

TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 3, Lecture 59

Alma 46

Book of Mormon Themes

Apostasy

We were talking about these recurrent themes in the Book of Mormon. Any of them would make a good subject for the final examination. We only give one test here; you just have to write a paper at the end. That's worked out best; I've tried every other combination. My daughter was just telling me that this Friday she takes her final examination for a Ph.D. at Harvard. She said it's funny. She can get a book absolutely down cold and recite it word for word (she has a marvelous memory) long enough for the examination. But after that's over, it's forgotten. You all know that experience.

I notice when you write these papers they get better and better. The last two semesters I've had marvelous papers, awfully good. You would never believe what can come out of this class. When you have a paper like that, you want to live with it. People come and ask for it again, and they take it seriously. You actually learn something. What's a good subject for this final? Well, all of these things we've mentioned would be good ones. First of all the idea of destruction, the geological and historical cycles. This is a theme in the Book of Mormon. It rings all through the book. You would think there was not room for anything else until you start reading and you find there's room for all sorts of other themes. But here it is the theme. "That day has finally come that we knew should come." Because of our imperfections we break down. Anything which isn't perfect isn't going to last, if it has the slightest flaw. That's why we must come here and get baptized to wash away our sins and achieve perfection. We are no good at all. Through the atoning blood of Christ we have to get cleaned up because we are getting ready for the long pull. There's a long time ahead whether it's eternity or not. Let's just cut it off at three hundred billion years, for example. That's quite a while. If you have flaws in your character, they are going to raise hell in that time, in very little time. They show very quickly, as you know, if you have imperfections in your character.

It's an amazing thing, like a building with a flaw in it. You may have seen the way New York is falling apart. I think it was on the last "60 Minutes." Bridges and sewers and the underground are all collapsing. It would take fifty billion dollars to restore them, because of little flaws in them. They thought they would last for a long time. They are all solid concrete, steel, etc. But the whole thing is just collapsing. Because this is mortality things have flaws in them. One little flaw, one little leak and you are on your way to destruction. So we have to think in terms of perfection, which is a long way off. We are faced with this constant destruction. We are constantly being oxidized. We are all being burned up in a slow furnace twenty-four hours a day.

When the announcement comes Aeneas says, "The final day has come that we knew must come." You've all read "The Idylls of the King." That's the theme there, isn't it? These idealists are going to have order; the Order of the Round Table is going to last for thousands of years. Well, it only lasts for less than one generation because of the flaws of

character of the people, no matter how small they are. You have to be ready and resigned to it. As Achilles said when he was about to knock off the youngest son of Priam, "All right, my boy, everybody has to die sometime; you might as well enjoy it. Why are you raising such a rumpus? Patroclus died, who was a much better man than you, so remember that. . . . There were brave men before Agamemnon. Perhaps the men of an earlier time were better than we are."

We talked about the constant decline because things run downhill. That's entropy. So destruction is a great theme, and the Book of Mormon hits it all the time. How can we get around it? How can we avoid being depressed by it? Then there is the problem of survival. Survival is a dirty word. That means, "I'm going to be here after everybody else is gone." It would be pretty dismal. We may not want to survive and wish we were dead. We mentioned the Christian fathers of the fifth century last time. They had a great earthquake in Antioch. It just wiped everything out. It was the "me generation." He said, "That's what has destroyed us. Everybody is out for himself." This is the philosophy of our time too. This is the ironical thing. There was a common joke in Antioch. "I wish there was an earthquake in Antioch that would kill everybody else but me. Then I would be the richest man in Antioch." That's what we want, to wipe out all opposition, use hostile takeovers, crush them, knock them out, etc. Those are policies that are used today. Then you will be the one on top. You will be the lone survivor, and won't it be wonderful to survive? No, it won't be.

This is the Rechabite motif—driven by fate. All the great men are wanderers, strangers like Abraham. He was a stranger and wanderer in the earth looking for a city of God which was built without hands. Abraham was called a refugee. Every year, especially the seventh year, every Jew would come to the temple and make a basket like a cornucopia of all the good things from his land, the blessings that his land had given him. Then he would say a prayer and say, "Our father Abraham was an outcast and a Syrian, a tramp and a wanderer that had no home." That's what the word Hebrew means—*Ivri* means a person who has no attachment, a displaced person. The Israelites were always displaced persons. Abraham wandered; he had to rent his grave from a Phoenician in Hebron. He didn't have anything of his own. He was a stranger depending on other people's bounty wherever he went, and of course depending on God wherever he went. Our father Abraham was a stranger, a wanderer, a tramp, and so are we all. We used to sing a hymn "I'm a Stranger, I'm a Pilgrim." That's our condition. That survival or Rechabite motif in the Book of Mormon is very important too. You'll notice that. It comes out all the time that we are all refugees.

