

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 3, Lecture 58 A Review of Book of Mormon Themes

I thought that since we are going to begin with Alma 46 and since I have not been looking especially at the Book of Mormon all summer, and neither have you, a review might be in order. Of course, that was a mistake. The great Joseph Justus Scaliger, the greatest scholar who ever lived, said, Arabic is like the devil. You reach with your finger and it will grab your arm. Then farewell to peace of mind forever after. It won't ever let you go. The Book of Mormon is that way too. You reach with your finger and it will grab your arm. But we've been able to avoid it rather well until now. As I said, we pick our way through gingerly as if we were going through a mine field avoiding all the unpleasant passages. Well, we're not going to do that now. But this review brought out certain things which I just noticed this morning. Every time you read the Book of Mormon you find all sorts of things. We were talking about the recurrent themes in the Book of Mormon. I discovered that in the first forty-five chapters there are eight recurrent themes. All the time these keep going over and over again. They are extremely important. In the second half of the Book of Mormon they become intensified. It builds them up, and they become very exciting then. Let's see what these themes are now. We'll call them recurrent themes. There are various names for them, such as leitmotifs. We are calling them "recurrent themes" because they keep coming over and over again.

I'm going to save you some trouble here. You always bring your Book of Mormon. After all, it is our text, the only text we have. It is a very good one, you know, and it's basic to this course. Is there anybody who doesn't have a Book of Mormon here now? That would be disastrous. Well, we will skip through now and consider these things. They are very important and extremely relevant. We start out right at the beginning seeing [Lehi with] many afflictions, highly favored, etc. He starts right out telling us in verse 4 that the great city of Jerusalem must repent or be destroyed. That is the theme of destruction. We mentioned that last time. All of a sudden they've discovered [the evidence of these destructions]. They had reason to know it all along. Here we walk around on the fossil remains of previous ages of the earth. They are all deposited under us, but they are there. And we are going to make a deposit too in our own time. We mentioned the article in the June 1989 *National Geographic* and that extermination is now a basic theme in the history of geology. There have been periods of extermination. That was introduced by Schindewolf, the German archeologist, in the 60s and was called neocatastrophism. It was the idea that there had been a series of catastrophes. It was sort of put down when he came out with it, but now it is fully accepted. The history of the world has been a series of regular catastrophes. Cyclical catastrophes can't be avoided because their cause is from outer space. He says it was either the Oort Cloud and the Star Nemesis.

We notice this in human history the same way. We go through a series of destructions; this is what the Book of Mormon is about. For example, this theme of destruction in 1 Nephi 1:4 comes out again in the Words of Mormon. They're almost completely wiped out. He starts out by saying there is almost nobody left. The whole thing is gone now. The big destructions come later on with the time of Christ, [earlier with] the Jaredites, and the rest. So we have in the history of the world all these destructions. It begins with why was

Jerusalem destroyed. Did it necessarily have to be so? Jeremiah was a friend of Lehi. He was a contemporary and knew him very well. That's very plain from the Book of Mormon; he belonged to that group. We don't go into that this semester. The fifth chapter of Jeremiah explains why. Very briefly it will tell you why—because the people were proud and corrupt. The rich were proud and the poor were oppressed. There was no justice. Everybody was out for money. Everybody had their hearts set on wealth—that fatal theme in the Book of Mormon. They set their hearts on riches, so we have this rottenness, etc.

We have the whole Lamentation Literature. The earliest records we have start back in the old kingdom of Egypt. We have what they call “The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage” back in the early time. He describes the complete collapse of the Old Kingdom. It all fell for the very same reasons. The great Babylonian lamentation literature has been collected by Lambert in one large Oxford volume. (You can look at it here.) The lamentations that these things must come, etc. And what was Enoch doing? He was prophesying and warning against the destruction of the world. It came and it was complete. In the time of Noah there was one of those great upheavals that do take place. In the time of Lamech and the time of Cain we are told how the evil spread abroad. We are always sinning and we can't keep out of it for some reason or other. This has always been recognized. Human history always seems to be running downhill. I guess that's entropy, that's gravity. Gravity sucks us all down; we are all being conquered by gravity everyday. I'm beginning to sag at all points here. There's no way I can avoid it; I'm sorry about that. This is what happens. We all yield to gravity and are taken downward.

