

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Mormon 1–5

Wickedness in War

I haven't thought of anything all day long yesterday and today except that book of Mormon, Mormon's book—that's the real Book of Mormon. The whole thing is there, and it's a haunting book. It can't leave you alone. If you see these dark circles [around my eyes], blame Mormon for that.

The questions are, are the Nephites stubbornly bent on doing the wrong thing? What is this everlasting harping on repentance? He won't leave that alone. What is the wickedness that the Nephites must repent of? People fighting for their lives don't bother with a lot of hanky-panky. That's not what interested them. That's just the point. The fighting is the thing; that was the wickedness. To set about deliberately and systematically killing people you have to have a mindset, and this has to be developed. You have to work up to it. Remember in the Book of Mormon how Korihor works on the people to do it. Alma repeatedly talks about the great reluctance of the Nephites to slay their brethren and the great reluctance of the Lamanites to do the same. People have to be trained and commissioned and put in order and conditioned for that sort of thing. Mormon shows us how far this mindset can go, because he [describes] it all the way to where it becomes actually a debauchery. It becomes addictive to the people; they have to have a bloodshed. This actually happens in the case of Aztecs and people like that, and he tells us what causes it. Do you remember Mormon 4:5? The cause was this: If they had not gone up against the Lamanites to war, they would not have been overcome. Then he says, "for it is the wicked that stir up the hearts of the children of men unto bloodshed." We're told [some of] the Lord's first words to the Nephites were there shall be no contention among you, for all contention "is of the devil." Somebody is stirring people up to this sort of thing, and this happens. This is what we're told—that there is a source for it.

You say, why would people go against their own best interest? Why would they do anything so insane? Well, the fact is that they do, and we are told that it is the evil one that stirs us up to that. There is such a stirring, and he tells us where it's all leading to. Mormon tells us where this is all going in the end. In the eighth chapter of Mormon he takes the roots of the trouble right back. He's talking about us now, and he puts us into the picture with the perennial conditions there and the purpose behind everything. He tells us where it's all leading, and with the last verse he brings us right down to the point at which we join the Nephites at this particular juncture of their history. Mormon 8:41: "Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you," and it shall soon descend because of the things you've done. Well, we're not to that yet, but this brings us right to the point.

The Book of Mormon tells us what we're getting into and where it is all leading. President Kimball in his bicentennial address tells us how far we've gotten and where it has already led us. This is going to be required reading. I'll have this photocopied the next time. It'll set you back twenty cents, but it's worth it. On the occasion of the bicentennial [of the United States] President Kimball gave this great address to the Church and to the world. He quotes familiar passages from Mormon, Moroni, and Alma in this. His talk is based on the Book of Mormon. So this is going to be required. You'll find it very useful in the essay which you write, among other things.

Another thing that's going to be required is this, which I'll have photocopied. This is going to set you back sixty cents. This is called "The Book of Mormon and the Ruins." It deals with the main issues, archaeological, etc., as taken out of the latest works on Mesoamerican archaeology. It's highly unoriginal. All I've done is steal from a lot of people who know something about it, supposedly, and put this together. I think you'll find it very useful as a summary. I'll have it next time. This is going to be sixty cents, and this is going to be fifteen cents. Is that price prohibitive? Or would you rather have a \$40 textbook? We say the Book of Mormon is a textbook. It's an insult to have a summary or syllabus or something on the Book of Mormon, which is the supreme syllabus. It has been edited with consummate skill for our benefit. As Mormon's going to tell us, these few plates I've kept out to edit for you, and all the rest of the plates are still stuck in the Hill Cumorah—or were stuck there then. So I'm going to have these photocopies, and you'll be able to get them the next time. I really recommend that you read them. They'll help you a great deal.

Now, back to Mormon again; we can't leave him alone. The constant refrain, as I said, is repent. The subject is repent of what. We saw Mormon was a very astute person. When he was eleven years old, his father took him to the town and he saw all the soldiers and the usual battles going on. It was a terrible thing. They had several battles, and then there was peace. Remember, he was a kid eleven years old. Just four years later, war broke out again, and whom did the people choose for their commander in chief? Mormon, who was going on sixteen. Does that ever happen? It's happened lots of times. We'll see that when we get to the Jaredites, and we can match it up against many cases in world history where this happened. Commanders as young as that have been common. But he tells us you can see why that's so. He had a very high profile. Not only was Ammaron aware of his smartness, but he [Mormon] was a large, powerful person, very impressive, and he was always getting involved. His sympathies are so that after he's sworn that he'll never fight again, he does go back and fight again. He can't leave the people alone. He must take a part in there. He was commanded to be an idle onlooker, and he wouldn't be an idle onlooker. Finally, he broke his oath, he says, and went back again, though it was without any faith and hope at all. Yet that was his greatness of spirit. His love of the people was so great that he had to do that.