After all, look how mobile our society is. How many of you live in the same home your grandparents lived in? That used to be the normal thing. When I was in Germany we had a meetinghouse in Salzgasse No. 9, an old Roman street in Bruchsal, a very ancient town. This house had been occupied by Sister Glück's family for a thousand years or so. All sorts of vicissitudes had happened. And the first house ever dated by tree-ring dating is in Hualapai in the Hopi village up on the First Mesa. Sister Theresa Harvey is the one who revived the making of ancient pottery. Her house was dated to the eleventh century, about eight hundred years. They have been occupying that house for all that time, a very enduring, very lasting civilization. That civilization is extremely stable and ours is extremely unstable. All you have to do is look at the fluctuations of the Dow-Jones. Nobody knows what makes it go up or down. If you do you're guaranteed to be rich. You could become fabulously rich if you could be sure. That's why insider trading is such a crime. If you tip somebody off, he can be sure about what is going to happen in a certain

thing. We can never be sure; that's why the stock market moves. As long as it moves up and down (it's been doing some great things in both directions) it's a very insecure society. We are on shaky pins. We don't know where we are going. A product that may go over big now will be no good a little later on. We talked about the things that passed away, the sailing boats that used to sail the sea in my day. Imagine that. This idea of survival is the Rechabite motif, and the Book of Mormon deals with it all the time because they are always running away and surviving.

Another theme is that this is the land of promise. The Lord said, if you want to be saved you have to get out. Lehi has a dream—he must get out. Nephi has a dream—he must get out. Mosiah has a dream—he must get out. You must get out of here. It isn't safe where you are; you have to keep moving. This business of surviving has to be more than survival. It's a nice subject for a paper.

Then this idea about the record, how the books hold it together. That's another theme we mentioned. A book is a mnemonic device. There's a great deal said about memory and the importance of memory. The purpose of writing, as the Book of Mormon tells us, is to keep in the people's memory the things that the Lord wants them to know. That's why it is given to them. He says, if we had to write these things from memory our record would not be reliable. So no matter how good your memory is you have to write things down. The record holds everything together. Your identity is your memory. If you lose your memory you lose your identity. I did for a while back in 1964. I had a minor stroke or something and forgot absolutely everything, lost identity and everything else. The remarkable thing is the way it came back, improved as a matter of fact. This is a strange thing. In his writing on the brain Sir John Eccles says there are two miracles of the brain. One is that you concentrate on one thing, and yet as background you can think of everything at the same time. Popper and Eccles wrote this book; they cooperated on it. Popper is a positivist in absolute science and wants no nonsense at all, but they agreed that the most miraculous thing in the world is that you wake up in the morning. They say that's just as miraculous as the resurrection would be—that you can blank out at night, let your brain go, and come back completely. Your whole person is there the next morning after you have slipped away. It's quite a miracle. He says, don't be too astounded at the resurrection. When it happens you say, "So what!" You don't believe a thing can happen until it does happen, and then it looks like the most normal thing in the world. You could write about the record and about memory. This is why we need the record. We say, "No, we are looking toward the future. We are not time bound; we are not bound to the past, etc. But the past is all we have to show for our existence. If you forget the past where do you stand? You are a person without identity; you are beginning life anew.

We had an extremely stupid but beautiful girl in a class back at Scripps College in Claremont, California, a very expensive girls' school where I used to teach. Charlie Wilson used say, "Isn't she marvelous? She's born new every morning—complete blank?" If you lose your memory that's what happens. We don't read today, and we don't know what's behind us. This is the great disaster that is coming upon us today because we have no feeling of identity of ourselves, no national identity. So we have to wave flags and do all sorts of very superficial and artificial clowning. To remind ourselves of the great nation, we have to put on military displays that lead to nothing but trouble. We don't have a feeling [for traditions]. You notice there are civilizations [that have this feeling]. This is a very important thing "that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This is very strong in the Book of Mormon. As you know they are constantly talking about keeping the record alive and keeping their traditions alive. You

could write about that too.

