

**THE BOOK OF MORMON**

**COMPUTER**

**MARKING PROJECT**

**for Open-minded and Diligent Seekers  
of a Testimony of the Truth of the Book of Mormon –  
A Project with a Promise  
by the Late Elder Bruce R. McConkie**

**PART 1 – Testimonies, Insights, and  
Tests of the Book’s Authenticity**

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## CONTENTS

Annotated Table of Contents	2
The Origin and Implementation of this Project	3
My Greatly Enhanced Personal Testimony of the Book of Mormon Following this Computer Marking Project	5
What I Learned from the Book of Mormon Computer Marking Project <i>My testimony and appreciation of the Book of Mormon soared, as will yours – by making the effort.</i>	6
Official Introduction to the Book of Mormon	7
Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith	8
Observations – Joseph’s Testimony <i>There are some unique features of Joseph’s story that deserve close attention</i>	9
Many Witnesses Have Testified to the Truth of the Book of Mormon. <i>There are far too many witnesses to be discounted easily. In some ways, the Book of Mormon and the whole restoration movement hinges on their testimonies. Read their stories and some fascinating insights about the witnesses.</i>	10
Tests You Can Use to Gain your Own Testimony of the Divinity of the Book of Mormon <i>We have significant advantages over earlier generations of readers. There are many resources now available, which leave no one with a good excuse for not gaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon. Categories of tests of the books veracity include–</i>	21
Spiritual	21
Application to Life	27
Doctrine and Teachings	29
Prophetic	31
Historical	33
Archaeological	33
Language and Literature.	36
Other choice observations on the Book of Mormon by BYU Professor Hugh Nibley <i>The brilliant scholar, Dr. Hugh Nibley, shares some insights, which can amplify the testimonies of analytical readers.</i>	39
Primary Purposes of the Book of Mormon <i>We should know these well.</i>	46
Prominent Themes of the Book of Mormon <i>These jumped out at me as I proceeded with the Computer Marking Project</i>	49
Doctrinal Contributions of the Book of Mormon <i>You have to look outside the Church and at the Bible standing alone to appreciate how important are these contributions.</i>	50
Reasons the Book of Mormon Must Be True <i>Taken together, these are compelling reasons for acceptance of the Book of Mormon as the word of God.</i>	55
Cost-Benefit Analysis for Believing in the Book of Mormon <i>What are the risks compared to the potential benefits?</i>	57
Notes and References	58

## THE ORIGIN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT

Unlike Wilford Woodruff, who stood and bore testimony of the truth of the restored gospel the day he first heard it, Brigham Young investigated for two years before joining the Church. Apparently, the Lord allows for a more left-brained or analytical approach to the search for truth.

Last year, the Book of Mormon was the Gospel Doctrine course of study for the entire Church. In addition, the First Presidency issued a call last week for all members of the Church to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year. Also, this book of scripture is studied regularly in seminary and institute classes. And for millions of converts, the Book of Mormon has been the focal point in their conversion.

Moroni admonishes those who read and ponder the Book of Mormon:

“I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are 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.”

This is a glorious promise. But some seekers of truth, including some of our own loved ones, struggle to gain a testimony, desiring or requiring a more rigorous investigative approach to conversion. It is for you who are the more analytical seekers of truth that I refer you to a remarkable promise by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, which is the theme for this project.

“There is another and simpler test that all who seek to know the truth might well take. It calls for us simply to read, ponder, and pray—all in the spirit of faith and with an open mind. **To keep ourselves alert to the issues at hand—as we do read, ponder, and pray—we should ask ourselves a thousand times, “Could any man have written this book?”**

**“And it is absolutely guaranteed that sometime between the first and thousandth time this question is asked, every sincere and genuine truth seeker will come to know by the power of the Spirit that the Book of Mormon is true, that it is the mind and will and voice of the Lord to the whole world in our day. . . It is the evidence, the proof, that God has spoken to us in our day.”**

I can testify that this promise is true, or was true for me. Let me share my experience with you.

When I began this project in the fall of 2003, I realized that my testimony of the Book of Mormon was primarily intellectual, based on the testimonies of others and on numerous evidences of which I was aware. I had read and taught from the Book of Mormon for many years, but without the full spiritual testimony promised by Moroni.

However, I felt there was too much at stake for a book with such extraordinary claims, doctrines, and promises – and profound lessons of life – to be satisfied with less than a deep testimony as the basis for total acceptance and application of the Book of Mormon in one’s life. It seemed reasonable to me – as suggested by Elder McConkie – that if one invested enough of oneself in studying and gaining a testimony of the book, the results would be a firm testimony and increased appreciation of its worth and power. I was not disappointed.

I began by acquiring the Book of Mormon on CD and then color-coding on my computer the entire book in twelve prominent themes. Then I went through the book to highlight important verses. This process of color-coding and prioritizing the text helped me to see thematic patterns I had missed before (such as the centrality of Christ in the plan of salvation – long before his coming) – and to appreciate that there was a purpose in everything that the compilers selected in the final abridgment.

Then I went to an LDS bookstore and purchased several of the best commentaries on the Book of Mormon I could find. Since there were dozens of commentaries, I was able to find some excellent reference books for this portion of the project. As I read, I extracted notes on specific passages that I inserted on the same pages as the text. I was amazed to discover the amount of information and insights I had missed from my heretofore-casual reading.

My testimony and appreciation of the Book of Mormon literally soared as I continued this project over the course of a year. I would recommend that you as the reader do the same. Use your computer to process the text – color coding, prioritizing the verses with varied typefaces, and inserting quotes and facts from commentaries that you find faith promoting and instructive. You might even make a selection of helpful charts and pictures to illustrate the stories. This could become a lifelong individualized project for teachers and serious students of the scriptures.

(For a more complete account of the details of the marking project, go to the section on “Tests that you

can use to gain your own testimony of the divinity and truth of the Book of Mormon” on page 23.)

Try your best to put into practice the principles as you read them. Based on my own experience, I feel certain that this will have a dramatic effect on your quality of life. As the Prophet Joseph promised, applying the precepts in the Book of Mormon will bring you closer to God than will any other book.

As you diligently study and practice its teachings, you will gain a conviction, as I have, that no man – or group of men – could have written the Book of Mormon without divine help – certainly not in the time provided and under the circumstances in which it came forth.

Where does that leave you? The Book of Mormon must be from God – the greatest book God has gifted to man. You can gain a growing witness that this is so.

Having invested this much of yourself in gaining a testimony, you might wish to record your own testimony as the last on the long list of witnesses in the section of this introduction dealing with witnesses to the truth of the Book of Mormon. Then testify boldly of its truth at every opportunity. Who knows what good could come to your listeners? The Lord is pleased when we are willing to share our testimonies freely and with the aid of the Spirit.

Of course, you are welcome to use what I have done as a starting point. The color-coding may be acceptable to you as is, but you may prefer to emphasize different verses in various typefaces. And you may make different selections of notes associated with the text.

Though having color-coded the entire text, I have compiled and inserted notes for only a portion of the Book of Mormon, as that was all that was needed for me to say with confidence:

“Enough! I can truly say that I have a testimony that the Book of Mormon is a true record of God’s dealings with the ancient people on this continent and that it was translated by the gift and power of God. And I appreciate more than ever what a great treasure it is.”

Now I handle the Book of Mormon with tenderness and great respect. I thank the Lord almost every day for giving it to us and for Joseph Smith, its translator and the prophet who restored the everlasting gospel. I also thank him for the great prophets of the Book of Mormon, and for living prophets today.”

Following this project, though I had gathered a large collection of commentaries on the Book of Mormon, I felt less need to read them. I now prefer to

drink directly from the fountain of living waters – the spiritual feast that comes from reading the pure text of the Book of Mormon. This is not to imply that the commentaries don’t continue to fascinate me, and they are still used as reference books. But time is precious, and my focus now is on daily reading of the Book of Mormon itself, as President Benson counseled.

NOTE: I am only making available my markings and the notes I gathered for the first seven chapters of 1 Nephi, though for my own use I inserted notes for much more of the book. The entire Book of Mormon computer-marking project may never be completed, as I would like. But I have fully satisfied my original objective – a greatly increased testimony and appreciation of the value of the book.

There are two other reasons that I am not including my color-coding for the entire Book of Mormon:

(1) The value of the project is in the doing (computer marking and compilation of notes), not in reading passively what someone else has marked.

When I first started the project, I was going to select only the more important passages, and leave out the wars, prophecies of Isaiah, etc. But in discovering that the themes of the Book of Mormon were repeated over and over – as I decided how to mark each passage – I gained a renewed appreciation of what Mormon and Moroni chose to include in the final compilation. Now I treasure every part of the Book – even the Isaiah chapters!

Would I want to take away from you the joy of discovering the value of the Book of Mormon by sharing all that I have done? No, it is my hope that you will undertake a Book of Mormon Computer Marking Project in your own way to fully satisfy your own need for information and inspiration.

(2) There are copyright restrictions on extensive copying of the work of others, even the Book of Mormon. However, copyright law allows for limited quoting of materials for research purposes, especially where proper references are given.

Also, I am not selling the work and hope that others will not attempt to profit financially from it. My objective is to share what has had such a dramatic effect on my testimony and appreciation of this great gift of God to man – the Book of Mormon.

Consider this project like share ware. If reading what I have gathered benefits you, please pass it along to others. May the Lord bless you in this project.

–Jon M. Taylor

## MY GREATLY ENHANCED TESTIMONY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON FOLLOWING THIS COMPUTER MARKING PROJECT

My intense study of the Book of Mormon in the process of color coding and prioritizing the text, and then of adding enlightening and faith-promoting commentary, has led to huge leaps of faith and confidence in the precepts taught in the book and in its divine authenticity. I have been especially impressed with the density of spiritual truths in the Book of Mormon—an observation shared by Elder Neal A. Maxwell. (cited earlier)

Pres. Benson said: “If they [the Book of Mormon writers] 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?” (op cit, p. 4)

When I tried to decide what text to leave out in my first pass, which was to be a summary of key teachings, I became more aware than ever that everything that is included within the pages of the Book of Mormon is there for a reason. And it became more and more clear that the book could not have been written by Joseph Smith or any other human, no matter how learned. Then as I made a more concerted effort to apply the teachings of the Book of Mormon in my own life, I gained my crowning conviction that the Book of Mormon is the greatest book ever written and truly a magnet drawing the diligent reader and seeker of righteousness to Jesus Christ himself.

**I believe that after any sincere seeker of truth has invested a few months of study, prayer, and application of its principles while processing the Book of Mormon similar to the way I have done on a personal computer, he or she will come to these conclusions, as I have, about the Book of Mormon:**

- The story of its coming forth was too remarkable
- the accounts of the witnesses and their lives were too explicit and consistent
- the prophecies are too accurate
- the words are too sublime
- the language is too authentic
- the history of the plates and journeys from the Old World conform too well with known history

- the translation was done too swiftly, without benefit of research or editing
- the principles taught are too inspired and uplifting
- the doctrines are too profound and effective in clarifying confusing doctrines taught elsewhere, including many Bible passages
- the use of names conform too well with Old World names
- the description of culture, politics, and wars are too genuine
- the monetary system described in Alma 11 is too efficient
- the spirit of the book is too powerful
- the promises to those who practice the precepts are too daring
- the impact on millions of readers is too powerful
- the text is too dense with profound teachings and insights
- the stories and experiences of the leading characters are too compelling
- the many evidences for its authenticity are too direct and tangible
- the promise of Moroni to readers is too unique, remarkable, and provable
- for the Book of Mormon to have been written by any man or group of men, no matter how brilliant or educated. It is all that the Lord, the witnesses, and the writers themselves testified it to be. I firmly believe that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and the greatest book ever given by God to man.

To learn more of what I gleaned from this project, see also the following:

<u>Article</u>	<u>Page number</u>
What I Learned from the Book of Mormon Computer Marking Project	6
Reasons the Book of Mormon Must Be True	55
Cost-Benefit Analysis for Believing in the Book of Mormon. ( <i>What are the risks compared to the potential benefits?</i> )	57

# WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE BOOK OF MORMON

## COMPUTER MARKING PROJECT

By Jon M. Taylor

1. *The Book of Mormon* contains principles which, when applied, bring us closer to God, specifically Jesus Christ
2. *The Book of Mormon* prophets labored intensely to make Christ real to people before his coming (since he had not appeared except to select prophets), to explain the need for a Savior and for His atoning sacrifice, and to stress the importance of our coming to Him and forming a special relationship with Him.
3. *The Book of Mormon* underscores the principles of faith that will lead to miracles in our lives – repenting of all ungodliness, praying without ceasing, and trusting in God and not in man.
4. *The Book of Mormon* is a voice that literally speaks from the dead. Ancient prophets of the New World often spoke of their desire to record and preserve these things, to make them known to future generations who would inhabit this continent, to testify of Christ, and to restore the knowledge of “plain and precious things” which would be lost from the *Bible*.
5. *The Book of Mormon* contains the promises of the Lord to the gentiles and to the covenant people of the Lord.
6. *The Book of Mormon* often repeats the appeal to Jew and Gentile alike that Jesus is the Christ and that they must come unto Him to be saved.
7. *The Book of Mormon* tracks the Lord’s chosen people through cycles of faith and obedience, prosperity, pride, trials and threatened destruction, humility, repentance, and restoration to faith and obedience.
8. *The Book of Mormon* teaches the principles of faith in Christ, hope of Eternal Life, and charity (the pure love of Christ) as guiding principles in life.
9. *The Book of Mormon* prophecies and testifies of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days.
10. *The Book of Mormon* answers questions not answered by the Bible nor by Christian leaders and writers who lacked modern revelation as a guide.
11. *The Book of Mormon* relates conversion stories that inspire us all to be better missionaries.
12. *The Book of Mormon* prophecies of many things that have occurred, are now occurring, or will occur in our present dispensation.
13. *The Book of Mormon* lays out the plan of salvation in a way that is much more explicit and inspiring than is the case with the *Bible* or any other book.
14. *The Book of Mormon* is very explicit about the great happiness enjoyed and the blessings promised those who exercise faith in Christ and who repent and serve Him.
15. *The Book of Mormon* accurately describes Satan’s power and influence – and warns of the great suffering that will be experienced by the disobedient who fail to repent and accept Christ as their Savior.
16. *The Book of Mormon* teaches the importance of seeking the gifts of the Spirit and of expecting miracles in our lives, if we live for them and pray with faith.
17. *The Book of Mormon* teaches the power of deliverance from trials, temptations, and other challenges to those who place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.
18. *The Book of Mormon* provides the seed of faith for a testimony of the gospel.

## (OFFICIAL) INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MORMON

1 The Book of Mormon is a volume of holy scripture comparable to the Bible. It is a record of God's dealings with the ancient inhabitants of the Americas and contains, as does the Bible, the fullness of the everlasting gospel.

2 *The book was written by many ancient prophets by the spirit of prophecy and revelation.* Their words, written on gold plates, were quoted and abridged by a prophet-historian named Mormon. The record gives an account of two great civilizations. One came from Jerusalem in 600 B.C., and afterward separated into two nations, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites. The other came much earlier when the Lord confounded the tongues at the Tower of Babel. This group is known as the Jaredites. After thousands of years, all were destroyed except the Lamanites, and they are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.

3 **The crowning event recorded in the Book of Mormon is the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Nephites soon after his resurrection. It puts forth the doctrines of the gospel, outlines the plan of salvation, and tells men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the life to come.**

4 After Mormon completed his writings, he delivered the account to his son Moroni, who added a few words of his own and hid up the plates in the hill Cumorah. On September 21, 1823, **the same Moroni, then a glorified, resurrected being, appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and instructed him relative to the ancient record and its destined translation into the English language.**

5 In due course the plates were delivered to Joseph Smith, who **translated them by the gift and power of God.** The record is now published in many languages as a new and additional witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that all who will come unto him and obey the laws and ordinances of his gospel may be saved.

6 Concerning this record the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

**“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.”**

—*Joseph Smith*

7 In addition to Joseph Smith, the Lord provided for eleven others to see the gold plates for themselves and to be special witnesses of the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon. Their written testimonies are included herewith as “The Testimony of Three Witnesses” and “The Testimony of Eight Witnesses.”

**8 We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. [See Moroni 10:3–5.]**

9 **Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is his revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the second coming of the Messiah.**

**“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.”**

—*Joseph Smith*

## TESTIMONY OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH (with observations)

1 The Prophet Joseph Smith's own words about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon are:

2 "On the evening of the...twenty-first of September [1823]...I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God. . . .

3 *"While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when **immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.***

4 "He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrists; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.

5 *"Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person. When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.*

6 *"He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.*

7 *"He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source 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;***

8 *"Also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and **the possession and use of these stones were what constituted Seers in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.***

\* \* \* \* \*

9 "Again, he told me, that when I got those plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled—I should not show them to any person; neither the breastplate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. *While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the*

*plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it.*

10 *"After this communication, I saw the light in the room begin to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so, until the room was again left dark, except just around him, when instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended until he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance.*

11 "I lay musing on the singularity of the scene, and marveling greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger; when, in the midst of my meditation, *I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, **the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside.***

12 *"He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at his first visit, without the least variation; which having done, he informed me of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence; and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things, he again ascended as he had done before.*

13 "By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard. **But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family), to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building His kingdom; otherwise I could not get them.**

14 "After this third visit, he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced; when *almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that **our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night.***

15 "I shortly after arose from my bed, and, as usual, went to the necessary labors of the day; but, in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable.

My father, who was laboring along with me, discovered something to be wrong with me, and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house; but, in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell



helpless on the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything.

16 *"The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received.*

17 "I obeyed; I returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there.

18 "Convenient to the village of Manchester, Ontario county, New York, stands a hill of considerable size, and the most elevated of any in the neighborhood. On the west side of this hill, not far from the top, under a stone of considerable size, lay the plates, deposited in a stone box. This stone was thick and rounding in the middle on the upper side, and thinner towards the edges, so that the middle part of it was visible above the ground, but the edge all around was covered with earth.

19 "Having removed the earth, I obtained a lever, which I got fixed under the edge of the stone, and with a little exertion raised it up. I looked in, and there indeed did I behold the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate, as stated by the messenger. The box in which they lay was formed by laying stones together in some kind of cement. In the bottom of the box were laid two stones crossways of the box, and on these stones lay the plates and the other things with them.

20 *"I made an attempt to take them out, but was forbidden by the messenger, and was again informed that the time for bringing them forth had not yet arrived, neither would it, until four years from that time; but he told me that I should come to that place precisely in one year from that time, and that he would there meet with me, and that I should continue to do so until the time should come for obtaining the plates.*

21 "Accordingly, as I had been commanded, I went at the end of each year, and **at each time I found the same messenger there, and received instruction and intelligence from him at each of our interviews, respecting what the Lord was going to do, and how and in what manner His kingdom was to be conducted in the last days.**

\* \* \* \* \*

22 "At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. On the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, having gone as usual at the end of another year to the place where they were

deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge: That I should be responsible for them; that if I should let them go carelessly, or through any neglect of mine, I should be cut off; but that if I would use all my endeavors to preserve them, until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected.

23 "I soon found out the reason why I had received such strict charges to keep them safe, and why it was that the messenger had said that when I had done what was required at my hand, he would call for them. For no sooner was it known that I had them, than the most strenuous exertions were used to get them from me. Every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to for that purpose. The persecution became more bitter and severe than before, and multitudes were on the alert continually to get them from me if possible. But by the wisdom of God, they remained safe in my hands, until I had accomplished by them what was required at my hand. When, according to arrangements, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him; and he has them in his charge until this day, being the second day of May, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight."

24 For the complete record, see Joseph Smith—History, in the Pearl of Great Price, and *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, volume 1, chapters 1 through 6.

25 The ancient record thus brought forth from the earth as the voice of a people speaking from the dust, and translated into modern speech by the gift and power of God as attested by Divine affirmation, was first published to the world in the year 1830 as THE BOOK OF MORMON.

## Observations – Joseph’s Testimony

1. **Joseph’s interviews with the angel lasted ALL NIGHT.** When in scriptural history had a person ever before been instructed by an angel all night long?
2. **The same message was repeated “without the least variation” four times** (with some additions each time) apparently to impress Joseph of its importance – three witnesses plus one for good measure. Note also that the angel was to meet Joseph each year for **four** years
3. (In the full account), the angel quoted scriptural prophecies that were about to be fulfilled.
4. As soon as the existence of the gold plates became known in his area, frequent attempts were made (“every stratagem that could be invented”) to steal them and to stop Joseph from his divinely appointed mission. If it were all a hoax, would we expect to see such efforts?
5. In spite of numerous threats against his life, Joseph never wavered from his testimony, nor did any of the witnesses of the angel or of the plates. (See details below.)