But remember it tells us in Mormon 1:16 that he tried to preach to the people, so he had a high profile. He made himself a nuisance, and they wouldn't listen to him—just like Abraham did, too. Well, that would certainly draw him to their attention and give him a high profile. We're told that he was large and powerful beyond his age and a very impressive and very smart person—obviously the ablest person around. So they chose him. But they have the wrong priorities, the wrong policies, the wrong practices. There was simply no talking to them. He says in verse 17 here: "I was forbidden to preach unto them, because of the hardness of their hearts."

Now this hardness, you'll notice. What are the two expressions that are used? Hardness of heart, and what is the other having to do with the neck? The people are hard-hearted and stiff-necked. Hardness and stiffness are lack of adaptability, lack of flexibility, etc. Hardness of heart, we're told, put a curse on their doings—just like hardness of the arteries. When you start getting old, things get hardened. They squeak and don't work so well, and the joints are the same way. They become stiff, stiffness of joints, stiffness of neck, hardening of arteries, hardening of everything else. What is that? That's inability to change or refusal to change, to yield, to adapt. They can't repent, you see. So that's the thing that holds you back, and when you reach a certain stage, when you've lost all flexibility and you won't change, then it's time to ring down the curtain. There's no point to going on with the story because you're not going to repent. Of course progress and everything else is progressive repentance. You have to repent. But their sins harden into policy now, just like concrete. Nothing's going to change them, and that's Mormon's problem. This is what he says is going to be your problem, too. We can see it today.

So "wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land," he tells us in verse 13. Well, specifically, what wickedness? What's he talking about? Well, he says it goes hand in hand with

unbelief. They wouldn't accept the charismatic gifts. They wouldn't listen to the prophets. They wouldn't trust in prayer or things like that. They were solid, practical, down-to-earth people, supposedly—materialists, positivists. For them that's where the solution lay. We will do it our way [they said]. No other program got a hearing, we're told. They had made up their minds; there was no point to talking to them. The result was a desperate search for economic security. It's always going to collapse every time. Notice, putting all your money in the vault and hoping you can save it that way. See, they started burying it, but it was slippery. They couldn't hold on to it. They were absolutely desperate for this security which they didn't have, and they sought it, of course, in building up safe capital reserves and all those things. They had all the usual solutions that didn't work.

Strangely, these hard, hard people were given to superstition and magic. That's true, too. I would have you read some of the books of Francis Yates on that subject [dealing with] the seventeenth century. In corrupt periods people get very prone to magic and hocus-pocus, like the superstitions of the stock market, etc. As the ancient world collapsed, everyone put their stock in sorceries and witchcrafts, so to speak, and magics. If these things didn't work, it was fortune. Demosthenes put this on his shield. When Greek democracy collapsed, everybody just started to say, it's just a matter of luck. It's just chance. It's fate. That's all it is. So everybody started worshipping Tyche, who was luck or Lady Fate. They started carrying medallions, charms, rabbit's feet, and all these things. As I said, the German soldiers were loaded with them, but had no faith in anything. They had not just swastikas but they had Christopher medals and every kind of trinket you can imagine, but they had no Bibles.

And again, the strength of the opposition was scary. They ran away. And then we reach a classic situation in Mormon 2:8. There are statements in Mormon here that simply knock you down. "The land was filled with robbers and with Lamanites; and notwithstanding the great destruction which hung over my people, they did not repent of their evil doings; therefore there was blood and carnage spread throughout all the face of the land, both on the part of the Nephites and also on the part of the Lamanites; and it was one complete revolution throughout all the face of the land." That is an all-too-familiar situation. Read Froissart from the fourteenth century. The whole fourteenth century was a horror. Barbara Tuchman's *A Distant Mirror* brings that out. It deals with the utter horror, along with the plague and all the rest. But before that in the fifth century, Salvian made a trip to just about all the churches throughout Europe to report on the moral situations in them. Again, his picture is horrendous—just like this. There was no security, blood and slaughter everywhere. And in the second century that's what Polybius gives you all the way through. And then, above all, there is the rich Lamentation literature, periodic from Babylon and Egypt. It goes way back, right to the beginning and describes this world every time. There's a complete collapse of a dynasty; it takes years for them to get back again. They go to a little dark age, they lose everything, and then they finally struggle back again. But this is the situation you find, and you find it again and again. There are definite centuries in which this happens—times of extermination, and we are approaching one of them. In fact, we're in it up to our knees already. We're getting deeper all the time.

