

CHAPTER XXIII

An Answer to Budvarson's Criticisms of the Book of Mormon (Cont'd)

In continuation of his attack, Budvarson attempts to prove (pages 31-35) that Joseph Smith contradicts the Book of Mormon or that, vice versa, the Book of Mormon contradicts Joseph Smith. These alleged contradictions have to do with the doctrine of God as taught by the prophet and the Nephite scripture. Budvarson first quotes from Joseph Smith's "The King Follett Discourse" as reported in President Joseph Fielding Smith's *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pages 345 and 346:

. . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.... It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God, . . . and that he was once a man like us; . . .

By these "unbelievable remarks," so Budvarson contends, "Joseph Smith is not only in violent disagreement with the teachings of the Bible, but he is also confuting the teachings concerning God in the Book of Mormon." Inasmuch as Budvarson doesn't undertake to show just how Joseph Smith is in "violent disagreement" with the Bible, we feel under no obligation to answer him on the point except to deny his assertion. Joseph Smith was often in "violent disagreement" with sectarian notions about the teachings of the Bible. So were the ancient prophets and Jesus at odds with the "professionals" in their generation. And, Mr. Budvarson, are all of you "true Christians" (page 19) in such agreement about the teaching of the Bible concerning God as to be able to present a united front on

the subject? Now, to show that Joseph Smith is also "confuting the teaching concerning God in the Book of Mormon," Budvarson cites these words:

"For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing? . . . and if there were miracles wrought then, why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being? And behold, I say unto you, he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God;" [Morm. 9:9, 19]

"For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity." [Moro. 8:18]

Well, Mr. Budvarson, if you think these scriptures are "confuted" by Joseph Smith's teachings that God was not God from all eternity and that "he was once a man like us," your logic quite escapes us. For if God, aeons and aeons ago, was a mortal like us, and, under divine providence (the patriarchal order of Gods) and guidance, lived, died, progressed, and was resurrected and became a God, then *Mormon's words which you cite apply to him only after he became the God of the universe (or universes) to which we belong. As our God he is, of course, a god of law and order, "the same yesterday, today, and forever," one in whom "there is no variableness neither shadow of changing."* Mormon knew that God had become such ages ago, eternities as man views it; hence he could say, knowing God to be just and a follower of law and order, "he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity." Your "dear Mormon people" will be highly unimpressed by your arguments at this point, Mr. Budvarson.

In Budvarson's next illustration (pages 32-33), he undertakes to show that Joseph Smith not only contradicts the Book of Mormon, but the "Three Witnesses" to it as well. He does this by showing that "Joseph Smith taught the doctrine of the 'plurality of gods,'" and then he cites

passages from the Book of Mormon which he alleges are contradictory to it. The prophet "openly ridiculed those who stood firm to the Bible revelation that there is only *One God*," says Budvarson. Again he quotes from Pres. Smith's *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pages 370 and 372:

I will preach on the plurality of Gods.... I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute *three distinct* personages and three Gods.... Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God! I say that is a strange God anyhow three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization . . . All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a giant or a monster.

These quotations are now compared with two quotations from the Book of Mormon:

. . . And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is *one God* . . . (2 Nephi 31:21. Italics ours.)

. . . and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God . . . (Alma 11:44)

To these Budvarson adds this part of the statement of the "Three Witnesses":

. . . And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God.

And to these quotations Budvarson adds this comment: "These glaring contradictions make one wonder if Joseph Smith had ever read the Book of Mormon, even though he claimed to be the 'Author and Proprietor' of it."

Now, Mr. Budvarson, in view of your criticisms, why

didn't you answer in some detail Joseph Smith's declaration that the Bible shows there are a plurality of Gods? And while you were at it, why didn't you quote from pages 370-371 in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* these words:

Paul says there are Gods many and Lords many. [1 Cor. 8:5] I want to set it forth in a plain and simple manner; but to us there is but one God—that is *pertaining to us*; and he is in all and through all. [Cf. 1 Cor. 8:6.]

In your quotations from the Book of Mormon and from the "Three Witnesses" you completely fail, as you usually do, to understand the real meaning behind them. You are a wonder at quoting the letter, but a complete loss at understanding the spirit of scripture.

And he said, Unto you [the disciples] it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. (Luke 8:10)

The Book of Mormon writers you cite, Mr. Budvarson, and the "Three Witnesses" all speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as being "one" God for the one and very same reason. Let us explain. You will remember how Jesus prayed during his earthly ministry that his disciples might be "one" even as he and his father were one:

Holy Father, keep through shine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be *one*, as we [are one]; (John 17:11. Italics ours.)

Now, Mr. Budvarson, in what sense did Jesus intend that all of his disciples should be "one"? Well, obviously he meant that they should be a unity in the faith, being one in mind, spirit and objectives. Just as he and his Father to whom he prayed were separate beings, yet "one" in mind and spirit, so he desired his disciples, individual portals, to be "one" with them. (See John 17: 20-21.)

The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are "one" (1 John 5:7) in this spiritual sense but are three distinct personages. The Book of Mormon writers, the "Three Witnesses," and Joseph Smith understood these fundamental principles alike. Hence Joseph Smith was not contradicting the Book of Mormon and the "Three Witnesses," as you so confidently assert. The trouble is, Mr. Budvarson, that you didn't do your "homework" before you started to write. We suggest that you read our Chapter VI, particularly the last part, "Are God the Father and His Son One God?" and learn how Joseph Smith explains the "oneness" of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, not to mention those who believe in them and keep their commandments. The glaring contradictions you speak of, Mr. Budvarson, only demonstrate your "glaring" misunderstanding of Mormon scripture and doctrine.

Budvarson continues to exhibit his lack of understanding of our doctrine of God in his pages 33 and 34. He finds it interesting to discover that the Book of Mormon, which is said to contain the "fulness of the everlasting gospel," does not "teach the doctrine of the 'plurality of gods,' nor that 'men may become gods.'" The doctrine of the Book of Mormon concerning God is monotheistic— *One God.*" Then he quotes from Ether 2:7-8 and Alma 11: 26-31, 39 in which are contained such statements as "the true and only God," "Is there more than one God? And he answered, No" and the like. "Yet," says Budvarson, "even in the face of these clear teachings in the Book of Mormon, the Mormon church teaches the doctrines of Joseph Smith concerning the 'plurality of God' and that the ultimate goal for men in the Mormon Church is to become gods!" In our last chapter we have already pointed out Budvarson's misunderstanding of what is meant by the Book of Mormon containing the "fulness of the everlasting gospel." Moreover, we have already pointed out in this chapter why the Book of Mormon writers speak of God

the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost as "one" God, when actually they understood them to be three distinct beings. But if you want a special demonstration of this fact, Mr. Budvarson, we'll give it to you. In 1 Nephi 10: 17 we are told that Nephi wanted to have a vision similar to his father Lehi's vision "by the power of the Holy Ghost." Furthermore, the Holy Ghost gave him his desire, as recorded in 1 Nephi 11: 1-12. Nephi says:

. . . I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another. (1 Nephi 11:11)

Nephi speaks his wonderment at the privilege of conversing with the Spirit as one man to another. So here is one member of the Godhead identified, Mr. Budvarson. Now turn to 3 Nephi 11:13-15 and learn how upwards of twenty-five hundred men, women and children (3 Nephi 17:25) had the privilege not only of seeing the resurrected Christ, but also of feeling the wounds in His side and the prints in His hands and feet. That makes two members of the Godhead identified. Read also Ether 12:39, where Moroni records that he saw Jesus and talked with him "face to face." Now to identify God the Father as the third member of the Godhead. As Jesus descended to meet the Nephites they heard his Father utter these words:

Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him. (3 Nephi 11:7)

