

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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4 Nephi 1

Prayer

Peace

Prosperity

Well, [because of] a rather severe jet lag, I took a very potent sleeping pill last night. It's just begun to take effect. It's always slow with me.

It has been announced in the news today that the Reorganized Church has denounced the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. I can almost equal that. In Cairo the Church meets on Friday, because Friday is the sacred day of the Moslems. The shops close on Friday, and we have our Sunday School on Friday. That's our Sunday. It feels just like Sunday, it looks just like Sunday, it smells like Sunday. In every respect it's a Sunday—there's no difference to us at all. The day is Friday, but it's a good time. The interesting thing is that the Christian churches all observe Sunday in Cairo. To be in keeping with them, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church also faithfully observes Sunday as the Sabbath. Now when you consider that their entire religion is built around the idea that you must have the Sabbath on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and nothing else will do, [that is strange]. We're all [gone] astray because we observe Sunday instead of Saturday, which Constantine introduced in the fourth century. [In Cairo] the Adventists are all going to Sunday School on Sunday. It's a strange world we live in.

But we are in a stranger world, too. We're in 4 Nephi now [discussing] why that was a marvelous book, etc. Now we're down to the twelfth [verse]. Notice we're taking time on this, but we don't want to take too much time. You can't take too much time. The whole book is here. This is an epitome of the Book of Mormon, 4 Nephi. What were they going to do? How did they spend their time? This is the point. As we saw the last time, the great issue is going to be boredom. You've got to do something. If there are no more crimes and violence, none of the elements that make for prime-time TV, what are you going to do to make life interesting? Well, it says they spent their days in continual fasting. We talked about fasting; it's far more than you think, when we say fasting here. And [they spent time] in prayer and in meeting together. Why did they meet together? To pray and hear the word of the Lord. Prayer is the main activity, apparently. They spent their days in fasting and prayer. Of course, fasting is not a conscious operation, but in prayer you have something in mind. You're doing something when you pray. You're doing the thing that we do most in this world. The very essence of our existence here is to pray. We pray all the time. That's an individual thing. They gathered together to pray, and they had individual prayer.

What is a prayer, anyway? Should we ask some people things here? Prayer is a broadcast, announcing that you are here. It's a personal signal, and nobody's going to escape it at all. It's an announcement of your presence. Sometimes when you're under great pressure or in great danger, you are willing to sound off and say, here I am—do something about it. But nobody can escape that. It's spontaneous and it's irrepressible that you will pray. It's an appeal for help in desperate situations, but not always that—you're announcing your presence all the time. To whom are you announcing your presence?

They say the monks of old would go out into the desert to pray. Well, Jesus went up into the mountain to pray, and Jesus went out into the desert to pray. Why do you go out to the desert to

pray? Because you're praying to a particular person, a certain one. Do you pray when you're in a crowd? Well, you do, yes. They pray to be seen. Remember, Jesus talks about the Pharisees that spread their phylacteries and pray to be heard. They pray in public places. They pray in the marketplaces and on the street corners. They pray on the towers, and they have a trumpet sound when they go to make their alms and give their prayers. So we're always praying. We're praying to each other, we're praying to the Lord, we're announcing our presence to everybody all around. It's the ultimate expression of our ego, that we're here. It's a very interesting thing. It's an announcement of our dependence also, and hence *religio*. There's always a time when a person will say, "O God," no matter whether they're atheists or not. That's *religio*, which means religion and a connection with somebody else. It reestablishes the tie that has been denied and broken. In a great crisis, people will pray.

You put into words what you want and how you feel. Prayer is as natural as breathing. It expands your awareness. It puts you into the big picture. You're not satisfied with being just in a hole, being nothing and being unnoticed. You must be noticed, and you must notice. We mentioned that before. You are always aware of God, and God is always aware of you. You can't break that. That's what the Arabs call the *faṭra*. Every time you breathe you say, "Allah, Allah." Incidentally, in a very good branch in Cairo, when they talk about God, they talk about *Allah*. "God be with you till we meet again," they sing. God is *Allah*. That's the only word you can use [in their language], so don't worry about that. But you announce your presence. The *faṭra* is a prayer you do unconsciously and in your hearts. Remember, when they couldn't pray aloud, the Nephites prayed in their hearts. They were suppressed and held as prisoners, etc. Then you're particularly aware of it. But you're particularly aware of another person who is aware of you. This is this mutual awareness. You're not alone, and it preserves your individuality. It heightens your individuality. "Here I am" is what you say.

