



# THE WITNESS

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*"Behold, this is a choice land,  
and whatsoever nation  
shall possess it, shall be free  
from bondage, and from captivity,  
and from all other nations  
under heaven, if they will but  
serve the God of the land,  
who is Jesus Christ..."*

# A Christian Nation

And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. (1 Nephi 3:147 RLDS) [1 Nephi 13:12 LDS]

Our Lord opened to my understanding (I could sense His hand upon me) so it became clear to me that it [the voyage] was feasible. . . . All those who heard about my enterprise rejected it with laughter, scoffing at me. . . . Who doubts that this illumination was from the Holy Spirit? I attest that He [the Holy Spirit], with marvelous rays of light, consoled me through the holy and sacred Scriptures . . . they inflame me with a sense of great urgency. . . . No one should be afraid to take on any enterprise in the name of our Savior if it is right and if the purpose is purely for His holy service. . . . And I say that the sign which convinces me that our Lord is hastening the end of the world is the preaching of the Gospel recently in so many lands. —Christopher Columbus

Interestingly, in the 1892 Supreme Court decision *Church of the Holy Trinity v. U. S.*, the Court unanimously affirmed that America was indeed a Christian nation. In so doing, it cited dozens of precedents from American history, including that of Christopher Columbus, acknowledging:

From the discovery of this continent to the present hour, there is a single voice making this affirmation [that America is a Christian nation]. The commission to Christopher Columbus . . . [recited] that “it is hoped that by God’s assistance some of the continents and islands in the ocean will be discovered,” etc.

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Cover photo courtesy of Kathy Vogt  
 (Ether 1:35 RLDS) [Ether 2:12 LDS]





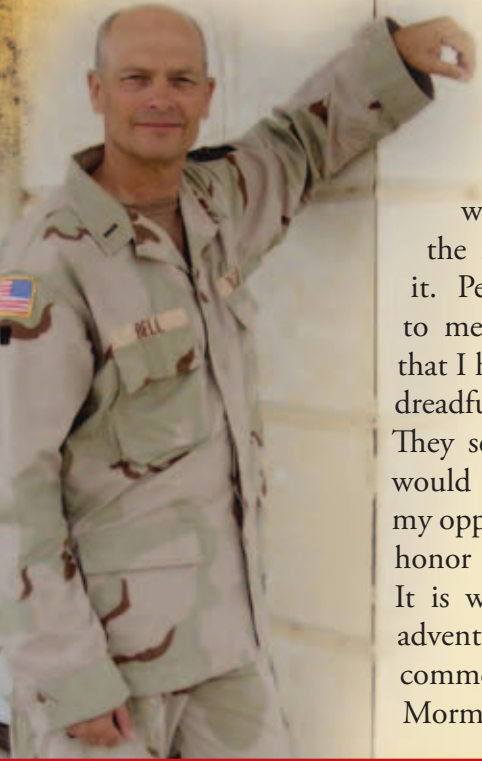
# DEFENDERS OF FAITH

## THE BOOK OF MORMON FROM A SOLDIER'S PERSPECTIVE

BY DOUGLAS J. BELL

This commentary on the Book of Mormon is undertaken with a deep love for its contents. My training as a soldier in the United States Army has given me a unique perspective on the book and explains the subtitle, "The Book of Mormon from a Soldier's Perspective." I have read the Book of Mormon many times and have taught courses on the Book of Mormon at Brigham Young University. However, the book's influence on me was magnified many times over when I served as a soldier in Iraq with the 142nd Military Intelligence Battalion during 2003. While I was stationed in Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom, I had an opportunity to study the Book of Mormon while serving in a war zone. The prophet-warriors came alive as never before. Their actions took on a new meaning because I saw them as military commanders and not just warriors. The wonder and significance of the "war chapters" seemed to leap off the pages. The dangers of living in a

war zone gave new and cherished meaning to life. People generally don't understand the life of a soldier and his confrontation with possible death and the faith that springs from it. People would often say to me when they discovered that I had been to Iraq: "How dreadful, terrible, or awful." They seemed shocked when I would say, "On the contrary, my opportunity to serve was an honor and a great adventure." It is with this same sense of adventure that this soldier's commentary on the Book of Mormon is undertaken.



### A COMPARISON OF CHRISTIANS AND WARRIORS

Consider for a moment an observation about Christians and warriors. A person truly devoted to Christ is often called a disciple. The root word for *disciple* is the same as for the word *discipline*. Just as the word *disciple* describes a true Christian, the word *discipline* describes the core value of a soldier or warrior. A true Christian must be like a warrior and demonstrate strong self-control, a life of order, and obedience to core values.

