

# TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

HUGH NIBLEY

Semester 3, Lecture 81  
3 Nephi 3–5  
Rhetoric

Now the standard explanation today of all this misunderstanding that's been going on between the Nephites, the Lamanites, the Zoramites, the Gadiantons, and all the rest of them—we would say piously is a lack of communication, wouldn't we? They certainly aren't communicating, and so we have a masterpiece of communication. This third chapter of 3 Nephi is the great letter. It's really a lesson in communications. It's typical of the official communique of our day. It's smooth, it's convincing, it's conciliatory—and it's totally false, as we'll soon find.

Now we see that Lachoneus is not an unlikely name at all to find at this time and place. Lachoneus, the governor of the land, gets an epistle from the leader of the other band. He has the good name of Giddianhi; Gidgiddoni was the Nephite captain. Giddianhi is a pure Egyptian name; in fact, if you're going to write it in Reformed Egyptian, you would have a very easy time of it, to write Giddianhi. All you'd have to do is write that—that's Giddianhi. "The Lord is my life" is what it means. His name is Giddianhi; we'll get to him later.

3 Nephi: 3:1: "Lachoneus, the governor of the land, received an epistle from the leader and the governor of this band of robbers; and these were the words which were written." Now what does it say there? It's flattering. Remember, we've seen already in the Book of Mormon a great deal about flattering words. Flattering words get the thing done. If you want to organize a movement, you start out and end up with flattering words, and they always work. Flattering words are those the people want to hear—tell them what they want to hear. It's a very good thing in our society. It has become a fine art, as you know. It has become the cornerstone of the rhetoric of our times. And at this point I might point out that it was not wars or plagues or famines or climatic changes that wiped out ancient empires and nations. It was rhetoric, this very thing we're talking about. That was the cause of it.

I've written some spiels on rhetoric. I'm not going to hold you up with it, but we must make this clear—what this rhetoric is and how devastatingly effective it is. It destroyed the ancient world. Every period ended up with rhetoric taking over, because it confounds all values. This article was written 33 years ago in Berkeley, when I was teaching classical rhetoric. This is what it does:<sup>1</sup> The ancient civilizations were beset by a feverish preoccupation with rhetoric, which suggests nothing so much as a hopeless alcoholic's devotion to the bottle. It destroyed them. Everywhere the ancients give us to understand that rhetoric (you can call it TV if you want) is their poison, that it is ruining their capacity to work and think, that it disgusts and wearies them, and that they cannot let it

---

<sup>1</sup> Brother Nibley is quoting and paraphrasing from his article, "Victoriosa Loquacitas: The Rise of Rhetoric and the Decline of Everything Else," *Western Speech* 20/2 (Spring 1956): 57-82; reprinted in vol. 10 CWHN (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 243-86.

alone because it pays too well and, having destroyed everything else, it is all that they have of remembered glory.

That sounds like an extreme statement; we have to go on here about how the art of rhetoric was founded. It existed in other civilizations, but it became a big thing in the ancient world with the Sophists, Gorgias and Protagoras, the more famous one, who started the school. These are both [from] dialogues of Plato. They were friends of Socrates, and Socrates denounced what they were doing as the most dangerous thing in the world. It does have that effect, too. (Our word gorgeous comes from Gorgias because of his gorgeous style. It's -ias because it's a Dorian name.) [Plato] charges his friend Gorgias because he has founded the first rhetoric school, and it's paying off enormously. He's turning out lawyers and businessmen by the scads. These schools are spreading everywhere, and before you know it, there's nothing else. By mixing rhetoric with philosophy he turned it to Sophistry, for which offense Plato takes him grimly to task. The charge is that he is turning his talents from the honest search for truth to the business of cultivating appearances. That is exactly what his teacher, Empedocles (whom the younger Aristotle calls the inventor of rhetoric) had done. Fretting like Dr. Faustus at the limitations of the mind and despairing of ever arriving at truth the hard way (there's just too much to be done in the short span of human life) Empedocles found satisfaction in pretending before the public that he had already achieved knowledge and power. He said that's just as good as having it. You have the same effect; you have the same satisfaction. You have learned the art of pretending; that will do it. He became the most magnificent of quacks and the father of a long line of skillful impostors. Well, you've all read the poem "Empedocles on Etna."

So we have the three big names here. We could start out with Gorgias, Protagoras and Empedocles. Gorgias wrote three famous books. One was to prove that nothing exists; the second was to prove that if it did exist you couldn't know it; and the third was to prove that if you did know it, you couldn't prove it to anybody else. So having settled that matter, he cultivated a new and wonderful art of finding success the easy way. He worked out a technique, says Philostratus, which enabled him to speak offhand on any and all subjects and to prove or disprove any point on demand (this is the skill of the rhetorician, you see, of the journalists, etc.), thereby bringing against himself the shocked and scandalized charge of "making the worse appear the better reason." That shocked everybody, but you can do it. You can make any reason appear the best. Traveling everywhere, he proved to the world that "nothing can stand up against the art of rhetoric." His playing with words, which captivated the fancy of the rising generation and all that followed, was actually a philosophical nihilism. Schmidt points out in his great work on the subject that it made a hash of all values, including the sacred *nomos*—the moral order of society—itsself.

