



Type: Magazine Article

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## A Marvelous Work

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Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 58, No. 6 (June 1955)

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

Page(s): 440, 442, 444, 446

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**Abstract:** This article describes the importance of the Book of Mormon in the Restoration, missionary work, and daily life. The author gives his witness to the truthfulness and validity of the book.

pear on the body. One of the greatest handicaps to spiritual growth, or any other kind of growth, is to have a negative mind, and I suppose that one of the functions of a great faith is to lift our thoughts upward, to houseclean our minds, to sweep out our "temptations down," and fill our minds with the "temptations up."

And so I would like to offer you the thought of some of the thrilling temptations upward—the temptations of culture, the temptations of service, the temptations of great industry, the temptations to focus our minds on great spirituality, the temptation to believe in God.

I am certain that the greatest waste there is in the world is not the devastation that goes with war; nor is it the cost that accompanies crime; nor is it both of these put together. The greatest waste in the world is that human beings, you and I, live so far below the level of our possibilities.

Henry Ward Beecher was once asked whether or not he believed that Christianity had failed, and he said that so far as he knew, it had never been tried. Compared with what we might be, we are only half awake. We have great concern that our lives may someday come to an end, but the real tragedy is that so many lives never really have a beginning. The fires in our souls need rekindling. In speaking of education, Francis Bacon said, "If you want a tree to produce, don't worry so much about the boughs; fertilize the roots." Then suppose we give in to that temptation to stimulate those great God-given powers within ourselves which can lift us toward heaven.

The brute creation goes down on all fours, which tends to throw its gaze upon the ground. But man stands upright in the image of his Maker that his vision may reach to the stars.

The mission of Jesus was up. Even in Gethsemane with the awful weight of our sins upon his soul, his face looked up to God. But whatever may be the attitude of the body, the spirit should be on its toes. When Jesus was teaching us to pray, he inserted that wonderful phrase which says, "Thy will be done." But even when we repeat these inspiring words, intended to lift us up, we usually surround it with a spirit of martyred resignation. When we say, "Thy will, not mine, be done" (see Luke 22:42), we may be hoping for the best but we are usually expecting the worst.

We fill our hearts with too many doubts and fears and negative thoughts. But try to imagine what the great Creator would have us do if we did his will. Can you conceive of any limits he would place upon our progress? What would God have us "arouse a desire for"? Certainly not for weakness, or failure, or sin! Certainly he does not want us to fill our minds with the temptations down. He is not pleased when we become the problem children

of God. His will is for us to become beautiful and glorious like him.

But the great truths of life become known only to those who are prepared to accept them. So I would like to present for your consideration the thrilling temptations of the gospel, the temptations to live worthily of the celestial kingdom, to attain a celestial body, a celestial mind, a celestial personality, to live with a celestial family and celestial friends on a celestial earth. The gospel offers us the temptation to accept the challenge of Jesus when he said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.)

"Thy will be done," means to become like God. Now try to imagine what the mind of the Creator is like. If you should lose all of your material posses-

sions, you might have reason to be greatly depressed. But how poor you would be if you lost your faith in God!

My brothers and sisters, we have lived successfully through the long ages of a pre-existence. Now we live in mortality which is very short. And we are very near the end of the race. How unfortunate are they who relax their efforts when on the very verge of success, like the great Roman general, Cato, who committed suicide on the very eve of his triumph. If you sometimes feel that the water is a little cold and the way is a little foggy, then is the time to look up and have faith, for there is land ahead.

"All things are possible to him that believeth," and so in our daily devotions we hold ever closer the very foundation of our faith, God's formula for success, "We believe in God."

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

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## A MARVELOUS WORK

by *LeGrand Richards*

OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE

I AM SURE as we come to the closing moments of this great conference our hearts are full of gratitude to the Lord for the blessings it has brought to each of us individually, and to the Church. We have had some wonderful counsel and advice and instruction given to us. The music has been delightful. The prayers from these mission presidents have thrilled us, and, altogether, I am sure that we feel in our hearts a re-dedication of our lives and our talents and all that we have to the building of the kingdom of God in the earth.

