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Abstract Daniel H. Ludlow, formerly the director of Correlation Review for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, answers questions about his understanding and testimony of the Book of Mormon.

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH

DANIEL H. LUDLOW

This interview between Daniel H. Ludlow, formerly the director of Correlation Review for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and two representatives of JBMS, *S. Kent Brown and Dana M. Pike, took place on 16 May 2002.*

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JBMS: How did you first become interested in the Book of Mormon? Was it an event or an experience?

DHL: I have always sort of been religiously inclined. I remember I went to Sunday School for 14 years without missing a single time. I remember when I was the age of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he had his first vision. Knowing how he got a testimony, I decided that maybe I could do that too. So when I was the same age, I remember praying all night about the Book of Mormon. I remember how bitterly disappointed I was when, after I prayed all night about it, my uncle called me to go out and start milking the cows and do the chores. No angel had visited. I couldn't say I knew. I was bitterly disappointed. But my love has always been the Book of Mormon.

I reached the point, though I was young, that I knew that the Book of Mormon was true as surely as though an angel had appeared to me. So I have

never questioned it. That is why it bothers me a little bit when some people feel like they have to prove the Book of Mormon, or they have to have the Book of Mormon proven to them. I am suspicious of that because I think the Book of Mormon is its own best evidence, its own best truth. I am still convinced that the best way to get a real testimony of the Book of Mormon and a love of the Book of Mormon is from the study of it from the spiritual side. I don't know that archaeology and other things are ever going to convert a person to the Book of Mormon. It might convince them, but to me there is a world of difference between being converted to something as compared with just being convinced that it is true. I lean towards internal evidences much more than external evidences.

This interest in the Book of Mormon is what brought me to BYU. When Ernest Wilkinson recruited me for the BYU faculty, he said, "If we let you teach religion classes, will you come to BYU?" I just loved to teach the Book of Mormon. So that is what I concentrated on when I came to BYU [in 1955]. About that time the Brethren decided that all the students at BYU ought to take a course in the Book of Mormon. Before that, BYU had a religion requirement, but students could fill that religion requirement in lots of ways. The Brethren finally decided that you needed to take a course in the Book of Mormon the first year you attended any church-sponsored college or university, whether you were a freshman student, a graduate student,

or a transfer student. Because of the rapid growth of BYU, and because of that policy, all of a sudden we were teaching scores of Book of Mormon sections. I was the chairman of the Department of Bible and Modern Scripture, so I had to get lots of new teachers. I wrote a letter to nearly all the institute teachers and some of the seminary teachers in the church and said, "If any of you are planning on coming to BYU for advanced degrees, we can arrange while you are here to give you a teaching fellowship to teach the Book of Mormon." Also, we had to go to other colleges within BYU and ask them to let some of their faculty come and teach courses. Some of the faculty said, "How can we teach it when we are not trained in it?" So, as the chairman of the department, I arranged that each Friday we would have a class for these teachers to cover the topics for the Book of Mormon classes the next week.

JBMS: Do you find more interest in studies that probe the book itself?

DHL: Yes. Language similarities, word analyses, wordprint analyses, and things like that as compared with external evidences. I started taking tours to Israel for BYU Travel Study very early. But I resisted any tours to Book of Mormon lands because I knew what some of the directors of those tours were saying: "This is where the city of Bountiful was located" or "This is where the land of Bountiful was located," and so on.

I finally started taking tours for BYU to Book of Mormon lands. I find it very fascinating, and the Maya civilization in particular, but also the Inca. Concerning the Maya civilization, I don't have any reasonable question but what they had something to do with the Book of Mormon.

JBMS: Do you see value in geographical studies?

DHL: I have been very, very fascinated with Book of Mormon geography, but you don't have to read very many of the theories on Book of Mormon geography to know one thing. They cannot all be right. And, as I told one author once, it may be that they are all wrong. And I have talked to others who say essentially the same thing.

Obviously the Book of Mormon people were real people. They lived in real places. There were real cities, and so on. But when people come out and say, "It is this place," when we don't *know* that's the place, I don't feel that is right.

