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The Keystone of our Religion

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Abstract: This article delineates the role of the Book of Mormon as the keystone of the LDS religion.

of the great events spoken of in the scriptures are about to be fulfilled.

In our own day another prophet has known God as Moses did, face to face, and in bearing his certain witness he has said to us, "And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: that he lives!

"For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

"That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God." (D&C 76:22-24.)

The greatest opportunity of our lives is found in following the spirit of this

ancient Grecian request, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21); and in consequence of our faithful, righteous search, we may have an inspiring personal testimony of his divinity springing up in our own hearts.

Modern travelers to that ancient city of Sheckem near the site of Jacob's well tell us that there are rivers of water flowing beneath the streets. During the daylight hours they cannot be heard. But when evening comes and the clamor dies out of the streets, when kindly sleep rests upon the city, then quite audibly in the hush of the night you can hear the music of these buried streams.

God has provided our earth with great underground reservoirs and buried rivers that may be brought to

the surface to keep our earth productive and beautiful. Likewise, there are some great unseen spiritual powers that can be used to vitalize our spirits and make our lives beautiful and happy.

And in the quiet obedience of our faith and love of righteousness, God may touch these hidden abilities implanted in the depths of our souls and release great spiritual strength to purify our lives and bring about our eternal exaltation in his presence.

As someone has said, "What cool sparkling pure water is to the welfare of the rose, so is the spirit of Christ to my life." That we may drink freely from those living waters that even now are springing up unto eternal life I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.



The Keystone of Our Religion

Bruce R. McConkie

Of the First Council of the Seventy

● We have a volume of sacred scripture known as the Book of Mormon, which contains the mind and will and voice of God to the world today. Like the Bible, with which it is in complete conformity, it contains a record of God's dealings with a people who had the fullness of the everlasting gospel. Thus, both the Book of Mormon and the Bible present a summary of the doctrines of salvation, of the truths men must accept and live by to gain the celestial heaven, and both record the wondrous blessings poured out by Deity upon those in former days who walked in the light of the Lord and who kept his commandments.

The Book of Mormon is a record of God's dealings with his ancient American saints; the Bible is a similar and parallel record of his dealings with the saints in the Old World. Both shed forth a flood of light and knowledge about those truths that must be believed and obeyed to gain salvation, to gain peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. And none now living can gain that salvation, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God, without conforming to those truths of which both books testify.

But salvation is not found in a book, any book, neither the Book of Mormon nor the Bible. Salvation is in Christ; it comes because of his atoning sacrifice; his is the only name given under heaven whereby man can

be saved. Salvation comes by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of his Son. As a Book of Mormon prophet said, ". . . salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent." (Mosiah 3:18.)

However, salvation is made available to men because the Lord calls prophets and apostles to testify of Christ and to teach the true doctrines of his gospel. Salvation is available only when there are legal administrators who can teach the truth and who have power to perform the ordinances of salvation so they will be binding and will have efficacy, virtue, and force on earth and in heaven.

Now this book, the Book of Mormon, was brought forth in our day by such a legal administrator, one Joseph Smith by name. This man was called of God by his own voice and by angelic ministrations. To him was given the ancient record whereon were inscribed the words of prophets and seers who dwelt on the American continent in ages past, holy men who ministered among the land's inhabitants in much the same way that biblical prophets represented the Lord in the lands of their labors.

Having received the ancient record from a heavenly messenger—from an angel named Moroni, who himself was one of the ancient American prophets—Joseph Smith then translated the

book by the gift and power of God. The translated account is the Book of Mormon, a volume of holy writ of some 522 pages. Thereafter Joseph Smith, endowed with the spirit of prophecy and acting pursuant to revelation and at the direct command of God, organized The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sometimes called the Mormon Church because of its acceptance of this Book of Mormon.

With the setting up on earth of the true Church, there came once again a restoration of the fullness of the everlasting gospel, a restoration of the fullness of those truths, keys, powers, and authorities which again enable men to gain a fullness of salvation in the heaven of God our Father.

Thus, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the call of Joseph Smith to represent God as a prophet on earth, the restoration of the gospel of salvation, and the setting up anew of the earthly Church and kingdom of God—all these are tied together; they are all woven into one pattern; either all of them are realities or none of them are.

We testify that Joseph Smith received the Book of Mormon record from a resurrected personage and that he translated it by the power of revelation.

