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“THE MOST CORRECT BOOK”:  
JOSEPH SMITH’S APPRAISAL

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On November 28, 1841, the Prophet Joseph Smith met with the Nauvoo City Council and members of the Quorum of the Twelve in the home of President Brigham Young. *History of the Church* records that he conversed “with them upon a variety of subjects. Brother Joseph Fielding was present, having been absent four years on a mission to England.”<sup>1</sup> It was in that setting, at the Sunday city council meeting in the Youngs’ residence, that Joseph Smith made what has come to be one of the most axiomatic and memorable statements in Mormon literature: “I told the brethren,” he said, “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.”<sup>2</sup> In what follows, we will consider the possible meaning and implications of the various parts of this rather bold declaration about this extrabiblical document. We will consider the nature of the Book of Mormon’s correctness, how it is the keystone, the precepts it contains, the poignancy of those precepts, its importance

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to the world, and finally, its prophetic destiny as a book of holy scripture.

### "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK"

How is it that the Book of Mormon is correct—in fact, the *most* correct of any book? In Joseph Smith's day the adjective *correct* was understood to mean "set right, or made straight," "conformable to truth, rectitude or propriety, or conformable to a just standard; not faulty; free from error." Likewise, to correct something was "to amend" or to "bring back or attempt to bring back to propriety in morals," to "obviate or remove whatever is wrong," or to "counteract whatever is injurious."<sup>3</sup> In our day we would say that something is correct if it is "free from error; accurate; in accordance with fact, truth, or reason."<sup>4</sup> In the action sense of the word, the Book of Mormon was given to us to set things straight, to make things right, to bring our thinking into conformity with truth, to see things as they really are (see Jacob 4:13; D&C 93:24), to bring back or restore to propriety, and to counteract ideas or teachings or practices that are harmful.

Nephi beheld in vision that after plain and precious truths had been taken away or kept back from the Bible and the gospel, the Lord would bring forth the Book of Mormon and "other books" (1 Nephi 13:39). "And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation . . . unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of [Nephi's] brethren, and also the Jews . . . that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true" (vv. 36, 39). In short, the Restoration scriptures "shall establish the truth of the first" and "shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them [the Bible]; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved" (v. 40).

We are all acquainted with Ezekiel's grand prophecy that the stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim would become one in the hand of Jehovah, a prophecy that was a poignant symbol of the ultimate gathering and uniting of the two formerly estranged nations (see Ezekiel 37:15–22). We learn from a lengthy prophecy of Joseph who was sold

## "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 57

into Egypt these words from Jehovah, words later excerpted by Lehi in counseling his young son Joseph: "The fruit of thy loins shall write [the Book of Mormon]; and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write [the Bible]; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together." And why would they grow together? For the purpose of "the confounding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord" (2 Nephi 3:12; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:31).

I believe the Bible to be the word of God and a marvelous witness of the Almighty's love and tender mercies; of His eagerness to bless and prosper those who put their trust in Him; and of the central, saving significance of the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. I love the Bible, especially the New Testament, for the manner in which it beckons me to submit to the divine will and surrender my hopes and dreams to Him who can do far more with my life than I can. I believe with all my heart that the Bible is meant to be read and pondered and memorized and applied by the Latter-day Saints and by all of God's children. Having affirmed my love for the Bible, I hasten to add, that as the Book of Mormon teaches, I do not believe it has come down to us in its pristine purity as it was written by the original authors.<sup>5</sup> This perspective does not, however, weaken my faith in its essential and central messages. Instead, it makes me that much more grateful for the scriptures of the Restoration that strive to prove "to the world that the holy scriptures are true" (D&C 20:11).

Why work so hard to prove the truthfulness of the Bible? Simply because a growing percentage of people in our world have begun to discount, belittle, or deny those elements of holy scripture that make the scriptures matter—divine intervention, miracles, and prophecy. And because the "quest for the historical Jesus" has retrogressed to the point of an outright rejection of our Lord's divinity and His bodily Resurrection from the dead on the part of people who still desire to be known as Christians. In 1966 Elder Gordon B. Hinckley said: "Modern theologians strip [Jesus] of his divinity and then wonder why men do

not worship him. These clever scholars have taken from Jesus the mantle of godhood and have left only a man. They have tried to accommodate him to their own narrow thinking. They have robbed him of his divine sonship and taken from the world its rightful King.”<sup>6</sup> Some five years later, President Harold B. Lee explained to a group of students at Utah State University: “Fifty years ago or more, there were the unmistakable evidences that there was coming into the religious world actually a question about the Bible and about the divine calling of the Master himself. Now, fifty years later [this was in 1971], our greatest responsibility and anxiety is to defend the divine mission of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, for all about us, even among those who claim to be professors of the Christian faith, are those not willing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God.”<sup>7</sup>