In a similar way, I think there are lots of parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Book of Mormon account. All of these things have whetted my appetite. But I guess my work in Correlation has also made me a little bit cautious, even when I take tours to Israel. We know where Bethlehem was located. But to be able to say, "The Church of the Nativity is the actual birthplace of the Savior," I don't feel that strongly. So I usually use the word *traditional*—"This is the *traditional* place."

I was privileged to go to Israel in 1969 with Elder LeGrand Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve. He finally called me on this word *traditional*. He would say, "Brother Ludlow, you keep saying this is the traditional place. I don't want to know the traditional place. I want to know the exact spot." I said, "Well, Brother Richards, I am not sure there are very many places where we can say that this is the exact spot. There are some places where we can say that it was in this area, and it may be within a few feet."

The shores of the Sea of Galilee and the level of that sea have not changed much over the years, maybe a few feet. But you can come around the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee today and say, "Now we have crisscrossed the path where the Savior went." Elder Richards wanted to see some of those places, so I took him. I will never forget. He was 84 years of age at that time and had a bad leg. Of course, he was dressed like an apostle, with nice clothes and nice shoes. When we came to the spot called Tabgha, or Peter's Primacy, we read in the book of John about the Savior's appearing after his resurrection to the disciples and about their catching fish and finally recognizing the Savior [see John 21]. I told him the traditions associated with this place, that the Savior must have been in this area.

Without presenting arguments, he wanted to know if I would walk out into the sea with him. I said, "Elder Richards, these stones are slippery, and you have your shoes on and you can't very well go out there in your stocking feet." He said, "I want to go out." So I helped this 84-year-old apostle, and we waded out into the Sea of Galilee until he could reach down and touch the water. That was all he needed.

I am quite impressed with that experience. But there aren't very many places where you can say, "This is the spot." It bothers me when good Latter-day Saints become too definite too soon.

JBMS: Are there places that impress you as Book of Mormon locales on this continent? We know that there are such places in Arabia.

DHL: You are talking about places like Teotihuacan and Monte Alban. I don't think there is any question about the Hill Cumorah in New York. I finally reached a conclusion. It is not a matter of testimony, but I am sort of convinced there must have been two Cumorahs. There must have been a Cumorah in Central America somewhere and the one in New York State.

The Lord in his own due time will make things clear. I have a strong testimony that, anytime the Lord wants, he can prove something. And he can prove it very quickly. But as I mentioned, I don't think he is interested in our being convinced; I think he is interested in our being converted. Building a testimony would impress me much more than to have something that has to do with archaeological evidence and such.

I remember that when I joined the BYU faculty in 1955, I didn't know Hugh Nibley but I knew of him. One time when I went to talk to him about Book of Mormon geography, he said, "Look, I wouldn't touch Book of Mormon geography with a 10-foot pole. The proof of the Book of Mormon is not going to come

from geography." Of course, he leans towards the manuscripts.

I don't think that scholars or the church has really scratched the surface on, say, the writings of Ixtlilxochitl. Sometimes we quote the Popol Vuh. In my opinion, the Popol Vuh is nothing compared to the writings of Ixtlilxochitl. He talks about the very day of the month of the year in which certain events took place, and you can correlate those with Book of Mormon times.

JBMS: If a young person came to you and asked, "What would you recommend is the best way to study the Book of Mormon?" what are some of the guidelines you would give?

DHL: To young people I would say, make sure that first of all you study the book, and then study what the prophets have said about the book, and don't get too far away from that. Where there is an interpretation that might suggest some other possibility, examine that with great care. But don't give it the same weight, because honest people can differ.

JBMS: What is your experience of effectively teaching the Book of Mormon?

DHL: Let me tell you a story. It has to do with multiple witnesses. One day in the 1960s West Belnap, dean of the College of Religion, came to me and said, "Brother Ludlow, the Board of Trustees has decided that we are going to offer some of our general education courses by kinescope [by videotape]. We don't have enough classrooms for all the students to take basic general education courses in a normal way with a regular teacher, so we are going to teach them in the largest rooms we have on the campus. The three courses that are going to be taught by kinescope are a course in the Book of Mormon, a course in physics, and a course in American history, so that hundreds and hundreds of students can complete their requirements in those areas. We don't have to add any new faculty. We don't have to build any new classrooms. Students will go into these classrooms hour after hour, hundreds of them each hour, and take these courses." I said, "I have had work in audiovisual, and I know that is an effective way to teach, but it doesn't substitute for a live teacher." He said, "The Brethren know that you have done that, and you have been selected to teach the course on the Book of Mormon. We are going to ask

thousands of students take a course in the Book of Mormon from you, 500 at a time. And you are going to record the lectures, and then we will play these lectures every hour in the Joseph Smith auditorium."