Then the gospel plan. As I said, the Book of Mormon has better, more clear expositions. The half-a-dozen sermons you find in the Book of Mormon are great. Some of them are the only ones, like Alma's talk to his son Corianton. He is the only person who tells us what happens after this. Is there something? Yes, he says, I know. I went there, and it was hell what I had to go through because I hadn't been doing right. There is more, and it tells us the whole plan. It's laid out throughout the Book of Mormon. All these passages right at the beginning of Jacob on how it is going to be. After their greatest victory Nephi can prophesy. This gospel plan is temporal and it is eternal. It goes for the eternities. And they live after the manner of happiness in the gospel plan. What a marvelous thing to say—that there is a manner of happiness and what it is like. Nobody else has it. You can have everything here. This is a theme we haven't mentioned, that of materialism. It piles up. Remember the Buddha. He was the son of a local prince but a very rich one. He had everything he wanted. His father particularly spoiled him because he didn't want him to become mystic and join the priests or anything like that. He gave him everything the heart of man could desire—the food, the play, the games, the sex, and all the rest of it. It made him sick, and he just brooded about it. He was not satisfied with it. He went out into the woods and finally found nothing. What was he looking for? The only conclusion he could reach was the five conditions in which you are nothing. Don't want anything and you won't be disappointed. Don't expect anything. There is no hereafter. There is no nothing. Once you get that idea, then nothing will worry you. Of course it won't. You might as well put a bullet through your head. Then nothing will worry you either. But that was it. The religions of the East promise us that. Don't expect anything and you won't be disappointed.

The very same problem was faced by Enos in that marvelous book. There's another thing you could write about, character studies in the Book of Mormon. There are at least twenty sharply defined, clearly pictured characters in beautiful little vignettes. Just in a few lines or a few verses it brings out the character very clearly and sharply—just what makes this person tick. Enos was a marvelous example, so was Nephi. (What a neurotic Nephi was, worried himself sick.) All day long Enos brooded. He'd had everything in his life. He was worried about himself because he hadn't been doing right. He said, this can't be what I'm here for. Then he finally remembered what his father had told about these things. He prayed all night for it; this must be it. The whole thing was he said, this can't go on—I can't live like this. He went alone to hunt beasts in the forest. He was the spoiled prince who had everything, but it wouldn't do at all. He finally had the vision; the Lord came to him.

It was the same thing with Enos and Harun al-Rashid, who was the most sumptuous and greatest of all the princes. He is the hero of *A Thousand and One Nights*. He had everything, and the Arab does that. They know how to live it up, as we see by the Arab sheikhs. Who ever dreamed they would be the richest people in the world? They were the poorest people. They had nothing but dirt and sand when I was over there. There are long stories of how at night Harun al-Rashid would try to amuse himself. He would do everything he could think of. His faithful servant, a giant black man by the name of Jafar, did his best to entertain him. He said, "What can we do?" Well, they would dress up like Prince Hal would and go around at night and visit all the "stews" and places like that and have fun. They would disguise themselves, fool people, and find out what was going on. That would amuse them. He goes through his gardens; they don't amuse him. He listens to the nightingale. "Well, I've had enough of that." The harem, fifty women! What do

you want? This went on. The point is that Harun al-Rashid is absolutely sick because he has too much. He has everything. And another prince. You will recognize this one:

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! O, fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. . . . the earth, seems to be a sterile promontory.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene 2

He wants to commit suicide. We could go on about Hamlet. He feels that way, that it's rank and gross. He goes on and on about it. We won't give you that speech now. It's the same thing with him.

If you have everything, that's not going to be it. This brings in the subject of materialism and the fatal gong that strikes in the Book of Mormon when it says, "They set their hearts on riches." Oh, look out when it says that! And does this apply to us?

