

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Semester 3, Lecture 70  
Alma 52–54  
The Prevalence of Warfare

Oh they rode on and they rode on  
And they waded through blood up to the knee.  
For all the blood that's shed on earth  
Stained the streams of that country.

[Scottish ballad; source unknown]

That's what you think when you read these chapters of the Book of Mormon that are everlastingly strategy and tactics. What kind of religious book is this that goes on telling us who moved where and what forces go where? Why the purely technical side? Well, these are the games men play, and there's a purpose for putting them in here. Why these games? Is this to be the nature of our probation, waging battle? Back to Liddell Hart's statement on why we do it. We mentioned the three reasons before. He thought at first that wars are caused by economics. That has long been held by everybody in modern times. Then he decided the cause is psychological. Then he finally decided it all came down to certain individuals; certain ambitious individuals are the cause of war. This is the clear-cut pattern that emerges all through here, isn't it? Without those leaders such as Ammoron and Amalickiah, and for that matter without Moroni, you are not going to have these wars. But they go on all the time because of ambitious men. This is an interesting thing. Why should we be told this? Because we are in it deeper than ever before today. We could ask, what is the ultimate form of folly, and why do we do it? Well, Hart is right. In these chapters we are repeatedly reminded that power is the thing they are after and that it is ambitious individuals eager for power. John Adams, the second president of the United States, said, "Power always thinks it has a great soul and vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak, and that it is doing God's service when it is violating all his laws." We get that.

The supreme law that we should never violate is in Ether 8:19. You have general orders and then you have special orders. General orders are orders that always apply. You have to know your general orders by heart. But in certain emergencies a person with the right authority can override them with special orders. There are certain things you don't do. Take this one, for example: "For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations, neither doth he will that man should shed blood, but in all things hath forbidden it from the beginning of man." There is a sweeping general order. Nephi was told to cut off Laban's head, and he was extremely reluctant to do so. He rebelled against that. But that can only come from the Source. Only the person who gave the order can rescind it. In this case this is the [general] order ". . . but in all things hath forbidden it from the beginning of man."

So what is this to us? Well, look where we stand today. I'm going to read you something from a military manual I have been reading, a very interesting manual. This is what we

read here. This is since World War II. “In the last four decades since World War II the United States has participated in more wars, caused more casualties, and lavished more money on war and arms than in its entire history up until then. Between 1945 and 1975 was a period during which some 120 wars were recorded globally [that’s the world we live in]. The United States participated directly in 27 wars and indirectly in 36 other wars. Even now, out of the 40 odd current [1988] wars raging over the Third World, the United States is involved in over one-quarter of them. If one was to judge its involvement on the basis of its arms supply, then involvement is even greater. For instance, out of the 41 countries at war today the United States is the major supplier of arms to 21 and the not-so-major supplier to 18 others [that just about covers them all]. In all from 1972 to 1981, relative years of American innocence, its military assistance to countries engaged in war was \$51 billion, or roughly the same as India spent on its defense during the same period. Today, no country is keyed for global war, whether nuclear, conventional, subconventional, or low intensity, as the United States. It has ready at literally a moment’s notice not only nuclear forces but conventional and special forces for projection to any corner of the globe to coordinate and direct its forces for war. It has parcelled out the globe into regional, unified military commands, an arrangement to which no other country has resorted. To sustain global interventions, in addition, the United States maintains a world-wide web of alliances, bases, command control, communications and intelligence facilities, prepositioned forces, and logistics establishment. The array of military facilities, much on the lines of previous global empires, is buttressed by security and assistance programs and proxy forces, which in essence are an economy of forces, a measure to expand U.S. influence and ease armed interventions.” Have an economy of force, and let other people do it.

“At present it has nearly half a million armed personnel abroad in some 333 military installations in some forty countries. In addition, 241 thousand men straddle the globe afloat in U.S. navies ready for war. To reinforce these overseas troops, the United States maintains on a permanent basis in the continental United States a wide spectrum of reserves. The centerpiece of the reserves is the Rapid Development Force (RDF) which gained prominence first in the rapid deployment task force and since 1983 has been the central command, whose regional responsibilities now span 17 countries in Africa and West Asia. It needs to be remembered that although the central command has regional command responsibility, the forces under it and the doctrines that guide them have global dimensions. It is not entirely coincidental that almost a complete range of our RDF forces took part in the Granada war. On these and other forces for global war the U.S. spends every two years almost the same amount it spent on the entire Second World War [every two years today when we are not at war we spend as much as we did in all of World War II; it’s an amazing thing]. In addition to fighting wars which, according to one estimate, added up to over 100 years of American wars since 1945, the United States has used its armed forces to interfere in Third World countries on over 260 occasions through acts of invasion, threats of invasion, blockades, demonstrations of military force, surveillance of sovereign states, and other similar acts of war euphemistically labeled as ‘coercive diplomacy’ or ‘force without war.’”