I said, "No way. I am not going to do it." He said, "I don't remember asking you whether or not you would do it. The Brethren have decided this is the way it is going to be done, and we want you to do it." So I said, "Well, okay. I will do it as long as you don't have any non-LDS students in there. The non-LDS students deserve a live teacher so that they can ask questions. No non-LDS students." He said, "Dan, you know we can't do that. Title IX of the Education Act won't allow us to discriminate. You have to allow non-LDS in there." I finally said, "Okay. I will do it if you let some other people help me. I will get up and introduce the topic each time, but we will have different people who will present the material on videotape. We will have Brother Sperry give a lecture on Semitic things in the Book of Mormon. We will have Brother Nibley teach an hour. We will have Robert K. Thomas, Chauncy Riddle, and Roy Doxey and others for an hour each. And I will just get up and introduce the topic and say, 'We have with us today Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, who got his degree in ancient Semitic languages from the University of Chicago, and he is going to teach on this subject today,' and turn it over to him." Belnap said, "I don't know whether the Brethren will agree to that or not. You were approved to teach the course. If you will prepare a list of what you want these people to teach, I will take it back to the Brethren and see what they say." So I did. He sent the list to the Brethren, and in the main they approved it. So I set up 27 lectures. I would get up and introduce the topic, and the other faculty member would give the lecture.

We used to have a man at BYU by the name of Richard Wirthlin, who was in statistics. He and others analyzed all three courses taught by videotape. (He later became the chief statistician for the Republican Party in the United States.) He analyzed the Book of Mormon course to find out what the students liked, what they didn't like, and so on. They were compared with students in the regular classes. Even the results of the final examinations were compared.

There is one consistent thing they found in the kinescope Book of Mormon classes. Many of the non-LDS students were joining the church, a much higher percentage than in the regular classes with regular teachers. I couldn't believe that non-LDS students were much more likely to join the church if they enrolled in these classes than if they were taught in the regular classroom. I wanted to talk to some of these students. So I and others visited with some of them and began to get an inkling of what was happening.

The story was this: The non-LDS student who took the videotaped class would say, "I took the course first of all because I knew there would not be a live teacher. When you got up and at the end of the first lecture you said, 'I know the Book of Mormon is true,' I said to myself, 'Of course he does, or why would he be teaching religion at BYU?' The next time you introduced Dr. Nibley as professor of history who was trained at the University of California and who is going to speak to us today on this particular subject related to the Book of Mormon. Dr. Nibley at the end of the class said, 'I testify that the Book of Mormon is true.' The next time, as an example, Reed Bradford, who got his degree in sociology from North Carolina, talked to us about sociological aspects of the Book of Mormon. Dr. Bradford at the end said, 'The Book of Mormon is true.' After about the fifth discussion or so, I asked myself, 'What is going on here? These people are all well trained people in their own fields and are logical, reasonable, intellectual, scholarly people, and they all say the Book of Mormon is true. I better find out what this book has in it.'" It was the multiple witnesses that brought them in.

JBMS: Very interesting. If you had to pick out one or two of your favorite passages, what would they be?

DHL: Let me answer this way. It is the old question of interpretation where I think we can go wrong. I think of the statement that we quote from the book of Moroni. It is a tremendous statement. I think it is probably the most frequently quoted, but also, I think, the most frequently misinterpreted scripture in the entire Book of Mormon. Let's just read a couple of things here. I think it is a question of not only to whom it applies but also what Moroni says. We will start with Moroni 10:2–3.

"I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you. Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things [that is, 'these records' referred to in verse 2], if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts."