The word *amen* [is used] when a group is together. *Amen* means "it's my intention. I approve that." Part of the ordinance of prayer is saying *amen*. We don't say *amen* when we should, not even with the sacrament, but you should say it. That's part of the ordinance. It's very important—"and all the people shall say amen." That's in the Dead Sea Scrolls, right on the first page where things are said about the prayer. That shows that it's your prayer, too—that you want to participate in it along with the others.

Another thing about it is that it's a real activity—and we engage ourselves up to the eyebrows in it. We're just in it all the way, but we have no instrumentality. We don't use instruments at all. That's a very interesting thing about prayer. We don't have prayer wheels, and we don't have rosaries. See, the rosary wasn't adapted until the seventeenth century by the Roman church, and it was adapted from the Buddhists through Jesuit missionaries. The rosary is considered something quite sacred now. [They] have prayer beads and worry beads, but we don't use instruments. No instrumentality. So where do we stand? Where's the reality? Is there real content there? Well, I think there is, now that we know how certain things are projected. First, prayer is individual. It puts into words what you want and how you feel. That's very important to do. That puts you into the picture. Remember, Joseph Smith when he was a child—the first time when he went to the Grove he said never before, neither he nor his family, had ever prayed out loud before. Why would the Lord need your words? He knows what's in your heart, but the words are for you to formulate. The *word* is very important. "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). It's through the word that we communicate. We saw that before. The only way that we exchange our own ideas and match our own universes is by the word. We have the seven preceptors, but there's only one projector. What I say is what you learn about my existence and my universe and we can share it that way. If I falsify through the word, the easiest thing in the world to do, it throws everything into confusion. It's a real horror. The worst of crimes is the lie.

So the individual puts into words what he wants and how he feels. That helps you and formulates you. That puts you into the picture and places you at the door ready for the interview. You brush yourself up and get ready for the interview because [you wonder] is the Lord really going to hear you? We've talked about that, too. Can that possibly happen? We've talked about the speed of gravity and the speed of light. There are some things that are instantaneous in their effect, and gravity is one of them. It's absolutely a complete mystery—nothing can be made of it at all. In a famous letter to Richard Bentley, Isaac Newton said, no sane person could possibly accept the reality of that, and yet it's so. That's the way it is—bodies can influence each other through empty space instantaneously at any distance. If that can happen, he says, it can only be through the operation of God's mind force.

To be sincere, you can see it must avoid mechanical repetition. We say we do not wish to multiply words before him. What do you do when you multiply? You repeat. You don't add when you multiply. You don't increase when you multiply, you just repeat. You repeat over and over again: Five times five is twenty-five—five repeated five times. When you multiply words, you just repeat words, and you do it automatically. This becomes a very common thing, as if repetition added to it. The scriptures say we do not multiply words, and yet so many Ave Marias are supposed to have much more value than half that many Ave Marias, or so many turns of the prayer wheel or so many Pater Nosters are supposed to have more value. No, multiplying words isn't going to do it at all in what you do here. We must avoid this mechanical repetition and prayer wheels.

What I'm talking about is how these people [in 4 Nephi] fill their time. Remember, they are not having any wars. There is nobody sick or anything like that. They have everything they want. Nobody is hungry. They didn't have to work any more than just to cover the minimum necessities. What are these people going to do, you see? This is the whole thing that puzzles us, too. But prayer is the main activity to get things going. It puts things on a special footing here.

Our wants are few, so how can you avoid repetition in prayer? I tell the Lord what I want, and every time I tell him, I tell him the same thing, because that's what I want. I don't want everything else. What about it? You can add, as I say, this multiplying that goes on. I've stood in churches and heard people say things hundreds of times over and over again. In a litany when there was a drought in Bavaria, they said, "Hear us, hear us, hear us." Or in Greece, they said *kyrie eleison* all morning. Or, as Paul tells us, they shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians; great is Diana of the Ephesians" for three hours without stopping. They thought that would be an acceptable prayer. Well, that's just automatic. You're not getting anywhere with that. It doesn't delight you; it doesn't delight the Lord or anyone else. That's not what we're supposed to be doing.

