



Type: Magazine Article

The Book of Mormon

Author(s): Bruce R. McConkie

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 64, No. 6 (June 1961)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s):402–405

Abstract: This article affirms that the best possible missionary tool is the Book of Mormon combined with the power of the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith said the Book of Mormon is the “most correct of any book on earth” and it is “the keystone of our religion.” The author explains how anyone can find out for himself if the Book of Mormon is true.

Our whole life involves the principle of choice. The Lord commands us to live close to him and to keep his commandments, and Satan seems to offer a counter proposal. Let us analyze a few of the things which bring a conflict between the forces of good and evil:

1. The Lord says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy might, mind and strength." (See Mark 12:30.)

Satan, in substance, suggests, "Why love God? Why not disregard him?" Or he might even indicate there is no god at all but himself.

2. The Lord says, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." (Mark 12:31.)

Satan might say, "Hate your neighbor and treat him with contempt."

3. The Lord says, "Keep the Sabbath day holy." (See Exodus 20:8.)

Satan would say, "Use the Sabbath day as a recreation day. What value is there in attending Church and in refraining from your labors on this day?"

4. The Lord says, "Honour thy father and thy mother." (Exodus 20:12.)

Satan craftily puts into our minds the idea of disobeying our parents; your life is your own to choose as you wish. Take all your parents will give you. They will soon be old, and someone else can take care of them.

5. The Lord says, "Sustain and uphold the Lord's anointed."

Satan would say, "Find fault with and weaken the position of the general and local authorities of the Church."

6. The Lord says, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," (Gen. 3:19.) and he also said, "Cease to be idle." (D&C 88:124.)

Satan might say, "Get as much as you can for nothing. It is undignified to work for what you receive." He would encourage indolence, laziness, and even the thought that the government owes you a living.

7. The Lord says, "Thou shalt not steal." (Exodus 20:15.)

Satan might say, "Why not steal and be dishonest? Give short measure and short weight. Do not give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay."

8. The Lord says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." (Exodus 20:16.)

Satan would say, "Dig a pit for your neighbors; lie about them; cause them personal injury; subject them to embarrassment."

9. The Lord says, "Pay one tenth of your interest annually as tithing. For this, I shall give you a great reward." (D&C 119:4.)

Lucifer would say, "Why pay your tithing? You need the money more than the Church needs it. The greatest blessing is to spend your own money."

10. The Lord says, "Observe the Word of Wisdom, my law of health." (D&C 89.)



THE BOOK OF MORMON

Bruce R. McConkie
of the First Council of the Seventy

We are laying the foundation for, and have already actually commenced, the greatest missionary undertaking ever destined to occur in any age of the earth's history. We are going forth by command of Deity to carry the knowledge of God and of his saving truths to all nations, to preach the gospel to every creature, and to give in due course, in this life or in the next, every living soul the opportunity to hear and obey these saving principles.

The ultimate end of this missionary work will be to see the knowledge of God and his saving truths cover the earth ". . . as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9.) The ultimate end of this missionary work will be reached when the day arrives in which it will no longer be necessary for every man to say to his brother or neighbor, "Know the Lord," for all shall know him from

the greatest to the least. (See Jer. 31:31-34.)

Now, since we are engaged in the greatest missionary undertaking that has ever been planned as part of Deity's program, he has also placed in our hands the most effective, compelling, and persuasive missionary tool ever given to any people in any age. The name of this tool is the Book of Mormon.

It goes without saying that conversion in all ages, for all peoples, is dependent upon their receipt of the Spirit. No one gets a testimony of the divinity of the Lord's work unless he gains it from the Spirit—that is, unless it comes by the power of the Holy Ghost. But the Book of Mormon is the means, the tool, the way which has been ordained and given so that men can get their hearts and souls in a frame of mind, in a condition where they can hearken to the testimony of the Spirit.

It was of this book that the Prophet said: "I told the Brethren [meaning the Twelve, with whom he had that day met] that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding its precepts, than by any other book." (*History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 461.)

This is precisely what we want people to do. We want them to get so near to the Lord that they will come down in the depths of humility, repent of their sins, and accept Christ for what he is, the Son of God. We want them

to come to the truth, join the kingdom of God on earth, and have performed for them the ordinances of salvation and exaltation under the hands of those legal administrators whom the Lord has appointed in this day and generation.