We begin the Old Testament and the Pearl of Great Price with Adam in the garden, in the world as it should be, in a heavenly place. Then he is kicked out and starts cultivating the earth. The books of Abraham and Moses are marvelous for this. We see the stages. Adam and Eve accepted the gospel and rejoiced in it, but their children [almost] all turned away from it. They mourned before the Lord. They did the best they could to save their children, but they could do nothing about it. They had Cain and Abel and lots of children. Cain and his people loved Satan more than God and would not listen to Adam. Cain made his covenant with Satan and things got worse and worse. Then with Lamech the evil spread among the whole human family and everything was going downhill. Well, this is the basic philosophy of history too, of the ancients themselves, the most famous being Hesiod's *Theogony*. I suppose you all know who Hesiod was. I'm going to stop asking questions because that's a fatal mistake when you ask questions anymore. It used to be you could get some answers, but no more. Some of you may have seen that long article by Carl Sagan yesterday with all those ghastly statistics about American education. We are just about as low as we can get. We can attest to that. Hesiod was writing at the time of Homer, about 770 B.C. He was writing on a much older basis, about the golden age. In the beginning there was the golden age, followed by a silver age, followed by a bronze age, followed by an iron age, followed by an age of clay. You'll recognize those as the figure that Daniel saw. Remember the head of gold, the shoulders of silver, etc. In other words we decline. Each generation is a little worse, or a lot worse, than that which went before. Must that necessarily be so? Well, that's so because of our nature; we have to be that way. “The troubles of our proud and angry dust are from eternity and shall not fail.” We run down, as Job says, “Man who is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” If we are made in that sort of a way, how can we avoid it? It's a fine thing to turn us loose here?

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make

And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's Forgiveness give—and take!

That's from the *Rubaiyat*. In my day every kid knew the *Rubaiyat* by heart. Nobody's heard of it today. That's it; we're made that way. As Beatrice says to Dante, God just made me that way. I'm good and you're bad because God made me that way. That's predestination, you see. Can you escape it? Do we necessarily have to be bad and go that way? This is very often mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Is there a general theory of human behavior? Yes, you will find that 2 Nephi and 3 Nephi break out and express themselves very warmly on this particular subject, on the unregenerate nature of man. You put him where he doesn't have a chance. What are we doing here? Well, it's the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. Statistically, we always go downhill that way, but that's no excuse for the individual doing it. Heisenberg showed that that applied throughout all science. You can predict with absolute certainty how a mass of atoms is going to behave, but you cannot predict at any time what any one of those atoms is going to do. It can go off anytime it feels like it; there's no way of controlling it. That's the uncertainty principle, and it's so with us. The world may "go to hell in a basket," but that's no excuse for you. That is what Lehi is told, and that's what we are all told. He has given us the plan, and he has given us the help. He says, I'm going to give you all the help you want. I'll give you everything you need. All you have to do is accept it. If you don't accept it, you can't complain that it's your nature. You recognize your weak nature and ask for help and you will get it. But we refuse it when it is offered this way, so we have all these downhill things.

Well that's 1 Nephi 4 already, the way things go, this recurrent theme of destruction. And, of course, the Book of Mormon ends with destruction. It ends with the most bleak and terrible and the saddest of destructions. It's very sad. Remember, your great epics all begin with the destruction of a civilization, the destruction of Troy being the classical example. When the city is destroyed what do you do? Then there is the second theme, the theme of survival. It's the very next theme that comes out here, which is "get out." Lehi was told to get out and leave Jerusalem. In a dream he was told he would have to get out. So he is the one that makes an escape. Then this again is the theme.

The idea of an archaic civilization that was much higher than has ever lived since has been revived by an eminent scientist, by Giorgio De Santillana at MIT. The idea that there was an archaic civilization that had vast knowledge we always thought was a rather romantic, rather mysterious sort of thing, like the Atlantis business. But there is evidence that that is actually the case, that Jamshyd and his seven-ring cup have disappeared.

They say the lion and the lizard keep
The court where Jamshyd feasted and drank deep
And Bahrám that great hunter
The wild ass stands o'er his head
But cannot break his sleep.

The great Jamshyd lived before, and those have all gone. They all rest now. But the idea is that at the very beginning things were better—in other words that evolution has been downhill and not uphill. It's the very opposite of what the Victorians taught. The strange thing is now that someone like Santillana says there may be more than something to that.

So they choose to get out. They are told to migrate here. Of course, they all migrate.

