



Type: Magazine Article

The Book of Mormon—A Latter-day Missionary of the Restored Gospel

Author(s): Lucy Mack Smith and James Patrick McEwan

Source: *The Instructor*, Vol. 94, No. 8 (August 1959), pp. 254-255

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

Abstract: Lucy Mack Smith relates the conversion of Mrs. and Rev. John P. Greene, Phineas Young, Brigham Young, Mrs. Murray, and the wife of Heber C. Kimball through a single copy of the Book of Mormon left with Rev. Greene. James Patrick McEwan relates his conversion to the Book of Mormon.

THE BOOK OF MORMON — *a Latter-day*

It Began Its Journey in 1830

Editor's Note: In his *Articles of Faith*, James E. Talmage lists five criteria on which Latter-day Saints base their belief in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. He adds, however, that "there is promised a surer and a more effectual means of ascertaining the truth or falsity of this volume."¹ This promise comes through Moroni within the book itself:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things. (*Moroni 10:4, 5.*)

Through prayer, many people, including President Brigham Young, have realized the truth contained in the Book of Mormon. This story will supplement the validity of that promise.

ON the thirtieth of June, Samuel started on the mission to which he had been set apart by Joseph, . . . He stopped at a number of places in order to sell his books; but he was turned out of doors as soon as he declared his principles. When evening came on, he was faint and almost discouraged; . . . Seeing an apple tree a short distance from the road, he concluded to pass the night under it. Here he lay all night upon the cold, damp ground.

In the morning he arose from his comfortless bed, . . . and proceeded to Bloomington, which was eight miles farther. Here he stopped at the house of John P. Greene, who was a Methodist preacher and was at that time about to start on a preaching mission. He, like the others, did not wish to make a purchase of what he considered at that time to be a nonsensical fable. However, he said that he would take a subscription paper, and if he found anyone on his route who was disposed to purchase, he would take his name. In two weeks Samuel might call again, and he would let him know what the prospect was of selling. After making this arrangement, Samuel left one of his books with him and returned home.

. . . After relating to us the success he [Samuel] had met with at Canandaigua, he gave us an account of his third mission to Livonia:

When I arrived at Mr. Greene's, Mrs. Greene informed me that her husband was absent from home, that there

was no prospect of selling my books; and even the one which I had left with them, she expected I would have to take away, as Mr. Greene had no disposition to purchase it, although she had read it herself and was much pleased with it. I then talked with her a short time, and, binding my knapsack upon my shoulders, rose to depart; but as I bade her farewell, it was impressed upon my mind to leave the book with her. I made her a present of it and told her that the Spirit forbade me taking it away. She burst into tears and requested me to pray with her. I did so and afterwards explained to her the most profitable manner of reading the book which I had left with her; which was to ask God when she read it for a testimony of the truth of what she had read, and she would receive the Spirit of God, which would enable her to discern the things of God. I then left her and returned home.

I shall now turn aside from my narrative and give a history of the above book. When Mr. Greene returned home, his wife requested him to read it, informing him very particularly with regard to what Samuel had said to her relative to obtaining a testimony of the truth of it. This he, for a while, refused to do, but finally yielded to her persuasions and took the book and commenced perusing the same, calling upon God for the testimony of His Spirit, the result of which was that he and Mrs. Greene were in a short time baptized.

They gave the book to Phineas Young, Mrs. Greene's brother, who read it and commenced preaching it forthwith. It was next handed to Brigham Young; and from him to Mrs. Murray, his sister, who is also the mother of Heber C. Kimball's wife. They all received the work without hesitancy and rejoiced in the truth thereof. Joseph Young was at this time in Canada preaching the Methodist doctrine; but as soon as Brigham became convinced of the truth of the Gospel as contained in the Book of Mormon, he went straightway to his brother, Joseph, and persuaded him to cease preaching Methodism and embrace the truth as set forth in the Book of Mormon which he carried with him.

Thus was this book the means of convincing this whole family and bringing them into the Church where they have continued faithful members from the commencement of their career until now. And through their faithfulness and zeal, some of them have become as great and honorable men as ever stood upon the earth.²

—Lucy Mack Smith,
Mother of the Prophet.