Now if the Book of Mormon is a true account of God's dealings with ancient inhabitants of the American

continent, if it contains, as we solemnly affirm, the fullness of the everlasting gospel, then Joseph Smith was a prophet, a legal administrator, who did in fact restore the gospel and set up the true Church again on earth. In other words, if the Book of Mormon is true, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is God's kingdom on earth, the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth, the only place where salvation may be found.

It thus becomes a matter of transcendent import for every truth seeker to learn of the truth and divinity of this volume of sacred scripture—this volume which will open the door to the knowledge of God and his laws; this volume which will introduce the truth seeker to those legal administrators who can, for instance, perform baptisms that will admit penitent persons, not alone to any earthly organization, but to that celestial realm which is God's eternal kingdom.

In all dispensations past the Lord has called prophets and commissioned them to teach and testify to the people, with the provision that all who believed and obeyed the heaven-sent message would be saved, while those who rejected it would be damned. He has done precisely the same thing in this final gospel dispensation. By his own voice he appointed Joseph Smith to be the first and foremost of his latter-day prophets. Those who have since built on the foundation revealed to Joseph Smith have worn the same prophetic mantle and have and do

stand as witnesses to the world of the truth of God's great plan of salvation in this day.

But in his manifold grace and goodness, God has given an added witness in this day of the eternal verity of his work. Men in this day are as much obligated as men have been in any age to hearken to the voice of the prophets, to lend a listening ear to their sayings, to open their hearts to the truths of heaven which fall from their lips. But today we also have the Book of Mormon to bear record of the truth of the message that has come from a loving Heavenly Father to us, his erring earthly children.

Joseph Smith said that the Book of Mormon was "the keystone of our religion." (*Documentary History of the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 461), meaning that the whole structure of restored truth stands or falls, depending on its truth or falsity.

Joseph Smith also wrote, "by the spirit of prophecy and revelation," that the Book of Mormon came forth 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 20:11-12.)

In the Book of Mormon is found the Lord's promise to all men that if they will read the record and ponder it in their hearts and then ask the Father in the name of Christ if it is true—asking with a sincere heart, with real intent,

having faith in Christ—he will manifest the truth of it unto them by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moro. 10:4.)

Now I am one who knows by the power of the Spirit that this book is true, and as a consequence I also know, both by reason and by revelation from the Spirit, of the truth and divinity of all the great spiritual verities of this dispensation. For instance:

I know that the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith—because the Book of Mormon is true.

I know that the gospel has been restored and that God has established his Church again on earth—because the Book of Mormon is true.

I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet, that he communed with God, entertained angels, received revelations, saw visions, and has gone on to eternal glory—because the Book of Mormon is true.

I know that the Bible is the word of God as far as it is translated correctly—because the Book of Mormon is true.

I know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth, the one kingdom with legal administrators who can seal men up unto eternal life—because the Book of Mormon is true.

To my testimony of the Book of Mormon I add that of the Lord God himself, who said Joseph Smith "has translated the book, . . . and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true." (D&C 17:6.)

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.○



A Silver Thread in the Dark Tapestry of War

Gordon B. Hinckley

Of the Council of the Twelve

● My beloved brethren and sisters: My heart was touched and my soul thrilled by the stirring testimony of the risen Lord given by President McKay this morning. I hope that no man or woman here will ever forget that testimony of our Prophet.

I was grateful the choir sang as an opening number the words of Parley P. Pratt:

"The morning breaks; the shadows flee;

Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled!
The dawning of a brighter day,
Majestic rises on the world."

(*Hymns*, 269.)

If the Lord will inspire me, I would like to use that as something of a theme.

I have spoken previously from this pulpit about the war in Vietnam. With your indulgence I should like again to say a few words on this, because I know that it is a subject on the minds and in the hearts of thousands of our people who have sons there. The welfare of their loved ones is the constant burden of their thoughts and prayers. Even for those of other nations, the war is a matter of deep concern.

One cannot have been to Vietnam as I have on a number of occasions, and felt in some small measure the

dreadful sorrow of the land, without making a plea for peace a part of his daily prayers. This war, like others, is fraught with terrible evil and unspeakable tragedy. I minimize none of these.

But notwithstanding the evil and the tragedy, I see a silver thread shining through the dark and bloody tapestry of conflict. I see the finger of the Lord plucking some good from the evil designs of the adversary. I see coming out of this conflict, as I have witnessed in other conflicts in Asia, an enlargement of the Lord's program.

Not long ago I was in Saigon. Our