Adam migrates. He leaves the garden and has to take out into the lone and dreary world and establish himself. Then his sons and daughters scatter everywhere throughout the world. After the flood the three sons of Noah [Genesis 9] scatter in three different directions. They are always scattering to repopulate the earth, etc. When you go out, you choose the wilderness. Of great importance is the person who makes the escape. Odysseus is a good example. Like Lehi, he is driven out and he wanders. He was not rescued from Troy; he destroyed Troy. He had more to do with it than anybody else. "He was a man who was forced to wander many places and suffer very many evils. He saw the ways of many men and saw the customs of many nations, seeking to get home to save his own life and those of his companions." But he failed to save them because they were foolish. They couldn't control their lusts and their appetites, and they were destroyed. They never got to see their homes again. Only he came through. See, it's the righteous man, the lone survivor in the desert. The Book of Mormon is full of those lone survivors; you'll notice that.

On this theme of getting out: In 2 Nephi 5 after they have settled in the New World Nephi must depart. He must leave the people because his people have become corrupt then. He goes out with the people who will follow him. They go out by themselves and settle. He builds a temple and they live "after the manner of happiness." It's not necessary to suffer the way people suffer. They don't have to if they would only do that "after the manner of happiness." It tells us what the secret is of living "after the manner of happiness." It puts that in a very nice way. It says to like the things that God likes. That's the thing that will make you happy, and you will get along fine because then you will have what you want.

In Omni 12 it tells us how Mosiah leaves from Nephi's new ideal community. Lehi leaves Jerusalem and settles in the New World with his ideal society. They have saved themselves in the wilderness, but they go bad. So Nephi leaves them. Then Nephi's community goes bad and Mosiah breaks off. He is told in a dream to leave them. So in Omni 12 Mosiah goes out and is made king in Zarahemla. Then in Mosiah 7 Ammon goes to the land of Lehi-Nephi and finds a Mulekite enclave there. Then we have Zeniff's story. He went out, and they [his group] went bad. In Mosiah 17 Alma is under pressure. He was a priest of King Noah, and he had to get out to save himself. He went out with a community, and they organized themselves in the wilderness at the Waters of Mormon. They had an ideal setting there, but it didn't last again. They caught up with them. Then under Lamanite pressure Noah and his priests took off to save themselves—"to save his own life and those of his companions." Alma got out by the Waters of Mormon, and Noah left. Then the Lamanites took them in and formed another community. Then in Mosiah 21 [Ammon] meets Limhi and they join together. They make a break because they are living under Lamanite pressure here by King Laman. They make a break and escape to Zarahemla. Everybody is always breaking out and escaping throughout the Book of Mormon, you notice.

In Mosiah 23 Alma is forced to move again. He makes a city of his own, but he won't be king. Then his rival Amulon comes along and becomes so oppressive. He is an old priest of Noah too, and he hates the sight of Alma. He oppresses him as much as he can because the [Lamanite] overlord has made him the local king over Alma's people. That's the worst thing that could happen to Alma. So by night they make a break and leave too. He gets out and ends up safe in Zarahemla in Mosiah 24.

Does anybody else get out here that we notice? We are going to see other escapes like

that. They are going to be destroyed, so you get out. That's the next thing to do; that's logical enough. And you choose a wilderness. Remember, it tells us in the book of Ether (a marvelous book, absolutely indispensable; we have to have that, the Jaredite story) that they go to that place where there never had man been. They go to a land which has never been occupied by human beings. It has to be a real wilderness; they are always going to wildernesses. This is an interesting thing here. The Saints went to the wilderness. As you know, Moses left the Egyptians and went into the wilderness, where he wandered forty years. The prophets always go out into the wilderness. Elijah went out and hid in the valley. The Qumran people had to imitate that. This is the Rechabite doctrine. When Israel or Jerusalem becomes wicked, the pious go off and live by themselves in the desert and wait for God to give them more revelation. That's the theme of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Those people went out to Qumran to do that very thing, so we have the Rechabites.

We are told in Jeremiah 35 that Jonadab ben Rechab and his son were righteous, and they were so blessed. They were the only people that were not corrupt in Jerusalem. They were blessed by having special offices in the temple forever after that. They went out to live in the desert by themselves. They would not live in houses of stone, and they would not even cultivate the ground. They would live as John the Baptist lived. John the Baptist was another one who went out into the wilderness. "Why have you come out into the wilderness?" He was contemporary with Qumran of the Dead Sea Scrolls. We are told that he was a wild man and that he lived on wild locust and honey. He dressed in camel's hair and he scared people. When Enoch appeared the people said, "There's a strange thing in the land; a wild man has come among us." We know from the Jewish sources that when John the Baptist appeared people said, "Who is he?" They said, "He is Enoch." They asked him, "Who are you?" and he said, "I am the man."

