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## The Book of Mormon—A Divine Record

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**Abstract:** This article is a plea to study the Book of Mormon again and again, with the promise that the Lord has “greater things” to manifest if members of the Church will esteem the Book of Mormon.

when we say that he still reveals, but let us paraphrase the words of Paul for a moment. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God will do what he has promised to do? If time would permit we could take you through the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation and show the promises of God with respect to the latter days. Why should it be thought incredible not only that he would keep his promise but that he would continue to do what he has done through all the dispensations of the gospel from the beginning?

The Church of Jesus Christ was established and is now directed by revelation, and that fact is largely responsible for the appeal which this new Church makes, and when I say "new," I wish to emphasize that to us it is not new but a restoration of that which was. The true Church of Christ is not a blind alley, it is an open thoroughfare, where men may confidently pursue truth in the light of revelation. That the Church is progressive and responsive to revealed truth is evidenced by our further declaration that we believe that God will yet reveal many great and important things.

This Church, our friends, is not committed to any formal or inflexible creed, but its members are taught to believe in and live by the revelations of the past and present and thus prepare themselves for the revelations yet to come. Our concepts and even our faith must be held subject to new light. The present and urgent need for continued revelation in this age of communism, atheism, godlessness, the spirit of the anti-Christ becomes more apparent when we realize that revelation gives us our most conclusive proof that there is a Divine Being—and how the world needs to know of him!

In an age when hundreds of millions of people are being systematically indoctrinated with the abominable doc-

trines of communism which are that there is no God, religion is an opiate, Christ is a myth; surely in the midst of such determined, persistent, and relentless attacks from the enemy, we may expect from God our Father some direction, and for that direction we constantly pray.

But our message is this, our friends, God has spoken from the heavens; communication between heaven and earth is still possible; the lines are open! That is the challenging message of Mormonism, it is an ensign to the nations, a message of hope to an imperiled world. If we are to exercise saving faith and accompany it with works and, of course, "faith without works is dead," we must know something of him, of his existence, his personality, his laws, his purposes with respect to man, and realize that we are, in fact, his children, related to him. He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.)

We do not say that God is immaterial and incomprehensible and without a body. Rather we say he is approachable as our Father. Now, revelation may come through dreams or visions, the visitation of angels, or, on occasion such as with Moses, by face-to-face communication with the Lord. You remember the Lord spoke to Adam, not only while he was in the Garden of Eden, but after he was cast out. He spoke to other patriarchs and prophets through the ages. He spoke to Enoch, who was called "The Seventh from Adam," and it is said that he was translated because he was especially favored with the presence of the Lord. The record reads, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." (Genesis 5:24.)

The Lord by revelation warned Noah of the coming flood. He talked with Abraham and told him to leave his

country and go into a new land and gave him some promises with respect to his posterity. By revelation he commissioned Moses to go into Egypt, and under God's personal direction he released the children of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians.

So we may trace the line of revelators, men who have stood, each in his time, as the medium through whom God speaks to his people, from Moses to Joshua, through the Judges, on to David and Solomon and down to Zachariah and Malachi. Christ, himself, came to this world to reveal God to men, and he himself was led and directed by revelation from his Father while he dwelt on this earth.

The Lord, as you know, revealed to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, what was to happen, and you remember what happened to Zacharias because of his lack of belief. The Lord revealed to Mary that she was blessed among women, that she should bring forth a son and call his name Jesus. (Luke 1:28, 31.) Christ himself said: "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

"And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the father said unto me, so I speak." (John 12:49-50.)

The apostles in the Meridian of Time were in touch with the heavens by revelation. Note what Paul says:

"But God hath revealed them [divine truths] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10-11.)

You remember John, on the Isle of Patmos, wrote the book of Revelation,

## THE BOOK OF MORMON, A DIVINE RECORD

*President Joseph Fielding Smith of the Council of the Twelve*

I consider this a great honor and a privilege to stand before this vast body, mostly of men holding the priesthood,

to bear testimony unto them of my faith. I seek the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord in what I have to say.

During the past week or two I have received a number of letters from different parts of the United States written by people, some of whom at least are a little concerned because they have been approached by enemies of the Church and enemies of the Book of Mormon, who had made the statement that there have been one or two or more thousand changes in the Book of Mormon since the first edition was published. Well, of course, there is no truth in that

statement.