Gorgias shares with his friend Protagoras the glory and guilt of selling rhetoric to the world. Protagoras concluded that he was wasting his time trying to sound the secrets of the universe in a short lifetime, burned his books in the marketplace, and turned to teaching rhetoric, achieving the immortal fame of being the first man ever to make 100 minas at the trade (a million dollars doing it). His famous dictum that "man is the measure of all things" led only too easily to the rhetorical gospel that anything goes, the Philistine morality which in the end destroyed Greek civilization. So let's put these two names down, Gorgias and Protagoras, so at least you'll remember them. He [Gorgias] came from Sicily to Athens and caused a sensation. We have wonderful stories about

them. We know exactly who they were, and they gave us the art of journalism, legal display, rhetoric, etc.

Well, there are some things to note here—it goes on and on. If nothing is rarer than a good orator, nothing is commoner than bad ones. The rewards of rhetoric are tremendous. Are such rewards to be left lying about unclaimed until the perfect orator comes along? As might be expected, the worst people took to rhetoric like ducks to water, for rhetoric preached the gospel of success. This is Theodor Mommsen, the greatest of the German historians [of Roman history]: The chance for everyone to “succeed” was the soul and essence of the principate [that’s the empire after the emperors took over], its justification for being, and its driving power. It was the school of rhetoric under the benign patronage of the Good Emperor that offered this plum to every ambitious youth in the Empire [you have a right to an education so you can succeed, they said], and “people of every class became inflamed with a desire to achieve the new success.” The orator’s philosopher, says Cicero, is not Aristotle (who loathed rhetoric), but Carneades, because he was always successful: “He never supported a cause that didn’t win or opposed one that didn’t fail.”

Lucian illustrated the spirit of rhetorical education when he told about a boy who went to Harmonides, the greatest flute player of the time. Harmonides started giving him lessons and telling him he had to practice long hours. The boy said, “Wait a minute, wait a minute. I don’t want to be a good flute player; I just want to be a successful flute player.”

“Well,” said Harmonides, “no trouble at all, then. You practice one hour a day and cultivate the right people.” That’s it, you see. But success was what they were after—which is a reminder that Isocrates, the founder of the first real school of rhetoric, ruled against the flute as a waste of time.

From the time of Isocrates on, wrote Wilhelm Schmidt, “naked self-interest ruled in the rhetorical schools.” Success meant getting ahead; all else was eliminated. Cicero simply can’t understand those Greeks who actually like to talk about things which are both hard and impractical in the schools; those people have no word for “inept,” he says with scorn, but play with ideas for their own sake. That, for him, is against the whole spirit and purpose of rhetoric and education, which aims to get results and no funny stuff—we should keep our boys away from such studies, he cautions. Why study anything but rhetoric? as the great Seneca challenged, and he became the richest man in Rome. What good is astronomy except for fixing horoscopes and keeping appointments? (It’s like Cornelius Vanderbilt who never learned to read because it would interfere with his business.) “Mathematics teaches me to make my fingers organs of avarice.” That’s as far as Seneca could see. Music is no good because it will not stop fears, nor sell anything, nor still appetites, as rhetoric will. “Geometry teaches me to measure a field. How much better to know how to measure a man.” It’s human engineering that’s going to pay off. Seneca’s interest in things went only so far as they would support his case; but even the case concerned him wholly and simply as a pretext for pushing his own career: *cupit enim se approbari non causam* was his slogan—“it is yourself you are selling after all.” You can take either side. It doesn’t make any difference what product you’re selling; it’s yourself you’re selling. And this was the philosophy of the time. For the rhetor success meant three things (right out of the Book of Mormon): fame, wealth, and power. We’re going to get that here; remember the four things that Nephi talked about. We talked about these things, and this is what ruined the ancient world. This article was written 36 years ago before we had the new developments of rhetoric, before we had the techniques.

What was not recognized was a fatal Gresham's Law by which bad rhetoric, art, and education, like bad money, always forced the better product out of the market. There can be no truce between the two. . . . In his discussion with Socrates Gorgias repeatedly confirmed the definition of a *rhetor* as one who addresses an *ochlos*, the multitude, the many. Number is everything. The Nielsen ratings are the whole measure of success. He says here, the multitude is the audience to whom he normally appeals in the interest of his clients. Accordingly the values of rhetoric are quantitative: How much? How many? These are the only questions you need to ask, he says. *Gloria*, like wealth, is a function of size alone; the greater the cheering multitudes (these are your Nielsen ratings), the greater the glory and success of the one cheered.