Josephus never gives the name of John the Baptist. He tells his story but never gives his name because when they asked him who he was he said, "I am Enos," which just means "the man." They took him for Enoch. It's this idea of the one who goes out and lives in the wilderness. As a witness against the sins and follies of the human race, you go out by yourself. People try that all the time. The Saints were driven whether they wanted to or not. The Mormons didn't stage it. As George Albert Smith, Sr. said, "We came out here of our own free will because they made us."

There have been plenty of sects that have imitated that. That's what St. Anthony did. St. Anthony was a rich fellow who lived in the fourth century in Alexandria. It was a thoroughly Christian city, but it was always corrupt. He went out in the desert to live by himself and started the monastic movement. The native Egyptians participated in that, and it became a great movement. An anchoritic monk is one who goes out and lives by himself in the wilderness. There are the two kinds. There's the monasticism of the desert and the monasticism of the sea; you choose the island or you choose the desert. They did. The idea was that the only way you could live purely, the only way you could keep yourself unspotted from the world, was to get out and live in the desert. They did in great flocks from the fourth century on. In Italy there was Monte Cassino in the sixth century with the Benedictine Order. Then it spread, and they became the Mendicant orders in the thirteenth century, St. Francis, etc. This was always popular that you had to go out and live by yourself. Of course, that had problems. Many of them became rich and corrupt. But we can't choose a wilderness anymore, can we? Oh, yes. There's always an artificial wilderness. You can always make a wilderness. Most of the wildernesses people have moved into have been those created by the follies of men. There are such wildernesses.

There's a recent, rather thorough, aerial survey of England that shows where there was a great civilization in England at least as early as 4300 B.C. Most of north England was under dense cultivation—farms, fish ponds, orchards, villages, towns, everything. It completely disappeared and then was completely covered by something else. Then it happened again. It happens again and again. Strange things happen here. Again and again the world has been depopulated to a greater degree than we realize. You think of the plague in the time of Marcus Aurelius that wiped out most of the population of Europe and the Near East. It started in the Near East. Then you think of the 1340s when the plague depopulated four-fifths of some countries, and some communities completely. In England a totally new village culture—way of doing things and type of farming—emerges suddenly after the Black Death because it just depopulated the land. Yes, you have your artificial wildernesses. People get themselves into this trouble, and then the world is desolate. You have great migrations. There are times when everybody is migrating and nobody knows who is in charge or where to settle—terrible times. In 3,000 B.C. there was such a time. The whole world became homeless. The weather was behind it too. They had bad years and had to move. In the great heartland of Asia the crops failed. The central hosts of Asia are living on a marginal economy, and when the grass doesn't grow they have to move and wander with their flocks. They infringe on the outlying civilizations. The civilizations are all on the edge—the Chinese, the Indian, the Egyptian, the Babylonian. They are all on the edge of what is called the heartland. That's the basis of Halford Mackinder's geopolitics on which Hitler based his aspirations and his empire. He had a geographer called Haushofer who [adopted] geopolitics.¹

It still runs the world. We are thinking in these world terms with these desolations. Because wars are so unpleasant we often completely forget how great the destructions were and that there was another people there entirely and they have disappeared completely. When the destruction is in tens of millions we forget that it does change the scene. We start out and say, "This is a fresh beginning, and we will just put that all behind us." We like to say that and we do. So we forget how many times this sort of thing has happened, how hard it hits, and when it hits how great the destruction is. It's a funny thing. Many people in Germany were destroyed too. Ludwigshafen was the old capital of Baden, a very aristocratic, beautiful city. It was one of those marvelous Baroque cities on the Rhine and the capital of Baden. I was on a mission part of the time there. Then after the mission I went back to the same place during the war. It had just been occupied there. I sat on the fountain. There was a very famous fountain with magnificent horses on it in front of the palace there. Well, there was no palace, there was no horse fountain, there was nothing left. I sat on the red sandstone remains. It might just as well have been the Mojave Desert. I ate my lunch. There were flies there, and there was a lizard that scampered across the red sandstone. I thought, the lion and the lizard keep the courts here. This was one of the peaks of civilization of the eighteenth century, and here I was sitting on its ruins. It was just as ruined as Babylon, more ruined than many a place in Egypt. There it was right in Germany where I had been on a mission. It was a very impressive thing. There was nobody there at all. The whole city was just empty; I could go take anything I wanted—loot if I wanted to. But there was nothing; it was all gone. This happens in place after place.