This is what the Book of Mormon is talking about. They did not repent of their evil doings—on both sides they didn't, neither the Nephites nor the Lamanites. They were equally bad because the only evil doings that concerned them were the evil doings on the other side so that vengeance became the name of the game. The other people are doing evil—well, they were doing evil, so we have a good case, you see. Nixon's book called *The Real War* brings that beautifully where he talks about that. We are the good guys; they are the bad guys. He says that may be a fiction, but that's the way we must think of it. They're entirely evil, and we're entirely right. It's this black and white. Well, that's the way they began to think. But then the Nephites did something we don't do. In the verse 10 they began to repent, but it wasn't a change of heart, he says. It was a change of policy brought on by economic disaster. Nobody could hold on to anything.

Now we get an inner-city idyll here in verse 10—mugging, rip-offs, murder. Why not? This was their social life—“no man could keep that which was his own, for the thieves [that’s people who come in and steal], and the robbers [that’s people who rob you legitimately in white-collar crime], and the murderers, and the magic art, and the witchcraft which was in the land.” Everyone was a possible victim here. Nobody was safe. Total insecurity. And this is the way you feel today if you want to walk around in some of our inner cities. Everybody’s bedizened and befuddled by these magic arts. It’s the mystique of the gangs and the graffiti. There’s a mystique and magic there. They get themselves up in fantastic, spooky costumes; paint their faces; draw their weird graffiti; and have their secret signs. Then there’s the devil cult. There is satanic worship all over the place, which is supposed to thrive here. I don’t know whether it does or not, but I’ve heard some cases all right. But it’s this Satanism. That’s the witchcraft we’re talking about. It’s funny how many people take it seriously, utterly silly though it is. So we always get this mystique of the gangs.

Of course, with the Indians, this is very real, too. This is no joke. The one-horn society is very real. If you go down to the Southwest Indians, you’d better look out for them. They have powers that are not necessarily supernatural, but which are unexplained. I’ve twice seen cases in the Snake Dance. First, the old man leading the Snake Dance in the ring had a gigantic rattler, and it whacked him so hard he was knocked right down off his feet. He got up and continued to dance. They do not take the poison. In fact there was one little kid nine years old who was a member of the branch there. He was in the Snake Dance. A big rattler he was carrying got him right under the eye. It swelled up like a bee sting for an hour or so and then went away, and that was all there was to it. They don’t take any drug or anything. Well, what have they got that we don’t have? You’d pass out if that happened.

In verse 11 notice this brooding evil, this feeling, “Thus there began to be a mourning and a lamentation in all the land because of these things.” You go back to visit an Indian village at a certain time, where they were once people of great faith, but they will have forgotten it entirely. It hit the Nephites harder than the others, we’re told, because their guilt was the greater. This mourning in the village, this tension in the village—you know when things are bad and it’s best not to go there. The danger is worse today in some of our cities. I mean you feel that, the brooding evil of the place, the danger of it. I felt it very strongly in Damascus. I was there the week that they hanged the two Israeli spies in the public square there. The hotel was right on the square, and there were pretty wild things. Then the next place we went to was Jordan, and there was a big mob there. Just for our benefit (there were just three of us) they had to bring tanks down from the palace to scatter them. The next day I talked to all the people, and we got along fine. They were perfectly normal, perfectly nice people as far as that goes. They got them whipped up. It was Nasser’s agents working on them. Well, we won’t go into that, but what I’m talking about is that these situations do exist now, and this world is terrible.

Mormon says, well now they’re being sad; they’re being properly scared. Now’s the time for repentance. Not a chance. Remember Michael’s [Nibley’s son’s] poem, “Mayhem and slaughter resume in the water, and all is exactly the same as before.” After all the preaching, etc. Well, why wouldn’t they repent? Because they regret what happened, never why it happened. That’s what makes them sorry, you see, like the AIDS patient. What has happened? It’s terrible, terrible, terrible. But why it happened never bothers him. He doesn’t feel guilty about that at all. That’s so with all our sins and crimes here. It was the same thing. As he said, the only thing that made them sorry was that the Lord wouldn’t suffer them to go on doing what they were doing. It was not the thing they did that made them sorrow at all, but the results of it which they didn’t like at all. So it was the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them. Too bad. It has to have an end, you see. That’s what hurts the worst. We have sold ourselves on a binge. That’s what Catullus says—Why can’t I go on having fun? Why must I be impotent? He says this because he lived a vile life. Virginia Woolf, Eleanor Wylie, and other people like that [who said] I burn my candle at both ends. And Edna St. Vincent Millay and other American poets from another time—the Algonquin set, the people who lived it up. It’s pathetic, you see, because it’s

got to end, and it ends rather soon. They burn themselves out quickly, and then it's resentment and bitterness. So it wasn't repentance at all [with the Nephites].

And then they cursed God and wanted to die. Why would they curse God? Well, I've heard that a thousand times. They curse God because he allows such things. If there was a God, he never would permit such things to happen. That's what I heard all over the place; you hear that often. We actually made a cult of this in high school in my day, which was many years ago. Everybody learned Omar Khayyam's *The Rubaiyat*, you see:

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round  
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

See, God sets these traps for us. We're wicked people, and when we fall into them, he says ha, you sinned.

