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Children and the Book of Mormon

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Guide Lessons.

LESSON I.

Theology and Testimony.

FIRST WEEK IN MAY

CHILDREN AND THE BOOK OF MORMON.

We frequently hear it said that woman's hour has struck. True as this is of the woman, it is equally true of the child. If women have been ignored in the past, so, too, have children. To-day the child commands an important place in educational and social philosophy. In her fight for political recognition, woman has always put forth the fact that her wish for political power is based, in no small measure, on her desire to protect the child from the crushing wheels of industrial tyranny.

We doubt if life holds anything more truly attractive and more distinctly charming than the child, and yet we had to wait for the advent of Charles Dickens to have the little child really magnified in literary art. To be sure, the *Mother Goose* melodies and such stories as "Little Red Riding Hood" did not ignore the child, but the class of literature has grown with the race and, consequently, is no deliberate effort to recognize it; Charles Dickens was deliberate in his portrayal of child life; in his novels he sought to arouse the public conscience against many abuses then borne by children.

In the Bible, three children stand out prominently: Samuel, David, and Jesus of Nazareth. Something specific is known concerning the individual life of each of these children. Let us see if it is possible to find anything specific about the individual lives of the children of the Book of Mormon. It may be a matter of passing interest to know that the words *boy* and *girl* were never found to be necessary to translate the Book of Mormon.

To be sure, Nephi, the son of Lehi, was very young when he played the important role he did in Nephite history; still we can scarcely regard him as a child. He had certainly reached that stage when he would be styled a youth, even as the boy prophet, Joseph Smith, is styled a youth.

Again, we have Lehi speaking to Jacob and saying, "In thy childhood thou suffered much affliction and much sorrow because of the rudeness of thy brethren," yet that appears to be the one

sentence that throws light on his childhood. Nearer the point is the record we find in Mormon 1:2-4:

“And about the time that Ammaron hid up the records unto the Lord, he came unto me (I being about ten years of age; and I began to be learned somewhat after the manner of the learning of my people), and Ammaron said unto me, I perceive that thou art a sober child, and art quick to observe;

“Therefore, when ye are about twenty and four years old, I would that ye should remember the things that ye have observed concerning this people; and when ye are of that age, go to the land Antum, unto a hill, which shall be called Shim; and there have I deposited unto the Lord, all the sacred engravings concerning this people.”

“And behold, ye shall take the plates of Nephi unto yourself, and the remainder shall ye leave in the place where they are; and ye shall engrave on the plates of Nephi, all the things that ye have observed concerning this people.”

A truly wonderful commission to give to a boy of ten, was it not?

So much for the very little information we are in possession of in regard to the individual child. A large part of the very meagre material that we have concerning the children of the Book of Mormon effects the child in group or in mass.

There is considerable evidence that both the fathers and the mothers were greatly exercised over the children in time of war and famine. In such particulars human nature suffers no change. In the terrible war through which we have just passed, the children of Poland, Servia, Belgium, and France, have often called for our deepest sympathy. Women in the large cities of the world are terrified at the slightest indication of labor trouble, lest the children may be deprived of milk, and thus deprived, sicken and die. The women of the Book of Mormon were, no doubt, victims of the same fears and misgivings, through all the trying scenes through which they were called to pass.

In the heart-sickening account given of the last struggle of the Jaredites, we read:

“And it came to pass that when they were all gathered together, every one to the army which he would, with their wives and their children; both men, women and children being armed with weapons of war, having shields, and breast-plates, and head-plates, and being clothed after the manner of war, they did march forth one against another, to battle; and they fought all that day, and conquered not.”

Fortunate it is that we are not compelled to close our lesson with the revolting picture of little children, armed and fighting in a great battle, destined to destroy their race, but that, like Shake-

spare, we may say, "Look on this picture and on that" (Ether 15:15).

The picture we close with is that which followed the great day of healing, when, in their gratitude, the people gathered about the Son and bathed his feet with their tears:

"And it came to pass that he commanded that their little children should be brought.

"So they brought their little children and sat them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him.

"And it came to pass that when they had all been brought, and Jesus stood in the midst, he commanded the multitude that they should kneel down upon the ground.

"And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and saith, Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel.

"And when he had said these words, he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.

"And after this manner do they bear record: the eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvellous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father."

And so, upon this continent, even as in the land of his nativity, did Jesus bless and exalt little children. No matter how grossly they may have been neglected by historians, philosophers, and men of letters, in the past, the Son of Man did not neglect them. He told of their purity, and how they were without sin, and redeemed from the fall through his atonement. The Church possesses no clearer and plainer doctrine in all its literature than that found in the Book of Moroni, chapter 8, concerning the redemption of little children, wherein he tells us that, "little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism."

"Wherefore, if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell.

"Behold I say unto you, That he that supposeth that little children need baptism, is in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity."

Christ's tenderness and compassion for little children comes ringing through the ages, in his immortal words, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS.

1. What are some of the abuses little children suffer, in modern times, that make child welfare associations necessary?
2. How old must a child be in Utah before it is permitted to work in a factory?
3. Give some reasons for women and children receiving such scant recognition in the histories of the past.
4. How does the child Mormon compare with any boy or boys you have known of ten years of age?
5. Why are little children frequently the greatest sufferers in all disasters that overtake civilization?
6. Read the 8th chapter of Moroni in class, beginning with paragraph 10.
7. How did the doctrine of the salvation of little children, as set forth by Moroni, differ from the teachings of Christian churches at the time the gospel was revealed?
8. What abominable practice, in relation to children, did the Jaredites resort to in their last struggle?
9. Read the account of Christ's blessing little children, when he was with the Jews.
10. Read or sing the Sunday School song, "Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me."

LESSON II.

Work and Business.

SECOND WEEK IN MAY.

LESSON III.

Genealogy.

THIRD WEEK IN MAY.

SURNAMENES DERIVED FROM OFFICES AND PROFESSIONS.

Teachers' Outlines.(See Chap. 16, *Surname Book*.)

The Norman barons who came over with William the Conqueror appropriated all the court offices and paying professions. Hence such surnames usually derive from Norman stock.

Surnames derived from: