

It's Happening in Mormonism, Too

by Desmond Ford

The foundations of the LDS church are shaking and the gospel is making inroads

W

hat Raymond Franz is doing among Jehovah's Witnesses, others are doing in Mormonism.

Sandra Tanner is one of several well-known former Mormons now engaged in whistle-blowing. It is of special significance that within the church itself loyal members are now sounding the same note.

Christianity Today [November 11, 1991] has an article, "Latter-day Skeptics," discussing how "liberal, yet loyal Mormon scholars are bringing long-kept secrets about Joseph Smith into the open." (page 28)

The article tells about the liberal Mormon journal *Sunstone* which has for its readership chiefly "college-educated members of the LDS community who want to deal with their faith in a slightly more rigorous fashion than they can through the standard fare offered by the church." (p. 31)

Scholars' Findings

LDS scholars are saying, and have been saying for a long time, that there is no archaeological support for the Book of Mormon. On the contrary, there is abundant evidence against its authenticity. John Kunich and Richard Van Wagoner, for example, are "both active, believing members of the Mormon church. Additionally, their works are published by Mormons and are

aimed at Mormon readership. They are representative of a growing segment of liberal believers within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." (p. 28)

Such men point out that the church's prophet was not as he is traditionally pictured. Furthermore, the stories of the Book of Mormon (endorsed by Smith) are not historical.

D. Michael Quinn, "a highly respected Mormon scholar, was voted Outstanding Teacher by students at church-owned Brigham Young University, where he served as professor of American history."

Quinn has published a book concluding that Joseph Smith believed in sundry superstitious and magical ideas which have no basis in fact. BYU offered Quinn the choice of resigning or being fired.

Population Studies

Then there is the case of John Kunich, who has served the Mormon Church loyally for many years. His research casts considerable doubt on the veracity of the LDS Church's extrabiblical revelation, the Book of Mormon.

This book claims to come from the Spirit of Prophecy. It tells the story of a small group of Jews who migrated from Jerusalem to the New World long before the birth of Christ. This group of about 30 became a huge civilization, which splintered into warring factions. These wars resulted in millions of deaths.

Kunich says:

From my biological background I knew that something was wrong in what I was reading there I did some research into human population growth over history and found that none of the rates reported could have produced the results in the Book of Mormon. (p. 31)

Kunich discovered that the claims of population growth in the Book of Mormon are 50 times that found in any historical civilization.

Gospel and LDS

Finally, there are Latter-day Saints absorbed in the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. This is the biggest challenge of all to Mormon traditionalism. Richard J. Mouw is provost of Fuller Theological Seminary. He says:

"We can hope that in debating these alternatives anew, many Mormons will come to embrace a truly 'restored gospel'—one that proclaims the good news that we can only be reconciled to the Triune God through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ." (p. 30)

How encouraging it is to know that Jesus, who is the Truth as well as the Way and the Life, has followers in every organization. These followers are willing, with J. N. Andrews of old, "to exchange ten thousand errors for one truth." May the numbers of such followers multiply, that the world will be blessed through the everlasting gospel. ❖