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Hard to Be Understood

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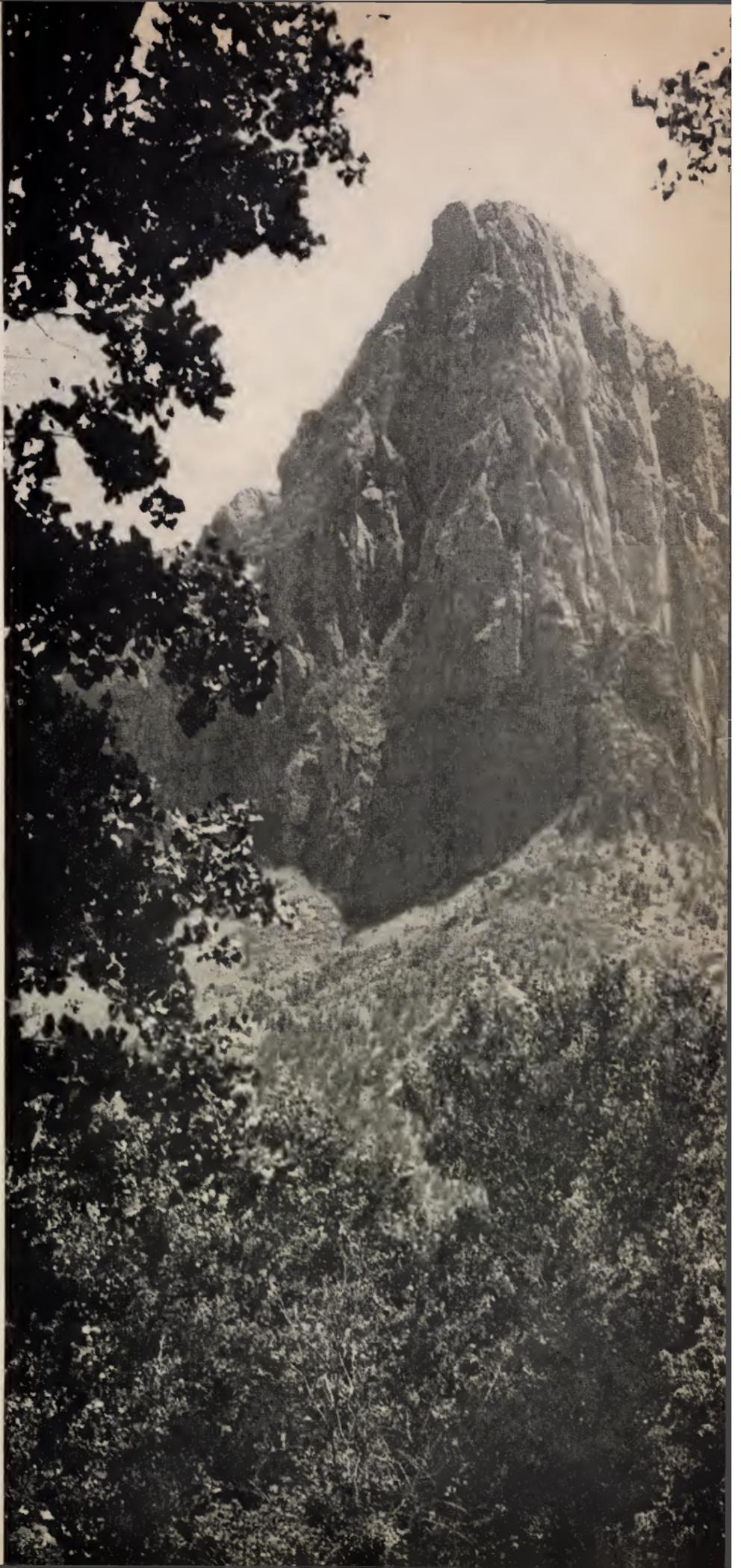
Abstract: This article affirms that the only way to clearly understand the great teachings and doctrines of the Book of Mormon is through the Holy Spirit. Science, study, and pure human intellectual pursuits, without God's spirit, will not adequately relay the full message of the Book of Mormon.

Hard to be Understood

BY MARION D. HANKS

OF THE FIRST COUNCIL
OF THE SEVENTY

*“For he truly spake
many great things
unto them,
which were hard
to be understood,
save a man should inquire
of the Lord; . . .”
(1 Nephi 15:3.)*





There is no way to understand spiritual truth except through the Spirit of God. Natural ability, brilliance of intellect, training, diligent search are all inadequate of themselves to give understanding of spiritual things if he who possesses them is not led by the Spirit.

“ . . . to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.” (2 Nephi 9:29.)

The Prophet Lehi tried with great patience to teach his sons Laman and Lemuel the principles of the gospel, but they would not learn. They were unable to understand because they would not humble themselves and call on the Lord; therefore, they could not receive a knowledge of truth through the Spirit.

“ . . . the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; . . . ” (D&C 42:14.)

Alma strongly attested the importance of learning through the Spirit:

“ . . . Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?”

“Behold, I say unto you that they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; . . . ” (Alma 5:45-46.)

In a letter to the Saints at Corinth, Paul bore the same witness:

“ . . . Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . ”

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. . . . ”

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:9-10, 12, 14.)

To the Jews, who required a sign, Christ was a “stumbling block,” and to the Greeks, who sought after wisdom, he was “foolishness,” while to those who receive him, he is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

The missionary sons of Mosiah received the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of revelation, and taught with the power and authority of God, because they had “searched the scriptures diligently,” and had “given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; . . . ” (Alma 17:1-10.)

In our dispensation, the Lord said:

“For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man.” (D&C 76:10.)

The only way to know spiritual truth is through the Spirit of God which may be enjoyed only by those who humble themselves and call upon him and hearken to his voice. Nothing is more clear in scripture or in life than this truth. The things of the spirit are “hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord; . . . ” in sincerity and humility. Through “study and also by faith,” through reverent search and humble prayer, men can know with certain assurance the things of God.

For those who will not pay the price, the truths of the gospel will always be a “stumbling block,” “foolishness,” “hard to be understood.” In their pride and stubbornness they fail to learn the most important truths of eternity.