How do you avoid this repetition, multiplying words this way? Well, this means that when you pray and you have asked for everything you want for now, intense introspection is required. Either you've already arrived and you have everything you want, and that covers everything you can imagine, and you're not going to progress or anything else anymore—or something is missing and you've got to pray for more. The question you keep asking when you get to the end of your prayer is, "where do I go from here"? The Lord says, I've heard all that before; now you're capable of more than that. What do we do next, you see? Notice in verse 12, they engaged in continuing prayer. Again, this is what I say is as a *faṭra*. You're aware of God all the time, and he's aware of you. This is what Schleiermacher called *Abhängigkeit*—the feeling of absolute and total dependence at all times. There is dependence but also a feeling of companionship—a feeling that you're not just some creature moving along like an ant crawling along the ground or something like that. Somebody is aware of you and you are aware of him, whatever else the human race [might be doing]. The one that you are in contact with is the greatest of them all; it's your Heavenly Father. He's able to be aware of you, and you're able to be aware of him.

We saw this in the case of Jesus introducing himself to the people one by one, blessing the children one by one. He knows your name, and you know him. It's an intimate personal relationship shared by nobody else, and that's not selfish because you know he has it with everybody else. That makes you friends with everybody else, too, because you know that you have a common friend and who it is. I told you about Brother John Hayes, the registrar, didn't I? He used to live kitty-corner across the street from me years ago in Provo. He had been registrar at BYU for forty years. It was a small school, but all the students passed through his hands, so to speak, and he knew all the students who ever went to BYU. He not only knew them, but he was interested in them. For that reason he knew their family histories and their troubles. He would meet a student twenty-five years after [graduation] and ask, "Did your mother ever get over her arthritis?" or "Did you ever move from Nephi?" "Is your father still in the cattle business?" He'd know all about them. Every student he knew all about, and he was no superman or anything like that. He was just good old Brother Hayes. He was interested; that's why. If he could know everybody individually, don't you think the Lord could know you? It's no problem at all for him. He knows you as an individual; you'll never be anything else but yourself to him. You'll have a friendship with him as intimate as with anybody else.

How can it be that intimate? Well, look. I used to think when we had one child that he was our life. He was marvelous. Little Paul thrilled the daylights out of me, but when we had eight it was just the same. Grandchildren are just as thrilling, just as wonderful, just as individual. No difference at all, and it could go on forever and ever. So don't worry. We're in a community here in which everything is going to be very jolly. There's going to be no boredom in this kingdom it's talking about here, not for the 240 years, anyway.

Let's go on with this prayer business that was continuing then and meeting off together. Well, you see that. You'll be drawn to people who've had the same experiences you have. This would be nice. You say, isn't it enough to pray and study alone? Those are important, of course. We read that wonderful account in the Mandaean community text from the third or fourth century—maybe even earlier than that. They are all different, where it talks about the various worlds, etc. All the worlds are different. Each has something to contribute to the others. Each can take something from all the others. The combinations are different in each one. So as the worlds get more and more numerous, they are more and more different. They're more and more distinct, yet more and more dependent on each other. They more and more enjoy each other's company, that wonderful thing about going and visiting each other and that sort of thing. This is a conceivable situation. We don't run out [of interesting things to do]. See, the whole thing is it abolishes all selfishness. The interest goes out to everything else. It's an outflowing feeling. "Three cheers for the universe," as the famous New England philosopher used to say.

Each there had something to give and needs more from the others. Everybody gains. The exchange increases the rich variety of our society, and especially the multifaceted genius of every individual. It's a remarkable thing to see [for example] the Egyptians, those amazing people. They did things we couldn't think of doing; they were a most marvelous people. They were the most stable society on earth because they were the most friendly. The great productive periods [were] the first six dynasties—it's a very interesting thing. That's when all the great stuff was produced, and there are no signs of war. We find no weapons. We find everything else in the tombs. You won't find weapons, you won't find any signs of conquest, you won't find the victor model—the victorious conqueror or anything like that. It's only in the later dynasties, the Middle Kingdom, when the Asiatics moved in and mingled, that you get the usual trouble. But these things aren't necessary. It's an amazing thing what's going on in this Book of Mormon here. The exchange increases the variety of society and the multifaceted genius of every individual in it. You're surrounded by beings as highly aware of your presence as you are of theirs. How much would you keep back from them? Your *sacer egoismus* is inviolable. You always have that. That's the wonderful thing about the Egyptian—he always leaves you his name and address and his

genealogy. He's not going to be absorbed into an ocean of being. It's himself. He's going to be preserved and he's going to rise in the resurrection. And it's the same thing here.