There is no exception to the rule, for all the fastidious and hypocritical protests of those scholarly rhetors who affected to despise the mob. Rhetoric, according to Augustine, is the art which, animated by necessity rather than "purity," scatters to the populace from its overflowing bosom (the Roman equivalent of pockets) an abundance of delights, thus leading them to comply with *his* interests. You can have whatever you want out of people if you only give them what they want—without question and without hesitation. The rhetor, says Philo, is the slave of a thousand masters; the public is a whore and he is her minion and her lap-dog. "What do you want me to do?" cries Dio Chrysostom to the people of his native city; "I'll do it!" And so it is. Give them anything they want, and that's what we want to find.

The orator must stoop to conquer, and a quick and frightening rebuke awaits him if he doesn't stoop low enough. For all his toadying Dio was banished for being unsociable. Libanius had to clear himself of the same terrible charge, and Apuleius was investigated time and time again because he was suspected of being an introvert. Go easy on philosophy, Cicero advises. Don't talk over people's heads—they don't like orators who make them feel stupid. Best keep your books at home for your private leisure. (You can see the direction everything is going in here.) "Everything must be accommodated to the common judgment and popular intelligence" [said Cicero], for the rhetor sells to everybody. To find out exactly what the people wanted was the hardest part of the rhetor's work and the secret of his success; it was the canvass or survey (well, this is your poll), the careful trial-and-error game of *empeiria*, "to pick out just those things that appeal most to listeners, and not only delight them, but entertain them without ever tiring them." (Now this is what [political pollsters] do. They find out what people want, and that's what the party gives them, because that will get you elected. Whether it's our policy or not has nothing to do with it. If they want that, that will be our policy.) Once you had that, the rest was easy, simply "to scratch and tickle the ears of those who want to be tickled," taking care never to speak harshly to them. And so it goes.

The landslide of vulgarization, once started, could not be stopped, it says. Just like TV, it all goes in one direction. Good men were intimidated and banished from their cities by mobs who could always count on finding orators who would never contradict them—society reserving its richest rewards for those who could justify, condone, and confirm its vices. Even a strong-minded emperor who tried to stem the tide (like Marcus Aurelius) could wreck his cause by refusing to play along with the show-bred city crowds, and even risk his person if he dared to talk back to them. The orating bishop who tried to introduce a fancy word or new idea into his sermon might find an angry congregation shouting back at him, or even have a riot on his hands. There was only one thing to do, as St. Augustine observed: Don't fight the stream, "O wo, thou tide of human custom—who

can possibly resist you?” You have to go along with the current, etc. McGiffert writes of the saint [Augustine], “For all his intellectuality, he was instinctively a conformist and could never be quite happy unless the majority agreed with him.”

“What society as a whole believes,” said St. Augustine in the *De Doctrina Christiana*, “that we also believe, and without an inkling of a doubt, even though there’s not the slightest evidence that it is true.” If everybody believes it, we believe it. So that’s the way people went. But rhetoric did more than bow before the storm; it worked hard to create and intensify it, beginning with political speakers who “systematically debauched” the people for their votes. (Well, we go into that sort of thing then.) Encouraged by the state to avoid serious thinking, the crowd came under the leadership of experts, not revolutionary or radical, but stoutly conservative, fond of rough-house but mushily sentimental. In time they learned even how to exchange spontaneous tears and laughter for the nicety and propriety of organized and directed applause. They had direct applause, too. They had cheerleaders. The *stasiarch* would wave a flag and lead a cheer, and they would all yell together. And so it goes, this unbridled passion for the spoken word.

Well, what did it do? The experts knew exactly what would sell and what would not sell; they had it all at their fingertips—formulae that could get a reaction as quick and predictable as a knee jerk. Even those who knew how it was done couldn’t escape “the noose of *suaviloquentia*,” as it was called. The general public didn’t have a chance—the rhetors simply get them drunk, says Lucian, and go to work on them (like selling Coke or Pepsi). Flesh and blood can no more resist the impact of a tried and tested rhetorical assault than it can take a cool appraising look at the Gorgon’s head—you are paralyzed before you know what hit you. A properly trained rhetorician can make his audience clay in his hands, helpless as automatons without a will or mind of their own. That was the effect they were after, and that was the effect they got. The Book of Mormon is full of this. We get these flattering speakers who lead people this way and that way by the nose. They are the cause of every great movement. Every great mischief in the Book of Mormon starts out with a person who is a master of many words, who is very clever and has a cunning knowledge of the language, and who is above all expert at flattering speech.

