

Why question it – Part 1

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Many claims have been brought against the Book of Mormon. Upon examining them individually, it becomes readily apparent that such claims come of misinformation or limited understanding of the book itself and the work of the Lord more generally. Such is the case with a set of claims listed on the following website:

<http://mit.irr.org/contradictions-between-book-of-mormon-and-bible>

Since the first claim involves a very important topic relating to little children, I've gone into more depth than I would anticipate will be needed to address the other claims in this list. Please note that I have used both the LDS version of the Book of Mormon and the NIV Bible at times in my reply because they are sources quoted in the claim. I have also used the KJV and the RLDS Book of Mormon (1908) at times to amplify or clarify a given point.

Claim # 1: It is claimed that the Book of Mormon teaches that *little children do not have a sin nature* (emphasis added).

*"1. The Book of Mormon teaches that little children are not capable of sin **because they do not have a sinful nature** (Moroni 8:8). In contrast, the Bible in Psalm 51:5 clearly teaches that we have sinful nature from birth: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (NIV). (This does not mean that those who die in infancy are lost.*)"*

*"*For further reading regarding infancy and salvation, see the Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry's [article on the subject](#). For another resource on this subject and many others, see Millard J. Erickson's Christian Theology, in his section on original sin."*

Book of Mormon Quote Cited:

[Moroni 8:8 \(LDS\)](#) *"Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me."* [[See Moroni 8:8,9 RLDS](#)]

Answer:

The wording "*they do not have a sinful nature*" used in this claim against the Book of Mormon is not actually found in the quote cited or elsewhere in this Nephite record. Therefore, claim #1 misrepresents Mormon's overall message included in the

eighth chapter of Moroni as well as the rest of the book. The claim does so by taking the quote out of context, adding something it does not say, and then constructing an argument which is then applied to the whole book without fair representation of the entire record.

Mormon clearly teaches in this chapter that little children are *made alive in Christ* because of the mercy of God ([Moroni 8:12 LDS](#)), not because they do not have a sin nature as stated in the claim. The reason given by Mormon for little children being protected and provided for by God's mercy is because they cannot repent since they are not capable of doing so. Therefore, they have been made *alive in Christ* by His mercy.

[Moroni 8:19-20 \(LDS\)](#) *"Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy. And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption."* [[See Moroni 8:20,21 RLDS](#)]

Mormon continues by stating that *"repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law"* ([Moroni 8:24 LDS](#)). We'll return to this point later on in the discussion points below.

Other authors in the Book of Mormon clearly teach that the *natural man* is an enemy to God, and thus we all must become submissive to God as little children are submissive to their parents by yielding to the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, or we cannot be saved in the kingdom of heaven (e.g. [Mosiah 1:119 RLDS](#), [Mosiah 8:75 RLDS](#), [Alma 3:27-40 RLDS](#), [Alma 19:91 RLDS](#), etc.). In the words of Mormon, it is a matter of being *humble* before God, even like that of a little child (cf. [Deuteronomy 8:16 KJV](#) & [Hebrews 12:5-11 KJV](#) with [Romans 6:16 KJV](#)).

[Moroni 8:10 \(LDS\)](#) *"Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, **teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.**"* [[See Moroni 8:11 RLDS](#)]

As this and other passages from Mormon's letter to his son Moroni show, Mormon did not teach that little children do not have a *sinful nature*. Rather, he emphasized the greatness of God's mercy and our need to be respectful of His care and provision for little children.

Plainly stated, this claim does not accurately represent Mormon's words or his overall message. Neither do the broad-brush statements in the claim represent the rest of the Book of Mormon. Therefore, it is a false claim against the book. It does not show that Mormon's teachings contradict those of the Bible as claimed.

Discussion Point 1: Jesus Christ's View of Little Children: Since Mormon claims little children are alive in Christ by the mercy of God, let's see what our Lord has to say about them. In Jesus' own words, little children are citizens of His kingdom (emphasis added).

[Luke 18:15-17 NIV](#) – *People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, **for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.**”*

Moreover, Jesus said that we must become like them to enter into the kingdom of heaven (emphasis added).

[Matthew 18:1-5 NIV](#) – *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “**Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.** Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*

These statements agree very well with Mormon’s statement quoted above in the answer to claim #1 that the Book of Mormon contradicts the Bible. Clearly it does not.

Remember also what Jesus said about the *will* of our heavenly Father, which Jesus said He came to fulfill. Jesus said that it is not the Father’s will that one little child should perish (emphasis added)!

[Matthew 18:12-14 KJV](#) – *How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. **Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.***

[John 5:28-30 KJV](#) – *Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; **because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.***

Thus we can understand that no little child will be lost because Jesus will save all little children in the kingdom of heaven according to the will of our heavenly Father.

