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Remarks on the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: This series defends the Book of Mormon against “current calumny.” Gibson cites reasons why God’s communications are not limited to the Bible, and explains why the plates should not be available for inspection. He also shows the harmony between the Book of Mormon and the Bible, using many prooftexts, including Zechariah 10:7-11, Hosea 11:9, and Isaiah 28, and discusses archaeological evidence. The fifth part continues to respond to more criticisms of the Book of Mormon.

made new creatures by the Spirit, who renews and sanctifies the soul.* Here his Grace makes it altogether dependant upon the faith of the parents or sponsors, whether the infants receive "spiritual regeneration," which is equally as unsound as his former remark, upon just the same reasons; for if the Lord would remove the obstructing bar to the worthy reception of baptism in some infants, why not in all? Is the child to be held accountable for the weak faith of its parents, or their prayerlessness, and consequently deprived of "spiritual regeneration?" It is not reasonable, nor does it do much honour to God to suppose it. I can tell his Grace how it is that he finds "so many, who though born of water (!) as far as concerns the baptismal rite, are evidently not made new creatures by the Spirit, who renews and sanctifies the soul." First: an ordinance which was never intended for infants is put into requisition on their behalf, and consequently they do not derive the blessings attendant upon that ordinance. Secondly: they require something more than baptism to enable them to become renewed and sanctified in the soul, viz., the gift of the Holy Ghost. Not having this, they cannot perform those good works, and "have God in the world," as his Grace desires.

2nd. I have now to say something respecting the Bishop of Exeter's views. His Lordship says, "our Church declares in its article that 'the baptism of young children is in anywise to be retained, as *most agreeable* with the institution of Christ:' that is, more agreeable with it than the baptism of others—*ut qui cum Institutione Christi optimè congruat*—which it could not otherwise be than because they by 'their innocency are the best qualified for it.'"† I ask his Lordship how, with the Bible in his hand, he could arrive at such a conclusion as that the innocency of infants best qualifies them for receiving the sacrament of baptism? When John the Baptist was administering this ordinance (and in its proper manner) at the river Jordan, certain persons presented themselves to him for baptism, and he said, "bring forth fruits meet for repentance."‡ It appears, then, one grand qualification in his view was repentance of their sins; and, therefore, unless sin exist, the sacrament of baptism is unneeded; for on no one occasion, throughout the New Testament, do we find it administered to any of our fallen race for any other purpose than the remission of sins, and I regret that his Lordship has not confined himself more closely to that sacred volume.

* See the Bishop of Exeter's Letter, pp. 12, 13. † Ibid, pp. 13, 14. ‡ St. Matt., iii. 8.
(To be Continued.)

REMARKS ON THE BOOK OF MORMON.

BY ELDER WILLIAM GIBSON.

(Continued from our last.)

I well remember asking a gentleman in Scotland who was a leader in a religious society, and well known for his scientific acquirements, if he thought a boat could not be constructed with a hole in the bottom, and by means of some such simple contrivance as I have stated, the water be prevented from coming in, while, at the same time, the aperture so left, be made most useful to those within?

He said he believed the thing could be easily done, but as the Book of Mormon gave no account of any such contrivance, he had therefore to conclude that there was none, and therefore to say that such vessels could float was an absurdity, unless they were to be upheld by a constant miracle.

As he professed to believe the Bible, I begged the privilege of asking him a question or two concerning a boat spoken of in it, namely, the Ark. We are told that Noah was commanded to build an ark, 300 cubits long, 50 cubits broad, and 30 cubits high,—that he was to divide it into *first, second, and third stories*,—that he was to pitch it within and without,—that he was to make a window in it of the size of one cubit, and that he was to make a door in the side of the ark; he was furthermore to take the clean animals and fowls by sevens, and the unclean by pairs into the ark, also himself and family, and then both door and window were to be shut upon them. I asked the gentleman if the inmates of the ark could live

without air? he answered, no! I then asked how were they to receive it, when the only door and window in all this vast building was closed upon them, and every seam and crevice filled with pitch? Oh, he said, there must have been some contrivance, that is not recorded for this purpose; but I told him, to be consistent, he ought to say, that as the Bible gave no account of any such contrivance, he should therefore conclude that there was none, and to say they could live without air was an absurdity, unless they were upheld by a constant miracle; and if our friends, Messrs. Chambers, the *Athenæum*, &c., were to apply the same reasoning to the account of the ark given in the Bible, that they apply to the account of the barges given in the Book of Mormon, if they were consistent men, and rejected one on this account, they would reject them both; for in reading the account of the ark given in the Bible, we must either say that there was some contrivance for giving them air that is not recorded, or have recourse to what the *Athenæum* (speaking of the Book of Mormon) calls getting rid of a difficulty, through the easy and arbitrary medium of a miracle: and if you say that there must have been some plan or contrivance which is not recorded, to prevent them from perishing for want of air in the ark, it is not unreasonable to say that there must have been some plan or contrivance which is not recorded, to prevent them from perishing by an overflow of water in the barges.

The next objection I will notice is that which is taken from the language of the Book of Mormon.