[Quoting from his article again:] With the introduction of the Second Sophistic the arts and sciences of the West entered a period of decline from which they were never to recover. At the same time the school entered upon a career of undreamed-of expansion and splendor. As steadily as civilization sank in the scale the school mounted on high, until the one reached a peak of enduring glory and authority at the very moment, in the fifth century, when the other came to rest at its final and permanent bathos. The school never recovered. Everybody went to school then, but they never learned anything. This is the point. It was because of what the schools became—the schools of education.

There came a day, says Cauer, when the cultural deposit of the past had become just too great for any mind to absorb (so they didn’t try anymore), while in the face of what had already been done, all future creation lost heart. They couldn’t think of anything new, and they never created a thing for centuries on end. This happens, you know. From then on, learning the hard way was just too hard, and the creative spirit was left with nothing to create. The only answer was rhetoric, the wonderful art by which an ordinary person could master all knowledge “in his sleep” (as a brochure said), and bring forth new and original creations simply by rearranging the familiar rhetorical building blocks in any desired pattern. The very thing that stifled learning was pure oxygen to the schools of rhetoric.

How easily they took over all the functions of scholarship may be seen in the case of the immortal Hermogenes. As a boy-wonder (it was an age of *praecoces pueruli*) he had given exhibitions of his rhetorical skill before the Emperor at the age of 15. His sweeping and pretentious rhetoric convinced the world that he was its greatest thinker, and his writing on all subjects became compulsory school books for generations to come. Right down to the 16th century, [his works were] being taught at the Strasburg School, etc. Hermogenes was the big one; he became the great leader of education for centuries, and he didn't have a thing to say! It's marvelous, isn't it. Yet his actual contribution to knowledge is exactly nil—he has nothing to say. As the brain that feels for the whole body is incapable of feeling itself or what is happening to it, so the antique school seems utterly incapable of judging its own ineptness. The actual productions . . .” We have them. R. Raby of Oxford has collected three very fine volumes, one on Latin secular poetry and the others on Latin religious poetry. A great deal of this rhetoric has been brought together. Of course, [there is] much more. But we have them all here at school [BYU]. The actual productions of the world's most illustrious professors for centuries on end are incredibly imbecile. In reading them we blush for the authors, yet they, in perpetrating these childish horrors, are joyfully exhibitionistic of their very worst themes, totally unaware of what a shocking spectacle they are. Rhetoric, like Mephistopheles, gave them success but took away their brains in exchange.

Then we get the horrible result of all this—[similar to] the Book of Mormon. From the second century on the chief characteristic of every branch of science and art is “the inability to create new compositions.” The stereotype had abolished the need of that: “things that bad poets instinctively love to fashion” are the permanent legacy of rhetoric to literature. Look how the Church has gone over for kitsch. All the art, music, and everything we have show a violent antipathy for anything which isn't kitsch—commonplace, low, vulgar, and easy to imitate. Our favorite artist is a Seventh-Day Adventist painter, Harry Anderson. He paints these Coca-Cola ads that are very folksy, very down to earth. [They have] no artistic value whatsoever. And so it goes.

In the rhetorical education sponsored by Augustine, Marrou observes, there is “an echo, an influence, a general direction of studies—this lowering of the general level of civilization which already, on all sides of Augustine, announced that the times of the barbarians is at hand.” They were going into a thousand years of slump after that. So, this is what rhetoric does to people, and what it did in the East and West. And the Book of Mormon is great on this. You won't call this [the letter of Giddianhi] a rhetorical masterpiece because it can't fool anybody; it's so transparent. And yet it does. This is the interesting thing about rhetoric. As it became more transparent and silly, as they kept repeating the same formulas over and over again, you might say, well, people would surely get wise to that. Yes, they got wise to it, but they had an appetite for it. They were able to take it because it was what they expected. Finally it was what they wanted, and it was all they ever got.

So here it comes from the band: Notice, he starts out with this flattering [language, in 3 Nephi 3:2:] “Lachoneus, most noble and chief governor of the land, behold, I write this epistle unto you, and do give unto you exceedingly great praise.” He's coming on too strong. This isn't what Henry IV says of the bishop of Bristol, who has been his bitter enemy all of his life. He says, “For though mine enemy thou has ever been, high sparks of honor in thee have I seen.” So he wouldn't condemn him too much when the civil war was over, because the bishop of Bristol had been true to his lord who was Richard II. Even

though Richard II was a fool and acted like a fool, and the bishop knew it, but still he had sworn and promised to support him. So he supported him, no matter what; he was loyal to him. That's why Henry says at the trial, "For though mine enemy thou has ever been, high sparks of honor in thee have I seen." But this isn't what we're talking about here at all. This is just is pure flattery: "[I] give unto you exceedingly great praise because of your firmness, and also the firmness of your people, in maintaining that which ye suppose [it's always what you suppose] to be your right and liberty; yea, ye do stand well, as if ye were supported by the hand of a god, in the defence of your liberty, and your property, and your country, or that which ye do call so."