Well, how much would you keep back from such people? You're not going to turn yourself inside out like some fantastic sea monster or make an exhibition of yourself. It's funny that these things are what's done in society in which people are suspicious of each other—in which they're jealous and competitive. There is where they try to show off. There's where they try to be exotic and excessive, etc., and it ends only in the saddest dissolution, a pitiful state of things. This is my work and my glory, to share with everybody else (Moses 1:39). They can have eternal life and immortality, too, just like I do. We get all of this in the book of Moses.

So we are literally a family then. We're praying separately and we're praying together. The worlds, we are told, maintain a lively exchange with each other. We know that by the comet shuttle now. This is actually no longer a myth. It's a fantastic thing. I gathered together [some examples of this] in that work called ["Treasures in the Heavens"] where the worlds exchange knowledge, etc. There's a poem that Isaac Newton wrote, a very good one on this. It's Isaac Newton's hymn.

Praise the Lord for he has spoken.
Worlds his mighty word obey.
Laws that never can be broken
Hath he for their guidance made.

This is Isaac Newton himself, this idea of worlds without number that God has given a common order to. He has given laws that never can be broken for their profit? Benefit? Any word that you want to put in there. I hadn't thought of that for many years, but that's a marvelous poem, and it comes from such a person, too.

Well, then, we have worlds maintaining a lively exchange with each other in the comet shuttle, each mixed with the parts of the others in its own peculiar combination. The numbers and variations are infinite as the number of worlds themselves.

Then we're told there was no contention among them [in 4 Nephi]. Is there any wonder about that? There's no contention. What, no plot in the play? We're not going to have any fun without contention. With us, after the buildup, after the climax, after the denouement, they ride into the sunset or they live happily every after. The play must end there, because the author or the playwright has nowhere to go. After all the problems, after all the dirty work, after all the dangers have been passed, then we say, "The cloudless skies are all serene. Oh joy, oh rapture unforeseen." They have no place to go, so the author has nothing to do but end the play. But that's where the play should begin. What kind of fun are they going to have after that if they've lost all the excitement, if it's all passed away? This, as Spangler says, is the ultimate disaster to civilization. After all our problems are solved, then we have nothing to do but collapse into a pile of ashes. We're not going anywhere. *Problemlösigkeit* is the absence of problems. We've got to have an answer here.

What do the Nephites do after they reach this condition? The only scene open to them after that, he talks about. He talks about mighty miracles. Now we have a very interesting thing that's going on repeatedly to a small nucleus of brethren, the brotherhood, that have this superior knowledge. They perform these miracles among themselves. The rest of them don't. They're just a normal society of people behaving themselves at last. But you see they get mentioned quite often here in significant situations. The only scene was the realm of mighty miracles. That's a world we know not of, you see. They were not ordinary people but something beyond our reach. Again, they're called the disciples of Jesus, and they appear as a very special group in this book. We are told in verse 13, "There were mighty miracles wrought among the disciples of Jesus," not just by the

disciples but they were wrought among them. Apparently not among the rest, though the rest were all members of the church. It tells us in the second verse that they'd all been converted, yet the mighty miracles were limited to this group among the disciples of Christ. They had knowledge, powers, and understandings beyond the rest. This has always been an ongoing tradition in human history—that there are human groups, isolated people, both men and women, who possess knowledge above the others which is kept secret. The idea is that it couldn't be shared without becoming corrupted, misunderstood, or lost, in other words. That's what the Lord tells the disciples when he meets with them behind closed doors. He says, don't tell these things to the others. It's like giving pearls to the swine and throwing your food to the dogs. They wouldn't appreciate it at all. It would just make them sick, and it would be lost on them. There's nothing wrong with them, but this is something special.