From my perspective (and I quickly acknowledge my bias), the Book of Mormon is the most correct of any book on earth because of the undiluted and penetrating message it presents—the way it establishes in no uncertain terms “that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them” (D&C 20:17); the way it highlights the nature of fallen humanity; the way it focuses repeatedly upon man’s utter inability to forgive or cleanse or resurrect or save himself; the way it places Jesus Christ on center stage and testifies of the infinite and eternal scope of His atoning sacrifice. In the Book of Mormon, Christ is the Lord God Omnipotent, who saves “not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy prophets, . . . as well as those who should come after” (D&C 20:26–27). For me the Book of Mormon is the most correct book on earth because it teaches us who God is, what the Godhead is, how they are infinitely more one than they are separate, and how the love and unity between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is of such magnitude that the Nephite record speaks of them several times simply as “one God, without end” (2 Nephi 31:21; see also D&C 20:28; Alma 11:44; 3 Nephi 9:15; 11:27, 36; 28:10; Mormon 7:7). I believe the Book of Mormon is the most

## "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 59

correct book because it presents with consistent clarity the delicate balance between the mercy and grace of our Lord and God and the works of righteousness that must always characterize and identify true disciples of the Master (see 2 Nephi 2:2–8; 25:23; 31:19; Alma 22:14; Helaman 14:13; Moroni 6:4).

I believe the Book of Mormon to be the most correct scriptural book because it assists us in spanning the Testaments and consequently spanning the chasm that many feel exists between the God of the Old and the God of the New Testament. "I make my own heartfelt declaration of God, our Eternal Father, this morning," Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated, "because some in the contemporary world suffer from a distressing misconception of Him. Among these there is a tendency to feel distant from the Father, even estranged from Him, if they believe in Him at all. And if they do believe, many moderns say they might feel comfortable in the arms of Jesus, but they are uneasy contemplating the stern encounter of God."

Elder Holland further observed that "one of the remarkable contributions of the Book of Mormon is its seamless, perfectly consistent view of divinity throughout that majestic book. Here there is no Malachi-to-Matthew gap, no pause while we shift theological gears, no misreading the God who is urgently, lovingly, faithfully at work on every page of that record from its Old Testament beginning to its New Testament end. Yes, in an effort to give the world back its Bible and a correct view of Deity with it, what we have in the Book of Mormon is a uniform view of God in all His glory and goodness, all His richness and complexity—including and especially as again demonstrated through a personal appearance of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ."

Finally, Elder Holland pointed out that "Jesus did not come to improve God's view of man nearly so much as He came to improve man's view of God and to plead with them to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them. The plan of God, the power of God, the holiness of God, yes, even the anger and the judgment of God they had occasion to understand. But the love of God, the profound depth of His devotion to His children, they still did not fully know—until Christ came."<sup>8</sup>

Our belief as Latter-day Saints in the supreme correctness of this other testament of Jesus Christ is neither a denunciation nor a denial of the Bible, not a statement that the former is wholly correct and the latter is wholly incorrect. Moroni himself acknowledged that the Book of Mormon may contain human error (see title page; Mormon 8:17). The very fact that we study and teach the Bible in our own homes and in the meetings of the Church, general and local, is statement enough that we treasure its content and seek to conform our lives with its timeless counsel.