Shortly before the Church was organized, April 6, 1830, writing by the spirit of prophecy and revelation, Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon, which he had translated by the gift and power of God, was ". . . a record of a fallen people, . . ."; that it contained ". . . the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews . . ."; that it was ". . . given by inspiration, . . ."; that it had been ". . . confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, . . ."; that it had been ". . . declared unto the world by them—" all for this purpose—and note the purpose: To prove ". . . to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old;

"Thereby showing that he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. . . ." (D&C 20:6-12.)

In other words, the Lord has given the Book of Mormon in this day as the absolute, sure, positive witness of the divinity of his work. We go out in the missionary cause, and we bear testimony in soberness and in truth, knowing the verity of what we say, that the heavens have been opened and that God has spoken again; that angels have ministered to men; that the gifts, powers, and graces had anciently have been

Lucifer contends that no harm will come from indulging in tobacco, liquor, tea, coffee, and other harmful abuses to the body such as overeating and over-indulgences. He would say, "Go along with the crowd and be a good sport. To acquire these contrary habits will make one popular."

11. The Lord says, "Parents, teach your children to pray and walk uprightly before the Lord." (See D&C 68:28.)

Satan would say, "Why teach your children to pray? There is no value in prayer. It is not necessary to discipline them."

12. The Lord says, "Seek the genealogy of your ancestors and complete the temple work for them."

Satan would say, "Postpone doing this work or, better still, don't do it at all."

In many other things the Lord has counseled us to prepare ourselves to live with him. In each instance, Satan's influence would attempt to destroy this

faith and the desire of doing the Lord's work. He would enslave us and persuade us to join his forces.

We cannot cover up evil. Our sins are known to God. Neither can we serve two masters. The Lord has said, "He that is not with me is against me; . . ." (Matt. 12:30.) It is imperative that we choose the right.

John Oxenham wrote these few lines, entitled "A High Way and A Low":

"To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way,
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low;
And in between on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro;
But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go."

Happiness here is dependent upon

moral decisions and obedience to the principles of truth. Our most important decision and obligation is to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This period is characterized by trial, suffering, sacrifice, and disappointment, as well as joy. All these experiences are dedicated to our progress and growth. During this life, we are our own judges. We judge ourselves continuously. We sentence ourselves to happiness through service or misery through sin.

In conclusion, I should like to repeat again:

"Who's on the Lord's side? Who?
Now is the time to show;
We ask it fearlessly;
Who's on the Lord's side? Who?"

May our decisions lift us to celestial glory and eternal life, I humbly pray, and leave my testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

restored anew; that the gospel and the plan of salvation are again on earth in all their ancient beauty and glory.

But this witness which we bear is not left to stand alone. The Lord sends with us a written record, a means, a missionary tool, which can be used by any person to gain a knowledge of the divinity of the work. The Prophet's expression that "the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion" means precisely what it says. The keystone is the central stone in the top of the arch. If that stone is removed, then the arch

crumbles, which, in effect, means that Mormonism so-called—which actually is the gospel of Christ, restored anew in this day—stands or falls with the truth or the falsity of the Book of Mormon. Thus our program and our purpose, as witnesses of the Lord in this day, ought to be to devise ways and means and to create inducements that will persuade those who are not of us to read the Book of Mormon and to read it according to the revealed pattern.

Moroni has left us in the Book of Mormon itself the recorded promise

that if anyone will read it ". . . with real intent, having faith in Christ, . . ." and will ask ". . . God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, . . ." whether it is true, he shall get a knowledge of its truth and divinity by personal revelation. (See Moroni 10:3-4.) This promise is true. It has been tested by thousands and tens of thousands of people in the world, and they have received this personal revelation. Further, by his own voice, the Lord himself testifies of the truth of the Book of Mormon in these words: ". . . as your



Lord and your God liveth it is true." (D&C 17:6.)

Now, our message to the world centers around three great truths. The first, the divine Sonship of Christ; the second, that in this day the knowledge of Christ and his saving truths have been restored through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith; and the third, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth, the organization through which salvation, hope, and peace are offered to all men.

Before any person is prepared to join the Church, he must believe that Jesus Christ is literally the Son of God; that as such he worked out the infinite and eternal atonement whereby all men are raised in immortality, and those who

believe and obey his laws gain the additional reward of eternal life; and that he has ordained and revealed a plan of salvation which enables men so to live as to gain peace here and the fulness of salvation hereafter.