This idea of special groups guarding their secrets, this esoteric [information], naturally led to the idea of all sorts of fake societies, all sorts of cultists. At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, it just became a rash. Everybody and his dog was joining these secret societies, with freemasonry taking the lead. They were trying to invest themselves in an air of mystery, of superior knowledge that others didn't possess, etc. But Joseph Smith actually did possess such knowledge, and if you don't believe it, look at the Book of Mormon. He gave us that. But it's very common for people to fake this for escapism—to escape the dullness of life and to make a big show to enhance one's importance. You're going to get this all the time. We have secrecy in business, government, and all sorts of things to give us this air of superior knowledge. All governments today are becoming secret government. It's nonsense and it's dangerous.

But here they are without the contention. Now where do the Nephites come? I say the only scenes open to them were these mighty miracles. Again, the disciples of Jesus appear in this special world. We're told that mighty miracles were wrought among them, rather than by them among the general public. This is confirmed later on in this book here. In a nation where all are members [of the church], this denotes a special brotherhood experienced beyond our kin. In other words, they're the people in the laboratory. They're doing the big stuff that we don't know anything about. This becomes apparent in the next verse, you'll notice. Look in verse 14. It tells us when these ordained disciples died, there were other disciples ordained in their stead, replacing them individually just as if it was a special group. "There were other disciples ordained in their stead; and also many of that generation had passed away. And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land."

I notice they use the two saecula here in this book. A saeculum is a complete human life. The generation is a hundred years here, and a little later on it's 110 years. That's the Roman seculum. That's a cycle in which the last person is alive who was alive when the cycle began. When that person dies, then a new cycle begins. A new cycle is one in which no person in the preceding cycle still lives. With the Romans it was 100 years; with the Egyptians it was 110 years, which became the normal life cycle. We have some noted Egyptian sages that lived to 110. In verse 18 it's going to tell us about that.

Verse 15: "There was no contention in the land because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people." Well, again you can see that. There was no problem if it did dwell in the hearts of the people. That would condition every thought and action, you see, if it dwelt in the hearts of the people. In any crisis we'd wait to get our directives from him, if the love of God dwelt there. The solution would be forthcoming. We're not going to have contention if we're waiting upon the judgment and the instruction of God, and if the love of God dwells in our hearts. It's impossible; it's out of the question. As soon as we start contending, you see what happens to that. It would be most retrograde to that. It would be completely opposed to it in every way.

Verse 16 reads like the famous negative confession, 125th section of the Book of the Dead, in which a person lists all the sins he did not commit. As Benjamin tells the people, there's no end to the list of sins I might make that you might commit. I can't go on telling you all the things you mustn't do. I'd better tell you the things you must do, because there's no end to the ways in which people can offend God. We leave it to the Jesuits to make these long lists, such as Molinos in the fifteenth century. They labored scientifically to make the longest possible list of sins that persons could commit, and then they had to be rated by number. This was the doctrine of probabilism. A certain sin would rate 6.2, and another sin would be 8.9. But in the list of sins, you can get a very, very long list. Well, of course, the thing is ridiculous because the whole thing is the state of mind in which the act is done. It's not the act itself, but the intention or the mood. I mean a thing that might be very virtuous in one condition [is evil in another]. Nephi committed the ultimate sin when the Lord absolutely insisted that he do it. He explained why he should when he murdered Laban.

This reads like a negative confession here. Is this what you call a good society, just because "there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God." Well, must we be so negative? What was there? Why do you tell us what there was not? Well, these aren't negative at all. These things are all unnecessary, and by denying the negative, of course, it makes it positive. There's no problem here. All the vices listed represent the absence of some vital quality, not a positive contribution of any sort. For example, envy is what? Well, it's the absence of full self-achievement. That's your own lack again. Or strife is grabbing for something you lack, something in which you're defective. Or someone who's blocking you is your strife. Or, tumult is raising hell for lack of getting enough attention yourself, getting into things. Whoredoms is a very defective family life. Lying is an inadequacy of knowledge or recognition or underachievement—they always take to lying. Lasciviousness—lack of sensitivity, lack of taste, lack of self-control. To lack all those lackings is to miss all that emptiness and frustration. It's simple algebra—two minuses add to a plus here. You should be at peace with yourself and all the world. How could there be a happier people if you lacked all these things? They're all frustrations, you see. If you hadn't done any of them, you would be at peace with yourself and the world and feel good about everything. You couldn't feel happier.