## MANY WITNESSES HAVE TESTIFIED TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Fortunately, we are not expected to accept the Book of Mormon as the word of God without witnesses to the authenticity of the plates themselves and of its miraculous coming forth. The Lord has provided an abundance of witnesses and evidences for any sincere seeker of truth. Why were these witnesses so important that the Lord took such great pains to prepare and provide them? Because so much hinges on their testimony.

### WITNESS LOGIC – WHY THE WITNESSES ARE SO IMPORTANT

**If the Book of Mormon witnesses told the truth, then:**

- The Book of Mormon is true and the word of God.
- Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God
- God lives and we are his children.
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Christ’s true church, presided over by a living prophet today.
- All the revelations, powers, and keys received through Joseph Smith and his associates are of God.
- We are part of “a marvelous work and a wonder.”
- The true understanding of the Plan of Salvation is restored in all its fullness and beauty.
- We can know for certain that Jesus Christ loves each of us and has made it possible for us—with our loved ones—to enjoy eternal life with Him. His arms are outstretched for all to come unto Him. For those who “come unto Christ” and obey his words, all the covenants and glorious promises found in the Book of Mormon and other revelations will be fulfilled.

Also, from published accounts and journals, besides the official accounts of three and eight “witnesses” we learn of other divine manifestations of the truth of the Book of Mormon as the plates were in the possession of Joseph Smith. (See Matthew B. Brown, *Plates of Gold*, pp. 48-54, 61-62, 80, 120. Read the more complete story in this inspiring book, which draws from a wide variety of journals and published accounts. See *Plates of Gold* for extensive textual references, which will not be repeated here.)

Another excellent reference book with information on the witnesses is *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, pp. 787-792)

### Early manifestations to the three witnesses

Prior to the published accounts of the testimonies of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, they each had been prepared by receiving manifestations of God’s hand in the work of translation that was about to transpire.

“Joseph Smith records a little-known incident in his writings that helps to explain why *Oliver Cowdery* had such a staunch determination to serve as his scribe. **The Prophet relates that the ‘Lord appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowdery and showed unto him the plates in a vision and also the truth of the work and what the Lord was about to do through me, His unworthy servant.** Therefore he was desirous to come and write for me.’ ” (Brown, 80)

*David Whitmer* also experienced miracles prior to and shortly after meeting Joseph Smith that strengthened his faith in Joseph’s mission.

“Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were unaware of the legal actions that were occurring in the upper part of the state of New York. But one morning as Joseph was preparing to work, he was informed through his translating device that evil-designing people were endeavoring to thwart the work of God. Therefore, he was commanded to write a letter to a man named David Whitmer (who was one of Oliver Cowdery’s acquaintances) and tell him to come immediately with a team of horses to move him and Oliver to the Whitmer residence in Fayette, New York. There the two men would complete the translation of

the Book of Mormon plates. Joseph had never seen David Whitmer before in his life, but being acquainted with his father, Peter Whitmer Sr., he complied with the command nevertheless.

“When David Whitmer first received the letter from Joseph, he was uncertain as to how he should react. He showed it to his father, mother, sisters, and brothers and asked their advice as to what it? would be best for him to do. His father responded,

‘Why David, you know you have sowed as much wheat as you can harrow in tomorrow and [the] next day and then you have a quantity of plaster to spread that is much needed on your land and you cannot go unless you get an evidence from God that it is very necessary.’

**“This suggestion was pleasing to David, and so he asked the Lord to grant him a testimony of the fact that this was indeed His will. David reports in his own words what happened next.**

**‘I did not know what to do, I was pressed with my work. I had some 20 acres to plow, so I concluded I would finish plowing and then go. I got up one morning to go to work as usual and, on going to the field, found between five and seven acres of my ground had been plowed during the night.**

**‘I don’t know who did it; but it was done just as I would have done it myself, and the plow was left standing in the furrow.’**

“Lucy Mack Smith provides a few details concerning the events that followed. She says, ‘When [David] informed his father of the fact his father could not believe it till he examined [the field] for himself.’ His father then told him, **‘There must be some overruling power in this thing and I think you had batter go as soon as you get your plaster paris sown.’** David agreed with these sentiments. ‘The next morning, as soon as breakfast was over, he took the half-bushel measure under his arm and went out to the place where he supposed the plaster to be.’ But the lime fertilizer had entirely disappeared from the location where he had left it the previous day.

“David ran over to his sister’s house, which was only a short distance away, and asked her if she knew where the fertilizer had gone. She was surprised at his question and informed him that **it had all been sown by three men the previous day.** Her children had begged her to go outside and watch them because they were doing their job faster than anybody they had ever seen do it before. The woman went outside to take a look but, supposing that David had hired the men, she

went back into the house and didn’t give it a second thought.

“David was unable to find out who these swift workers were, and his father was equally puzzled when he was told of this deed, but the entire Whitmer family was now convinced that a higher power was connected with these events, and they all pitched in to prepare David for his journey to Pennsylvania.

“David Whitmer and the team of horses that were pulling his wagon moved rapidly along the rough dirt roadway. David reports that he traveled over forty miles on the first day of his long journey, and it was necessary for him to put up at inns as he made his way south. After two and a half days of travel, David reached the head of Cayuga Lake and there, unexpectedly, was met by both the Prophet and his scribe. Whitmer relates, ‘When I arrived at Harmony, Joseph and Oliver were coming toward me, and met me some distance from the house. Oliver told me that Joseph had informed him . . . that I would be there that day before dinner, and this was why they had come out to meet me.’ But this was not the only surprise for David. He says,

**‘Oliver told me they knew just when I started, where I put up at night and even the name on the sign board of the hotel where I stayed each night, for he asked Joseph to look in the seerstone, that [Joseph] did so, and told [Oliver] all these particulars of my journey, which Oliver had carefully noted in his book.**

**‘Oliver asked me—when I first met them—when I [had] left home, where I stayed on the road, and the names of the persons keeping the hotels. I could not tell the names, but as we returned I pointed out the several houses where I had stopped, [and] he pulled out his book and found it to be correct even to the names.’**

“Joseph’s demonstration of the gift of seership greatly astonished David Whitmer, and he said on one occasion that it ‘strengthened his faith in the Prophet.’”

*Martin Harris* and his wife, Lucy, both had manifestations prior to Martin’s more direct experience with the angel.

“Mrs. Harris [who had insisted on coming in person with her husband to validate Joseph’s story] retired to sleep at the Smith home that evening, and during the night she is said to have had a rather peculiar experience.

“The Prophet’s mother recalled that in the morning she told them about ‘a remarkable dream. She

said that a personage had appeared to her the night before and said to her that inasmuch as she had disputed the servant of the Lord, and said that his word was not to be believed, and asked him many improper questions, that she had done that which was not right in the sight of God. ‘Now,’ said [he], ‘behold, here are the plates. Look upon them and believe.’ Mother Smith recalled that ‘she then described the record minutely’ and again offered the Prophet some money. Joseph, it is reported, finally agreed to her proposition but only ‘in order to get rid of her importunities.’

“Martin Harris likewise told the Prophet that if he could get a witness from God that this was His work he would support the publication of the Book of Mormon financially. Martin then went to his home and asked God in prayer to show him whether this was His work. He also covenanted that if he received such a witness he would put forth his best ability to bring the translation of the plates before the world. Martin testified that **the “still small voice” then spoke to him, confirming that this was indeed the Lord’s work, “ and that it was designed to bring in the fullness of His gospel to the Gentiles to fulfill His word.”**

“With conviction in his heart, Mr. Harris was now willing to assist in pushing the Lord’s work forward. When he ran into Joseph Smith at a public house in Palmyra, he took a bag from his pocket and gave it to the Prophet. Inside the pouch was fifty dollars in silver coins. He said, **‘Here, Mr. Smith, is fifty dollars. I give it to you to do the Lord’s work with. No, . . . I give it to the Lord for His own work.’** Joseph protested and said that he would prefer to sign a note for the money, but Martin called upon all the strangers present to witness that he gave it freely and did not demand any compensation or return. The money was for the purpose of doing the work of the Lord. . . .

“Joseph Smith records in his history that **‘because of [Martin Harris’s] faith and this righteous deed, the Lord appeared unto him in a vision and showed unto him His marvelous work which He was about to do.’ But there was more. Martin also informed Joseph that ‘the Lord had shown him that he must go to New York City with some of the characters’ from the Book of Mormon plates.”** [leading to the Professor Anthon incident, fulfilling Isaiah 29. See JSH 1:63-65] (Brown, 52-54)

“Joseph was naturally concerned with the transportation of the golden plates during this journey to New York, so he “inquired of the Lord [to know] in what manner the plates should be conveyed to their point of destination. His answer was that he should

give himself no trouble about [the matter] but hasten to [Fayette] and after he arrived [at] Mr. Whitmer’s house if he would repair immediately to the garden he would receive the plates from the hand of an angel to whose care they must be committed for their safety.’ David tells a fascinating story about an encounter these men had with this particular angel during their trip. He says,

“When I was returning to Fayette, with Joseph and Oliver—all of us riding in the wagon, Oliver and I on an old-fashioned, wooden spring seat and Joseph behind us—[and]while [we were] traveling along in a clear open place, **a very pleasant, nice-looking old man suddenly appeared by the side of our wagon and saluted us with, ‘Good morning, it is very warm’ (at the same time wiping his face or forehead with his hand). We returned the salutation and, by a sign from Joseph, I invited him to ride if he was going our way. But he said very pleasantly, ‘No, I am going to Cumorah.’** This name was something new to me; I did not know what Cumorah meant. We all gazed at him and at each other, and **as I looked around inquiringly [at] Joseph the old man instantly disappeared so that I did not see him again. . .**

‘He was . . . about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches tall and heavysset. . . . [He] was dressed in a suit of brown woolen clothes, his hair and beard were white, like Brother [Orson] Pratt’s, but his beard was not so heavy. I also remember that he had on his back a sort of knapsack with something in [it], shaped like a book.’

“David and Oliver ‘asked the Prophet to inquire of the Lord who this stranger was. Soon David said they turned around and Joseph looked pale, almost transparent, and said **that was one of the Nephites and he had the plates of the Book of Mormon in the knapsack.**” (Brown, 91-94.)

The actual fulfillment of the prophecy that the Lord would provide witnesses is recorded in *The History of the Church of Jesus Christ*, Volume 1. A more detailed account gathered from journals and other first-hand accounts is again found in Matthew Brown’s *Plates of Gold*, Chapter 7. The latter provides fascinating and faith-promoting details that I will not take the space to include here. A summary of what happened follows:

As commanded by the Lord, just prior to completing the translation, Joseph proceeded with the three witnesses to a pasture, cleared of underbrush, to pray. Joseph led by praying first, and each followed by

praying individually and fervently. This happened twice, after which Martin Harris excused himself, believing his presence the cause of their failure.

After Martin's departure, **the other two commenced praying and were allowed to see the angel in a light "more glorious and beautiful" than the sun. The light grew brighter and brighter until "suddenly a radiant angel appeared before the two men, dressed in white and standing above the ground. Between the trio of mortals and the heavenly visitor was a table that appeared to be made of wood, and on top of the table were a variety of objects, including the following:**

- **The golden plates of the Book of Mormon**
- **The breastplate**
- **The sword of Laban**
- **The directors, or Liahona**
- **The brass plates**
- **The plates of the book of Ether**
- **Plates containing records of wickedness and secret combinations**
- **Many other plates**

The Urim and Thummim were not on top of the table, but were "a little way off, and in a receptacle which held them."

**"Joseph Smith relates that the angel held the plates of the Book of Mormon in his hands and turned over the leaves of the unsealed portion one by one so that the witnesses could have a distinct view of the engravings that covered their surfaces. David Whitmer reportedly said that as the angel "turned over [the plates] leaf by leaf, [he] explained the contents, here and there." He recalled that the angel "declared to us . . . that the Book of Mormon is true." According to Oliver Cowdery's words, the angel testified "that the translation from the plates in the Book of Mormon was accepted of the Lord."**

**In addition, said Cowdery, the angel stated that the translation would "go forth to the world, and no power on earth should stop its progress." Oliver is further represented as saying that the angel "commanded them as witnesses to bear a faithful testimony to the world of the vision that they were favored to behold," and, said Oliver, " this personage told us if we denied that testimony there [would be] no forgiveness in this life nor in the world to come."**

**Finally, the angel addressed himself to David Whitmer and said, 'David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps His commandments.'**"

**Then the group "heard a voice from out of the bright light" above them saying, "These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God; the translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear record of what you now see and hear.'"**

**"We know it was the voice of God," said David to some of many curious interviewers who sat down to listen to his story. "I knew it was the voice of God just as well as I know anything."**

Whitmer asserted that the objects on the table were taken away by the angel to a cave, which [the witnesses] saw by the power of God while [they] were yet in the Spirit."

Joseph then sought out Martin Harris, who was praying alone. He joined him for some time in prayer, and the two had a similar vision. The following document was then prepared and signed by the three witnesses (*right column*):

## **What became of the three witnesses and their testimonies?**

Though each of these men had key roles in the early history of the Church and made many other contributions beyond their role as witnesses, all three became dissenters as problems arose over leadership and monetary concerns. Pride and doubt over church policies led to their leaving the Church. But none of them ever denied their testimonies.

*"Oliver Cowdery* returned to the Church after a decade as a respected lawyer in Ohio and Wisconsin. A prominent non-Mormon attorney who studied law with Oliver said he was 'a great advocate,' well-informed, possessing a 'friendly disposition,' and was 'modest' and generous in his relationships. Oliver was successful in regional politics, though his detractors ridiculed his testimony which was published with the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, Oliver did not explain away this public declaration, and private letters in this period show that he firmly accepted Joseph Smith's visions, mentioning being present at some.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE THREE WITNESSES

**1** BE IT KNOWN unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken. **And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment-seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.**

OLIVER COWDERY  
DAVID WHITMER  
MARTIN HARRIS

President Brigham Young “related that several years after Oliver had become disaffected from the Church, “a gentleman walked into his Oliver’s law office and said to him, ‘Mr. Cowdery, what do you think of the Book of Mormon now? Do you believe that it is true?’ He replied, ‘No sir, I do not.’ ‘Well,’ said the gentleman, ‘I thought as much; for I concluded that you had seen the folly of your ways and had resolved to renounce what you once declared to be true.’

“[Oliver replied,] **‘Sir, you mistake me; I do not believe that the Book of Mormon is true; I am past belief on that point, for I KNOW that it is true, as**

**well as I know that you now sit before me.’** ‘Do you still testify that you saw an angel?’ [asked the interrogator]. [The reply was,] **‘Yes, as much as I see you now; and I know the Book of Mormon to be true.’**” (*Journal of Discourses* 7:55)

“On rejoining the Church in 1848, Oliver spoke of the Book of Mormon before a large audience: **‘I beheld with my eyes, from which it was translated. I also beheld the interpreters. That book is true.’** Oliver died a year and a half later at forty-three.

“A dozen family members left memories of his last moments, when he reassured his wife, daughter, and close relatives of his love for Christ, of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, and of the reality of priesthood restoration. [Oliver was with Joseph Smith on May 15, 1829, when John the Baptist, the same person who baptized Christ, appeared to them as a resurrected person on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania and conferred the Aaronic priesthood on their heads and commanded them to baptize each other. Oliver also accompanied Joseph when the ancient apostles Peter, James and John, appeared in resurrected form and conferred on their heads the higher authority, the Melchizedek priesthood.]

**“I do not believe that the Book of Mormon is true; I am past belief on that point, for I KNOW that it is true, as well as I know that you now sit before me.**

“Do you still testify that you saw an angel?” [asked the interrogator].

**“Yes, as much as I see you now; and I know the Book of Mormon to be true.”**

—*Oliver Cowdery*

“After leaving the Church, *David Whitmer* lived a half century in Richmond, Missouri, where he ran a successful livery business, renting horses and rigs. He was highly respected in his community, and at his death a local editor said he was ‘honest, conscientious and upright in all his dealings.’

“David lived until 1888, well into the era of modern journalism, and after all other ten witnesses had passed away. He was regularly sought out by reporters, curious non-Mormons, and believers traveling through the area where he lived. **On scores of occasions David testified that he saw the angel with the plates and heard the divine voice declare the translation to be correct.** This central message is

clear, though minor variations appear in the reports of the many interviews.

“In his last decade, David published statements reiterating his Book of Mormon testimony, while at the same time explaining why he thought Joseph Smith lost the gift of inspiration he enjoyed when translating the Book of Mormon and receiving early revelations. **In his last year, David corrected encyclopedia accounts alleging that the Three Witnesses renounced their written testimony. He stated: ‘I will say once more to all mankind, that I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof.’**”

Like Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, in his final hours David Whitmer reaffirmed his testimony that the Book of Mormon was revealed by God. . . .

**“I will say once more to all mankind, that I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof.”**

—*David Whitmer*

“*Martin Harris*, the third of the Three Witnesses, stayed in Ohio after most of the Church moved to Missouri in 1838. He had sold a major portion of his New York farm in 1831 to pay for the publishing of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. Martin once told William Pilkington (according to a Daniel Peterson audiotope): **“I would rather have my head chopped off than to deny what I have seen.”**”

The strong convictions [of Martin Harris] cost him his reputation and his family, as well as his property. The great respect he had enjoyed in his community changed to scorn, and he suffered estrangement, and finally separation from his wife and children.

**“I would rather have my head chopped off than to deny what I have seen.”**

—*Martin Harris*

“Martin had loyally followed Joseph Smith in the first Ohio years, continuing to contribute money to church projects such as the first printing of the revelations known as the Book of Commandments, in 1833. Though serving for a time on the Kirtland high council, Martin later complained that he was not given high position. Martin developed a stormy alliance with the Kirtland dissenters, for which he was excommunicated at the end of 1837. He stayed at

Kirtland for a third of a century before returning to the Church in Utah in 1870.

“Even though in his Ohio years Martin was often critical of church leaders, he never denied or compromised his firm testimony of the Book of Mormon. At age eighty-three he put his deepest convictions in crisp words: **“I do say that the angel did show to me the plates containing the Book of Mormon. . . I do firmly believe and do know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.”**” (*Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 790-91)

“George Godfrey, . . . one of Martin Harris’s neighbors [in Clarkston, Utah] . . . recalled that he had heard Martin ‘bear witness to the truthfulness and genuineness of the Book of Mormon’ many times during his final years. That testimony ‘never varied,’ even though several individuals ‘tried to entrap him relative to the testimony he bore by cross questioning him relative to . . . scenes and events . . . in connection with the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon.’ George states:

**“A few hours before Martin’s death in 1875, and when he was so weak and enfeebled that he was unable to recognize me or anyone, and knew not to whom he was speaking, I asked him if he did not feel that there was an element at least of fraudulence and deception in the things that were written and told of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And he replied as he had always done so many, many times in my hearing and with the same spirit he always manifested when enjoying health and vigor and said (Brown, 110):**

**“The Book of Mormon is no fake. I know what I know. I have seen what I have seen and I have heard what I have heard. I have seen the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon is written. An angel appeared to me and others and testified to the truthfulness of the record, and had I been willing to have perjured myself and sworn falsely to the testimony I now bear I could have been a rich man, but I could not have testified other than I have done and am now doing for these things are true.”**

This deathbed testimony is one more confirmation of what the Lord told the witnesses in D&C 17:3 – “And after ye have obtained faith, and have seen them with your eyes, **you shall testify of them, by the power of God.** Their testimonies were attended by the power of God, even when they were out of the Church and finally in the throes of death.