This is an ironical touch. Throughout this letter he keeps contrasting Lachoneus's "wimps" with his own mighty men, you see. He rubs it in here. It's much more effective than name-calling would be. This is ironic; he's being almost sarcastic here. Verse 3: "And it seemeth a pity unto me, most noble Lachoneus, that ye should be so foolish and vain as to suppose that ye can stand against so many brave men who are at my command [your people are all right, but come on now], who do now at this time stand in their arms [the intimidating motif], and do await with great anxiety [they're just waiting to come down] for the word—Go down upon the Nephites and destroy them. [And he drops the disguise here—Mr. Nice Guy no more, he says.] And I, knowing of their unconquerable spirit, having proved them in the field of battle, and knowing of their everlasting hatred towards you because of the many wrongs which ye have done unto them . . ."

Of course, there's no hint in here anywhere of the fact that the issue is the crimes and the outrages that have been performed all these many years by the Gadiantons. He's going to tell us it's a noble society and we've been doing well, and you've forced us to do it. Therefore if they should come down against you they would visit you with utter destruction [now, if that isn't a threat—but] . . . feeling for your welfare [he says, that's what is worrying me], because of your firmness in that which ye believe to be right, and your noble spirit in the field of battle. Therefore I write unto you, desiring [all you have to do is give us everything you've got, and then we'll be your friends; save us the trouble of having to beat you and we'll appreciate that] that ye would yield up unto this my people, your cities, your lands, and your possessions, rather than that they should visit you with the sword and that destruction should come upon you. Or in other words, yield yourselves up unto us, and unite with us and become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren that ye may be like unto us—not our slaves, but our brethren and partners of all our substance."

After talking about everlasting hatred here, he wants recruits. Remember, they're being outnumbered. They're having a hard time here, and this is what he's after. They've been using the Zoramites to recruit, as you've seen, and they've been doing it by using the romantic appeal to younger people—come down and join the training camps down in the woods, or in the canyons where they were doing it, "And behold, I swear unto you, if ye will do this, with an oath, ye shall not be destroyed; but if ye will not do this [now, no longer Mr. Nice Guy; humanity has nothing to do with it—you do it my way or], I swear unto you with an oath, that on the morrow month [one month—he's going to give them one month to prepare] I will command that my armies shall come down against you, and they shall not stay their hand and shall spare not, but shall slay you, and . . . ye shall become extinct"—another age of extinction.

Verse 9: "And behold, I am Giddianhi [that's his name, and he had no trouble writing it, if that's all he had to write]; and I am the governor of this the secret society of Gadianton."

Now he starts talking. Most secret societies make this claim—that they’re ancient and that they’re essentially benevolent. That’s what he says. We’re a benevolent society. We’ve just suffered wrong, that’s all. You’ve done all the wronging, and we’ve been your victims. “And the works thereof I know to be good; and they are of ancient date and they have been handed down to us. And I write this epistle unto you, Lachoneus, and I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions without the shedding of blood.”

You see, this would be very nice. Nothing pleased Hitler more than having people just yield without it. He did not want war. Germans always enjoy war, but when he got what he wanted he was Mr. Nice Guy. Hitler was a very sweet person when he got exactly what he wanted. And this is a beautiful self-image: “I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government.” It’s all their rights and their government that they’re talking about all the way through. We are the ones; you’ve taken it away from us, so you forced us. We’re the real state and you’re not [they claim]. It’s like S.S.

Verse 11: “And now it came to pass when Lachoneus received this epistle he was exceedingly astonished.” Notice he was nonplussed at this total mendacity. He’d never heard of such nerve in his life. He knew perfectly well, and it’s obvious from the letter too, what kind of man Giddianhi really was and what he was really after. They had wronged themselves. He said they had brought it all on themselves, and he knew that and everybody else knew that. “Now behold, this Lachoneus, the governor, was a just man, and could not be frightened by the demands, . . . but he did cause that his people should cry unto the Lord.” And then he used the redoubt tactics against them. He gathered together the people into one place. What they’re doing is launching a general strike, because he knows that these robbers depend on them for their livelihood. If they just refuse to produce and have enough to live on [they can win]. In order to do that they must have enough reserve to live on, so they’re going to have a general strike, have their reserves, and starve the others out. They’re going to win that way. “. . . gather together their women, and their children, their flocks and their herds, and all their substance . . . unto one place. And he caused that fortifications should be built round about them.” This is on the large scale—robbing them of their labors. He placed guards round about, etc. And he said to the people, “As the Lord liveth, except ye repent of all your iniquities,” you are to blame—are you the good guys? Large-scale crime requires large-scale cooperation. This is what happens. We’ve been told many times the Mafia or the Medellín couldn’t survive a month if they didn’t have cooperation in city and town governments throughout the country. They have cooperation everywhere. They couldn’t carry on on their own. Any lawman will tell you that—they’d fold up almost instantly. But it takes massive cooperation for large-spread crime to thrive, as it thrives in this country today—so many people cooperating, so many people on the take. Who knows? You might innocently be on the take even without knowing it, as far as that goes, once these meshes spread out.