The Book of Mormon describes many great military commanders who were also courageous Christians and warriors. The commanding generals of their armies were called chief captains. Sixteen years before the appearance of the Savior in the Americas, a great prophet named Nephi put the role of Nephite Chief Captain into perspective when he wrote the following:

*Now the chiefest among all the chief captains and the great commander of all the armies of the Nephites was appointed, and his name was Gidgiddoni. Now it was the custom among all the Nephites to appoint for their chief captains, (save it were in their times of wickedness) some one that had the spirit of revelation and also prophecy; therefore, this Gidgiddoni was a great prophet among them, as also was the chief judge.*

[3 Nephi 3:18-19 LDS]  
(3 Nephi 3: 23-24 RLDS) (emphasis added)

The leaders of their armies were much more than military commanders—they were also prophets. Knowing this, one can see why Mormon wanted us to study these awe-inspiring men. While we explore the lives of these marvelous prophets in the Book of Mormon, it will become evident that the skills of a

Replicas of Saddam  
Hussein's hands  
at Saddam's  
Parade  
Ground



warrior, such as self-control and obedience, also played a role in making them more loyal Disciples of Christ. As I discuss their thrilling stories, it is my hope that their personal qualities and values will give you marvelous examples to emulate and energize your faith in Christ.

## MY DAYS IN KUWAIT: MURMURING AND THEN AWAKENING

In 2003, my military unit was flown into Kuwait and sent to live in tents in the desert. During this experience, I had a spiritual awakening that is explained through the Book of Mormon. Our unit was not happy. The cause of our displeasure was much more than just being away from home. Our mission had been changed, and the uncertainty of where we would go and what we would do created dreadful anxiety. We had been trained to set up a prisoner of war detention facility in northern Iraq and carry out screenings and interrogations. That mission had been scrapped and appeared to have been a waste of time. It was so hot in Kuwait that we couldn't sleep until after eleven o'clock at night, and during the day the wind would stir up dust and leave a fine film over all of our gear in the tent. The dust had the consistency of flour and would stick to everything, especially our perspiring bodies. I attended meetings with good people who had changed their normally first-class demeanor to a bearing of distasteful irritability. Most of us had become angry, bad tempered, and quite dysfunctional. As I was reading the Book of Mormon, I realized that I had become just like the wayward sons of the prophet Lehi—Laman and Lemuel: (1) I wanted the comforts of home, (2) I hated the desert and intense heat, (3) I didn't understand where I was destined to go, and (4) I resented the people who brought me there. It became clear to me that I was murmuring, and I had become very good at

it. My behavior was almost identical to these two sons of Lehi who didn't want to leave their home in Jerusalem. They were in the deserts near the Red Sea and rebelled against their father [see *murmurings* in 1 Nephi 3:5-6; 7:6-7, 16; 15:7-8; 16:20, 36-37; 17:17, 45-49; 18:9-11 LDS] (1 Nephi 1:63-64; 2:12-13, 26-27; 4:8-9; 5:25, 47-48; 5:85-87, 144-156; 5:182-189 RLDS).

This recognition was an awakening for me, and I decided to make a serious change in behavior. The first step I took was to stop focusing on my own discomfort and begin inviting people into my life. I began with the chow line, which was several hundred yards long. The wait for each meal gave me time to talk to other soldiers. I would ask the following questions: "Where are you from?" "What is your MOS (military job)?" "Do you have children?" "Do you have a life outside the army?" Their responses were marvelous and insightful. My journal is full of stories about the people I met: mechanics, infantrymen, tank commanders, pilots, and surgeons—just to name a few. They were high-quality people, and it was clear that they were sacrificing much more than me. My attitude almost immediately changed toward hope and appreciation for the others who were suffering through that dreadful experience with me.

## A WALK ON SACRED GROUND

My attitude also changed by an interesting incident that again brought the Book of Mormon close to my heart. I noticed some small, white rocks mixed in with the sand and dust that made up the desert floor. I began to collect a few. The rocks were just smaller than golf balls and worn smooth from centuries of wind and grinding dust. One night in the tent, I took one of these rocks from my pocket and put my flashlight under it. The rock absorbed the light and it glowed! I was stunned. My mind was immediately directed to a Book of Mormon story about the experience of the brother of Jared. He was the leader of a small group that God separated and led away from the land of the Tigris and Euphrates valley at the time of the Tower of Babel. The brother of Jared needed light for the ships he had built to cross the ocean, and his solution was to ask the Lord to touch some stones, knowing that they would glow from His touch and bring continuous light for his ships. The Lord was pleased with the solution and touched the stones, which glowed and provided light for the Jaredite voyage. When my stones glowed

easily, I suddenly recognized that I was geographically near the site where Jared and his small band had traveled over four thousand years earlier. I was camped on hallowed ground that had been blessed by the footsteps of prophets [see Ether 2:18-24; 3:1, 4-6 LDS] (Ether 1:47-57; 1:60-61, 66-69 RLDS).

From that time on, I was energized by the idea that I was traveling in a region blessed by God. When in Kuwait, I was near the place where the Jaredites had gone to escape from the Tower of Babel. When I eventually went to Iraq, I was in the land of Abraham, Daniel, Ezekiel, Ester, Jonah, and many others. My interest in Old Testament scriptural accounts intensified. The book of Daniel was most inspirational to me because it told of ancient Babylon and the captive Jews. Knowing that I was near the birthplace of Abraham, the founding patriarch of Israel, added depth and understanding to every trip I took.