**“The Book of Mormon is no fake. I know what I know. I have seen what I have seen and I have heard what I have heard. I have seen the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon is written. An angel appeared to me and others and testified to the truthfulness of the record, and had I been willing to have perjured myself and sworn falsely to the testimony I now bear I could have been a rich man, but I could not have testified other than I have done and am now doing for these things are true.”**

—*Martin Harris (on his deathbed)*

### **Eight more witnesses provided**

While translating the Book of Mormon text, Joseph and his associates learned that in addition to the three witnesses”—who would see the golden plates by the power of God—there would also be “a few” other people who would be permitted to view the plates “according to the will of God” in order to bear testimony of His word to the children of men.” (2 *Nephi* 27:12-13)

It should be noted that while the three witnesses saw the plates and the angel, along with many other sacred and ancient objects, they did not actually handle the plates. The eight witnesses, on the other hand, not only saw the plates, but “as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands.” **So the more spiritual account of the three witnesses was balanced by a more natural tactile experience by the eight witnesses for those who may be inclined to explain away the whole phenomenon as delusion or as hypnotic suggestion. Because of the two sets of witnesses, no one could say that only Joseph Smith claimed experience with an angel, and no one could say that the plates were a figment of the imagination.**

The following testimony is that of the eight additional witnesses that were provided—of the physical reality of the plates:

### **THE TESTIMONY OF THE EIGHT WITNESSES**

**1** BE IT KNOWN unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come: That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

CHRISTIAN WHITMER	HIRAM PAGE
JACOB WHITMER	JOSEPH SMITH, SEN.
PETER WHITMER, JUN.	HYRUM SMITH
JOHN WHITMER	SAMUEL H. SMITH

### **What became of the eight witnesses and their testimonies?**

“Among the Eight Witnesses were both prominent and less-noted supporters of the Restored Church. The Whitmer brothers, including their brother-in-law Hiram Page, were among the first Mormons to accept the call to settle near Independence, Missouri. They endured mob violence in the 1833 expulsion of he Saints from Jackson County, Missouri. When *Christian and Peter Whitmer Jr.* died of illness in the mid-1830’s in Missouri, Oliver Cowdery reported, **‘They proclaimed to their last moments, the certainty of their former testimony.’**

“After the 1838 excommunications of *David and John Whitmer, Hiram Page and Jacob Whitmer* disassociated themselves from the Church. Hiram and Jacob farmed near Richmond, Missouri, and Jacob also pursued his trade as a shoemaker. Both men passed away in the 1850’s. According to their sons, **these two remained firm in their testimony of seeing the plates to the end of their lives.**

“*John Whitmer* lived until 1878, far beyond the others of the Eight Witnesses. He had earlier served as Church historian and editor, as well as in the Missouri presidency. Successful in farming and raising stock



after his excommunication, he regularly repeated the convictions he had expressed in 1836 at the end of his editorial career in Kirtland:

**“I have most assuredly seen the plates from whence the Book of Mormon is translated, and . . . have handled the plates, and know of a surety that Joseph Smith, Jr., has translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God.”**

—*John Whitmer*

“Joseph Smith’s father and two brothers, Hyrum and Samuel, were really martyrs to the cause of the Book of Mormon and the Restoration. *Joseph Smith Sr.* served on the high council and in the First Presidency for a time in Ohio. He was a revered patriarch, giving nearly 400 recorded blessings. At one point he was thrown into a dungeon for not burning the Book of Mormon manuscript or renouncing the Book of Mormon as a condition for having a debt cancelled. Emotionally devastated by the arrest and imprisonment of Joseph and Hyrum in Missouri in 1838, he suffered from exposure in migrating to Illinois, where he died in 1840.

**“I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast.”**

—*Hyrum Smith*

“*Hyrum Smith’s* Church career paralleled that of the Prophet, whom he served as counselor and then as assistant president in Nauvoo (D&C 124: 94-96). He went to Carthage with Joseph, fully aware of the threat of assassination, finding solace in the Book of Mormon, in particular Moroni’s farewell testimonial to the Gentiles (Ether 12:36-38; D&C 135:4-5). Earlier, after nearly six months in Missouri prisons, Hyrum Smith wrote, ‘I felt a determination to die, rather than deny the things which my eyes had seen, which my hands had handled, and which I had borne testimony to, wherever my lot had been cast.’

“*Samuel Smith* rode hard, hoping to rescue this brothers, arriving at Carthage immediately after their murder on 27 June 1844. He himself succumbed a month later, weakened by internal

**injury or overexertion.** “Samuel was always true to his published testimony as one of the Eight Witnesses. Samuel had given copies of the Book of Mormon to a brother and sister of Brigham young, laying the groundwork for the conversion of Joseph Smith’s dynamic successor.” (*Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 791-92)

*Samuel Smith* rode hard, hoping to rescue his brothers, arriving at Carthage immediately after their murder on 27 June 1844. He himself succumbed a month later, weakened by internal injury or overexertion.

## Other contemporary witnesses to the truth of the Book of Mormon

While they are not given as much attention as the official three and eight witnesses that are found in the beginning of each copy of the Book of Mormon, other powerful testimonies were given by other witnesses. These include three women who were central to the prophet’s efforts to translate.

Also, from the day Joseph first brought the plates home to be translated, certain members of the household (his mother and sister Katherine) and even visitors, such as Josiah Stowell and Joseph Knight, were allowed to “heft” the plates while they were covered with a “tow frock” (or long linen work shirt) or with a pillowcase.

Added to these witnesses are the millions of sincere seekers of truth who prayed about it and gained a testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost. In fact, the Lord himself has given his own testimony and oath of the truth of this great book.

Anyone can use these testimonies as a starting point to gain their own personal witness by the power of the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is the word of God. Tests for accomplishing this are given in the next section.

## Important testimonies of three women as witnesses

Who knew Joseph Smith better than the two most important women in his life—his mother and his wife Emma. Joseph’s mother, *Lucy Mack Smith*, stated:

**“I am the mother of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I do testify that God has revealed himself to my son. [She was the first to hear of the First Vision.] The Book of Mormon was brought forth by the power of God and was translated by the Gift of the Holy Ghost. If I could make my voice sound as loud as the trumpet of Michael the Arch Angel, I would declare the truth from land to land and from sea to sea.”**

– *Lucy Mack Smith*

(*History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*, 204)

*Joseph’s wife, Emma*, stated:

**“My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity — I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for when I acted as his scribe, Joseph would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or interruption, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this, and of one so unlearned as he was it was simply impossible.”**

– *Emma Smith, Joseph’s wife*

(*Saints Herald*, October 1879, *Witnesses to the Book of Mormon*, by Nibley, 29)

We also have the eyewitness testimony of Mary Whitmer, who made an important contribution to the translation of the Book of Mormon, that deserves our attention and appreciation:

“I have heard my grandmother (*Mary Musselman Whitmer*) say on several occasions that she was shown the plates of the Book of Mormon by a holy angel. . . . It was at the time, she said, when the translation was going on at the house of the elder Peter Whitmer, her husband [in June 1829]. Joseph Smith with his wife and Oliver Cowdery—whom David Whitmer a short time previous had brought up from Harmony, Pennsylvania—were all boarding with the Whitmers and my grandmother, in having so many extra persons

to care for, besides her own large household, was often overloaded with work to such an extent that she felt it to be quite a burden.

**“One evening, when (after having done her usual day’s work in the house) she went to the barn to milk the cows, she met a stranger carrying something on his back that looked like a knapsack. At first she was a little afraid of him, but when he spoke to her in a kind, friendly tone and began to explain to her the nature of the work which was going on in her house, she was filled with inexpressible joy and satisfaction. He then untied his knapsack and showed her a bundle of plates, which in size and appearance corresponded with the description subsequently given by the witnesses to the Book of Mormon.**

**“This strange person turned the leaves of the book of plates over, leaf after leaf, and also showed her the engravings upon them; after which he told her to be patient and faithful in bearing her burden a little longer, promising that if she would do so she should be blessed; and her reward would be sure if she proved faithful to the end.**

**“The personage then suddenly vanished with the plates, and where he went, she could not tell. From that moment my grandmother was enabled to perform her household duties with comparative ease, and she felt no more inclination to murmur because her lot was very hard.”**

– *Mary Whitmer*

(Andrew Jensen, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia* 1:283)

## Harrison Burgess testimony

Another remarkable witness was Harrison Burgess, though little attention has been given his testimony. We have only his personal account in his autobiography. And who knows how many others have had similarly powerful spiritual manifestations of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon?

“On the third Sabbath in May [1833] while speaking to a congregation I declared that I knew the Book of Mormon was true and the work of God. The next day while I was laboring in the community something seemed to whisper to me ‘Do you know the Book of Mormon is true?’ My mind became perplexed and darkened, and I was so tormented in spirit that I left my work and retired into the woods. The misery and distress that I there experienced cannot be described. The tempter all the while seemed to say, ‘Do you know the Book of Mormon is true?’ I remained in this situation about two hours. At last it came into my mind the faith that the brother of Jared had in obtaining a knowledge of God for himself, and others also. I resolved to know whether I had proclaimed the truth or not and commenced praying to the God of heaven for a testimony of these things. When all at once the vision of my mind was opened and a glorious personage clothed in white stood before me and exhibited to my view the plates from which the Book of Mormon was proclaimed and taken.”

— *Harrison Burgess* (Quoted from Harrison Burgess’s autobiography. *Plates of Gold*, p. 120)

### MILLIONS OF WITNESSES— PUBLISHED AND SILENT

President *Gordon B. Hinkley* offered these insightful comments: “. . . To think that anyone less than one inspired could bring forth a book which should have so profound an affect for good upon others is to imagine that which simply cannot be. The evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon is found in the lives of the millions, living and gone, who have read it, prayed about it, and received a witness of its truth. “

—*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinkley*, p. 38-39

### GOD’S TESTIMONY TO US OF THE TRUTH OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

“One of the most solemn oaths ever given to man is found in these words of the Lord relative to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. ‘He [meaning Joseph Smith] has translated the book even that part which I commanded him.’ saith the Lord, ‘and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.’ (D&C 17:6)

“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.”

—*Bruce R. McConkie* (CR April 1982, p. 50)

### My own testimony of the Book of Mormon was greatly increased by this marking project (from page 5)

I believe that any sincere seeker of truth who has invested a few months of study, prayer, and application of its principles while processing the Book of Mormon similar to the way I have done on a personal computer, will come to these conclusions, as I have, about the Book of Mormon:

- The story of its coming forth was too remarkable
- the accounts of the witnesses and their lives were too explicit and consistent
- the prophecies are too accurate
- the words are too sublime
- the language is too authentic

(continued on next page)

—the history of the plates and journeys from the Old World conform too well with known history  
 —the translation was done too swiftly, without benefit of research or editing  
 —the principles taught are too inspired and uplifting  
 —the doctrines are too profound and effective in clarifying confusing doctrines taught elsewhere, including many Bible passages  
 —the use of names conform too well with Old World names  
 —the description of culture, politics, and wars are too genuine  
 —the monetary system described in Alma 11 is too efficient  
 —the spirit of the book is too powerful  
 —the promises to those who practice the precepts are too daring  
 —the impact on millions of readers is too powerful  
 —the text is too dense with profound teachings and insights  
 —the stories and experiences of the leading characters are too compelling  
 —the many evidences for its authenticity are too direct and tangible  
 —the promise of Moroni to readers is too unique, remarkable, and provable  
 —for the Book of Mormon to have been written by any man or group of men, no matter how brilliant or educated. It is all that the Lord, the witnesses, and the writers themselves testified it to be. I firmly believe that the Book of Mormon is the word of God and the greatest book ever given by God to man.

— Jon M. Taylor

**Learn how you too can be a witness by gaining your own powerful testimony of the Book of Mormon**

In the next section are powerful tests you can use to gain your own testimony of the Book of Mormon, some of which come from teachings and promises in the book itself. A summary of them follows:

1. The promise of Moroni that anyone who reads the Book of Mormon and prays to Heavenly Father with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, will have the truth of it manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost.

2. Plant and nourish the seed of faith. (Alma 32)

3. As you read the book, and study and ponder and pray about it, ask yourself 1,000 times if any man could have written the book, as suggested by Elder Bruce R. McConkie (See full quote in next section)

4. Apply the precepts in your own life, and you will know of its truth by experience. (John 7:17)

5. Study and compare the doctrines of the Book of Mormon with the Bible—or any other book.

6. Study the Biblical prophecies of the Book of Mormon and their dramatic fulfillment.

7. Study the abundance of commentaries about the doctrine, history, archaeology, language, and customs of antiquity.

8. Undertake your own computer marking and notation project, as I have done. The value is in the doing, not in just reading of the research and commentaries of others. The more you invest of yourself in the Book of Mormon, the more you get out of it.

## Questions to ask yourself when you have gained the testimony you seek

When you have obtained your own personal testimony that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, you may wish to record your answers to questions such as these, which you can use in sharing the gospel and to pass on to posterity:

What convinced me that the Book of Mormon was more than merely a creative work?

How does the Book of Mormon differ from the Bible in doctrine, in teachings, and in purpose?

How has the Book of Mormon affected my life?

What do I intend to do with my testimony of the Book of Mormon? How will the doctrine and teachings within the book change the direction and conduct of my life?

Will you I looking for opportunities to share the Book of Mormon with others? How will I go about it?

Do I intend to keep reading the Book of Mormon and learning more about it? How?

## TESTS YOU CAN USE TO GAIN YOUR OWN TESTIMONY OF THE DIVINITY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Several tests can be applied to know that the Book of Mormon is truly the word of God and that it came forth by the power of God, as testified by Joseph Smith and the witnesses. These are spiritual and supremely practical when tested in the crucible of righteous living. The claims of the Book of Mormon can be supported by studying many pieces of evidence, including prophetic, analytic, content, historical, and linguistic evidence. Use one or more of these to gain or build upon your testimony that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, that Joseph Smith was the first prophet and seer in the latter days, that the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and his true church has been restored to earth, and that it is led by a living prophet and apostles today.

### SPIRITUAL TESTS

#### 1. Apply the promise of Moroni.

**“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**

**Do we appreciate the fact that The Book of Mormon is the only book on earth that contains such a remarkable promise?** Given the time, one could no doubt compile a collection of hundreds, or even thousands, of powerful testimonies of persons who have put the Book of Mormon to such a test and found the promise vindicated. I know of several in my own acquaintance who have seen this promise fulfilled for them in a marvelous manner.

As you go about the process of gaining and building on your own testimony of the Book of Mormon, remember the instruction of Moroni to you as a recipient of this great book. **This is a true promise, whether the testimony comes on the first attempt or after many readings and many prayers, whether in one major manifestation or in many small steps—line upon line, precept upon precept.**

**“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*

President Gordon B. Hinkley stated: **“The evidence for the truth of the Book of Mormon is found in the lives of the millions, living and gone, who have read it, prayed about it, and received a witness of its truth.”** (*Teachings*, 38-39)

While Moroni’s promise may be sufficient, there are many people whose testimony of the truth of this book will be facilitated and bolstered by investing more of themselves in their quest. If you have read and prayed about the Book of Mormon and not yet received a confirmation, your level of intent and faith in Christ will be strengthened by applying one or more of the following tests.

You can also study additional (non-spiritual) evidences to support your faith, as suggested below.

**The resources for pursuing such a quest today are bountiful and leave anyone seriously desiring and seeking a testimony of the Book of Mormon without excuse. Moroni’s promise will eventually be fulfilled for anyone willing to pay the price. It is my testimony that with a powerful testimony and enhanced understanding and appreciation of the great teachings of the prophets and of Christ himself as recorded in the Book of Mormon, life will take on richer meaning and purpose.**

## 2. Plant the seed of faith.

Brent L. Top, Professor of Church History and Doctrine at BYU, shared some inspiring insights that can help us follow Alma's advice (Alma 32:27-28). Excerpts from his excellent article follow:

There is nothing inherently wrong with having doubts or asking tough questions. Often it is part of the process of growth. There is, however, a difference between faithless cynicism and faithful questioning. The one is stagnant and yields no answers and spiritual growth, whereas the other is dynamic and leads one to find the right answers—leads one to the very Source of Truth Himself. . . .

In reality it is neither the questions nor the doubts that should be feared, but rather what one does with them. "Doubt, unless transmuted into inquiry, has no value or worth in the world," Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote. "A lasting doubt implies an unwillingness on the part of the individual to seek the solution of his problem, or a fear to face the truth." (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 31)

**"Doubt, unless transmuted into inquiry, has no value or worth in the world."**

—Elder John A. Widtsoe

To the Zoramites who desired to develop faith in God, Alma illustrated and amplified this process of inquiry when he admonished them to "awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words" (Alma 32:27). Alma's suggested experiment follows much the same pattern that Nephi had followed in his own quest--desire, belief, pondering. But he adds (v. 37) an additional element – nourish. **These elements comprise the divinely designated process – the "rules" of faithful questioning, the "imperatives" of spiritual inquiry – desire, belief, pondering, and nourishment.** Just as it was for Nephi and Alma, so it is for us today in our own quest for knowledge of spiritual things.

"Even if you can no more than desire to believe," Alma taught the Zoramites concerning this experiment, "let this desire work in you, even until you believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words" (Alma 32:27). Desire is the first step for almost everything in life. A great talent or skill cannot be acquired and fully developed devoid of some degree of desire. Often athletic events are won as much by desire as by skill. "They wanted

it more than we did" is a phrase that reflects this "will to win."

The story (perhaps apocryphal) is often told of the Greek philosopher who was approached by a pupil desiring the key to acquiring great knowledge. Suddenly the old sage pushed the young student's head under water and held it there until the youth was desperately seeking to extricate himself. When the old tutor finally let go of the young man's head, the latter angrily asked, "Why did you do that?" The great philosopher then proceeded to teach the young student the very lesson he had so earnestly sought. "When you desire knowledge as much as you desired air when your head was under water, you will not need to ask me. You will gain the knowledge that you seek."

**The greater the desire for something, the greater the price one is willing to pay for it. The greater the desire, the greater is the effort to acquire what is desired. For this reason, having genuine desire to gain a testimony and know the truths of the gospel not only is the first step but also it actually facilitates all the other steps. "Desire must precede all else in the winning of a testimony," Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote. "The desire to know the truth of the gospel must be insistent, constant, overwhelming, burning. It must be a driving force. A 'devil-may-care' attitude will not do. Otherwise, the seeker will not pay the required price for the testimony."** (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, 16.)

The great spiritual giants of both the past and the present all started their journey to knowledge, wisdom, and spirituality with the same first step--desire.

I, Nephi, being exceedingly young.., and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God... (1 Nephi 2:16).

I, Abraham,... sought for the blessings of the fathers... desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge (Abraham 1:1-2).

If any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know . . . At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to "ask of God," concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture. (Joseph Smith—History 1:12-13.)

Even if it is merely the earliest inklings of desire to know, this spiritual sojourn of eternal importance always begins with that first step.

**Desire must precede all else in the winning of a testimony. . . The desire to know the truth of the gospel must be insistent, constant, overwhelming, burning. It must be a driving force.**

— *Elder John A. Widtsoe*

Akin to desire is belief that God will reveal truth to you. Having a believing heart is as essential to the process of spiritual inquiry as the mind is. Nephi was able not only to see what his father had seen in vision, but also to receive further heavenly instruction. His desire to know coupled with his belief that God could and would indeed reveal truth to him yielded the desired results. "And blessed art thou, Nephi, because thou believest in the Son of the most high God; wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired" (1 Nephi 11:6).

In contrast, Laman and Lemuel would not believe. And as a result they could not know. They were like a scientist or researcher who determines the conclusions before the experiment is conducted and results are analyzed. Such unbelieving people will not honestly evaluate the evidence and will dismiss all findings contrary to their own preconceptions, even in the presence of overwhelming evidence of truth. A researcher guilty of such a sham would characterize the worst of intellectual dishonesty – a total defiance of established rules of inquiry. His conclusions would be thrown out and his future "research" would be viewed with suspicion.

**“Many in the world hold back from making the ‘leap of faith’ because they have already jumped to some other conclusions.”**

— *Elder Neal A. Maxwell*

The same principles apply in the spiritual realm. **One cannot thumb his nose at the very process of spiritual inquiry and the divinely established “rules” for revelation and yet be trusted to come up with the right answers. “Ironically, many refuse to examine gospel truths simply because of how God reveals them,”** Elder Neal A. Maxwell profoundly observed. “These very methods swell

skepticism among many. . . . **Many in the world hold back from making the ‘leap of faith’ because they have already jumped to some other conclusions.”** (“The Inexhaustible Gospel,” 1991-92 *Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, 144.)

The prophet Amulek knew something of this “pseudo-spiritual-inquiry” from his own experience. “I did harden my heart,” he recalled, “for I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know” (Alma 10:6).

