

"Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

"For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him.

"And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance.

"And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

"Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people.

"And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

"And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me in the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!"

We are bringing many souls unto a knowledge of the Gospel. I rejoice beyond all the power which God has given me to express my feelings, that the Latter-day Saints in every land and in every clime, all over the wide world wherever the Gospel has gone, have been blessed with a testimony, with a knowledge of the divinity of the work in which we are engaged. I never have heard and never expect to hear the song, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet, to Guide Us in These Latter Days," but what my heart goes out in gratitude to God for choosing that wonderful young man, Joseph Smith, to restore to the earth again the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the plan of life and salvation. I rejoice that the missionaries who have been going out to proclaim this Gospel for ninety-nine long years have gone out under the inspiration of the living God, that they have declared that which they knew to be true; and that in every nation under heaven where the Gospel has gone, honest men and honest women, in answer to their own prayers and their supplications to God, have been blessed with the light and the knowledge of the Gospel, and of the divinity of the mission of Joseph Smith the prophet.

May God bless us during our assembly here today, and inspire all those who shall speak to us, is my humble prayer and I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT ANTHONY W. IVINS

I desire first to express the sincere gratitude which I feel that I, as well as all of you who are assembled this morning, have been preserved through another year. That we are privileged to assemble here, as it is our custom to do, to commemorate the organization of the Church, to be informed regarding its development and growth, by the teachings of the Gospel which we receive in these general gatherings of the Church. It is for this purpose that we meet together.

PROTECTION FROM STORM

It is a stormy day. Looking out of the window to the south before getting up, it appeared that the storm had developed into a blizzard.

We thank the Lord for the rain and snow. We thank him for

clouds, as we do for sunshine, and know that as long as we continue to put our trust in him he will watch over and protect us. The mantle which is drawn about us through the influence of the Gospel of Christ will protect us from the storms of the world, just as this comfortable building does this morning from the storms which are raging without.

MISREPRESENTATION

From the organization of the Church to the present it has been customary for unbelievers to assail the Church until it has become a thing to be expected by us. Abortive efforts have been made to explain the reason for its existence. It has been ridiculed, it has been criticised by both unlearned and learned men. It has been referred to as an organization not Christian in its character. It has been referred to as an organization which perverts the doctrines of Christ as they are taught in the Bible. In fact, it would appear that there is no pretext that can be thought of which has not been resorted to in order that the true origin and purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints might be misrepresented to the world. And it is strange, almost incomprehensible, that these statements which have been made, the reasonings which have been offered, have been accepted as true by intelligent, thoughtful people.

ONE OF THE OBJECTIONS

One of the objections commonly raised is that the Latter-day Saints accept the Book of Mormon, as we declare in our Articles of Faith, as coming from God. This book has been referred to as the "Golden Bible." It has been referred to as a book which the Latter-day Saints place before the Holy Scriptures as they are contained in the Bible. It is now nearly one hundred years since the book was published, and I do not know of a single argument, of a single theory, that has been advanced which has not been successfully met. I desire during the short time at my disposal to refer to some of these objections and call your attention to certain developments which have come under my observation during the past few years that tend to establish the divine authenticity of the book and the things which it teaches.

I am going to read first, in justification of the statement which I have just made, from a book that I now hold in my hand. It is entitled, "Sketches of Mexico," and is written by John W. Butler, a man whom I knew, a man who was in Mexico during my early experience as a missionary in that country. This is what he says in reviewing the origin of the Mexican people:

"The theory found in the Book of Mormon hardly merits mention. The story is given in Bancroft's *Native Races*, vol. v, and covers five pages (p. 96, et seq.) It is rather romantic and reaches from the Tower of Babel, soon after which it is claimed the first Mormons came to this continent, down to September 22, 1827, when Joseph Smith removed the buried book from the hill Cumorah, Ontario County, N. Y. The whole story is not only a pretentitious fraud but also a blasphemous perversion of Old Testament history.

"The learned John Fiske in his recent valuable work, 'The Discovery of America,' (Boston, 1892), well says: 'It is extremely difficult for an imposter to concoct a narrative without making blunders that can easily be detected by a critical scholar. For example, the Book of Mormon, in the passage cited, in supremely blissful ignorance introduces oxen and sheep, as well as the knowledge of smelting iron, into pre-Columbian America.'" (Vol. 1, p. 179.)

HIS OWN ARGUMENT

Undoubtedly no one can deny John Fiske's intelligence. No one can deny his good citizenship. No one can deny the sincerity of what he writes, but it would perhaps be not entirely inappropriate for me to call attention to his own argument:

"It is extremely difficult for an imposter to concoct a narrative without making blunders that can easily be detected by a critical scholar."

It is equally difficult for a critic to reach proper conclusions in discussing a subject upon which he is not well informed.