## MY DAYS IN IRAQ: A GREAT ADVENTURE

In 2003, I spent nine months in Iraq. During this time, I was stationed in an unstable and dangerous war zone. My reading of the war chapters in the Book of Mormon spoke to me as never before. It was almost as if these great prophet-warriors joined me and my fellow soldiers. They helped me understand the need for soldiers to love the Lord, their country, and their families. Moreover, I came to understand the wonder of a nation being liberated. The Iraqi people had been dreadfully oppressed for decades by the wicked dictator Saddam Hussein. The war was devastating to them but the opportunity to be free from tyranny brought impressive energy to their lives. The work I did with the Iraqi people became the adventure of a lifetime.

I was permanently stationed in Baghdad and had the opportunity to travel throughout the surrounding area. The city and its suburbs have over six million people. Laced with freeways, it is quite modern. Very little of Baghdad had been destroyed by bombing. It was, however, ravaged by its own people. When the Iraqi armies were told to stop fighting and go home, there was no law or policing authority in most of the country. Consequently, nearly all government buildings and schools were looted. It was sad to enter beautiful, stately buildings and see rooms without furniture and strewn with waste and paper. The light fixtures, switches, and outlets were taken, and even the toilets and sinks were

cut from the walls. This looting highlighted a people who had been so oppressed and dominated by an evil dictator that they felt justified in stealing property back from the government. We were all dismayed by this self-destructive behavior. The ravages of war can take many forms, and they permanently touch every soldier. This behavior had a resounding effect on me.

I mentioned earlier that while in the Middle East, I felt I was walking on sacred ground. To gain a better perspective, I read and reread the stories of Abraham and Daniel many times. As I read the book of Daniel, I checked the Bible Dictionary and found out that the ancient city Babylon was surrounded by a wall 335 feet high 85 feet wide, and 56 miles long. I was stricken by the enormity of the area and began to see the spiritual as well as the historical significance of this remarkable land. In short, faith in the Lord and knowledge of the history of Chaldea, the biblical name for Iraq, made my journey among the people more meaningful.

Traveling in Iraq was dangerous because of improvised explosive devices, commonly called "IEDs." These explosive charges would be placed on the roadside and



exploded by remote control devices (usually cell phones) as US military convoys or vehicles drove by. In spite of the danger, it was satisfying to travel through the cities and take the opportunity to meet with interesting people. I met with impressive Iraqi generals, university presidents, scientists, and many other influential Iraqi citizens. They loved and appreciated their newfound freedom and helped us at the peril of their own lives. If loyalists to Saddam Hussein found out they help the United States Army, they could still attack them or their families.

One of the former Iraqi generals became a close friend, a friendship illustrated by a hug as a greeting before we would begin our discussions. He was an honorable man and always showed us respect. At the end of our meetings, we would often spend time talking about family, economic conditions, or the government. After one very productive meeting, I asked the general if he was a descendent of Abraham. His countenance brightened as he said, "Yes, I am." I said, "A descendent of Ishmael, right?" He replied with even greater interest. "Yes, indeed." In a way, I think his interest and excitement was sparked because I knew his ancestry. I then stated, "I am also a descendant of Abraham." At this point, the translator became very concerned because he thought I had told him I was a Jew. I quickly stated, "I am a descendent of Ephraim." My great Iraqi friend rose up and said, "We are cousins." Friendship and freedom are so wonderful! Only a few months earlier, we were possible battlefield enemies, and now we were friends and soldiers with deep admiration for each other.

Captain Moroni, perhaps the greatest of all Book of Mormon generals, illustrated this same respect for a former enemy. Readers of the Book of Mormon may

wonder how Captain Moroni could be so bold as to allow his defeated battlefield enemies to return home after giving an oath. After my experience, Moroni's actions become especially understandable. Moroni was a battle-hardened veteran, who had learned to respect the valor of his enemy. Moroni always showed mercy to his enemy when his army had a distinct advantage. He avoided slaughter and allowed his archenemy relief and freedom if the enemy soldiers would put down their weapons and take an oath never to return. Just as Captain Moroni, we Americans were able to set our enemies free, and they worked with us to end the war and to establish freedom and peace in their newly liberated nation.