Then there's the ethnic mix. Here's another one you could write about. The Book of Mormon is a crazy quilt of ethnic mixture, and we have always been so simplistic about it. When I was a little kid everything you found was either Nephite or Lamanite. Well, that's not so at all according to the Book of Mormon. It talks of vacant lands and people who had been there, of vast areas deforested by the former inhabitants of the land. They weren't Jaredites either. This was down in the south lands. They used to teach in the Church actually that the Rocky Mountains here were formed because the Book of Mormon says there was a great storm and some of the earth was cast up. Of course, they were volcanic. It gives a perfect example of a number eight on the Richter scale, a humdinger of an earthquake in all details. It gives a beautiful analysis. We'll get to that. But that doesn't mean the Rocky Mountains were formed with it. We used to leap to those conclusions. Like Hilary said of the Bible, "Anything that isn't mentioned in the Bible you can safely say never happened." Because the Bible is the perfect book. If it's not mentioned in the Bible it didn't happen. Well, fundamentalist Christianity isn't too far away from that either. They preach the same nonsense as that. Don't make this ethnic mix business so simple.

I should have brought a book from 1830, a beautiful exposition. It's an American writing showing that the Indians all came over the Bering Strait. Notice, that simplistic theory is still accepted now. There's a series running on Channel 7 right now on the Maya, and especially the newly discovered sensation of the Indians who were in Florida in 5,000 B.C., about 7,500 years ago. Does that clash with the Book of Mormon? No it doesn't. You look at the Book of Mormon ethnology and you'll find out about that. As it starts out, you notice, Lehi is of what tribe? He is out of Manasseh. Well, who is Ephraim and Manasseh's mother? We are descended from Ephraim. Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph and Asenath. Joseph married Asenath, and she was the daughter of the high priest of Heliopolis. She had to be pure blood Egyptian. So the ancestor of Ephraim is Egyptus. Don't worry about that. But that gives a terrific mixture because the Egyptians were already a mixture of at least seven different lines. Asenath had at least seven.

Remember they [Lehi's family] were half Manasseh. They were on the other side of the Jordan. They were desert Arabs. They all had Arab names, as you find in the Book of

Mormon. [His family] marries up with Ishmael. A Jew isn't going to be called Ishmael because Ishmael was the enemy of Jacob. Ishmael was the father and hero of the Arabs. He [the Ishmael in the Book of Mormon] had his daughters marry the sons of Lehi. You can be sure they were Ishmaelites because Lehi himself was a desert man. He was a merchant who traveled in the desert. [Ishmael] would be his cousin and an Ishmaelite.

Then they took Zoram. He was the servant of Laban, as you know. It calls him a slave. But a Jew can't be a slave of another Jew. Zoram, as his name shows, was obviously of some other tribe. He could have been from one of the old Canaanite tribes, a Phoenician, or anything else. Right from the beginning you get this terrific mixture in the family of Lehi. Then throughout the Book of Mormon you find all sorts of mixing going on—strange things. The ethnic mix is a good subject.

Then there's the theme of the promised land. In the Dead Sea Scrolls every blessing (*berākāh*) goes with a cursing (*ʿālāh*) because that's the penalty. In a contract you have to have a penalty clause. If you don't keep the contract, you said, "Well, that's fine. If I keep the contract I get rich. If I don't keep it, nothing lost." When you invest in a thing like that you have to be kept to something. The promised land is never mentioned without the curse that's on it. There is a promise on the land. The curse is sometimes mentioned first. There's a curse on this land if you do not live up to it—when you are ripe in iniquity. When the fruit is ripe there is no reason for letting it go on rotting. Then is the time you have to pick it. Or when the cup of iniquity is full then you can add no more to it. You can't dilute it; you can't take the poison out of it. When that time comes, then the inhabitants shall be swept from the land. You shall become extinct is the word that's used. This doesn't happen in other nations. This is a special curse on the promised land. The Greeks, Arabs, and Egyptians are still there. The Hindus and Chinese were ancient nations when Lehi left Jerusalem. They are still there, still speak their language, and still have their culture. But what about the cultures that were on America? Nobody can even guess about them. Nobody has the wildest guess about what was going on in the time of Christ 2,000 years [ago] in this country. You can't even begin to guess that because we have no written records, nothing like that. They haven't found the big stuff yet. I'm sure they will find it. It's different in this country. They have disappeared. The magnificent ruins are there and some of the people, like the Mayan, are still there and still speak [the language]. But they have lost all connection with the past; it's all gone. They are nations from the dust. Notice how often the Book of Mormon uses that "from the dust." Whispering from the dust these voices of nations that have passed. It's very sad when it starts out. This is a voice that comes to you. There's nothing sadder than the ending or the beginning. When you get this record you shall know.