### THE KEYSTONE

Let us now examine the Prophet Joseph's characterization of the Book of Mormon as the keystone of our religion. Elder Holland explained, "A keystone is positioned at the uppermost center of an arch in such a way as to hold all the other stones in place. That key piece, if removed, will bring all of the other blocks crashing down with it."<sup>9</sup> What does this mean in regard to the Book of Mormon? President Ezra Taft Benson explained that the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our witness of Christ, the keystone of our doctrine, and the keystone of our testimony.<sup>10</sup> He taught:

The Book of Mormon is the keystone in our witness of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the cornerstone of everything we do. It bears witness of His reality with power and clarity. Unlike the Bible, which passed through generations of copyists, translators, and corrupt religionists who tampered with the text, the Book of Mormon came from writer to reader in just one inspired step of translation. Therefore, its testimony of the Master is clear, undiluted, and full of power. But it does even more. Much of the Christian world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches in plain and unmistakable terms about the truth of all of those. It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement.<sup>11</sup>

## "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 61

Regarding the Book of Mormon as the keystone of our doctrine, President Benson reminded us that it contains what the scriptures call "the fulness of the gospel" (D&C 20:9; see also D&C 27:5; 42:12; 135:3). It is not the case that this scriptural record contains the fullness of Latter-day Saint doctrines, for there is no mention in the Book of Mormon of such matters as eternal marriage, the three degrees of glory, or the corporeality of God. The Book of Mormon is what it is and teaches what it teaches. It contains the fullness of the gospel in the sense that it declares and elevates the core verity of salvation in Christ—including the good news or glad tidings of the Atonement (see 3 Nephi 27:13–14), as well as the means by which we incorporate the Atonement through the first principles and ordinances (see 2 Nephi 31; 3 Nephi 27:15–21). In short, "in the Book of Mormon we will find the fullness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation. The Book of Mormon offers so much," President Benson continued, "that broadens our understandings of the doctrines of salvation. Without it, much of what is taught in other scriptures would not be nearly so plain and precious."<sup>12</sup>

Simply stated, if either the origins or the message of the book is false, the whole religious system that is built upon and flows from the book, including our individual and collective testimonies of the Restoration, is false, misleading, and thus spiritually destructive. "The enemies of the Church understand this clearly," President Benson noted. "This is why they go to such great lengths to try to disprove the Book of Mormon, for if it can be discredited, the Prophet Joseph Smith goes with it. So does our claim to priesthood keys, and revelation, and the restored Church."<sup>13</sup> Elder Holland likewise has written: "To consider that everything of saving significance in the Church stands or falls on the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and, by implication, the Prophet Joseph Smith's account of how it came forth is as sobering as it is true. It is a 'sudden-death' proposition. Either the Book of Mormon is what the Prophet Joseph said it is, or this Church and its founder are false, a deception from the first instance onward."

"Not everything in life is so black and white," Elder Holland went on to say, "but the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and its keystone

role in our religion seem to be exactly that.”<sup>14</sup> If Moroni did not truly appear to the seventeen-year-old Joseph Smith Jr. on September 21, 1823; if Joseph and the witnesses did not handle tangible metal plates with the appearance of gold; if Joseph and his scribes did not translate the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God through the Urim and Thummim, Joseph “would not be entitled to the reputation of New England folk hero or well-meaning young man or writer of remarkable fiction. No, nor would he be entitled to be considered a great teacher, a quintessential American religious leader, or the creator of great devotional literature. If he had lied about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, he would certainly be none of these.”

“I am suggesting,” Elder Holland stated soberly, “that one has to take something of a do-or-die stand regarding the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the divine origins of the Book of Mormon. Reason and righteousness require it. Joseph Smith must be accepted either as a prophet of God or else as a charlatan of the first order, but no one should tolerate any ludicrous, even laughable middle ground about the wonderful contours of a young boy’s imagination or his remarkable facility for turning a literary phrase. That is an unacceptable position to take—morally, literarily, historically, or theologically.”<sup>15</sup>

### OBEDIENCE TO ITS PRECEPTS

A *precept* is a command, a mandate, an order pertaining to proper behavior.<sup>16</sup> It is “a general instruction or rule for action, a maxim, *esp.* an injunction regarding moral conduct.”<sup>17</sup> Joseph Smith’s statement avers that a person will draw nearer to God by abiding by the precepts of the Book of Mormon than by any other book. It would seem that attending scrupulously to and abiding by the ever-present “and thus we see” or “and thus we can plainly discern” statements would be a significant part of our obedience. These appear to be Mormon’s means of stating to the reader: “In case you didn’t get the point of this story or that episode or this tragedy or that happy ending, let me make it clear by formulating it into a maxim or a memorable saying. It is something that should not be ignored or forgotten.”