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make  
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:

[You gave us Eden, you gave us the serpent.]

For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
Is blacken'd—Man's Forgiveness give—and take!

You made us this way—who's to blame, anyway? You're God, you're all-powerful. So there was all this cursing of God, and they wanted to die, of course. It was terrible, but they feared death. They fought desperately to postpone it. I imagine in this case they had nothing to gain by it. It's a pretty horrible thing to look forward to anyway. So there's no contradiction here. They cursed God and wished to die and fought for their lives. Those things go together. They're inseparable. We get another case of that.

And then the terrible words in verse 15: "I saw that the day of grace was passed with them." Well, right to the end the Lord's going to give them plenty of opportunity to repent. This is going to be the sad thing. They're going to have it right to the end. Anytime they want to they can change. I mentioned *atē* the last time. The prime sin in which they are indulging is war "in open rebellion against their God, and heaped up as dung upon the face of the land." It ends up as mass slaughter. As I said, many people of Mormon's age today can make this astonishing statement [verse 18]: "A continual scene of wickedness and abominations has been before mine eyes ever since I have been sufficient to behold the ways of man." Nothing else. Notice the nature of the wickedness here is open, public, and visible. This is quite different. It may fester underground, but this comes out. This is so open and so brash. Of course, now we have the TV to splash it right on and use the ratings to make what is popular and to bring these things before us and make it public and visible so people are more responsive.

It fills Mormon with sorrow [with] no prospect of improvement in this life. And here we have the great force of Mormon's character in verse 24. He checks the flight and turns the tide to victory. They're going to have about a dozen victories after this. They're going to win hands down. The Nephites actually have the military advantage, as the Israelis have had all along—though they're smaller, they're outnumbered, and sometimes their weapons are far inferior in number. Yet they had certain military advantages of position and morale and all the rest of it. They could have saved the day anytime. That was not the problem at all, just as it isn't the problem in Israel now. So we have a Nephite victory in verse 24 and following. They win, and then in verse 26 there's

another victory. But the military situation is grim, he says, because it's now man for man. It's missile for missile. We count with them, you see. We're on the same base they are.

Here we have an interesting thing. There is no strongest army. This is a strange thing. They've tried it again and again. Armies are always equal, so this idea that you could be overwhelmingly strong is a myth. That was the Prussian myth that upset them. The great Prussian Generalstab was going to have the great army that would conquer and control Europe. Of course, that was so with France—Napoleon did it. And the Chinese have done it and the Romans. It's the ideal to have the great overwhelming army. What always happens in every case? When you have an army stronger than any of your neighbors, all your neighbors gang together and form leagues and alliances until their armed forces are equal to yours. The threat is equal to yours, and then they have to do it. As Moroni knew, no army can long permit the enemy any advantage in special weapons, armaments, tactics, uniforms, or anything else. It must be met and countered. The Germans had a certain color uniform which was superior to ours. Instantly we adopted it. The Russians had a shepatovka which became the anti-tank gun. Instantly the Germans and everybody adopted it because it was the best. The Germans had superior helmets to ours. We had the flat helmets. Instantly we had to adopt them. They had heavier tanks. We had to make our tanks like a Pershing tank, had to imitate them. You have to if you're going to meet them. You can't let them have an edge and advantage for too long or you're going to lose your shirt. So armies always come to resemble each other exactly before the war is over. You'll notice wherever you look now in the news, you can't tell which is which—the same type of helmet, the same type of fatigue suits or camouflage suits, same types of weapons. If we arm our men with automatic weapons, they've got to be armed with automatic weapons, too. So then everybody, including the people on the street, could go around shooting up liquor stores, etc. They have to have their automatic weapons. So this happens, you see. You're not going to have overwhelming force. Armies are always equal. The proposal was made not long ago by a certain person here that we must have an army and navy so strong that no other nation or combination of nations on earth can ever threaten us again. It's an utterly absurd statement. That was a policy of a recent president.

In verse 27 there's another great victory for the Nephites. And they win everything back. And what does Mormon call this? A great calamity to my people. Well, what was it? Was he crazy? No. The calamity, as he explains it, is because of their wickedness and their abominations. That's the calamity. Winning victories isn't going to help. It's going to justify them, make them feel all the better. So, more reasonable than many of us today, in verse 28 they make treaties. They make treaties with the Lamanites and the robbers—willing to divide the lands of their inheritance, which they'd won back. We wouldn't go so far. We say no treaties with terrorists, no treaties with communists, nothing like that. We'll never move an inch, etc. It doesn't do us any good. We have to treat with them if we're going to get prisoners back or anything like that. We're always contradicting ourselves and stumbling over each other, internecine fights in departments, etc. But they make a treaty and it holds. But notice in verse 29 they're willing to accept their own lands as a gift from the Lamanites.