So we have the promised land and the migration times. The people are always migrating, but they are always doing that anyway. Here we always migrate; we always keep going. As I say, you are not living in your grandparents' houses. We not only move individually and by families, but we also move by mass. There have been mass movements toward the Southwest since World War II, a great movement toward the sun belt. It changes culture, habits and everything else. We are always changing, but you reach a certain point of corruption. Now the means are at hand by which the whole earth can be swept clean—to be swept from the face of the earth, that's the promise. Of course, anciently they were. You don't have to have modern technology to do that. You can do that quite efficiently because fire will have the same effect once you have set it. The Assyrians and the Romans were very good at making empty lands and producing wildernesses.

Incidentally, that's another theme, the wilderness theme and the importance of living in the wilderness. You'll notice that at least half of the Book of Mormon takes place in the wilderness. It's always the good people that are in the wilderness. "Into the woods my Master went, Clean forspent, forspent." You go into the woods to clean yourself up. You have to go back to nature to make yourself clear. They do that. Lehi and Nephi would always go out by themselves to pray. And where was the revelation given to Joseph Smith? In the grove. He went to the grove. He starts out his story that was discovered in 1969 (the oldest version of the First Version) with how he got onto it. He lived in the most beautiful area. Upstate New York is gorgeous, but then it was a marvelous wilderness. He said he looked about him and saw what a beautiful world it is, the sun and the moon and all nature in its glory, and man walking forth upon the face of the earth with all his potential and glory. This was when he was just a kid fourteen years old. And when he looked upon the wickedness and the dissensions and the violence and the deceptions and the meanness and the cruelty of man, he said there was something definitely wrong. That's what first sent him to the Bible and out to the grove to ask what was going on. There the Lord told him, "Behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good, no not one. . . . and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to this ungodliness . . ." ¹ His anger is kindling, getting hotter and hotter. It's building up.

You know we are living in some times. We need the Book of Mormon more than anything else. This is the handbook we have, because it's a happy book too. This is the nice thing. You can live after the manner of happiness among the worst conditions. You notice when the Greeks produced their best comedies, tragedies, and poetry was when Athens was hiding behind walls under siege by Sparta and a strong coalition. The plague had broken out in the city. They hadn't any food. In the most terrible conditions they produced their greatest masterpieces, a remarkable thing. Maybe we'll have a chance to produce some masterpieces if we stay around. Let's hope not.

The wilderness is an important theme. You escape to it. You all know "sweet are the uses of adversity." It starts out with the duke. I'll give you the speech and you'll see what it is. They are out in the woods, and it is winter time. Remember, *As You Like It* takes place in winter under the bleakest circumstances. Shakespeare is very fond of having people go back to the wilderness. When they are disillusioned they go back. King Lear does and in *As You Like It* they do the same sort of thing. The duke says,

Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
[He had been a powerful duke.]
More free from peril than the envious court?

There's where the danger is—not out in the woods. They're starving to death and freezing. He's shivering around. The duke is covered with furs, and they are all shaking. What a way for a comedy to begin! That's a bleak situation.

Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
[We're back to fundamental, elemental things now.]

The seasons' difference; as the icy fang
 And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
 Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
 Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say
 'This is no flattery; these are counsellors
 [Flattery was all he got when he was back in office.]
 That feelingly persuade me what I am.'
 [Then comes the speech we all know.]
 Sweet are the uses of adversity;
 Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
 [It looks bad.]
 Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
 And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
 [If you want to see honesty and see things the way they are, you must get away from the
 public haunts.]
 Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
 Sermons in stones, and good in every thing:
 I would not change it.

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene 1

He has to go out to that sort of thing. We find a lot of that here, so we'd better put the wilderness theme down here. They are always doing that in the Book of Mormon. When Alma, Enoch, Jared, Lehi, Nephi, Ammon or whoever it is runs away, it is always to the wilderness. You get out and get away from people if you can. Can we get away from people? As I said, we can arrange artificial wildernesses. Today we are very good at doing that.

Then we have the theme of the routine apostasy. Must it always happen? We say the individual is without excuse, but they [societies] always apostatize. We are going to get a very good speech on that in the chapter we are studying today—chapter 46, which we will soon get to, believe it or not.