Discussion Point 2: The Proposed Standard of Measure: Now let’s look at Psalm 51:5 as the proposed standard by which the claimants attempt to judge the selected Book of Mormon quote. Based on the words of Jesus quoted above, this reference from the book of Psalms is obviously not the last word provided in the Bible on the subject of the nature of little children. In reviewing other psalms we see that it is not even the last word in the

book of Psalms on their nature. For example, consider what David wrote in the following psalm (emphasis added):

[Psalm 139:13-18 NIV](#) - ***For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.***

David's declarations in Psalm 139 appear to form the exact opposite picture as those found in Psalm 51:5, which is quoted below with the surrounding verses for further context (emphasis added):

[Psalm 51:3-6 NIV](#) - ***For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.***

Note how, in [Psalm 51:3-6 NIV](#), David is expressing regret and seeking repentance for the sin of adultery and murder he committed as an adult (not as a little child). In contrast, consider how there came into David's life praise and worship later on in his adult life as recorded for us in [Psalm 139:13-18 NIV](#). Can both declarations totally describe the man and his nature? Can anyone fairly build a generalized theology to represent the entire Bible based on David's confession in Psalm 51? Or conversely, should we build our theology on Psalm 139? Or is it possible to build a theology on both?

Asked along another line of reasoning, which psalm better describes the true nature of our birth and how we should view little children? Do both fairly represent the matter? If so, did God create us as sinful creatures when He knit us in our mother's womb? Is God praiseworthy for the way we were fearfully and wonderfully made to have a sin nature? Which is it? Is the matter as cut and dry as the claimants attempt to make the matter out to be?

Please note it is not my intent here to counter David's declarations in these two excerpts from his many psalms. Rather, by contrasting them, it is hopefully apparent that a superficial reading of scripture simply will not do. We need to look deeper than is presented in this claim against the Book of Mormon.

Instead of trying to adopt a theology from either or both psalms, it seems obvious that we would be wise to take Jesus at His word regarding the nature of children and the kingdom to which they actually belong. With this in mind, I believe a fair reading of Moroni 8 will show that Mormon's teachings are completely compatible with our Lord's words.

Discussion Point 3: Is Training Alone Sufficient? To help illustrate the need to look deeper at quotes from scripture, consider this familiar proverb:

[Proverbs 22:6 KJV](#) – *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

or

[Proverbs 22:6 NIV](#) – *Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

Is this a true saying – always or at least sometimes? Can [training](#) alone conquer *the sin nature* of concern to the claimants? Can training in our youth always save us later on in our lives? If children with a sin nature are trainable, does proper training take away a sin nature or sufficiently subdue it? If so, then training would be all that we would need to be free of sin and its consequences.

Obviously, training alone cannot save us, else why did Jesus have to die on the cross to atone for our sins? Rather, as Mormon states so plainly in the eighth chapter of Moroni, all of us need Jesus, both old and young. As described previously, there is, however, a difference in how we need Him when in our infancy compared to when God begins to hold us accountable for our actions toward Him and His laws.

By such examination, we may conclude then that all such psalms and proverbs must be taken within a proper context of the whole gospel message of Jesus Christ the same as quotes taken from the Book of Mormon.

Discussion Point 4: Being Cognizant of the Limited Capabilities of Little

Children: Although the claimants do not make this statement, perhaps they believe Mormon’s statement that little children are *not capable* of committing sin is the same as stating they do not have a *sin nature*. These two statements are not the same, however. Capability to sin requires more than just a *sin nature*.

To understand this clarification, we need to look at the definition of sin. John tells us that *sin* is the transgressing of the law ([1 John 3:4 KJV](#)), or simply *lawlessness* ([1 John 3:4 NIV](#)). Next, James tells us that “*to him that **knoweth** to do good, and **doeth it not**, to him it is sin*” ([James 4:17 KJV](#)). Book of Mormon teachings do not contradict these definitions, but agree well with them (see [Alma 19:97-111 RLDS](#)).

So are little children *capable* of *knowing* to do good according to the law? No. Are they then able to knowingly transgress the law? No. This is why it is said that they are not *capable of committing* sin. Not because they do not have a *sin nature*, but because they are limited by what they can actually know and do regarding the law of God because of their limited capabilities as little children.

Just because little children have legs, does not mean they can run from danger. Just because they can breathe, does not mean they can blow up a balloon. Just because they can

see, does not mean they can read an eye chart. While these are obvious examples of the physical limitations of little children, they point to the overall inabilities of little children, including in the areas of comprehension and decision making.

