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What the World Owes the Book of Mormon

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Abstract: This article is a discussion of the value of the Book of Mormon, from its aphorisms to its powerful testimony of Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR

ESTABLISHED IN 1840

“Verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.” BOOK OF MORMON, 3 NEPHI 11: 29.

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WHAT THE WORLD OWES THE BOOK OF MORMON*

ELDER BRIGHAM H. ROBERTS

OF THE FIRST COUNCIL OF SEVENTY

MY BRETHREN AND SISTERS, in all the conferences of the Church that I have attended, I cannot recall a time when I have felt that we have had a greater spiritual feast than we have had at this conference, because of the outpouring of the Spirit of the Lord upon His servants.

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As [President Ivins] closed his remarks the thought that flashed through my mind was this: O, what the world would have lost if the Book of Mormon had not been brought forth!

I wish I had the time to consider the things that would have been lost to the world but for the bringing forth of the Nephite scriptures. . . . I remember in my early days coming in contact with opponents of the Book of Mormon who charged, for instance, that it had no aphorisms of any importance, and that it was in this respect in strong contrast with the Jewish scriptures. I want to call your attention, however, to a few aphorisms that are of great worth, and that enrich the sacred literature of the world. For instance, there is that sharp-cut sentence: “Wickedness never was happiness.” I think it would be difficult to find an epigram more important than that, and a truth that the world ought to know more.

Again: “All things have been done in the wisdom of him who

*From an address delivered at the closing session of the Ninety-eighth Annual Conference, in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A., April 8th, 1928.

knoweth all things.*" A beautiful utterance; and a declaration of confidence in the perfect knowledge of God; and builded upon that perfect knowledge—and it can only be builded upon perfect knowledge—perfect wisdom. And that beautiful declaration is followed by this announcement of the great truth, giving us clear vision of the purpose of God with reference to the earth-life of man, the like of which is not found elsewhere, neither in Jewish nor Christian scriptures, nor in the philosophies of men: "Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy." That is the thing that God is working out, and what a lesson of cheer and good will and of hope it is!

Here is another: "The Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."

You who are starting to bring to pass the high purposes of God, with reference to this creation of His, what comfort that assurance brings! "God will require nothing at the hands of the children of men save he prepares the way for them to accomplish that thing." Again, Moroni, near the close of his record, seems to tremble for the success of his work, and as he reviewed it and became conscious of the weaknesses in it, he was very deeply sorrowful and he wrote in substance—and all these quotations are but in substance: "Lord, the Gentiles will mock at our weakness in writing." And the answer of the Lord was: "Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for all who humble themselves before me, saith the Lord."

NO LACK OF APHORISMS

I remember having a very rich bit of experience with that passage in the younger days of my ministry when I was on my first mission. It fell to my lot to engage in a three-day debate with a seasoned man in that line of work. I was but twenty-three and had had no experience. He was fifty-four and had the reputation of having driven all his opponents from the platform. He mocked considerably at the Book of Mormon, and brought up this very question of its lack of incisiveness and clear-cut aphorisms, and challenged me to produce anything that could be comparable with the sharp, clear-cut aphorisms of the Bible scriptures. I told him I could think just at the moment of but one, and that was: "Fools mock, but they shall mourn."

I am not very much acquainted with his history after that debate, but after three days' discussion he utterly refused to go on with the debate, when it was really but half through, notwithstanding he had previously driven every opponent from the platform. I had his promise also that I should have the opportunity of examining his doctrine after closing our debate on the

*These quotations are in substance only. They are not purported to be *verbatim et literatim*.

Book of Mormon, but he refused to go on with it, and left the platform with an unfinished job on his hands. By the way, let me say—not by way of boasting, but because of the blessing of the Lord on our labours—immediately following the discussion we began baptizing, and within two months had raised up a branch in the neighbourhood of more than sixty members. The Lord so blessed us on that occasion. After calling this gentleman's attention to that passage, "Fools mock, but they shall mourn," he did not ask for any more aphorisms.

DIVINE COMFORT AND ASSURANCE

"Fools mock, but they shall mourn"! And then this richer statement follows it: "I, the Lord, give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me."

Have you in your moments of trial or deep sorrow felt the hand of a friend steal quietly into your hand, and by pressure express sympathy and brotherhood to you? I have fortunately had a few friends with whom I have had such experience as that, both men and women—a recollection that is among the precious treasures of my experience. But this passage: "I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all those who humble themselves before me"—in this, it seems to me, that I feel the hand of God slipping gently into my hand, and giving me the pressure of assurance that there will be mercy, that there will be helpfulness, that there will be encouragement from God. He will remember that we are but men and women in the making; and while not yet perfect, yet perhaps perfectable—which is the important thing. In that utterance in the Book of Mormon I feel the richness of the grace of God, and assurances of success in hungering and thirsting after righteousness, for it shall be given unto us.

The Book of Mormon is important because of its correction of some errors that have crept into the philosophies and religions of men. You see perhaps the most perfect expression of God's law unto men in the sermon on the mount. That sermon as it stands in Matthew is vulnerable, at least at one point; and that is where the Saviour admonishes men without any limitation, apparently, as expressed by Matthew, to take no thought for tomorrow what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed; and calls attention to the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed as one of these. He refers to the very birds of the air, that they are under the care of the Father, and will have His attention, and not one falleth to the ground without His notice. "Are ye not of more worth than many sparrows?"

Now those who enter into arguments against the doctrines of Christianity, and who try to condemn even this sermon on the

mount, say that this doctrine of taking no thought of tomorrow is utterly impracticable in life—that if men generally tried to live as the birds do, and to receive their clothing as the flowers are clothed with beauty, the result would be not civilization but savage life as we know it among the undeveloped races of the children of men.