Before joining the Church a person must believe that Joseph Smith was called of God to open this gospel dispensation; that he was indeed a prophet who received keys, powers, authority, and revelation from heaven; that he was the revealer of the gospel and the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of salvation for this age; and that he was commanded by Deity to set up his Church and kingdom again on earth.

Before baptism a person must believe that this Church is true; that it is in fact the Lord's earthly kingdom; that

the priesthood and keys are here; that those who now officer it are legal administrators sent of God to preach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

The Book of Mormon—which has come forth to prove that God inspires men and calls them to his holy work in this age and generation—establishes the verity of these great truths which comprise the message of the restoration. If the Book of Mormon is true, our message to the world is truth; the truth of this message is established in and through this book.

The Book of Mormon is a new, living, modern witness of the divine Sonship of Christ. It testifies of him and of the doctrines of his gospel. It teaches of his atoning sacrifice; it proclaims that



THE REDEEMING POWER OF GOD'S SPIRIT

Antoine R. Ivins
of the First Council of the Seventy

My brethren and sisters, I am happy again to have the privilege of bearing my testimony to you in the general conference of the Church. I realize I will be able to say nothing that will help you or me unless you give me your faith and prayers that I may enjoy the Spirit of the Lord.

Much has been said during the conference thus far of the missionary responsibility under which we as members of the Church rest. I stand before you, as many of you know, as the grandson of a member of the Twelve who went to introduce the gospel to Europe, starting in Denmark. I am the son of one of eight men who carried the work to the Mexican people, traveling on horseback, carrying their beds on pack horses.

I have lived practically all of my life, all my life in fact, in an atmosphere of Church service, and I trust that to the end of my days, I may be able to acquit myself in some reasonable way of the responsibility under which I labor.

We are getting reports from many sections and many missions of the great influx of new members into the Church.

When I began this service, if a missionary performed a baptism a year in a foreign mission he was considered successful. The harvest is tremendously greater now. It is very, very interesting to contemplate it, and one wonders why, and I cannot quite figure it out except it be that the Lord has seen fit to pour out his Spirit upon a greater number of people than formerly was the case. I cannot believe that anybody has a stronger testimony of the gospel than my grandfather and my father had. I cannot believe that anybody is more susceptible, as a missionary for the Church, to the inspiration and the Spirit of God than the missionaries who went out in the very early days of the Church. But we see the fact that many people, more people perhaps than ever before, are coming into the Church. It means to us, or it means to me, an additional responsibility when that happens.

Not very long ago, a few large trees that stood on the corner of South Temple and State Street were picked up and transplanted. In the transplanting of them it was necessary to give them auxiliary support with guy wires from several sides to hold them until they could become established in their new environment. In a sense, every new convert to the Church is a transplanted being in that he needs the support of the established members of the Church. If that support is given, he becomes a full-fledged, faithful member of the Church. If that support is not given, he may do, as far as his faith is concerned, as a transplanted tree that is not properly nourished.

I would like to tell you a story, if you will let me, to illustrate what I mean.

Sixty years or more ago, a young man walking down a street, I believe, in Memphis, Tennessee, heard some missionaries speaking in a street meeting. He had been very unfriendly up to that time, but something impelled him to stop and listen. He listened throughout that meeting. After the meeting he walked up to the elders and asked to be baptized. He got a testimony from it, not, I think, from what the elders said, but because some way or another he was ready for the Spirit of God, and God did bear that testimony to him. He asked for baptism. In due course he was baptized, and when he became a member of the Church he was an outcast from his family. So he looked around, and one day he appeared in Colonia Juarez, a new member, inexperienced in Church operations and all that, and of course he got into the right kind of an environment because the people in Colonia Juarez were friendly people; they were interested people, and they gave him every aid possible.

But only this week I had the privilege of reading two letters that told of the interest they had in that man, one was a letter from his bishop and the other was a letter from his stake president, and in both we discovered that there was not only interest in the man's spiritual well-being, but in his physical well-being, also, and both his bishop and his stake president stood ready to assist to any possible extent in that. Well, do you want to know the result? All right. He married for time and eternity one of the finest young women we had in the colony. He had three sons and three daughters. One of those sons was a missionary in the area that is now the

through him men are redeemed from the spiritual and temporal death brought into the world by the fall of Adam. It outlines the course men must follow to gain eternal life.