All these books came out a few years ago on how to feel good about yourself—I'm all right, you're all right, aren't we wonderful, etc. Rather pitiful [efforts] trying to buck up your morale. But if you're devoid of these things, you would be a happier people.

In the next verse, the negative catalog continues: "There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites." Would they miss their robbers and murderers? Would we miss them if we didn't have them? We'd miss them terribly on TV, and the ratings would drop.

In this class we always used to use Brother Woods' reprinting of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. It was better than this, but it didn't have chapter and verse in it. It wasn't divided into verses, so it was very hard to locate passages for discussion. You couldn't say such-and-such a verse, so we don't use it now. But I notice looking in it yesterday that *-ites* here is not spelled this way at all. In the first edition, instead of *-ites*, it's as if it were special word. It has there were no manner of *ites*—as if an *ite* was a member of some nation or other. Well, that's exactly what an *ite* is. If we look in the Oxford English Dictionary, we learn what an *ite* is. It's a suffix denoting one of a party, a sympathizer with or adherent to, a native or citizen of, or the like. It covers a lot, you see. This is a neat turn of language that's used here in the Book of Mormon, and it achieves great economy because it expresses without the slightest obscurity the meaning. Nobody's fooled for a minute about what it means when it says "nor any manner of -ites."

Incidentally, the dictionary here states that it's strictly a political term. It's not an ethnic term. And we're told here that those people who went with one group were called Lamanites, and the others who went with the others were called Nephites, but that included all sorts of people. The skin color had nothing to do with it. There were the four Nephite tribes and the three Lamanite [tribes], but again they weren't tribes, they were mixtures. They'd been intermarrying freely all along, it tells us here. So remember the race question in the Book of Mormon is very complicated.

It's quite impossible to misunderstand what's meant here. That's what's so neat about it. These ellipses are very characteristic of language, and you use them where you don't need further expression. You get them in the Scots ballads, etc. "The king has written a bra' letter, and signed it wi' his hand, and sent it to Sir Patrick Spens, was walking on the strand." You don't need relative pronouns there. "Sent it to Sir Patrick Spens, was walking on the strand." Who was walking on the strand? You don't need it. See, ellipses is when you leave out words you don't need. And you'll always leave them out when they're not necessary at all. What if it used some alternative term for *-ites*, "nor any manner of party members or sympathizers or others with their adherents, other natives, or citizens of other groups, or the like." Well that would be more confusing. But when it says "nor any manner of *-ites*," it's as clear as a bell. It's one of those neat tricks that Joseph or Moroni pulls, or something here. It used to be *vites*, which means a *branch* or *twig* or something coming out like that. So [it means] any manner of twigs, offshoots, other branches, sidelines, or anything like that.

So they have this happy condition. Verse 18 tells us, "And how blessed were they! For the Lord did bless them in all their doings." When all your wants are supplied, do you sit around prospering in this case? ". . . and prospered until an hundred and ten years had passed away; and the first generation from Christ had passed away, and there was no contention in all the land." What were they doing just prospering? It uses the word *prospering*, which has always been limited to a person of great personal wealth. They consider themselves as prospering. Here prosperity always refers to the community; you prosper as a community. Then here is where it tells us [about the generation]. "The first generation from Christ had passed away." A hundred and ten years, as I said, is the Egyptian generation. That's the fixed Egyptian maximum life span.

Verse 19 shows us what was really going on, which is not recorded here. "And it came to pass that Nephi, he that kept this last record (and he kept it upon the plates of Nephi) died, and his son Amos kept it in his stead." They had been keeping records here—well, what were they recording? As we said the last time, "happy are the people whose annals are a blank." In happy times, there's nothing to record. On the other hand, there's the famous formula of Horace *Non numero nisi serenas* that they used to find on Roman sundials. "I record only the happy hours." Only the happy hours are worth recording and remembering. They're the ones we want to keep in mind; they're the ones we want to enjoy. All the other types we wish were over. If we could only get this over and forget it, [we say]. It's funny, and yet that's the stuff we make history of, the stuff we'd like to get over and forget. We're strange, perverse creatures, aren't we?