In the Book of Mormon account of Christ delivering that sermon on this continent among His people, when coming to that part of His sermon which He repeated here in this land, He turned directly to the Twelve Disciples unto whom He had given authority to preach the Gospel and administer the ordinances thereof; and it was to them, and to them alone, that He addressed that part of His sermon. They were to take no thought of the things of tomorrow, nor the things of the world; for the Father knew beforehand what their needs were. And then He admonishes them to take encouragement from His reference to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, how they were fed and clothed; and gives them encouragement that the Father would so care for them. From the fact that this part of the sermon was limited to the twelve special disciples on this western hemisphere, it is a reasonable conclusion that the same limitation was fixed in His sermon on the mount when He delivered it in Palestine, as it was recorded by Matthew.

PROPHECY SUSTAINED

Since this is Easter day, let me call your attention to one other thing in the testimony of the scriptures of the western continents—the Book of Mormon—in relation to the resurrection of Christ. What a wonderful testimony that book contains for the thing that is celebrated this day throughout Christendom; namely, the resurrection from the dead of our Lord the Christ! In all the accounts that are given of the reality of that resurrection—and it has been beautifully expressed to our thought during this conference, the absolute reality of it—how well the testimonies of the Christian scriptures and the prophetic parts of the old Bible, too, are sustained by that wonderful appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ to the inhabitants of this western world!

After the awful destruction by storm and tempest and earthquake, which very much changed the character of the face of the land, even mountains arising from plains, and mountains shaken to their foundations, covering wicked cities upon whom God had decreed destruction; after the awful three days' darkness which seems to have been even more terrible than the storms and earthquakes, and which has become enshrined in the legends of the native people of this American Continent—then a voice was universally heard in the land, proclaiming the mercy and willingness of the Saviour to forgive; proclaiming the truth that He was the Creator of the heavens and the earth, that He had made His sacrifices for the redemption of men.

Following that, some time after the close of the storms, tempests, whirlwinds and earthquakes, came to pass the wonderful appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, when a few people in the Land Bonntiful stood by a temple that happened to have escaped destruction—then, as they wondered upon the changes that had been wrought in the lands about them, and were recovering somewhat from their own errors, they heard a voice, but knew not whence it came nor what it said. They looked about at each other, wondering whence it came. The second time they heard it, but there was no definite communication in the sound. The third time they heard it they recognized that something was said, and that something was this, and it thrilled them: “Behold my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.”

Looking in the direction whence that voice came they saw a Man, all glorious, descending in white raiment, and down He came until He stood upon the earth in their presence. Stretching forth His arms—it seems to me it must have been with wonderful majesty—He said unto them: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world: and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning.”

HOSANNA TO THE MOST HIGH GOD!

What a message of Deity to the world; a message and testimony of the Christ; of the fact that He had suffered for the sins of the world, of the fact that He had risen from the dead, and now stood before them clothed with all authority in heaven and in earth, come to establish faith in the hearts of those people who had been tried by their severe experiences, and had survived because they were the worthiest to survive! To them also He granted the privilege of St. Thomas, to behold His wounds in hands and feet and side. And when they had thus confirmed their faith, on their faces they fell and shouted aloud: “Hosanna, Hosanna to the Most High God!” And so they worshipped the risen Lord.

Now, tell me in what church or cathedral in the world, in what sacred grove, in what place among the habitations of men, will be found a more glorious Easter vision of the Christ than this? And the world would have lost this if it had not been for the Book of Mormon coming forth; and there are a hundred more such glorious things that have come to the world in that book to enlighten the children of men, all of which would have been lost had not this American volume of scripture been brought forth.

And now, O Lord Jesus, if thou couldst but come into the con-

sciousness of our souls this day, as thou didst come into the vision of the ancient Nephites in the Land of Bountiful, we would join their great song of praise and worship, saying—"Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!" And we, like them, would fall down at the feet of Jesus and worship Him this Easter day! Amen.

WILFORD WOODRUFF—PRESTON TO CASTLE FROME

ELDER RICHARD L. EVANS

THE STORY of the early British Mission labours of Wilford Woodruff is a classical example of wholehearted resignation to the will and direction of God. The bounteous success resulting from this pursuance of the Lord's work in the Lord's way is eloquent in its testimony of the wisdom of such resignation to and support of the Lord's word.

In a previous writing we have followed Wilford Woodruff from his New England boyhood to his early manhood in New York State, where he came in contact with two "Mormon" missionaries, accepted their message and moved to the body of the Church. His call and ordination to the Apostleship, his departure from his family, his journey to British shores, his arrival in Liverpool on January 11th, 1840, and his presence at the Preston consultation held in the home of Willard Richards on January 17th, have also been related. At this last named gathering it was decided that Wilford Woodruff should take up his labours in the Potteries of Staffordshire.

He was a stranger to England and to the territory assigned. He had no friends there known to him. There was work to be done, however, and Wilford Woodruff was not one to let time slip by in inactivity. On the following day he bade adieu to Elders Fielding, Richards and Taylor in Preston, and set out for the designated field, accompanied by Elder Turley who was bound for Birmingham. We may well suppose that parting from his brethren and from the organized body of the Church was hard on this occasion, but throughout his life Gospel interests were paramount in the actions of Wilford Woodruff.

EXPERIENCE WITH AN EVIL SPIRIT

Elders Turley and Woodruff took their journey by way of Manchester, where they visited for a day or two. There Wilford Woodruff and William Clayton met for the first time. The formalities of introduction had scarcely passed, when Elder Clayton requested Elder Woodruff to join him in administering to a woman possessed of an evil spirit.

They found the unfortunate lady in a rage, with three men attempting to quiet her. Many, among them both members of