Precepts could obviously take the form of “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not,” warnings against violating the Ten Commandments, as well



## "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 63

as such sins as pride, greed, immorality, arrogance, indifference, profanity, rebellion, and failure to remember. On the positive side, there are precepts that invite us to give mind and heart to transcendent truths—liberating and lasting lessons. These demand an explanation that is reasonable. Where did they come from? Who wrote them? Was Joseph Smith really that bright, that articulate, that eloquent, that polished in his presentation of sacred truths? Someone noted to me recently that it takes too much faith to be an atheist. I agree wholeheartedly. I am persuaded—setting aside the living witness I have within my mind and heart of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon—that it is much easier to believe in angels and golden plates and seer stones than some of the ridiculous explanations that critics of the book offer. “If Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Mormon as a work of ancient origin,” Elder Holland has written, “then I would move heaven and earth to meet the ‘real’ nineteenth-century author. After one hundred and fifty years, no one can come up with a credible alternative candidate, but if the book were false, surely there must be someone willing to step forward—if no one else, at least the descendants of the ‘real’ author—claiming credit for such a remarkable document and all that has transpired in its wake. After all, a writer that can move millions can make millions. Shouldn’t someone have come forth then or now to cashier the whole phenomenon?”

Elder Holland concluded, “There is no other clandestine ‘author,’ no elusive ghostwriter still waiting in the wings after a century and a half for the chance to stride forward and startle the religious world. Indeed, that any writer—Joseph Smith or anyone else—could create the Book of Mormon out of whole cloth would be an infinitely greater miracle than that young Joseph translated it from an ancient record ‘by the gift and power of God.’”<sup>18</sup>

As the Apostle Paul taught, the things of God are known only by the power of the Spirit of God (see I Corinthians 2:11–14). The *truthfulness* of a religious matter is known by the quiet whisperings of the Spirit. But the *significance* of a religious matter—such as the Book of Mormon or temples or the nature of God—may often be discerned by the loud janglings of opposition from those who are somehow threatened and offended by them. In other words, if I did not already know, by the

power of the Spirit, that the Book of Mormon is indeed the word of God and another testament of Jesus Christ, I might suspect that it is holy writ by the intensity and even rabidity of those who attack it. Nephi warned: “Wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more! And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness” (2 Nephi 28:27–28).

If those who rail against and battle the Book of Mormon would spend a fraction of their time and energy seeking to discover and fathom the *fruits* of the Book of Mormon as they do in conjuring up a new angle every month to explain the *roots* of it, they just might come to different conclusions. People must judge for themselves. As President Benson observed, “The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ.”<sup>19</sup>

#### POIGNANT PRECEPTS

We are given little indication in the biblical record that the prophet-writers delivered and preserved their messages for any day other than their own. There is no doubt that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Malachi, Peter, Paul, John, and others spoke of the distant future; by the power of the Spirit, they saw and described the doings of peoples of another time and place. Their words were given to the people of their own time. Their words have and will yet find application and fulfillment for future times. And yet we never see a particular prophet from the stick of Judah addressing himself directly to those who will one day read his pronouncements.

How very different is the Book of Mormon! It was prepared and preserved by men with seeric vision who wrote and spoke to us; they saw and knew our day and addressed themselves to specific issues that a people in the last days would confront. The poignant words of Moroni point us to the contemporary relevance of the Book of Mormon: “Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:35). Later Moroni said: “Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall have my

## "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 65

words" (Mormon 9:30). In the words of President Benson, the Book of Mormon "was written for our day. *The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times.* It was meant for us. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us. . . . If they saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, 'Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?'"<sup>20</sup>

Do I desire to know how to handle wayward children, how to deal justly yet mercifully with transgressors, how to bear pure testimony, how to teach and preach in such a manner that people cannot go away unaffected, how to detect the enemies of Christ and how to withstand those who seek to destroy my faith, how to discern and expose secret combinations that seek to destroy the works of the Lamb of God, how to deal properly with persecution and anti-Mormonism, and how to establish Zion? Then I must search and study the Book of Mormon.

Do I desire to know more about how to avoid pride and the perils of the prosperity cycle; how to avoid priestcraft and acquire and embody charity, the pure love of Christ; how my sins may be remitted and how I can know when they have been forgiven; how to retain a remission of sins from day to day; how to come unto Christ, receive His holy name, partake of His goodness and love, be sanctified by His Spirit, and eventually be sealed to Him? Do I desire to know how to prepare for the Second Coming of the Son of Man? Then I must search and study the Book of Mormon. This volume of holy writ is without equal. It is the most relevant and pertinent book available to humankind today.

