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The Book of Mormon from a Bible Standpoint

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Abstract: This article refutes arguments against the Book of Mormon that use the Bible as evidence, e.g., Revelation 22:18-19. Wolfe says Isaiah prophesied of the Book of Mormon, as did Ezekiel.

Emma Guy

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“And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”—MARK 4: 26-28.

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THE BOOK OF MORMON FROM A BIBLE STANDPOINT.

BY ELDER WALTER M. WOLFE OF THE LONDON CONFERENCE.

ELDER ORSON PRATT in his treatise on the “Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon,” makes the following statement: “The nature of the message in the Book of Mormon is such that, if true, no one can possibly be saved and reject it; if false, no one can possibly be saved and accept it.” Nevertheless, the world at large absolutely refuses to have anything to do with the book for which such vast claims are made. The world declines to investigate its historical or doctrinal merits. One story after another is concocted to account for the origin of the humanly-devised, fraudulent record, as the history of the Nephites is called, a record that has been palmed off for seventy-four years on the credulous, the ignorant and the superstitious. Each story in turn has proved false and has been rejected, only to be succeeded by others less plausible and more preposterous. There are those, however, who take these idle tales for what they are worth, and attack the Book of Mormon on scriptural grounds, using the Bible as their sole weapon. Their first claim is that the canon of Scripture is complete; that the Bible contains all that God ever has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and all that He ever will reveal for the salvation of mankind.

In answer to this we will say that the authors of many of the accepted, canonical books refer to other scriptures that they certainly regarded as being as sacred, if not more sacred, than their own writings. There are eighteen

such books referred to in the Old and New Testaments, commencing with Moses's reference to the Book of the Covenant (Exodus xxiv: 7), and closing with St. Jude's mention of the Book of Enoch. These include a missing epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (I. Cor. v: 9), one to the Ephesians (Eph. iii: 3), another to the Colossians from Laodicea (Col. iv: 16), and a missing epistle of Jude (Jude 3).

Many fortify their arguments against the Book of Mormon by quoting Rev. xxii: 18-19, which has become a sweet morsel to their tongues: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." It is foolish to imagine that St. John was referring to anything but his own book of Revelation, for the New Testament was not compiled. It was three centuries before the Catholic church decided what should be accepted as canonical and what should be rejected, and more than fifteen centuries elapsed before the Protestant world took the liberty of expunging from sacred writ books that all Catholics accept as divinely inspired. So, if the sectarian interpretation be true, either all of the Catholic faith or all of the Protestant faith must be damned by this one verse. What will be done about the Pauline epistles of many of which St. John, in all probability, had never heard? And did he not utterly condemn himself by writing these epistles which all biblical students ascribe to a later date than the Apocalypse. Dean Farrar, in his "Early Days of Christianity," proves conclusively that the epistles of John close the canon of New Testament Scripture. He says (chap. v, p. 50): "Besides the four Gospels, besides the thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, we have nine books of the New Testament which are the works of five different authors, and every one of these brief but precious documents is marked by its own special characteristics. Earliest, probably, of them all is the book which is unhappily placed last, and therefore completely out of its proper order in the New Testament, The Revelation of St. John the Divine."

It is a singular fact that the oldest New Testament manuscript (Sinaitic) contains the epistle of Barnabas and a part of the Shepherd of Hermas; while the next oldest manuscript (Alexandrine) contains the First Epistle of Clement and fragments of the second. All of which modern reformers reject as spurious. To those critics who would put a stop to divine communications we will quote Deut. iv: 2, and, to be consistent they must accept Moses as well as John. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." John the Divine says substantially what Moses says. If one is true so is the other, and hence all who accept as the word of God the sixty-one books that follow the Pentateuch must be under condemnation. "Consistency, thou art a jewel!" seems to be an especially appropriate motto for the harangue against continuous revelation.

Still more puerile is the argument that the Book of Mormon is valueless as history because, contemporaneous with the acts of Nephites and Lamanites, God was recording his dealings with the chosen people on the eastern continent; is valueless as doctrine because it contains only principles that are already

enunciated in the Bible. Is it not true that Kings and Chronicles overlap or are parallel with one another? Is not Amos contemporaneous with both Joel and Hosea; Isaiah with Micah; Daniel with Ezekiel; Haggai with Zechariah? Why will not one Gospel suffice instead of four? Why should the same parables and miracles of our Lord be narrated by two, three or four separate hearers and witnesses? Why not abbreviate the Epistles by eliminating repetitions? Simply because our Father is the best of teachers, and His servants, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recognize the value of repeating and dwelling upon the principles of salvation and exaltation, with which none of His children can become too familiar.

One other passage is frequently referred to by the objectors. It is from St. Paul's letter to Timothy (II. Tim. iii: 15): "From a child thou has known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation;" the argument being that the Scriptures with which he was acquainted in his youth were amply sufficient to secure eternal life for him and, inferentially, for all mankind; hence there was no need of further divine revelation. Assuming this to be true, it does away with any necessity for the New Testament, since Timothy as a child could have been acquainted only with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the New Testament having not yet been written.