If this isn't enough to distinguish the Father as a distinct being, turn to 3 Nephi 19:20-24, 27-29 where Jesus prays earnestly to his Father. Obviously the Father is a distinct being; Jesus wouldn't pray to himself! Incidentally, notice the "oneness" Jesus prays for in verse 29. You see, the Nephites did understand the fact that the

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were three distinct beings, three Gods; yet they refer to these three beings, one in spirit and purpose, as the "true and only God." And the Mormon people commonly do the same thing today. And remember Joseph Smith's words as recorded in Smith, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pages 370-371:

I want to set it forth in a plain and simple manner; but to us there is but one God—that is *pertaining to us; and* he is in all and through all. (Cf. D & C 88:41.)

You have said (page 34), Mr. Budvarson, "it is simply not possible to reconcile Joseph Smith's doctrine of God with what is stated in the Book of Mormon on the subject. They are direct contradictions!" But it is possible to reconcile the teachings of Joseph Smith with the Nephite record. They are not contradictions, as we have shown. After all, Mr. Budvarson, you are treading on our ground. We know our scriptures and doctrine better than you. Apparently it is not given to you "to know the mysteries of the kingdom"; they seem to you to be "parables" (Luke 8:10), for you apparently haven't made a thorough attempt to understand them. We say this in as kindly a spirit as we can. You are misrepresenting Mormon beliefs and doctrines in your brochure. Again we say that you are "out of your depth" in writing about the Book of Mormon.

Budvarson continues his attack (pages 34 and 35) by attempting to show that the Book of Mormon contradicts Joseph Smith's story that he saw in his first great vision of God the Father and his only Begotten Son. He supports this strange "contradiction" which he has drummed up by an appeal to three passages found on pages 25 and 28 of the First (1830) Edition of the Book of Mormon. Here they are:

"Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God. . ." (Cf. 1 Nephi 11:18)

". . . behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father!" (Cf. 1 Nephi 11:21.)

". . . and Jesus Christ, which is the Lamb of God . . ." (Cf. 1 Nephi 12:18.)

"Now," says Budvarson, "if Jesus Christ is God the Eternal Father according to these quotations from the Book of Mormon, how could Joseph Smith have seen 'two personages'?"

Well, actually, Mr. Budvarson, our Lord is spoken of in the Book of Mormon in a special sense as the "Father," but it in no sense implies that Joseph Smith could not have seen "two Personages" in his first vision. Read our Chapter VI, "The Twofold Problem of Mosiah 15:1-4: Is Jesus the 'Father and the Son'? Are God the Father and His Son one God?" But coming more directly to the point, we repeat in part what we said in an earlier chapter (XXII) that the three readings which you cite did not agree with the original manuscript used in the printing of the First Edition. Consequently, in subsequent editions of the Book of Mormon issued during Joseph Smith's lifetime, corrections were made in the printing to make it conform with the original reading. Hence the present readings:

Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God.

* * *

Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!

* * *

. . . and the Messiah who is the Lamb of God, . . .

That these readings are the correct ones is shown by the Oliver Cowdery manuscript now in the possession of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at Independence, Missouri.

In light of these plain facts, Mr. Budvarson, how can you so twist and contort them as to say

this blunder [i.e., the readings cited in the First Edition] was discovered, but of course the story of the fourteen-year-old boy, Joseph Smith, who claimed he saw two personages, could not be disputed or discredited, for the foundation of the Mormon church rests upon his "story." Nevertheless, something had to be done. They simply changed the Book of Mormon!

Budvarson wouldn't run true to the ways of critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints without taking a dig at the doctrine of "polygamy" in his pages 35-37. His attack is somewhat different in approach in that the Book of Mormon is brought more strongly into the picture. He quotes at length from the *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:1, 4, 6, 37, 61-62, relating to the "new and everlasting covenant" and the plurality of wives. After pointing out that those who have the law revealed to them must obey it (verse 4), Budvarson says:

Here indeed is a very peculiar situation, because according to some of Joseph Smith's other "revelations," this same "Mormon god" declared that the "fulness of the everlasting gospel" was contained in the Book of Mormon, and yet the Book of Mormon condemns the practice of plurality of wives and calls it an "abomination" before the Lord God.

