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Objections to the Book of Mormon Answered

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Abstract: Morton responds to three objections to the Book of Mormon. Mr. Rought Brooks of the *Burnley News* maintains that the Book of Mormon is weakened because Joseph Smith used a “peek-stone” to search for money, and the Book of Mormon mentions the use of “precious steel,” domesticated horses, cows and oxen, and the compass. Morton counters that the Chinese used magnetic directors in 2634 B.C., ancient iron remains have been dug up in the New World, as have remains of horses. Buffaloes are domesticated cows and oxen gone wild.

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“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, if they reject my words, and this part of my Gospel and ministry, blessed are ye, for they can do no more unto you than unto me ” (DOC. AND COV. 6: 29).

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OBJECTIONS TO THE BOOK OF MORMON ANSWERED.

THE following letter was addressed by Elder William A. Morton to the editor of the *Burnley News*, and appeared in the September 24th issue of that paper:

Dear Sir:

I sincerely thank you for the lengthy and correct report in your paper of the address I delivered at Burnley, on the 14th inst., in which I set forth some of my reasons for believing the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God. In the same issue of the *News* (August 20) there appears an article by Mr. Rought Brooks, in which he attempts to prove that the Book of Mormon is a gross imposture. Your correspondent gives me credit for sincerity in my belief; I return the compliment by giving him equal credit for sincerity in his belief. Saul of Tarsus was just as sincere in his belief that Jesus Christ was a deceiver as the early Christians were that he was the Redeemer.

Mr. Brooks says: “In the first place, Joseph Smith’s early career does not inspire one with confidence in his credibility. As I recorded last week, he had been dabbling in the occult as a ‘money finder’—using a ‘peek-stone’ as a modern fortune teller uses a crystal—long before his alleged discovery of the plates of gold on which he declared the Book of Mormon was inscribed in ancient hieroglyphics, which, by the gift and power of God, he translated into English.”

I would remind your correspondent that far worse things were said of Christ, by the people in his day, than has been said of Joseph Smith. He who is now acknowledged throughout Christendom as the Son of God, was at that time denounced as a “deceiver,” a “blasphemer,” “a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber,” etc. Christ told his followers that they in like manner would be evil spoken of, and reminded them that they were not

greater than he. "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub," said he, "how much more shall they call them of his household?" If the question were asked, "Who loved Jesus Christ most?" the answer would be, "Those who knew him best." And the same may be said of Joseph Smith; the greatest admirers of the modern prophet were the men and women who were most intimately acquainted with him, who saw his daily life and conduct. These were the ones who loved him most, who bore the strongest testimony regarding his divinely-appointed mission, a testimony which cost many of them their lives. These Mr. Editor, are the testimonies that appeal to me.

I commend to the consideration of your correspondent what Josiah Quincy, son of the President of Harvard College, and sometime Mayor of Boston, wrote concerning Joseph Smith. He says: "It is by no means improbable that some future text-book, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: *Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants. History deals in surprises and paradoxes quite as startling as this. The man who established a religion in this age of free debate, who was and is to-day accepted by hundreds of thousands as a direct emissary from the Most High—such a rare human being is not to be disposed of by pelting his memory with unsavoury epithets. Fanatic, impostor, charlatan, he may have been; but these hard names furnish no solution to the problem he presents to us. Fanatics and impostors are living and dying every day, and their memory is buried with them: but the wonderful influence which this founder of a religion exerted and still exerts throws him into relief before us, not as a rogue to be criminated, but as a phenomenon to be explained. The most vital questions Americans are asking each other to-day have to do with this man and what he has left us. A generation other than mine must deal with these questions. Burning questions they are, which must give a prominent place in the history of the country to that sturdy self-asserter whom I visited at Nauvoo" (*Figures of the Past*, p. 376).

Mr. Brooks says the Book of Mormon "represents the compass as being in use some centuries before it was known." Yes, reference is made in the Book of Mormon to a compass, but not to the mariner's compass, but to an instrument prepared by the Lord to guide a remnant of the seed of Joseph to their promised land (America), even as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night guided his ancient covenant people to the land of their inheritance. In *Universal Knowledge* (Chambers), p. 203,

it is recorded that "the directive power of the magnet . . . was known in China, and throughout the east generally, at a very remote period. The Chinese annals indeed assign its discovery to the year 2634 B. C., when, they say, an instrument for indicating the sun was constructed by the Emperor Hon-ang-ti. At first, they would appear to have used it exclusively for guidance in traveling by land." As well might I say that the instrument here referred to was the mariner's compass as for Mr. Brooks to say that the compass referred to in the Book of Mormon was the mariner's compass. Here is a description of the latter: It was "a round ball of curious workmanship; and it was of fine brass. And within the ball were two spindles: and one pointed the way whither we should go into the wilderness, and . . . I, Nephi, beheld the pointers which were within the ball: and they did work according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto them" (I. Nephi 16: 10, 28). I leave your readers to judge between this instrument and the mariner's compass.