The Bible then in no manner tends to do away with further revelation, or to make impossible, or even improbable the then existence and future production of other divinely preserved records, divinely inspired prophecies, divinely uttered doctrines. On the contrary such are consistent with Bible teachings, and might be expected were there no prophetic sayings that point directly to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. So we turn from the negative side of the question to the positive, from defence to attack, and take the Bible as *our* weapon to prove the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

The manner in which the Book of Mormon was found; the hiding place of the plates on a rocky, at that time untilled hillside; the very nature and character of the discoverer have long been subjects of ridicule to those who scoff at Mormonism. But if the story related by the Prophet Joseph concerning Moroni's message and mission is not true, or if some similar discovery of a concealed record has not or will not be made, how do profound Bible students explain the words "Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm lxxxv: 10)? Isaiah expresses the same idea (Isaiah xlv: 8) when he says: "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it."

The twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah contains prophecies of whose fulfillment the Book of Mormon gives plain evidence. The first four verses are as follows: "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifice. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow; and it shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall

be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."

Concerning this passage Elder Pratt says: "The latter part of the second verse speaks of another event that should be similiar to the one which was to happen to Ariel or Jerusalem. This cannot refer to Ariel itself, but it must refer to something which should be 'as Ariel.' It would be folly to say that Ariel shall be as Ariel. Therefore the word 'it' must refer to a nation that should suffer similar judgments to those which should befall Jerusalem. . . . These predictions of Isaiah could not refer to Ariel or Jerusalem, because their speech has not been 'out of the ground,' or 'low out of the dust,' but it refers to the remnant of Joseph who were destroyed in America upward of fourteen hundred years ago. The Book of Mormon describes their downfall, and truly it was great and terrible. At the crucifixion of Christ 'the multitude of their terrible ones became as chaff that passeth away,' and it took place 'at an instant suddenly.' Many of their great and magnificent cities were destroyed by fire, others by being sunk in the depths of the earth. This sudden destruction came upon them because they had stoned and killed the prophets sent among them. Between three and four hundred years after Christ, they again fell into great wickedness, and the principal nation fell in battle. Forts were raised in all parts of the land, the remains of which may be seen at the present day."

Indeed the whole of Central America and of northern South America is dotted with the ruins of mighty cities whose silent towers and crumbling walls are an eloquent witness to the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. More than this the events so graphically foretold by Isaiah linger in the traditions of the degraded descendants of those mighty peoples, and from their legends, unknown half a-century ago, a great portion of the story of the Book of Mormon could be reconstructed.

Continuing to quote from Elder Pratt's work: "One of the most marvelous things connected with this prediction is, that after the nation should be brought down, they should 'speak out of the ground.' This is mentioned or repeated four times in the same verse. Never was a prophecy more truly fulfilled than this, in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith took that sacred history 'out of the ground.' It is the voice of the ancient prophets of America 'speaking out of the ground,' their speech is 'low out of the dust.' . . . It is the voice of prophets speaking from the dead, crying repentance in the ears of the living. In what manner could a nation, after they were brought down and destroyed, 'speak out of the ground?' Could their dead bodies, or their dust, or their ashes speak? Verily, no: they can only speak by their writings or their books that they wrote while living. Their voice, speech or words, can only—'speak out of the ground,' or 'whisper out of the dust' by their books or writings being discovered. Therefore, Isaiah further says in the eleventh and twelfth verses: 'And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver unto one that is learned, saying, read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered unto him that is not learned, saying, read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.'" It is needless here to relate the absolute fulfillment of this prophecy in the taking of the Book of

Mormon characters to Professor Charles Anthon, of New York, by Martin Harris. But it is well to remember that complete details of this transaction, and the statement of each side of the case, are given in "Orson Pratt's Works" (Salt Lake edition), pages 295-7. A similar account in briefer form is given in "The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," vol. i, chap. 3, and in the "Life of Joseph Smith," Cannon, chap. 8.

The thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel deals almost entirely with the great Latter-day work and might be made the subject of volumes of commentaries. A few of the verses (16-19) distinctly foreshadow the writing and bringing forth of the Book of Mormon. These have been so fully discussed by almost every preacher and writer of our Church that the merest reference to them seems superfluous, and nothing can be added to what has already been said: "Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand."

To this day in the orthodox Jewish synagogues the Book of the law is read from rolls of parchment wound upon long silver-mounted rods, and the term roll or stick when connected with the acts of writing or reading means a book. Supposing this to be the case in Ezekiel's reference to two sticks we can easily see the stick of Judah to mean the Bible, and unless some similar record can be found for "Joseph, the stick of Ephraim," and for all the house of Israel, the prophecy is as yet unfulfilled. It is nonsense to consider the New Testament as the stick of Ephraim, for its message, written to the Jews, is no more for Joseph in particular than for any other family of the human race. But the Book of Mormon, giving the history of the house of Joseph on the American continent, literally accomplishes every detail of the prophecy, and hence must be considered that of which Ezekiel wrote. Leading up to this point we might prove from Jacob's blessing that Joseph, his branches running over the wall, his boundaries the utmost hills, was to fill, with his posterity, lands then unknown, and we could learn from the history of the Nephites and Lamanites that scores of Bible prophecies are literally accomplished in these peoples. However, this does not bear directly upon the subject in question. Each day gives us added testimonies, in many ways, of the divine mission of the boy Prophet, and the Book of Mormon is but one of the scores of evidences that the Lord is giving to the world of the restoration of His great work in these latter days.

THE prerequisite to doing good work in the field of philanthropy—in the field of social effort, undertaken with one's fellows for the common good, is that it shall be undertaken in a spirit of broad sanity, no less than of broad and loving charity.—THEODORE ROOSEVELT.