To prove his point Budvarson quotes extensively from Jacob 1:15; 2:23-24; 3:5; Mosiah 11:2 in the Book of Mormon, including such strong statements as these:

Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. (Jac. 2: 24)

* * *

And he had many wives and concubines. And he did cause his people to commit sin, and do that which was abominable in the sight of the Lord. (Most 11:2)

Budvarson concludes:

What a predicament to be in! The person who does not abide the "new and everlasting covenant" is damned

according to the "revelation" given in the Doctrine and Covenants. Yet, the person who keeps the "new and everlasting covenant," or the "law of the priesthood" as it is also designated, and has "ten virgins given unto him by this law" is indulging in wicked practices and is not keeping the commandments of God, but is an abomination in His sight! And this according to the teaching of the Book of Mormon!

In other words, Budvarson is making a point of showing how completely inconsistent and contrary the Book of Mormon teaching on the plurality of wives is with Joseph Smith's other revelations on the subject. And offhand it would appear that his point is well taken. But here, again, Budvarson leaves out vital evidence and comes to a wrong conclusion. One would think that he would give Joseph Smith and other Mormon leaders just a little credit [or having some common sense and good judgment. Our Church wouldn't have attracted to its ranks hundreds and thousands of intelligent men and women if its leaders had set forth scriptures which were not consistent with each other in their spiritual appeal and in their doctrines. So where has Budvarson missed the point in the issue at hand?

Let Budvarson be reminded that the Book of Mormon [early teaches that the Nephites were commanded by the Lord not to have "save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none." (Jac. 3: 5) And Joseph Smith said, "I have constantly said no man shall have but one wife at a time, *unless the Lord directs otherwise.*"¹ So Jacob and other Book of Mormon prophets speak in strong terms to their people because they had been forbidden by the Lord to have plural wives. Jacob wanted to emphasize the sins of his people in failing to keep the Lord's commandments and therefore had a tendency to stress the misdemeanors of David and Solomon. The acts of David and Solomon in taking wives and concubines were not abominable before the Lord until they broke his law governing

plural marriage. When David had Uriah killed and took over this loyal man's wife Bathsheba, the Lord was, of course, indignant and commanded his servant, Nathan the prophet, to rebuke him. Could Jacob have been ignorant of these words of Nathan to David?

And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that were too little, then would I add unto thee so much more. (2 Sam. 12:8. Jewish Publication Society translation.)

We doubt it. Nor is Jacob very likely to have been ignorant of the words condemning Solomon for taking foreign wives who turned his heart to other gods, as found in the Book of Kings:

Now king Solomon loved many foreign women, besides the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel: "Ye shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods"; Solomon did cleave unto these in love. (1 Kings 11:1-2. Jewish Publication Society translation.)

This passage is self-explanatory. We conclude, then, that Jacob was simply denouncing plural marriage *among the Nephites*; his references to David and Solomon had to do with their abominations in violating the principles of plural marriage as understood by the ancient Hebrews. He used these violations to drive home the lesson he was giving to his own people. That Jacob was not condemning plural marriage as a principle, but only because it had been forbidden among his own people, is shown by these words:

For if I will, saith the Lord of hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things. (Jacob 2:30)

Now, Mr. Budvarson, why did you not acquaint your-

self with this verse and Joseph Smith's words that plural marriage was not to be entered into "unless the Lord directs otherwise"? Intelligent Mormons didn't realize that there was any inconsistency between Joseph Smith's teachings in the *Doctrine and Covenants* and that in the Book of Mormon on plural marriage until you and others like you asserted it on very poor grounds.

¹ Joseph F. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 324. Italics ours.