The Book of Mormon is different from the other books of scripture. They are true, and they are inspired. They come from God. But the Book of Mormon has a spirit all its own. "Not all truths are of equal value," President Benson has taught, "nor are all scriptures of the same worth." This modern prophet explains further:

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called “the words of life” (see D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance.<sup>21</sup>

But there is more. The Book of Mormon is far more than a theological treatise, more than a collection of great doctrinal sermons. (It would be worth its weight in gold even if that was all it were!) It is not just a book that helps us feel good; it is a heavenly document that has been given to help us *be* good. It is as if the Nephite prophet-leaders were beckoning and pleading to us from the dust: “We sought for the Lord. We found him. We applied the gospel of Jesus Christ and have partaken of its sweet fruits. We know the joy of our redemption and have felt to sing the song of redeeming love. And now, O reader, go and do thou likewise!” The Book of Mormon is not only an invitation to come unto Christ but also a pattern for the accomplishment of that consummate privilege. That invitation is extended to all, the rank and file as well as the prophets and apostles. The Book of Mormon does more than teach with plainness and persuasion the effects of the Fall and the absolute necessity for an atonement; it cries out to us that unless we acknowledge our fallen state, put off the natural man, apply the atoning blood of Christ, and be born again, we can never be with or become like our Lord, worlds without end. Nor can we ever hope to establish Zion, a society of the pure in heart. Stated differently, this volume is not just a book about religion. It *is* religion. Our challenge, therefore, is not just to read and study the Book of Mormon; we must live it and accept and apply its doctrines and philosophy.

## "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 67

## IMPORTANCE TO THE WORLD

Too much effort has been expended over too many centuries, too much blood has been shed, too many tears have watered the pillows, too many prayers have ascended to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, too great a price has been paid for the Book of Mormon record to be destroyed. Or discarded. Or ignored. No, it must not be ignored, either by the Latter-day Saints (the present custodians of the stick of Joseph) or by a world that desperately needs its message and transforming power. No less than God Himself has borne witness of the Book of Mormon. To Oliver Cowdery, who was raised up to serve as scribe in the translation, the Lord affirmed: "I tell thee, that thou mayest know that there is none else save God that knowest thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart. I tell thee these things as a witness unto thee—that *the words or the work which thou hast been writing are true*" (D&C 6:16–17; emphasis added; see also 18:2). The Almighty set His own seal of truthfulness with an oath upon the Nephite record when He said: "And he [Joseph Smith] has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him, and *as your Lord and your God liveth it is true*" (D&C 17:6; emphasis added). In the words of a modern Apostle: "This is God's testimony of the Book of Mormon. In it Deity himself has laid his godhood on the line. Either the book is true or God ceases to be God. There neither is nor can be any more formal or powerful language known to men or gods."<sup>22</sup>

For those outside the faith, the Book of Mormon presses for a decision. It forces an issue. One cannot simply dismiss it with a wave of the hand and a turn of the head; it must be explained. Thus, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie declared, "the time is long past for quibbling about words and for hurling unsavory epithets against the Latter-day Saints. These are deep and solemn and ponderous matters. We need not think we can trifle with sacred things and escape the wrath of a just God. Either the Book of Mormon is true, or it is false; either it came from God, or it was spawned in the infernal realms. . . . It is not and cannot be simply another treatise on religion; it either came from heaven or from hell. And it is time for all those who seek salvation to find out for themselves whether it is of the Lord or of Lucifer."<sup>23</sup> And as far as members of the Church are concerned, President Benson has declared

boldly: “Every Latter-day Saint should make the study of this book a lifetime pursuit. Otherwise he is placing his soul in jeopardy and neglecting that which could give spiritual and intellectual unity to his whole life.”<sup>24</sup>

### ITS PROPHETIC DESTINY

So here we are today. In compliance with the prophetic mandate, millions of Latter-day Saints across the world have begun to search and pray over and teach from the Book of Mormon. Because of their study of the Book of Mormon, many Saints have already begun to find answers to their problems; many have come alive to the scriptures and have begun to understand many of the more mysterious passages in the Bible. Many have begun to feel that sometimes subtle but certain transforming influence that flows from the Book of Mormon—they have begun to sense its sanctifying power. Theirs is a greater yearning for righteousness and the things of the Spirit, a heightened sensitivity to people and feelings, and a corresponding abhorrence for the sins of the world. Many have come to the point where they honestly and truly desire to surrender to the Lord and His ways, to know and abide by His will, and to keep an eye single to His glory. For such devotees of the Book of Mormon, surely the condemnation spoken of in Doctrine and Covenants 84 is no more.