The Book of Mormon teaches and testifies that the truth can penetrate any heart that is not so badly scar-tissued by willful unbelief that it leaves one “past feeling” (see 1 Nephi 17:45). “If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive,” Nephi promised his brothers, “surely these things shall be made known unto you” (1 Nephi 15:11). To the faith-seeking Zoramites, Alma taught:

**“Now we will compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves--It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”**

—*Alma 32:28*

Moroni reminds us that desire to know and a believing heart must also be accompanied by efforts on our part – intellectual and spiritual efforts. Someone once told me, **“In order to get inspiration you must first get information.”** In other words, obtaining a knowledge of the truth requires both the head and the heart.

Just as a journalist must obtain verifiable information from the most reliable sources for the news story to be factual and trustworthy, so too must we in our spiritual quest for knowledge. Some sources are better than others. There are secondary

sources and primary sources even in spiritual inquiry. Each can provide important information. In order to sift through all kinds of bias, you must gather as much information as you can. Secondary sources are “second-hand”—the opinions, feelings, experiences, teachings of someone else—like parents, teachers, friends, Church leaders, and even critics (to some extent). They are not bad sources of information, but they are not the most important or most reliable. The primary sources include the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets. **The ultimate primary source is the Lord Himself.**

Once you have obtained information from secondary sources, such as friends, teachers, even parents, and primary sources, such as the scriptures and teachings of the Church—you then approach the Lord in prayer ready to receive inspiration. . . .

**The ultimate primary source [of information] is the Lord Himself.**

—*Brent L. Top*

The sons of King Mosiah, and Alma the son of Alma the Nephite prophet-high priest, certainly had been taught the gospel all of their lives. Yet even they had a rebellious period of doubt. From being doubters and dissidents they were transformed into mighty men of faith and conviction—**“they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth.”** The process of their conversion included both intellectual and spiritual effort – information and inspiration.

**“For they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God. But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.”**

—*Alma 17:2-3*

Even after one has exercised his desire for knowledge of the truth, believing that God will reveal it to him, and has studied, pondered, and prayed for guidance, the “experiment” must continue. Even after the “experiment” produces, as Alma described, an enlargement of the soul and an increased enlightenment of the mind, there is yet work to be done because “it hath not grown up to a perfect knowledge” (Alma 32:29). You can't stop now. You

must continue with what has thus far been done, but also add an additional—continual nourishment of the seedling of testimony. You must “nourish it with great care,” Alma admonished, “that it may get root, that it may grow up, and bring forth fruit unto us.”

“And now behold, if ye nourish it with much care it will get root, and grow up, and bring forth fruit.

“But if ye neglect the tree, and take no thought for its nourishment, behold it will not get any root; and when the heat of the sun cometh and scorcheth it, because it hath no root it withers away, and ye pluck it up and cast it out . . .

“And thus, if ye will not nourish the word, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life.

“But if ye will nourish the word, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow, by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.

**“And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.**

**“Then, my brethren, ye shall reap the rewards of your faith, and your diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, waiting for the tree to bring forth fruit unto you.”** (Alma 32:37-38, 40-43.)

A few words that Alma uses in his description of the “experiment” have special significance to me – **continue, diligence, patience.** Being an avid gardener, I have a deep appreciation for what Alma is teaching. From the practical experience of gardening, I understand better the spiritual process Alma is describing.

Each year I can hardly wait for the snow to melt in early spring so that I can start planting my vegetable garden. Even before the seeds can be planted there is much work to be done to get the soil ready. When I can finally plant the seeds, I anxiously wait for the first signs of sprouting. Sometimes it takes longer than I expected and, as hard as it is for me to wait, I must be patient and not give up. More than once I have replanted the carrots in my impatience. Only later did I discover that if I had just patiently waited for the first planting to sprout I would have had a much better crop.



While I wait for my plants to grow, and as I count the days until I can partake of the literal “fruit of my labors,” many gardening chores need my constant attention – tasks like weeding, watering, fertilizing, thinning.

It's a continual process. If I slack off or give up, the weeds take over in almost no time at all. If I forget to water – even for a short time – during the blistering heat of the summer, the plants will die quickly. If I let up even for a while, I can lose my entire garden (except maybe zucchini, which I can't kill even when I want to!). There will be neither sweet corn nor fresh tomatoes, no juicy watermelons, green beans, or red potatoes. All of my efforts would also be totally wasted. To be able to harvest all of those delicious treats I must continue my efforts with all diligence and patience. A bounteous harvest, spiritually as well as agriculturally, doesn't come easily or quickly.

Coupled with continued efforts of diligence and obedience is the difficult principle of patience. When we want something that is important to us it is most difficult to wait. But like gardens, testimony and spiritual understanding take time to become fully developed and recognized as such.

**“Clearly, without patience we will learn less in life,”** Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained. **“We will see less; we will feel less; we will hear less. Ironically, ‘rush’ and ‘more’ usually mean ‘less.’ The pressure of ‘now,’ time and time again, goes against the grain of the gospel with its eternalism.”** (*“Patience,” 1979 Devotional Speeches of the Year*, 217) If I eat them before they are ready, I certainly can't make a valid evaluation of the quality of the tomatoes I planted or the sweet corn I grew. So it is with the “fruits” of the gospel.

**“Clearly, without patience we will learn less in life, . . . We will see less; we will feel less; we will hear less. Ironically, ‘rush’ and ‘more’ usually mean ‘less.’ The pressure of ‘now,’ time and time again, goes against the grain of the gospel with its eternalism.”**

— *Elder Neal A. Maxwell*

Sherem was known as an anti-Christ because he declared to the Nephites “that there should be no Christ” and he sought to “overthrow the doctrine of Christ” (Jacob 7:2). With his great learning and “perfect knowledge of the language,” his powers of

persuasion and flattery, and the power he had received from the devil himself, Sherem had great success in leading away the hearts of many people (see Jacob 7:3-4). Possessing natural arrogance and bolstered by his success among the people, Sherem took it upon himself to “reason” with Jacob – the prophet-president of the Nephite Church. “And he had hope to shake me from the faith,” Jacob recorded, “notwithstanding the many revelations and the many things which I had seen concerning these things” (Jacob 7:5).

Jacob wasn't as concerned about his own faith as he was of that of his people. He therefore confounded Sherem with reason, with the scriptures, and most of all because “the Lord God poured in his Spirit into my soul” (Jacob 7:8). Why wasn't he threatened by Sherem's flattery and powers of persuasion and all of the “philosophies” that seemed so reasonable? **“I had heard the voice of the Lord speaking unto me,” Jacob declared, “wherefore, I could not be shaken”** (Jacob 7:5). Sherem's assault on the faith of Jacob had no effect because Jacob was protected by and firmly founded upon his testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel and his spiritual understanding of the “doctrine of Christ.”

In a similar way, when Enos heard the voice of God in his own heart he was strengthened spiritually and his faith fortified. “And there came a voice unto me, saying, Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed . . . thy faith hath made thee whole,” he recalled. **“And after I, Enos, had heard these words my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord.”** (Enos 1:5, 8, 11.) The knowledge Enos had obtained served as a strength throughout his life and as a guide in his ministry among the people.

Hearing the “voice of the Lord,” having a spiritual knowledge of the truthfulness of the gospel, doesn't mean that one knows all things or has answers to all questions. It does, however, give comfort and confidence even when we don't know all the answers to the “tough questions” or know how to adequately respond to criticisms. Nephi's answer to the question posed by an angel of the Lord illustrates the power of knowing without knowing everything. “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” the angel asked. “And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.” (1 Nephi 11: 16-17.) Nephi humbly acknowledged that he didn't know everything, but he did know the love of God.

What Nephi knew was far more important than what he didn't know. The same is true for us. With a testimony of the gospel we can still be confident in the face of questions for which we may not have

answers. It becomes our rock foundation for us. Without that solid base everything else falls apart amidst doubt and criticism. . . .

**I do not believe it is merely coincidence that the first several questions of the temple recommend interview deal with our personal conviction of the fundamental teachings of the gospel—the reality of God, the transforming power of the Atonement, the truthfulness of the Restoration, and the authoritative and inspired ministry of living prophets. This is the knowledge that is foundational to all other things and that will protect us in times of doubt and difficulties. “I am satisfied. I know it's so,”** President Gordon B. Hinckley testified, **“that whenever a man has a true witness in his heart of the living reality of the Lord Jesus Christ all else will come together as it should. . . . That is the root from which all virtue springs among those who call themselves Latter-day Saints.”** (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 648.)

We are being spiritually assaulted today by means of the same tactics and philosophies utilized anciently by Sherem, Nehor, Zeezrom, and Korihor. To remain unfazed and unshaken we must be like Nephi, Jacob, Enos, having a personal knowledge and conviction of the truth. We are living in the days of and experiencing the very fulfillment of President Heber C. Kimball's prophecy of the last days.

To meet the difficulties that are coming, it will be necessary for you to have a knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such a character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall.”

**“The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?”**

*—Heber C. Kimball*

( Quoted from “Have You Inquired of the Lord?” by Brent L. Top, published February 27, 2004, on the Meridian web site —www.ldsmag.com)

### **3. Ask 1,000 times: Could any *man* have written this book?**

Elder *Bruce R. McConkie* offered a powerful test of the truth of the Book of Mormon (*Ensign*, November, 1983, 73-74):

**“There is another and simpler test that all who seek to know the truth might well take. It calls for us simply to read, ponder, and pray—all in the spirit of faith and with an open mind. To keep ourselves alert to the issues at hand—as we do read, ponder, and pray—we should ask ourselves a thousand times, “Could any man have written this book?”**

**“And it is absolutely guaranteed that sometime between the first and thousandth time this question is asked, every sincere and genuine truth seeker will come to know by the power of the Spirit that the Book of Mormon is true, that it is the mind and will and voice of the Lord to the whole world in our day. . . It is the evidence, the proof, that God has spoken to us in our day.”**

*—Elder Bruce R. McConkie*

**NOTE: This is exactly what happened to me before I read this quote. I became convinced with greater certainty that the Book of Mormon was God-given and could not have been fabricated by Joseph Smith or anyone else.**

This incredible promise has not been given much attention before. This may be because it may not be applicable to most readers – those who can be converted on simple faith in Moroni's promise. However, as one who has worked and taught at two universities, I know there is a certain segment of the population who seem to need a more rigorous analytical approach to conversion and lasting commitment. Hopefully, this computer-marking project can be used, in conjunction with the promise of Elder McConkie, to help them gain a solid testimony on which to build.

## “APPLICATION TO LIFE” TESTS

### 4. Note the richness of the text itself—plenty to ponder and put into practice.

“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.” —Joseph Smith (*History of the Church*, 4:461)

Pres. Ezra Taft Benson admonished: “If they [the Book of Mormon writers] 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?’” (*Ensign*, Nov. 1986, p. 6)

Elder Neal A. Maxwell shared these insights: “The concepts in the Book of Mormon are a constant source of inspiration, if we will but contemplate them. There, more abundantly than in any other volume, the Lord opens the windows of heaven, not only to pour out blessings, but to let us look in.” (*All These things Shall Give Thee Experience*, 35)

**“If they [the Book of Mormon writers] 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?’ ”**

— *President Ezra Taft Benson*

When I made the first pass through the Book of Mormon while doing the color coding, I was trying to select the best “precepts” for a vest-pocket summary. So I was sifting to eliminate those passages that had in the past seemed to be meaningless filler material, such as the Isaiah chapters and the accounts of the many wars in Alma, as well as the running commentary about the lives of the people. **But as I**

color coded on the basis of recurring themes, it became apparent that everything that is in the book is there for a reason.

Before reading the above quote from President Benson (“We should constantly ask ourselves, ‘Why did the Lord inspire Mormon [or Moroni or Alma] to include that in his record?’ ”), I had already been doing that and had concluded that **everything these prophets included in the compilation was there because the Lord wanted it there. So I left it all in.** (JMT)

### 5. Apply the ultimate test—abide by the precepts of the book in your life.

The promise of Joseph Smith that “a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” should be borne out by our life experiences. I testify that this promise is true. For further elaboration on this point, I should like to refer back to the excellent article by Brent L. Top:

“If any man will do [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine,” the Savior taught, “whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). Without obedience to God-given principles one cannot know of the truthfulness of those principles. The “rules” of spiritual inquiry require right behavior as well as right thinking. While the world may say, “I will live that principle when I know it is right,” the Lord would have us say, “I will live that principle so that I can know it is right!”

Thus King Benjamin taught his people that behavior must accompany belief if one is to possess knowledge of God and His ways. “And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them,” he declared, “and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things see that you do them” (Mosiah 4:10). He added: “**And behold I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true**” (Mosiah 4:12; see also Alma 26:21-22; Ether 4:13).

**“The ‘rules’ of spiritual inquiry require right behavior as well as right thinking. While the world may say, ‘I will live that principle when I know it is right,’ the Lord would have us say, ‘I will live that principle so that I can know it is right!’ ”**

—*Brent L. Top*

After all of the work and weeding and watering, no gardener would knowingly spray a toxic herbicide on his garden as a substitute for fertilizer. Yet, spiritually speaking, that is what is done when one thinks he can come to know the things of God while willfully living a life that is at odds with the “rules” of spiritual inquiry the Lord has established. “I don’t seem to get answers to my prayers,” a young person who was guilty of immorality said to his bishop. “I don’t even know whether God exists.” He will never get the spiritual knowledge he seeks when he is, as it were, spraying “Round-Up” on the spiritual seeds in his heart. Faith, repentance, and diligence in keeping the commandments are the real fertilizers of testimony. Alma declared to the questioning critic Zeezrom:

**“It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.**

“And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.

“And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word, until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell.” (Alma 12:9-11.) (“Have You Inquired of the Lord?” by Brent L. Top, Professor of Church History and Doctrine, BYU, quoted from an article published February 27, 2004, on the Meridian web site, which can be found at [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org))

**As a young man struggling to know if the Book of Mormon was true or not, I concluded that there was nothing to lose in accepting and**

practicing the precepts contained therein – all of which are good! And the promises found in that great book are so glorious that it seemed there was little if anything of value to lose in embracing it until my testimony became stronger.

**“I counsel you . . . to make reading in the Book of Mormon a few minutes each day a lifelong practice. . . . Drink deeply from the divine fountain itself.”**

—*Elder Marion G. Romney*

Elder *Marion G. Romney* urged: “I counsel you . . . to **make reading in the Book of Mormon a few minutes each day a lifelong 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 may not be deceived. . . . Don’t be content with what someone else says about what is in it. Drink deeply from the divine fountain itself. (*Conference Report*, April 1960, 112-13) He continued—

**“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.”**

—*Elder Marion G. Romney*

President *Gordon B. Hinkley* remarked: “. . . To think that anyone less than one inspired could bring forth a book which should have so profound an affect for good upon others is to imagine that which simply cannot be.” (*Teachings*, 38-39)

## DOCTRINE AND TEACHINGS

### 6. Compare the depth, breadth, and clarity of doctrine with the Bible.

“The density of the spiritual truths of the Book of Mormon is especially impressive. Indeed, the doctrinal density of the Book of Mormon clearly overshadows the portion that is given over to history or to details such as the description of Nephite money. The book’s structure is clearly and intentionally secondary to its substance, and its plot to its principles. **The Book of Mormon’s innumerable insights and doctrinal declarations constitute their own witness.** Clearly, this book came **through** but not **from** Joseph Smith. It is translated language, but its substance is of the Savior.” (Neal A. Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things*, 14)

“A thoughtful reading of the book makes clear what is required in order to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32). Yet it is much, much more than a gospel principles manual. Within its pages, prophet after prophet testifies of the profoundness of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ – ‘the three pillars of eternity,’ as Elder Bruce R. McConkie called them. (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 81)

“Other important principles and ordinances of the gospel are clarified as well. **The book’s teachings on faith, repentance, baptism, enduring to the end, the sacrament, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the plan of salvation, the universal resurrection, and the judgment of God are doctrinal diamonds.** Elder Bruce R. McConkie challenged those who would question the breadth and depth of the Book of Mormon’s doctrinal teachings (“What Think Ye of the Book of Mormon?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, p. 73):

“**‘Let every person make a list of from one hundred to two hundred doctrinal subjects, making a conscious effort to cover the whole field of gospel knowledge . . . then write each subject on a blank piece of paper. Divide the paper into two columns; at the top of one, write ‘Book of**

**Mormon,’ and at the top of the other, ‘Bible.’**

**‘Then start with the first verse and phrase of the Book of Mormon, and continuing verse by verse and thought by thought, put the substance of each verse under its proper heading. Find the same doctrine in the Old and New Testament, and place it in the parallel columns.**

**‘Ponder the truths you learn, and it will not be long before you know that Lehi and Jacob excel Paul in teaching the Atonement; that Alma’s sermons on faith and on being born again surpass anything in the Bible; that Nephi makes a better exposition of the scattering and gathering of Israel than do Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel combined; that Mormon’s words about faith, hope, and charity have a clarity, a breadth, and a power of expression that even Paul did not attain; and so on and so on.’**

**“Conversely, one might make a list of the doctrinal misunderstanding and shortness of sight that would plague us without the Book of Mormon. We need not look far to see the confusion over the path to salvation that has resulted in Christianity because many plain and precious truths of the gospel were lost from the Bible (See 1 Nephi 13:19-29).”**

— *Elder Bruce R. McConkie*

—Quoted in “The Remarkable Book that Changes Lives,” by Brent L. Top, Professor of Church History and Doctrine, BYU, quoted from an article published on the Meridian web site, which can be found at [www.ldsmsg.com](http://www.ldsmsg.com)

### 7. Read and ponder commentaries and research on the Book of Mormon.

Many excellent books (and tapes, CD’s, etc.) have recently become available about the people and circumstances surrounding the coming forth of the

Book of Mormon, as well as commentary of the text and its meaning for us in our lives. Many are full of faith-promoting stories and invaluable insights from literally hundreds of the best scholars, teachers, and curriculum writers in the Church—a selection of which are quoted in the notations herein. (For samples of commentaries and reference books cited, see Notes at the end of this section and at the end of the book.)

The process of picking out the best of these has helped me to appreciate their contributions to understanding this great book. You cannot help but have your testimony of the truth of The Book of Mormon strengthened by reading some of them—along with the original text, of course.

## **8. Continue this Book of Mormon computer-marking project to help build your own testimony. Then record your own witness for others to read.**

When I began this project I realized that my testimony of the Book of Mormon was primarily intellectual, based on the testimonies of others and numerous evidences of which I was aware. However, it seemed to me that there was too much at stake for a book with such extraordinary claims, doctrine, promises, and profound teachings, to be satisfied with such a superficial testimony as the basis for total acceptance and application of the Book of Mormon in one's life. It seemed reasonable that if one invested enough of oneself in studying and gaining a testimony of the book, the results would be a firm testimony and increased appreciation of its worth and power. I was not disappointed.

I began by acquiring the Book of Mormon on CD and then color-coding the entire Book of Mormon in twelve themes, using the standard range of colors provided in MS Word 2000. I would click “format,” then “shading.” But in order to come up with enough colors that could be distinguished from one another and still be light enough to allow the type to be seen, I had to click on the “more colors” tab to bring up a color wheel with a wider range of options from which to choose sufficient colors to be distinguished from one another.

I used the text option for the entire color-coding, and where two color codes applied, I coded the paragraph in one color and the appropriate text in another. Were I to do it over again, I would have

reversed this and color coded the main text in paragraphs and coded the text within the paragraphs where two themes overlapped.

Next I went through the entire text to highlight verses I wanted to stand out. For some of the more interesting passages I used *italic typeface*, and **bold italics** for higher priority passages. Some of the most important teachings are in **bold typeface**. Occasionally, a key word or phrase was underlined as well. Carrying it even further, for some of the more important text I used larger type, and even enclosed with heavy borders some of the most significant verses. This may appear to be too many levels of prioritizing to some readers, but the very act of deciding levels of importance of text was instructive to me.

**This process of color-coding and prioritizing the text helped me to see thematic patterns I had missed before (such as the centrality of Christ in the plan of salvation – long before his coming) and to appreciate that everything that the compilers selected in the final abridgment was there for a purpose.**

Then I went to an LDS bookstore and purchased several of the best commentaries and reference books on the Book of Mormon I could find. Since there were dozens of commentaries, I was able to find some excellent books for this portion of the project. For examples of some of the references used, go to the Notes section at the end of this introduction.

I began adding notes at the end of text. There are several options for formatting – embedded text, 2-column, notes at the bottom of the page with the text, and notes on the same page as the text (but not at the bottom). I liked the 2-column the most, but it took too much time and caused problems with the computer locking up, so I went with the last option, as it took the least time and was the most flexible for making changes. I have included samples of the different approaches, and there may be others that a person could create that would work well.