But notice it shows that what was really going on is not recorded here. Notice in all the preceding verses also in this book when they're telling us what went on, it's always only in the most general terms. They're not giving places, dates, names, individuals. Not a single concrete episode is given here. That's the remarkable thing about this document. You feel that you've had a survey of the society and the people, but you haven't been told one single specific thing. And yet in general you know very much what it would be like to live there, that it would be most delightful. But speaking in general terms, this is how it was. No names, no dates, no places—only what the whole people did as time went by.

It tells us Nephi and Amos were recording here. What did they have to record? Delightful reading [probably], but not to the grim purpose of the Book of Mormon. It's left out. We could write you

wonderful stories about it—comedies of manners and all sorts of things. It would be quite delightful, I imagine, but that's not what the Book of Mormon is for. Remember, this is the grim record. This is a warning to us, and it gets down to business because immediately there is trouble. There's trouble in Eden now. Verse 20: "A small part of the people who had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land." The name of Lamanites. They gave themselves that name because that was the traditional name.

Why did some people revolt from the church and call themselves Lamanites when everything was going so well? People used to leave the Church in Utah all the time. They all became Gentiles. Then they called them Gentiles and jack Mormons and gave themselves names like that. But, why did they leave? Well, ask them. The same reasons then as now for the most part. This being a system that embraces all aspects of life, they felt too many demands were being made on them. It was just too hard, too much effort to keep it up. See, keeping up a virtuous society [requires], as it tells us in verse 12, fasting and prayer and meeting together often. That's just too strenuous, because they had to dedicate themselves to intense thought, we're told here. Later on it tells them that this is it. As we saw in the case of the Mandaean people, it is all in the realm of intense mental effort that our time has to be spent. That's where the work lies. Even athletes tell us nine-tenths of the game is the mental effort, and numerous experiments show that. So they could go on and on and have no end of activity to keep them busy, but it required increasing mental effort and they just weren't up to it. You get bored and weary with that sort of thing. You don't rest enough. There's a tendency to overdo. I'm sure that would have something to do with it. I get into that all the time. I overdo, and then, blah—forget it all. But I know we all do that when we push ourselves.

For the most part they felt too much is being demanded. They were asked to give up too much. They walked in too strict a path. But this wasn't the church that was demanding that—it's nature that demands it. Nature demands our sobriety and refraining. The Word of Wisdom is a perfectly natural sort of thing. It's nature that demands the Word of Wisdom. It's not an arbitrary rule or anything like that. The people are finding that out now—that's the thing. Imagine that the time should come when nobody can smoke in planes anymore—you should live to see the day. You just forced that on us, that's all [people might say]. Before, people would say, I would leave a church that won't let me smoke in an airplane. Now you can't smoke because it's wrong.

We learn that population was booming—that's a problem in verse 23—and there was great prosperity. There it is again. Does that mean there were a lot of rich people? Hardly, for we are told that they had all things in common. That, said Brigham Young, is the very thing that makes people rich. And what is this prosperity in Christ? Jack Welch called my attention to something in the last *Time* magazine. The Episcopal Church is preparing a theological reply to all the evangelists that are swarming in the country, TV evangelists, etc. They're preparing this reply, and one of the accusations is that they're becoming more and more like Mormons. Well, they have to get something to agree with; they have to have something to talk about. This is what the science fiction people [claim]. Orson Scott Card tells me about what they call the "Mormonizing of science fiction." Everybody else runs out of ideas, but you get them in the Book of Mormon.

I was going to talk about this prosperity in Christ. It's one of those cliches that the evangelists use—come to Christ and prosperity in Christ. But what does it really mean? What are you really saying there? Well, what is progress? It's moving forward, progressive. It's upward mobility, it's advancing, it's eternal progress. It's not standing where you were. And it is not upward motion in the company, in the corporation. That's become a fetish now, but that is a contingent loyalty. Now we see what prosperity in Christ means. That's the difference. It is this upward motion. It's increasing favor and advancement. You might even call it promotion, to use the favorite military and corporate word. But those loyalties are contingent loyalties. They can be broken without a qualm the moment another company gives you a better offer. This happens, you see. You sing

the company hymn, you're loyal to death, etc. Then you get a better offer and immediately you're off and to hell with the company. This I've seen happen many times, and it's an acceptable practice. It won't be held against you. You won't be regarded as a traitor if you go to somebody who offers you more money. You're just being loyal to money; that's the whole thing, you see. So that's your contingent loyalty. Shakespeare knew it. Remember King Lear? Everybody was licking his boots except his one daughter. His two older daughters couldn't follow him enough. He was everything. He was the big boss. He was Mr. Big. Would he like this? Would he like that? Everything he said was just wisdom itself. They just fell all over themselves until he abdicated, and they became the heirs. With the property in their hands, they just threw him out of the house and had nothing to do with him. They kicked him out. The only person who went with him was his faithful clown who says,

That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
And follows but for form,
Will pack when it begins to rain,
And leave thee in the storm.

