

President Alvin R. Dyer

Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy will now speak to

us. He will be followed by Elder Robert L. Simpson, first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric.

ELDER MILTON R. HUNTER

Of the First Council of the Seventy

The Lord spoke from heaven to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery 140 years ago and said:

"A great and marvelous work is about to come forth unto the children of men. . . .

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (D&C 6:1, 21.)

A great and marvelous work

And then he commissioned Oliver Cowdery to assist Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon. This book was designed to play a prominent role in this "great and marvelous work."

Jesus Christ had already chosen Joseph Smith to be his prophet, seer, and revelator, and had announced that his gospel would be restored from heaven through that prophet, and also that he had been selected to establish the true Church of Jesus Christ upon earth once again. Accompanied by God the Father, the Savior had appeared to that prophet in what is known as "The First Vision."

This "great and marvelous work" that Jesus Christ declared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery was about to come forth among the children of men was the "restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21), with all the gifts, powers, and priesthoods, and gospel ordinances requisite for the exaltation of the human family possessed by any and all former gospel dispensations. This was to be the last dispensation, the dispensation of the fullness of times.

Accordingly, numerous ancient prophets brought to Joseph Smith the priesthoods, keys, and powers of their dispensations. Through direct revela-

tion from the Savior, Joseph Smith established the Church and officially named it the Church of Jesus Christ. This church was endowed with power from God to carry forth the work of the Master and build a kingdom to which the Savior will eventually come to reign.

The Book of Mormon

Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, began making preparations 2,500 years ago for this "great and marvelous work" in the latter days by initiating a project to produce a holy scripture to testify to his divinity. Also, the scripture was destined to play a prominent role in helping to give the gospel of Jesus Christ to the honest in heart and bring them into his Church in the latter days. This holy scripture is known as the Book of Mormon. Therefore, the Book of Mormon is the voice of God to our generation.

No holy scripture in the world is unique in as many ways as is the Book of Mormon.

First, Jesus Christ initiated its writing and through numerous revelations supervised its production, which is unique.

Second, as early as 600 B.C. the Master proclaimed that this record would play a unique role in the latter days in testifying that he was the Christ, the Savior of the world, thereby sustaining the testimony of the Jews, the Holy Bible.

Third, through 1,000 years' time the prophets who wrote the book did so under the divine guidance of our Savior.

Fourth, acting in accordance with revelation from Jesus Christ, the last two Nephite prophets—Mormon and Moroni—abridged the ancient records,

making them suitable for use in our day. We know of no other similar occurrence in history; hence, unique.

Fifth, the Book of Mormon is unique in its being translated from records of which an angel was the custodian for 1,400 years before they were brought forth in a book.

Sixth, the Book of Mormon stands alone in being the only book known to have been translated from ancient records delivered to an unlearned young man by an angel.

Seventh, the feat of translating the ancient record was also an unheard of achievement. Joseph Smith, assisted by Oliver Cowdery, translated the entire Book of Mormon of 522 printed pages in approximately sixty days. The writing on the plates was in an ancient script called "reformed Egyptian" (see Morm. 9:32), a language that no mortal man through his own power could decipher. Then how did Joseph Smith accomplish such a mammoth job in such a short time? He has told us that he translated the Book of Mormon "through the gift and power of God and through the Urim and Thummim."

Eighth, no other book in the world has been testified to as to its truthfulness and divinity by the voice of an angel and by the voice of Jesus Christ other than the Book of Mormon.

Testimonies of divinity

Let us now pay particular attention to some remarkable testimonies regarding the truthfulness and divinity of the Book of Mormon. One of the strongest testimonies came directly from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself. In June 1829, the Savior spoke from heaven and declared:

"... as your Lord and your God liveth it [the Book of Mormon] is true." (D&C 17:6.)

I am positive that my Lord and God liveth—and so I am also positive that the Book of Mormon is true.

No other book in the world has ever had a witness borne to it as dynamic and powerful as the one the Master provided to sustain the Book of Mormon in what is known as "The Testi-

mony of Three Witnesses." The ancient American prophets had predicted that through the power of the Lord the plates would be shown to three others besides the prophet to whom the records would be given for the purpose of their bearing witness. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris asked for that privilege.

The Three Witnesses

In June 1829, Jesus Christ spoke from heaven to the three men through the Prophet Joseph Smith, declaring:

"... you shall have a view of the plates, and also of the breastplate, the sword of Laban, [and] the Urim and Thummim. . . ." (D&C 17:1.)

Thereupon the four men went into the woods and kneeled down and prayed. In response, the Angel Moroni came down from heaven and showed these sacred objects to them. He turned the sheets of the gold plates leaf by leaf and let them examine the inscriptions thereon. He described Joseph Smith's work in translating the Book of Mormon records. As he was doing so, the voice of Jesus Christ spoke from heaven and said:

"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." (Cited in Preston Nibley, *The Witnesses of the Book of Mormon*, p. 8.)

After the Angel Moroni left with the gold plates, the three men wrote their testimony, which is known as "The Testimony of Three Witnesses." Their testimony states:

"... 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. . . . the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it. . . ."

In no other time in history has such an astounding event occurred. Never before nor since have three men received their testimonies directly from

an angel and from Jesus Christ, as did these three men.

Believers and nonbelievers

Since the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is so astounding, it has divided all people who have come into contact with it into two definitely separate groups—believers and nonbelievers. Those who believe love it, enthusiastically testify to its divinity, and proclaim its great worth to humanity. Those who disbelieve it hate it. Many brilliant men have written viciously against it. No book has had as many attacks made upon it as has the Book of Mormon.

One may wonder why so many intelligent people have rejected the Book of Mormon. Perhaps it is because there is so much that they would call miraculous connected with its origin, preservation, coming forth, and translation.

Apostle Paul explained that it is only through the operation of the Holy Spirit of God that spiritual things can be understood and received by man. Paul declared that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:11, 14.)

Thus the ordinary man whose heart is not moved upon by the Holy Ghost regards the Book of Mormon and all of the great and marvelous things that Jesus Christ did in its preparation and bringing forth as being fantastic, fabricated, and untrue. On the other hand, when the Holy Ghost bears testimony to the heart and soul of a man of the divine nature of the Book of Mormon, the spiritual-minded man knows the reality of the divine authenticity of

that book, and this reality becomes very important in his whole being. He feels impelled continuously to testify.

Formula of Moroni

Any person in the world can know for sure that the Book of Mormon is true, that it is the word of God, if he will in all sincerity, humility, and faith follow the formula laid down in the last chapter 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." (Moro. 10:4-5.)

I bear my testimony that I know positively that the Book of Mormon is true. It is the word of God. I am as sure of it as I am sure that I am alive, or as I am sure that I am speaking unto you today. The Holy Ghost has borne powerful witness to my heart and mind of the truthfulness of this divine book, and has filled my heart with a powerful love for it and an exceedingly great love for my Savior. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Elder Milton R. Hunter of the First Council of Seventy has just spoken to us.

Elder Robert L. Simpson, first counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, will now address us. He will be followed by Elder LeGrand Richards of the Council of the Twelve, who will be our concluding speaker.