I recall fifty years ago when with the missionaries and President Grant who was then the president of the European Mission, I attended a conference in Holland that lasted all day. There were many tears shed during that day. At the close of the conference President Grant said: "Today we have feasted on the fat things of the Spirit of the Lord. Now, brethren, go out and give it away. The more you give away the more you will have left." That should be the feeling in the heart of every member who has been privileged to attend this conference. We ought to carry its spirit wherever we go—in our workshops, in our businesses, on our farms, and in all our activities in the Church, and in whatsoever we are called to do, we should carry this wonderful spirit with us into the world.

I am grateful for the presence here of these mission presidents and the great work that they are accomplishing. They are noble men. They have great responsibility. They have entrusted to

them your boys and girls, the youth of Zion, who have gone forth as missionaries, and when new converts come into the Church, they have the responsibility to see that they are all put to work, that they use the gifts and the talents with which the Lord has endowed them for the building up of his kingdom, and for the honor and glory of his name, and for the blessing of his children, that there shall be no wasted manpower, just as the bishops in these wards share that great responsibility also.

While Brother Bennion and Brother Evans were speaking about joy and happiness, my thoughts went to the experiences I have enjoyed during the past year. It has been my privilege, besides mingling with the Saints in the stakes of Zion, to go to four of the missions of the Church. I toured two of them. Over in Hawaii, with President Nelson, we held a testimony meeting that lasted from seven o'clock in the morning until five o'clock at night, and we had only a fifteen minute recess. We were all there fasting, and eighty-eight of us bore our testimonies, and the Spirit of the Lord was manifested in rich measure.

Then I toured two missions and interviewed eighty-five missionaries individually in one and sixty-five in the other. I was in another mission where one young man said, "Bishop, why do the brethren not send someone around to teach our parents the gospel the way we are teaching it to these people here in the mission field?" I came to feel that if you wanted to find the happiest

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people in this world, and those who really have had their hearts touched with divine joy, you should go into the mission field. You find these young men and young women who are giving all their time to the work of the Lord, and one by one they will testify that it is the happiest time of their entire lives. I have met for hours with the missionaries in the mission field, and they would say: "When we were home, we heard the returned missionaries say that their mission was the happiest time of their lives, and we did not believe a word of it, and now we know what they were talking about." One young man said, "There isn't a corporation or a company in this world that could pay me a large enough salary to get me to leave my mission." Another young man said: "I would not take a check for a million dollars for the experience of my mission," and as I listened to such statements, I thought of the words of Alma when he said that he would that he had the voice of an angel that he might cry repentance to all the world. Surely the Lord is the best paymaster in all the world. He knows how to make his children happy when they are doing his great work.

I have said, and I repeat here, that as long as the Lord will put such faith and feelings and satisfaction and joy in the hearts of his missionaries, you just cannot stop this work from rolling on in the earth, and I thank the Lord for the great work that is being done in the missionary fields of the Church, not only in the foreign fields, but also here in the stakes of Zion.

Last year, according to reports, 18,573 people decided to cast their lot with this great Church, leaving the teachings they had been taught, because of the efforts of the missionaries in bringing to them the gospel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and I thank the Lord for each one of them and pray that they themselves may become working units and witnesses of the great truths the Lord has established in the earth.

We have a great responsibility, those of us who are privileged to be here in Zion. You remember the words of the Prophet Jeremiah of old when he said,

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart. (Jer. 3:14-15.)

Now, when we are gathered to Zion, either here or in her stakes or missions, we have a great responsibility. I think of the words of the psalmist, who saw our day. Quoting from the fiftieth Psalm:

The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. (Psalm 50:1-2.)