It is true that when the Book of Mormon was printed the printer was a man who was unfriendly. The publication of the book was done under adverse circumstances, and there were a few errors, mostly typographical—conditions that arise in most any book that is being published—but there was not one thing in the Book of Mormon or in the second edition or any other edition since that in any way contradicts the first edition, and such changes as were made, were made by the Prophet Joseph Smith because under those adverse conditions

and, incidentally, this is sometimes called the Apocalypse, and that means in Greek "revelation." This is what he wrote in the first chapter of his book—it was not written of his own wisdom:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him [speaking of himself], to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:" (Revelation 1:1.)

The scriptures, then, are not only replete with evidence, but conclusive in proving that God does and always has, whenever there has been a dispensation of the gospel upon the earth, been in touch with his people.

Remember Paul said this, and he is speaking now of our time:

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth; even in him: . . ." (Ephesians 1:10.)

From the scriptures cited and many others, it seems evident that revelation from God to man has been a vital characteristic, and standard procedure in all dispensations of the gospel. All the prophets and leaders of ancient times were led, directed, chosen, inspired by God himself through revelation.

Eusebius records what happened after the apostles had been slain and when no authoritative answers could be given. He writes, "When the sacred choir of apostles became extinct and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom had passed away, then also the combinations of impious error arose by the fraud and delusions of false teachers. These, as there were none of the apostles left, henceforth attempted without shame to preach their doctrine against the Gospel of truth."

And Mosheim reminds us that both

Jews and heathens were accustomed to a vast variety of pompous and magnificent ceremonies in their religious service. All the records of the second century mention the multiplication of rites and ceremonies in the Christian Church. "But," you ask, "were these the times that have been?" Some of you may say, "We can believe in revelation in Adam's day and in the days of Moses, in the days of Christ, in the days of the apostles, but not now."

Is there any indication that we might, with reason, expect some word from God? Hear John's testimony as he spoke of things that were to come in the latter days. He said:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him: for the hour of his judgment is come: . . ." (Revelation 14:6-7.)

That, my dear friends, is a prophetic promise of revelation in our time. The Church today is founded on the rock of revelation as securely as it was in the days of Peter when Christ said to him, after Peter had spoken of his knowledge of him,

". . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18.)

We think we are justified in anticipating future revelation, and we believe that it will be surpassing in importance and glorious fulness anything that has yet been revealed. We believe that he will continue to reveal himself as long as man continues his probation here on earth.

Now, you friends of ours probably ask, "What particular revelation is the one on which you found your Church?" Time will not permit, of course, a complete answer to that, but humbly, and

from the very center of my heart, I say to you, our friends, and to you members of the Church, God has restored the gospel of Jesus Christ and there was a great revelation, one of the greatest of all time, when the Father and the Son, anticipating our very day and the events of these times, appeared to a man. They were personal Beings; they were separate and distinct; they were in form like man, thus proving the first scripture in Genesis, "So God created man in his own image, . . ." (Gen. 1:27.) They spoke to him. Other revelations followed. The whole message of Mormonism centers around the life and mission of Jesus the Christ, and we proclaim to the world in contradiction to the hellish doctrine of communism, God does live. He still speaks to men. There are prophets on the earth.

If that statement is true, it is the greatest message that has come to this earth since Christ ascended into heaven because it is a message of his coming, and if it is true, all of you should know it. That it is true we humbly testify.

We ask you to listen, to read, to pray—ask God for guidance—and we promise you, paraphrasing the Prophet Moroni, that if you will ask of God in faith in the name of Jesus Christ, whether what we declare is true, he will reveal the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

We believe this is the message for which the world has been waiting. We declare it is the very truth of God, and for my own self I bear witness to that effect and say to you in humility, but without any equivocation, by the same power and authority with which Peter spoke, I say, with him, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16.) I know this to be true, and I plead with men everywhere to hearken; for it is a message from the heavens, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

the Book of Mormon was published. But there was no change of doctrine.

Now, these sons of Belial who circulate these reports evidently know better. I will not use the word that is in my mind. I started to read the Book of Mormon before I was old enough to be a deacon, and I have been reading it ever since, and I know that it is true. Every member of the Church ought to know that it is true, and we ought to be prepared with an answer to all of these critics who condemn it. They are laying themselves open to punishment when they come to the judgment,

and the Lord has said that such characters would arise. Moroni wrote about them, and the Lord answered him in regard to the critics that "fools mock, but they shall mourn." (Ether 12:26.)

