

He Would Not Touch the Book

By Hermenegildo I. Cruz

In the last area of my mission, Molo, Iloilo, in the Philippines, I prayed hard that before I was released we could baptize and confirm a family. My companion and I prayed one day that we would be directed to the honest in heart, someone who was ready to accept the gospel. We were impressed to knock at a certain house with a bamboo fence. A man came down the stairs, opened the door for us, and invited us to come in.

We befriended him and learned that he was a lawyer. He asked many

questions that we sometimes could not answer, and when he spoke, it was with such eloquence as to discourage any missionary. He became a difficult investigator. We introduced the Book of Mormon, but he said, “The Bible alone is enough.” He would never read or even touch the Book of Mormon, as if his hand would be burned.

One day an assistant to the mission president came to work with Elder Alcos, my junior companion. They met with this man, and afterward the assistant frankly told us, “I don’t think that man is prepared to accept the gospel.” I pondered his words, but a sweet, peaceful, reassuring feeling came to me as I recalled our prayer petitioning Heavenly Father to direct us to those who were ready to accept the

gospel. I knew our prayer had been answered. I felt that there was something we needed to share with this man. We just did not know what it was or how to do it. But we did not give up on him.

Slowly his heart began to change, and he learned to love the family home evening program that we introduced to him. As the days passed, I felt discouraged that we could not baptize and confirm this family before I left. I had only a few more days before my release. One day I sadly told him, “Brother Garcia, I think I failed my mission.”

He said, “No, Elder Cruz, you did not fail. We have developed a friendship.” We

When we introduced the Book of Mormon to our investigator, he said, “The Bible alone is enough.”

were delighted at his next words: “Don’t worry. We will go to your church on Sunday.”

He and his family did come to church, and the members received them warmly. I saw him shed tears as he listened to the inspiring words spoken during sacrament meeting. He went home happy and uplifted that day. I knew his heart had been touched.

When the time was right and we felt he was ready, we challenged him to be baptized and confirmed. He accepted the challenge. We also challenged him to fast and pray and read the Book of Mormon. My companion and I fasted for him and his family.

May 4, 1986, was my last Sunday in the mission field. It was fast and testimony meeting, and I bore my sincere final testimony to the people I had learned to love. After I testified, I saw this lawyer, who had at first been unreceptive to our message, stand up and walk to the pulpit, holding the Book of Mormon. His whole frame was shaking, and there were tears in his eyes as he raised the Book of Mormon and cried, “Brothers and sisters, I know the Book of Mormon is true.” We rejoiced to hear this testimony.

That afternoon many members of the ward attended the baptism of the Garcia family.

After I was released from my mission, I corresponded regularly with Brother Garcia. He gladly told me when he became a Sunday School president. Later he was called as

bishop. He traveled many hours by boat to attend my wedding in the Manila Philippines Temple. Eventually he was called to serve as a stake president and as a counselor in the Philippines Bacolod Mission presidency.

He has been an instrument in the conversion of many people to the restored gospel. The man who acted as if his hand would be burned if he touched the Book of Mormon became a great witness to the divinity and truth of that book. ■

The Orange Car

By Elwin C. Robison

Early in our marriage my wife and I attended school in the northeastern United States, where winters are harsh and road salt is plentiful. After several winters, the body of our old car began to corrode, culminating with a passenger stepping through the floor of the car. With optimism I purchased some sheets of aluminum and pop rivets, and we called my parents to see if we could visit that weekend and work on the car.

We arrived late Friday night, and my father and I got up early on Saturday to work on the car floor. We pulled back the rubber mats and started looking for sound metal to which we could fasten the metal sheets. Our search revealed nothing but corroded metal. We looked at each other silently, replaced the mats, and went to breakfast.

After we made the slow and careful five-hour drive back to our apartment, the phone was ringing when we walked in. Mom had decided that she “needed” a new car and wondered if we would like her old one. My dad

cautioned that the car was three years old and had many miles on it. My mom then joked that it couldn’t be too bad—it had been driven by a full-time payer. We laughed, and after we hung up the phone, we danced around the apartment in honor of this bit of manna from heaven.

The orange car was wonderful. It had four doors, air conditioning, and no rust holes. It got us through graduate school and on to our first job. But after six years of driving and an additional 80,000 miles (129,000 km), it was now the ugly car I drove to work. The shiny orange paint was looking blotchy from sun exposure, the air conditioning no longer worked, the driver’s side window wouldn’t go down, and my mother was once again shopping for a new car (legitimately this time). The trade-in value of her old car was so little that my parents decided to give it to us.

In the midst of our pleasure in having a newer car, we wondered what to do with the orange car. Yes, it was ugly, but the engine ran reliably. We could



get a few dollars for it at a junkyard, but we both felt we should look for someone to whom we could give it.

On Sunday morning I went into the clerk's office to ask the ward clerk if he needed a car. He and his wife had several teens. He smiled and said no thanks; he didn't need another car. In the corner of the office, however, was a ward member writing something. He perked up at the mention of a car, so I went through the long list of things that didn't work. But I assured him it had good tires, the engine was reliable, and it couldn't be too bad since it had always been driven by a full-tithe payer.

He and his wife had only one car, and he worked nights while she worked days. He had turned down better employment opportunities because he would have needed the car when his wife also needed it. A second car would permit them to increase their income and open up advancement potential for him. So we gave them the old orange car.

This would have remained just a fond memory if it hadn't been for our conversation three months later. This ward member and his wife wanted us to know more about their circumstances when we gave them the car.

W*e looked for someone to whom we could give our old car, but little did we know how the Lord would use it to fulfill His promises.*

As is often the case with young couples, money was scarce, and with the birth of their first child, expenses had increased

more rapidly than income. They had gotten behind in their tithing and had felt awful about it. With each passing month they felt worse, but they didn't see a way out of their dilemma. They had gone six months without paying tithing, and they had prayed and felt that they just had to make things right with the Lord. That Sunday morning when I walked into the clerk's office, he had been writing out his tithing check, wondering how he was going to meet his financial obligations through the coming month.

My first thought was embarrassment at my joke about the car having been driven by a full-tithe payer. But as I reflected on the situation, I marveled at how the Lord keeps His promises when we keep ours. The ink wasn't even dry on his check when the means to resolve his dilemma unwittingly walked through the door.

I have often looked back at the example of faith shown by this young couple. It comforts me to know that if I show faith, someone somewhere can be in the right place at the right time to help solve my dilemmas. How grateful I am for a Father in Heaven who knows us so well that He can bless us even before we have finished demonstrating our faith. ■