So I want to take John Fiske for just a few moments to some of the recent developments which touch upon the very things that he refers to and treats as impossible.

THE USE OF STEEL

I hold in my hand a story taken from the January number of "World's Work" a year ago. It is written by A. Hyatt Verrill, one of the foremost of our archaeologists. The article is headed "The Pompeii of Ancient America," telling of a vast city on the Isthmus of Panama which was destroyed centuries before Christ. He says:

"We believe that this article stands unique among accounts of modern archaeological discoveries. It is the story of an American city which flourished and probably was destroyed by a volcano centuries before Pompeii existed. We are finding that America is not so young after all. Moreover, the veteran explorer for the Museum of the American Indian, who discovered this ancient city and who writes this article, believes that he has made another interesting discovery—that steel implements were used in America centuries ago—a theory which was scoffed at until iron was found in King Tut-Ankh-Amon's tomb in Egypt, dating back to about 1350 B. C."

The entire article is exceedingly interesting to a student of the Book of Mormon. It is elaborately illustrated. I cannot take time to read the many things which have a direct bearing upon the Book of Mormon, but I ask your indulgence while I read the following:

Verrill says:

"I am thoroughly convinced that these people, as well as many other prehistoric races, possessed iron or steel tools, and I do not know of a single argument or fact to disprove this. The fact that no iron or steel tools have ever been found proves nothing. Iron is the most perishable of metals, and except under most unusual and peculiar conditions, all traces of small iron or steel tools would disappear completely in a few centuries. No doubt archaeologists will scoff at this theory and pooh-pooh the idea but scientists as well as laymen have a habit of scoffing at every theory until proof is forthcoming to place them in the wrong."

He then refers to the discovery of steel in the tomb of Tut-Ankh-Amon and continues:

"Indeed, less than two years ago I was scoffed at for suggesting that an entirely new and unknown culture of great antiquity had existed in Panama, but we now have undeniable proof of the fact. Moreover, at a depth of five and one-half feet below the surface, at the temple site, among broken pottery and imbedded in charcoal, I found a steel or hardened iron implement. The greater portion is almost completely destroyed by corrosion, but the chisel shaped end is in good condition. It is so hard that it is scarcely touched by a file and will scratch glass, and with such an implement it would be a simple matter to cut and carve the hardest stone."

He then proceeds to say that the stone work which he has uncovered there could not have been accomplished with anything but a hardened steel implement.

Thus, one of the objections which Mr. Fiske expresses in the book from which I have just read is disposed of. Joseph Smith had no knowledge of this, but he told us one hundred years ago, or the historian who wrote the Book of Mormon which Joseph Smith translated, told us that they became expert in the manufacture and use of steel.

ANIMALS OF ANCIENT AMERICA

Again, the objection is made by Mr. Fiske that sheep are referred to in the Book of Mormon. I do not think that this needs particular attention. The llama and alpaca of South America are of this species.

Fiske says oxen were referred to. I have in my hand a circular issued by the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Science and Art. On page 27 of the book is a picture of the skeleton of an ancient ox, mounted and complete. If you will go into the museum at Los Angeles, as I have done, you will see these mounted skeletons. This skeleton is said to be that of a prehistoric ox the remains of which have been taken from the asphalt beds near the city, associated with the remains of many other animals which once existed in America, and are now extinct.

On page twenty-six of the same book is the picture of a skeleton of a horse, said to differ slightly from our present horse, but fully as large taken from the same bed. The Book of Mormon tells us that there were horses and oxen here. This would appear to dispose of that criticism also.

FINE PEARLS

Another thing to which my attention has been called, and it has been very interesting to me, because it helps us in the conclusions reached in regard to several important matters contained in the Book of Mormon, is the following: (We are now dealing with a period nearly three hundred years after the birth of Christ.) The writer tells us:

"And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world."

He does not refer to diamonds, nor rubies, nor sapphires, but to pearls. This also has been made a question of ridicule by critics of the Book of Mormon and the faith of the Latter-day Saints. I have in my hand a page which I tore from the "Courier-Journal" of Ohio in 1925. I wish you could all have it and read it, and also a page from the "Literary Digest." I can only read the headlines because time will not permit me to refer to the many interesting things which are contained in it. But this is what the headlines tell us: "America's Ancient Kings and Their Bushels of Pearls—Skeletons of a prehistoric family that ruled the mysterious people who built the mounds near Chillicothe, Ohio, where they were recently discovered. They are surrounded by bushels of pearls which evidently formed their burial robes."—"Newest remarkable discoveries about the Prehistoric People who built the huge earthen mounds and buried their Kings in Robes of Precious Stones."