The mayor of Pforzheim, another place not far from there, told me that in the last British air raid on that town of 80,000 people, 30,000 were killed. That's what happens, and then we just forget about those things. We have artificial deserts that we can move into, so don't worry about not having a wilderness to go into. We have this extermination.

Then we have these swarming times when everybody is disorganized and disoriented. The book of Ether is a classic treatment of that. I wrote a book on that, *The World of the Jaredites*. That's called the heroic period, the epic period. It produced epic literature and was called "the swarming time." [This happened] in 1700 B.C. Then in 1200 B.C. Troy fell—not just Troy but the Egyptian empire and everything fell in 1200. Then 600 B.C. was another pivotal date, in Lehi's day. The old governments, the old sacral kingships disappeared everywhere. In 1200, 1700, 2400, and 3000—about every 600 years. It looks like that, doesn't it?

Now look at Beirut. I also used to live in Beirut. It was the most cultivated city in the East, the Switzerland of the East. All the people in the Near East, the Arab sheikhs, the Egyptians, and the Turks invested their money in Beirut because they knew it was so safe. It was a safe and civil society. It was all full of banks, swank shops, and things like that—the most sophisticated place of all. This was the old Phoenicia, and they were very proud of the fact. We had a student here who was a Lebanese girl, and she became very angry if you said they spoke Arabic. She said, "We speak Phoenician." Well, they do have a dialect of their own. Look at Beirut today! You couldn't find anything worse; the whole city is a ruin. The people are fighting each other—people who have been living in that city together for hundreds of years. The Christians, the Maronites, and the Moslems have lived together there. Now the Sunni come in and fight the Shiites. It's over a minor point of doctrine, who was to be successor of Muhammad. Well, that's not minor with them, and it's not a point of doctrine. But it's just about that. Was it to be Ali or was it to be Omar? The one is [the choice of] the Sunnites and the other is the Shiites, and they are killing each other like crazy. The city has become a complete shambles—that big, prosperous city, a place to put your money that was safer than Switzerland. Now it's not the best city—it's the worst. It's just a total ruin; you can see that on the news now. It's ghastly. Nobody dares to go there anymore. You'll get picked up like that. That's the world we live in. Anything can happen when that can happen. If they had prophesied that ten years ago, you would say the Arabs are crazy. They have no sense of history or anything like that. Ah ha, this is what happens.

Our third motif here is the importance of keeping the record. Why this importance of the record? It's constantly going to be repeated here. For example, in 2 Nephi 29 he explains why the scriptures are to gather all things in one, the great unification. They are absolutely necessary to the project to orchestrate the whole thing, to bring it together. If this was just one disconnected series of tragic events, the thing would be a horrible mess. People think it is, but it isn't. It all fits into the same plan, and the record is going to tell us that. God wants us to keep the record which shows us that the thing is orchestrated here, just as you bring an empire together. You couldn't have an empire until you had the written word, until you had writing. An emperor has no control out of sight of the next country or people unless he has the written record. He sends a scribe out to bring in the reports. He has the main office or bureau, and that's the center of empire. They talk about that with the destruction of the Egyptian empire in *The Wisdom of Amenemope*, the Egyptian sage. There's quite a great wisdom literature; they are lamenting for the destruction of everything. One very important thing he says is that the mob breaks into the royal archives, brings out all the records, takes them out into the alleys, and stamps them under their dirty feet. With that the empire disappears because if [the records are] gone, it's gone.

There's an Arabic account of a great empire in the East. A tornado came and scattered all the records everywhere, and the empire disappeared. Without the records at the control

you don't know who owns what or who owes what. If you have no records, you have no account of anything and no control. Writing is not only the greatest invention of the human race, it is the greatest means of control and oppression. All it takes is a name written on a piece of paper to put an Arab oil sheikh or a Japanese consortium in charge of half the mountains in Utah here. They may never see them, but you can't go there now because they own them. Why? Because their name is on a piece of paper. That's quite a thing. I wrote an article on that called "The Arrow, the Hunter and the State" in a political journal years ago.² It stirred a lot of people up. Our society rests on such flimsy things. But the written record has this strange power. As Galileo said, it makes all other inventions look like nothing. It is *the* invention. You will never be able to catch things with a TV or anything like that hereafter. We have writings right here that are 5,000 years old. They still get their message across. It can be emotional and stir us very deeply after all those years. All it took was a rock surface and something to scratch on it. That's it. If you set up a broadcasting system or something like that, it's very fragile, very brittle. That will break down at a thousand points, but writing can be preserved as long as any fossil, a million years. It's an amazing invention, isn't it?