### **COMING HOME WAS WONDERFUL BUT DIFFICULT**

Upon returning home, I encountered a difficult transition—most of the normal activities of life seemed trivial and unimportant. Since that time I have spoken with many of my friends that went with me to Iraq, and most have had a similar experience. Family, friends, and church became the central focus of life. Everyday life, including work and the news, became inconsequential. Complaints about the difficulties of life seemed trivial. For example, student complaints about the stress of life or school was hard to hear, when compared to life in a war zone. It was as if students couldn't possibly know how truly wonderful it was to just be at BYU. Before I left for Iraq, my life was focused on personal finance, school, employment, or cultural activities, such as movies and sports. Upon my return, those parts of life seemed so simple and insignificant. I remember walking across the BYU campus and watching the students, all busy and hurrying to various buildings or activities. I wanted to stand on a wall and yell at the top my voice,

"Wake up! Be grateful the Lord lives! He is in charge! He is blessing us every day! We need to honor Him!" I'm sure most of the students were grateful and mindful of the Lord but I assumed they were much like me before my experience with war—consumed every day by the need to improve my personal situation in the temporal world.

While living in a war zone, the proximity to my Savior, the attention to family, and a concern for the principles of freedom became the focus of my emotions. Personal liberty is paramount! It may seem commonplace to Americans at home, but it is not commonplace to the soldier



fighting for this precious principle at the peril of his or her life. Referring to our God-given agency and our inalienable rights, Thomas Jefferson said it best in the American Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This statement alone is worth fighting for. While in the Middle East, the concept of freedom was paramount in my thoughts. My heart and mind were filled with a love of liberty. Being free to use our agency is the governing principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without freedom, the purpose of the world would come to naught.

Coming home took me away from this emotional concern for liberty. The awkward feeling that the normal pursuits of life were mundane took months of reflection to understand. I have now finished the reentry process and have a new appreciation for life. My conclusion is this—in a war zone—every soldier is confronted with danger and the possibility that any day may be his last. When a soldier comes home, the danger is gone, but the spotlight on the importance of life remains. Hence, he or she is confronted with the trivial nature of our day-to-day lives and the improper focus on the temporal self-centered world. With months of reflection, it becomes possible to live in the midst of this worldly conflict and still focus on the most important principles: God, family, and country.

## THE BOOK OF MORMON AND MY EXPERIENCE WITH WAR

Having given you this personal background, I hope you understand how I was touched by war in the Middle East. The Book of Mormon played a major part in my understanding of war and the need to have the Lord by my side. Many people find the Book of Mormon war chapters difficult to understand. It is my prayer that my commentary will help Book of Mormon readers overcome that aversion.

The Book of Mormon was named after its principal editor and compiler. Mormon took his account from the writings of others and relied on the Spirit to tell him what was most important for our day. He would often interject an editorial within a story he was

The palace of Saddam's son, stripped by the people before turned into soldiers' living quarters

writing. On one occasion, he interrupted the story and made this comment.

*And now there are many records kept of the proceedings of this people, by many of this people, which are particular and very large, concerning them. **But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people, yea, the account of the Lamanites and of the Nephites, and their wars, and contentions, and dissensions, and their preaching, and their prophecies, and their shipping and their building of ships, and their building of temples, and of synagogues and their sanctuaries, and their righteousness, and their wickedness, and their murders, and their robbings, and their plundering, and all manner of abominations and whoredoms, cannot be contained in this work.** But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites.*

[Helaman 3:13-15 LDS]

(Helaman 2:12-14 RLDS) (emphasis added)

If Mormon could not even include "a hundredth part" then why would he spend so much time on the periods of war? There is a section of the Book of Mormon that people commonly call the war chapters [Alma 43-62 LDS] (Alma 20-29 RLDS). If one includes several other accounts of times when war was prevalent, the chapters on war total more than 140 pages. This is over 25 percent of the Book of Mormon. Considering the difficulty Mormon had etching the history on gold plates, there must be a very serious and important message given on those precious pages. A vital part of

this study will be to discover the messages delivered by the prophet-warriors in the Book of Mormon.

Mormon used an interesting literary device, the phrase "thus we see," to insert editorial messages. There are over 20 instances of this wording, which begins reflective comments on the situation or on the behavior of the people. Other times Mormon simply interjected comments in the middle of a story. An example is found in Alma 28, following an awful war in which "many thousands were slain." Mormon, a great military general, had personally experienced the ravages of war and felt inclined to make this statement after recording the history of a terrible conflict 400 years before his time.

*And thus we see how great the inequality of man is because of sin and transgression, and the power of the devil, which comes by the cunning plans which he hath devised to ensnare the hearts of men. And thus we see the great call of diligence of men to labor in the vineyards of the Lord; and thus we see the great reason of sorrow, and also of rejoicing sorrow because of death and destruction among men, and joy because of the light of Christ unto life.*

*[Alma 28:13-14 LDS](Alma 15:50-51 RLDS)  
(emphasis added)*

It is clear that Mormon was looking forward to our time and wanted us to learn an important lesson from his historical account. Moroni, son of Mormon, was also a prophet warrior. He finished the recorded history on the golden plates and later buried them about in AD 400. Moroni looked forward to our day and wrote the following editorial near the end of his writings. He had been blessed to see a vision of the future when the Book of Mormon would come forth. Moroni followed this proclamation with a warning, which I will quote later in the text.