And then, after all, it's still not too late, in Mormon 3:2–3, if they'll only repent. But they didn't realize this. He says that they were given another chance for repentance. We have three great blessings in this life. The first is life itself, the chance to come to earth and have a body. The second is to have progeny, of course. And the third is, after that stage, the Lord allows us to live on, giving us more time to repent. As Nephi says, he extended our lifetime so we'd have more time to repent. That's the great third boon he gives us. Spend your old age repenting—that's the thing you have to do. Remember the first words of Christ to the Nephites? This is my gospel, that the Father calls upon all men everywhere to repent. But people haven't the slightest inclination to repent today if they can find other people doing wrong. In fact, a review came out yesterday of Mr. Nixon's new book in which he says everything said about him that wasn't complimentary was a myth. All those things are myths, he says. Talk about someone who has no idea of

repenting. Well what about the things they catch him on tape saying. He says, I changed my mind after that. All this is a myth, he says. I did not do a single wrong thing. Well, you're not going to have repentance with that attitude. Who wants to repent? None of the Watergate gang repented. They said we had bad advice, we did what was best, etc., etc. We can always make excuses.

But notice he keeps hammering away, *repent*. He saw that in this peace the Lord was giving them a chance for repentance, but they didn't realize it. No one can ask for anything better than that, than these three blessings—life itself, progeny, and a special time for repentance. They turned it down. They blew it again. Their eyes were on the Lamanites whose king sent them a formal challenge to meet them on the traditional battleground, Desolation, near the narrow pass. It doesn't say neck of land; it's near the narrow pass. As I said, the Isthmus of Panama is not a narrow pass. No, they wouldn't consider that. They said, we have more important matters to consider.

The phrase you hear a million times is “there's a war going on.” That's the stock answer. War will always have your number one priority. We can forget about repentance, but Mormon's lesson is that it does not have number one priority. The whole ninth chapter is taken up with that. Here's where their priorities should have been. When you say there's a war going on, that puts everything on the shelf. As Cicero puts it, once you take to arms, once a war begins, all laws are suspended. All rules are suspended, and that's exactly what Clausewitz says. To talk about the laws of war is an absurdity. The only way you use laws of war is to give you an advantage. You appeal to the laws of war for a pause or something—just to give you a better chance to get a dig at the enemy, but you're into strategy and tactics. Strategy is defined as deception practiced on an enemy. That's what wins. You must deceive. Don't let him know what your intentions are, what's your strengths are, what's your positions are, or anything else. Fool him all the way. That's strategy, and that's the only way you're going to win. The great general is the great strategist. That's why Napoleon was such a great general. As his father said, “Little Napoleon always lies. He's going to be a great man.” See, this would come first. After all, that's what they'll always tell you. Can you wait here? Will you do this? Will you meet me? Can you fulfill this obligation? No, there's a war going on. That puts you in the clear; you say that over and over again.

But with that philosophy, however, in verses 7–8 there's a Nephite victory, and another Nephite victory. They've been winning. Their policy is paying off. Why should they listen to Mormon here? These are great morale boosters. Now they take a sacred oath: “before the heavens” they're going to do the noble thing and avenge the blood of their brethren on their enemies, etc. We said this is the standard theme of the American Western, the crime fighter, and the war films. Mr.-Nice-Guy-no-more goes out for revenge, and that's exciting and satisfying. That's the kind of plot we like to see. So they were out for the stock solution to the problem in [verse 10]. We've had these Lamanites on our hands all these years. How do we solve the Lamanite problem?

Verse 10: “And they did swear . . . that they would go up to battle against their enemies, and would cut them off from the face of the land.” That would settle it once and for all—get rid of the Lamanites. And when they did that, that was it. That settled it as far as the Lord was concerned. The Lord told Nephi in 1 Nephi 2:23–24 that it would never work, you see. Right at the beginning of the Book of Mormon in the second chapter, the Lord already tells Nephi that solution is never, never going to work: “For behold, in that day that they shall rebel against me [the Lamanites, descendants of Laman and Lemuel], I will curse them even with a sore curse, and they shall have no power over thy seed except they shall rebel against me also [that will give them power]. And if it so be that they rebel against me, they shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance.” I'm going to keep the Lamanites in place all the time as a scourge “to stir them up in the ways of remembrance.” You'll never be able to beat them except by righteousness, by doing what's right. They'll have no power over you [in that case]. Don't worry about them—you're not going to beat them on the field. They'll always be stronger than

you are, but they'll have no power unless you rebel against me. Then they'll have power over you. But the only way to meet that, you see, is, "And if . . . they rebel against me, they shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance." So that's what they're doing. They're stirring them, all right, but they just make them madder and madder. They have this one man, Mormon, trying to stand out and say, can't you see the point of all this? Can't you see what you're doing? But they were out for the stock solution to cut them off.