So it goes on. We are still engaged in this sordid business, you know. The Book of Mormon is a reminder of that. But there’s more to it than that now. What is this to us? As we are told in Matthew 26:52, he who takes up the sword shall perish by the sword. The Book of Mormon teaches us that certainly. But why this form of probation? Must we spend so much time on earth doing this particularly silly and futile thing? It’s very expensive and never gets anywhere really. Because the operation has been turned over to

Satan, naturally, the common enemy. Remember section one [of the Doctrine and Covenants]: “The time is not now but is near at hand when peace shall be taken away from the earth and the devil shall have control of his own dominion.” He works best there, as a matter of fact. He is permitted to try and tempt us with the four things that we see every day around us, the four things that are mentioned in [1 Nephi 22:23]. In 3 Nephi 6:15 they repeat the four things that we shouldn’t seek for but everybody is out for (gain gets power and power gets gain): Gain, power, popularity, and the pleasures of the flesh (the lusts of the world). Of course, that’s what makes up your TV programs—the power, the money, and the popularity which we all seek. Then we want to enjoy gracious living and all the rest that goes with it.

As Brigham Young says, Satan is doing his mission manfully. I will not criticize him. He is carrying out what he should be. He’s supposed to really tempt us, and he is doing it very effectively. He takes the resources and treasures of the earth and converts them into cash for easier handling—gold and silver, which have always been the standards since the earliest times that we have any records of. He buys off armies, navies, popes, priests, presidents, and kings. He buys them up and buys wars for all of us. So he’s going to go on practicing the old thing. We should get wise to it by now. After all these years we are no better at all. We are in the same state of mind, even worse. We have less wisdom. Was there ever such addiction to war as we see on TV today and in the movies? We are compulsive war junkies. The younger generation idealizes the most depraved of beings. The soldier of fortune will kill anybody, and he doesn’t worry about who he’s killing, doesn’t even think about it. These four things I just mentioned lead to the one thing, which is extermination. “To be carnally minded is death.” That’s being carnally minded. It’s sickening that at this late date we should turn to this old, weary nightmare. Will we never snap out of it? Well, the world has never snapped out of it.

There are four things that Joseph Smith deplored. He said you should never be guilty of four things, and they are what make up careers today. There are two a’s and two c’s. The first is to aspire. He said, an aspiring spirit is from the devil. Satan aspired and that was his fall. Don’t aspire. Of course, that’s our competitive spirit, to aspire to be number one, etc. The second is to accuse. Devil means accuser, (Gk. *diabolos*). He’s called “the accuser of his brethren.” Remember, Adam said, “I do not accuse thee,” speaking of Satan. The Lord be thy judge. I will not bring a railing charge against Satan. He brings charges and accuses; he is always the accuser. There are many stories told about that. The book of Job begins with Satan in heaven challenging the Lord to put Job to the test. He accuses Job of being weak and says he will fall. He accuses, we are told in the Talmud and elsewhere. He doesn’t accuse falsely; he tells the truth about people and their weaknesses. He wants God to test them. He’ll accuse this one and that one. The accuser of his brethren is devilish. Never accuse anyone. So never aspire and never accuse. But if you are going to get ahead and aspire, you start out with an anti-something campaign. Then you get public favor. That’s the way you’ll be able to aspire, by accusing somebody. You can accuse all sorts of people of things.

