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Conversions THROUGH THE BOOK OF MORMON

JOHN HENRY EVANS

VI. *Alvina Covert Turner*

Alvina Covert Turner, a Virginian by birth and a German by descent, is now a resident of New York City. To this place she came from North Carolina, after her marriage to Ros-



ALVINA COVERT TURNER

coe W. Turner, an attorney by profession.

Always deeply religious by nature, yet she was not inclined to fanaticism. Hers is the thinking

rather than the merely emotional type of mind.

Three things became "convictions" with her, "even in my 'teens." They were baptism, tithing, and the need for divine authority in religion. "Why were there so many different creeds?" There was no satisfying answer. "Why did the ministers lack the power the apostles possessed?" To this she received the conventional reply: "It is not needed now!"

This did not satisfy her mind.

"While I keenly enjoyed my association with these fine people," she says, speaking of her Baptist friends, "and received much in the way of spiritual advancement. I was never completely filled with peace and satisfaction."

And so, in order not to belong to anything which she had to "pretend to believe," but did not, she severed her connection with the church of her childhood and youth.

That must have cost her something.

Religiously she was now foot-loose. But where was she to go? Two things she had, which are pearls of great price in any human life. She had an unfaltering trust in God, and she had an eager, open mind.

"From that time on, when acquaintances and friends (out of in-

terest, I feel sure) presented their beliefs, I always carefully investigated their claims, fearing that, if I did not, they might perchance have the very authority I was seeking." Thus, during the next few years, she became familiar with many churches and many creeds.

Mormonism, however, was not one of these.

One day in Norfolk, Virginia, Mrs. Turner's birthplace and her home at the time, she was visited by her eldest daughter, Mrs. Brooke Temple. Very casually and "without comment," the younger woman placed on the table a volume of sizable proportions.

This particular book had had a peculiar history. In 1927 the Temples, while in Toledo, Ohio, were called upon by two men, elders of a church. These men either sold or gave them this work, which was on the subject of religion. As "neither of them had any interest in religious literature," their only purpose in retaining it was that "Mamma would like to read it." And, "notwithstanding they wanted to get rid of excess baggage," this book went with them "here, there, and everywhere, till they returned to Norfolk."

This was the Book of Mormon, and the men who sold or gave it to them were Mormon missionaries.

Mrs. Turner later took up the volume and examined it, with no other feeling, she says, than a certain "aloofness." Meantime, as she read the title, "vague memories" haunted her of "a sect that per-

formed strange rites in their temples."

Since she was convalescing from an illness, she had an excellent opportunity "to carefully read it through without interference."

"As I read of these ancient people and God's dealings with them," she says, "I was amazed, and wondered if it were all true. It seemed that I involuntarily prayed. I remember saying, 'Lord, are these things true? Are these people of Israel, as is claimed?' Immediately there came to my mind the words, 'These are my *other sheep*.'

"Such a thing had never happened to me before. What was it? I had not recently heard a sermon on that subject nor read about it.

"After much speculating, I dismissed the incident from my mind, and resumed my reading.

"On getting to Third Nephi, where Jesus makes known that the Nephites were his 'other sheep,' I had another experience of amazement and bewilderment." Here were the very words which had come so strangely to her mind from she knew not where.

And then, near the end of the volume, she came upon those fateful words of Moroni: "When ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye 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."

This moved her deeply. "So with-

out knowing it, I could in all sincerity say that I had inquired and was given a testimony that it was all as represented."

Up to this time Mrs. Turner, in spite of her wide searchings for a church with authority, had no knowledge of the people whose book she had read. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was "the only one with which I was not familiar." So now she was "consumed with the desire to find out what its claims were."

In Norfolk she tried vainly to locate members of that church. But when, a year or two later, the family moved to New York City, she was "definitely urged and impelled to find the one church which I had not investigated."

Turning to the Red Book (City Guide), she found that the Mormons held their meetings in Steinway Hall. So "one beautiful Sunday morning, in October, 1930, I worshipped with the Latter-day Saints for the first time." There she bought a copy of the Pearl of Great Price and was supplied with some tracts—all of which she read interestedly. Later she obtained copies of the Doctrine and Covenants and the *Articles of Faith*, by Elder James E. Talmage.

"As I studied the claims of this church," she says, "I just *knew* they were true!

"Thank God for the gift of faith!"

Does any missionary feel discouraged at not having done any great work during his two years' labor in the field? Mrs. Turner

has a word of encouragement.

"It was fourteen years ago," she remarks philosophically, "that those humble missionaries came to my daughter's home in Toledo. They may have gone back weary, discouraged, at their failure to accomplish more for their Master. But they did a marvelous work that day. Till now the fruitage of that one copy of the Book of Mormon in our family is: my husband, five sons, two sons-in-law, two daughters, two daughters-in-law, and four grandchildren, besides, much work for the dead."

All these conversions, she says, came about "through the hard way."

"My husband, who, as stated, was an attorney, believed, with the pride of the South, that all religion commenced and ended in the church of his fathers, the Methodist. He could never have accepted Mormonism until he was prepared and the way made clear.

"First, we lost our oldest son, aged twelve. This was a blow such as he had never felt before. Questions were raised in his mind to which his church could give no answer. He began for the first time to think and to reason about God and His purposes in it all.

"Then he was betrayed by one he had trusted, bringing great financial loss, and shaking his faith in man. From this we have never fully recovered. Down the slope we have traveled until, economically, we reached the bottom.

"Into all these experiences I entered, and likewise suffered. But I

felt that God had a purpose in it, and attempted to keep my husband firm in his trust in the Lord.

"We have traveled far over a hard road, and the end is not in sight. Our faith has been tested and tried many times. I know that, had my husband not been dealt with by the Lord and his spiritual soil prepared for the seed, he would have attained much distinction and wealth. I also know that I am grateful that the Lord used these experiences to prepare him for better things.

"Many times he has told me how grateful he was that I had led him to find the truth, and now he understands and can see clearly just how he had been led by the Lord, through me, along those dark and trying paths.

"There is an estrangement between some very dear friends and myself. They have withdrawn from an association which was very pleasant, and no longer seek my company. We have given up much of the things dear in this life.

"That is one picture of the 'sacri-

vice' which I have been called upon to make. On the other side is another picture, a picture of joy and happiness. I have been privileged to have a part in bringing my husband and children into a true knowledge of God, of our latter-day prophet, of the gospel restored, and of divine authority.

"No one can read the Book of Mormon, think carefully, pray earnestly that they may know, without coming to the same conclusion that I came to. I no more doubt the truth of the story given to us by the Prophet Joseph Smith than I doubt that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, that he lived among men, and that he was crucified by those whom he came to help.

"I pray that ere long the world will read and study this Book as I did and, as a consequence, come into that fulness of life and knowledge of God's plan."

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm!



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