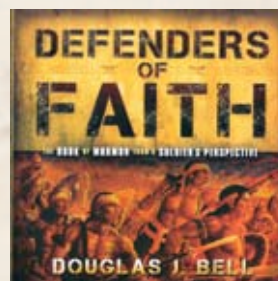
*Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you. Behold, I speak unto you as*

*if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing.*

*[Mormon 8:34-35 LDS] (Mormon 4:45-47 RLDS)*

These great prophets saw our day and tried to inspire us to learn from their experience. The faith-inspiring heroes of the Book of Mormon have changed my life. Their poignant expressions were magnified and became especially clear while I was serving as a soldier. My meager efforts to help a captive and impoverished nation become free, took on an even greater significance as I read about the incredible efforts of the Book of Mormon warriors to establish and maintain freedom in their ancient land. My study brought to light the depth of their convictions and the role that war played in their history. My purpose in writing this commentary can be simply stated: the great Book of Mormon prophets speak directly to us from their hearts and want us to see the dangers confronting us today. They lived in wicked and perilous times that required incredible faith, obedience, and sacrifice. They want us to learn from their experience and avoid the mistakes and pitfalls of their day.

I am humbled by the truths taught by the Book of Mormon authors. While writing this book, I had one primary concern: I prayed that what I wrote would increase the reader's appreciation for these marvelous prophets and their military acumen. Above all, I want to give the reader an additional opportunity to see their testimonies of Christ. With that goal in mind, I humbly present *Defenders of Faith: The Book of Mormon from a Soldier's Perspective*.



This article is composed from excerpts from the introduction to the book "Defenders of Faith: The Book of Mormon from a Soldier's Perspective" by Douglas J. Bell. It is published by Cedar Fort Publishing of Springville, Utah. To order *Defenders of Faith: The Book of Mormon*

*From a Soldier's Perspective* please see the advertisement included in this issue of *The Witness*.



# The Blessings of Liberty

By Marlin Guin



*And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.*

(1 Nephi 1:54 RLDS) [1 Nephi 2:20 LDS]

This past December, we had the opportunity to visit New York City. As expected, the list of things to do was much longer than time allowed. We still found it educational and enjoyable to experience the history and culture of a large and diverse city—especially since it has demonstrated such a prominent role in the history of our nation.

At the top of my “must-see” history list were familiar places such as St. Paul’s Chapel, Ground Zero, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. These places are usually found at the top of most everyone’s history list visiting there today. I must confess that much of the anticipation and excitement for the trip came from my love for history, especially as it relates to the Book of Mormon and this “mighty nation” called America. The prophet Nephi speaks of God’s promise to “raise up” this nation for divine purposes:

And it meaneth that the time cometh that after all the house of Israel have been scattered and confounded, that the Lord God will raise up a **mighty nation** among the Gentiles, yea, even **upon the face of this land;**

(1 Nephi 7:15 RLDS) [1 Nephi 22:7 LDS] (emphasis added)

It’s very humbling to see the Statue of Liberty welcoming the ships entering the harbor and the airplanes flying over to many destinations. She can be seen from great distances from the sea and sky. Her arm and torch stretched upward toward the God who brought forth and established this free nation.

One can only imagine the lives of people who have come in the past and will come in the future. Historically, those migrating from Europe in the early years were often seeking religious freedom, prosperity and new life in a nation founded upon a belief in Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon speaks clearly to the coming of our forefathers for this purpose. Nephi writes:

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did **humble themselves before the Lord**, and the **power of the Lord was with them**; And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them; And I beheld that the **power of God was with them**; and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle. And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were **delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations**. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did **prosper in the land**;

(1 Nephi 3:152-156 RLDS)[1 Nephi 16:16-20 LDS] (emphasis added)

Notice how God gathered people, established a “mighty nation,” prospered the inhabitants and protected them from the dominance of other nations. History illustrates how England, the mother country, tried to bring America into servitude, but the Lord had other plans. America’s infant military power should have crumbled against a veteran world power such as England. Only the power of God could bring victory to America in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 under such circumstances.

Many other people kept coming to America over the centuries. During our lifetime, people all over the world are making the same journey for various reasons. Perhaps they have never known true freedom, or they seek political asylum. Perhaps they have been in bondage. Perhaps they seek opportunities for prosperity. Perhaps they’re our own battle-weary veterans, coming



home after fighting for the liberty of those oppressed in far-away countries; coming home to their faith, family and friends, to once again remember the real reasons they have given so much for the cause of freedom.