Well, for Mormon that did it. He would have nothing more to do with them. His love and loyalty were boundless, as he says in the next verse, but he knew all along that he couldn't save them. Now here's your paradox. I prayed with all my heart, but without faith [he said]. Do you pray without faith? He prayed with all his heart, but without faith, because he knew they would not change. And later when his great heart overcomes his decision, he accepts command again. He tells us in Mormon 5:2, "But behold, I was without hope." He accepted the commission again but without hope. Here's a man leading his people without faith and without hope. We're not going to get far without faith and hope. But he has charity, oceans of charity. That's the thing, giving something and expecting nothing in return at all, and he does. He knows it's a losing cause. As C. S. Gordon says, that is the essence of the heroic position—the hero who does the right and heroic thing knowing that he's living for a lost cause, that he will never be able to win and is doomed.

He says three times he pulled them through and gave them another chance. To do what? To repent, of course, (verse 13). But for them it was only another chance to "beat the damn Lamanites." We're going to get them this time. But this was the last straw when they swore this ringing oath in the manner of our stock heroes to avenge the blood of their brethren. At that point God gave Mormon a direct command. He said you're out of it. Don't have anything to do with it. "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay; and because this people repented not [when they had the chance] after I had delivered them, behold, they shall be cut off from the face of the earth," not just the face of the land. They'll be finished. They'll become extinct.

Well, they repented not. Repented not of what? Of what they were doing. Their behavior and policy were all absorbed in one thing, the activities of war. The Lord commanded Mormon not to move against his enemies in verse 16, to be a witness and a first-hand observer for our benefit, and for our full consideration before we make our big moves in the last days, as it says in verse 17. "Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare [notice commence, about to prepare] to return to the land of your inheritance." Just at the point when we're poised and ready to take things over. And they haven't taken over. We have not gone back to the land of the inheritance of Zion, and the Israelis have not reclaimed the land of Israel that had been promised to Abraham. So this is just the first step we're in now, but things move very fast.

Then everybody must know this, he says in verse 18 and following—all of Israel and the remnants of Lehi's people. These passages now are pure prophecy. These were prophesied way back 150 years ago, and we've seen it has followed right down the line. We thought it would never be. In my day this sounded far away and long ago. It was a romantic story—the story of the Indians, etc.—but didn't apply to us. There was just too much bloodshed, etc. Things like that don't happen in civilized societies. That was before World Wars I and II.

What should they have been thinking of instead of war? Well, Mormon 3:20 tells us: "And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul." This is what you should be concerned about, he says here. It's the individual obligation to do the right thing. We're going to be judged on an individual basis, not on membership or affiliation or office or patriotism, but for our "works, whether they be good or evil." The gospel will be made accessible to all those who read this, at that time, he says verse 21. They will have the

gospel, the Bible. They'll have all the rest of it by the time they get this, and Mormon's message to one and all is repent and prepare to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. That's where the real problem is. As opposed to this we have the futile slogan, "there's no substitute for victory."

Well, the Nephites in the next chapter start losing in a big way. Wickedness and folly ruin them, and Mormon 4:5 says it was because they took the offensive that they lost everything. But they had to do it [they felt]. They had to judge and they had to punish the Lamanites for their many offenses. That was their undoing. Leave the punishment up to God. Mormon 4:5: "But, behold, the judgments of God will overtake the wicked [don't let that worry you]; and it is by the wicked that the wicked are punished." We should leave it all up to God then and not try to police the world—though it's a great boon, as you know, to the military industrial complex. We're moving into that against which General Eisenhower warned us so fervently. But that's the thing that keeps it going, of course—policing all the world. I'll never forget the excitement when General Taylor burst in. He later became Chief of Staff, as you know, shortly after that. He burst in and he'd discovered the solution to all the military problems—the brushfire war. We'll have little wars going on everywhere that we'll be able to control throughout the world. It will provide training, promotions, and all the rest. It won't be costly in terms of lives because of our great superiority of weapons, etc. The brushfire war was to be the solution. What did we get out of it? Korea, Vietnam, and the horrors that followed. Well, that was a very interesting day. He burst into the tent all excited.

Then in Mormon 4:8 there's another Nephite victory. That proved Mormon was wrong, premature, disloyal. Their policy is working after all. Why should they give it up? Oh, boy. They were more than a match for the Lamanites. The slaughter went on on both sides, as it does today, and the Nephites stuck to their policy, which is called persisting in wickedness continually. That what he calls in [verse 10]. This, of course, is the shedding of innocent blood, which every war does [particularly a] perpetual war like Vietnam. There are those who delight in the shedding of blood continually; it becomes addictive. But if one delights in watching the shedding of blood, is such a person innocent? That seems a favorite diversion with us as with the Romans. It became an insatiable appetite for them—they had to have the shedding of blood. People delight night after night in watching the shedding of blood, crime, murder, sex, riches, all this sort of thing. That is the prime-time stuff that the advertisers think the public demands, and we're getting that. So to delight in the shedding of blood is to delight in the spectacle as well as in the participation.