It's when they mature and gain the capability to act for themselves that the *sin nature* becomes growingly evident and is expressed at will. Legs can be used to run from a crime scene. Lungs can be used to blow into a breathalyzer. Eyes can be used to gaze on images that insight lust, etc. But while a person is little and is still young and innocent of sin against His laws, Jesus' atonement covers for him or her.

To summarize, just as little children need constant care to protect them physically, so Jesus recognizes that little children need spiritual protection. Therefore, His atonement was designed to protect them while in their infancy until such time that they begin to be able to act and choose for themselves regarding whether or not they will obey God. This is not only fair; it is logical and responsible on God's part.

Discussion Point 5: Mormon's Main Message: Mormon's main message in his letter to his son Moroni is this: "...it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children" ([Moroni 8:22 LDS](#)). Note how Mormon does not say here that it is unnecessary to baptize little children because they do not have a *sin nature*. Rather, he writes emphatically that baptizing little children is nothing less than solemn mockery before God! Why? As Mormon teaches, Jesus Christ addressed the matter of salvation for everyone, including those who are *without the law*, which includes little children who are not *capable of knowing* the law or transgressing it (emphasis added).

[Moroni 8:22 LDS](#) – ***For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing—.*** [[See Moroni 8:25-26 RLDS](#)]

This doctrine is consistent with the Bible. In the words of Paul, "...we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" ([1 Timothy 4:10 KJV](#)); "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law" ([Romans 12:12](#)); and "To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law." ([Romans 5:13 NIV](#)). In the words of Jesus (emphasis added):

[Luke 12:47,48 KJV](#) – ***And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.***

Also in agreement with the Bible (e.g. [John 3:16](#), [Romans 5 etc.](#)), Mormon clarifies how our Lord's intercession includes special provisions for little children due to their limitations (i.e. their lack of capability). In the words of Mormon, little children are alive in Christ and

do not need baptism. Just because one little child may be baptized while another little child is not, does not mean the one will be saved while the other one will not be saved.

[Moroni 8:12-15 LDS](#) – *But **little children are alive in Christ**, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; **for how many little children have died without baptism!** Wherefore, if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell. **Behold I say unto you, that he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell. For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism.*** [[See Moroni 8:13-16 RLDS](#)]

Note how in the above quote Mormon is not just saying it is unnecessary to baptize little children. He brings a substantial warning to those who suppose little children need baptism, stating that those who do *must go down to hell* should they *be cut off while in the thought*. Why? To suppose such a thing is to accuse God of being *unjust* by being *partial* in His judgments and provisions for little children. It is akin to blaspheming against the Holy Ghost (see [Matthew 12:31](#) with [I John 5:16](#)).

Because, according to Mormon, little children are covered by the atonement of Christ and are properly and sufficiently covered by the intercession of Christ, this implies they actually have a need for this to be true, i.e. that they have a sin nature. Thus we see that the claim against Mormon's teaching simply ignores his overall message, and so misrepresents Mormon and the Book of Mormon as a whole.

Summary: In closing, it should be remembered that the context of Mormon's comments quoted in the objection to the Book of Mormon was part of an argument against infant baptism. In Mormon's letter to his son, Moroni, he did not say that little children "*do not have a sin nature.*" Rather, Mormon reminds us that *the curse of Adam* was taken away from little children in Jesus Christ to the extent that it has no *power* over little children. Without the redemption of Jesus Christ, little children would yet be subject to the *power of the curse of Adam* [[See Moroni 8:8,9 RLDS](#)].

But praise God, through the redemption of Jesus Christ there is hope for each of us from the earliest age. This does not mean that Mormon implies here that little children do not have a sin nature. Rather, it means that he is pointing us to reliance upon Jesus Christ and His power for salvation for little children as well as for those who begin to exercise their free wills. Mormon clearly argues that little children do not need to make decisions pertaining to their salvation (e.g. baptism) until they are responsible enough to do so before God. Neither should anyone suppose little children need baptism, whereby they would offend God through a failure to believe in His mercy in Christ.

As we grow, each of us we must choose for ourselves the way of life or the way of death (see [Jeremiah 21:8](#) with [Joshua 24:15](#)). Although we have a fallen nature, referred to as the

natural man, yet God gives us that opportunity and capacity to yield ourselves to Him or to rebel against Him. If we yield to the Lord, He gives us the power to become God's children by adoption (e.g. [John 1:11-16 KJV](#) with [Romans 6:16](#) & [Romans 8:14-17](#)). On the other hand, if we rebel against Him, then we must suffer the consequence of our rebellion (cf. [Daniel 9:4-14 KJV](#)). This is why the Book of Mormon authors call us to be submissive to God like a child is to be submissive to a parent ([Mosiah 1:119,120](#) & [Moroni 8:11](#) with [Alma 5:38-44](#) & [Alma 10:27-30](#)).