I was in communication at this time with a friend in New York, who is a collector of Indian relics, and probably had one of the largest individual collections in the United States. He was well acquainted with the archaeologist who uncovered this remarkable burial place. The photographs contained in the article the headings of which I have just read show the form in which the skeletons were found and their surroundings. The article says that the fragment of clothing which they wore was shown to be of very fine quality. But more than all, this friend of mine said he had some of these pearls in his possession which had been sent to him, and they were very fine, ranging in size from a hickory nut to a pin head, all of which had been pierced and used evidently as ornaments.

WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF THE FUTURE

This may be considered a small thing by some people, but to me it is very important, because one hundred years ago that account was written into this record without knowledge of the future, without knowledge of these developments that are being made by archaeologists at the present time. I do not know that I can say that these things tend to strengthen our faith because our faith appears to have been definite and needs little strengthening, but it is a source of great satisfaction to us to know that these arguments which have been used, and used so effectually against the Book of Mormon, are gradually being displaced by the actual discoveries which are being made.

THE GOLDSMITH ART

The Book of Mormon is referred to as the Golden Bible of the Mormons, because of the fact that the record was made in reformed Egyptian characters upon plates which were of gold. I have in my hand a little book published by the Heye Foundation of the American Indian, from which I wish to read a paragraph or two. This book is written by Saville, one of our foremost students of archaeology. It is entitled

"The Goldsmith's Art in Ancient Mexico." The entire volume is devoted to this one subject, and tells us of the expert manner in which the Mexican Indians handled gold at the time of the conquests; that the goldsmiths of old Spain, which stood at the head of the world at that time, were amazed, and that they employed these Indians to convert the gold which was accumulated by the conquerors of Mexico into ingots that could be carried back to Spain.

MILLIONS IN GOLD

One of the first Spaniards to visit the coasts of the mainland was Juan de Grijalva. He left Cuba, coasted along Yucatan and Central America, and then returned to his starting point. He brought with him more than one hundred samples, which I have copied from this book, of ornaments made from gold. This excited the cupidity of the Spaniards, and other expeditions were immediately sent out for further investigation. One single article, it could not have been used as an ornament, undoubtedly having some religious signification, said to have been as large as a cart wheel, was brought out. It had a weight value in gold of thirty thousand dollars. Among the things which he brought were very beautiful representations of animals, of birds, of men, and other things. Prescott declared that there was collected by Cortez and those who were with him, six million three hundred thousand dollars worth of gold, the greater part of which was not used as a circulating medium, but for the adornment of the person, the representation of various forms of life, and the religious ideals of the people.

Among other things Montezuma had in his palace in Mexico City, a room wherein was represented every known bird and animal which could not be kept alive in the gardens just outside, made from gold, and said to have been so nearly perfect that it amazed these Spanish adventurers.

PLATES OF GOLD

That is not the particular thing to which I desire to call your attention. Mr. Saville has taken the contents of his book from the old inventories that are still available, reports which were made to the kings to whom one-fifth of all the booty which fell into the hands of the conquerors was sent. The amount not recorded he says no one can guess. Six million dollars would be but a bagatelle compared with what we believe was carried away by the conquistadors.

This is the thing which particularly interested me, and to which my attention was called by Professor Levi Edgar Young. The book that I hold in my hand is his property. I read from it as follows:

"Padre Gay mentions that the Mixtecan Indians 'sold to some European antiquarians, very thin plates of gold, evidently worked with the hammer which their ancestors had been able to preserve, and on which were engraved ancient hieroglyphics.'"

That is very significant to us, when considered in connection with

the declaration that the record from which the Book of Mormon was translated was written upon plates of gold.

A few days ago I received a letter from Dr. John A. Widtsoe who at present presides over the European mission. Among other things he says:

"Last fall as I was leaving London I spent an hour in the British museum almost at random. I entered the large room devoted to oriental manuscripts. I noticed at once in the first case to the right a series of very fine silver plates, perhaps three inches wide and eight inches long, held together by a silver ring. The plates were beautifully engraved with characters which the legend said gave Buddha's first sermon. In the next case was a sheet of extremely thin gold likewise engraved on both sides, which according to the legend was a letter from one ruler to another."

I thought again, my brethren and sisters, that this is very significant. It settles without controversy the fact that gold was used anciently for plates upon which records were kept. It illustrates clearly that sheets of metal used for that purpose were held together by rings, just as the prophet tells us the plates containing the Book of Mormon were held together.

NOT UNREASONABLE

How reasonable this is when you think of it. We know that gold is one of the most ductile, one of the most enduring of metals. We know that it does not tarnish. You may throw it into a river of muddy water; you may bury it in the earth. Go where you will today and wash from the gravel its grains as I have done, you will find that they are always bright. They retain their color. They are recognized at once. It is one of the softest of metals, not as soft as lead, but nearly so, and consequently would be a convenient metal upon which to keep a record. And if that record were especially valuable and sacred to the people how reasonable it would be that they should keep it upon plates of gold.

