

Give Those Mormons Jesse

By Janet S. Porter

The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook
pp. 28-31, using his own words

CHARACTERS (5 or 6 – 3 or 4 males; 2 females)

Phineas Wolcott Cook (PWC)

Ann Eliza (his wife)

Phineas Cook (his father)

Irene Cook (his mother)

Elder Edward M. Webb

Father Orr (no speaking part)

Phineas Sr: I swear, I've always been a Mormon but didn't know what the devil to call it. The meeting tonight convinced me they have the truth.

Irene: I was convinced of the truth too.

PWC: Well, parents, I think you must be poor off for names. I don't think it would take me long to find a name for it. I was in Kalamazoo last year in 1844, and they said the Mormons were of the devil. News came in by the mail coach that day saying Joe Smith was killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois. The news had quite an effect on the people. In fact, everyone had something to say about the matter. Some said he was an imposter and it was a good thing for the world. At the time, considerable was said about the doctrine of the Mormons, but nobody seemed to say anything good about it.

Phineas Sr. Well, I have something good to say about it. I liked what they said, and I think you would like it too.

Irene: There's a meeting next week Phin. Come with us and listen to the Mormon Elders.

PWC: I don't wish to hear any more sectarianism. For a year or more I did my best to believe in the religion taught by the churches, but gave it up. I've had enough of them, and I would rather hear the devil. *Now that would be something new!*

Irene: Well, that's a fine thing to say!

(Phineas Sr. and Irene leave the stage. Ann Eliza joins PWC on stage)

Ann Eliza: Phineas, there's another meeting tonight with the Mormon Elders. Please would you come this time? I have a feeling you would be glad you did.

PWC: All right, for argument's sake I'll go. But I'm taking paper and pencil so I can write notes, for I intend to expose their lies.

Ann Eliza: There is no pencil in this whole house. I've already looked. You'll have to listen without writing it down.

PWC: We'll stop at the neighbor's. I'm sure Father Orr will have a pencil.

(They walk across the stage. Father Orr and Elder Webb sit on chairs by the microphone, and PWC and Ann Eliza come back and stand beside them)

PWC: Father Orr, I'm going to the Mormon Meeting tonight and I want to take notes, but I have no pencil. I want to write down what they say, for I intend to give them Jesse.

Elder Webb: Oh, you're going to give them Jesse, are you? Here's a pencil. I hope it helps you.

PWC: Thank you, stranger. I'll be on my way now.

(Everyone leaves the stage. PWC and Ann Eliza come back to the stage)

Ann Eliza: I think I'll sit here in the back row. That way no one will be surprised that I have no questions.

PWC: I see a chair right on the front row. I have found sitting in front is the best way to discern their lies. If I look the preacher fair in the face, determined that not a word should escape, I can put down their errors, which I have no doubt of doing, and that in abundance. *(She sits behind Phineas. He sits in the chair right next to the microphone)*

Elder Webb: *(Coming in and standing at the microphone)* Good evening, friends. I see my new friend in the front row. He has my pencil and is bent on finding errors in my speech. Good luck, Brother Cook. May my pencil tell the truth.

PWC: Well, I'll do my best.

Elder Webb: Tonight I wish to speak on the subject of the fall of the ancient church, the setting up of the anti-Christ, and the ultimate salvation of mankind.

PWC: Oh, this will be something new.

Elder Webb: We have been together for more than an hour, but I have one thing more to say. The various sects teach that few will be redeemed, and that God has selected them out of the whole family of mankind for salvation. I take as my text John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." He didn't come to take away the sins of a few, the sins of those who belong to a certain sect. He came to take the sins of every man, woman, and child in the world, if they are willing to repent and improve themselves and appeal to His great gift of the atonement.

PWC: This is amazing. I thought from his appearance I was more than a match for him, but I find no fault with anything he says.

Elder Webb: I conclude tonight with a verse from the Book of Mormon, before mentioned as the great volume translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith to come forth in our day as a witness of Jesus Christ. I will read from the book of Helaman, chapter 14, verse 17:

"But behold, the resurrection of Christ redeemeth mankind, yea, even all mankind, and bringeth them back into the presence of the Lord."

And this is my message to you tonight. Jesus Christ came to redeem every one of us—you and me—the rich and the poor, the proud as well as the downtrodden. God is no respecter of persons. You here tonight can learn from the Book of Mormon about God's dealings with His people on this continent, that salvation and the hope of eternal advancement are gifts each of us can earn.

Ann Eliza: Phineas, you're sitting here with your mouth wide open. Your pencil dropped to the floor half-way through the lecture.

PWC: It did? I could see he placed his eyes intently on me as though he thought I was the only hardened sinner there was to fear or contend with. But I could find no fault with him.

Ann Eliza: Are you aware all eyes in the whole room are fixed upon you? I believe they all knew you came with every argument to put down any and everything the Mormon preacher said.

PWC: Well, they are looking in vain. (*He stands up and addresses the audience*) I am satisfied. I can say nothing, for I know what Elder Webb said is true, and cannot be refuted by any testimony I have.

Ann Eliza: You can all go home now. He is satisfied the Mormon missionaries are telling the truth.

PWC: It is as I always said: that truth would prevail, and it has surely done so at this time, especially over me.

Elder Webb: Sir, why did you not arise and tell me your criticism of the matters about which I spoke?

PWC: You have told us the truth, and it is not my province to raise my voice against it. Here is your pencil. Thank you for letting me borrow it. But I could not use it, for I felt as if I was wrapped in a vision as you spoke. I know now that God has once again spoken to us through a prophet, even Joseph Smith.

Ann Eliza: If you think you can come out of your vision, we must walk home. The room is deserted and they want to put out the candles.

PWC: I will never again doubt the truth of Joseph Smith's mission on earth. After all these years of searching for truth, I have finally found it!

Family Discussion

How did Phineas know he had heard the truth?

When we experience the witness of the Holy Ghost we feel peace. Many times we feel filled or warmed by the spirit. We may feel happy, even joyful, as Phineas Wolcott Cook did. Ann Eliza knew she had heard the truth too, but for her it was a more quiet surety.

Phineas had searched the scriptures and had prayed for many years to know the truth. He had felt the spirit when the angel appeared to him, and knew what it felt like. When other religions taught their doctrine, he knew the spirit was not with them. After his years of praying to know which religion was right, the spirit came to him as the missionary spoke, and he knew God was telling him he was hearing the truth.

The Holy Ghost is there for every person to learn what is right or wrong. But we have to be listening for its promptings, and we have to want to know the truth more than we want anything else.

Mary R. Durham, in "A Child's Guiding Gift," *Ensign*, May, 2016, gave good advice about how parents can help their children learn to recognize the Holy Ghost:

1. Bring to our children's attention when they are hearing and feeling the Spirit.
2. Prepare ourselves, our homes, and our children to feel the still, small voice.
3. Help family members understand how the Spirit speaks to each of them...they may not realize that a recurring thought, a feeling of comfort after they cry, or remembering something at just the right time are all ways the Holy Ghost communicates.