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KnoWhy #385 - How Can Sally Conrad's Witness of the Book of Mormon Strengthen Our Faith?

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Abstract: In June of 1829, Mary Whitmer hired Sally Conrad to help her around the house. While there, she often saw Joseph and Oliver “come down from the translating room several times when they looked so exceedingly white and strange” that she asked Mary Whitmer what was going on. Mary explained that Joseph and Oliver were translating a sacred record from golden plates, “and that the power of God was so great in the room that they could hardly endure it.” Mary’s explanation satisfied Sally, who eventually joined the church because of her experiences. As with Joseph and Oliver, the spiritual light the Book of Mormon brings into our lives can also bring others to the truth.

HOW CAN SALLY CONRAD'S WITNESS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH?

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“And the Lord said: I will prepare unto my servant Gazelem, a stone, which shall shine forth in darkness unto light.” Alma 37:23

THE KNOW

Generally, when we think of witnesses of the Book of Mormon, we think of the Three Witnesses or the Eight Witnesses. However, there were many other indirect witnesses of the Book of Mormon. These incidental witnesses may have seen part of the plates, like Josiah Stowell did.¹ Others may have handled the plates, like Emma Smith did.² One witness was converted to the church simply by witnessing the effect that the translation process had on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Her name was Sally Heller Conrad.³

In June of 1829, Mary Whitmer was hard at work taking care of her own family, but she also faced the added burden of taking care of Joseph and Oliver, who were translating the Book of Mormon in her home.⁴ Exhausted and overworked, Mary hired Sally to help her around the house. Eighteen-year-old Sally likely thought this would be a job like any other, but she soon noticed something unusual. She later told a friend that she saw Joseph and Oliver “come down from the translating room several times when they looked so exceedingly white and strange” that she asked Mary Whitmer what was going on.⁵

Because of the sacred nature of the work and fear of persecution, the Whitmers did not tell Sally what was happening.⁶ But finally, after seeing this happen multiple times, Sally said she would leave if Mary did not tell her what was going on.⁷ Mary finally explained that Joseph and Oliver were translating a sacred record from golden plates, “and that the power of God was so great in the room that they could hardly endure it: at times angels were in the room in their glory, which nearly consumed them.”⁸

Mary’s explanation satisfied Sally, who not only stayed to help the Whitmers, but eventually joined the church because of her experiences.⁹ She would eventually marry in the church, travel west with the Saints, and die in Provo, Utah at the age of 92.¹⁰

THE WHY

As far as we know, Sally Conrad never saw the plates or even handled them.¹¹ What made a difference in her life was the effect the Book of Mormon had on those around her. Sally did not have some grand or glorious

vision of an angel with plates. She didn't hear a voice from heaven. She simply saw the impact the Book of Mormon had on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. The same can be true of us today. Our faces may not have a celestial glow when we read the Book of Mormon, but people will still be able to see in our countenances that we read the Book of Mormon and live what it teaches.¹² And they may even wonder, like Sally did, what makes us different from other people they know.

James E. Faust once commented on a remark someone had made about the "light" in the eyes of Latter-day Saints. He said,

What was that light in their eyes which was so obvious to our friend? The Lord Himself gives the answer: 'And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings.' Where did that light come from? Again the Lord gives the answer: 'I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' The Lord is the true light, 'and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.' This light shows in our countenances as well as in our eyes.¹³

When we faithfully read the Book of Mormon, the Spirit will flow into our lives, and the impact of the Spirit will be obvious to those we interact with. Most people

will probably not become converted when they see the influence of the Spirit in our lives, as Sally was, but our increased spirituality will touch all we meet.¹⁴ They will not need to see golden plates and divine messengers to know that something about the Book of Mormon is good and true. They will see it in our faces, and eventually, from their own experiences reading the Book of Mormon.

May we all, in our own small ways, let the Book of Mormon's spiritual light radiate from us so that we can be a positive influence in the lives of those around us.¹⁵

FURTHER READING

John W. Welch, "The Miraculous Timing of the Translation of the Book of Mormon," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch, 2nd edition (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and BYU Press, 2017), 109, primary document no. 114. (available on p. 185).

Glenn Rawson, "Sallie Heller Conrad" in *Signs, Wonders, and Miracles: Extraordinary Stories from Early Latter-day Saints*, ed. Glenn Rawson and Dennis Lyman (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2015), 199–200.

Mark L. McConkie, *Remembering Joseph* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 248–249.

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NOTES

1. See "Mormonism," *New England Christian Herald* 4, no. 6 (Boston, MA; November 7, 1832); reprinted in *Morning Star* 8, no. 29 (Limerick, ME; November 16, 1832); accessed November 1, 2017, online at sidneyrigdon.com.

2. Amy Easton-Flake and Rachel Cope, "A Multiplicity of Witnesses: Women and the Translation Process," in *The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon: A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, ed. Dennis L. Largey, Andrew H. Hedges, John Hilton III, and Kerry Hull (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015), 143.

3. Her actual name was Sarah, but she went by Sally (sometimes spelled Sallie). See John W. Welch, "The Miraculous Timing of the Translation of the Book of Mormon," in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch, 2nd edition (Salt Lake City and Provo, UT: Deseret Book and BYU Press, 2017), 109, primary document no. 114 (available on p. 185). See also Glenn Rawson, "Sallie Heller Conrad" in *Signs, Wonders, and Miracles: Extraordinary Stories from Early Latter-day Saints*, ed. Glenn Rawson and Dennis Lyman (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2015), 199.

4. Although Emma likely was helping during much of the time, things would still have been very busy. See Rawson, "Sallie Heller Conrad," 199.
5. For a copy of the original interview, see Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 185. See also Mark L. McConkie, *Remembering Joseph* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 248–249.
6. See Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 185.
7. See Rawson, "Sallie Heller Conrad," 199.
8. See Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 185.
9. Rawson, "Sallie Heller Conrad," 200.
10. Rawson, "Sallie Heller Conrad," 200.
11. One would think that she would have mentioned this during her interview if she had. See Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 185.
12. See Andrew C. Skinner, "Alma's 'Pure Testimony' (Alma 5–8)," in *Book of Mormon, Part 1: 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, *Studies in Scripture*, Volume 7, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 301.
13. James E. Faust, "The Light in Their Eyes," *Ensign*, November 2005, online at lds.org.
14. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987–1992), 3:30.
15. See, for example, Alma 37:23.