The importance of the record is another point we make. First there is destruction, geological and historical cycles. Then there is survival, the Rechabite motif, getting out. You are commanded to go out into the wilderness and survive there. You can't find a wilderness? There'll be one made for you—don't worry. Remember the "yellow dog prophesy," that when the Saints go back to Jackson County there won't be a yellow dog to wag its tail there it will be so wiped out. This could be the aftermath of a nuclear war, you could well imagine. After that, there will be deserts, don't worry, places where it's not safe to go for ten thousand years. I don't like that kind of a desert. We are making for that sort of thing. It was Julius Caesar who quoted a Gaulish chieftain as saying about the Romans, "They make a desert and they call it a peace." Once the Romans had made peace all you had was a desert. You dared not raise your finger; there was nothing there at all. And the only safe Indian was a dead Indian. We did that. We forget that the great Indian culture of the eastern United States was completely annihilated and so quickly. You can catch it in a few things like that book *The Star in the West*, but very few records of that remained after.

Then we get the next point which is the gospel plan. The Book of Mormon not only is a history, but as the history goes along it explains what's happening. It takes us by the hand and gives a meaning to the whole thing. It tells us where we fit in and why this is not just a lot of nonsense, why we are being told this. It's very carefully selected and very carefully edited. We are conducted through here, and we find such marvelous gospel sermons. The Book of Mormon has more gospel sermons than anything you will find anywhere. They go further in explaining what is going on in this world than anything else. You will find such sermons in 1 Nephi 10, the plan with Christ as the center, a single unified plan. That's what scientists are talking about today, a unified plan that will explain everything. That's what we want because they are all connected somehow. How can we explain them? This is the theme in the Book of Mormon. It says, "Bringing things all together in one." That's what the written word has the effect of doing. But the plan itself is explained here. In 1 Nephi 12–14 he shows the whole story; it would be pointless without it. When we are suffering these things we have a right to know, but we refuse to believe. If the Lord tries to explain it to us, we do like Cain. We turn on our heel and march out of the room. "I'm not going to listen to anymore of this," Cain told the Lord in [the book of] Moses. That's what we do. But it is explained and nowhere better than in Book of Mormon. As 1 Nephi 16 tells us, this is hard to take. It's a bleak story, etc.

This [chapter] tells us about the Liahona. The Liahona is all the help you will ever want. We talked about the technical aspects of the Liahona which are historical. The Arabs do use such guiding arrows to direct them through the desert, the spinoff spindles. You hold them on your finger, etc. The point here is that the Lord will always give you guidance, but you must be in a frame of mind to receive it. When this was explained later to the young Mormon by his father, he said, these things don't work anymore. They work only according to faith. This is not magic. This is not a machine that does things for you and tells you where to go. It's not a magic wand, ring, book, robe, or anything like that which operates itself no matter who has it. If you get the ring of Solomon then you have the power of Solomon. No, it doesn't work that way. The Liahona only works like the Urim and Thummim, like seer stones and things like that, for people who qualify and know how to do it. Any complicated device will work only if you know how to use it. You must be in the right frame of mind for the Liahona, as he explains to his son, to receive it. And there are Liahonas all around us. The only thing that keeps us from receiving the message that's coming in so loud and clear is our vanity.

I just thought of a passage on Newton this morning from Richard de Villamil, who wrote a book called *Newton, the Man*.³ Newton is the greatest scientist in history as far as we know for making significant discoveries and thinking things through [and explaining] the activities of the brain. But look in what a realm he worked. He said you can't do it without revelation. This is an important thing. You know the Newtonian hymn. How does it go?

Praise the Lord for he has spoken
Worlds his mighty word obeyed
Laws that never shall be broken
Has he for their guidance made.

The laws of nature are for the worlds, which God has made for their guidance. We have to follow them. If you don't follow them, you are asking for trouble. This is about Newton, "Why do I call him a magician? Because he looked on the whole universe and all that is in it as a riddle." I said last time that read is the same as riddle. When you see a document in front of you, it doesn't speak to you itself. You have to apply your mind to it. We talked last time about the importance of doing this very thing, of bringing these things to mind. All the book does is give you various hints, but it's not the real thing. Shakespeare says again: "Sit and see, minding true things by what their mockeries be." He says, this is just a play. We went through this with *Henry V*. This is just a play; this is just a book; this is just a mockup; this is just paper and ink. You've got to apply your mind to that, and to the degree to which you do you can find out that it will convey a great message to you. But you must apply your mind to a much higher state than you do with just your own intellectual powers. You must concentrate intensely, the most intense kind of concentration, which is prayer. You've got to pray about it. That's not just joking; that's an intellectual operation he is talking about. Nobody realized that better than Newton. Nobody was able to make the great discoveries that Newton was able to make for that very reason.

