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A Marvelous Work

Author(s): John Longden

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Abstract: This article states that faithful men and women all over the world bear witness of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. The message can be spread throughout the world through Church members. Two stories, one of a Methodist minister and another of a young Baptist, reveal the value of this concept

and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

"And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

"And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." (*Ibid.*, 6:4, 6-9.)

"Search the scriptures," (John 5:39) said Jesus to his carping critics, who, being surfeited with the things of this world, rejected him. In the scriptures they could, if they would, learn the truth about him and the things of eternal life which he taught them.

The Psalmist thus recounts the rewards which follow knowing and meditating upon the word of God:

"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: . . .

"I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

"I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

"I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

"Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:97-105.)

I am persuaded, my brethren and sisters, that it is irrational to hope to escape the lusts of the world without substituting for them as the subjects of our thoughts the things of the spirit, and I know that the things of the spirit are taught with mighty power in the Book of Mormon. I believe with all my heart, for example, that if our young people could come out of our homes thoroughly acquainted with the life of Nephi, imbued with the spirit of his courage and love of truth, they would choose the right when a choice is placed before them.

How marvelous it would be if, when they must make a decision, there would flash into their minds, from long and intimate association with them, the words of Nephi: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them." (1 Nephi 3:7.)

And if, when the going gets rough and temptation to abandon the course of righteousness presses upon them, they would think of his plea to his wayward brothers: ". . . let us be faithful in keep-

ing the commandments of the Lord for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?" (*Ibid.*, 3:15 4:1.)

If our young folks are traditioned in the teachings of the Book of Mormon, they will not only be inspired with righteous courage to choose the right by the example of Nephi, the "two thousand sons of Helaman," and other great characters of the book, they will also be so schooled in the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ that they will know what is right.

From almost every page of the book, there will come to them a moving testimony that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of the Living God, our Redeemer and Savior. This witness alone will be a sustaining anchor in every storm. In the Book of Mormon, they will find the plainest explanation of Christ's divine mission and atonement to be found anywhere in sacred writ.

They will be familiar with the great fundamental basic virtues; the Book of Mormon is full of instructions concerning them. They will have learned that ". . . to be carnally-minded is death, and to be spiritually-minded is life eternal" (2 Nephi 9:39), that the Lord God delights in chastity and virtue which are ". . . most dear and precious above all things, . . ." (Jacob 2:28, Moroni 9:9.) They will know that a violation of this sacred principle is, in the sight of the Lord, an ". . . abomination . . . above all sins save it be the shedding of innocent blood or denying the Holy Ghost." (Alma 39:5.)

They will have learned the folly of putting their trust in the learning of men or in the riches of this world (2 Nephi 9:28-30.) As a matter of fact, there is no fundamental virtue about which they will not be taught, for in the Book of Mormon, as has already been said, is to be found "the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ." (D&C 19:26; 20:9.)

And so, I counsel you, my beloved brothers and sisters and friends everywhere, to make reading in the Book of Mormon a few minutes each day a life-long practice. All of us need continuing close contact with the Spirit of the Lord. We need to take the Holy Spirit for our guide that we be not deceived. I am persuaded by my own experience and that of my loved ones, as well as by the statement of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that one can get and keep closer to the Lord by reading the Book of Mormon than by reading any other book. Don't be content with what someone else says about what is in it. Drink deeply from the divine fountain itself.

I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who

dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase, mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to that counsel. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness.

That we will seek these blessings through reading the Book of Mormon, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.



A MARVELOUS WORK

John Longden

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

"Now behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men.

"Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day.

"Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work;

"For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;

"And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

"Remember faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence.

"Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen." (D&C 4.)

This is one of my favorite scriptures.

I have noted that many of the speakers during this conference have called attention to the revelations of the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith. This one was received fourteen months before the Church was organized, for it was recorded in February of 1829. What a great declaration to make to the world! Joseph Smith knew there had been spiritual darkness, and it was revealed to him that a marvelous work was to come forth—not a marvelous thing—you will note that the word “work” is used. I am thankful for that word—that four-letter word “work.” This is a Church of faith and works.

Reference has been made to another revelation bearing on the subject of the restoration of the gospel, the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Proclamation of warning and commandment to the Church and to the inhabitants of the earth at large—The authority of the Priesthood in this dispensation attested—Second advent of the Lord Jesus Christ foretold—Authenticity of the Book of Mormon affirmed.”

This revelation was given November of 1831 after the Church had been organized and set up, as we learned today from President David O. McKay.

Yes, a marvelous work has taken place, and the authority of the priesthood in this dispensation has been attested. It was humbling to hear Brother Lee speak of the little town in which I was born which is now part of a stake of Zion. I recall being told of the missionaries calling in this town at the home of my parents, sixty-four years ago. Elder Mark Austin was one, willing to leave his home here and the comforts and conveniences to carry this glorious message—this marvelous work—to affirm the authenticity of the Book of Mormon to the people of that land.