Verse 15: He [Lachoneus] said “Except ye repent of all your iniquities, and cry unto the Lord, ye will in nowise be delivered out of the hands of those Gadianton robbers. And so great and marvelous were the words and prophecies of Lachoneus that they did cause fear to come upon the people [he made them afraid]. . . . Now the chiefest among all the chief captains . . . was Gidgiddoni.” Well, now there’s another of these Egyptian names; this is a more elaborate one—Gidgiddoni versus Giddianhi They are period names; they are

common. You notice that Giddianhi and Gidgiddoni sound alike. You'll find that in particular periods in the Book of Mormon the names sound alike, as they do in ancient times a lot. Remember, in the fifth century everybody was called Constans or Constansius or Constantinus, all variations on Constans. There were three rivals: Maxim, Maximianus, Maximus, and there were Valentinians and Valens and there were Galerius and Galianus—emperors at the same time. Everybody would sort of share the same names. These two names are very much alike.

Well, the chief captains had “the spirit of revelation” and they were devoid of military ambition. “This Gidgiddoni was a great prophet among them, as also was the chief judge [a very different social organization from ours, you see]. Now the people said unto Gidgiddoni: Pray unto the Lord, and let us go up . . . and destroy them,” because they had faith in Gidgiddoni. But he said, no, that is not the way we do it. We're not going to make any preemptive strikes or any search and destroy or anything like that. If we do that, we'll get badly beaten. Clausewitz is right all the time. The defense is always the strongest position to take in war. So he says [in verse 21:] “If we should go up against them the Lord would deliver us into their hands.” We're not supposed to do that. All wars so far have been fought on Nephite soil, and if they invade, that's different. “We will wait till they shall come against us.”

So he sent out a “proclamation of Lachoneus . . . and did march forth by thousands.” They were gathering their stuff together; it was a big thing. “. . . they should gather themselves together to defend themselves against their enemies.” It's the redoubt psychology; it doesn't work for long. You must have enough supplies to outlast the enemy, and then you can do it. You must have strong enough defenses. They had everything they needed for that. It can't usually be worked, because you can't last for long. You can be starved out—that's the thing. But this time it was the other way around. It was the outer ones, the Gadiantons, that could be starved out because they didn't have a source of income in the land. If they started to cultivate or anything like that, immediately the Nephites would descend on them. It explains here what the economic arrangement was. Verse 24: “And there were a great many thousand people who were called Nephites, who did gather themselves together in this land [there was a curse upon the land northward] . . . and they did fortify themselves against their enemies; and they did dwell in one land, and in one body [and] . . . they did repent of all their sins.”

In ancient times and medieval times, on the great rivers of Europe, the Syech was the big island in the center where robber bands would retire, and these were very strong places. You'll find them in *Taras Bulba*, the great Russian novel about the people of the Syech. But this is the reverse. It's the good people who are in the Syech now, and the robbers are on the outside. But, you may think, they have the whole land around there; why don't they take it? Because it was scorched-earth policy. They've taken everything off it. This is very effective, as you know. This is what beat Hitler in Russia and Napoleon too, because the people left nothing for them to live on.

Verse 25: “ They did repent of all their sins [that's the important thing]; and they did put up their prayers unto the Lord their God. . . . And they were exceedingly sorrowful because of their enemies. And Gidgiddoni did cause that they should make weapons of war.”

Then chapter 4 is the general strike and how effective it was. The armies of robbers “began to come down and to sally forth from the hills.” Easy pickings. They found the land

vacant, but that was just it. There was nothing there—the land had been left desolate in a black-earth policy. And “there were no wild beasts nor game [they were depending on those] . . . save it were in the wilderness. And the robbers could not exist save it were in the wilderness, for the want of food; for the Nephites had left their lands desolate”—their own lands. They didn’t leave a thing for them; they could have burned their houses and all the rest.