My testimony and appreciation of the Book of Mormon literally soared as I went through this project over the course of a year. I appreciate President Benson's call to repentance of the entire Church for not taking seriously the instruction by the Lord:

“And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—

“Which vanity have brought the whole church under condemnation.

“And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.

“And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written—

“That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom . . .” —*Doc. & Cov. 84:57*

**I would recommend that you as the reader do the same. Use your computer to process the text, using color coding, prioritizing the verses with varied typefaces, and select quotes and facts from commentaries that you find faith-promoting and instructive. You might even make a selection of helpful charts and pictures to illustrate the stories.**

Of course, you are welcome to use what I have done as a starting point. The color-coding may be acceptable to you as is, but you may prefer to emphasize different verses in various typefaces. And you may make different selections of notes associated with the text. I have only completed the notations for a portion of the text. This phase could be a lifelong project for teachers and serious students of the scriptures.

**Try your best to put into practice the principles in the book as you learn them. Based on my own experience, I feel certain that this will have a dramatic effect on your life as well. It will bring you closer to God and to know of his love, as Lehi and Nephi experienced in their dream of the tree of life. Remember that the rod of iron lead to the tree of life with the fruit which represented the love of God.**

**Then you should gain a conviction, as I have, that no man could have written the Book of Mormon without divine help – certainly not in the time provided and circumstances in which it came forth.**

**Where does that leave you? The Book of Mormon must be from God – the greatest book God has given to man. You can gain a growing witness that this is so.**

Having invested this much of yourself in gaining a testimony, you might wish to record your own testimony as the last on the list of witnesses in the foregoing section. Then testify boldly of its truth at every opportunity. Who knows what good could come to your listeners. We must be willing to share our testimonies freely and with the aid of the Spirit.

## OTHER CONFIRMATORY EVIDENCES

**“Ongoing scholarly study of the Book of Mormon continues to reveal the book’s consistencies and bear witness of its veracity. Both external evidences, such as archeological discoveries, and internal evidences, such as linguistic, cultural, and doctrinal analyses, continue to testify of the book’s own claim – that it has come to us through power from on high ‘by inspiration, and is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels, and is declared unto the world by them.’ (D&C 20:10).” (“The Remarkable Book that Changes Lives,” by Brent L. Top, op cit)**

NOTE: The examples below are merely some of the stronger classes of evidence supporting the truth of the Book of Mormon. There are likely to be others, some of which have not yet come to light. While they help to confirm one’s testimony, **the more spiritual approaches already discussed are most important for gaining a spiritual witness that the Book of Mormon is the word of God.**

## PROPHETIC

### 1. Review Biblical prophecies of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Several prophecies by prophets as recorded in the Bible, taken together, offer powerful evidence that they foresaw a divine record of Joseph’s posterity coming forth “out of the ground” in the latter days—which would contain the everlasting gospel. Some important examples follow:

#### The promise to Joseph of Egypt:

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, . . . whose branches run over the wall. . . unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills.” —*Genesis. 49:22-26*

Lehi and Ishmael and their posterity, who traveled “over the wall” to this continent were of the tribe of Joseph. The series of mountain ranges that ring the earth as “everlasting hills,” including those under the oceans, goes through North and South America.

### **An important book to come *out of the ground*:**

“And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.”

—*Isaiah 29:1-4*

Note that the Lord emphasized this by having Isaiah repeat the *out of the ground or dust* metaphor *at least four times*. And what is the “familiar spirit,” if not the feeling one gets when reading the Bible, to which the Book of Mormon is often compared?

The whole 29<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah seems to be pointing very graphically to the coming forth of the everlasting gospel as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith in the last dispensation.

### **The prophecy about Professor Anthon:**

“And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:

“And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.”

—*Isaiah 29:11-12*

For an account of the literal fulfillment of this prophecy, see JS-H 1:63-65 It is also inspiring to read more extensive accounts recorded in several church histories.

### **The *stick of Joseph*:**

“The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,

“Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and

write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

“And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

“And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?

“Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

“And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.”

—*Ezekiel 37:15 – 20*

Many of us today have the Bible (the stick of Judah) bound together with the Book of Mormon (the stick of Joseph) and the modern revelations in a quadruple combination.

### **The *other sheep not of this fold*:**

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”

—*John 10:16*

Christ told the Nephites that his appearance to them was the fulfillment of this prophecy: “And verily I say unto you that ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.

“And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the Gentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be converted through their preaching.” —*3 Nephi 15: 21-22* (see vs. 13-24. Christ had told a woman of Canaan “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” [Matt. 15:24])

### **An *angel to bring the everlasting gospel*:**



**“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.”**

—*Revelations 14:6-7*

One must ask: If the Bible, which was already on the earth, contained the everlasting gospel, why was there a need for another angel to bring it them that dwell on the earth?

**The Book of Mormon was prepared, preserved, revealed, and translated by the power of God, who empowered prophets and angels to bring forth from the dust (*Isaiah 29:4*) the “stick of Joseph” (*Ezekiel 37:15-20*) containing “the ever-lasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth” (*Rev. 14:6*)**

## HISTORICAL

### **2. Study the history and prophecies surrounding the events of the Book of Mormon.**

Upon reading the first chapters of the Book of Mormon, one becomes aware that it was written in a setting in Jewish history about which much is known from the Bible and other sources. These can easily be checked. What is more, the prophecies of what would happen to the House of Israel and to the Gentiles of the world up to the present time were foretold with remarkable accuracy.

Prophecies regarding the long night of apostasy and the restoration of the gospel were laid out in so that serious searchers can see the Lord’s hand in unfolding this “marvelous work and a wonder,” with all the miracles of the restoration through the instrumentality by the Prophet Joseph Smith occurring exactly as predicted. The history of the discovery of the New World, of the fate of the Lamanites or American Indians, and of the founding of this nation is all information that can be checked against history as it has unfolded.

### **3. Study the testimonies and lives of Joseph Smith and the witnesses to the truth of the Book of Mormon.**

When one studies the testimonies and lives of Joseph Smith and the witnesses to the truth of the Book of Mormon, it becomes apparent that the Lord went to a great deal of trouble to provide credible witnesses to give us reason to take the Book of Mormon seriously. And when one considers the growing number of witnesses, the excuse that “no one knows for sure that the Book of Mormon is from God” evaporates quickly. To read a summary of the testimonies of the many witnesses, published and unpublished, see the prior section.

Also, a study of the history of how the Book of Mormon came forth, as gathered from journals as well as official Church histories, is as inspiring as any stories told in all of religious history. An excellent book worth reading is *Plates of Gold*, by Matthew B. Brown. And one of many articles worth reading on this subject is “The Credibility of the Book of Mormon Translators,” by Richard Lloyd Anderson (*Book of Mormon Authorship*, 213-237)

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL

### **4. Another promise is being fulfilled.**

Bishop LeGrand Richards recalled: “I heard Brother [Charles A.] Callis once say that **when Joseph Smith received the plates he got down on his knees before the Lord, and said, ‘O God, what will the world say?’ And the voice of God came to him, ‘Fear not, I will cause the earth to testify of the truth of these things.’**” (In *Conference Report*, Oct. 1946, p. 125)

Apparently the witnesses had a similar experience. David Whitmer told James H. Hart that

**“When they were first commanded to testify of these things they demurred and told the Lord [that] the people would not believe them for he [Book of Mormon], concerning which they were to bear record, told of a people who were educated and refined, dwelling in large cities; whereas all that was then known of the early inhabitants of**

**this country was the filthy, lazy, degraded and ignorant savages that were roaming over the land.**

“[David Whitmer said,] **The Lord told us in reply that He would make it known to the people that the early inhabitants of this land had been just such a people as they were described in the [Book of Mormon] and He would lead them to uncover the ruins of great cities, and they should have abundant evidence of the truth of that which is written in the book.**” (*Deseret News*, 4 September, 1883.)

**When Joseph Smith received the plates he got down on his knees before the Lord, and said, ‘O God, what will the world say?’ And the voice of God came to him, ‘Fear not, I will cause the earth to testify of the truth of these things.’**

—*Quoted by Bishop LeGrand Richards*

“We see the Lord’s promise being fulfilled almost daily” (Brent L. Top, *op cit*). However, archaeological evidence by itself will not likely lead to a testimony, but can be confirmatory, at least insofar as discovering that there were indeed great cities and civilizations that lived in the Western Hemisphere in ancient times. Many books have been written on archaeological discoveries in these lands, so space will not be given for that here. Any person with such an interest can read one or more of the many books available.

## LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

### 5. Study what is known about the language of the Book of Mormon – reformed Egyptian, Hebrew, etc.

In 1 Nephi 1:2, Nephi said that his father’s language consisted of the “learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.” While the characters were of Egyptian origin, the learning of the Jews was reflected in many Hebrew idioms in the text.

In about 1970, BYU language instructor Gabriel Tabor bore his testimony to me about his extraordinary journey from a language headmaster in Communist Romania to emigrant to Israel, to

language emissary from Israel to Brazil, where he met two Mormon missionaries, who presented him with a copy of the Book of Mormon. **He instantly recognized from his language background that the book was of authentic Hebrew origins.** Gabriel immediately traveled to Salt Lake City, where he went directly to Temple Square and asked to know more about the Church.

The guide happened to be Cleon Skousen, who took him in as a house guest and answered his questions. After traveling to many U.S. cities to see if the Latter-day Saints were as genuine as those in Provo, **he applied for baptism – based on Christ’s instruction, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”**

**“By their fruits ye shall know them.”—Matt. 7:20 (confirming evidence for linguist Gabriel Tabor’s testimony)**

Though I cannot vouch for the source and accuracy of the following item (which has been circulated widely), the linguistic and scriptural content seem consistent with the facts as I have checked them:

A native Egyptian by the name of Sami Hanna was an academic scholar who over 20 years ago accepted an assignment with the University of Utah (he has since relocated back to the Middle East), as a specialist in Middle Eastern studies and the Semitic group of languages such as Arabic, Abyssinian, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Assyrian. Being a newcomer to Utah, he felt the Mormons were a bit of a curiosity.

Upon learning that the name Mormon came from our belief that the Book of Mormon is divine scripture, he was intrigued by the existence of the Book of Mormon. . . . When he was told that the Book of Mormon was translated from the Ancient Egyptian or modified Hebrew type of hieroglyphic into the English language by the Prophet Joseph Smith, he became even more engrossed, for this was his native language and he knows much about the other Semitic languages as well as the modern languages.

So challenged was he by this book that he embarked on the project of translating the Book of Mormon from English to Arabic. This translation was different from other translations, for this was to be a translation back to the original language of the book. . . . The process of this translation became the process of his own conversion: for he soon knew the Book of Mormon to be a divine document even though he knew virtually nothing of the organization of the Church or of its programs. His conversion came

purely from the linguistics of the book, which he found could not have been composed by an American, no matter how gifted. Some of his observations clarify some of the unique aspects of the book.

**[Sami Hanna's] conversion came purely from the linguistics of the book, which he found could not have been composed by an American, no matter how gifted.**

Mormon stated the origin of the language of the Book of Mormon . . . : “And now behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.” (Mormon 9:32) Examples of expressions that are uniquely semitic, and not American follow:

Jarom 2: ‘It must needs be....’ This expression, odd and awkward in English is excellent Arabic grammar. Elsewhere in the book the use of the compound verbs “did eat,” “did go,” “did smite,” etc., again while awkward and rarely used in English, are classical and correct grammar in the Semitic languages.

Omni 18: ‘Zarahemla cave a genealogy of his fathers, according to his memory.’ Brother Hanna indicated that this is a typical custom of his Semitic forebears to recite their genealogy from memory.

Words of Mormon 17: Reference is made here, as in other parts of the Book of Mormon, to the “stiffneckedness” of the people. Brother Hanna perceived that this word would be a very unusual word for an American youth as Joseph Smith to use. An American would likely prefer an adjective such as “stubborn” or “inflexible.” But the custom in the Arabic language is to use just such a descriptive adjective. “Stiff-necked” is an adjective they use in describing an obstinate person.

Mosiah 11:8 “King Noah built many elegant and spacious buildings and ornamented them with fine work and precious things, including ziff.” Have you ever wondered about the meaning of the word “ziff” referred to in this scripture? This word, although in the Book of Mormon, is not contained in dictionaries English language. Yet, it translates freely back into the Arabic language, for a ziff is a special kind of curved sword somewhat like a scimitar, which is carried in a sheath and often used for ornamentation, as well as for more practical purposes. The discovery

of the word “ziff” in the Book of Mormon really excited Brother Hanna.

Alma 63:11 Reference is made here to Helaman, son of Helaman. Why did not Joseph Smith interpret this as Helaman, Jr., which would have been more logical for him, bearing the same name as his father, Joseph, and being named Joseph Smith, Jr. In Arabic, Brother Hanna explains, there is no word “junior” to cover the circumstance. Their custom is to use the terminology, Joseph, son of Joseph.

Helaman 1:3 Here reference is made to the contending for the judgment seat. Brother Hanna observed that the use of the term “judgment seat” would be quite strange to an American who might have used a more familiar noun in governmental parlance such as governor, president, or ruler. Yet in Arabic custom, the place of power rests in the judgment seat and whoever occupies that seat is the authority and power. The authority goes with the seat and not with the office or the person. So; this, in the Semitic languages, connotes the meaning exactly!

Helaman 3:4 In this verse, there are a total of eighteen “and’s.” Reviewers of the Book of Mormon have, on occasion, been critical of the grammar in such passage where the use of the word “and” seems so repetitious. Yet Brother Hanna explained that each of the “ands” in this verse is absolutely essential to the meaning, when this verse is expressed in Arabic, for the omission of any “and” would nullify the meaning of the whole verse.

Helaman 3:18-19 Have you wondered why the Book of Mormon cites a numbering system such as this? Do we say “forty and six,” “forty and seven”, “forty and eight”? No. Joseph Smith’s natural interpretation would more appropriately have been forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight, without “and’s”. Brother Hanna excitedly observed that the use of “and’s” in forty and six is precisely correct Arabic. Remember, they number as well as read from right to left and recite their numbers with the “ands” to separate the columns.

Below are other notes regarding the language that I gathered: Moroni later referred to the characters as “reformed Egyptian,” which had been “handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.” (Mormon 9:32-33)

“Some scholars believe that reformed Egyptian was a type of shorthand. Moroni explained: “if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew, . . . and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.” (Mormon 9:33) “This suggests that **reformed Egyptian must not have**

been as precise and accurate as Hebrew, and it must have required less space to write reformed Egyptian than to write Hebrew. Knowing this gives us a greater appreciation of how efficient the reformed Egyptian language must have been.

“The Hebrew language is very compact when compared to English and many other western languages. A typical English sentence of fifteen words will often translate into seven to ten Hebrew words. We have no indication of the size of the characters Mormon and Moroni used, but if they rejected Hebrew because the plates were not “sufficiently large,” then reformed Egyptian must have been a language remarkable for its ability to convey a lot of information with few words.” (*Book of Mormon Student Manual*, p. 4)

“Hebrew is a completely alphabetic language [with 22 simple characters], whereas in Egyptian a symbol can represent an entire concept.” (R. Millet & J.F. McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 1:20)

Several examples of what could be considered “Reformed Egyptian” (Semitic texts that were written using Egyptian characters) have recently been discovered. (John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book*, p. 22-24)

“We now realize that the ancient Jews could write quickly and boldly, in an artistic flowing hand, with the loving penmanship of those who enjoy writing. And the Nephites got rid of this to learn in its place the most awkward, difficult, and impractical system of writing ever devised by man! **Why all the trouble? Simply to save space. What space? Space on valuable plates.**” (Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, p. 16)

Also, in the notes I have gathered related to the first few chapters of the Book of Mormon are examples of Hebraisms, colophons, etc., that provide impressive evidence of features of semitic languages unique to the ancient Middle East. During the time in which Joseph Smith lived, and with his lack of formal education, he could not have been aware of these semitic language features, at least not enough to give them such prevalence in the Book of Mormon; i.e., not without divine help.

As Hugh Nibley put it:

“**We can say without hesitation that the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, the Testament of Lehi, has the authenticity of a truly ancient pseudepigraphic writing stamped all over it. It is a well-nigh perfect example of the genre.**” (*Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless*, 4) To confirm this, read the notes for Chapter 1 of 1Nephi.

## 6. Read the Book of Mormon as literature.

In addition to the strictly linguistic evidences of the book’s authenticity, *Feasting on the Word*, by Richard Dilworth Rust, demonstrates that the Book of Mormon satisfies our deepest yearnings for the best in sacred literature. As the flyleaf to the book proclaims,

**“As literature, the Book of Mormon engages all our senses; it involves not only thinking but also feeling. It bids us to taste, touch, see, and hear, to experience things of the Spirit in terms of matter. Like the tree of life in Lehi’s vision, the book itself beckons us to ‘receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love.’ (Jacob 3:2)**

**“This literary richness is one reason . . . that the Book of Mormon is so pleasurable to read. Literary elements used by the book’s prophetic writers to invite the reader to Christ include form and imagery, poetry and narrative, repetitions and chiasms. Several of these elements are of ancient Hebrew and Middle Eastern origin, and their presence in the Book of Mormon testifies of its roots.”**

## 7. Word Prints verify different authors.

Studies of stylometry (statistical analysis of style) prove that the various authors of the Book of Mormon were indeed separate authors, whose authorship was in turn completely separate from that of Joseph Smith and those with whom he was associated in bringing forth the Book of Mormon. (Details on these studies are reported in an article by Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher, entitled: “Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? An Analysis of Wordprints” in *Book of Mormon Authorship*, pp. 157-188)

## OTHER ANALYSES

### 8. Verify the time to transcribe.

While working on this computer-marking project, I was struck with the speed with which Joseph Smith completed the translation of the Book of Mormon, once the Lord inspired Oliver Cowdery to become his scribe. According to a variety of sources, with Oliver’s assistance, **the bulk of the book was translated in just over 60 days** (at about eight pages per day).

I set up a test to see how much time it would take to write out the text, let alone translate. I had my wife dictate from a page in the Book of Mormon, which I transcribed in longhand. It took us about 30 minutes for a single page. Projected over the 531 pages of the full Book of Mormon, this would have taken a minimum of 265 hours, or perhaps 350 hours, allowing for difficult words and names to be spelled out and confirmed, as they were reported to do.

The process would have been so intense, that I doubt the pair could have translated more than six hours a day, allowing for needed meals and rest. At six hours per day, *that's a minimum of about 58 days – just to transcribe, without any editing.*

**Had Joseph fabricated the story, this would have allowed little or no time to research and think through the history, the geography, the customs, the battle gear and tactics, the monetary system, the scriptural references, the ancient literary devices, the doctrine, the story lines and book divisions, the items that would become artifacts, etc. And he would have had no time to edit the manuscript to be the fine, inspiring document that it is.**

**As an occasional writer and self-publisher, I have not felt comfortable publishing books and articles without editing the text many times—often spending ten times as much time researching and editing as in writing the original draft.**

**I remember revising one article 31 times before releasing it for publication! In contrast, Joseph's scribes reported that when he returned from breaks, he picked up where he left off without any attempt to go back and review what he had done before.**

**It is my firm conviction that this feat of translating and transcribing the entire text of the Book of Mormon in so short a time period is not only remarkable, but that it would have been impossible to accomplish without divine help.**

—Jon M. Taylor

## **9. A whole series of miracles was necessary to print and bind the book with the resources that were available and in the time required.**

Gordon L. Weight wrote “an old-time printer’s perspective on printing the original copies of the Book of Mormon” entitled *Miracle on Main Street (Murray, Utah, 2003)*. In it he describes the many challenges of printing the Book of Mormon in early 19<sup>th</sup> Century America. A whole series of miracles was necessary for the book to be published on schedule – or even to be published at all:

E. B. Grandin’s acceptance of the project in the first place, since he had neither the expertise nor the resources to pull it off. He had begun advertising himself as a book printer only three months before he was first contacted regarding printing the Book of Mormon. And he did not want to expose himself to the ridicule of being associated with it.

—The required paper, white and lightweight that was also opaque, was not available at that time period in that area of the country. The process for bleaching the paper to become as white as desired was not developed for another 40 years.

—The “new” type was not available at that time period and in that area of the country and would not be available in the time allowed.

—It was not possible to accomplish the typesetting, printing, and binding for such a major project in the time allowed and with the help available to Grandin.

