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Book of Mormon Critics Refuted

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Abstract: This article is a plea to the members of the Church to study the Book of Mormon. Critics of the Book of Mormon visit the homes of members pointing out the changes in the Book of Mormon and discrepancies with the Bible.

aside and a heavenly light may shine into the righteous soul. By the listening ear attuned to the celestial music, the voice of God has been heard declaring his personality and will; to the eye that is freed from the moats and beams of sin, single in its search after truth, the hand of God has been made visible; within the soul properly purified by devotion and humility, the mind of God has been revealed."

The honest investigator must be prepared to follow wherever the search of truth may lead. Truth is often found in the most unexpected places. He must, with fearless and open mind "insist that facts are far more important than any cherished, mistaken beliefs, no matter how unpleasant the facts or how delightful the beliefs."

Quoting Lowell:

"New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth; They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth!"

As God is our Father and the source of all truth, as we are all primarily interested in attaining eternal life and as it is eternal life to know him, surely an open-minded and courageous study of him and his divine plan with respect

to our salvation will be the most interesting and permanently rewarding of all ventures into the vast realms which invite man's questing spirit. It was doubtless a contemplation of this majestic theme that gave us the rhapsody recorded in John. He said:

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2.)

The restored gospel of Jesus Christ which we proclaim, when understood and accepted, will unite all men in a common cause, and then only will all new scientific discoveries be utilized for the benefit of mankind. Then we shall have peace. A knowledge of truth will help men to be free, whether it come by direct revelation as in the case of the prophets, from the written word of God as recorded in the scriptures, revealed as a result of research in the laboratory, in the flight of the astronaut as he circles the globe, or as revealed to a prayerful youth upon his knees in the sanctuary of a grove.

Religion has to do not only with the internal life of man, but with his eternal life, which will be a continuation of identity and personality into the spiritual

realm of immortality. Religion gives meaning, purpose, and direction to man's insatiable quest, his instinctive curiosity, and inspires in him a desire for greater awareness of himself, of his universe, and of God. The prayerful searcher after truth will, as Shakespeare said,

"Find tongues in trees, books in running brooks,

"Sermons in stones and good in everything." (*As You Like It.*)

Man is ever wrestling with the problems of how to organize his reactions and find peace amidst the diverse and confusing experiences which crowd in upon the daily activities of his body, mind, and spirit. Religion is the means by which a man may achieve tranquility of spirit without internal anguish or external disaster.

The basic and fundamental doctrine of the primitive Church came through revelation from God the Father through Jesus Christ his Son. His life among men on earth, his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, all proclaim the eternal fact that he was and is personal and material, and to that we humbly bear witness. He was a babe born of woman, he matured through childhood and youth, and, as the Apostle Paul said:

BOOK OF MORMON CRITICS REFUTED*

*President Joseph Fielding Smith
of the Council of the Twelve*

My beloved brethren and sisters, I trust I may have the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord in what I shall say. I want to make a plea to the brethren holding the priesthood and to the sisters of the Church to spend a little more time in the study and the research that they might give to the standard works of the Church, and particularly to the Book of Mormon.

We had a campaign a short time ago in which we asked the members of the priesthood to read the Book of Mormon. It seems to me when we know the history whence the Book of Mormon came and how it came, no member of this Church could rest satisfied until he or she had read it from cover to cover—not once, but many times.

Now, there are some religious organizations who have centered their attack largely upon the Book of Mormon. They go into the homes of members of the Church and point out to them what they consider to be errors or changes or additions to what was given in the first publication. If anybody has published a book he knows that the first thing that stares him in the face the moment it comes off the press is some glaring error. We have never claimed

that in the beginning there were not some errors which the Prophet corrected, but they were very, very few. But some of these complaints or charges are against certain writings that appear, and in the limited time that I have I wish to refer to two of these accusations.

I have a letter on my table now from a man who seems to be very much disturbed because he, in conversation with some of these people, was told that the Book of Mormon did not tell the truth in regard to the birth of the Son of God, and that the Book of Mormon declared that the Savior would be born in Jerusalem, the land of their fathers. Now the Book of Mormon makes no such statement. I am going to read it to you.

Alma, in speaking about the coming of the Son of God, said: "And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, . . ." (Alma 7:10.) Now, if he had said the city of our forefathers it would have made a difference, would it not? Well, wasn't Jesus born in the land of Jerusalem, Jerusalem being the capital? Alma did not say he would be born in the city of Jerusalem, but in the land over which Jerusalem was the capital. But they make a great deal out of this,

and some of our people seem to be unable to defend themselves. Now, *at* does not mean necessarily *in*. You might read in the newspaper, if you were in Great Britain, that a certain vessel arrived at London, but it did not—it landed at Southampton, the port for London, which is many miles away. There is no mistake in this statement whatever. Jesus was born at the land of Jerusalem, the land of their forefathers. So much for that.

