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The Keystone of Our Religion

Author(s): Marion G. Romney

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Abstract: This article reaffirms that the purpose of the Book of Mormon is to bear witness of Jesus Christ.

It's the stick-together family that wins
the joys of earth,
That hears the sweetest music and
that finds the finest mirth;
It's the old home roof that shelters all
the charm that life can give;
There you find the gladdest playground,
there the happiest spot to live.
And, O weary, wandering brother, if
contentment you would win,
Come you back unto the fireside and
be comrade with your kin.

(Adapted from a poem
by Edgar A. Guest.)

And so let's strengthen the family.
Family and individual prayer, morning
and evening, can invite the blessings of
the Lord on your household. Mealtime
provides a wonderful time to review
the activities of the day and to not only
feed the body, but to feed the spirit

as well, with members of the family
taking turns reading the scriptures,
particularly the Book of Mormon.
Nighttime is a great time for the busy
father to go to each child's bedside, to
talk with him, answer his questions,
and tell him how much he is loved.
In such homes there is no "generation
gap." This deceptive phrase is another
tool of the devil to weaken the home
and family. Children who honor their
parents and parents who love their
children can make a home a haven of
safety and a little bit of heaven.

Does this poem describe your family
gatherings?

We are all here:

Father, mother,
Sister, brother,

All who hold each other dear.

Each chair is filled, we are all at home.

Tonight, let no cold stranger come;
It must be often thus around
Our old familiar hearth we're found.
Bless, then, the meeting and the spot,
For once be every care forgot;
Let gentle peace assert her power,
And kind affection rule the hour.
We're all—all here.

(Adapted from a poem
by Charles Sprague.)

God bless us to strengthen our fami-
lies by avoiding the crafty designs of
the adversary and following the noble
ways of the Lord, so that in due time
we can report to our Heavenly Father
in his celestial home that we are all
there, father, mother, sister, brother,
all who hold each other dear. Each
chair is filled, we are all back home.

In the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen. ○

Friday afternoon session, October 2, 1970

The Keystone of Our Religion

Elder Marion G. Romney

Of the Council of the Twelve

● Brethren and sisters: I have taken for my theme this afternoon, "The Keystone of Our Religion."

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote in his diary for November 28, 1841:

"I spent the day in the council with the Twelve Apostles at the house of President Young, conversing with them upon a variety of subjects. . . . I told the brethren 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 by its precepts than by any other book." (*Documentary History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 461. Italics added.)

The authenticity of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the gospel rest upon the same two fundamentals: first, the reality of modern revelation, and second, the fact that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. These two veri-

ties are inseparably connected in their relationship to the Book of Mormon and the restored gospel. To accept one of them is to accept the other.

When Joseph Smith retired to bed on the night of September 21, 1823, he had no thought (and he had never had a thought) about the Book of Mormon. The matter that concerned him at that moment was his standing with the Lord. This, in prayer and supplication, he sought to determine. While praying, he was visited by Moroni, a personage sent from the presence of God, who told him that "there was a book deposited [in nearby Cumorah], written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the sources from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient

inhabitants; also that there were two stones in silver bows . . . deposited with the plates; . . . and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book." (*DHC*, vol. 1, p. 12.)

In this interview, the Prophet received his first concept of the Book of Mormon. From that night until the book was published, Joseph was constantly guided from heaven in obtaining, caring for, and translating the sacred record. One of the most remarkable things concerning the Book of Mormon is the frequency and the finality with which the Lord himself testified to its truth and divinity.

Confirming his own participation in bringing forth the Book of Mormon, the Lord, in August 1830, said to the Prophet: "I . . . sent [Moroni] unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel. . . ." (*D&C* 27:5.)

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In the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said that he called upon "Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments" that he might "have power to translate through the mercy of God, by the power of God, the Book of Mormon." (D&C 1:17, 29.) The Lord also told the Three Witnesses that the Prophet had "translated the book," and then he added, "as your Lord and your God liveth it is true." (D&C 17:6.)

As the Prophet proceeded with the translation, he learned many great and marvelous truths. He learned that the concept of the Book of Mormon originated in the mind of the Lord Jesus himself—that both the source material for the record and the engravings that he was translating were prepared by righteous men directed by God.

He learned that, under the guidance of the Lord, the gathering of source material for the book began as early as 2200 B.C., when the Lord commanded the brother of Jared "to go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord, and write the things which he had seen." (Eth. 4:1.) He learned that the record thus begun was continued by commandment of the Lord until the end of the Jaredite era; that the complete Jaredite record miraculously came into the hands of Moroni, who, about A.D. 400, abridged it into the short record we know as the book of Ether. He learned that the things in this short abridgment were written by Moroni upon the plates he, Joseph, was translating, because, according to Moroni's own words, "the Lord hath commanded me to write them"; and Moroni continues: ". . . I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw" and the Lord "commanded me that I should seal them up; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the interpretation thereof; wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters, according to the commandment of the Lord." (Eth. 4:4-5.)

Similar direction was given concerning the Nephite records:

"The Lord commanded me [said Nephi], wherefore I did make plates of ore that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. . . .

"And this have I done, and commanded my people what they should do after I was gone." (1 Ne. 19:1, 4.)

Thus, pursuant to divine command and direction, the comprehensive record on the large plates of Nephi, from which Mormon made his abridgment, was kept for nearly a thousand years.