William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, act II, scene 4

See, you have your faithful hanger-on. Yes, J. B.; no, J. B. I always thought so, J. B. You said it from the first, J. B., etc. These company sycophants are "that sir which serves and seeks for gain, and follows but for form," Well, what happens? He'll "pack when it begins to rain, and leave thee in the storm." He won't be loyal to you when it's stormy. He'll pack up and get out and go with some other outfit. You can't beat Shakespeare. He's got the answers to these things. They were just as cynical in his day altogether.

So prosperity in Christ is to exercise loyalty to the only master who can give you permanent promotions, so to speak. This is beginning to sound like an evangelist. You don't talk [about this] in those terms, but that's true. It's not contingent; it is going on forever. This is prosperity. Remember, *prospero* means "to move forward, to advance, to get better and better." This is our eternal progression, and it's only in Christ that it can happen. He is the agent through whom we must act. He is the one who keeps us in touch with Heavenly Father and to whom we must go. That's why we turn to Christ and go to Christ and come to Christ, because he's the one who can give us instructions to get further. He's there to teach. Come to me—I will teach you [he says]. There are no schemes, no conspiracies, no cliques or stratagems such as are taught in business schools.

Then this is what happens—the thing goes sour. (Oh, we're not going to finish the book today.) So in the 201st year there began to be—ah hah—look, here comes the cloven hoof. "Those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them." Well, this is familiar. This is the time we're living in now.

I'll bring something to quote next time, but this is what happens. The pride is back. High fashion is in. People have been behaving themselves, living austere and sober lives, and exerting themselves mentally, which is the hardest work of all—terrible strain. It's the blight of life, the demon thought. People will do anything to escape it. They get tired of it and give it up after a while. People won't keep it up—it's too much. And this is what happens here. So instead of that, I say, the pride is back. The fashion's in, the mink and the jewels. This is what brought about the revolution. It was the Gilded Age, the Gay Nineties, the Roaring Twenties, the robber barons, the Newport Beach, the H. L. Hunts, the Reagan Revolution. They all ended the rule of austerity and honesty. It was too much.

And the name of the game, it tells in the next verse, is privatizing. They were going to get back to private things. Verse 25: “And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them.” Everybody is out for himself now; you’re no longer your brother’s keeper. Equality has become distasteful. A famous man said, “Without poverty there is no true freedom.” That was Robert Welch, founder of the John Birch Society. What next? They began to be divided into classes. Wouldn’t you know that must happen then? Of course. “. . . to build up churches unto themselves to get gain.” The widening gap here inevitably produces a class society. These verses very closely parallel the story of our time, especially of our decay. I have a good quotation here from Henry Commager, the foremost American historian, who says, “In the 1980s for the first time in our history we became a class society.” So this is very relevant to the moment we’re living in right now. I think the Lord has timed all these things here. I have all sorts of statistics here we won’t go into.

The bottom 20 percent of our people in income lost 6 percent of their income between 1979 and 1987. The top 20 percent gained 11 percent in their income between 1979 and 1987. One moves this way, the other moves this way, and the gap gets wider. So it is a class society. No wonder the Book of Mormon zeroes in on this point. We read also here that the economy was rich ground for church business, a stock theme through history everywhere. This idea of this leading to the riches of the churches isn’t peculiar to the Book of Mormon either. The primary purpose of churches is to get gain. It doesn’t start out that way, but after the first five minutes, that’s all it is. I’m thinking here of the spread of prosperity of religious cults at every time in history in the past. [They build] splendid and ornate churches to the glory of God to impress the public. All this is shared by the parishioners enhancing this position. Well, how wealth enters into it we’ll mention tomorrow. We must get on to the book of Mormon and the book of Ether. That’s one of my great favorites. But 4 Nephi has a lot to tell us.