Now, "these things" in verse 3 obviously has to do with what Moroni says in verse 2: "I seal up these records." So he is talking about the records known as the plates of Mormon [see Mormon 6:6]. But then he says, "I want you to read the Bible." He doesn't say it in so many words, but remember we read "from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it [the way God deals with people] in your hearts." So in verse 3 "these things" refers back to what was in verse 2, that is, the records. But in verse 4 "these things" in "when ye shall receive these things" refers back to all that is mentioned in verse 3. So what are the "things" we have to receive (accept) according to verse 4? Well, they are not only the records that Moroni has been preparing but also an understanding of how God has dealt with people from the days of Adam on down. "And when ye shall *receive* these things"—it doesn't say to *read* any more from Moroni's records—"I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true"—that is, the Book of Mormon, the Bible, and how God deals with people. When we are willing to receive those things, then we ask God whether or not the Book of Mormon is true, and "he will reveal the truth of it unto [us], by the power of the Holy Ghost" [Moroni 10:4].

In 1962 I had a young woman in a class at BYU who was a Methodist. In those days, we had special Book of Mormon sessions for non–Latter-day Saints. We were on the quarter system. I challenged students to read the Book of Mormon completely through when they went home at the end of the first quarter. When students came back the next quarter, a lot of them were in the same section. I noticed that this young woman wasn't in my class the first day, which surprised me because she was one of the best students I had. Finally, after the second class, I saw her. She was standing at the back door. She came up, and I could tell she had been crying. She wanted me to sign a slip to withdraw from the class. I said, "What happened, Judy?" She said, "Well, I found out for myself the Book of Mormon is not true." I asked her how she found that out. She said, "I did what you said to do and what Moroni says to do. You read the Book of Mormon and you pray about it, and if you pray about it with a sincere heart, then God will manifest the truth of it unto you. I did it, and I don't know." She was honest and sincere, and she really believed that. I thought, "Heavenly Father, what do I do with this problem?" I was not only thinking that, but I was praying silently in my mind, "What do I do?" And the impression came very strongly: "Ask her about the Bible." I didn't see the relevance of that, but I said, "Judy, do you believe the Bible?"

"Oh, of course. I'm a Methodist. I believe the Bible."

"Ask her about the miracles," came the impression.

"What do you believe about the miracles in the Bible, the miracles of the exodus and so on?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't believe those," she said. "My minister tells me that they were just put in there to make the Jewish people look good in the eyes of the people."

"Do you believe that Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea, and do you believe that he smote

the rock and water came out?" I asked.

She said, "Oh, no. I don't believe any of those things."

Finally I saw why I was being prompted to ask her about the Bible. I said, "Judy, if we go back and read what it says here in Moroni, it says you have to believe the Bible before you can get a testimony of the Book of Mormon. Your problem is that you don't believe the Bible." I said, "I have a good friend who is not a flashy teacher, but he has substance, and I would like to recommend you take his course. I know you are required to take a course in the Book of Mormon, but I will sign a waiver for you that you don't have to take the Book of Mormon this quarter as long as you are in another religion class." To make a long story short, she became converted to the Bible, and she was then converted to the Book of Mormon. She served a mission. She brought her parents into the church. Some of her sons have served missions.

According to Moroni, we have to read the Book of Mormon, but we also have to read the Bible to see how God has dealt with people from the days of Adam on down, and then ponder how he deals with us. Then we ask God whether or not "these things" [in verse 4 "these things" include the Book of Mormon records, the Bible, and how God deals with people] are true, and then we get the testimony.

Once you see the reference to the Bible in Moroni, then you can go back to the end of Mormon's writing where he says, "Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews, which record shall come from the Gentiles unto you. For behold, *this* [the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that ye may believe *that* [the Bible]; and if ye believe that ye will believe this also" [Mormon 7:8–9]. If you accept one in honesty and truth, you will accept the other.

Brigham Young one time in a great general conference of the church held up those two books and said, "No Latter-day Saint, no man or woman, can say the Book of Mormon is true, and at the same time say that the Bible is untrue. If one be true, both are; and if one be false, both are false" [in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:38]. That is 100 percent correct. They are either both true or they are both false. So what you have to do is get a testimony of both of them. And as long as you don't have a testimony of the Bible and refuse to get one, you can't get a testimony of the Book of Mormon. It is contrary to the way God deals with people. Truth cleaveth unto truth. Why would God say to you that these things in the Book of Mormon are true, but they are not true in the Bible when they are teaching the same things? So what Brigham Young and Moroni and Mormon are saying is true. You can't believe one without believing the other, if you read both records.