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A Book of Mormon Consistency

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Abstract: The author notes that Jesus did not mention the Scribes and Pharisees in his 3 Nephi discourses, even in the parallel passages from the Sermon on the Mount.

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BY THOMAS W. BROOKBANK.

The record of Christ's personal teachings to the Nephites, when he visited them after his resurrection, is embraced in chapters 11 to 28 (inclusive) of III Nephi, and considering the brief time which was occupied in these ministrations, the account is more complete than the New Testament records are.

Notwithstanding this fact, it is remarkable that he did not once mention the names of the Scribes and Pharisees, either singly or together. These powerful and haughty sects had been principally instrumental in effecting his death, and at their hands he had suffered the most bitter persecution throughout the whole period of his public life. Naturally his mind would be filled with some of the pleasing, and then again with some of the sad and harrowing remembrances of his former days in Jerusalem and the land of his nativity. Under these circumstances who can presume that his omission to refer by name to his former enemies was the result of inadvertence or chance? On the contrary, we find unmistakable evidence in Nephi's record that his remarkable silence was predetermined; for on one occasion, at least, he had more than a good opportunity to name the Scribes and the Pharisees, and his purpose not to do so is obvious. The text of Matthew 5: 20, in our common Bibles, reads thus: "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven."

The corresponding verse in III Nephi 12: 20, is as follows: "Therefore, come unto me and be saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In the verses immediately preceding the 19th of this Nephite quotation, Christ was repeating to the Saints on this continent the first portion of his sermon on the Mount of Olives, in a manner that if not strictly literal, was yet more nearly so than it was like an original discourse. In the 19th verse we plainly see that he is preparing the way for what he says in the first portion of the 20th, and having thus avoided the necessity for naming the Scribes and Pharisees, he resumes, even before closing the 20th verse, his former sermon.

What a revelation of God's just indignation and anger is thus displayed to our view! The expunging of the names of the Scribes and Pharisees from the vocabulary of the risen Redeemer seems perfectly to illustrate what is meant by having one's name blotted out from the book of God—out of the book of his remembrance—a penalty which he has threatened, more than once, to inflict upon the desperately wicked. There is told, in the ominous silence of the Savior respecting his persecutors and murderers, the story of centuries piled on centuries of suffering, of spoliation, banishment, death and woe for a race—of prayers unanswered, of petitions ignored, of tears and groanings unheeded until the days of refreshing shall come, and the names of God's chosen people again be held in his remembrance. Such is the story, as it appears to me, that is told in the Book of Mormon by a carefully designed act of our Lord, which altogether, in its revelations and significance, constitutes a grand and yet appalling consistency.

It is, furthermore, not only consistent with the revealed word of God respecting what the worst elements of humanity shall suffer, and the history of the forgotten Jews; but it is consistent also with the record of Christ's ministrations, after his resurrection, among the people of the land of his birth? When conversing, for instance, with the two disciples, as they journeyed to Emmaus, the topics readily suggested the names of the Scribes and Pharisees; but no mention of them was made. Even the mouths of the disciples were sealed in this respect in the presence of the Lord.

The translator of the Book of Mormon made no mistake, for more reasons than one, when he omitted the names of these sects from that record.