Ellis Island was a similar experience for us. It is located in close proximity to the Statue of Liberty. Spanning six decades, Ellis Island was a major gateway for processing the diverse peoples coming to this “land of promise.” One source describes it this way:

Ellis Island operated from 1892 to 1954. During much of that time, Ellis Island was the main port of entry for immigrants not just to America but for much of North America. Ellis Island processed an average of 5,000 people per day and a total of 12 million immigrants passed through the island over the years.<sup>1</sup>

How exciting it was for us to look out the windows of the main hall or stand on its harbor shore to see both New York City and the Statue of Liberty! Each are powerful symbols for a new life in a land uniquely blessed by God. Ellis Island reminded me of Nephi describing how the Lord brought his family to the “land of promise:”

But, said he, notwithstanding our afflictions, we have obtained a *land of promise*, a land which is *choice above all other lands*; A land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a *land for the inheritance of my seed*. Yea, the Lord hath *covenanted this land unto me, and to my children forever*; And *also all those who should be led out of other countries, by the hand of the Lord*. Wherefore, I, Lehi, prophesy according to the workings of the Spirit which is in me, that there shall *none come into this land, save they shall be brought by the hand of the Lord*. Wherefore, *this land is consecrated unto him whom he shall bring*. And *if it so be that they shall serve him according*

*to the commandments* which he hath given, it *shall be a land of liberty unto them*;

Wherefore, they shall never be brought down into *captivity: if so, it shall be because of iniquity*: For if iniquity shall abound, cursed shall be the land for their sakes; But *unto the righteous, it shall be blessed for ever*.

(2 Nephi 1:6-15 RLDS) [2 Nephi 1:5-7 LDS] (emphasis added)

In light of these scriptures, I believe the historical contributions of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island speak for themselves. I don't believe a modern-day patriot can go there without sensing the presence of a determined pursuit of liberty and the relentless defense of our rights and freedoms by those giving such personal sacrifice and even the ultimate sacrifice. This “familiar spirit” spoke to my heart in a powerful way and caused me to reflect again upon the bountiful blessings bestowed upon us. I found it easy relating to the spiritual connection between God and this “choice land” because of my experiences as a latter day “servant warrior” for God and as a former Marine in service to my country. Chief Captain Moroni captured the essence of this special relationship between this “choice land” and the followers of Christ:

And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it, *In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children*; and he fastened it upon the end of a pole thereof. And he fastened on his head-plate, and his breastplate, and his shields, and girded on his armor about his loins; and he took the pole, which had on the end thereof his rent coat (and he called it the *title of liberty*), And *he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren so long as there should be a band of Christians remain to possess the land*;

(Alma 21:41-43 RLDS) [Alma 46:12-13 LDS] (emphasis added)

Sitting at the very top of my “must-see” history list was St. Paul's Chapel and Ground Zero. St. Paul's Chapel faces Broadway Street, with its historic cemetery bordering Church Street at the rear of the property. Church Street separates the church property from the site of the World Trade Center where the twin towers once stood. It uniquely connects the past with the present by surviving as a church from the Revolutionary era and also functioning as a public building today.<sup>2</sup> In many ways, St. Paul's Chapel represents

a bridge between the spiritual and physical aspects of the founding of our nation. Some interesting historical facts to help illustrate this are:

- George Washington worshipped there after his inauguration as first president of the United States. He continued to attend services at the chapel during the two years that New York served as the capital of the United States.
- It has the nation's first monument to a soldier. In front, there is a monument to General Richard Montgomery, a revolutionary hero who died in the Battle of Quebec.
- It displays an oil painting of the Great Seal of the United States. It is the first rendition of the seal and hangs over Washington's pew.
- It is the burial place for many patriots, both the famous and the common soldier.



Why is this location of such great interest? While planning our trip to New York City, I had a deep desire to see St. Paul's Chapel and Ground Zero. I wanted to see it for myself, especially since so many saints are now discussing Rabbi Jonathan Cahn's book, "The Harbinger," and writing articles on the fulfillment of Isaiah 9:

The Lord sent his word unto Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel. And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. (Isaiah 9:8-10 IV/KJV)

Since much has already been said and written about it, I won't expound further in this article. However, having stood on the very spot mentioned by Rabbi Cahn, I do want to share my personal testimony about the experience. The heart of his message is for America, as a nation, to remember and return to God.

It was very special to stand next to the cedar tree at the corner of St. Paul's Chapel cemetery. It had been planted to replace the sycamore tree cut down by one of the falling beams of the North Tower on September 11, 2001. With my back to the cedar tree, I could look to the left and see the graves of the Revolutionary War patriots and the chapel where our founding fathers worshipped God in freedom. At that moment, it was easy to sense the spiritual connection between God and America, the "mighty nation." I could then look to the right and see the place where two great towers once stood. Looking even further in the same direction, I could see the new "Freedom Tower," rising higher each day as their replacement.

What a powerful contrast in symbolism! It's difficult to describe the experience, but it sealed the connection as it reminded me again how this "mighty nation" was called forth into existence and divinely ordained by God as a place to accomplish great and marvelous things.