Just after the war the British appointed a council to examine into the Royal Academy and why science was not very fruitful. It wasn't very fruitful at that time. They said, Newton is a great man and made great discoveries in spite of his faith in God, his prayers, and all that sort of thing. They failed to realize the point that it was only because of those things.

If that will give you the results, let's do that. It says here, “. . . because he looked on the whole universe as a riddle, so he had to solve that riddle.” This book is a riddle. To read is to riddle, or to unriddle. If it was in another language with other characters, then you would have to learn them and work them out. “What is this talking about? What is this telling us now.”

It's a marvelous thing. I was so elated last night. I read until 3:00 a.m.—silly. I was reading Arabic, and I was doing it because of this darn class. It got me saying, “Well, have I forgotten everything. It's been years and years since I've done that.” So I started reading, and it's the darndest thing. It all came back just like that. I haven't made any effort to hold it or anything like that. Somebody was pushing it all back there, words I had only seen once. I remembered exactly the day I looked them up and exactly what they meant at the time. Marvelous! But this is the way the thing hangs together. There's no reason why it should do that. Look, as I say, there are no capital letters. There are no divisions between words. There are no vowels. Well, how can you read anything? There is no punctuation of any kind, and yet you can read the stuff. Well, that's against all the rules. You shouldn't be able to do it. Faith has a place. If you panic and think you can't (this often happens), then your mind goes blank because you lack faith. You decide, well, I can't do it. I can't do it. It's not going to come. If you try to play or sing at a recital you know that. If you suddenly panic you'll tighten up and you won't be able to play a note. You'll become terrified. So we live by faith. You must loosen things up and get things rolling by faith. Faith is not only the lubricant that keeps things going, it's the force behind them. But the force behind them is a force like the force of an airplane. It's a vacuum. It sucks you forward. You move forward into a vacuum when you learn things; nobody is pushing you from behind. You move spontaneously into the vacuum. As soon as you are aware of that vacuum in front of you, you are sucked into it automatically. You can't resist it; it will pull you in. This is the way we are drawn onward, as the expression is used in the scriptures. It drives you forward. We are drawn out.

Back to a riddle, “. . . as a secret which could be read by applying pure thought to certain evidence.” This was the folly of the Renaissance and Reformation too and the Hermetic movement and all that go with them, namely that they thought it could all rely on the power of the human mind alone. They thought they were clever enough to do it with the liberation that came. I won't say “at the end of the Middle Ages” because scholasticism was just as vain and just as intellectual. This was St. Augustine's thing, that by thought alone you could prove the gospel, by thought alone you could prove anything you wanted to. You were equal to anything. When they discovered new devices and new documents like the great Hermetic literature, then they became confident that there was nothing they couldn't do, that the human mind was capable of anything. They were fooling themselves because the human mind isn't. But aided it is, with a Liahona, if God aids you with this sort of thing and you want to join him. The Book of Mormon has a great deal to say about this, about the powers of the mind and what we can do by faith. He goes on here, “. . . as a secret . . . by applying pure thought to certain evidence, certain mystic clues which God had laid about the world to allow a sort of philosopher's treasure hunt to the esoteric brotherhood.”

Like the people of Lehi they go out and they keep themselves to themselves. There are always secrets in the church. But God has laid about these hints, treasure clues. It's a treasure hunt, but God has given us the hints. He has given us the clues. This is Liahona pure and simple. It worked only according to their faith. Then it would put them onto the

road they were supposed to go. There are the two arrows. One says “stop or go” and the other points the direction you should go in. It says there were two arrows in the spindles, and this is the way the Arabs had done it in ancient times. This all came out long after Joseph Smith’s day. “. . . to allow a sort of philosopher’s treasure hunt to the esoteric brotherhood.” You know what esoteric means. That’s those who have been initiated and know inside what it is talking about, those who accept it and are willing to give it a chance. That’s esoteric. There’s exoteric, those who belong to the outside world. But esoteric, is a comparative form and means “more inward, the people who are more inside.” The insiders know how to look for clues here that God has set about in a sort of treasure hunt. They are there; it’s true.

