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A Converter of Souls

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Abstract: On many occasions the Book of Mormon has converted practicing Christians to the LDS faith. Moroni's promise (Moroni 10:3-5) applies to all.

A Converter of Souls

by Russell C. Harris

I HAVE talked with people who are critical of the Book of Mormon. Many of them have never read it. If there were nothing else unique about the book, this would make it so. What other work would a thinking person presume to criticize without first having read it? The only way to test its truth is to try it.

Fifteen centuries ago, the last of the prophet historians wrote:

. . . When ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4.)

Without being able to explain it, people experience the fulfillment of the promise. A lady wrote, "The strangest thing to me about the Book of Mormon is the fact that when I read it, I knew it to be true. I don't know why I knew it. I just did. I have two books now instead of one—the Holy Bible and the Book of Mormon. My children are my dearest of worldly possessions. If I could have one wish for them granted, I would wish that they might be one of you and live among you. This most likely will never be, but I would have it so if I could."

A wife, whose husband was transferred overseas by the Air Force of the United States of America, was advised by the medical department to settle in a high, dry area. She chose Salt Lake City and moved into a home near a ward chapel. She watched people pass to and from Church. Her 5-year-old son followed other children to the meetinghouse and she eventually went there to Sunday School. Although she believed her Protestant religion, there were certain doctrines which she felt should "go a little further—things still unanswered and unexplained."

At Sunday School she heard repeated references to the Book of Mormon. Although not really anxious or willing to read the book, she felt she should know

(For Course 28, lessons of September 2-16, "The Book of Mormon"; and for Course 6, lesson of September 16, "The Missions in North America," and lesson of October 21, "The Book of Mormon—the Word of the Lord.")

something about it. Telling herself it was probably no good anyway, she secured the least expensive copy available.

"One night," she said, "prepared to be antagonistic and with hardness of heart, I began to read." Far into the night she consumed page after page, finishing the book the following morning. She was forcibly impressed by "the ring of truth about all the stories in the record—my, what a story!" She knew it was true. She is now an active member, and so is her husband.

While on vacation, a man and his wife visited the minister of their church in a California town and were offered the use of his library while they were in the city. They selected certain volumes; and, when they noticed a copy of the Book of Mormon, the husband derisively recommended that they take it. The wife replied that she had no time for trash, but pursuing his intended joke and without her knowledge, the husband took the book to their hotel. One day when she had read everything else that they had borrowed, she picked up the book and commenced to read. Telling me her story, she said, "When I read the first chapter, I knew it was true."

She finished the book and spent the following year trying earnestly to hold on to her traditional beliefs. She and her husband were among the leaders of their church group, and she had no wish to upset her home nor her religious affiliations. She matched her strongest beliefs against the teachings of the Book of Mormon and the Church. She described to me her discomfiture at seeing her erstwhile convictions undermined one by one. After a year, she announced to her son and her husband that she intended to join the Church. Her husband accepted an overseas assignment with a legal department of a United States agency and left without inviting her to accompany him, although he had theretofore made special arrangements for her to do so. Her son, with whom she had such a close bond, became estranged, and each went separate ways—she to Salt Lake City. Still an active member, she has since returned to her home, but whether to her husband and son, I do not know. When some people are fully convinced of the truth of the work, they make whatever sacrifices are necessary to live the teachings.

The title page of the book announces its compelling message: ". . . to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ. . ." A letter came from Ohio, presumably from a Gentile who recognized this message. It said, "A young man of our village visited your city and brought back a Book of Mormon. This he gave me to read, but I soon discovered that it is not to be read but to be

studied; so I am writing to see if it is available. I was much impressed by what I read. It is most refreshing to study anything that upholds the deity of Christ in this day of apostasy and chaos.”

A newly baptized Gentile convert sent copies of the book to his Jewish neighbors. A certain father to whom it was sent was not interested; but his son, home on leave, read it. His first thought was: “Here is another witness for Christ—a witness outside the Bible.” He could not put it aside. Upon leaving the service, he came to Salt Lake City and spent months in search of this treasure which Jesus said man would sell all that he has to obtain. Finding it, he joined the Church.

At my request, a recent convert wrote of the disappointments she and her family had experienced in trying to find a church upon which to agree. The father stopped attending a church where he felt the people were more concerned with money and position than with religion and where some considered themselves superior to others. “I kept trying to keep the children in Sunday School, but it was hard; and I wished so much we had a church where we could all be happy. I had no idea what church

it could be; in fact, I considered it a near impossibility, but I never gave up pursuing the thought that we could never be supremely happy without attending church. The children were growing rapidly, and often I felt I had come to a dead end in disciplining them.

“Months before we took our vacation, I prayed that if only one good thing should come from it, it would be a better means of rearing our children. Somehow I felt this help would come to us in the form of a book, but I never dreamed it would be the Book of Mormon. By chance, my husband and I toured Temple Square. We became so thrilled that we decided we would like to read the Book of Mormon to learn more about this religion which seemed to touch us so deeply. We and our daughter joined the Church, and what great happiness we know! Also, my brother and his family saw the great beauty in the LDS religion.”

The reading of the Book of Mormon can change the lives of Church members and nonmembers alike. To all, the promise is the same: “. . . by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.” (*Moroni 10:5.*)

WHOM THE LORD DESIRES

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right path; and we need no longer have pangs of conscience for believing things which are contrary to the doctrines of our church.

When the missionaries returned again and were to set the date for baptism, they found that the wife of Brother Ebengreuth, who was practical where he was enthusiastic, began to ask questions as to what would happen to them and to their children and their friends and their way of life. And what would their mother and father think?

The traveling elders had come with the missionaries to assist them in arranging the baptismal date. One of them, Elder Robert W. Daynes, at the proper moment rose to bear his testimony concerning the

feelings of Sister Ebengreuth. He told them exactly what they wanted to know. He told them that the Mormons are normal people; that they are probably happier than most other people; that life changes for the better if you bring yourself to take the important step; that Mormonism is not a religion to be put on like a black suit on Sunday, but rather a way, *the way of living this life*; that Mormonism is a challenge to everything which is good in man; that it takes courage to be a Latter-day Saint because the goal is very high and the grade is very steep.

Following this meeting, Brother and Sister Ebengreuth gave up smoking, alcohol, coffee and tea. In August of 1960, Brother Ebengreuth was baptized into the Church. His wife followed him two weeks later; and the older children, after three months of instruction, were baptized in December of the same year.

In the relating of this experience it is interesting to note how the Spirit of the Lord operates at just the right moment to assist in bringing those into the Church whom the Lord desires as members. Without the companionship of the Spirit, and without the exercise of this power, the missionary would be wholly lost.



◀ *Members of the Ebengreuth family as they are pictured left to right: Diethelma Luschin-Ebengreuth, Astrid, Gero, Immo Luschin-Ebengreuth, Iris, and Hanno.*