Now, I ask you, how has the Lord "shined" out of Zion the perfection of

beauty? He has gathered them one of a city and two of a family and taught them with pastors after his own heart, and then he sends them out again, calling to the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof, and God cannot call to the earth crying repentance to bring his children to a knowledge of the truth without instruments to do the calling. That is where our great responsibility lies, and as I have indicated, over 18,000 during the past year have heeded that call and have gone down into the waters of baptism, being born again, taking upon them the name of Christ, and as Paul said,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28.)

That, we feel as we travel in the missions, as President McKay has just done, down in the islands of the South Pacific, and down in Central America where I have just been, I interviewed some of the missionaries who are converts to the Church who have never been here in our midst, and when they tell us that they had nothing to live for until the gospel found them, and now they really have something to live for, and bear witness that the time that they have been in the Church is the happiest time of all their lives, it makes you feel grateful to God that the Church has grown to such proportions that it can begin to reach out into all these foreign fields and carry to them the message of eternal truth as the Lord has revealed it.

I told those good people down in that land that if I had come to them from the States with enough money to give each of them a million dollars, it would not be worth one hundredth part as much to them as the message that I had to bring to them. That represents the importance of our message. It is what Jesus called the "pearl of great price."

He said that when a merchant man seeking goodly pearls found the "pearl of great price," he went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13:45-46.) And when one has acquired it, it is a thing that brings joy and peace and happiness and satisfaction into one's soul, the like of which he cannot find in any other way in the world.

I have great faith in the words of the prophets. I believe, as Isaiah said, that known unto God are all of his works from the beginning, and he has permitted his prophets to speak of those things, and when you stop to analyze what prophecy really is, no mortal man of himself could catch as it were the intelligence of God and know the future events of the world and portray them to the world except by the power of the Holy Ghost.

That is what Peter meant when he said,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark

place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (II Peter 1:19-21.)

When you put the prophecies together and see what the Lord permitted his prophets to see, you realize that we are living in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times that all of the prophets have looked forward to, the greatest gospel dispensation the world has ever known. In the words of the Lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith, we live in "the light of the noon day sun," and you know that is the brightest period of the entire day. We live in the day when the brightest spiritual light is available to all men, and if the world knew what we have, I testify to you that there is not an honest man, or an honest woman, in all this world who really loves the Lord, and who would be willing to sacrifice friends and loved ones in order to be identified with his Church, who would not accept the gospel message as it is brought to them by the elders of this Church, because it is in very deed God's eternal truth.

Therefore, I said to the people in Central America, that if I could bring them a million dollars it would not be worth as much to them as the message we have to bear.

Some years ago, one of our great commentators is reported to have made this statement. He said he was asked what message could be broadcast to the world that would be considered of greater value than any other message that could go out over the air. He said after giving the thought consideration, he came to the conclusion that the greatest message that could be broadcast to this world would be to say that a man who had lived upon the earth and died, had returned again with a message from God. If that be true, we have the greatest message that can possibly be broadcast to the world. We not only testify that a man who lived upon the earth and died has returned with a message from God, but also that God, the Eternal Father, introduced his own Son in his resurrected body of flesh and bone, to the boy Prophet, Joseph Smith, which event we will celebrate next Sunday, it being Easter, and from him, this boy Prophet, Joseph Smith, learned that he should join none of the churches.

Now, that is a hard thing to say to most people because they think all the churches are good. And there is good in them, just as there is in the Kiwanis Club and the Rotary Club, and the Exchange Club, and other civic organizations, but there are no people, no organization, nor individual, who can take upon himself or themselves the power of the Holy Priesthood, the power to bind on earth and it shall be bound in heaven. That power has to come from God, the Eternal Father.

When we see the perfectness of nature and how marvelous the Lord's works are, it is hard to believe that he could

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THE IMPROVEMENT ERA

be the author of all the confusion there is in the world today in spiritual matters. Some of our greatest leaders have borne their testimonies of the need of Christianity coming again as it was formerly. I would like to read a few words from Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, who you know is one of our great spiritual leaders in the United States. He said:

A religious reformation is afoot, and at heart it is the endeavor to recover for our modern life the religion of Jesus as against the vast, intricate, largely inadequate and often positively false religions about Jesus. Christianity today has largely left the religion which he preached, taught, and lived, and has substituted another kind of religion altogether. If Jesus could come back to earth now, hear the mythologies built up around him, see the creedalism, denominationalism, sacramentalism, carried on in his name, he would certainly say, "If this is Christianity, I am not a Christian."