All this marvelous information we have been getting from the stars with the spectroscope, etc., that evidence has been there all the time. The stars have been twinkling their light. They’ve given their colors and their brightness. All the indices of their nature have been there all these thousands of years. All we had to do was react to them. All we had to do was start thinking about them and look at them. Then we would react to what the stars really have to tell us, but the hints are there. He has here, “He believed that these clues were to be found partly in the evidence of the heavens and in the constitution of the elements. That’s what gives the false suggestion of his being an experimental natural philosopher.” He says he wasn’t an experimental natural philosopher; that’s only part of it. “. . . but also partly in certain papers and traditions.” Now we are getting to the record. Newton actually believed that there were certain ancient papers and traditions that had been handed down in the manner of the Book of Mormon. We are talking about handing down the record. “. . . papers and traditions handed down by the brethren in an unbroken chain back to the original cryptic revelation in Babylonia.” Well, that’s the Hermetic literature that comes out here and the Chaldean records of Abraham. The thing here is that he not only believed in the present evidence, but also that this had been documented in the past. “He regarded the universe as a cryptogram set by the Almighty, just as he himself wrapped the discovery of the calculus [he discovered calculus, as did Leibniz at the same time] in a cryptogram when he communicated with Leibniz. By pure thought, by concentration of mind the riddle he believed would be revealed to the initiate.”

Of course, that was the mistake of the Renaissance and Reformation. They broke down because they believed that by pure thought they could do it all, that they could pull themselves up by their bootstraps. As Job 11 says, man cannot by searching find out God. You can search all you want and find out a lot of things, but you need God to help you if you are going to find out how it all belongs together. “He did read the riddle of the heavens, and he believed that by the same powers of his introspective imagination he would read the riddle of the Godhead.” That’s going too far. Man cannot by searching find out God. “. . . the riddle of the past and future events divinely foreordained, the riddle of the elements and their constitution from an original undifferentiated first matter . . .”, which is what we are talking about here. That’s what we are looking for today is that ultimate particle, something beyond the quark. It’s beyond the undifferentiated first matter originally. That’s what it begins with, just one particle. It begins with one type of matter. “. . . he could read the divinely foreordained, the riddle of the elements and their constitution from an original, undifferentiated first matter, the riddle of health and immortality. All would be revealed to him if only he could persevere to the end.”

This shows his neurotic state. The reason these men were able to do such great things . . . They did force themselves all the way, but in the end they didn’t find it. Descartes, Leibniz and all the rest of them were doing the same thing. They realized we haven’t even

begun to use our brains. If we start that, who knows? Naturally they jumped to the conclusion—there’s no limit to what we can find. We can find out it all because we have been able to find out so much. We have been neglecting it all these years. Now let’s put our minds to it and we can go all the way. They [scientists] are still trying to do that. This is the neurotic condition in which you end up if you try that. “All would be revealed to him if only he could persevere to the end uninterrupted by himself, no one coming into the room—reading, copying, testing all by yourself. No interruption for God’s sake, no disclosure, no discordant breakings in or criticism, with fear and shrinking as he assailed these half-ordained, half-forbidden things—creeping back into the bosom of the Godhead, into his mother’s womb, voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.” Not as Charles Lamb, a fellow who believed nothing unless it was clear as three sides of a triangle.

This is what the Book of Mormon gives us, this kind of enlightenment. The mystery of the Liahona is what we are talking about here. It’s a type of thing. God will give it to us to aid our thinking, but you have to bring your mind to it. If you didn’t think, the Liahona wouldn’t work. It worked only according to their faith and according to their behavior because again you have to keep the line pure. If you introduce corrupt elements, it’s like introducing impurities in a conveyor. Impure copper is going to heat up. The more impure it is the less good a conveyor it is. If it is perfectly pure then you have a marvelous conveyor. That’s what we have to be. This purity of life is an absolute necessity to go with these other things, and the Liahona wouldn’t work without it. As soon as they started misbehaving, it refused to work. This applies to everything we do in our lives.

We talked about three of the points. We have a couple more for the next time. But for heaven’s sake read the Book of Mormon and put your minds to it.

1. See John H. MacKinder, *The Geographical Pivot of History* (New York: Division of Social Philosophy, The Cooper Union, 1943). Reprinted from *The Geographical Journal* 23 (1904): 421–44.
2. Hugh W. Nibley, “The Arrow, the Hunter, and the state,” *Western Political Quarterly* 2/3 (1949): 328–44; reprinted in vol. 10 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 1–32.
3. Richard de Villamil, *Newton, the Man* (London: Knox, 1931).