Then the others: You should never contend. When the Lord comes to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon, the first thing he says to them [3 Nephi 11:28–29] is there shall be no more contention among you about my doctrine as there has been in the past. Contention is not of me but of the devil. We do not contend. As the scripture says, you can say “Yea, yea and nay, nay.” Whatsoever is more or less than this is of the devil. I can point and bear my testimony and say, “That is so.” Or I can say, “That is not so.” That’s all I can do. I can’t twist your arm and make you believe it. I may convince you by showing, by

demonstration. All contention is of the devil, he says. So don't contend; there is no need to contend. That can spoil things quicker than anything. The last one is to coerce. You [shouldn't] coerce, but that's what we do. We give orders to everybody and back them up with force. We tell everybody what to do. So we coerce, we contend, we command—we do all these things. This is the atmosphere in which we live. This is the spirit that surrounds us of contention, of ambition, of rivalry, of strife, of accusation. No wonder there's no security or anything else. Everybody goes out for his thing, and [in doing] it he feels there is something quite devilish about it. Only the Book of Mormon can get us out of this hole. That's the interesting thing; that's why we have it. The word *power* occurs 639 times in the Book of Mormon. Can you imagine that? What an obsession power is, after all. Of course, there is the power of God. The powers are divided equally.

The world has no solution. The Book of Mormon is grim because our condition is grim. Well, all the world's great literature is grim. That's the only kind that wins the Nobel Prize. I was wondering what world literature to cite today. In Greek tragedy you always run up against a stone wall and that's the end. This life is a dead end. In *Oedipus Rex* he says, "Oh, human race, how I account you equal to exactly nothing." The chorus always bemoans the human fate, and there is no getting out of it. The first lines of the *Iliad* are "We're caught like rats in a trap. There's nothing we can do about it." I think Matthew Arnold brings us up to date on the theme with his great "Dover Beach." The end of it is as follows:

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

That's our situation, and that was just before World War I. He was right. He was looking over the Straits of Dover and saw the lights of France on the other side. But then he had a heavy, foreboding sense of gloom; you're not going to escape from this sort of thing.

I brought along something. There is one passage I like; it amuses me. It's from C. P. Snow who wrote his novels about the great scientists of Cambridge in the 1930s when they had just discovered that the atom wasn't solid. Cambridge, which was Newton's school, was the center of the great breakthrough in science in the early part of the [twentieth] century. Here you have the great ray of hope, etc. He was writing about that. "The tone of science at Cambridge in 1932 was the tone of Rutherford [who discovered the structure of the atom]—magniloquently boastful, creatively confident, generous, argumentative, and full of hope [he was the great scientist of science fiction]. Science and Rutherford were on top of the world. Worldly success—he loved every minute of it—flattery, titles, the company of the high official world. He was superbly and magnificently vain as well as wise, and he enjoyed his own personality."

So here is the great lovable scientist of science fiction here. What more could you ask? Then he goes on. "He enjoyed a life of miraculous success, but I am sure that even late in life he felt stabs of sickening insecurity [this is strange, isn't it?]. Does anyone really

imagine that Bertrand Russell, G. H. Hardy, Rutherford, Blackett, and the rest were bemused by cheerfulness as they faced their own individual fate. In the crowd they were leaders. They were worshipped, but by themselves they believed with the same certainty that they believed in Rutherford's atom that they were going after this life into annihilation." That's the point. When you get to the stone wall, that's the end. It's a one-way trip. They were going nowhere, going after this life into annihilation. "Against this they had only to offer the nature of scientific activity [that would keep them entertained] and its complete success on its own terms [the Nobel Prize is great, but]. In itself it was a source of happiness, but it is whistling in the dark when they are alone."

Everybody has to face that. This is the peak of success. You've got the answer. Science has given the answers, and the answers have great finality—there is nothing more. Well, no scientist should be given an answer that is as final as that. That's as if the last data were in. Since then it has been a new world. This is the time when the head of the Physics Department at Harvard said to his students, "There's no point to going on and taking graduate work in physics. The work has all been done." It was the same thing with Professor Linforth, the foremost Hellenist at the time. I had him for lots of seminars in Berkeley, and he said, "Oh, there is nothing left in ancient history. The work has all been done there." He hadn't looked at anything. But the thing is that we are caught here. We are trapped unless something can get us out of this situation. To make it worse we spend our time fighting each other. But this is where the Book of Mormon takes off. How can anything good come out of this shambles? In the Book of Mormon we are in a shambles all the time. Just read the newspapers; we are in it today the same way.

