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## Reply to a Recent Critic

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**Abstract:** This two-part series defends the Book of Mormon against the charge that it cannot be God-inspired since its literary merits are so poor. Brookbank believes that its poor literary style supports its claim even more since good style cannot be had from translating Egyptian hieroglyphics. The second part concludes the series.

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EDITORIAL.

REPLY TO A RECENT CRITIC.

*(Concluded from page 445).*

Having made clear, from examples and from the expressed purpose of the Lord to speak at times with "stammering lips," that we are not to expect classical elegance in ALL of the inspired revelations which He gives to mankind, some remarks shall next be made showing why the Book of Mormon, as a literary production, should not be of such a high standard as we find in some of the books of the Bible. There are several of them where poetry of an exquisite order graces the inspired page; and then, again, there are others where prose composition occurs. This latter is found in the historical portions which give a plain and straightforward narration of the events that are recorded. Now, the Book of Mormon is largely historical, and it is not fair to condemn it because its narrative portions are couched in prosaic terms, clear, understandable and unpretentious as the same kind of composition is in the Bible. In the enunciation of the law, also, there is not any noticeable elegance of style used. For instance, "Thou shalt not steal," or, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," THOUGH WRITTEN BY THE FINGER OF GOD HIMSELF, are just plain commands without any ornamentation of verbiage or style in expressing them; and, when treating of such matters, the Biblical writers generally do it in about the same way. They seem to think they are doing well enough when they come up to the standard of simplicity set for them in the beginning by the Almighty. As an imitator of a celestial model, the Book of Mormon, in some respects, ranks high. It goes with a plainness and directness to the points in hand that are commendable, not censurable by any means; and for this VIRTUE it is held in esteem by hundreds of thousands of intelligent people the world over, who stand unsally high in social conduct in such important matters as "sobriety, thriftiness, zeal for education, and all other things that make for prosperous citizenship," as our friend admits of representatives with whom he has become acquainted. Now, these two divisions embrace the principal themes upon which the Book of Mormon treats, and so the opportunities for grand figures of speech, or a lofty style, etc., are necessarily very few.

Then, further, the Book of Mormon purports to be a record which was originally written in hieroglyphics, and one of the writers expressly calls attention to the fact that such a system is difficult in

practice, and for this reason the same perfection in composition can not be expected as where the work is done by means of a different system that is alphabetical (Book of Mormon, sub-division 9:31-33). This point is well taken; for it must be evident to every person who shall give the subject a little study, that hieroglyphics are not well adapted for a classical style of writing, and it does not seem that they can be used in rhythmic or poetical composition with any success whatever. Granting, then, that the originals of the Book of Mormon were in hieroglyphics, the simple style of composition and expression found in its translated form, are perfectly consistent with its claims, while an elegant style and diction, and a few professed Jewish songs and psalms in it of even a low degree of merit, would make any attempt to explain their occurrence a hopeless task in view of what the book professes to be; and so, far from being self-condemned on account of its simple style, the direct opposite is true; for anything like a rivalry of some of the best portions of the Bible in elegance of style, would have made it indefensible as an ancient record originally written in reformed Egyptian. Moreover, we have the authoritative statement that it was CORRECTLY TRANSLATED—a condition that evidently would not allow the translator much liberty to vary from the simple style of the original text. The translators of the Bible also have, as far as possible, accommodated their work to the style of the originals, not embellishing where it was ordinary, nor failing to manifest its beauty where greater excellence occurred—the only proper course to adopt. The lack of literary elegance in the Book of Mormon is, therefore, from more than one view-point, a consistency whose value demands our high appreciation. Since the text, unembellished as it is, conforms so nearly to what an unprejudiced judgment can readily discern it should be, the argument derived from its unpretentious style is altogether in favor of the contention that the claims made in and for itself are true.

Our friend does not question that Joseph Smith was the personage through whom the Book of Mormon, as we now have it, came into existence; but alleges that he was “nearly within the illiterate class.” He does not seem to be aware that many able non-“Mormon” critics of that book in America long ago took the stand that it was impossible for an unschooled man, such as Joseph Smith undeniably was, to write a book like the one in mind, and have assigned its authorship to Sidney Rigdon, who was a scholarly and eloquent preacher. There is scarcely a prominent, educated anti-“Mormon” in America now who will charge that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon entire, or even used the Spaulding story as a base for it. They perceive clearly enough that an uneducated person could not have written it even with a whole library of romances at his command, considering some of its characteristics. And understanding, too, that to admit *his* authorship leads directly towards an acknowledgment of his claim

that he brought it forth by the power of God, they stoutly deny that he had any direct agency in the work of composing it.