The *Athenæum* and Messrs. Chambers say, "through all we find one signal proof, not merely of imposture, but of the ignorance of the impostor, repeated with pertinacity. Every successive prophet predicts to the Nephites the future coming of Christ. The writer has fallen into the vulgar error of mistaking an epithet for a name. The word Christ, as all educated persons know, is not a name, but a Greek title of office, signifying *the anointed*, being in fact a translation of the Hebrew word Messiah. Now the use of a Greek term in an age when the Greek language was unformed, and by a people with whom it was impossible for Greeks to have intercourse, and moreover, whose native language was of such peculiar construction as not to be susceptible of foreign admixture, is a mark of forgery so obvious and decisive, that it ought long since to have exposed the delusion; unhappily, however, we are forced to conclude, from the pamphlet before us, that the American Methodists, who first undertook to expose the Mormons, were scarcely less ignorant than themselves.

"A second Nephi takes up the history at a period contemporary with the events recorded in the New Testament, and the words attributed to him bear still more conclusive evidence of the ignorance of the impostors. 'Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God, I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are.' And again, 'I am the life and the light of the world; I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.' In addition to the former blunder respecting the name 'Christ,' we have the name Jesus in its Greek form, and not as the Hebrews would have called it, Joshua; we have, furthermore, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, given as a metaphorical description of continued existence to a nation that had never heard of the Greek language. It is quite clear that the writer mistook Alpha and Omega for some sacred and mystic sounds to which peculiar sanctity was attached, and wrote them down without perceiving that they were an evidence of forgery so palpable as to be manifest to school-boys." So then, according to this, the believers in the Book of Mormon are fools, and the American Methodists no better for not having made this discovery before it was made by such a learned and wise man as the editor of the *Athenæum*, or such talented and far-famed gentlemen as the Messrs. Chambers, of Edinburgh.

To those who have read Elder P. P. Pratt's reply to this, in the first number of the second volume of the MILLENNIAL STAR, I need say nothing; but as this is made much of by our enemies as an argument to prove the Book of Mormon a forgery, and many have not seen Elder Pratt's reply, a few words on it might do good.

The *Athenæum* says that these Greek words, according to the Book of Mormon, were given to a nation that had never heard of the Greek language. Now this is a

lie to begin with. There were no such names on the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. What the names were that were applied to the Redeemer in the language of the ancient American Indians—how they were pronounced by them—or how they would appear if an idea of the original was to be conveyed by the English alphabet we know not, for we have only got the TRANSLATION; but these wise men forget this, and want to make men believe that these Greek names were in the original. The English tongue is a mixture of many languages, Greek amongst the rest; and, therefore, if even Messrs. Chambers, or the learned editor of the *Athenæum* was to translate a book from any other language into English, and in that book had to speak of the Redeemer of mankind, how would they name him? Suppose they were translating from the Hebrew, would they call him *Joshua*? if they did, they would next have to tell the people that *Joshua* meant *Jesus Christ*, or some might perhaps imagine they meant Joshua the son of Nun, and yet these wiseacres find fault with the translation of the Book of Mormon, because it does not name the Redeemer *Joshua*—a name by which he is not known in the English language.

Now that the Book of Mormon is about to be translated into other languages, such as French, German, Italian, &c., if the wise men there are like the wise men here, the fault in France will be that French words are put in the mouth of Nephi, and in Germany that Nephi uses the German language; and if such a thing as a Latin term should be in common use among any people into whose language it is translated, then (according to the *Athenæum*) if that word be in the translation, it will be an evidence of forgery so palpable as to be manifest to school-boys. Oh, folly! thou art now seen in high places! How truly did Isaiah in his 29th chapter, when speaking of the book's coming forth, declare, that then "the wisdom of the wise should perish, and the understanding of the prudent be hid!"

(To be Continued.)

CIRCULAR OF THE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF DESERET.

Patrons of Learning,—The citizens of the State of Deseret, having established a University at Great Salt Lake City, the Chancellor and Board of Regents appointed to superintend the same, do hereby issue the following circular to you. Hear us and then judge. We do not ask your aid, unless we can give you good reasons why you should patronise our object.

We should despair of any assistance whatever, if we were not assured that our young Institution has greater claims than any other. We know that you are constantly assailed with the pretended claims of new things appealing to your sympathies, your prejudices, your hopes, and your fears. It is only wise men that can discriminate the true from the false. To them we appeal whether they are few or many. Here is an Institution, which is like the foundling babe of the Hebrews. It is the child of providence, and destined to live and flourish. However obscure its parentage in the valley of the wild and lofty mountains; however many the perils it has to encounter, it will live and shine in nature's simplest brightest livery, and teach all nations all useful arts and sciences. This Institution is needed to meet the wants of thousands that annually emigrate to this Great Basin. Multitudes of all ages come from under the heavy hand of oppression, and desire instruction in order to be free, useful, and happy. This boon must be given them, without respect to age or means. The emigrants and outcasts of all nations will here find an asylum of safety, and a nursery of arts and sciences available upon the cheapest terms. Here, instruction by means of lectures or otherwise, will be brought to the level of the laboring classes of every grade—of every religious faith—of every political or social creed, and of every living language. It is neither arrogant or extravagant to say that this Institution is forthwith prepared to teach more living languages practically, than any other University on the face of the earth; and as to the matter of dead languages, we leave them mostly to the dead. The known industry of