Today, many leaders in the highest halls of government, and in our society at large, seek to disconnect America from its spiritual heritage as a Christian nation. We should valiantly share our testimony and have confidence God will accomplish His purposes and fulfill His word for this land. I love the Book of Mormon because it speaks to these things more powerfully than any other book. It's the sacred record of Joseph's land, written by those to whom it was given for the land of their inheritance. Within it is found God's prophecies and the promises for America, the "mighty nation" from the Book of Mormon. May we study it for the time ahead and respond to its testimony:

Behold, this is a *choice land*, and *whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be free* from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, *if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ* who hath been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 1:35 RLDS) [Ether 2:12 LDS] (emphasis added)

<sup>1</sup><http://www.genealogyintime.com/GenealogyResources/Articles/Ellis%20Island%20Immigration%20Records%20page1.html>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.nyfreedom.com/Stpauls.htm>



# One Nation

## CHRISTIAN QUOTES OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*  
(John 8: 36 IV/KJV)

### PATRICK HENRY

Ratifier of the U.S. Constitution

“It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here.”

--The Trumpet Voice of Freedom: Patrick Henry of Virginia, p. iii.

“Cursed be all that learning that is contrary to the cross of Christ.”

--America's Providential History, p. 93.

### JOHN JAY

1st Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and President of the American Bible Society

“By conveying the Bible to people thus circumstanced, we certainly do them a most interesting kindness. We thereby enable them to learn that man was originally created and placed in a state of happiness, but, becoming disobedient, was subjected to the degradation and evils which he and his posterity have since experienced.

*"The Bible will also inform them that our gracious Creator has provided for us a Redeemer, in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; that this Redeemer has made atonement "for the sins of the whole world," and thereby reconciling the Divine justice with the Divine mercy has opened a way for our redemption and salvation; and that these inestimable benefits are of the free gift and grace of God, not of our deserving, nor in our power to deserve.*”

--In God We Trust—The Religious Beliefs and Ideas of the American Founding Fathers, p. 379.

*And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall prosper, and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands.*

(1 Nephi 1:54 RLDS) [1 Nephi 2:20 LDS]

### BENJAMIN RUSH

Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Ratifier of the U.S. Constitution

“Christianity is the only true and perfect religion, and that in proportion as mankind adopts its principles and obeys its precepts, they will be wise and happy.”

--Essays, Literary, Moral, and Philosophical, published in 1798.

*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

(John 8:32  
IV/KJV)

### JOHN ADAMS

2nd U.S. President and Signer of the Declaration of Independence

“The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever.”

--Adams wrote this in a letter to his wife, Abigail, on July 3, 1776.

# Under God

*And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them.*  
(Ether 1:31 RLDS) [Ether 2:9 LDS]

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Unites States Constitution

“Here is my Creed. I believe in one God, the Creator of the Universe. That He governs it by His Providence. That He ought to be worshipped.

*"That the most acceptable service we render to him is in doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this. These I take to be the fundamental points in all sound religion, and I regard them as you do in whatever sect I meet with them."*

--Benjamin Franklin wrote this in a letter to Ezra Stiles, President of Yale University on March 9, 1790.

## THOMAS JEFFERSON

3rd U.S. President, Drafter and Signer of the Declaration of Independence

“I am a real Christian – that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus Christ.”

--The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, p. 385.

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*  
(Galatians 5:1 IV/KJV)

## SAMUEL ADAMS

Signer of the Declaration of Independence and Father of the American Revolution

“And as it is our duty to extend our wishes to the happiness of the great family of man, I conceive that we cannot better express ourselves than by humbly supplicating the Supreme Ruler of the world that the rod of tyrants may be broken to pieces, and the oppressed made free again; that wars may cease in all the earth, and that the confusions that are and have been among nations may be overruled by promoting and speedily bringing on that holy and happy period when the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and all people everywhere willingly bow to the sceptre of Him who is Prince of Peace.”

--As Governor of Massachusetts, Proclamation of a Day of Fast, March 20, 1797.

## JAMES MONROE

5th U.S. President

“When we view the blessings with which our country has been favored, those which we now enjoy, and the means which we possess of handing them down unimpaired to our latest posterity, our attention is irresistibly drawn to the source from whence they flow. Let us then, unite in offering our most grateful acknowledgments for these blessings to the Divine Author of All Good.”

--Monroe made this statement in his 2nd Annual Message to Congress, November 16, 1818.

*For it is a choice land, saith God unto me, above all other lands;*

(2 Nephi 7:31 RLDS)

[2 Nephi 10:19 LDS]

## JOHN HANCOCK

1st Signer of the Declaration of Independence

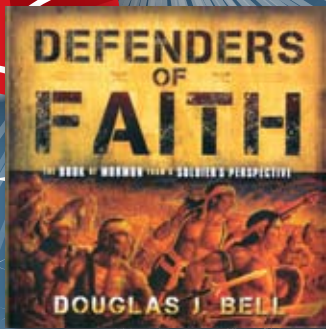
“Resistance to tyranny becomes the Christian and social duty of each individual. ... Continue steadfast and, with a proper sense of your dependence on God, nobly defend those rights which heaven gave, and no man ought to take from us.”

--History of the United States of America, Vol. II, p. 229.