—The enemies of the truth would certainly not allow the book to be printed and would put up sufficient opposition to cause Grandin to back away from the project.

—The financing was precarious at best, with no progress payments as costs were incurred – only the promise of Martin Harris that he would sell a portion of his farm to pay the costs when the book was completed. Such a sale seemed unlikely at the time.

**Yet Grandin agreed to the project, the paper and type were provided, the work accomplished in the time allowed, the detractors were stopped, the financing was approved, the sale of the farm parcel consummated, and the Book of Mormon completed on time — by April 6, 1830, which was revealed as the anniversary of the Lord’s birth when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was to be formally organized – all in a miraculous fashion. Brother Weight concludes (on p. 25):**

**“After assessing each task and assuming all went well with no sick employees, no mechanical break downs, no legal problems, no mob harassments, no waiting for supplies, etc., it’s clear that the Book of Mormon *should have taken, at a minimum, 17 1/2 months to complete.***

**“Yet, on March 19, 1830, a little over six months after the work began, the *Wayne Sentinel* carried the following announcement: “We are requested to announce that the ‘Book of Mormon’ will be ready for sale on March 26, 1830.”**

—*Gordon L. Weight*

## 10. The Hugh Nibley challenge

“No one on earth, regardless of how educated, has been able to produce such a remarkably consistent, intricate, and influential book. Dr. Hugh Nibley, one of the most renowned LDS scholars in the world, once proposed a test for any who would claim that the Book of Mormon is fictional narrative born of an overactive imagination of Joseph Smith. Focusing on the account of Lehi’s journey from Jerusalem through the Arabian desert to the shore of an ocean, as recorded in 1 Nephi, he suggests that the skeptic sit down and write a history of life, let us say, in Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century A.D. Let him construct his story wholly on the basis of what he happens to know right now about Tibet in the eleventh century – that will fairly represent what was known about ancient Arabia in 1830, i.e., that here was such a place and that it was very mysterious and romantic . . .

“But there will be other obstacles, for in your chronicle of old Tibet we- must insist that you scrupulously observe a number of annoying conditions: (1) you must never make any absurd, impossible, or contradictory statement; (2) when you are finished, you must make no changes in the text – the first edition must stand forever; (3) you must give out that your ‘smooth narrative’ is not fiction but true, nay sacred history; (4) you must invite the ablest orientalist to examine the text with care, and strive diligently to see that your book gets into the hands of the most eager and most competent to expose every flaw in it. The ‘author’ of the Book of Mormon observes all these terrifying rules most scrupulously. (*Lehi in the Desert*, 119. Quoted in

“The Remarkable Book that Changes Lives,” by Brent L. Top, op cit)

For more on Hugh Nibley’s insights, read on.

Let us close this section by quoting the Prophet Joseph Smith himself on the miracle of the Book of Mormon:

## 11. A prophecy by Joseph Smith of evidence to come

**We can not but think the Lord has a hand in bringing to pass this strange act, and proving the Book of Mormon true in the eyes of all the people. . . . It will be as it ever has been, the world will prove Joseph Smith a true prophet by circumstantial evidence, in experiments, as they did Moses and Elijah.**

—*Joseph Smith, 1842*

## OTHER CHOICE OBSERVATIONS ON THE BOOK OF MORMON BY BYU PROFESSOR HUGH NIBLEY

It is likely that no scholar has applied such a brilliant mind and career to the study of the Book of Mormon as has Dr. Hugh Nibley. A few excerpts from numerous papers and books are cited here from *Of All Things: Classic collections from Hugh Nibley* and most of which can also be found in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*.

**No one can know too much about the Book of Mormon.**

*(“Introduction to the unknown book,” CWHN 6:3)*

### The achievement of the Book of Mormon

A century and a quarter ago, a young man shocked and angered the world by bringing out a large book that he set up beside the Bible, not as a commentary or a key to the scriptures, but as original scripture — the revealed word of God to men of old — and as genuine history.

The book itself declares that it is an authentic product of the Near East. It gives a full and circumstantial account of its own origin. It declares that it is but one of many, many such books that have been produced in the course of history and may be hidden in sundry places at this day. It places itself in about the middle of a long list of sacred ‘writings, beginning with the patriarchs and continuing down to the end of human history. It cites now-lost prophetic writings of prime importance, giving the names of their authors. It traces its own cultural roots in all directions, emphasizing the immense breadth and complexity of such connections in the world. It belongs to the same class of literature as the Bible, but, along with a sharper and clearer statement of biblical teachings, contains a formidable mass of historical material unknown to biblical writers but well within the range of modern comparative study since it insists on deriving its whole cultural tradition, even in details, directly from a specific time and place in the Old World.

**The Book of Mormon is God’s challenge to the world. It was given to the world not as a sign to convert it but as a testimony to convict it. In every dispensation the world must be left without excuse. It is given without reservation or qualification as a true history and the word of God.**

*(“Historicity of the Bible,” CWHN 1:15-16)*

Where else [but in the Book of Mormon] will one find such inexhaustible invention combined with such unerring accuracy and consistency? To put it facetiously but not unfairly, the artist must not only balance a bowl of goldfish and three lighted candles on the end of a broomstick while fighting off a swarm of gadflies, but he must at the same time be carving an immortal piece of statuary from a lump of solid diorite.

In an undertaking like this, merely to avoid total confusion and complete disaster would be ~ superhuman achievement. But that is not the assignment; that is only a coincidental detail to the main business at hand, which is, with all this consummately skillful handling of mere technical detail, to have something to say; not merely significant, but profound and moving, and so relevant to the peculiar conditions of our own day as to speak to our ears with a voice of thunder.

*(“Strange Things Strangely Told,” CWHN 7:141)*

It is a surprisingly big book, supplying quite enough rope for a charlatan to hang himself a hundred times. As the work of an imposter it must unavoidably bear all the marks of fraud. It should be poorly organized, shallow, artificial, patchy, and unoriginal. It should display a pretentious vocabulary (the Book of Mormon uses only 3,000 words), overdrawn stock characters, melodramatic situations, gaudy and overdone descriptions, bombastic diction. . . .

Whether one believes its story or not, the severest critic of the Book of Mormon, if he reads it with care at all, must admit that it is the exact opposite. . . . It is carefully organized, specific, sober, factual, and perfectly consistent

*(“Good People and Bad People,” CWHN 7:337-38)*

## The Book of Mormon and other holy writings

In three ways the Book of Mormon by implication rejected the conventional ideas of what the Bible is supposed to be: (1) by its mere existence it refuted the idea of a “once-for-all” word of God; (2) by allowing for the mistakes of men in the pages of scripture it rejected the idea of an infallible book; (3) and by its free and flexible quotations from the Bible it rejected the idea of a fixed, immutable, letter-perfect text. (“A New Age of Discovery,” *CW.HN* 7:20)

Just as the New Testament clarified the long misunderstood message of the Old, so the Book of Mormon is held to reiterate the messages of both testaments in a way that restores their full meaning.

(“The Mormon View of the Book of Mormon,” *CWHN* 8:259-60)

**We can say without hesitation that the first chapter of the Book of Mormon, the Testament of Lehi, has the authenticity of a truly ancient pseudepigraphic writing stamped all over it. It is a well-nigh perfect example of the genre.**

(“To Open the Last Dispensation,” *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. by Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks)

## Tests and evidences

A young man once long ago claimed he had found a large diamond in his field as he was ploughing. He put the stone on display to the public free of charge, and everyone took sides. A psychologist showed, by citing some famous case studies, that the young man was suffering from a well-known form of delusion. An historian showed that other men have also claimed to have found diamonds in fields and been deceived. A geologist proved that there were no diamonds in the area but only quartz. The young man had been fooled by a quartz. When asked to inspect the stone itself, the geologist declined with a weary, tolerant smile and kindly shake of the head.

An English professor showed that the young man in describing his stone used the very same language that others had used in describing uncut diamonds. He was, therefore, simply speaking the common language of his time. A sociologist showed that only three out of 177 florists’ assistants in four major cities believed the stone was genuine. A clergyman wrote a book to show that it was not the young man but someone else who had found the stone.

Finally an indigent jeweler named Snite pointed out that since the stone was still available for examination the answer to the question of whether it was a diamond or not had absolutely nothing to do with who found it, or whether the finder was honest or sane, or who believed him, or whether he would know a diamond from a brick, or whether diamonds had ever been found in fields, or whether people had ever been fooled by quartz or glass, but was to be answered simply and solely by putting the stone to certain well-known tests for diamonds.

Experts on diamonds were called in. Some of them declared it genuine. The others made nervous jokes about it and declared that they could not very well jeopardize their dignity and reputations by appearing to take the thing too seriously. To hide the bad impression thus made, someone came out with the theory that the stone was really a synthetic diamond, very skillfully made, but a fake just the same. The objection to this is that **the production of a good synthetic diamond 120 years ago would have been an even more remarkable feat than the finding of a real one.**

“Lehi the Winner,” *CWHN* 5:121—22

## Internal evidence

It is rarely necessary to go any further than the document itself to find enough clues to condemn it, and if the text is a long one, and an historical document in the bargain, the absolute certainty of inner contradictions is enough to assure adequate testing. **This makes the Book of Mormon preeminently testable, and we may list the following points on which certainty is obtainable.**

**1. The mere existence of the book is a powerful argument in favor of its authenticity.**

**2, In giving us a long hook, the author forces us to concede that. he is not playing tricks.**

**3, This writer never falls back on the accepted immunities of double meaning and religious interpretations in the manner of the Swedenborgians or the schoolmen. This refusal to claim any special privileges is an evidence of good faith.**

**4. Shysters may be diligent enough, in their way, but the object of their trickery is to avoid hard work, and this is not the sort of laborious task they give themselves.**

**5. Upon close examination all the many apparent contradictions in the Book of Mormon disappear. It passes the sure test of authenticity with flying colors.**



**6. The style is not that of anyone trying to write well. . . . Here is a book with all the elements of an intensely romantic adventure tale of far-away and long-ago, and the author turns down innumerable chances to please his public!**

**7. There are few plays on words, few rhetorical subtleties, no reveling in abstract terms, no excess of esoteric language or doctrine to require the trained interpreter.**

**8. Whoever wrote the book must have been a very intelligent and experienced person; yet such people in 1830 did not produce books with rudimentary vocabularies. This cannot be the work of any simple clown, but neither can it be that of an able and educated contemporary.**

**9. The extremely limited vocabulary suggests another piece of internal evidence to the reader. The Book of Mormon never makes any attempt to be clever.**

**10. Since it claims to be translated by divine power, the Book of Mormon also claims all the authority— and responsibility— of the original text. The author leaves himself no philological loopholes, though the book, stemming from a number of nations and languages, offers opportunity for many of them.**

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” (JJWHN 8:65—69; ellipses omitted)

## External evidence

Whatever external evidence [a researcher] finds must fulfill three conditions:

1. The Book of Mormon must make clear and specific statements about certain concrete, objective things.

2. Other sources, ancient and modern, must make equally clear and objective statements about the same things, agreeing substantially with what the Book of Mormon says about them.

3. There must be clear proof that there has been no collusion between the two reports, i.e., that Joseph Smith could not possibly have knowledge of the source by which his account is being “controlled” or of any other source that could give him the information contained in the Book of Mormon.

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study,” CWHN 8:69-70

## Circumstantial evidence

Entirely apart from the contents of the Book of Mormon and the external evidences that might support it, there are certain circumstances attending its

production which cannot be explained on grounds other than those given by Joseph Smith. These may be listed briefly:

**1. There is the testimony of the witnesses.**

**2. The youth and inexperience of Joseph Smith at the time when he took full responsibility for the publication of the book—proof (a) that he could not have produced it himself and (b) that he was not acting for someone else, for his behavior at all times displayed independence.**

**3. The absence of notes and sources.**

**4. The short time of production.**

**5. The fact that there was only one version of the book ever published (with minor changes in each printing). This is most significant. It is now known that the Koran, the only book claiming an equal amount of divine inspiration and accuracy, was completely re-edited at least three times during the lifetime of Mohammed.**

**6. This brings up the unhesitating and unchanging position of Joseph Smith regarding his revelations. . . . From the day the Book of Mormon came from the press, Joseph Smith never ceased to spread it abroad, and he never changed his attitude towards it. What creative writer would not blush for the production of such youth and inexperience twenty years after? What imposter would not lie awake nights worrying about the slips and errors of this massive and pretentious product of his youthful indiscretion and roguery? Yet, since the Prophet was having revelations all along, nothing would have been easier, had he the slightest shadow of a misgiving, than to issue a new, revised, and improved edition, or to recall the book altogether, limit its circulation, claim it consisted of mysteries to be grasped by the . . . initiated alone, say it was to be interpreted only in a “religious” sense, or supersede it by something else. The Saints who believed the Prophet were the only ones who took the book seriously anyway.**

**7. There has never been any air of mystery about the Book of Mormon. There is no secrecy connected with it at the time of publication or today.**

**8. Finally, though the success of the book is not proof of its divinity, the type of people it has appealed to — sincere, simple, direct, highly unhysterical, and nonmystical — is circumstantial evidence for its honesty. It has very solid supporters.**

When one considers that any one of the above arguments makes it very hard to explain the Book of Mormon as a fraud, one wonders if a corresponding list of arguments against the book

**might not be produced. For such a list one waits with interest but in vain. At present the higher critics are scolding the Book of Mormon for not talking like the dean of a divinity school. We might as well admit it, the Victorian platitudes are simply not there.**

“New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study” CWHN 8:71-72

The great boldness and originality of writings attributed to Joseph Smith are displayed in their full scope and splendor in the account, contained in what is called 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon, of how the Lord Jesus Christ after his resurrection visited some of his “other sheep” in the New World and set up his church among them. **It would be hard to imagine a project more dangerous to life and limb or perilous to the soul than that of authoring, and recommending to the Christian world as holy scripture, writings purporting to contain an accurate account of the deeds of the Lord among men after his resurrection, including lengthy transcripts of the very words he spoke. Nothing short of absolute integrity could stand up to the consequences of such daring in nineteenth-century America.**

We know exactly how his neighbors reacted to the claims of Joseph Smith, and it was not (as it had become customary to insist) with the complacent or sympathetic tolerance of backwoods “Yorkers,” to whom such things were supposedly everyday experience: nothing could equal the indignation and rage excited among them by the name and message of Joseph Smith.

“Christ among the Ruins,” CWHN 8:407

## Relationship to other records

From what oriental romance, then, was the book of 1 Nephi stolen? Compare it with any attempts to seize the letter and the spirit of the glamorous East, from Voltaire to Grillparzer, nay, with the soberest oriental histories of the time, and it will immediately become apparent how unreal, extravagant, overdone, and stereotyped they all are, and how scrupulously Nephi has avoided all the pitfalls into which, even the best scholars were sure to fall. **There is no point at all to the question: Who wrote the Book of Mormon? It would have been quite as impossible for the most learned man alive in 1830 to have written the book as it was for Joseph Smith.**

“Lehi the Winner,” CWHN 5:123

To the trained eye, every document of considerable length is bound to betray the real setting in which it was produced. This can be illustrated by something Martin Luther wrote two days before his death: “No man can understand the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* of Virgil who has not been a herdsman or fanner for at least five years. And no one can understand Cicero’s letters, I maintain, who has not been concerned with significant affairs of state for twenty years. And no one can get an adequate feeling for the Scriptures who has not guided religious communities by the prophets for a hundred years.”

What is the world of experiences and ideas that one finds behind the Book of Mormon? What is the real *Sitz im Leben* [milieu]? We can start with actual experiences, not merely ideas, but things of a strictly objective and therefore testable nature. For example, **the book describes in considerable detail what is supposed to be a great earthquake somewhere in Central America, and another time it sets forth the particulars of ancient olive culture. Here are things we can check up on; but to do so we must go to sources made available by scholars long since the days of Joseph Smith. Where *he* could have learned all about major Central American earthquakes or the fine points of Mediterranean olive culture remains a question.**

“Some Fairly Foolproof Tests,” CWHN 7:231

**It is not enough to show, even if [critics] could, that there are mistakes in the Book of Mormon, for all humans make mistakes. What they must explain is how the “author” of the book happened to get so many things right.**

“Lehi the Winner,” CWHN 5:122

## Lachish letters

What are the chances of the many parallels between the Lachish Letters and the opening chapter of the Book of Mormon being the product of mere coincidence?

1. First consider the fact that only one piece of evidence could possibly bring us into the Lehi picture, and that one piece of evidence happens to be the *only* first-hand writing surviving from the entire scope of Old Testament history. Lehi’s story covers less than ten years in the thousand-year history of the Book of Mormon, and the Lachish Letters cover the same tiny band of a vast spectrum – and they both happen to be the *same* years!

2. Not only in time but in place do they fit neatly into the same narrow slot, and the people with which they deal also belong to the same classes of society and are confronted by the same peculiar problems.

3. With the Book of Mormon account being as detailed and specific as it is, it is quite a piece of luck that there is nothing in the Lachish Letters that in any way contradicts its story— that in itself should be given serious consideration. Is it just luck?

4. Both documents account for their existence by indicating specifically the techniques and usages of writing and recording in their day, telling of the same means of transmitting, editing, and storing records.

5. The proximity of Egypt and its influence on writing has a paramount place in both stories.

6. Both stories confront us with dynastic confusion during a transition of kingship.

7. Both abound in proper names in which the - *yahu* ending is prominent in a number of forms.

8. In both, the religious significance of those names gives indication of a pious reformist movement among the people.

9. The peculiar name of Jaush (Josh), since it is not found in the Bible, is remarkable as the name borne by a high-ranking field officer in both the Lachish Letters and the Book of Mormon.

10. in both reports, prophets of gloom operating in and around Jerusalem are sought by the government as criminals for spreading defeatism.

11. The Rekhabeite background is strongly suggested in both accounts, with inspired leaders and their followers fleeing to the hills and caves.

12. Political partisanship and internal connections cause division, recriminations, and heartbreak in the best of families.

13. The conflicting ideologies – practical vs. religious, materialist vs. spiritual – emerge in two views of the religious leader or prophet as a *piqqeah*, “a visionary man,” a term either of praise or of contempt – an impractical dreamer.

14. For some unexplained reason, the anti-king parties both flee not towards Babylon but towards Egypt, “the broken reed.”

15. The offices and doings of Laban and Jaush present a complex parallel, indicative of a special military type and calling not found in the Bible.

16. Almost casual references to certain doings by night create the same atmosphere of tension and danger in both stories.

17. Little Nedabyahu fits almost too well into the slot occupied by the Book of Mormon Mulek, “the little king,” who never came to rule but escaped with a party of refugees to the New World.

18. The whole business of keeping, transmitting, and storing records follows the same procedure in both books.

“The Lachish Letters,” CWRN 8:400—401

## Contemporary relevance

In my youth I thought the Book of Mormon was much too preoccupied with extreme situations, situations that had little bearing on the real world of everyday life and ordinary human affairs. **What on earth could the total extermination of nations have to do with life in the enlightened modern world?**

**Today no comment on that is necessary. Moroni gives it to us straight: This is the way it was before, and this is the way it is going to be again, unless there is a great repentance.**

“Prophetic Book of Mormons” CWHN 8:468

Since the first step in the Nephite disease is exposure to wealth, the only sure cure or prevention would seem to be strict avoidance of wealth. One can avoid almost any disease by giving up eating altogether, but there must be a better way.

One of Satan’s favorite tricks is to send ailing souls after the wrong cure, leading them by his false diagnosis to “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.” In this he is ably abetted by those physicians who would force us to choose between their own violent, extreme, and sometimes fantastic remedies and a sure and agonizing death. Either accept the Wackleberrry Cure, they say, or resign yourselves to a frightful and certain end – no other alternative is conceivable. And so by instilling fear with one hand and offering an only hope with the other such practitioners gain a following.

**But the Book of Mormon is against violent remedies, It prescribes the gentlest of treatments – charity, accompanied by strong and steady doses of preaching of the gospel. The final analysis of Mormon and Moroni was that the fatal weakness of the Nephites was lack of charity. And whenever the worst epidemics of Nephite disease were brought under control and even stamped out, it was always through a marvelous display of charity and forbearance by such great souls as Alma, Ammon, Moroni, or Nephi or his father Helaman, and specifically through the preaching of the word, which Alma knew was more effective than any surgery.**

“Prophesy in the Book of Mormon,” CWHN 7:392—93

I have always thought in reading the Book of Mormon,

**“Woe to the generation that understands this book!”**

To our fathers, once the great persecutions ceased, the story of the Nephites and the Lamanites was something rather strange, unreal, and faraway – even to the point of being romantic. The last generation did not make much of the Book of Mormon. But now with every passing year this great and portentous story becomes more and more familiar and more frighteningly like our own.