Did anything good come out of Nazareth? Remember, "the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not." The world in which the Lord found himself was a world of intrigue and bitterness. There was great prosperity, etc., but a lot of nasty people walking all over each other—not only the Scribes and the Pharisees, but the elders, judges, and Romans. Everybody was playing tricks on each other. They were making deals, etc. It was a terrible world he was in. What happened? In the year 70 A.D. the whole thing was utterly wiped out, just completely destroyed. The Romans did a thorough job, far more thorough than we ever thought before. They just tore it all down to bits. And during all the time Jerusalem was being destroyed the Jews were busy fighting [among] themselves, just like the Nephites. They were always taking it out on each other.

But the light is the reality. The light shines in the dark. The light was there first. How can you say that? It's darkness if there is nothing there. But the light shouldn't be there. If it is there at all, who turned it on? When did they turn it on? If darkness is the fundamental nature of things (the black hole), then the light has no business being there. It doesn't exist until we think of it. That's the new anthropism. The world's wisdom gives only one side to the picture. That's C. P. Snow's great scientist. But in no other writing is the other side of the picture presented so clearly, forcefully, and convincingly as the Book of Mormon. It's just as if it were preparing us. It's like saying, I've got good news and bad news. I'm going to give you the bad news first. I'm going to give it to you hot and heavy. I'll give you all the bad news. But then I'm going to give you the good news, and you would be surprised. It makes all the bad news look like nothing. You just forget everything once you get to the good news. Let's read on so we can get to the good news in the Book of Mormon. It's going to be there sometime.

The Lamanites were trying to make a dash out of Mulek to follow Teancum's army. Then [Lehi's] army zeroed into them from Bountiful. Then Moroni's army was down in the

southwest, and he moved in behind them. They were hopelessly trapped and surrendered. There are some things to comment on in Alma 52:32. It was up to them to decide when to quit. “And Moroni commanded his men that they should fall upon them until they had given up their weapons of war.” As soon as they gave them up, that was it. There was not extermination here. Then notice the good old Zoramites. They were all Nephites to begin with; therefore, they were apostates and were very bitter. Jacob wants to go on fighting. The Lamanites don’t, but he does. He led them “with exceeding fury against Moroni” and cut his way through to the city of Mulek. Then there was a terrific melee. Moroni was wounded and Jacob was killed, and that ended this particular war.

Verse 36: “And Lehi pressed upon their rear with such fury with his strong men, that the Lamanites in the rear delivered up their weapons of war [this is just under the walls of Mulek]. . . . Now Moroni seeing their confusion, he said unto them: If ye will bring forth your weapons of war . . . we will forbear shedding your blood.” He always does that. There is no Rambo in Moroni. You notice Teancum doesn’t do that. So they threw down their weapons, but there were many who refused to do it. They weren’t cut down. They were taken and bound and compelled to march to the land Bountiful, where they had to build a huge stalag to hold them. They put the prisoners to work on that, and he apologized for having to do that. Moroni always wanted to play fair. They set guards over the prisoners. Remember, these Lamanites armies were vast compared with theirs. What do you do with them? Well, they set them to burying the dead first at all the scenes of the battle. Then they marched them to Bountiful and put them in a stalag under guard. It always made me nervous to see two MP’s with tommy guns conducting three or four thousand Germans down the road. They didn’t even have automatic weapons then. How could you guard prisoners like this? Well, that’s a serious problem, he tells us here. They finally can’t do it and just let them go.

They went to the city of Mulek. He gave it to Lehi to hold, and he went on. Lehi was a man like Moroni, much beloved by the people. In verse 3 they finished burying the dead, and “they were marched back into the land Bountiful; and Teancum, by the orders of Moroni, caused that they should commence laboring in digging a ditch round about the land, or the city, Bountiful.” They called it the land or the city. They were city states, just exactly as it was in Israel. [Brother Nibley tries to think of the Amarna Letters, but can’t until later.] Early documents from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. speak of the “land of Jerusalem,” just as the Book of Mormon does. It says the Lord would be born in the “land of Jerusalem.” That has been taken as a great slipup on the part of the Book of Mormon. Jerusalem wasn’t just the city; it was the land around it—just as Athens was all the land of Attica and Sparta was all the land around it. They marched them back, and they commenced digging and making the fortifications. They are standard—the breast works with the timbers on the top encircled [the city]. The Indians in the Mississippi Valley had the same type of structures, and they did it over large areas.