In verse 12 he said there never had been greater wickedness. Well, there was a war going on. That was their justification. And it was all perfectly legal, everything they were doing. It was the laws of war, as I said. They could feel perfectly moral about it because they had declared war, though we make wars without even declaring them. Congress must declare war, you know, but we don't bother about that anymore. In verse 14, as in the case of the Aztecs, there's an uncontrollable appetite for the shedding of blood, which they justify on religious grounds. They ritualize it. They use these slaughterings as sacrifices on religious grounds, a horrible thing. It's so bad it must be holy to be tolerated, so we have Satanism and things like that. But it went all the way. Naturally this made the Nephites angry—talk about righteous rage. If they do that to your women and children, wouldn't you be righteously enraged? Well, they were righteously enraged here. And they won another victory in verses 14–15. That proves that revenge is an effective stimulant. It is that. War and atrocity stories pay off to the troops. It's good for motivation. But a year later the Nephites [begin to] dissolve "as a dew before the sun." Just like that.

Remember, I had to go in the forefront in a jeep as fast as I possibly could. We'd get ahead of the lines as fast as we could and watch the Nazi war machine dissolve. Everybody started shedding uniforms, insignia, and badges. Nobody had been a Nazi at all, all of a sudden. They just melted away. There was not an army left, just like that. It says they melted "even as a dew before the sun." The Nazi war machine was duly absorbed into our own.

Then in Mormon 4:23 there was a third fateful visit to the hill of Shim up north. Mormon is the only one willing to repent. And he repents backwards, you see. His humanity overcomes all his other feelings. He repents of his oath he'd made; he shouldn't have taken it in the first place. We're not supposed to swear at all. He disobeys God's command. They thought that Mormon was the miracle man, that he could deliver them. He would save them; he was the man that had won three times already. Why did he give in to them? Well, why did Socrates not leave Athens? His friends all came and told him, up north we have plenty of friends who will be only too glad to accept you there. The richest men in Athens wanted to help him out. The doctors of the schools had ganged up against him, but he wouldn't leave Athens. He could have left Athens to save his life. They said, well, why don't you save the Athenians from committing this great crime in putting an innocent man to death?

He said, look, I've been living in Athens all my life. I knew the kind of people these were. They're my people. Now is not the time to skip out, you see. The time to give anti-war speeches is when you're having your war rallies before you go into war. But after the shooting's begun, you can't be fastidious and say oh no, I don't like war, so I won't have anything to do with it. Then you should volunteer for the nastiest job you can get. That's a strange contradiction, but it's the same thing here. He's like Socrates. I would be a hypocrite now if I ran out after all these 70 years I've been here and haven't left you. I knew what was going on here. I'm not that kind of a fool. Now is not the time for me to withdraw. And it's the same thing with Mormon. I've known these people and I've loved them all along. They are fools, but they're my people and I love them [he might have said], so he went back. But he says in verse 2 that it was without hope and without faith, but with charity. He asked for no return. He never said, I'm doing this for your own good. Here is the smartest, cleverest, most great-hearted figure in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon deserves to be named after him; he tells us the whole truth and nothing but the truth here.

They struggled for their lives. Well, why wouldn't they call on God even in extremis, like in extreme situations? Well, they'd "stepped in blood so far," like Macbeth. "Should I go no more, return would be as tedious as go o'er"—I might as well go through with it. This is the paranoid condition which they were in. A paranoid's not going to repent, you know that. It would only damn them and make them ridiculous. The mood is one of total defiance, a condition frequently met with among paranoid commanders who commit suicide. This is vividly expressed in the German war hymns and Shakespearean tragedies. A person reaches that point of no return, which I said is *atē*. That's when you're not going to change, even though you'd give anything if you didn't have to go through with this. But I must force myself to do it [they say].

I will tomorrow  
(And betimes I will) to the weird sisters.  
More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know  
By the worst means the worst.

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act III, scene 4

I've got to know the worst; I must have the worst happen. As Hitler said, we must have our choice between a terrible end or going on in terror without end. We have that choice. This is the situation these people are in, and it's sad.

