.

Ether 5:6 has Moroni saying we will be able to judge if he made up the Book of Ether and his own writings. This was spoken to people living from 1829 to now. But we have no evidence that the book is true. Moroni was proven to be a false prophet by this statement. Appealing to a spiritual testimony is no use for what if a book as good as Ether was written? Many would claim a similar testimony.

The resurrected Jesus Christ appears to all the people of Nephi when he only appeared to a handful in Palestine. They all go and touch his wounds and his side. Suspect. It should have taken them days and days to do it but it didn't take long.

Moroni 7 contains teaching on charity that is almost straight out of St Paul's teaching on charity in 1 Corinthians 13. Moroni could not have had access to Paul's writings for Moroni was in America and there was no contact with Europe where Paul's epistles were distributed. The simplest explanation is that Joseph Smith copied out of his Bible and wrote the Book of Mormon himself. Mormons disagree and conjecture that Moroni saw Paul's writings in a vision or that Jesus made the teaching not Paul and Moroni and Paul were copying Jesus and Paul was not copied by Moroni. This would involve holding that Jesus voiced the teaching both in Palestine and in America. This shows how dangerous belief in miracles is. You can pass off any pack of lies as the truth as long as you can suppose miracles happened. Because any religion can do the same you end up with having no real credibility – you end up giving no real reason to believe. Unless you stick to simple non-supernatural explanations you will never get anywhere. This is true even if you believe in the supernatural for you should only believe in it when you have to. Anything that confuses and obscures the truth is dangerous and fanatical for we need to be grounded in reality to live wholesome lives. If we reason away the evidence that the author of the Book of Mormon used the Bible to help him write it and was not translating from golden plates then that opens the way for any forger to do the same. If it is right to slander scholarly critics and do away with science then how can it be wrong to command suicide in the name of faith? Follow reason, not rationalisation.

Alma 46:15 says that the Nephites were called Christians in 73 BC. Acts says that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. But the Mormons say the Church Acts is on about was called that for the first time which does not rule out an unknown Church being called that before then. They are assuming that people being called Christians before Christ is explicable. It is not. They are assuming miracles. Miracles are so improbable that they should never be assumed. You need the evidence for every miracle. If a miracle doesn't have any evidence then it fails to be a proper miracle to us. Miracle means wonder. Stories about miracles don't cause wonder – only evidences for miracles do.

The Book of Mormon is full of miracles that were not seen in Smith's day. He couldn't do any miracles even though he was supposed to be the best prophet of them all.

CONCLUSION

The Book of Mormon is not history but fiction. Mormons use lies and distortion to cover up its errors and that it is not the word of God. When a major world religion that is so respected is so full of untruth and whitewash and exploitation, what does that say about other world faiths such as Catholicism and Jehovah's Witnesses? Mormonism is not the only religion known to have deployed serious deception.

BOOKS CONSULTED

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THE FACTS OF MORMONISM ARE STRANGER THAN FICTION, Charles Crane and J Edward Decker, Christian Information Outreach, Kent, 1982
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WHY THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WAS ESTABLISHED ANEW IN 1929?, Church of Christ with the Elijah Message, Independence, Missouri

THE WEB

THE BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES

www.exmormon.org/file9.htm

Excellent refutation of the claims of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon

Barry R Bickmore

www.geocities.com/Athens/parthenon/2671/EC.html

MORMON SCHOLARSHIP, APOLOGETICS AND EVANGELICAL NEGLECT, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen,

www.gospelcom.net/apologeticsindex/cpoint10-2.html#mosserowen

BOOK OF MORMON QUESTIONS

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MORMONISM UNVAILED: MORE EVIDENCE THAT IT IS TRUE. Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry

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THE ABRIDGEMENT OF D&C 137

www.saintsalive./com/mormonism/falseprophetjs/htm

THE BOOK OF MORMON: ONE TOO MANY M'S Stephen Van Eck

www.infidels.org/library/modern/stephen_eck/toomany.html

EGYPTIAN CHARACTERS

www.mormonstudies.com/seer2.htm

This shows that when Smith translated the book of Abraham he invented hieroglyphics where there was a piece missing from the papyri. The characters Smith added make no sense to translators. Yet he translated these imaginary hieroglyphics! His mother and close associate David Whitmer spoke of Joseph copying characters of the gold plates of the Book of Mormon before he translated and that like the Book of Abraham Smith often produced two lines in the manuscript with the translation of a single character which shows that the whole Book of Mormon thing was a hoax.

MORMON FARMS

www.xmission.com/~country/reason/farms_1.htm

by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Gathers evidence that indicates that it was possible that Smith was insane and had manic depression.

DR CHARLES ANTHON RE AUTHENTICITY OF WRITING SAMPLES ALLEGEDLY COPIED FROM THE GOLDEN PLATES

www.mormonism-web.com/anthon.htm

INTERVIEW OF MARTIN HARRIS

www.xmission.com/~research/about/docum4.htm

COMMENTS ON THE BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES: A RESPONSE TO JERALD AND SANDRA TANNER

www.mormons.org/response/bom/witnesses_Roper.htm

A ridiculous rebuttal that has been taken into account for this book and refuted.

FACTS ON THE BOOK OF MORMON WITNESSES, PART 1

www.irr.org/mit/bomwit1.html

Excellent refutation of the reliability of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon

THE STOLEN MANUSCRIPT

www.utlm.org/onlineresources/bom_early_problems/goldenbible_stolenmanuscript.htm