Then there's the theme of prophecy. The Book of Mormon has some marvelous prophecies for the people of Lehi and for us. When you read the Book of Mormon keep an eye open for prophecy. It's loaded with it. It's all over the place and it's very clear. Then we have those great sermons, etc. These are some of the main themes we have in the first 45 chapters. Now we start with chapter 46. If this chapter was the only one we had, it would be quite enough to prove the Book of Mormon with evidence to convince a person. It really would. Let's open to 46 here and we get a lot of surprises. It's extremely rich in evidence. But notice what the situation is here. Naturally, you must read what goes before. You have to have a memory; otherwise, you are nowhere here. There had been a great war, and they had been saved by "the skin of their teeth," by the genius of Moroni mostly. After the war there was a post-war boom. At the end of chapter 45 everybody got very rich.

We'll start with verse 21. "For behold, because of their wars with the Lamanites and the many little dissensions and disturbances . . ." There were lots of troubles everywhere because things had gotten uncorrelated, like the Church in Europe after World War II. Strange things had grown up. Strange leaders had taken over, and there were arguments about doctrine. People lost touch. That's what happens when you don't have the written

record and you don't have the controls. This happened in Europe in almost all countries where they were left alone to their own resources. They start little groups of dissent. There would be arguments in the branch, power struggles and little things like that. This is what happened during this long fourteen-year war. There were many dissensions and disturbances, so they had to make a single regulation throughout the Church. The central authority had to take over, which you have to do, of course. That's why you have the central offices, etc. So Helaman, the son of Alma, and his brethren went forth to establish the Church again. They went to straighten things out. But the people didn't want to pay any attention to Helaman. Things were going too well after the war. They gave a sigh of relief and wanted to take it easy. In Alma 45:23 it says, ". . . and they would not give heed to the words of Helaman and his brethren." Why not, after the war? Remember, this was written by a 23-year-old in the 1820s in upstate New York. People knew nothing about this course of history, but this is the course that history has taken in our day. This is what you might expect to happen after a great war, but who would have all this figured out? This is what happened, and it sounds very familiar, doesn't it? "But they grew proud, being lifted up in their hearts, because of their exceedingly great riches. . . ." great prosperity.

It's an interesting phenomenon—the great wars of extermination in Central Asia. Genghis Khan and Kublai Khan would just wipe out whole nations. The funny thing is that after those great exterminations or after the plague in Europe there always comes a boom period. Apparently it relieves population pressure or something because great prosperity always follows. There is always a big market for things. There is always lots of raw material around. Labor is expensive because the workers are few. The great plague in the middle of the fourteenth century only lasted a few years in England, but it lingered on here and there. So many of the people were killed off that the farm workers could now ask for a raise in pay because there were fewer of them. Immediately the Crown [Edward III] cracked down with the most severe laws preventing any wage raise. You had to take the wage you could get. That led to the Peasants' Revolt shortly after that led by [Wat Tyler] in the time of Richard II. Richard II took the side of the peasants, but the land owners were too tough for them. This theme goes on. After a great war or plague or whatever then there is great disturbance, terrific economic booms, and great greed. That's a good example because there were only about a third of the workers left. They wanted to get a raise in pay because they had more work to do and they had better opportunities. But they passed laws that (1) you should not leave the farm; you must never leave the land you are on, and (2) you must never ask for a raise. In other words stay the way you are forever. We profit by the war; you don't, [they said]. So the great lords and barons from then on made an awful mess in England. Under Simon de Montfort they became greedier than ever.

This is what happens here. "But they grew proud, being lifted up in their hearts, because of their exceedingly great riches; therefore they grew rich in their own eyes, and would not give heed to their words, to walk uprightly before God." Who is Helaman to speak to us? We'll go our own way. So big trouble begins with chapter 46. We are starting out now very appropriately on a timely theme. This chapter is so compact and rich with detail, all related. It alone would prove the Book of Mormon. So what did they do? Well, they felt their wealth was threatened, and they formed an opposition party. And what's more, this is the Central American pattern. They cracked down on the peasantry with hit squads, and they really meant business here. Notice it says they "gathered together against their brethren. . . . they were exceedingly wroth, insomuch that they were determined to slay them." This was not just politics here. They wouldn't put up with this sort of thing, that in

their exceeding great riches they might feel threatened. And they found a strong leader, somebody like Noriega. They always find a strong and ruthless leader. It was Amalickiah, and he was clever. He was a good man [for this job]. He was a leader; he was sharp. Again, one of these character studies. Amalickiah is a marvel there. He has all this mixture of cunning and wisdom. He's clever and a good military man. You see the flaw that runs through his character, a dangerous character. He was a dictator. Notice that he "was desirous to be a king." These are the king-men here. He's a typical military dictator, a type that has proliferated today. He makes a reflection on the next page which is very much to the point here.