I believe this pattern will continue. In regard to the future, President Benson said:

I have a vision of homes alerted, of classes alive, and of pulpits aflame with the spirit of Book of Mormon messages.

I have a vision of home teachers and visiting teachers, ward and branch officers, and stake and mission leaders counseling our people out of the most correct of any book on earth—the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of artists putting into film, drama, literature, music, and paintings great themes and great characters from the Book of Mormon.

I have a vision of thousands of missionaries going into the mission field with hundreds of passages memorized from the

## "THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 69

Book of Mormon so that they might feed the needs of a spiritually famished world.

I have a vision of the whole Church getting nearer to God by abiding by the precepts of the Book of Mormon.

Indeed, I have a vision of flooding the earth with the Book of Mormon.<sup>25</sup>

Such a day will not come to pass without opposition. But amid it all, the work of the Lord, with the Book of Mormon held high as an ensign to the nations, will go forward. As Moroni explained to Joseph Smith: "Those who are not built upon the Rock will seek to overthrow this church; but it will increase the more [it is] opposed."<sup>26</sup>

I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. I know that the Lord God is its author. It speaks peace and joy to my soul. It is a quiet, steadying influence in my life. Many of our longings for another time and place, those vague but powerful feelings that we have wandered from a more exalted sphere, are satisfied and soothed when we read the Book of Mormon. Reading it is like coming home. It is a gift of God that we are expected to receive, understand, and experience. I feel a deep sense of kinship with its writers, particularly Mormon and Moroni. I think they are as concerned now, if not more, with what is done with their book than when they etched their messages onto the golden plates some sixteen centuries ago. I know that the Almighty expects us to read and teach from the Book of Mormon and to devote significant time to the consideration and application of the doctrines and principles it contains.

"Its appeal is as timeless as truth," President Hinckley declared, "as universal as mankind. It is the only book that contains within its covers a promise that by divine power the reader may know with certainty of its truth. Its origin is miraculous; when the story of that origin is first told to one unfamiliar with it, it is almost unbelievable. . . . No one can dispute its presence. All efforts to account for its origin, other than the account given by Joseph Smith, have been shown to lack substance. It is a record of ancient America. It is a scripture of the New World, as certainly as the Bible is the scripture of the Old. Each speaks of the other. Each carries with it the spirit of inspiration, the power to convince and

convert. Together they become two witnesses, hand in hand, that Jesus is the Christ, the resurrected and living Son of the living God.<sup>27</sup>

God grant that we might be wise in the day of our probation. God grant us strength in our sacred care and keeping of the timely and timeless Book of Mormon. Then, having done all in this regard, we will rest our souls everlastingly with those who paid such a dear price to write and preserve and bring it forth.

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## NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:461.
2. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:461; see also Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 194.
3. *Noah Webster's First Edition of An American Dictionary of the English Language*, facsimile of 1828 edition (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1985), s.v. "correct."
4. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), s.v. "correct."
5. See Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 9–10, 61, 327.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, April 1966, 85.
7. LDS Student Association fireside, Utah State University, October 10, 1971, as quoted in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 23–24.
8. Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, October 2003, 73–75.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 344–45.
10. Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 18–19.
11. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 18.
12. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 18–19.
13. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 19.
14. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 344–45.
15. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 345–46.
16. *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*, s.v. "precept."
17. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "precept."
18. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 347, 349.
19. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 13.
20. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 19–20; emphasis added.
21. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 10, 21–22.
22. Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, April 1982, 50.



"THE MOST CORRECT BOOK" 71

23. McConkie, in Conference Report, October 1983, 105-6.
24. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 7-8.
25. Benson, in Conference Report, October 1988, 4-5.
26. *Messenger and Advocate*, October 1835, 2:199; as quoted in Francis W. Kirkham, *A New Witness for Christ in America* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing, 1942), 100.
27. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 38.