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The Book of Mormon Bears Witness of Christ

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Abstract: In this two-part series, Church members are exhorted to live righteously and to know doctrine and Church history well enough to defend their faith. Ivins testifies that the Redeemer appeared on this continent. The first part begins the series.

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THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS'

MILLENNIAL STAR

ESTABLISHED IN 1840

“Yea, and wo unto him that shall say at that day, to get gain, that there can be no miracle wrought by Jesus Christ; for he that doeth this shall become like unto the son of perdition, for whom there was no mercy, according to the word of Christ!” BOOK OF MORMON, 3 NEPHI 29:7.

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THE BOOK OF MORMON BEARS WITNESS OF CHRIST*

PRESIDENT ANTHONY W. IVINS

MY BRETHERN AND SISTERS, who are members of the Church, and those who are not identified with it who may be present this afternoon, I desire earnestly, during the few moments I may occupy, that you will give me the benefit of your faith and prayers. I feel my weakness as I stand here in the role of a religious instructor, knowing fully, I believe, the responsibility that a position of this kind entails, for if I speak not the truth and because of that which I say others are led into error, I become, to a certain degree at least, responsible; and it is not my desire to lead any man or woman away from Christ our Lord, or away from faith in God our Father, and obedience to His commandments.

From the very many important and valuable points of doctrine, advice and instruction which are contained in the general epistles of the Apostle Peter, I will read from the first a paragraph or two, to illustrate the thought I have in mind.

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

In these short paragraphs that I have read, two outstanding doctrines or ideas strongly appeal to me. In the first place, it

*Address delivered in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, Sunday, May 22nd, 1927.

teaches me that every person professing to be a follower of Christ our Lord, every person who has entered into covenant with the Lord that he will serve Him and keep His commandments, should be careful, in the first place, so to live that his conscience may be void of offense toward our Father in heaven, and toward his fellow-men, and that his example should be such that other people seeing his good works may be assured of his sincerity and believe in him as a man practising what he believes, and believing that which he practises.

REASONS FOR CONDUCT

The other thought expressed in these words of the Apostle of the Lord, which have always appealed to me, is the fact that every man professing to be a follower of Christ our Lord, professing fellowship in any Christian denomination with which he may be identified, should be sufficiently well acquainted with the doctrines taught by the Redeemer, and the example which He set in His life, that he may be able to give a reasonable explanation or reason for his religious faith and the life which he leads. It is with this thought in view that I desire this afternoon to present to this congregation of Latter-day Saints and people who may not be members of the Church—for we all need it—briefly and as directly as I can my reasons for having identified myself with, and for adhering to, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called the “Mormon” Church.

This Church is not a Protestant organization; it is not a church which has broken away from Rome, from the Church of England, from the Presbyterian or any other existing church in the world. It is a newly organized Church, having been in existence now for nearly one hundred years; and it was brought into existence under circumstances different from any other latter-day religious organization. It is founded upon faith in God our Father. We believe in Him as the organizer, the Creator, through Christ His Son, of the earth upon which we dwell. We believe that He holds dominion over this world, that He shapes its destiny to the end that His definite purposes may ultimately be accomplished.

FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS

We do not believe that everything that occurs upon the earth is foreordained of God. Man, having been given his own agency, is left to do the will of the Father or not, as he may choose. We believe that through the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord men have been inspired to outline and foretell, in the spirit of prophecy, the definite purposes of the Lord, which shall be accomplished upon the earth, and that they have also foretold and predicted many things which God our Father desired should not be accomplished, but which, the foreknowledge of God manifested to them, would occur. And so it must be understood that

not all of the words of the prophets are to be regarded as having been the definite purpose or will of our Father in heaven, but there are certain well-defined plans; and to bring about the accomplishment of those plans He does control and overrule the actions of men. We believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost, that God our Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and His Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost, which emanates from God our Father and enlightens everything that comes into the world, constitute the Godhead which we worship.

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

Now continuing I would like to read from the Articles of Faith of the Church, for this is its constitution, this is the foundation on which it is built:

We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, viz., apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.

We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.

We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honouring, and sustaining the law.

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

It is now nearly one hundred years since this constitutional declaration was made by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Church has never deviated from it. We have not always been able to carry out the principles herein set forth, because men are mortal, and we all know that we are beset with difficulties and do not always magnify our calling as we should.

I have been wondering, as I read these Articles of Faith, what there is in them that should be objected to by any right-thinking man or woman, even if one is not identified with the Church; what is there in them that is objectionable; what is there in them that is not praiseworthy; what is there in them that is not thoroughly in accord with the teachings and doctrines of Christ?