“The Book of Mormon as a Witness,” CWHN 3:2 14

Why do you think the Book of Mormon was given to us? **Angels do not come on trivial errands, to deliver books for occasional light reading to people whom they do not really concern. The matter in the Book of Mormon was selected, as we are often reminded, with scrupulous care and with particular readers in mind. For some reason there has been chosen for our attention a story of how and why two previous civilizations on this continent were utterly destroyed.**

Let the modern reader of this sad and disturbing tale from the dust choose to pass lightly over those fearful passages that come too close to home, the main theme is repeated again and again so that almost any Latter-day Saint child can tell you what it is. The people were good so God made them prosperous, and when they were bad, they got wiped out. What few people can tell you are the steps by which the fatal declension took place, without which the story is jejune and naive.

“Freemen and King-men,” CWHN 8:365—66

## Believing the Book of Mormon

How could anyone put up a halfway decent defense of the Book of Mormon without being prejudiced in its favor? There is nothing wrong with having and admitting two sides in a controversy. By definition every theory is controversial, and the better the theory the more highly controversial. There can be no more constructive approach to a controversial issue like this one than to have each side present the evidence which it finds most convincing, always bearing in mind that authority is not evidence and that name dropping is as futile as name calling. Sweeping statements and general impressions are sometimes useful in the process of getting one’s bearings and

taking up a position, but they cannot serve as evidence because they are expressions of personal impressions which are non-transferable....

**The evidence that will prove or disprove the Book of Mormon does not exist. When, indeed, is a thing proven? Only when an individual has accumulated in his own consciousness enough observations, impressions, reasonings, and feelings to satisfy him personally that it is so. The same evidence which convinces one expert may leave another completely unsatisfied; the impressions that build up the definite proof are themselves nontransferable.**

Preface to *Since Cumorah*, CWHN 7:xiii-xiv

The Book of Mormon, like the Bible, is an organic whole. We are asking the literary experts to produce just one modern work which resembles it as such. There are, we believe, plenty of *ancient* parallels, but if the Book of Mormon is a fraud, a cheat, a copy, a theft, and so on, as people have said it is, we have every right to ask for a sampling of the abundant and obvious sources from which it was taken. Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* is no more like the Book of Mormon than a telephone directory. All attempts to find contemporary works which the Book of Mormon even remotely resembles have been conspicuous failures.

So it has been necessary to explain the book as a work of pure and absolute fiction, a nonreligious, money-making romance. But one need only read a page of the book at random to see that it is a religious book through and through, and one need only read the title page of the first edition to see that it is given to the world as holy scripture, no less. Here we come to the crux of the whole matter.

**The whole force and meaning of the Book of Mormon rests on one proposition: that it is true. It was written and published to be believed.**

**People who believe the Book of Mormon (and this writer is one of them) think it is the most wonderful document in the world. But if it were not true, the writer could not imagine a more dismal performance.**

**There is nothing paradoxical in this. As Aristotle noted, the better a thing is, the more depraved is a spurious imitation of it.**

An imitation nursery rhyme may be almost as good as an original, but a knowingly faked mathematical equation would be the abomination of desolation. Curves and equations derive all their value not from the hard work they represent or the neatness with which they are presented on paper, but from one fact alone – the fact that they speak the truth and communicate valid knowledge. Without that they are less than nothing. To those who understand and believe Einstein’s equation that  $E = mc^2$  [Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared], that statement is a revelation of power. To those who do not understand or believe it (and there are many!) it is nothing short of an insolent and blasphemous fraud. So it is with the Book of Mormon, which if believed is a revelation of power but otherwise is a nonsensical jumble....

It will be said that this merely proves that the greatness of the Book of Mormon lies entirely in the mind of the reader. Not entirely! There are people who loathe Bach and can’t stand Beethoven. It was once as popular among clever and educated people to disdain Homer and Shakespeare as barbaric as it is now proper to rhapsodize about them in Great Books clubs. Different readers react differently to these things – but they must have something valid to work on.

**We are not laying down rules for taste or saying that the Book of Mormon is good because some people like it or bad because others do not. What we are saying is that the Book of Mormon, whatever one may think of it, is one of the great realities of our time, and that what makes it so is that certain people believe it.** Its literary or artistic qualities do not enter into the discussion. **It was written to be believed. Its one and only merit is truth. Without that merit, it is all that nonbelievers say it is. With that merit, it is all that believers say it is.**

“New Approaches to Book of Monnon Study,” CWHN 8:84-86

Our prophets spare us the usual clichés about higher spiritual values, the brotherhood of man, and how our problems would be solved if everybody only did this or that. The way out is not to be found in the self-consoling merry-go-round of philosophy, the heroic self-dramatization of literature and art, or the sell-reassuring posturings of science and scholarship. Men have tried everything for a long time and the idea that their condition has improved rests entirely on an imaginary reconstruction of the past devised to prove that very proposition. Not that the theory may not be right, but at present we just don’t know; and **for a world in as dire a predicament as ours that can guarantee no long centuries of quiet research ahead and seems to need some quick and definite**

**assistance if it is to survive at all, it might pay to consider what Mormon and Moroni have to offer.**

**If mankind is to get any real help it must come from outside, and it does. First of all, angels, yes, angels, must come to explain and establish things.**

“Momentary Conclusion,” CWHN 7:402—3

An angel is a messenger; when he visits he not only talks with people, he converses with them – that is the word used both in the Book of Mormon and in the Bible. The angels circulated among men, women, and especially the children and chatted with them. That is how they carry out their mission or ministry. **Why don’t we see angels? The people raise that question in the Book of Mormon, and the answer there is very clear. Angels do not pose as ornamental fixtures; they come only to deliver important messages and at moments of crisis.** Throughout the Book of Mormon, when things reach a hopeless condition, it is the visit of an angel which moves things off dead center and invariably inaugurates a new turn of things. They appear only to specially qualified persons – men, women, and children – not high officials. But if angels do not come, we are left on our own resources in a perilous condition. How fortunate that the whole Book of Mormon story begins with Moroni, the clinically specific and detailed account of an angel’s visit to Joseph!

“The Book of Mormon: Forty Years After,” CWHN 8:549

This is not a handing down of testimony, for each of these messengers calls upon the others to seek testimony for themselves by faith and prayer; there are no second or third-hand testimonies....

Is there anything to this? You will never find out, say our prophets, if you begin denying everything. . . . All that Mormon and Moroni ask of the reader is, don’t fight it, don’t block it, give it a chance! If it does not work, then you can forget it; but it is not asking too much that men invest a little of their time and effort in an enterprise in which they stand to win everything and lose nothing – especially now, when so many know that as things are they stand to win nothing. Let the hesitant consider that the way of faith is the way of science, too: “Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith,” says Moroni (Ether 12:6). First we “make the experiment” (Alma 32:27) in which it is fair game to hope for results, since without hope nobody would go through with the thing at all (Moroni 10:22), and then we get our answers. That is the way it is done in the laboratory; what could be fairer?

“Momentary Conclusion,” CWHN 7:403-4

## PRIMARY PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

From *The Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (pages 140-145) and from *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, by Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, pages 5-8

Purposes identified in *The Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (pages 140-145):

—**To be a sign of the Father’s work.** The Book of Mormon is one of the signs of the times. It is an announcement that the restoration of the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ has taken place in the last days. Its presence is a sign that The Church of Jesus Christ (Zion) has been reestablished and that the work of gathering, called “the work of the Father,” is underway. (3 Nephi 21:7)

—**To confound false doctrine.** Millennia ago the Lord told Joseph of Egypt that one day the Bible and the Book of Mormon would grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines.” (2 Ne. 3:12 – See p. 141 of *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* for eight false doctrines the Book of Mormon would correct.)

—**To the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ** (title page of The Book of Mormon). The book truly brings us to an understanding and appreciation of what Christ did and is doing for us.

—**To latter-day people, that we might learn to be more wise [than they].** Mormon saw our day and said that what he felt inspired to include in the record would have great relevance to a latter-day audience—that readers may “learn to be more wise” than were the Nephites. (Mormon 9:31)

—**To prove to the world that God inspires men and calls them to his work in the latter days.** (D&C 20:11) It is extremely faith-promoting to study the lives of the those associated with Joseph Smith in restoring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days. Numerous miracles were experienced by them.

—**To prove to the world that the holy scriptures are true;** i.e., to confirm and bear witness of the essential truthfulness of the Bible. (D&C 20:11)

—**To restore plain and precious truths of the Gospel**—which had been lost through the centuries (1 Ne. 13:28-29). One who understands the Book of Mormon and the modern revelations will observe the paucity of understanding about Christ and His gospel as depicted in the media and in sermons and writings

of Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical preachers. I find the differences between the two stark, which enhances my testimony of the Book of Mormon.

—**To reveal the enemies of Christ**—whether people, teachings, philosophies, practices, temptations, or sins, which oppose the doctrine of Christ and the revealed plan of salvation.

—**To show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers** (title page of The Book of Mormon) (The above purposes were paraphrased from the *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 140-145)

McConkie and Millet (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, pages 5-8) suggest seven reasons for the Book of Mormon:

“1. **The Book of Mormon is an independent witness that Jesus is the Christ.** It has become increasingly popular in recent years for those in the scholarly world to challenge the authenticity of the Bible. This is particularly so of the Gospels and their testimony of the divine Sonship of Christ and the sayings attributed to him. Much that is contained within the holy writ is now judged to be a pious fraud. . . The most perfect response to these modern scribes would be an independent scriptural record to come forth, one totally independent of the Bible. This is precisely what the Book of Mormon is—an independent witness of Christ, his divine Sonship, and his teachings.

“2. **The Book of Mormon is a second witness of the Bible.** It is the eternal decree, in order that man be not deceived by false doctrines and false Christs, that all saving truths be established in the mouth of two or more witnesses. . . As it is an [unmatched and] independent witness of Christ, so it is an [unmatched announcement and] independent witness of his doctrines. . . .

“3. **God, who has directed that we “prove all things” and “hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. 5:21), granted us the Book of Mormon as tangible “proof” that Joseph Smith is a prophet. . .**

**“4. The Book of Mormon stands as proof that God is in reality the same yesterday, today, and forever.** If indeed God is unchangeable, if in reality he is no respecter of persons, if in fact he is forever the same, the only way that we can know with perfect assurance that he spoke to the ancients through prophets would be his speaking to us through prophets [as well as to prophets in the New World]. .

**“5. Myriad conflicting doctrines claim parentage from the Bible, thus dramatizing the need for an independent source—one of pure lineage, a lineage that traces itself directly from God to prophet to man – a source which the pen of man has neither added to nor taken from so that the gospel in its purity might be known. . .**

**“The Book of Mormon initiated the doctrinal restoration.** It was the text that prepared Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery for baptism and for the priesthood. The restoration of its doctrines preceded the organization of the Church. The Book of Mormon teaches virtually every fundamental doctrine of the gospel with a power and clarity far surpassing that found in the Bible. Since the purest evidence of the verity of the restored gospel is its doctrines, and since faith cannot be exercised in false principles, **the Book of Mormon is destined to become the source of greater understanding and faith than any book ever written.**

**“6. In the providence of God the Book of Mormon has been ordained as the scriptural testimony which gathers Israel to the faith of their ancient fathers.**

**“7. The spiritual power and purity of doctrine in the Book of Mormon can bring a man nearer to God than any other book** [as promised by Joseph Smith]. **There is a spiritual endowment associated with faithful study of the Book of Mormon: ‘Whosoever believeth on my words,’** the Lord said in reference to the Book of Mormon, **‘them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit.’** (D&C 5:16)”

President *Ezra Taft Benson* counseled: **“What is the main purpose of the Book of Mormon? To bring men to Christ and to be reconciled to him, and then to join his church—in that order.”** (See 2 Nephi 25:23; D&C 20:11-14, 35-37) (*Ensign*, Nov. 1984, p. 6)

**“The Book of Mormon was written for us today. God is the author of the book.** It is a record of a fallen people, compiled by inspired men for our blessing today. Those people never had the book—it was meant for us.

Mormon, the ancient prophet after whom the book is named, abridged centuries of records. **God, who knows the end from the beginning, told him what to include in his abridgment that we would need for our day.”** (*Ensign*, May 1975, p. 63)

**“Members of the Church should know the Book of Mormon better than any other book. Not only should we know what history and faith-promoting stories it contains, but we should understand its teachings. . . .**

**“I have noted within the Church the difference in discernment, in insight, conviction, and spirit between those who know and love the Book of Mormon and those who do not. That book is a great sifter.”** (“Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *New Era*, May 1975, p. 19)

**“We do not have to prove the Book of Mormon is true. The book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it! 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.”** (*Ensign*, Nov. 1984, p.8)

Two years later, Pres. Benson quoted this warning: **“And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon.”** (D&C 84:54-57) (*Ensign*, November 1986, pp. 4 )

**I would like to speak about one of the most significant gifts given to the world in modern times. The gift I am thinking of is more important than any of the inventions that have come out of the industrial and technological revolutions. This is a gift of greater value to mankind than even the many wonderful advances we have seen in modern medicine. It is of greater worth to mankind than the development of flight or space travel. I speak of the gift of the Book of Mormon, given to mankind 156 years ago. . .**

*— President Ezra Taft Benson*

**“The Prophet’s expression that ‘the Book of Mormon is the keystone of our religion’ means precisely what it says. The keystone is the central stone in the top of the arch. If that stone is removed, then the arch crumbles, which, in effect, means that – Mormonism so-called—which actually is the gospel of Christ, restored anew in this day—stands or falls with the truth or the falsity of the Book of Mormon. .**

**“The Book of Mormon—which has come forth to prove that God inspires men and calls them to his holy work in this age and generation—establishes the verity of these great truths which comprise the message of the restoration. If the Book of Mormon is true, our message to the world is truth; the truth of this message is established in and through this book. . . .**

*— Elder Bruce R. McConkie*

“The Book of Mormon stands as a witness of the divine Sonship of Christ; it has come forth for ‘ . . . the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations— . . .’ (Preface to the Book of Mormon.)

**“This book is also a witness of the divine mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the divinity of the Church set up under his instrumentality. It establishes and proves to the world that Joseph Smith is a prophet, for he received the book from a resurrected personage and translated it by the gift and power of God. And since the Book of Mormon came by revelation, which included the ministering of angels, then obviously Joseph Smith also received other revelations and was ministered to by other heavenly beings. Among those revelations was the command to organize the Church. The Church is thus the one true Church because it was set up by a prophet acting under command of God. Thus the truth of the message of the restoration is established in and through and by means of the Book of Mormon.”**  
*(Conference Report, April 1961, pp. 39-40)*



## PROMINENT THEMES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Quoted and summarized from *The Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, (pages 145-155)

**1. Becoming convinced of sin.** “The Lord converts people by convincing them of their sins in order to redeem them: ‘I will work a great . . . work among the children of men, either to the convincing of them [of their sins] unto peace and life eternal, or unto the deliverance of them to the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds’ (1 Nephi 14:7). Through Joseph Smith he declared, ‘**I will work a marvelous work among the children of men, unto the convincing of many of their sins’ for two reasons: (1) so ‘that they may come unto repentance,’ and (2) so ‘that they may come unto the kingdom of my Father,’ neither being possible without a revealed witness of one’s personal sinfulness. (D&C 18:44)**” (145)

Classic examples of the Lord’s power to be convinced of their sins was Alma and the sons of Mosiah. The latter were described as “the very vilest of sinners,” and yet they performed immeasurable good after their repentance.

**2. Deliverance from bondage.** Nephi announced his intent to show that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all who have faith “to make them mighty even to the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20). This power included the power to deliver man from all bondages.

**3. Come unto Christ.** Nephi wrote: “**And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.**” (2 Ne. 25:26) This “**come unto Christ**” theme pervades the Book of Mormon, even to the end. (Moro. 10:30-32)

**4. Cycles of prosperity and destruction.** Book of Mormon prophets promised that when the people kept the commandments, they would prosper in the land. But then they became proud and needed to humble themselves again or they would be destroyed.

**5. Freedom to choose happiness or misery.** “Throughout the Book of Mormon, readers can learn about Christ and the path to happiness, or Satan and the path to misery. The Book of Mormon contains stories of individuals and groups who make choices that put them on one path or the other, and then shows the

consequences that result from these choices. Behaviors, attitudes, practices, and people representative of the two paths are contrasted so readers can clearly see what leads away from Christ as opposed to what leads to him.” (151)

**6. Obedience.** “In a gospel sense, obedience is the conscious and willing adherence to the will and commandments of God. Such obedience is a theme that reverberates throughout the Book of Mormon. . .

“Obedience is more than compliance. It requires a willing and committed heart, leading to total fidelity and exactness in observance of God’s laws.” (152)

Some related concepts apply: “Obedience brings the blessings of heaven. . . The Lord promises his assistance to those who faithfully strive to do his will. . . Just as obedience brings the blessings of heaven, so does disobedience result in unhappy consequences. . . There can be no greater example of obedience, no greater testimony of its importance, than that provided by the Savior himself.” . . (153)

**7. Remember, remembrance.** “. . . From Nephi to Moroni, Book of Mormon prophets constantly urge, counsel, and command the people to remember their Lord, their forebears, their history, their blessings, their promises, their covenants, their own experiences, and their deliverance from captivity. In addition to sending prophets, the Lord on occasion sent pestilence and famine to stir this people to remembrance. He also allows wars, captivity, and destruction to occur for the same purpose.

“But the act of remembering means much more than simply calling to mind things from the past. Rather, as in the Bible, this remembering implies a course of action as well as a train of thought; it implies a way of living, not just an item of intellection. . . And in the sacramental prayer, remembering is parallel with keeping the commandments. . . .” (154)

**8. Restoration of the house of Israel.** . . . In addition to prophecies of scattering, destruction, captivity, and lost promises, prophets foretold of a day of restoration—a day when scattered Israel would come back to their God, and the covenant would be reestablished. They would be blessed, prospered, and eventually gathered back to the land of their inheritance. (403)

## DOCTRINAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Quoted from Volume I of *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, by Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet

To those who are familiar with the points of contention, fundamental flaws, and profound doubts in the various religious denominations today, the Book of Mormon is a Godsend – and not just in the manner of its coming forth. It is inspiring to me to compare the clear and consistent doctrines taught in every book of the Book of Mormon with the doctrines, or lack thereof, expressed by those of other faiths.

**The situation in apostate Christianity is as Jesus Christ told Joseph Smith in the First Vision: “. . . their creeds were an abomination in his sight; . . .they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. . .” No matter how well-meaning they may be, the brightest theologians cannot get it right without revelation.**

I have Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet to thank for identifying key doctrinal contributions of the Book of Mormon in their outstanding four-volume series entitled *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (The following is quoted from pages 8-16 of Volume 1):

The Book of Mormon is so effective in responding to points of contention among the various religious denominations that its critics now argue that it cannot be true because it is too relevant to our day. How, they reason, could prophets living hundreds of years ago possibly respond so perfectly to modern theological debates? Significantly, the Book of Mormon even responds to this objection. Moroni put it thus: “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.)

This commentary has been written to call the reader’s attention to the clarity and power of the doctrines of Christ as restored to us in the Book of Mormon. Our sole purpose is to involve the reader more deeply with and perhaps give a greater appreciation for the doctrines of salvation as they have been restored. Let us briefly take a dozen illustrations of the priceless gems of spiritual truths which, were it not for the Book of Mormon, we would not have.

**1. *Jesus as the Son of God.* No doctrine is more fundamental to true Christianity than that of the**

**divine Sonship of Christ. On this matter the Old Testament is silent, the New Testament confused.** Matthew is twice recorded as saying that Jesus is the son of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:18, 20), while Luke tells us that, though Mary would be overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, the child conceived in her womb would be the “Son of the Highest” and that he was to be called “the Son of God” (Luke 1:31, 35). It is the Book of Mormon that resolves the matter. In vision Nephi saw Mary “carried away in the Spirit,” apparently to the presence of God. Thus the Son of God was conceived, as Nephi tells us, “after the manner of the flesh,” and Nephi testified that he is “the Son of the Eternal Father!” (1 Nephi 11:16-21.) Prophesying of the same event, Alma described Mary as “a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10).