¹For Course 19, lesson of October 4, "The Book of Mormon—Modern Discoveries"; and for Course 7, lesson of October 18, "The Book of Mormon—the Word of the Lord."

²Talmage, James E., *Articles of Faith*, 1925 edition; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; pages 273, 274; 293.

³Reprinted by permission from *History of the Prophet Joseph*, by His Mother, Lucy Smith, as published in *The Improvement Era*, Vol. 5, Part 2, 1902; pages 497-499; 571, 572.

Missionary of the Restored Gospel*

It Circles the World Today

I HAVE been criticized and ridiculed because I have discarded my former religion and now believe most emphatically in the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly called the Mormon Church. After much consideration and thought, I have decided to write down for the benefit and help of others why and how I made my decision. Let me begin by explaining who I am.

I am the second eldest of a very poor, struggling family — a family so poor that I was put away when very young in a church orphanage because my people could not afford to keep me themselves. At the tender age of 6, without a “by-your-leave” or any understanding of what it was all about, I was baptized there. Being so placed, I was clothed and given a fairly good education, as education goes; but the worst experience was being forced to study religion. After being asked questions about it and giving the wrong answers at times, I received the full force of the belt and quickly learned how to give the *right* answers. Imagine the terror created in my young mind through this applied force. Instead of finding love and peace in religion, I grew bitter.

From the orphanage I graduated to the not-so-tender care of the child welfare — from there to Borstal — thence to prison! This is not a pretty picture to paint of anybody's life. It is not a life that developed from a good, happy, loving family or home, but a life built from bitterness and terror and disappointment . . .

What was religion to me through all these years? Well, it was “Nothing” with a capital “N.” In fact, I scoffed at anyone who mentioned God or religion. To me religion was a manufactured dream fit only for those who wanted to live their lives in a stupor or trance. I would not have read a Bible nor anything of a religious nature. If there was a Saviour, why had He let me live my life in the way it had been lived! But little did I know of the devious ways in which the Lord works and what lay ahead of me in the very near future.

Yes, here I was behind bars, and yet I had the opportunity of receiving the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter who or where you are, the Lord is seeking you; and you can come. I had this experience, and now I proclaim it to the world. Truth and a new life are mine through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, all because of an interest in the Book of Mormon.

It was marvelous the way in which I was first introduced to this book — it was given to me by accident among a bundle of American paper-back magazines.

I picked it up and idly thumbed through it — then began to read. Page by page I read, finding each paragraph and chapter more engrossing than the last. I became so absorbed in it that I requested a Bible to follow and compare statements, facts and figures. I, who could never before understand the Bible, found that understanding came easily now. It was marvelous the change that occurred in me. I was so moved by what I read that I inquired for more of these works to catch up on my life of alienation from the Lord.

My “conversion” was not a “fly-by-night” experience. For many months now I have delved into the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to such an extent that, though I am still in prison, I have requested permission to be baptized into this, the true Church.

I have also had the wonderful help of Elder Snow, Elder Anderson and Elder Moody, who have given up their valuable time to visit with me. Through these and other elders, I have received much information of the word of God and many books that to me are priceless.

This is the testimony that I give from the very core of my being: I was, not so long ago, a man who believed in no Church nor creed, who was ignorant of the very word “religion.” Now I am different. I honestly believe that my past experiences were meant to be, so that I would be able to help others in like circumstances who are losing their grasp on the “iron rod.” I would like to steer them away from the pits of darkness into the light of love and truth and the glory of God, for this is living in the Lord's way.

This Book of Mormon which was so instrumental in my gaining a testimony could not have been written by even a professor of religion; yet a man who lacked in education, as we know education today, could do this thing. I look at myself and ask the question, “Could I write a book comparable to this?” And in all truth my answer must be in the negative.

I believe that through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the one and only true Church of our Lord, Jesus Christ, has been restored to the earth in its fullness. This is my testimony to all: the Gospel is true! Through study and prayer in my cell at the prison I have received a knowledge of this; and that through repentance, baptism, keeping God's commandments and enduring to the end, even I have an opportunity to enter God's kingdom. Yes, I'm not serving time here — *my time is serving me!*¹

—James Patrick McEwan.

¹Reprinted by permission from *Te Karere* (New Zealand Mission magazine), Vol. 53: No. 5, May, 1959; pages 190, 191.