Who was backing him? ". . . those people who were wroth were also desirous that he should be their king." They lined up back of Amalickiah, and he was very good at organizing them. Amalickiah was very good at organizing them. He organized together various conflicting groups. He brought them together in a common cause here. ". . . and they were the greater part of them [ambitious lower officials] the lower judges of the land, and they were seeking for power." An upwardly mobile, ambitious class seeking for power, and this was the man to give it to them. "And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah . . ." He promised them that they would come to power. Notice, "he would make them rulers over the people." This is the classic pattern, not only in Central America, but in modern Europe. Brother Joseph has it all down when he is still in adolescence.

Verse 5: "And they had been led by the flatteries of Amalickiah, that if they would support him and establish him to be their king that he would make them rulers over the people." Well, that's what you do. You make people ambassadors, department heads, and cabinet members if they support you, to put you on the throne. This is the pattern we follow in this country. "Thus they were led away by Amalickiah to dissensions, notwithstanding the preaching of Helaman . . ." It didn't do any good.

What if you were to take this first six verses. This would be a good subject for a final. Take these first six verses and put it in the form of a "McNeil-Lehrer Report" or "Face the Nation" or something like that. You have a council who are discussing the situation: This is the situation at that time. "Well, what do you think is happening in the country now? Here we've just come through the war. We finally made it by the skin of our teeth. Now we've had the post-war boom. What is all the trouble happening in the country? Who do think is responsible? What do you think Amalickiah's chances are? Well, he's getting a lot of people now, but he can't hold them. Oh, can't he though?"

You could have an argument going on in the way that we argue today around the table with things like these programs that go on morning, noon, and night—some of them, like McNeil-Lehrer on a pretty high level. You would discuss this thing. "What are Amalickiah's chances? What do you think is behind him? How can he count on wealth? What can Helaman do? He is the head of the Church. What are Helaman's chances? Well, they're pretty good. What about the lower judges?" You'll have one of them on the panel. He defends Amalickiah. He wants to get the country moving ahead. He doesn't want it dragged down by this equalitarianism.

We go on, but you can see that all sorts of arguments are possible. Here is Goering's promise and Hitler's promise: He would make them rulers over the people. Goering used to fire up the *Hitlerjugend* by saying, "We are going to rule the world, and you can all be governors and rulers somewhere. You can hunt tigers in India, and all that sort of thing.

We promise to make you rulers; we will be the master race.” The English had been doing it before, and the German were just jealous. I don’t think they could ever be as nasty and efficient as the English were after they got going. Once you win you settle down and become more humane. But the British—you should see them in action! They don’t fool around. You wouldn’t hold an empire for a hundred years if you didn’t crack down relentlessly, ruthlessly. I’ve seen them do it time and again.

Thus they were led away to thinking they would be something “notwithstanding the preaching of Helaman and his brethren [don’t you think Helaman’s preaching will bring them around? No, that will never bring them around], yea, notwithstanding their exceedingly great care over the church, for they were high priests over the church. And there were many in the church [but the church at least will hold out; oh no, the church is yielding and collapsing before this post-war boom here that has everybody raked in] who believed in the flattering words of Amalickiah . . .” You notice they found the political and economic arguments more interesting and more persuasive than the religious arguments. Religion is all right in its place [for most people], but you [need to] believe in the gospel all the way—that it is real and that is the law by which we are to live on the earth. Nothing else will do it, absolutely not. I would recommend reading Brother Joseph Fielding Smith’s edition of *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.