The Book of Mormon stands as a witness of the divine Sonship of Christ; it has come forth for "... the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations—..." (Preface to the Book of Mormon.)

This book also is a witness of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the divinity of the Church set up under his instrumentality. It establishes and proves to the world that Joseph Smith is a prophet, for he received the book from a resurrected personage and translated it by the gift

and power of God. And since the Book of Mormon came by revelation, which included the ministering of angels, then obviously Joseph Smith also received other revelations and was ministered to by other heavenly beings. Among those revelations was the command to organize the Church. The Church is thus the one true Church because it was set up by a prophet acting under command of God. Thus the truth of the message of the restoration is established in and through and by means of the Book of Mormon.

No person can read this book, according to the prescribed pattern, and not know that it is true. No person can read this book, in the way Moroni directed, without getting in his heart the absolute, certain, sure knowledge that

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. No person can read this book and learn of its divinity "... by the power of the Holy Ghost..." (Moroni 10:5), without knowing that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God and that this Church, as now constituted, organized, and set up is God's kingdom on earth.

As one voice among thousands of others, I certify that I know by the promptings of the Spirit that the Book of Mormon is true. As a consequence I have in addition a personal knowledge, also born of the Spirit, of the divinity of Christ, of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and of all things incident to this great latter-day work which are essential for the salvation and exaltation of men.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Central Atlantic States Mission. A daughter became the wife of a missionary who served in France. He went there before he was married, I believe, but later was the president of the Central American Mission, faithful and true. And their mother, to this day, while not being strong in health, is a firm, faithful member of the Church. He died in full fellowship, of course, with the love and with the esteem and confidence of the people of that area. Why? Well, he had the qualities in the first place for inspiration, but he had the support and the aid of the officers of Colonia Juarez.

Now, you will pardon me if I have a little extra enthusiasm for Juarez, because that is where I grew up and got my foundation. But in every mission in the Church these new converts come into branches. In some places, of course, they come into stakes, as we have here in the United States, and what happens? Whose responsibility is it to nurse them? I think it is the responsibility of the bishops, and even stake presidents cannot ignore the influx and the responsibility of giving aid and support.

Now, I wonder whether we do it, brethren. Our campaign throughout the stakes is to impress the local ward and stake authorities with the responsibility of assimilating all these new members who come in by baptism or who come in on recommend from other areas of the Church, to stimulate them in their faith and in their endeavor to live the way they should after accepting the responsibilities of membership in the Church.

There is another phase of responsibility, too, that we have, brethren and

sisters. I wish that all of you could have been with Sister Ivins and me last Sunday and heard a talk by a teen-age young woman setting forth her plan for qualifying for celestial marriage. I think I have never heard a better statement from a young person than that young woman made, and when she talked, I formed a picture of the family from which she likely came; of the household where she had been reared; of the life of her father and mother and the example that they had set for her to stimulate her in this great endeavor. And if she carries through the program that she set forth, the man who happens to marry her will be a wonderfully fortunate man.

Now, we bring these people into the Church through birth, but that does not in any sense relieve us of as great or greater responsibility for them as we have for these newly-baptized and transplanted members of the Church. So, after all, there resides in the body of the Church the greatest imaginable responsibility—responsibility to the young lives whom we bring into the Church, responsibility to the more mature people whom we bring in through the ministry of the missionary service, and it is very unfortunate when either of these is lost because of the neglect of the people who form the body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Brethren and sisters, if we can just get out of my testimony a feeling that we do have a responsibility to these people and that the fathers and mothers have a real responsibility to love each other and love their children into correct and proper living and service in the Church, I will be happy that the

President called me to bear my testimony to you.

I testify that the gospel is true. I know it. A man came to me the other day and he said, "How do you know it?" I said, "I have just as great an assurance that the gospel is true as of anything else I experience." I do not know, I never have claimed that I know everything that could be known about the gospel, but I have lived among enough people of varying nationalities to know that it is a regenerating force which tends to exaltation in the kingdom of God when it is accepted by baptism and when one makes a reasonable effort to live the teachings of God our Heavenly Father.

I hope that I may be able to do it. I am a little like my wife's grandfather—I sat up with him when he was in his nineties and on his deathbed, and he said, "Antoine, I hope I can endure to the end." So I hope that I may enjoy the Spirit of the Lord, the spirit of service, for my life is dedicated to the service of the Church and to each other.

May God bless you, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