**The importance of the matter [of the Christ as the literal son of God the Father] cannot be overstated, for it determines the very nature of the Atonement. A God of spirit essence cannot shed his blood in an atoning sacrifice, nor could such a one father a child in the flesh. Neither could an exalted, resurrected, and glorified being make a blood sacrifice, for the bodies of such do not contain the corruptible element of blood. Only the offspring of an immortal being, from whom the gift to live endlessly could be inherited, in union with one who is mortal, a personage of flesh and blood, could say of his own life, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself [having obtained such capacity from my mortal mother]. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again [which power I inherited from my immortal father].” (John 10:18)**

**2. *Jesus as the Christ.*** We observe with some interest that **critics of the Book of Mormon are offended with the book, not because of its failure to teach and testify of Christ. but rather because it is so Christ-centered.**

A Christian scholar in a comparison of the 3 Nephi account of the Sermon on the Mount with the version in Matthew observed that the Book of Mormon placed a much stronger emphasis on the commission of the Twelve, the necessity of baptism, and believing in the words of Christ than does Matthew. He then suggested that the beauty of the biblical account was in its ambiguity, and that it was a characteristic of cults to desire too many answers. The seeking of continuous revelation he likened to the putting of too much glitter on the Christmas tree. He suggested that we think of Jesus as a teacher of righteousness rather than the source of authority and salvation.

Others have objected to the Book of Mormon because of its constant reference to Christ and his church prior to what the world calls the Christian era. The strength of this argument rests in the fact that neither the name *Christ* or the word *church* appears in modern translations of the Old Testament. It is reasoned that there could have been no church organization until the meridian of time and that the peoples and prophets of the Old Testament did not know of Christ. In sharp contrast with the idea that the faithful of Old Testament times knew little if anything of Christ and that they were not believing Christians, Jacob the son of Lehi, some six hundred years before the birth of Christ, wrote as follows:

“For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that **we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us.** Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him.” (Jacob 4:4-5)

One of the glorious truths restored in the Book of Mormon is that the knowledge of Christ and his saving doctrines was enjoyed by faithful souls from the beginning of time. Such doctrine evidences the Book of Mormon’s testimony of a God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

**3. Christ as the Promised Messiah.** It is generally agreed that Isaiah 53 is the greatest of the Old Testament messianic prophecies. This prophecy has been variously interpreted as having reference to Isaiah, the nation of the Jews, and Christ. No such ambiguity exists in the messianic prophecies of the Book of Mormon. In fact, Abinadi quotes Isaiah 53 in its entirety and then gives a marvelously insightful interpretation of it. (See Mosiah 13-15.1 Abinadi explained that salvation was not to be found in the law

of Moses, it being but a “type” of things to come (Mosiah 13:28, 31). He assured us that “all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began” had spoken of these things. “Have they not said that God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth? Yea, and have they not said also that he should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted?” (Mosiah 13:34-35.)

Explaining Isaiah’s statement that the Redeemer would “see his seed” (Isaiah 53:10), Abinadi asked, ‘And who shall be his seed?’ In response, he announced “that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord – I say unto you, that **all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.** For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions.” (Mosiah 15:10-11.)

The Book of Mormon prophets, in detail that matches much in the Gospels, gave prophetic descriptions of the birth of Christ, his mortal ministry, the calling of the Twelve, his miracles, his rejection by the Jews, his crucifixion, his three days in the tomb, and his resurrection. They show Christ as the fulfillment of the Mosaic law and give much by way of understanding that reaches beyond that of the Bible. Of a surety **there are no Old Testament prophecies that match the Book of Mormon for breadth of understanding or plainness.** (See 1 Nephi 11:13-34; 2 Nephi 10:3-6; 25:19-26; Mosiah 3:5-15; Alma 7:10-12.)

**Of a surety there are no Old Testament prophecies that match the Book of Mormon for breadth of understanding or plainness.**

**4. The Fall of Adam.** The Book of Genesis records the story of the Creation and the subsequent fall of man, the most perfect account of which is found in the *Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible* (Moses 2-4). There is no indication that the Book of Mormon peoples had an independent revelation on this matter. In teaching the Fall their prophets quoted the account given on the brass plates, which they had brought with them from the Old World (see 1 Nephi 5:11; 2 Nephi 2:17). The brass plates came from the same source as did Genesis.

The Bible provides a detailed account of the Fall, while the Book of Mormon does not. Yet it is one thing to tell the story and quite another to understand it. The Bible, as we presently have it, gives no clear theological explanation of the events that it has recorded. Evidence of this is the doctrines of the Fall found among those professing belief in the Bible. Again on this matter, Book of Mormon prophets shed considerable light. **Lehi explains that if Adam had not fallen, he and Eve would have remained endlessly in the Garden of Eden and that all things that had been created would have “remained in the same state in which they were after they were created.”** There would have been an endless state in which there was no change: no aging, no separation of the body and spirit in death, no reunion of the same in resurrection, no rewards for righteousness, no punishments for wickedness, no future kingdom of glory, no eternal life. Nor is this all, for Adam and Eve would have remained incapable of having seed of their own, Thus, as Lehi so eloquently stated it, “Adam fell that men might be and men are that they might have joy.” (2 Nephi 2:22-25.)

**“Adam fell that men might be and men are that they might have joy.” (2 Nephi 2:22-25.)**

**5. The Plan of Salvation.** It is from the Book of Mormon that we gain the concept of a “plan of salvation.” This phrase is not a part of the vocabulary of theology of the Bible-believing world. The idea is not found in the Bible. We know it should be there, because we have it in the book of Moses (Moses 6:62), but the Bible as we have it today does not contain any reference to a divine plan for the salvation of men. It is in the Book of Mormon that we repetitiously read such phrases as the “merciful plan of the great Creator” (2 Nephi 9:6). “the plan of our God” (2 Nephi 9:13), the “eternal plan of deliverance” (2 Nephi 11:5). “the plan of redemption” (Alma 12:25). the “plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8), the “plan of mercy” (Alma 42:15), and, of course, the phrase “plan of salvation” (Jarom 1:2, Alma 24:14; Alma 42:5).

**It is from the Book of Mormon that we gain the concept of a “plan of salvation.” This phrase is not a part of the vocabulary of theology of the Bible-believing world. The idea is not found in the Bible.**

The Bible and Book of Mormon alike testify of a God of order. Yet only the Book of Mormon refers to

an eternal plan for the salvation of men, a plan requiring a fall from an immortal or bloodless state to a mortal state in which men would have the corruptible element of blood flowing in their veins. **It was a blood fall that required a blood atonement.**

**6. The Atonement.** There neither has been nor can be a more transcendent event than the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**It is the foundation upon which all true faith must rest. All gospel principles are an appendage to it. Without the Atonement the whole plan of salvation would have been frustrated: there would be no Savior, no gospel of salvation, no purpose in gospel rituals, no forgiveness of sins, no righteousness, no resurrection, no judgment, no eternal rewards, no punishment of the wicked, and no rewards for righteousness. As basic as the doctrine is, we have no clear explanation of it in the Old Testament, and there is considerable difference on the matter by those professing a belief in the teachings of the New Testament. The Book of Mormon knows no such void or ambiguity.**

Moroni, for instance, explained that God created Adam, that Adam in turn brought about the Fall, and that Christ came in answer to Adam’s fall. **“Because of the redemption of man,”** he declared, **“which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord; yea, this is wherein all men are redeemed, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and all shall stand before his bar, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death. And then cometh the judgment of the Holy One upon them; and then cometh the time that he that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still; he that is happy shall be happy still and he that is unhappy shall be unhappy still.”** (Mormon 9:13-14.)

We touch but briefly on this doctrine of unsurpassed importance. Many like passages could have been cited. Let it suffice to say at this point that the Latter-day Saint understanding of the Atonement comes from the Book of Mormon. The Bible with beauty, power, and inspiration records the events that

led to Christ's suffering and death, and for this we are eternally indebted to it, **But it is to the Book of Mormon that we turn to find meaning in the more important matter of why it was necessary for Christ to suffer.** (See 2 Nephi 2:6-13; 9:6-16; Alma 34:13-16; 42:13-26.)

**7. The Resurrection.** The Bible may be searched in vain for a definition of resurrection. The Old Testament does not use the word and the closest we can come in the New Testament is Paul's statement that we are "raised a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44). This had led many to conclude that the resurrected body is not a corporeal or physical body. Again for plainness we turn to the Book of Mormon. Amulek defined it thus:

**"This mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption"** —Alma 11:45

Alma described the Resurrection in this language: "The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame" (Alma 40:23).

**8. The Spirit World.** Because the Bible has no clear definition of resurrection, it is also without definition of the spirit world. If it is not understood that in his final state man will enjoy the inseparable union of body and spirit, there is no reason to raise the question as to what becomes of the spirit of man from the time of death to the time of resurrection. **Alma, knowing that body and spirit are reunited in the resurrection, could then ask. What becomes of the spirit while it awaits the day of its reunion with its body and its consignment to its eternal reward? In response to his query an angel of the Lord explained that the spirit went to a world of spirits, a world divided into two parts—paradise, the abode of the righteous. and outer darkness (typically referred to by Latter-day Saints as hell), the abode of those who chose evil works rather than good.** (Alma 40:6-15.)

**9. The Necessity of Ordinances.** If the Bible is clear on the necessity of ordinances, there is no evidence of it in the practices of much of the Christian world today. **Let us take baptism as our illustration. The word is not found in the Old Testament and most refuse to acknowledge its existence in Old Testament times. The New Testament has been used to justify infant baptism, baptism by sprinkling or by immersion, and the idea that baptism is merely an outward ordinance expressing an inward conviction, and thus unnecessary.**

The Book of Mormon is most explicit. Baptism, it declares, is essential to salvation. Indeed, Nephi announces that Christ, though sinless, could not have been saved in the kingdom of God without it. **Had he neglected it, he could not have "fulfilled all righteousness."** (2 Nephi 31:5.) We understand the principles espoused by Nephi relative to baptism to be equally true of all other ordinances of salvation, such as the temple endowment and eternal marriage.

**10. The Doctrine of Justification (including the relationship between grace and works).** What must one do to stand justified before God? Does one seek God's favor through fasting, prayer, ritual observance, and works of righteousness? Or are all such to be eschewed in favor of the doctrine that "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)? **This was the issue over which the Roman Catholic Church and Martin Luther battled.** Of this struggle one noted scholar wrote (Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, p. 196, cited in Sidney B. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters*, p. 172.):

**"This doctrine of justification by faith has divided the old unity of Christendom; has torn asunder Europe, and especially Germany; has made innumerable martyrs; has kindled the bloodiest and most terrible wars of the past; and has deeply affected European history and with it the history of humanity."**

What does the Book of Mormon have to say on a matter of such doctrinal importance? Nephi put the matter quite succinctly: **"It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do"** (2 Nephi 25:23). In his instruction to his son Corianton, Alma taught us the principles involved. Burdened with sin, Corianton was agitated over the requirements of salvation. **Alma responded by teaching him the principle of "restoration," declaring that "it is requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works; and if their works were good in this life, and the desires of their hearts were good, that they should also, at the last day, be restored unto that which is good. And if their works are evil they shall be restored unto them for evil."** (Alma 41:3-4.)

“The meaning of the word restoration,” he said, “is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful.” **The principle is immutable.** Alma then instructed his son:

**“See that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again. For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all.”**

—*Alma 41:13-15*

Martin Luther, for all his greatness, was the author of one of history’s classic examples of searching the scriptures with a blind eye. Taking selected texts from Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians that dealt with salvation by grace, Luther said these three books, with 1 Peter, John’s Gospel, and I John, would “teach everything you need to know for your salvation, even if you were never to see or hear any other book or hear any other teaching” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, p. 179).

**Like Luther, one must be very selective in what he reads in the Bible if he wishes to sustain the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. To that end Paul is quoted, Christ is not; the Old Testament and its doctrines are disregarded; James is called a “straw book”; and the host of other New Testament references to works of righteousness (most of which come from Paul) are ignored. Again, on this matter the Book of Mormon is most plain.**

**11. *The gathering of Israel.*** The doctrine of the gathering of Israel is something of an enigma to the Christian world. They have resolved the matter with the explanation that the scriptural promises made to Abraham’s seed are to be understood, at least for the most part, figuratively rather than literally. **Relative to this doctrine, the Book of Mormon—having established that the gathering of Israel is literal—makes three distinctive contributions. First, it teaches with great plainness that Israel was**

**scattered because they rejected Christ and his doctrines, and that they will not be gathered until they return to him (1 Nephi 15:12-20; 2 Nephi 6:8-18; 10:3-22; 25:10-15). Second, and this is but an extension of the first, the Book of Mormon teaches us that one does not accept Christ without uniting with his Church and thus obtaining citizenship in his kingdom (see 2 Nephi 9:2:3 Nephi 2 1:22; Ether 13:10-11). Third, the Book of Mormon expands the promise given to Abraham that his children would return to a land of promise, [or] to “lands” of promise (1 Nephi 22:12; 2 Nephi 6:11; 9:2; 10:7-8). The Americas, it declares, have been promised to the tribes of Joseph. Other lands undoubtedly have been promised to other of Jacob’s children.**

**12. *Continual Revelation.*** The Bible evidences that whenever God had a people that he acknowledged as his own, he guided them by revelation. **The Book of Mormon affirms that God spoke to the scattered remnants of Israel anciently, and this record testifies that he will continue to speak to the end of time to those willing to hear his voice.**

**Indeed, the Book of Mormon sounds a solemn warning to any who deny the spirit of revelation: “Wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost! Yea, 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: and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall. Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.” (2 Nephi 28:26, 28-30)**

**The Book of Mormon affirms that God spoke to the scattered remnants of Israel anciently, and this record testifies that he will continue to speak to the end of time to those willing to hear his voice.**

## **REASONS THE BOOK OF MORMON MUST BE TRUE**

By Jon M. Taylor

### **General reasons**

1. The genesis of the Book of Mormon (it's origin, translation, and publication) is too fantastic to have been fraudulently concocted.
2. The Lord promises (Moroni 10:4-5) that anyone can know the truth of the book by the power of the Holy Ghost – a promise not found for any other book.
3. The extent of the animosity of Joseph's detractors were far greater than justified if it were an obvious fraud.
4. The spiritual power of many of the teachings were beyond the power of any man to write.
5. The Book of Mormon clarifies many things in the Bible.
6. The language of the Book of Mormon and the D & C is far superior to the language in Joseph Smith's personal letters.
7. Many have proven Joseph's promise that the Book of Mormon can bring us closer to God than any other book.
8. The principles of Book of Mormon are invaluable in resolving life's issues and in finding answers to problems.
9. The monetary system in Chapter 11 of Alma is brilliantly simple and efficient.
10. With all the efforts of the enemies of the Church, they were not able to prevent its publication.
11. The history of the Church substantiates the importance and efficacy of the Book of Mormon.
12. The story of Christ's visit to this continent as inspiring, if not more so, than that in the New Testament.
13. The story of Christ's visit to America corroborates American Indian legends of the visit of a great white God.
14. Many Polynesian peoples were prepared for the Book of Mormon to come to them.
17. The numerous prophecies concerning the latter days (of which the Book of Mormon was a part) proved to be accurate.
18. The fulfillment of the record "speaking from the dust," as prophesied in Isaiah 29:4, was fulfilled in the unearthing of the Book of Mormon. This "speaking from the dust" or "out of the ground" metaphor was repeated five times in different words.
19. The prophecy in Isaiah 29:4 "Thy voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit is fulfilled in the Book of Mormon.
20. Charles Anthon fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 29:11-12.
21. The prophecy in Exekial 37:15-20 of the stick of Joseph is fulfilled in the Book of Mormon.
22. The prophecy in Revelation 14:6-7 of "another angel" bringing the everlasting gospel is fulfilled in the Book of Mormon. Christ's prophecy in John 10:16 regarding "other sheep" that would also hear his voice is fulfilled in the Book of Mormon.
23. The prophecy of Joseph's branches going "unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills" (Genesis 49:22-26) is fulfilled in the Book of Mormon.

### **Testimonies of others**

24. Joseph's testimony was supported by the testimonies of eleven witnesses, by Mother Whiter, and others.
25. The three witnesses never denied their testimony, in spite of their disaffection and separation from the Church.
26. Millions more have received a witness of the Book of Mormon by the power of the Holy Ghost.
27. Many have received a witness of the Book of Mormon through dreams and visions.
28. Joseph's own family believed him and followed him, though they had been partial to various denominations.
29. Joseph and Hyrum sealed their testimonies with their own blood.
30. Many others sealed their testimonies by dying in this cause.

### **Prophecies of and within the Book of Mormon**

15. The prophecy of a "choice seer" in Lehi's blessing to his son Joseph (2 Nephi 3:7)
16. Moroni told Joseph his name was to be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues.

## Testimonies from Scientists and Scholars

31. The ancient literary technique of Chiasmus, used powerfully in the book, was not known by Joseph Smith.
32. The language and stories in the B of M were beyond the ability of Joseph Smith or anyone else to write.
33. Book of Mormon names and Semitic language idioms could not have been known by Joseph Smith or anyone else.
34. Dr. Hugh Nibley's challenge to Jewish and Arab students to duplicate the feat of writing the book has not been met.
35. The claims of cement, metal plates, horses, great ancient buildings, etc., have all been corroborated.
36. Using word prints, the different books in the Book of Mormon have been found to be by different authors.
37. Scholars on both sides of the aisle of belief give it enough attention that it could not be a transparent scam.
38. Neal Maxwell pointed out that the Book of Mormon is tangible, testable, and verifiable.
39. Authorities of Hebrew and Egyptian languages have testified of its linguistic authenticity.
40. Brilliant scholars, such as Dr. Hugh Nibley, have made it a lifetime study and confirmed its truth to themselves.
41. Jack West placed the coming forth of the Book of Mormon on trial in law school, and evidence was not found to be sufficient to prove it a fraud.

**After limited study of the Book of Mormon, these were just written off the top of my head. With further study and reflection, many more reasons for the truth of the Book of Mormon could be listed. See what you can come up with yourself.**



## COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS FOR BELIEVING IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

By Jon M. Taylor

In many fields of endeavor, including business, government, medicine, etc., there is a risk for any course of action. After identifying and weighing the benefits and the risks, the two are placed side-by-side for comparison. The question then becomes “Are the benefits sufficiently great to exceed the risks (or costs) to the point that you are willing to assume those risks in order to enjoy the benefits?”

Those of you who have been trained to think in terms of cost-benefit analysis, the Book of Mormon certainly applies. What are the risks of believing the Book of Mormon – if in fact the book were not true as claimed by so many witnesses?

— By spending valuable time in church meetings, reading the scriptures, serving in church callings, holding family home evenings, etc., you may forfeit many good times, such as partying, fishing and hunting, attending sporting events, traveling, or otherwise pursuing favorite pastimes.

— You may spend some of your money on tithing and other donations, when the money could have been spent for desired things or invested for a more comfortable retirement.

— You may miss out on many pleasurable “vices” the Church teaches against, such as gambling, drinking and drugs, promiscuity, profanity, pornography, etc.

— You may fail to take advantage of your neighbor for your own gain – and otherwise fail to improve your lot in life.

On the other hand, if you believe and practice the precepts taught in the Book of Mormon and by Latter-day prophets, and you find ultimately that they are true, what are the potential benefits?

— You would enjoy the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and would be live a life of peace, happiness, and of rejoicing in the things of God.

— You would be eligible for eternal life and exaltation with your Heavenly Father in the Celestial Kingdom, the greatest of all the gifts of God.

— You would enjoy the companionship of your wife and eternal ties to your children to whom you have been sealed for time and all eternity.

— You would thank yourself forever and ever for electing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ who made all of this possible.

Does one really lose anything by seeking and obtaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon and following its precepts?

I personally believe that the risks of rejecting the Book of Mormon and the restored gospel are infinitely greater than the risks of seeking a testimony and acting on it. Conversely, the benefits of gaining a testimony of the Book of Mormon far outweigh the benefits of putting it off.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

### GENERAL NOTES

1. Because of frequent repetition, "Salt Lake City" and "Deseret Book Company" are shortened to SLC and DBC, respectively.
2. Many of the reference notes were drawn from those selected for *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families*, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, by Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, and *The Book of Mormon Student Manual* (Rel. 121 & 122). Numerous other resources were used as listed below, along with my observations. Notes referenced "JMT" are my own comments.

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