Verse 5: “. . . and in this city they did guard the prisoners of the Lamanites . . . Now Moroni was compelled to cause the Lamanites to labor, because it was easy to guard them while at their labor.” You can watch them that way. But that wasn’t included in the “Geneva Convention,” and he apologized for it. Notice, he had to be compelled. Well, why is it wrong to make prisoners do some work? It’s the type of work they are doing. They cannot be forced to fight their own people. They are participants in the war if they are doing this. But now we know that anything you have them do helps the war effort. Usually prisoners just stay around. They can refuse to do any work at all if it will help against their side. He had three victories here. He got the stronghold of the Lamanites

[Mulek], and he built a stronghold to take care of his prisoners. He solved three problems in one. Then he went on preparing. Especially providing food was an important thing.

Then this is what happens in verse 8. You would think things would be going well, but what spoils it? Their own silliness. “And now it came to pass the armies of the Lamanites, on the west sea, south, while in the absence of Moroni on account of some intrigue amongst the Nephites [Moroni couldn’t be there. What he wanted to do then was move to the west and hold them there, but he couldn’t], which caused dissensions amongst them, had gained some ground over the Nephites.” That allowed the Lamanites to win some because the Nephites had to start fighting among themselves, having contentions. “And thus because of iniquity amongst themselves, yea, because of dissensions and intrigue among themselves they were placed in the most dangerous circumstances.” That always happens that way. We get the human element here.

Incidentally, you notice how easily people in arms quarrel with each other. That’s the theme of the *Iliad*. The chiefs and the lords are always struggling, always jealous of each other’s mete of honor, etc. That goes all through the *Iliad*, which is a military epic. And all through the others there is much striving because of ambitious people. This accounts for a very important phenomenon in the army. The things they do seem superficial to us. It was Leopold von Anhalt-Dessau who invented the *Manual of Arms* in the middle of the eighteenth century. It’s a perfectly artificial. It has no useful function whatsoever, but it is very necessary to have them do these drills, cooperate on these things, and do these things together here. We have to have these constant reminders of rank. It’s absolutely necessary to have almost reverence for rank. Otherwise, how soon jealousy would break out in open defiance, and you can’t have that. We have to salute on all occasions. The Germans don’t salute off duty in their army, the Russians don’t, and the British don’t. If a fellow is an old college friend in the army, there’s nothing to that—it’s great. But in our army you salute off duty. We are very strict there because we need it more.

About the third day in Normandy we were having a very bad time. Finally, somebody got through from the Navy. It was Tom Hungerford who had been a student of mine at Claremont. We immediately embraced. In fact, he had been a student in a one-man class. It was in this little farm house we were trying to hold on to by the skin of our teeth. He brought in some artillery from the sea because we couldn’t get any. They [the weapons] were very accurate and very valuable. So here came Tom Hungerford who was our connection with the Navy. But they were quite upset when I talked to Tom Hungerford as an equal. They didn’t like that at all. We don’t talk to officers that way. He had got to be quite a high officer in the Navy.

This reminds me of another story which is too good to miss. A very good friend of mine was George Allen. He’s a Pennsylvania Quaker, and his family owns the oldest bookstore perhaps in America on Walnut Street in Philadelphia. He had an identical twin brother, and they joined the Army together. They did everything together. You know when you are assigned certain things. They came to a certain point and one brother was assigned to a certain camp and the other one to another, just like that. That’s the way it happens. At the end of the war my friend George Allen, who was very active and got bronze stars, was a corporal and his brother was a colonel. They were identical twins, and one wasn’t any smarter than the other. But after three or four years one was a colonel and the other was a corporal. Well, that’s the way things go. That’s the way the cookie crumbles. What can you do about it? But these artificial things have to be done. You have to set up an artificial situation. This is necessary to keep people in line, the salute and all that. Otherwise, armies

would quickly fall to pieces in personal factions because they would start intriguing. There is so much bitterness, etc. That's why once you got in the LST to go back to England again, to have a round of ammunition on your person was a court martial offence. The officers were scared to death of anybody who had ammunition. There was a lot of fragging that went on in Vietnam, and there was quite a bit in the European theater that we don't talk about.

It was because of iniquity among themselves [the Nephites] that they were in the most dangerous circumstances. They [armies] have to preserve this discipline against great odds, so they have these artificial things. That drill did a great deal of good, although it's very artificial. Why do you walk this way and turn that way? It's the *Manual of Arms*, etc. Leopold von Anhalt-Dessau died of an apoplectic fit when he learned that his twelfth or thirteenth child was learning to read. That was the kind of man old Leopold was. "Old powder face" they called him.