This is not a statement from the Mormons but in substance is the same statement the Redeemer of the world made to this boy Prophet, Joseph Smith, when the Father introduced him and the Savior inquired of Joseph what he wanted to know. He told him he should join none of the churches. President McKay has referred here today to that great promise that a marvelous work and a wonder was about to come forth. That was also the statement made nearly three thousand years ago recorded by Isaiah, when he said:

Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. (Isaiah 29:13-14.)

I wonder, in the minds of the world, when they read such promises as this, how they can sit idly by and not believe that some day the God of heaven would fulfil this promise, because as Peter said, we have a more sure word of prophecy, and here the Lord declared that he would bring forth a marvelous work and a wonder. Why should not the world open their hearts and be willing to investigate when we bring to them the announcement that the God of heaven has revealed himself, and with him, his only Begotten Son? Such a knowledge as this certainly is worth more than all the wealth of the world and is the greatest message that could possibly be broadcast to the world.

Take the other prophecies of the scripture. I think of the words of Jesus as he walked along the way and met the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, following his crucifixion, and as he listened to them you will recall he said,

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and enter into his glory? (Luke 24:25-26.)

Then he began to explain the scriptures to them and opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.

So today, if the Savior were here among us, he would say to this world in which we live,

Have I not permitted the prophets to speak unto you? Have I not given them the signs of the times in the latter days by which you should know that there was to be a new truth revealed to the earth in the day when men should teach for doctrine the commandments of men? Why should you not be praying unto the God of Israel that this great message that is promised by the prophets should come, just as Israel should have been praying for the coming of the great Redeemer of the world when he came in the Meridian of Time?

Today we are, as the prophets of old have indicated, speaking of the world generally, as they who have eyes that see not, and ears that hear not, and hearts that do not understand and comprehend the marvelous things that the Lord has done.

We have testimony here today of the fact that the Father and the Son are real personages with bodies. You remember, some of you, who read the book written by Senator Beveridge, in which he devoted a chapter to the young man and the pulpit. He told of his experience interviewing ministers and others during his vacation time, and how people wanted to believe. They wanted to believe that there is a God who is a real Personage, and then he said that one great railroad magnate said that he would give all the wealth of the United States to know that after he died he would live again with a conscious identity, knowing who he was and who other people were.

To every Latter-day Saint, through the restoration of the gospel, that becomes an obvious common truth in our Church, and yet here was a man who would have given all the wealth of the United States in order to know that one great truth that we have to teach.

I want to say a few words about the coming of Moroni, who brought the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. You just cannot believe the words of the prophets, you cannot believe the Holy Bible, without knowing that there is a companion volume of scripture to go with it. What is it worth? To some of us it has been a great inspiration in our lives.

I heard a young serviceman, who returned from the service, talking in a youth meeting not long ago. He held up the Book of Mormon and said: "This book kept me clean and brought me home clean to my loved ones. I read from it every day that I was in the service."

Some years ago a story was told about an elderly brother who was sent on a mission. He wrote letters back to President Joseph F. Smith, calling his

attention to this statement and that statement in the Book of Mormon, so wonderful he thought the Presidency of the Church had never read them just because he had not read them.

I wonder how many copies of the Book of Mormon there are in our libraries that never get read?

A short time ago an article appeared in the newspaper which stated that William A. Kennedy was here from Lima, Peru, to gather money to establish a research university down in Lima, Peru, to study the early inhabitants of the Americas, particularly dealing with the Mayan and Incan civilizations. This article said that with the pledges he had, when matched by the small American countries, as they had promised, it would give them over thirty million dollars, with an assurance that within five years the amount would be increased to between sixty and seventy million dollars, and that President Hoover had agreed to serve on that board.

