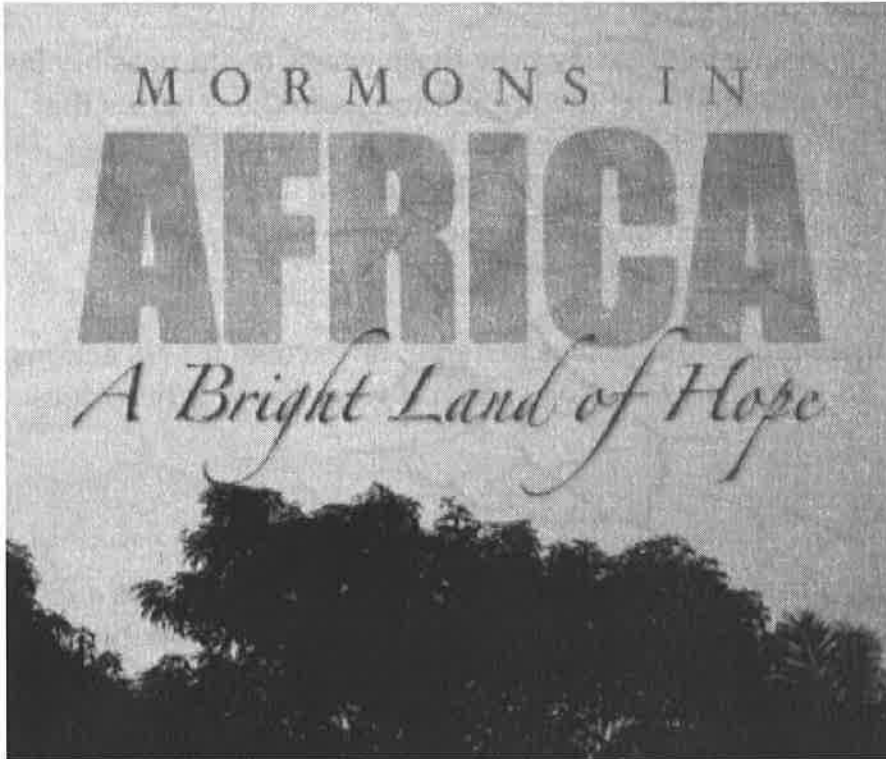




The Book of Mormon in Africa



Recently, my assignments took me and Sister Delaney to far-off Africa, where our Church is growing at a much faster pace than many other places in the world. A large throng of our dearest African members assembled to hear me speak. I decided to address the importance of reading the Book of Mormon, and testified that the surest way to lose a testimony would be to become lax in our belief or critical of its inspired teachings.

The talk was a tremendous inspiration to all in attendance. However, after our meeting concluded, a young American missionary approached me and said that he had something to confess. He said that my remarks had stirred his soul to repentance and that he wished to speak privately with me.

We found a room where we could speak, and no sooner had the door closed when the missionary suddenly burst into tears. He said he had been feeling very guilty for his actions and that he could no longer contain his remorse and sorrow. I asked him what he had done that was so gravely sinful. He then confessed to me a most shocking fact: he had been removing pages from copies of the Book of Mormon before giving them to investigators!

I asked him to explain to me the reasoning for these preposterous actions. He stated that he had felt (erroneously, I might add) that certain sections of the Book of Mormon might be offensive to the African people. I asked which sections, and he began to list the following verses:

- "... wherefore, as they were white, and exceeding fair and delightsome, that they might not be

enticing unto my people the Lord God did cause a skin of blackness to come upon them." (2 Nephi 5:21)

- o "And the skins of the Lamanites were dark, according to the mark which was set upon their fathers, which was a curse upon them because of their transgression." (Alma 3:6)
- o "...for this people shall be scattered, and shall become a dark, a filthy, and a loathsome people, beyond the description of that which ever hath been amongst us..." (Mormon 5:15)

At this point I interrupted him. I asked the young missionary how these verses could possibly be offensive. He answered that the African people might get the impression from these verses that their skin color was a "curse" or related to "sin" or "filthiness." He told me that he just didn't want the African people to read of the Lamanite skin turning dark because of sin, then white when they were righteous, and then dark again when they were wicked. He said he was *afraid* they would find this hurtful or painful to their self-image.

I listened carefully to the missionary's justification (and it was just that, an excuse) for his actions, and then I said: "Did you notice that word you just used? You said you were *afraid*. Where does fear come from?"

"The adversary," he responded.

"You see," I said, "the adversary wants you to fear the truth. This you must not do. Fear is a tool of the evil one. You must share the truth boldly and unafraid. Do you think the Holy Scriptures are in error? No, absolutely not. This cannot be. We know of a surety that the Book of Mormon is the most correct of any book and it is the very word of God. If it declares that dark skin color is a curse, then we must embrace this revealed truth from our Lord. We cannot change God's word because of trends in society, Elder, neither can we pick and choose which parts we wish to believe. It is either all or nothing. Do you understand what you must do?"

The young missionary's face brightened, and a glow came to his once-despondent countenance. He replied that he now understood. He made a solemn promise that from this day forth he would never remove any more pages from the Book of Mormon, and that in fact he would make a point of boldly declaring the truth of these verses to all whom he taught. At that moment, I felt a strong impression in my heart, and thus promised the missionary that as he testified boldly of these verses, his baptisms would increase and eventually the truth of God would overtake the entire land. I could see from his expression that he now had an understanding beyond the reasonings of men. The unchanging truths of God were once again made manifest in the heart of a true believer.

I thanked him for confessing his egregious actions to his righteous priesthood leaders. As he walked out the door, I called out to him one additional word of hope: "And remember, Elder, you need not worry too much anyway because most Africans cannot read!"

Some time later, I received a letter of appreciation from this dear missionary, along with a photograph and thank-you note from his newest converts. I smiled lovingly as I read their enclosed note: "Thank you for inspiring the missionaries to update our Book of Mormon. We love it even more now!" In my mind's eye, I could envision them reading from verse 15 of the 2nd

chapter in 3 Nephi, "...and *their curse was taken from them, and their skin became white* like unto the Nephites," and I imagined the hope and anticipation which must have filled their hearts and souls whilst reading these glorious promises of our Lord!



My dearest brothers and sisters, may we declare the love and truth of the Gospel at all times and in whatsoever place we may be in, that its light may penetrate every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, that all may one day become "fair and delightsome" as the Lord has assuredly promised!

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7 COMMENTS

7 thoughts on "The Book of Mormon in Africa"

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Thank you Elder, for reminding us to never be afraid of the truth! We don't have to hide or cower in the face of seemingly uncomfortable gospel doctrine, but stand tall and proudly teach the eternal truths that heavenly Father has revealed unto us. I testify with you
in the name of cheese and rice amen!