But what happens in [verse 3]? Another victory, and then another one, and then another one. There are three victories in a row here. Twice more they gained the advantage. The military advantage has often been theirs, but that was not the issue; he says in verse 6, "it was all in vain"—not what becomes of them, but what they become. And he's not enjoying this at all in verse 8, but he must make his report. God has commanded it. These things must become

common knowledge to the Indians and the Gentiles on the land. It's not enough for them to turn away with the idea that there can be no hope at all. That would turn them off. We mustn't go too far with this, because there is always that hope. He says, that's why I'm not going to tell you the whole story. It would turn you off. It would turn your stomach. You would feel lost in that case, when men can become so vile. But Lehi's people, the Jews, Israel, and the Gentiles, he says, must realize where their only advantage lies. All this has not been necessary. He says that's the point. That's what so sad.

In Mormon 5:11 he says they will realize that it might all have been so different, "For I know that such will sorrow for the calamity of the house of Israel; yea, they will sorrow for the destruction of this people; they will sorrow that this people had not repented that they might have been clasped in the arms of Jesus." It might have been so different. They didn't have to go through with that sort of thing. It will play a role in restoring the Jews, he says, to the land of their inheritance. They're having dire troubles and approaching disaster because they won't see the principles set forth by Mormon here. They're not reading the Book of Mormon now. There's more to come, in other words. We're told here that there is more to come. They have not yet suffered in the land as the Nephites did in theirs, before they learned their lesson, you see. They've suffered plenty, though.

But the descendants of Lehi will know what it is to suffer. (I get a chance to read that after all now.) A complete, repeated defeat and humiliation after knowing the right way. They're rootless, homeless, and driven. Whenever wealth is found on their lands, they're driven right out now. I have some examples of that. This is from the January 17, 1990, news: Ronald Vertrees, president of the Customs Clearing House, a Denver-based drilling supply firm [for oil wells, etc.] wrote a letter to the Navajo tribal council. They are an independent nation. They have treaties with the United States, you see. They made a rule giving priority in hiring to young Navajos because they have awful unemployment there. To work in the oil wells on their lands, they gave priority to Navajos. This makes this man furious, you see. He protests favored treatment in hiring practices of Navajos on their own reservation. "Given the historical facts, we consider ourselves to be members of the conquering and superior race and you to be members of a vanquished and inferior race. We hold your land and property to be spoils of war, ours by right of conquest [Mormon would have something to say to this]. Through the generosity of our people you have been given a reservation where you may prance and dance as you please, obeying your kings and worshiping your false gods." He had no conception at all what their culture was, you see.

"Contacted Monday, Vertrees said he had no regrets about sending the letter." And there was no outrage or anything like that. Well, when Albert C. Fall (who spent the rest of his life in jail incidentally) became Secretary of the Interior in 1921, few people realized "that along with various schemes to defraud the Indians of their land, oil and mineral rights, [there] would be injected into the plan a false commissioner of Indian Affairs, Charles H. Burke, to deny the Indian the freedom of religion he still enjoyed [freedom of religion in 1921 was taken away from the Indians], as provided for in the Bill of Rights. Rarely, until recent times, was [this freedom] even considered as applying to religions of the Indians of the United States. In fact, it was a government policy to aid missionaries in converting the Indians to one or another of the Christian denominations. [Baptists, Mennonites, and others were brought in by the government in 1906, and the Mormons were all ordered out. They were ordered away from the Hopi and Navajo reservations, but the others were brought in.] Definite stipulations curtailing Indian freedom of religion were contained in the official Bureau of Indian Affairs regulations, often referred to as its Indian Religious Crimes Code. The suppression of the Sun Dance ceremony at the insistence of missionaries and government officials led to the enactment of a regulation which, although aimed particularly at the Sun Dance, concluded 'all similar dances and so-called religious ceremony shall be considered Indian offenses punishable by incarceration in the agency prison for a period not exceeding thirty days' [so any Indian dance like that was considered a crime]. In 1922 the Senate passed the Burson Bill, taking the most valuable agricultural lands

from the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico [well, there have been worse things since that]. In the spring of 1923 Commissioner Burke wrote this to all Indians: 'I feel that something must be done to stop the neglect of stock, crops, gardens and home interests caused by these dances or by celebrations, powwows, and gatherings of any kind that take the time of the Indians for many days. No good comes from your give-away customs at dances, and it should be stopped. You do yourselves and your families great injustice [this is a crooked Irish politician who went to jail just after that for a great swindle] when at dances you give away money and other property, perhaps clothing. I could issue an order against these useless and harmful performances, but I would much rather you give them up of your own free will. I urge you to hold no gatherings in the months when seed time, cultivation, and harvest need your attention.' ”

Of course, those are the sacred festivals in the law of Moses—that's when all ancient peoples [held them]. The Indians are forbidden to hold the meetings at that time. “ ‘And at other times to meet for only a short period and have no drugs, intoxicants, or gambling and no dancing that the superintendent does not approve. If at the end of one year the reports show that you reject this plea, then some other course will have to be taken.’ ”

Confiscation of half of the best agricultural land was the penalty for that. Well, we see that Mormon knows what he's talking about when he says they're going to be ground down.