We have been trying this year to get every man holding the priesthood, and our sisters too, to read the Book of Mormon during the year 1961—no matter how many times they may have read it before. It seems to me that any member of this Church would never be satisfied until he or she had read the Book of Mormon time and time again, and thoroughly considered it so that he

or she could bear witness that it is in very deed a record with the inspiration of the Almighty upon it, and that its history is true.

I can testify of that, for I know the Book of Mormon is true just as well as I know I am standing here in this building facing you.

So much for that. I want to address myself to the men holding the priesthood, particularly, and to their wives and to all other members of the Church. No member of this Church can stand approved in the presence of God who has not seriously and carefully read the

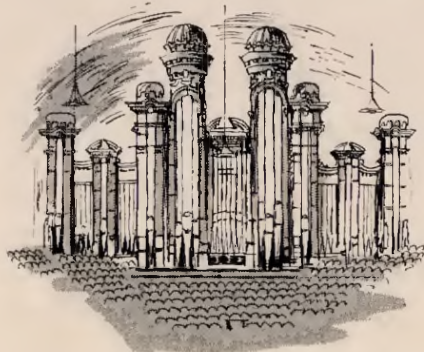
Book of Mormon, and I think I could add to that also, as far as our brethren are concerned, the Doctrine and Covenants.

We have besides the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, another record which is priceless, as these records are, that every member of this Church ought to have read, and which I fear many have not read. I have reference to the Pearl of Great Price. It seems to me that a member of this Church would not be able to rest in peace and comfort and have a clear conscience without having knowledge by study and by faith of the standard works of the Church. These records are priceless. The world mocks at them, but through their teachings we are permitted to come nearer unto God, get a better understanding of our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ, become closer acquainted with them and to know more in regard to the wonderful plan of salvation which they have given unto us and unto the world if it will receive the plan that will exalt us in the kingdom of God to become his sons and his daughters, receiving the fulness of that kingdom.

In closing this record, Moroni wrote these words: "And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto

you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?"

"I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.



"And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true.

"And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing." (Moroni 10:27-30.)

That is the counsel of Moroni as he closed his record, not only to the members of the Church, but to every soul unto whom this record comes. I want

to bear testimony to you, my good brethren here, and our sisters and to the members of the Church who listen in and to everyone else, that I know that the Book of Mormon is true; that Joseph Smith received it from the hand of God through an angel that was sent to reveal it, the same angel who, while living in this world, finished the record and sealed it up to come forth in this Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.

I would like to call your attention to one thing in the Book of Mormon. The Lord has promised us greater knowledge, greater understanding than we find in the Book of Mormon, when we are prepared to receive it. When the brother of Jared went upon the mount to have the Lord touch stones to give them light to light their way across the great ocean, the Lord revealed to him the history of this world from the beginning of it to the end. We do not have it.

I am going to read one or two passages of scripture from the Book of Mormon in relation to that matter.

"And he" (that is, Christ) "did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory—yea, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth, even until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away; . . ." (3 Nephi 26:3.)

**Friday Morning Session,  
September 29, 1961**

## DESIGN FOR LIVING

**ElRay L. Christiansen**  
*Assistant to the Council of the Twelve*

With you, my brothers and sisters, I have been deeply moved by the message of President McKay this morning—so timely, so fitting, so true! He is, indeed, the prophet of God in this day. To this I testify! I know also that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that through the restoration of the gospel he has given a divine plan for living which will help all of us who adhere to it to avoid the pitfalls and the sorrows that will surely come if we depart therefrom. If ever there were a day in the world when the gospel of Jesus

Christ is needed, it is today! It is needed to give us fortitude and direction.

The gospel is more than something just to talk about, however. It is a design for living, for successful living, for happy living. It calls for deeds, action, and proper conduct on the part of each and all of us. Its principles are not limited to the payment of tithing, the Word of Wisdom, keeping holy the Sabbath day—they are part of the gospel, of course, and are very important, but the gospel embraces *all* truth and the application of *all* virtues. "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men. . . . If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things." (Thirteenth Article of Faith.)

The principles enunciated in that Article of Faith are designed to help us to become more refined, more reliable, more peaceable, more Christlike.

One of the virtues mentioned is benevolence, which is the disposition to do good, to be kind, to be charitable to others. Among the beautiful princi-

ples taught the multitude by Jesus upon the mountain was this: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: . . ." (Matt. 7:12.) This is often referred to as the Golden Rule. It is another version of the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Mark 12:31.)