CONCERNING THE BIBLE

There has been objection raised to this eighth Article of Faith, in which we say that we believe the Bible contains the word of God, in so far as it has been properly translated. This does not suggest any lack of faith in this holy book. There is not a person present, who is well-informed upon the question, who does not know the manner in which our Bible came to us. We know that when the compilation was made, a great mass of manuscripts were there, not one of which purported to be an original, not one of which was even known to be the first copy of an original. They had been written in different languages; they had to be translated, and naturally we believe that errors may have crept in; but this much we unhesitatingly do have faith in—that the Bible as we have it in our hands, this King James edition, preserved by the power of God our Father, contains sufficient of truth, sufficient of doctrine, sufficient of prophecy, to direct the thought of mankind in the path that will lead them back to God if they will only follow after it; and we have never sought to change it. We use this Bible that I have in my hand. Not one word in it has its origin with or from the “Mormon” Church.

AN OBJECTION OVERCOME

But, says the objector, you also believe in the Book of Mormon; you declare that to be the word of God; and that we cannot accept. There cannot be another scripture; there can be but one word of the Lord. People will often quote the words of the Redeemer as they are recorded in the revelation which we know as the Apocalypse, in which the Lord says that if anyone shall take from or add to the words of that book the displeasure of the Lord will result. Now that is exactly the truth. That refers to the revelation given by Christ our Lord to John the beloved Apostle while he was upon the Isle of Patmos, and it just happened to be put in the last part of the Bible instead of the forepart. It has no application at all to the book as a whole.

Let me call your attention to one or two things, and ask their

meaning: The Redeemer said to His disciples that He had other sheep which were not of that fold. They were not Jews; they were not at Jerusalem; and "them also I must bring," He said, "and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

What is meant by that? No one knew, no one properly understood, until the Book of Mormon was given to the people of the world. It has now been before them nearly one hundred years. It has been subjected to the criticism of the learned, and to the ridicule of the unlearned; but no one has ever pointed out during this century a single doctrine taught in it that is not a Christian doctrine. What is it? It is just the story of a great people that once occupied the American Continent.

No argument is necessary to satisfy you that a great people did once occupy this continent. All that is necessary is for you to go down in the land south of us here, as I have been, to walk among those mighty ruins, greater than any in the Old World, and see the remains of hundreds of thousands of human habitations, to see the ruins of great temples and structures which make our buildings insignificant, so far as magnitude is concerned; not with the same degree of elegance and of developed civilization that ours show, of course; but I have seen one structure there, the base of which covers as large a space as this Temple Block, the top of which is two hundred and more feet high. You could put everything that is upon this Temple Block and the surrounding hotels and business houses in the interior of it, and you would not see a sign of any of them; they would be lost in one structure. And all around it are the ruined homes of what must have been countless thousands of people.

Who were they? From whence came they? What was their end? There is no answer to these questions. Scientific investigation during the past century has developed greater knowledge in regard to them than we previously had, but still we are in ignorance. The Book of Mormon tells the story of these people, and from whence they came; that they are a part or were a part of the House of Israel, the people to whom the message of Christ properly came; that they came to this country led by the prophets.

BRITAIN AND ISRAEL

We all know that the Ten Tribes, a short time after they were carried captive by Shalmaneser into Assyria, disappeared. We do not know where they went. A great movement is just now on foot in Great Britain which is developing the fact, and it is true, that the people of Israel found their way into Northern Europe. The British people are just beginning to understand that it is not because of their superior strength or intelligence that they have been preserved and magnified until they have been made, in many respects, the dominant nation of the world:

They are just awakening to the fact that the promise of God our Father made to Abraham, repeated to Isaac, and enlarged upon the head of Jacob, is being fulfilled, and that British Israel is an instrument in the hands of the Lord in its accomplishment. We have been trying to teach that to them for nearly a hundred years. I cannot dwell but for a moment upon this Book of Mormon. I would like to read to you from the title page, and this title page was not written by Joseph Smith. It was upon the plates, and was translated by the man who took the records from which he translated and had this book published.

THE BOOK OF MORMON, an account written by the hand of Mormon upon the plates taken from the plates of Nephi.

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven—Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers: and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

That is the title page, the very beginning. This book, from the first chapter to the last, is the strongest corroborative evidence of the divinity of the mission of the Redeemer that is in existence—I say corroborative evidence—proving beyond doubt the truth of the things contained in the Bible, both the prophecies of the Old Testament and the things written in the New Testament.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH*

IN PARADISE

DURING the hours of Christ's agony upon the cross one of the condemned malefactors who was crucified with Him appealed to

*This article is for use in the course of study of the Relief Societies on the first meeting night in October.