Here's a peaceful story about the people of Ammon. Notice that they were Lamanites, just as the Zoramites were Nephites. They really switch characters with verse 10 here. ". . . who, in the beginning, were Lamanites; but by Ammon and his brethren, or rather by the power and word of God, they had been converted unto the Lord." Notice how the Book of Mormon uses that doublespeak from time to time. He catches himself and says it was really by the power of the word of God. It wasn't Ammon. They always specify this way. They sort of demur here. It tells a story at two levels. We are always reminded in the Book of Mormon that the Lord was behind all these things. It wasn't Ammon that converted them. That's not so. We talked about the Greek chorus before. Well, a Greek chorus comments on the play and tells us what is really going on. The superficial play is before your eyes, but what is really going on is something deeper than that. The positivist says, "We've seen everything there is." When Hamlet asks whether Gertrude sees his father or not, she says, "Nothing at all; yet all there is I see." Well now, is that true? She is speaking truly when she says she doesn't see anything, but is she right when she says, "I see everything there is"? That's what we say all the time. We say, "I don't see anything at all." That's the positivist position—if I don't see it, it doesn't exist. "Nothing at all; yet all there is I see."

Especially the Egyptians view the momentary event as just a shadow of something. Alain de Lille's famous poem says everything we see is just a reflection in a mirror. It's not the real thing. There must be whole generations of causes behind it, something building up behind. This is just a superficial reflection for the moment. It's fleeting and passes. Every creature in this world is like a book and a picture, as if we were looking in a mirror. So we have these things. The greatest play I think I've ever read is *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles. I just looked at it, and I didn't realize how great it was. It just bowled me over completely. He makes it so perfectly clear that all the play, everything you see, is just a shadow theater. The oldest of theaters is the shadow theater in the Far East, etc. The old shadow theater was the Garden of Eden theater. That was the theme of the shadow theater. In Arab countries an old man travels around with a show box, a monkey, and his donkey. He has a shadow theater that he puts up and people all watch. It's the Adam and Eve story. I have a rather interesting book I picked up in Damascus; you can't get another copy of that one.

So the momentary event is merely a type. The unique events in history are lost forever. The only reason we have any history is that things happen over and over again. We talk about the recurrent events in the Book of Mormon. There are recurrent events all the

time. It's these recurrent, typical events that can mean something to us and we can rely on. If it has happened before it will happen again—that's the way we are. So there's this by-comment as if you had a commentator there, somebody special to point out that this isn't the real thing and explain how it is. He is the *hry tp*, as the Egyptians would call him, the commentating priest, the priest that explains what is going on. In the temple he is the *paralemtor*, the person who stands at your elbow and explains to you the ordinances and gives you the words you are supposed to speak. We have *paralemtors* in the temple too.

Verse 11: “. . . for they had taken an oath that they never would shed blood more.” Remember, the Lord said he had forbidden it in all things. But when they saw the danger and saw that their benefactors were in such terrible trouble and they could help, they were about to pitch in and help. When they saw the afflictions that the Nephites bore for them, they were moved with compassion and were desirous to take up arms in defence. But they were stopped cold. Both Helaman and Moroni said nothing doing; we are not going to do that. “. . . they were overpowered by the persuasions of Helaman and his brethren.” Now, Helaman needed their help the worst way, but he said it is better that we lose than that you break your oath. “. . . and his brethren for they were about to break the oath which they had made. And Helaman feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls.” That was more important. Do we have such integrity today? The point is you must not cheat, even if it means you'll lose. We can't conceive of that—do anything to win. There's that wonderful story in the *Clementine Recognitions*. We won't stop for that though. (I'm remembering and forgetting so fast today. Everything comes and everything goes.)