Our English friend has evidently not studied the Book of Mormon very thoroughly, or he would not have admitted either that Joseph Smith was its author, in any sense, while, at the same time charging him with being "nearly within the limits of the illiterate class." For one thing, that book gives us a view of the principles of gospel truth so fully and harmonizing so perfectly with those of the Bible, that no disagreement and lack of unity has been sustained or claimed by any of its enemies. Illiteracy and a work of that kind do not belong together. The possession of a profound religious knowledge is necessary. Then, further, as already stated, the Book of Mormon is largely historical, treating in the main of an Israelitish people, and, hence, to write it without getting irretrievably confused, one would be obliged to have a very full knowledge of ancient Jewish manners and customs, of their forms of civil government, of their military system, of the genius of the Hebrew language—for there are many Hebraic idioms and analogies found in the text of that book—he must be aware of the limitations of the Hebrew alphabet, and take care not to transgress them. He must have the ability, the genius to be able to write in utter oblivion of his modern environment, of his nineteenth century ideas, training, prejudices, and what not, in order that every page of his work shall not reveal its modern authorship. He must have an insight into human nature which will enable him to lay it bare with all the skill of a master, whether it be moved upon by the principles of righteousness or of evil. He must have a knowledge of the people who anciently inhabited the continent of America, and of the traditions of the Indians who live there at present. He must know what archæological research and the discoveries of travelers in that land brought to light up to the time when his book was written, and he must take care that beyond that point he does not go, for in the unseen and the unknown all is conjecture. However, to write the Book of Mormon as we have it, not only had all these things, and much more, to be known and observed, but its translator transgressed these bounds and wrote of things that were unknown among men, either learned or unlearned, at the time his work was done, yet we find that later developments have set the seal of truth upon his record. Now, we submit that the author who knows all these things and can do all this necessary work successfully, has advanced far beyond the meager attainments of the illiterate class—so far, indeed, that he has not a compeer on this earth in intelligence; in fact, does not exist himself. There is not a man living, nor a mortal who has ever lived, that can write a spurious history of an ancient people, such as the Book of Mormon contains, and have it stand the test of criticism and investigation into its claims to be an authentic history, as that despised book does. It will remain unimpeached as the inspired word

of God so long as it is not shown clearly that its record is fictitious. What our friend has to say, therefore, about its being "unfortunate" for our cause that Joseph Smith wrote a book, will be passed with the amendment that it is unfortunate only for our opponents, since the Almighty is vindicating its truthfulness in a very effectual manner.

Mr. Daruley further asserts that the "historical record of the body (that is, of the 'Mormon' people) during its early years is equally damaging to it in the eyes of all decent people, students or otherwise." With this statement before us, we wish to call the gentleman's attention to certain riotous proceedings which have recently occurred at Saltley, an account of which was published in last week's *Star*. They furnish instructive matter for study in connection with his testimonial that the "Mormons" now stand in their social life "unusually high in such important matters as sobriety \* \* \* and all other things that make for prosperous citizenship." They surely, then, ought to be desirable citizens of any country; and Canada, a part of the British empire, is welcoming them to her domain as colonists by the thousands. At the trial which was the sequel to the mobocracy at Saltley, police officers testified that the "Mormons" in that city are peaceful and law-abiding, and, we add, that that is a characteristic of our people everywhere. The records of the criminal courts of this country, and of every other one as well, show that "Mormon" offenders against law and order are remarkably few in number. The late Home Secretary of this government, the Hon. Winston Churchill, caused an exhaustive investigation to be made into the charges of criminality that were lodged against us, and the report of the present Home Secretary corroborates the fact that there is no need for any new legislation affecting us as clamored for by our enemies. During the progress of that searching investigation, how many of our elders or laymen were arrested for any violation of the laws of this country? How many since it was concluded? Not one. Out of all the alleged cases where it was charged that young girls were being decoyed to Utah for immoral purposes, how many were proven, or "brought to light"? Not one. Did our people anywhere show signs of a guilty fear while the investigation was going forward? No. We welcomed the test. We had confidence in the officials of this government, and believed that the work would be done fairly, impartially and free from the prejudice of religious bigotry; and under these conditions we knew that our vindication was assured. We will welcome any further investigation by this government into our practices, which it shall see proper to make. We invite its officers to attend our meetings in uniform or in plain clothes, the visit announced or unannounced, as they shall choose. Let them watch the conduct of our elders and of the whole Church membership. We have no fear of the law. Like all other people,