Jesus himself edited part of that record. During his post-resurrection ministry among the Nephites, he in-

structed them to write the things which he had taught them. He also reminded them that they had not made record of the prophecy of his servant Samuel the Lamanite, to the effect that at the time of his resurrection "many saints" should arise from the dead. When he drew this to their attention, his disciples remembered the prophecies and their fulfillment. (Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded.)

From the title page of the Book of Mormon, the Prophet learned that one of the two purposes of the book was "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ."

For the accomplishment of this purpose, the book is from beginning to end a witness for Christ. Its first chapter contains an account of a vision in which Lehi beheld Jesus "descending out of the midst of heaven" in luster above the noonday sun. (1 Ne. 1:9.) Its last chapter concludes with Moroni's great exhortation to come unto Christ and be perfected in him, with this assurance: ". . . and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be . . . sanctified. . . ." (Moro. 10:32-33.)

Numerous and great are the stirring testimonies that illuminate the five hundred pages between these two chapters.

I bear you my witness that I have obtained for myself a personal knowledge that the Book of Mormon is all the Prophet Joseph said it is; that from it radiates the spirit of prophecy and revelation; that it teaches in plain simplicity the great doctrines of salvation and the principles of righteous conduct calculated to bring men to Christ; that familiarity with its spirit and obedience to its teachings will move every contrite soul to fervently pray with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps. 51:10.)

One's soul is lifted above the sordid things of this world and soars in the realm of the divine, as in spirit he stands with the brother of Jared on Mount Shelem in the presence of the premortal Redeemer and hears him say: "Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have light, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name. . . .

". . . Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

"Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh." (Eth. 3:14-16.)

One's soul is likewise lifted as in spirit he mingles with the multitude "round about the temple . . . in the land of Bountiful," who, as Mormon said, "were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place.

"And . . . also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.

"And it came to pass that while they were thus conversing one with another, they heard a voice as if it came out of heaven; . . . and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.

". . . and it said unto them:

"Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him.

". . . and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

"And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

"And behold, I am the light and the life of the world. . . ." (3 Ne. 11:1-3, 6-11.)

No one can read Alma's resumé of the experiences of his father with the saints who joined the church at the waters of Mormon; of the Lord's mercy and long-suffering in bringing them out of their spiritual and temporal captivity; of how by the power of the Holy Spirit, they were awakened from their deep sleep of death to experience a mighty change wrought in their hearts—no one, I say, can contemplate this marvelous transformation without yearning to have a like change wrought in his own heart.

And no one can answer for himself these questions, which Alma put to his brethren:

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"[1] . . . have ye spiritually been born of God? [2] Have ye received his image in your countenances? [3] Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?

"[4] Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? [5] Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?

"I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the

works of righteousness upon the face of the earth?

"[6] Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? [7] Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time . . . that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ . . . ?" (Al. 5:14-16, 27.)

I say, no one with the spirit of the Book of Mormon upon him can honestly answer to himself these soul-searching questions without resolving to so live that he can answer them in the affirmative on that great day to which each of us shall come. I leave my humble testimony that the Prophet knew whereof he spoke and uttered

divine truth, when he declared:

"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than any other book."

As do all the works of God, the Book of Mormon bears within itself the evidence of its own authenticity.

I urge you, my brethren and sisters and friends, all of you who hear my voice, to become familiar with the teachings and spirit of the Book of Mormon—"the keystone of our religion." Its teachings and its spirit will lead us to Christ and eternal life. To this I bear solemn witness, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

The Library of the Mind

Elder Joseph Anderson

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

● I stand here in a great presence, surrounded by the First Presidency and the other General Authorities of the Church. Sitting before me are those who are appointed to administer the affairs of the Church in the stakes, missions, temples, wards, priesthood, and other organizations of the Church. In addition are faithful, devoted Latter-day Saints and other good people who are in this great assembly and those listening in on the air. It is a weighty responsibility and a humbling experience. I am dependent upon the Lord, in whose presence I also stand, as his Spirit is most certainly here. I depend also upon your faith and prayers.

Someone has said that memory is the library of the mind and recollection is the librarian. There are stored in that library things we have read and information that has come to us in many other ways. Sometimes when we call upon the librarian for help, he is slow to bring to us the things we would like to have. And sometimes he brings to us material that would better be forgotten.

As I stand before you today, the librarian brings from the library of the mind some wonderful, impressive, and enduring experiences. I recall many years of close and intimate acquaintance and association with great men of the past and present. Twenty-three years of unforgettable experience with President Heber J. Grant, one of the sweetest associations that man could have, and with that memory comes the recollection of a wonderful association with his counselors during those years.

From the memory of the past comes to mind an association with President George Albert Smith and his counselors. President David O. McKay completed in January of this year an administration of nearly 19 years, and the association with him and the counselors he has had during that period has been a glorious experience and privilege. I have known their hearts and their innermost desires; they have been and are good and righteous men.

While not knowing them personally, I have become acquainted, through a

perusal of the records they have left, with the Presidents of the Church and their counselors and brethren of the Twelve who have preceded those whom I have named; and I bear testimony that they too were inspired men, prophets of God, whose actions and teachings were in harmony with the lives of those with whom I have had personal acquaintance over the years.

And now we are blessed with the administration of President Joseph Fielding Smith and his counselors, Presidents Harold B. Lee and Nathan Eldon Tanner. I testify to you that they too are men whom the Lord loves, men called of God to preside over his church here upon the earth, prophets, seers, and revelators; and that great strides are being made in the work of proclaiming the gospel to the nations of the world and carrying out the Lord's program for his church in these the latter days.

In addition, I think of the brethren of the Twelve Apostles whom I have known intimately over these many years, many of whom have passed to