Laws, rules, regulations are designed to give society a more safe and a more orderly way of living. But it is understandable that even though we have innumerable laws, both civil and ecclesiastical, to direct us, laws cannot be made to cover each specific act or each transaction that we make. For this reason we must develop a conscience attuned to the will of the Lord. We must develop a feeling of obligation to do what is right. We must countenance no subterfuge, no evasiveness. When correct laws are not written to guide us, we must conduct ourselves by correct principles, by high standards of personal ethics.

To illustrate: An opportunist, knowing that he was protected by the letter

All of that was written and given to the Nephites. We do not have that record, and the Lord said this—which is concerning us particularly—and Mormon wrote it:

"And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.

"And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.

"And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation." (*Ibid.*, 26:8-10.)

I say that when the brother of Jared went on the mount, the Lord revealed the history of this earth to him from the beginning to the end thereof, but we do not have it. But when the Nephites became righteous, after the visit of the Son of God, the Lord revealed that record to them, and then when they began to fall away, he took the record away again and hid it up. Here is what the Lord says about it.

"And after Christ truly had showed himself unto his people, he commanded

that they should be made manifest." (That is, the full record.)

"And now, after that, they have all dwindled in unbelief; and there is none save it be the Lamanites, and they have rejected the gospel of Christ; therefore I am commanded that I should hide them up again in the earth." (Ether 4:2-3.)

For the sake of time I will skip a little and say that the Lord has promised that we can have that hidden record when we are prepared to receive it. I will read it.

"For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.

"And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are." (*Ibid.*, 4:6-7.)

Now the Lord has placed us on probation as members of the Church. He has given us the Book of Mormon, which is the lesser part, to build up our faith through our obedience to the counsels which it contains, and when we our-

selves, members of the Church, are willing to keep the commandments as they have been given to us and show our faith as the Nephites did for a short period of time, then the Lord is ready to bring forth the other record and give it to us, but we are not ready now to receive it. Why? Because we have not lived up to the requirements in this probationary state in the reading of the record which had been given to us and in following its counsels.

Brethren, teach the men who hold the priesthood in their quorums. Teach the members of the Church in their meetings, and also when you visit them in their homes as ward teachers. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, teach them to read and study in faith and prayer the revelations the Lord has given us that we may not be deceived and led astray by false teachers.

We have false teachers among us. We have apostates among us who are endeavoring to tear down and destroy the kingdom of God, and they are disturbing a great many members of the Church. Why? Because they haven't the faith nor the background in knowledge to resist these false teachers and their false doctrines.

Let me plead with the membership of this Church for humility, for faith, for more prayer, more study, more love in their hearts for God their Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

of the law, was led to exploit and take advantage of a widow who was not versed in the law and by clever maneuvering caused her to lose her property and her savings while technically he was within the law. He was led to do this unjust deed because he was not sensitive to correct principles or the desire to do good. Rather he was motivated by a desire for personal gain even at the expense of another.

In the Bible we read: "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: . . ." (Lev. 19:13.)

In contrast to this selfish exploitation, consider the report that was given in the Relief Society conference held earlier this week. With the desire to do good—224,000 hours were spent in compassionate service; 775,000 hours spent by these sisters in welfare service, doing good unto their neighbors.

True greatness and integrity are found together in men. Great minds are motivated by self-sacrifice, not by self-seeking. Strong men have the moral courage to choose the right above economic advantage, even though it may

be within the letter of the law for them to do otherwise.

" . . . whatsoever ye would that men



should do to you, do ye even so to them." (Matt. 7:12.)

Now, to what degree is this principle being applied in your life and in mine? Do we take all that we can get for a commodity or for a service, or do we

accept a reasonable and fair return?

When I was a youth, I was greatly impressed by the honor and fairness of a man in the community who offered for sale his hay at a certain price a ton. When others told him that because of scarcity he could obtain a higher price for the hay, he replied, "I know, I know. But if I were buying the hay I would not want to pay more than the price I have set, so why should I require my neighbor to pay more?"

True religion is the activated love of God and of neighbor. It is based on good deeds, not good intentions, not merely good words.

The Article of Faith that I have referred to states: "We believe in being true," which means that we are true to a trust, we can be relied upon, we are upright in our dealings.

Some years ago I arranged with a fine man to purchase a building lot in Logan. It was a choice lot in a choice place, the only lot left in the area. The price was agreed upon, and I offered some earnest money, so-called, to bind the agreement until the deed was prepared, but the owner said, "In my dealings, I never