So they were about to break the oath, and then he said it was better [to lose] than losing their souls. That sounds positively absurd to us. Why would they lose that chance for help? An interesting theme would be sportsmanship in the Book of Mormon. Moroni plays a sporting game all the time, and the enemy doesn't. Remember Zerahemnah when he was talking to Moroni and lunged at him with his sword. He got the top of his head cut off as a result of that. Jacob, who was leading them [the Lamanites] after all the rest had surrendered, decided to charge. Laman and Lemuel bullied poor Nephi, tied him up, and beat him up. There are some very poor sports in the Book of Mormon to say the least. Then there's Amalickiah and his long list of dirty tricks. He never played fair at all. That's the way he won. But there are people in the Book of Mormon who are very sporting and always play fair. Moroni is one of them—that's his greatness, and Nephi the same way. The good guys play fair and the bad guys don't in the Book of Mormon. But there's a very sharp distinction made. This is a typical example here, this idea of sportsmanship moving them to compassion. Back in Alma 52:37 I noticed an example when Lehi pressed upon the Lamanites with such fury from the rear. “Now Moroni seeing their confusion, he said unto them: If ye will bring forth your weapons of war and deliver them up, behold we will forbear shedding your blood.” Well, in the confusion was the time to finish them off and never have to bother with them again, but he didn't. And it's the same way in Alma 53:5 where it says, “And this city became an exceeding stronghold ever after; and in this city they did guard the prisoners of the Lamanites.” He has to apologize. He guards them and makes them labor at this unpleasant labor because he is compelled to. He has no choice there.

These Ammonites had many sons who were just babies at the time, and they hadn't entered into the oath. Of course, they were free to do what they wanted. When their parents were told not to do it by Helaman, they assembled themselves together. Helaman was the one who did the persuading. In his integrity he was the one who persuaded their

parents and saved their oath. Naturally, the boys would choose him to be their leader. Here's the man we can depend on; he's the one that practically appointed us to this calling [they may have said]. They called themselves Nephites. They were Lamanites, but they were not ashamed to call themselves Nephites. Notice how with the Zoramites, Nephites become Lamanites, and the Ammonites become Nephites. We are not talking about pure blood. I had a very important talk yesterday with a man who is president of a mission in Mexico. That's a big problem down there, this race business because of this trouble that Brother [George] Lee raised.

Verse 16: “. . . they called themselves Nephites. And they entered into a covenant to fight for the liberty of the Nephites.” There were two thousand of them who took an oath to protect the Nephites from bondage. This is another interesting thing. All day long there was a constant bringing in and interrogating of prisoners [during World War II]. You get them fresh when they're all shaken up and have just surrendered, and they will tell you anything. It's an interesting thing that the kids who came from the villages and believed what they were told wouldn't tell anything. But the big tough SS men, who had taken their solemn oath to the Fuhrer, would spill their guts. They were eager. The tough ones always cracked first. It wasn't the ones you would expect to. The kids were still idealistic; they really believed it. So I wouldn't question them at all. I wouldn't have anything to do with it. That's why I was fired. I wouldn't press people like that.

So there were two thousand of them, and they are going to go through with it now. Believe me, they are! They chose that Helaman should be their leader. He was the one who told their parents they shouldn't lose their souls. [They thought,] Now there's a man we can follow. There's a man we can stick to. He is going to be honest all the way. A study in integrity is the Ammonites. Of course, the boys to him were true in all things because they saw how true and faithful he was. Verse 20: “. . . they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted. Yea, they were men of truth and soberness.” The opposite of that is trickery and excess. They weren't men of trickery and excess, but of truth and soberness. That's the one quality you want, of course. If you have people you can count on, then you feel good. Brigham Young used to say, with eight men I feel far better than if you put an army behind me and I couldn't trust them. This happens again and again.

So Helaman marched at the head of them. They wanted him and they got him. Whose advantage was this? Ammoron was the brother of Amalickiah and just as bitter as Amalickiah. He was going to avenge him. Ammoron sent a letter to exchange prisoners. Here is the temperament of Moroni, a very good commentary on Moroni. He is short tempered, and he is the most tactless person you can imagine. He's perfectly honest. That must be one of the things that makes him so tactless. This shows you that Clausewitz is right when he says a military man should not make decisions of government. Moroni is one dimensional; he goes straight ahead. Moroni desired provisions and he desired to strengthen his people. He wanted to exchange. The exchange would be to the Lamanites' advantage. All the Lamanite prisoners were soldiers. But because of the Lamanite sweep through the country, they had conquered all the women and children too. They had to feed them, and they didn't like that at all. They wanted to get rid of them. The prisoner exchange would be to their advantage. They would get rid of these Nephite women and children who weren't doing them any good. For every family they sent back, they would get a fighting man back. So an exchange would favor them. So he [Moroni] wrote this letter to him. This isn't his most tactless letter. He is going to beat this in other letters.