When the Saints went south in 1857, Brigham Young ordered every house in Provo to be burned. They had straw and combustibles in every house in Provo. Every house was to be burned all at once. As it turned out, they didn’t have to do it, but they were ready to leave everything, burn all their crops, and leave everything blank so [the army] would have nothing to live on. That’s what defeated Johnston’s Army, actually; they had nothing to live on except what the Mormons sold them. A year after Johnston’s Army occupied, Brigham Young stood up in a general conference and said, “I thank God for the United States Army; I am \$1 million richer than I was a year ago.” As soon as he heard the army was coming, he hitched up his horse and buggy. He had a black footman and driver of whom he was very fond, and he said, Get down to Provo just as fast as you can and tell them that the army’s coming and that they’re to double the prices of everything—charge a dollar apiece for eggs and everything else. They did, and the army was glad to pay for them. The government was paying for it anyway, so they were able to sell produce to the army and make themselves very prosperous. It was the greatest source of profit they had at that very difficult time that they were in. The army struck, hoping to wipe them out in their weakness, and handed it all to them on a platter.

Verse 4: “Therefore, there was no chance for the robbers to plunder and to obtain food [that was their business], save it were to come in open battle against the Nephites.” This accounts for their generous offering. Armies do exist by coercing, by destroying. What kept the Thirty Years War going was a system that was invented by the Austrian general, a system of requisitions. The army would just go into town and requisition whatever it needed. There was no talk of contract or anything—in other words, it was living by plunder, and that’s what kept it going. The great Austrian general Wallenstein introduced requisitions, and everybody started doing it then. But they couldn’t make requisitions here because there was nobody home. They took “provisions, and horses and cattle, and flocks of every kind, that they might subsist for the space of seven years.” Now that again was a set policy of ancient times—the seven-year cycle. You know, the seven lean years and the seven fat years [in the story about Joseph in Egypt]. We have eleven-year cycles today because that’s the normal sun cycle. But the seven-year cycle was standard. You would get enough food for seven years, and this was a law in Israel too. Remember, every seven years was a year of release, the Lord’s year. The year of release was the seventh year, and the great year was the seven times seventh year, the 49th. So they were just following the old Jewish custom of getting all the stuff you’d need together for a seven-year cycle.

Verse 5: “Giddianhi found that it was expedient that he should go up to battle against the Nephites [They were forced to fight. The poor Gadiantons had no other source of income. What were they going to do?], for there was no way that they could subsist save it were to plunder and rob and murder. And they durst not spread themselves upon the face of the land.” If they tried to do it that way, then they exposed themselves everywhere. So they couldn’t raise grain; that would take too much time and effort. They didn’t want to do it anyway. They would be “sitting ducks” if they tried to go out and farm that way, because that’s what they had been doing to the Nephites all these years. So what would they do? What a picture! They decided they would have to make one big push. They were going all

out; we'll go for it now [they said], and this will do it. Boy, did they prepare for that! Verse 7: "Great and terrible was the day that they did come up to battle." It was going to be the steamroller now. This was Clausewitz's psychological policy of *Schrecklichkeit*, paralyzing your enemy with fear. They fixed that up. "They were girded about after the manner of robbers; and they had a lamb-skin about their loins, and they were dyed in blood, and their heads were shorn, and they had headplates upon them; and great and terrible was the appearance of the armies of Giddianhi, because of their armor, and because of their being dyed in blood."

It reminds you very much of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia who terrified the people mostly by their fantastic costumes. They wore the headplates with deer antlers, horns, wings, and all that sort of stuff. They would paint themselves as dragons to make themselves hideous, go out by night, and scare the daylights out of the peasants. This psychological effect was very important in the Middle Ages—to make yourself utterly hideous and then put a defiant device on your shield, defying all other persons.

Verse 8: "And it came to pass that the armies of the Nephites . . . had all fallen to the earth, and did lift their cries to the Lord their God." Of course, the armies of Giddianhi thought they really had them now, that they were terrified. It wasn't that at all. "They began to shout with a loud voice, because of their joy, for they had supposed that the Nephites had fallen with fear because of the terror of their armies. But it was God they feared, so it went on. Note the literary style in verse 11: "And the battle commenced in this the sixth month; and great and terrible was the battle thereof, yea, great and terrible was the slaughter thereof, insomuch that there never was known so great a slaughter among all the people of Lehi since he left Jerusalem." That was the battle of battles, all one side all out against all the other. And to their surprise the Nephites beat them back and pursued them as far as the borders of the wilderness. You can understand that this was the only time they gave the order "take no prisoners," and they didn't. "They should not spare any that should fall into their hands by the way; and thus they did pursue them and did slay them, to the borders of the wilderness." They got out into the wilderness. But they only defended their own turf, you notice. They pursued them to the borders, but not over the borders. They defend their lands, and that's it. Giddianhi was pursued and fled. He was killed, and that was the end of him, we're told. "And the robbers did not come again to battle," but still they had to live. They didn't kill them all, so they started coming back again.