Notice it’s the political and economic arguments that get to them. That gets to people. Then you want to take sides. That’s easy to argue out. Everybody is an economist. Everybody knows the politics. We are pushovers for this sort of thing, and Amalickiah knew it. Great psychologist too. “. . . therefore they dissented even from the church [the church people started dissenting too]; and thus were the affairs of the people of Nephi exceedingly precarious and dangerous . . .” They had this sudden reverse after the war when everything seemed to be going so well. Of course, this was utterly exasperating. They thought they had it made. Now we can settle down. The war is won. The world is safe for democracy, etc. It never turns out that way. “. . . notwithstanding their great victory which they had over the Lamanites, and their great rejoicings which they had because of their deliverance by the hand of the Lord.” Right in the middle of the celebration the whole thing collapsed and went sour. Imagine how they would feel about that.

Well, this happens again. Remember, within just [eleven] years (1918-29) of the armistice came the Great Depression. The whole country just collapsed. Here is [Helaman’s] reflection on it, and it’s a marvelous one. It’s philosophical here. Joseph Smith talked about the brethren this way. If you have a Bible, I think it’s the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. It’s marvelous. He’s reflecting, “What does all this mean?” Speaking about our round-table discussion, etc. It says here, “Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget the Lord their God [this is the way we are made], yea, how quick to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one. Yea, and we also see the great wickedness one very wicked man can cause to take place among the children of men.”

Well, of course, we think of Hitler and Stalin there. They were one-man shows, and the infinite wickedness and mischief they were able to do. They were the only men because the most skillful of all stay in the background. You never hear of them. I could a tale unfold about things like that. But the fact is that one very wicked person can do an awful lot of damage, as Satan does. We can see how it happens.

Let me have your Bible, would you? My Hebrew Bible is such a massive thing; it bears me

down. We all know this one: “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?” What good is your career going to do you? We are careerists today. That means you reach the top of the ladder and then you go nowhere. You have nowhere to go. There are some very sad things about this. One day everybody is kowtowing to you. Then you are no longer chairman of the board. You come to the office the next day and they say, “Who are you?” You find your desk has been cleared out, etc. Studs Terkel has written a very interesting book about these men. He interviewed top executives who suddenly reached the top and then were released. The next day they went to their office and were thrown out. They weren’t even recognized, these men that everybody was licking the boots of the day before. This is the way we do things.

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever [the show goes on same as ever]. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.”

There’s the great ode of Catullus on that: “The sun sets and the sun rises again. But once our little brief light goes out, nothing remains for us but one long night of nothing.” How negative. That’s the philosophy of the Romans. The Romans were a materialistic civilization. They lived for that. That’s all they had to look forward to. What a world we are in. Nothing gives you comfort like the Book of Mormon. You won’t find this cynicism in the Book of Mormon, but you will find this. We are to blame for the whole thing. It’s because of the foolishness of men. They don’t have to act that way. How quick to do iniquity, how quick to forget, and the great wickedness of one very wicked man. We are prone to wickedness. We are very vulnerable to all sorts of foolishness.

“The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full . . . All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” We all sit before the “idiot box” and it just goes on and on. We never get anywhere at all. “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.” This sad Book of Mormon story is all going to be repeated over and over again. This happened then, and it’s happening now. Must we go through with this? “Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.”

We do have recurrent events, and we do go ’round and ’round the cycle here. “There is no remembrance of former things [they are all forgotten; they are swallowed up; how quickly we do forget so we can live our own generation]; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after. I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.” It was King Solomon. We talked about Buddha and Enos. It says here, “And I gave my heart to see and search out by wisdom concerning all thing that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.” It’s a rough road here. Does he understand that it’s supposed to be? Again, the Book of Mormon has the explanation. You could write on that—this time of probation, this time of testing. And yet it can be a happy time too.

“I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Solomon is fed up with his 400 wives, his most beautiful of palaces, magnificent temple, etc. But he is like the rest of them. You are not going to get it here,

he says. “That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered [if it isn’t there]. I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.”

That was his foolishness. He thought he was so wise that the Shulamite, this clever woman, made a monkey of him. In the story of Bilqis and King Solomon, the great epics in Arabic, the Queen of Sheba ties him into knots with her clever riddles. She is so much smarter than Solomon that he’s ashamed of himself. She really lowers him down. It’s the same thing with the Shulamite in the Hebrew tradition. “And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”

So let’s enjoy the great ignorance we are reveling in at the present. On this happy note we will continue. I say it again—we need the Book of Mormon.

1. Dean C. Jessee, “The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” *BYU Studies* (spring 1969): 275.