Alma 54:5: “Behold, Ammoron, I have written unto you somewhat concerning this war which ye have waged against my people [notice that it’s personal], or rather which thy brother hath waged against them.” There is always this refrain. He invites them to repent and withdraw their armies. He is carried away already. He preaches. “Behold, I would tell you somewhat concerning the justice of God . . .” I would tell you that, but you won’t listen. Well, he goes ahead and tells him anyway. He has to unburden his soul. “. . . repent and withdraw your armies . . . Yea, I would tell you these things if ye were capable of hearkening unto them [can you suggest another approach than this?]; yea, I would tell you concerning that awful hell that awaits to receive such murderers as thou and thy brother have been [he has to insult his brother too], except ye repent and withdraw your murderous purposes, and return with your armies to your own lands.”

This is Moroni’s weakness; he must go all the way. He will not compromise his position. He is not a diplomat. He is like Brutus—a plain, blunt soldier. So he says things like this, and this happens all the time. He says, “But as ye have once rejected these things . . . I may expect you will do it again.” (Remember, Zerahemnah said cynically to [Moroni], you know if I swear an oath I’ll break it. They agreed on that too.) [Moroni said,] Except you withdraw he threatens you with utter destruction. “But behold, it supposeth me that I talk to you concerning these things in vain; or it supposeth me that thou art a child of hell.” He is using the soft sell here, isn’t he? Moroni cannot restrain himself, so he tactfully says, “Thou art a child of hell.” Therefore, I will close my epistle telling you, to hell with you.

Do you think he is going to get a deal on these terms? “. . . I will not exchange prisoners, save it be on conditions that ye will deliver up a man and his wife and his children, for one prisoner.” If you don’t do this, I will arm my children. He tells him, you can run but you can’t hide. “. . . it shall be blood for blood, yea, life for life; and I will give you battle even until you are destroyed from off the face of the earth. Behold, I am in my anger . . .” He is—he is ranting here. He admits to a terrible temper here. George Washington had a terrible temper too. You think of Patton here too the same way. Unrestrained, he just let himself go. There was no tact to him. [Moroni said] “But behold, if ye seek to destroy us more we will seek to destroy you . . . Now I close my epistle. I am Moroni; I am a leader of the people of the Nephites.” That’s the way you terminate here.

You say, this is crazy. Why do we do this? No, this is perfectly routine. He is just following accepted procedure for generals. This is the *stichomythia* or *stichomachia*. You can call it either one. In epic literature, whether it’s Homer or whether it’s the *Aeneid*, the heroes or leaders of the hosts always before the battle have to stand up and at least spiel off a whole book, sometimes two books, of imprecations against the enemy—tell him how often he has done wrong, how evil he is, and the terrible things you are going to do with him. Then he comes and replies. This is the *stichomythia*. Before the battle you exchange insults to get yourself worked up so you won’t be just cold blooded murderers. When you are good and hot and fired up, then you are willing to slaughter anything. But this is routine. The *stichomythia* is represented in every Greek drama where there is a major confrontation between the kings. *Seven against Thebes* is a typical example. There’s the army of Thebes, the army of Eteocles, and the army of his brother. The two are fighting each other to the death, and they kill each other—the same sort of thing we are going to get in the Book of Mormon. Both armies destroy each other.

A *stichos* is a verse. It’s just a short speech. But that’s immediately followed by a short speech from the other side. You say something, and then he says something. Where you

get that today is if you happen to revel in world-style wrestling, or whatever they call it. They spend most of time swearing at each other and saying what I'm going to do to you when we meet next week. They tell you what a coward you are, what a slump and what a dolt. I'm going to tear you limb from limb and you won't have that championship belt when I get through with you. Then the other guy talks back. In these artificial voices they scream and rant at each other. It's high comedy, you know. That's what they do. That's *stichomythia*. Or *stichomachia* is when you fight at it. *Stichos* is a verse, and *mythia* is you recite it to each other.

That's what this is. He has to do this because then Ammoron writes him back a letter that's just as insulting. He says just the same things, is just as mean about it, and threatens to do the same things to him that he has threatened to do to [Ammoron]. So we are in the human comedy over our ears here in the Book of Mormon.