Another objection made by Mr. Brooks to the Book of Mormon is because "it speaks of the 'most precious steel' before even the commonest had been invented." I could fill columns of the *News* with the most conclusive evidence that iron and steel were in use among the ancient inhabitants of America. Baldwin says of the Peruvians: "Iron ore was and still is very abundant in Peru. It is impossible to conceive how the Peruvians were able to cut and work stone in such a masterly way, or to construct their great roads and aqueducts without the use of iron tools. Some of the languages of the country, and perhaps all, had names for iron; in official Peruvian it was called 'quillay,' and in the old Chilian tongue 'panilic.' 'It is remarkable,' observes Molina, 'that iron, which has been thought unknown to the ancient Americans, has particular names in some of their tongues.' It is not easy to understand why they had names for this metal, if they never at any time had knowledge of the metal itself" (*Ancient America*, Baldwin, pp. 248-9). "Iron," says DeRoo, "seems to have been unknown in America at the time of the Spanish discovery, but the Mound-builders' graveyards afford proof that they not only knew it, but manufactured it into tools and implements. In the sepulchral mound at Marietta (Ohio) there was found in the year 1819 a little lump of iron ore that had almost the specific gravity of pure iron, and presented the appearance of being partially melted; while in a mound at Circleville oxidized iron was unearthed in the shape of a plate" (*History of America before Columbus*, DeRoo, Vol. I., p. 67). Josiah Priest, writing on the discoveries of iron in the mounds of America, says: "We have examined the blade of a sword found in Philadelphia, now in Peel's Museum, in New York, which was taken out of the ground something more than sixty feet below the surface. The blade is about twenty

inches in length, is sharp on one edge, with a thick back, a little turned up at the point, with a shank drawn out three or four inches long" (*American Antiquities*, p. 141). In the town of Pompey, Onondaga County, New York, in one of the mounds where Mr. Priest describes the finding of glass, he also says: "In the same grave with the bottle was found an iron hatchet, edged with steel. . . . In the same town, on lot No. 17, were found the remains of a blacksmith's forge; at this spot have been ploughed up crucibles, such as mineralogists used in refining metals" (*American Antiquities*, p. 260).

Mr. Brooks says the Book of Mormon "introduces the 'cow and the ox and the ass' as indigenons to America, which they were not." Well, let us see. In the November, 1904, number of the *Century Magazine* there is a very interesting article entitled, "The Evolution of the Horse in America," by Henry Fairfield Osborn, Professor of Zoology in Columbia University, and Curator in the American Museum of Natural History. Speaking of the migration of the horse from America to Europe, he says: "About the early or mid-Pliocene period there apparently occurred the long journey of the true American breed of horses into Asia and Europe and over the newly-made land-bridge of Panama or of the Antilles into South America. That the true Old World horse actually came from America is inferred because of the sudden appearance in the Upper Pliocene of the Siwalik Hills of northern India, in northern Italy, and in England, of five species of the true horse, of which no ancestors have been found in either Europe or Asia. Another strong argument for their American origin is found in the simultaneous appearance in the same countries of the camel, which we positively know to have been an exclusively American-bred animal. It is possible, however, that in unexplored portions of northern Asia the evolution of the true horse may have been progressing. I am sanguine that traces of this great exodus and migration of the horse will be discovered in the rocks of northern Asia, and that this great problem in the history of the horse will be solved in favour of America."

Speaking further of the horse in America, the Professor says: "In 1826 Mitchell aroused widespread interest by the discovery of the first true fossil horse of America, found near the Navesink Highlands of New Jersey. This was seventy-eight years ago: it antedated by a quarter of a century Leidy's discoveries in Nebraska. The wide geographical range, as well as the great variety in size and breed of the American preglacial horses, is indicated by the following facts. One animal (*Equus complicatus*), about the size of a small western bronco, originally found near Natchez, has been traced all over the Southern States from the isles of the Gulf of Mexico to South Carolina. A larger horse with very elaborate grinding teeth has been found in the North-

eastern and Middle States. On the extreme western coasts of California and in Oregon occurs the large 'Pacific horse,' perhaps closest to the existing species of horse. In Nebraska we quarried a whole season, securing remains of hundreds of horses belonging to another species."

Daniel G. Brinton, one of the most competent writers upon the subject says: "There is no doubt but that the horse existed on the continent contemporaneously with post-glacial men; and some palaeontologists are of opinion that the European and Asian horses were descendants of the American species; but for some mysterious reason the genus became extinct in the New World many generations before its discovery" (*The American Race*, Brinton, p. 51). With reference to the other animals mentioned by your correspondent, namely, "the cow and the ox," I will say that the great herds of buffaloes that once roamed the plains were simply these domestic animals of the ancients gone wild.

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM A. MORTON.

THE OINTMENT OF SPIKENARD.

AND being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.

And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?

For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.

And Jesus said, let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me.

She hath done what she could (Mark 14: 3-6, 8).

It is an old story that men do foolish things when they are in love, and smile at themselves when in after years love has grown cold; but they are the better for having done them, and their criticism is on a lower level than their folly was. We are made thus: and we cannot help it, and we would not help it if we could. Things are signs to us, containing more than their apparent meaning: a flag stands for loyalty; a lock of hair, for lost love; an old letter, for a friend estranged; a chance word calls up a world of forgotten emotions; bread and wine are no longer themselves, but a sacrament, Christ's body and Christ's blood. And under the influence of thoughts and memories which these things suggest, we do not closely measure our words, or ask what our actions, rigidly interpreted, may be taken to mean. For a little while we are above criticism, and content to be so. If it were the