There was another missionary who had an influence in the lives of my parents—a Methodist minister, who was their neighbor. He told a group at one time that he was coming over to America to convert the Mormons, and he paid his own expenses to try to do that. He became acquainted with Elder James Paxman, with whom I had the opportunity to be associated on the high council of the Highland Stake. Elder Paxman was the patriarch of that stake. Before coming to Salt Lake City he had lived in Nephi, Utah.

This Methodist minister some way got to Nephi, where he had several gospel conversations with James Paxman and one or two others. He was heard to make the statement, “It will be a cold day when I join the Mormon Church”—and it was! It was a day in January in Nephi, Utah. They had to break the ice to baptize him. Why? Because he had received a witness. He had received the light of the glorious gospel which banished darkness and untruth and half truths. The authenticity of the Book of Mormon had been affirmed to him.

Then he was unashamed after he received that affirmation and witness to be baptized and have hands laid upon his head to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. He was unashamed to return to England where he assisted Elder Mark Austin in the conversion—or in teaching the gospel—to my parents that they might convert themselves.

A marvelous work has come forth. In years gone by we have been on the defensive because Satan has done everything in his power to thwart the work of the Lord. We are still on the defensive for he is still endeavoring to weaken the faith and testimony of those whose lives have been touched by the gospel. If we continue working at building faith and testimony, he will not have power over this work. This is evidenced by the number of stakes that have been established in spite of his buffetings—294 stakes, some 2400 wards, over 300 branches, in the stakes of Zion; fifty-one missions and the many branches and districts contained therein.

In all parts of the Church we have many men who are anxious and willing to bear witness to this marvelous work, that it is the work of the Lord, not a thing of man. It was deeply stirring to listen to the reports of forty-two mission presidents in the temple a week ago Tuesday—men from all vocations, willing to serve the Lord, to be shepherds, if you please, of your sons and daughters, all of whom are united in the desire to serve God, to thrust in their sickle that the inhabitants of the earth might be warned, the authority of the priesthood attested, and the authenticity of the Book of Mormon affirmed. The faithfulness of these fine men and women who are bringing to pass the fulfillment of latter-day revelation is most heart-warming. I do not underestimate what has been accomplished in the past—in fact, I salute the leaders through the years—since Joseph Smith made his declaration, “a marvelous work is about to come forth,” but I recognize too that today there is just as much faith and devotion in the children of God who are willing to serve and to spread these glorious truths and to build up his kingdom.

Just six months ago last Sunday night—the Sunday night of general conference in October—it was our privilege to be invited to Tooele to attend a mis-

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Reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body. As by the one, health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated; by the other, virtue, which is the health of the mind, is kept alive, cherished, and conformed.

—Joseph Addison, *The Tattler*,
No. 147

sionary farewell. It was a rich experience. I learned that a faithful son from out there had been called into the service by Uncle Sam after filling his mission for the Church. He became acquainted with a young man from Kansas who was a staunch Baptist. This young man had an inquiring mind. He was also observant, and he was willing to listen and learn. Several Latter-day Saint servicemen taught him the gospel. He received a conviction of its truth and was baptized. He and this young man from Tooele decided they would send some of their earnings from their Army pay each month back home to a missionary fund, to help support some missionary. After they were released they learned that this money had been untouched, and the idea came to them that this converted Baptist might go into the mission field to share with others the joy that had come into his life, so he accepted a call to serve as a missionary.

I shall always remember the testimony that he bore that night at his farewell. As he looked down into the congregation and saw there many young people with whom he had been affiliated while in the service of his country, some of them now married, one or two with babes in arms, he said, “I am thankful tonight that I had the opportunity of meeting with you and learning of these glorious truths, but more important, I want to testify to you that had you kicked over the traces just once, I would not be here tonight.” They had preached the gospel by their actions as well as by their words!

Do we fully appreciate the influence that we have in the lives of others? It surely was called to my attention as I listened to his witness and testimony. We must continually work at being Latter-day Saints.

I bear you my witness that a marvelous work truly has come forth. There is nothing like it in the world. It is the pattern for living. The Lord has given us a safeguard, the authority of the priesthood. We may know of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon if we will but study its contents. We have the power of the Holy Ghost which will guide into further light and truth and knowledge. I humbly pray that we will constantly recognize the importance of this marvelous work and wonder and will ever be found furthering it, teaching it, living it, that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven, and his Son, Jesus Christ. I bear witness that they live, that Joseph Smith was and is a Prophet of God, as are those who have succeeded him down to President David O. McKay today.

May God bless us with the desire and spirit to do, to accomplish, with an eye single to his glory, I humbly pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.