I have never heard what became of it, but this was the thought I had. They were willing to contribute sixty to seventy million dollars to learn something about the early inhabitants of that land, and when they have spent it all, they would not know one thousandth part as much as they could learn by reading the Book of Mormon that they could get for fifty cents, and if they did not have the fifty cents, we would give them a copy for nothing.

The Book of Mormon not only tells us the history of the people, and what they did, but it also gives unto us the words of their prophets, and not only that, it also tells us that this is a land choice above all other lands. Upon this land shall be built the New Jerusalem of the Lord our God, and they will not likely find that recorded in any relics they find down in those mounds in South and Central America, many of which I have recently seen.

I was thrilled by Brother Hunter's testimony of these records that parallel the records of the Book of Mormon. I have never seen this in print, but I heard President Callis make this statement: that after the Book of Mormon came forth the Prophet Joseph was terribly worried about what the world would say, and he said, "O Lord, what will the world say?" And the answer came back, "Fear not, I will cause the earth to testify of the truth of these things," and from that day until now, and only the Lord knows what is yet ahead, external evidences have been brought forth of the divinity of that book.

But more than all this is the promise contained in the last chapter by Moroni, that if one will read it with a prayerful heart the Lord will manifest the truth of it unto him by the power of the Holy Ghost.

When I was a boy, I led our Sunday School in reciting the testimony of the three witnesses, and their words have rung through my heart from that day until this, when those men testified that an angel of God came down from heaven and brought and laid be-

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fore their eyes the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated and testified that it was translated by the gift and by the power of God.

I give you that witness today. I wish there were time to discuss other marvelous things the Lord has given us in the restoration of the gospel. Then you would know why it is the greatest message that could be broadcast to the world and why it is worth more than all the wealth of this world.

I bear you solemn witness that I know this work is of God. I know the greatest joy that can fill the human soul and breast is the testimony of the Spirit of God, and I tell you, brothers and sisters, we ought to go out and share it with our neighbors and our friends, and may God bless every effort that is being put forth by the membership of this Church in that direction I pray, and leave you my love and blessing, in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Whence and Why and Whither?*

*Richard L. Evans*

**N**ot long ago I watched a loving family before an open grave, as the casket of a beloved silver-haired father was lowered to its resting place. There was calm. There was peace, and no evidence of irreconcilable sorrow. In their hearts there seemed to be assurance that all that is most loved in life is everlasting. And then I thought of other somewhat similar scenes—similar, but different in that there seemed to be little assurance; different in that the cry of the heart was reflected in the fear that this parting was final—the fear of anguished utterance: "Oh, if only we knew, if only we could be sure that it is so—that death is conquered, that life is everlasting, that personality is forever perpetuated, that our loved ones will be there to welcome us." These are the age-old cries and questions—the questions of Whence? and Why? and Whither?—questions concerning the open grave that have faced men from the first time death intruded into the realm of life. These questions the disciples of Jesus faced. And to the chief priests and Pharisees who requested ". . . that the scpulchre be made sure . . ." Pilate replied, "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can."<sup>1</sup> And so they did. But no man can secure the grave against the glorious eternal reality of everlasting life. "And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted."<sup>2</sup> Yes, some doubted. Some still doubt. Some say in their loss and loneliness: "Oh, if only I knew, if only I could be sure." But you who wrestle in your souls with the question of everlasting life, take peace unto your hearts, for God has not deceived us in the assurance that the sweetest, finest things of life are everlasting, including the promised renewal of the association with those we love. Scripture, logic, reason, revelation, all confirm it, with all the intimations of immortality within us, and with the added word of witnesses. He who holds creation in its course, and who brought us to birth, has not deceived us in letting us so much love life, and so much love our loved ones. Let faith overcome fear, for the question of the open grave was solved some nineteen centuries ago—and as surely as we lay away our loved ones, just so surely do they live always and forever.

*"The Spoken Word"*

FROM TEMPLE SQUARE  
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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 27:64-65.  
<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28:17.