FAMILIARITY WITH THE BOOK REQUIRED

But I must not continue. I call your attention to these facts believing that they will be interesting to you. I appeal to all of the members of the Church to become familiar with the Book of Mormon. I would that all people, whether they be members of the Church or not, would familiarize themselves with that work. Not through rumors that have been circulated in regard to it, not from such statements as are made by Fiske, which I have read to you—an honest man without doubt, but misled because of what others had said, not familiar with the book itself. I would like to apply that same warning that he applies, to myself and to others, that we must be careful lest we, by writing on subjects that we do not understand, make the same mistake that he has made.

"It is extremely difficult for an imposter to concoct a narrative without making blunders."

Nothing more true than that was ever said. I paraphrase that statement by saying, it is extremely difficult for a critic to criticise that with which he is not familiar without making blunders.

Blunders have been made from the time of the publication of the book until the present, beginning with the old Spaulding Manuscript story, in the abortive attempts which have been made to account for the existence of the Book of Mormon, and the organization of the Church, and it is still being done by men who reside in our own communities, men who have the facilities at their command by which they may know the truth.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon does not replace the Bible. We believe the Bible to be the word of God insofar as it is correctly translated. I could preach a sermon upon that subject and satisfy any reasonable man that it is the only correct statement that could be made. We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God. It is a Christian book. The title page itself appeals to people to come unto Christ—Jew, Gentile, bond and free—that salvation may be obtained through him. The last chapter in the book makes the same appeal. You can scarcely open a page that does not bear witness to the fact that Christ is the Redeemer of the world, the Son of God, our Savior, our Elder Brother, our Advocate with the Father. He stands between us and the Father to plead our cause. Every message that comes to us from the Father comes through the Son. He came to do the will of the Father. He came to show us the personality of the Father, for he said he was in the exact image of his person.

So I say one by one criticisms which have been made regarding the Book of Mormon are falling by the way through the investigation of scientists who understand their business. I thank the Lord for them and that which they are undertaking to do. I have never had any fear that a thing would be discovered to disprove the truths contained in this book.

We must be careful in the conclusions that we reach. The Book of Mormon teaches the history of three distinct peoples, or two peoples and three different colonies of people, who came from the old world to this continent. It does not tell us that there was no one here before them. It does not tell us that people did not come after. And so if discoveries are made which suggest differences in race origins, it can very easily be accounted for, and reasonably, for we do believe that other people came to this continent. A thousand years had elapsed from the time the Book of Mormon closed until the discovery of America, and we know that other people came to America during that period.

NO DEFINITE SOLUTION

There is a great deal of talk about the geography of the Book of Mormon. Where was the land of Zarahemla? Where was the

City of Zarahemla? and other geographic matters. It does not make any difference to us. There has never been anything yet set forth that definitely settles that question. So the Church says we are just waiting until we discover the truth. All kinds of theories have been advanced. I have talked with at least half a dozen men that have found the very place where the City of Zarahemla stood, and notwithstanding the fact that they profess to be Book of Mormon students, they vary a thousand miles apart in the places they have located. We do not offer any definite solution. As you study the Book of Mormon keep these things in mind and do not make definite statements concerning things that have not been proven in advance to be true.

God bless you, my brethren and sisters, keep us all in the faith, and make it possible for us to withstand the assaults of the world, for they are coming just as they have come. They will come with greater force. Lucifer is not dead. He is opposed to Christ, our Lord. He has been opposed to him and fought him for the dominion of this earth since he was cast down to it, and the battle is not yet won. It will become fiercer and fiercer, but there is no doubt in regard to the ultimate termination. Christ will prevail. He will rule over this earth, the right of which he won by the shedding of his blood, and redemption will come to his covenant people. Every word spoken by the prophets inspired of God, as it applies to this land, to this people, and to this great dispensation, the greatest of all time, will be fulfilled. I bear witness of it, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

One great difficulty that we have always had in our conferences is to find sufficient time to hear from all whom we would like to have speak here. We will ask some of our missions presidents to speak briefly this morning, and ask that they occupy not to exceed ten minutes.

ELDER SAMUEL O. BENNION

President of the Central States Mission

I sincerely trust that the spirit of the Lord may lead my thoughts at this time.

The principles of the Gospel as taught by the Church of Jesus Christ appeal to me; they are in strict accord with the holy scriptures; they are conclusive evidence to me that this Church is in harmony with that established by our Lord and Master in the meridian of time. In my experience I have not found any man or set of men who have successfully assailed any of the principles of the Gospel revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith a century ago. During that period of time the Church has taught many glorious truths—among others, that our Eter-