

President Marion G. Romney

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, today we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the organization of the Church. The Church of which we speak is not a man-made organization; it is exactly what its name implies.

"Thus [said the Lord himself] shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"Verily I say unto you all [he continued]: Arise and shine forth, that thy light may be a standard for the nations;

"And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth" (D&C 115:4-6).

Genuineness of Book of Mormon

In the headnote to the twentieth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Prophet Joseph wrote: "We obtained of him [Jesus Christ] the following, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation; which not only gave us much information, but also pointed out to us the precise day upon which, according to his will and commandment, we should proceed to organize his Church once more here upon the earth"; and then he added, "The Lord again attests the genuineness of the Book of Mormon."

Since the Lord, as he specified the date on which his Church was to be organized, attested again to "the genuineness of the Book of Mormon" at the same time, in the same revelation, I have concluded that as we observe the sesquicentennial anniversary of the organization of his Church, it will be proper for us to review a few Book of Mormon

teachings. There are many reasons why we should do so. To begin with, the Lord has put us under obligation to teach the Book of Mormon. He said that he sent Moroni to reveal it (see D&C 27:5), and that through his mercy he had given the Prophet Joseph "power . . . to translate [it]" (D&C 20:8; see also D&C 1:29), and that it contains "the truth and the word of God" (D&C 19:26) and "the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also" (D&C 20:9).

Most correct book

The Prophet Joseph Smith "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" (*History of the Church*, 4:461; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938, p. 39).

Nephi tells us that its contents "shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; . . . and the nations who shall possess them [the teachings of the Book of Mormon] shall be judged of them according to the words which are written" (2 Ne. 25:22).

For me there could be no more impelling reason for reading the Book of Mormon than this statement that we who have the Book of Mormon shall be judged by what is written in it.

Moroni says that the very reason the book has been given to us is that we may know the "decrees of God" (Eth. 2:11) set forth therein and by obedience to them escape the calamities which are to follow disobedience.

Remember Book of Mormon teachings

To the early Saints the Lord spoke rather sharply about remembering the Book of Mormon's teachings.

"Your minds in times past," he said to them, "have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—

"Which vanity and unbelief 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" (D&C 84:54-57).

Prior to this he had told them that "the Book of Mormon and the holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction" (D&C 33:16). On another occasion he had said, "The elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in . . . the Book of Mormon" (D&C 42:12).

It is, of course, obvious that unless we read, study, and learn the principles which are in the Book of Mormon, we cannot comply with this direction to teach them.

Avoid evil

There is another reason why we should read the Book of Mormon: By doing so we will fill and refresh our minds with a constant flow of that "water" which Jesus said would be in us "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). We must obtain a continuing supply of this water if we are to resist evil and retain the blessings of being born again.

The great overall struggle in the world today is, as it has always been, for the souls of men. Every

soul is personally engaged in the struggle, and he makes his fight with what is in his mind. In the final analysis the battleground is, for each individual, within himself. Inevitably he gravitates toward the subjects of his thoughts. Ages ago the wise man thus succinctly stated this great truth: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

If we would escape the lusts of the flesh and build for ourselves and our children great and noble characters, we must keep in our minds and in their minds true and righteous principles for our thoughts and their thoughts to dwell upon.

We must not permit our minds to become surfeited with the interests, things, and practices of the world about us. To do so is tantamount to adopting and going along with them, for the experience of the race sustains the conclusion of him who said that—

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,

As to be hated needs but to be seen; Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,

We first endure, then pity, and then embrace.

(Pope, *Essay on Man*, epistle ii, lines 217, *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 383).

If we would avoid adopting the evils of the world, we must pursue a course which will daily feed our minds with and call them back to the things of the Spirit. I know of no better way to do this than by daily reading the Book of Mormon.

Keep truths in mind

In all dispensations, the Lord has counseled his people to keep in their minds and thoughts the truths he has revealed to them. To the early

Saints of this dispensation he said: "Let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your minds" (D&C 43:34). This counsel followed his statement to the elders:

"Ye are not sent forth to be taught, but to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit;

"And ye are to be taught from on high" (D&C 43:15-16).

Instructing ancient Israel not to go after "the gods of the people which [were] round about" them (Deut. 6:14), he said:

"Hear, O Israel. . .

". . . these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

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

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

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

Meditate on word of God

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

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

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

"I have more understanding

than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

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

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

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

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

"Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every [evil] way.

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

Teachings will assist youth

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

How marvelous it would be if, when they must make a decision, there would flash into their minds, from long and intimate association with them, the words of Nephi:

"I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (1 Ne. 3:7).

And when the going gets rough and temptation to abandon the course

of righteousness presses upon them, they might think of his plea to his wayward brothers:

"Let us be faithful," he said, "in keeping the commandments of the Lord; for behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?" (1 Ne. 4:1; see also 3:15).

If our young folks become familiar with the teachings of the Book of Mormon, they will not only be inspired by the examples of Nephi, the 2,000 sons of Helaman (see Al. 53), and other great Book of Mormon characters to choose the right, they will also be so schooled in the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ that they will be able to know and understand what is right.

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

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

They will have learned the folly of putting their trust in the learning

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

Practice of daily reading to gain Spirit

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

I feel certain that if, in our homes, parents will read from the Book of Mormon prayerfully and regularly, both by themselves and with their children, the spirit of that great book will come to permeate our homes and all who dwell therein. The spirit of reverence will increase; mutual respect and consideration for each other will grow. The spirit of contention will depart. Parents will counsel their children in greater love and wisdom. Children will be more responsive and submissive to the counsel of their parents. Righteousness will increase. Faith, hope, and charity—the pure love of Christ—will abound in our homes and lives, bringing in their wake peace, joy, and happiness.

That we will seek these blessings through reading the Book of Mormon, I humbly pray and leave my blessings with you, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Following President Romney's remarks, the Tabernacle Choir sang "Hosannah Anthem" without announcement.

President N. Eldon Tanner

President Marion G. Romney, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Hosannah Anthem."

We appreciate the courtesies shown by the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations who offered their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to a large audience throughout many areas of the world.

These services are being carried over radio to seventy stations in countries of South America and sixty-one stations in Australia. They are being broadcast in the United States and

Canada over numerous commercial television systems by RCA SATCOM satellite.

Video tapes of sessions of this conference will be sent to television stations in Canada and to members and friends assembled in chapels throughout Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, and Austria.

For the first time, conference will be broadcast over television in the Philippines.

We shall conclude this fourth session of the conference with the Tabernacle Choir singing "Hail to the Brightness of Zion's Glad Morning," after which the benediction will be pronounced by Elder Jack H. Goaslind, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

This conference will then be adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The Choir sang the hymn "Hail to the Brightness of Zion's Glad Morning."

The benediction was given by Elder Jack H. Goaslind.