The other charge that is made that I wish to mention is the statement of Abinadi, and a similar statement occurs in some other places, that Jesus Christ is both Father and Son to us.

"And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

"And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—

"The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—" (Mosiah 15:1-3.)

*Address delivered Friday afternoon, October 5.

“. . . being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; . . .” (Hebrews 5:9.)

He was and is Jehovah, God the Son, a separate identity working in complete oneness with Elohim, God the Father, in whose likeness man was created.

The announcement of new and continued revelation from God is more momentous, more reassuring and challenging in national and international affairs today than any of the discoveries of atomic energy or the amazing achievements of scientists.

We must seek to know God's word and will concerning us individually and collectively, and to this end we need not rely wholly on the written word given to people of another age. Each succeeding prophet added something to the revelations of the past. While much of that word is applicable to our time and condition, we announce to you, our friends, humbly but with a sincerity born of the witness of the Spirit, that God's word is revealed to men today, as anciently, through his own appointed servants. We proclaim a new revelation from the heavens, a new vision and understanding of God and of Jesus Christ his Son, a new interpretation of truth, and also a new delegation of

authority from God to man. Continued revelation places religion in the vanguard of human progress. We proclaim the opening, under divine guidance, of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, that which was mentioned by the Apostle Peter:

“That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: . . .” (Eph. 1:10.)

A poet of this dispensation said, hopefully:

“The morning breaks; the shadows flee;
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!
The dawning of a brighter day,
Majestic rises on the world.”

—Parley P. Pratt

The vital and dynamic message of Mormonism is that there is a personal God in the heavens. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He has not abated his power; he has not surrendered his sovereignty; he has not diluted his love; he changes not; and his plans never fail. We bear witness that his chief executive officer in the creation and direction of the affairs of this and other worlds is Jesus Christ the Lord, the Redeemer of the World,

the Son of the Father.

The foundation of this Church rests upon the bedrock of revelation. The character, personality, and purposes of God have been again revealed to the world. The kingdom of God has been set up as predicted by Daniel and other prophets. An angel has flown in the midst of heaven in the latter days in confirmation of John's vision recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation, where he said:

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Rev. 14:6-7.)

Our friends, either this solemn statement is true or it is false. If it is true, it is the most important announcement since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Christ. If it is false it will, of course, with all other falsehood, come to naught. That it is true we humbly testify, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

What's wrong with that scripture? What is a father? One who begets or gives life. What did our Savior do? He begot us, or gave us life from death, as clearly set forth by Jacob, the brother of Nephi. If it had not been for the death of our Savior, Jesus Christ, the spirit and body would never have been united again. Death would have been inevitable and, as Jacob states—I won't take time to turn to read it—if there had been no redemption from death our spirits would have been taken captive by Satan, and we would have become subject to Satan's will forever.

What did our Savior do? He begot us in that sense. He became a father to us because he gave us immortality or eternal life through his death and sacrifice upon the cross. I think we have a perfect right to speak of him as Father.

King Mosiah put his people under covenant to take upon them the name of Christ. And this was 124 years before the birth of Christ. I want to read a verse or two from this pledge. “And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye

say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters [spiritually].” (Mosiah 5:7.) Is there anything wrong in us

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THE SHINING ONES

BY LEE AVERY

*Bless those, to whom the passing
years
Bring larger faith and lesser fears;
Who, ageless, joy in every day,
Catch beauty's gleam along each
way;
Who love their friends, forgive their
foes—
God grant that I be one of those!*

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calling Jesus Christ our spiritual Father? “And under this head,” this wonderful king said, “ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have

entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

“And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.

“And now it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall not take upon him the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God.” (*Ibid.*, 5:8-10.)

The Son of God has a perfect right to call us his children, spiritually begotten, and we have a perfect right to look on him as our father who spiritually begot us.

Now if these critics would read carefully the Book of Mormon, they would find that when the Savior came and visited the Nephites, he told them that he had been sent by his Father. He knelt before them, and he prayed to his Father. He taught them to pray to his Father, but that did not lessen in the least our duty and responsibility of looking upon the Son of God as a father to us because he spiritually begot us.

The Lord bless you in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.