*He would that they should come forth even unto the land of promise, which was choice above all other lands, which the Lord God had preserved for a righteous people;*

(Ether 1:29 RLDS) [Ether 2:7 LDS]

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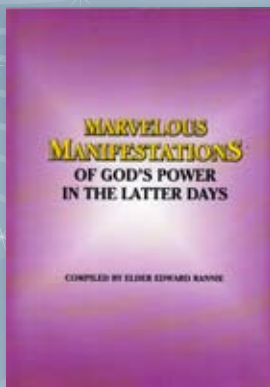
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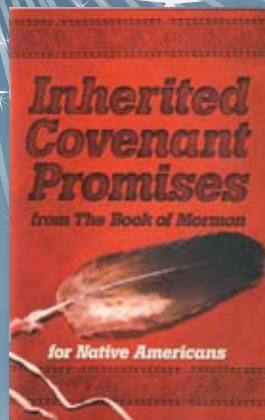
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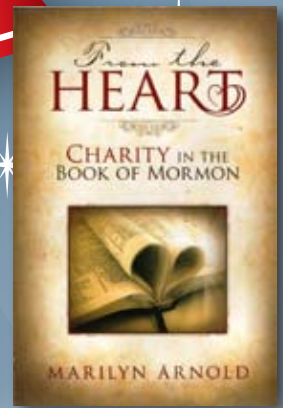
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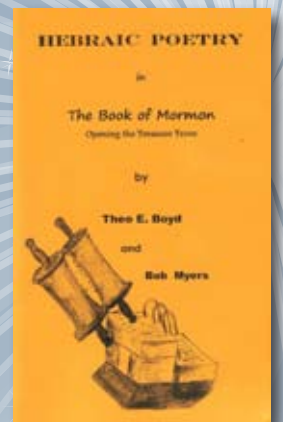


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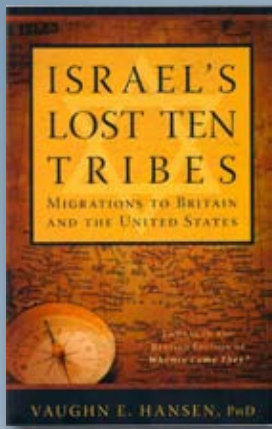
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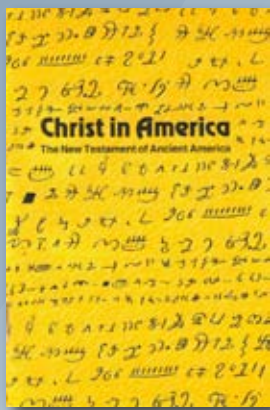
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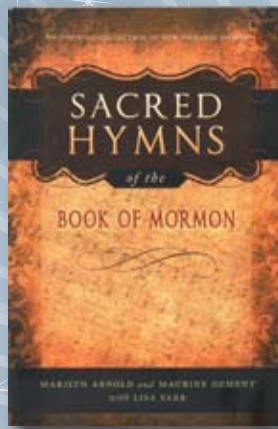
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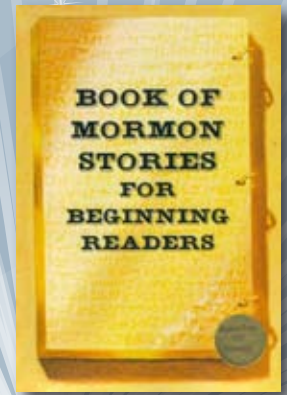
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# THE Sound OF A Trumpet



## It *is* the Sound of a Trumpet

By Sue Engelman

In the spring of 2012, I had a unique experience. On Tuesday, April 3rd, I had been in prayer with the Lord and was very concerned about the future direction of our city—Independence, Missouri. My husband, Jim, and I were meeting with friends and family to watch the results of the local City Council election at the Independence Square. We arrived early and were waiting outside for the rest of our party and enjoying the noticeable quiet and stillness, when I heard a very long sound of a trumpet. As it was blowing, I asked the Lord, “Was this the sound of a shofar?” The answer came gently, “No, it is the sound of a trumpet.” The trumpet played a long single note. I even looked around to see if someone had stepped out of a nearby building to play the instrument. I remember thinking that if it was a scriptural trumpet, the Lord would confirm my experience and its purpose. I also assumed others (my husband and arriving family) had heard it.

The next morning, while visiting family was preparing to leave, I asked my husband and daughter if they, too, had heard the trumpet. They had not. Again, the underlying feeling during the entire experience was “a voice of warning for future direction of the city,” followed by my continued prayer for confirmation and explanation. The confirmation came that day when, in my mailbox, was a copy of *The Witness* (issue #141, Spring 2012). I saw the lamb on the cover, reminding me of Passover. As I opened the magazine, the first article was *The Sound Of A Trumpet*, by Marlin Guin, confirming that, yes, indeed, that was what I had heard. Later that week, I realized it had taken place on the eve of Passover and was again to be taken as “a voice of warning.”