who are the strength of this kingdom, we, except in unusually rare cases, live above the law. Its terrors are for evil doers, not for us; for mobocrats, not for those who obey it. It was people of this law-respecting class, Mr. Darnley, who were mobbed at Saltley—the evidence at the trial shows that—whose property was destroyed, some of whom were driven from their homes, and whose lives were put in jeopardy. They are religious, they meet together and worship God in a manner quite similar to that which prevails among sectarians; they sing hymns of praise to Him; they pray to Him as the Author of all good; they accept Jesus Christ as their Redeemer; they exhort one another to lead godly lives, and to do no evil to any one; yet these God-fearing men and women, these people who should be welcomed in any land as desirable citizens or residents because of their “sobriety,” “thriftiness,” “zeal for education,” “honesty,” “cultivated intelligence,” “and all other things that make for prosperous citizenship”—the quoted terms are from Mr. Darnley’s remarks—are the very ones who are loudly proclaimed from one end of this kingdom to the other as the very offscourings of society, as moral lepers, as unworthy to have a home among respectable people; and this opinion is held, too, by multitudes in this country and in others the world over. But men of the honorable class to which Mr. Darnley belongs, KNOW that these charges of vileness and criminality are false, and this government knows it now. It is so admitted in some quarters, directly or indirectly, and a few are bold and honest enough to speak in our praise. But the enmity which many cherish against us and our work will not allow them to confine their hostile operations to such as are lawful, and they break out into rioting and mobocracy, and then attempt to justify their damnable deeds by vilifying their victims. The false charges first made are followed by the shameful abuse of the innocent sufferers. Events at Saltley warrant these statements; and who can say with reason that similar conditions did not exist in other instances when our people have been MOBBED? These deeds were not in harmony with a state of civilization, to say nothing of one of Christian influence and culture, and if our people were guilty of everything laid to their charge, that guiltiness would not justify mobocratic proceedings against them. We notice, too, that amongst those who participated in the unlawful acts at Saltley, there were some theological students—men who are preparing themselves to preach the gospel of love and forbearance toward all their fellows. It takes demonstrations like these to make many upright men and women believe that such outrages are possible in a Christian community. But with the stern facts brought forth before an English court, they can not be denied truthfully.

Now, a number of similar mobbings against us in the years that are past have occurred in this country, and then the scene shifts to the United States, where our history is marked also by the abuses

we have suffered at the hands of men who have defied the law. Tracing events of a like character in the reverse order of their occurrence, we come at last to the days when this Church was in its infancy; at which time our people were also mobbed and driven, as history attests. There is a continuous chain of such events in our history from the time we first began to make it, down to the present. Englishmen know that there was no justification whatever for the mobbings at Saltley, that the charges of criminal conduct against us are false, and with these examples of anti-"Mormon" deportment before us, is it reasonable to assume that in the days of our early history no false accusations were then made against our people? No! Who does not know that like principles of evil everywhere and in all time bear like fruits? The Missouri and Illinois mobocracies affected more people than the Saltley outrages did; but who can fail to see that the spirit which animated the mobbers was the same. Were not our people subject to arrest and punishment by law the same as other people? Why not let the law take its course? Why should we be treated in this respect unlike other people—as wretches outside the pale of the law, as bandits and outlaws having no rights under it? Why this constant resort to VIOLENCE against us? Some say the men wanted could not be arrested because of the protection which their "Mormon" friends gave them. But if our enemies had sufficient power to drive thousands of the saints from their homes, they were certainly able to effect the arrest of all the leaders they wanted by proceedings within the law. If a "Mormon" be a criminal, that fact does not make the burning of his house, the ravishment of his wife and daughters and the expatriation of a multitude of innocent men, women and little children, acts of virtue—does not make them less heinous in the sight of God.

Joseph Smith was arrested more than forty times, but was not once convicted of any crime against the law, and because he could not be imprisoned or destroyed by legal measures, the mobocrats declared that if the law could not reach him, powder and shot should. It was men of this low, villainous character who testified against the "Mormons" in early days, and there are intelligent people who accept their word as truthful—as if creatures who were guilty of almost every damnable sin known would not LIE against their victims in order to excuse their own infamy. The revelations of the Saltley mobocracies should make fair-minded citizens of this kingdom refuse to accept the accusations of the Anti-"Mormon" League against the leaders or other members of this Church, unless proven by evidence that is unimpeachable. We protest against the testimony of mobocratic violators of the law being received as sacred truth, while that of thousands of upright and intelligent people is rejected as unreliable for no other apparent reason than that it is in our favor.

T. W. B.