They came to lay siege again in the twenty-first year, and they "cut them off from all their outward privileges." They tried to cut off the people of Nephi. When they went to work in the fields or trade or anything else, they would be waiting for them. And they [the Gadiantons] had another leader, Zemnariyah. This was an advantage to the Nephites, just what they wanted, because of their much provisions. They had enough to live on, but the others didn't. They were exposing themselves. Verse 19: "They had nothing save it were meat for their subsistence, . . . and wild game became scarce in the wilderness." That goes very fast, doesn't it? Suddenly, deer became scarce in Utah this year; the deer hunt was very poor. A few years ago it was lavish; we had all the deer we wanted, but not this year. Who knows? They come and go. In the 1950s when they were talking about the bomb and everybody was building bomb shelters, many people had the idea that they could go out in the mountains and live there until the war would be over. It wouldn't bother them; they could live on game [they thought]. They couldn't last a week that way; there wouldn't be enough at all. It was the same thing here; they had exhausted their resources. We don't have unlimited resources anymore.

Notice they [the Nephites] went out by day and by night, falling upon their armies. It was really a retreating and beaten army, like 1812 or like Xenophon's 10,000. They just kept harassing them all the time. They [the Gadianton's] had to do something; they were the ones that were desperate. Verse 23: "And it came to pass that Zemnariyah did give command unto his people that they should withdraw themselves from the siege, and march into the furthest parts of the land northward." So they really retreat now. Brigham Young said they retreated into the canyons and the gorges of the red rock country [that are now] Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, etc. That's the sort of country they went into. This became Gadianton country. Well, it certainly is today. They use those areas for various things. You'd better look out; there's some stuff that goes on there.

Well, "Gidgiddoni . . . did send out his armies in the night-time, and did cut off the way of their retreat. . . . When the robbers began their march, they were met by the armies of the Nephites both in their front and in their rear. [In other words, they didn't have a chance; they had been worn down completely.] . . . And there were many thousands who did yield themselves up prisoners. . . . And their leader, Zemnariyah was taken and hanged upon a tree." The same thing happened to Nehor; he was hanged upon a tree. This is a very interesting rite that is mentioned in the Book of Mormon. It's not mentioned in the Bible, but it is an important one.

We are told the Watchers were sent down to convert people in the time of Enoch when the world had gotten very wicked. After the sons and daughters of Adam apostatized, there was a crash program to try to turn things around. These Watchers were sent down to live upon the earth. They were tempted by the daughters of men, and they fell. They were led by Harūt and Marūt, and they perverted all the ordinances of the gospel, which they had. They preached that they were using them in righteousness, but they were using them for evil purposes. They were the first ones who ever rebelled, as happened in the case of Nehor. We are told that Nehor was the first in the Book of Mormon to rebel against the order the Lord had established. They had to be hanged because the earth would not receive them, as it would not receive Cain. Heaven, of course, couldn't receive them. This is in the Koran. Harūt and Marūt to this day are suspended between heaven and earth, hanging there, because heaven wouldn't have them and the earth wouldn't have them. Until the day of judgment comes, they have no place. They just have to be suspended there. And they can't even blight the air; the tree is cut down then. This whole thing is an ordinance. "They did fell the tree to the earth, and did cry with a loud voice, saying: . . ." This is a chant in which they were all led by a *stasiarch*. This was like trampling on the garments, a very well-attested Hebrew custom that we have in the Book of Mormon too, where we have the title of liberty. The people brought forth their garments, trampled on them, and said, may God trample on us if we break our covenants. The same thing happened here [in verse 29]: "May the Lord preserve his people in righteousness . . . that they may cause to be felled to the earth all who shall seek to slay them because of power and secret combinations, even as this man hath been felled to the earth [it was the old Hebrew custom that Jonathan Z. Smith has written about]. . . . May the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob [this is the old Jewish custom they are following; they are reciting a formula] protect this people in righteousness, so long as they shall call on the name of their God for protection. And it came to pass that they did break forth, all as one." They are all chanting in one voice.

How about this chanting of a whole nation all at once like that? Well, we are seeing it today in the main squares of Prague, Budapest, and even Sophia, Leipzig, and all over. The people are all singing together. In Prague they all sang the national anthem together, and they chant these things. It's a case of the whole nation coming together celebrating a new liberty and freedom, and they all chant together. Here we have it in the Book of Mormon. We are finally catching up with the Book of Mormon, we might say. These things that sound so strange and distant to us actually happen, and they are happening here when it says that all the people did rejoice with one voice and "did break forth, all as one, in singing, and praising their God for the great thing which he had done for them, in preserving them from falling into the hands of their enemies. . . . And their hearts were swollen with joy." God had delivered them because of their repentance. We are seeing something akin to that in the world today. Whoever dreamed two years ago that anyone would see such a thing actually happen.

Well, we come to a happy part here now. Everybody was converted, and we could say, this is going to be wonderful now; everything is going to go well from now on. Of course, if we know the Book of Mormon, we'll say, don't fool yourself—or if you know human nature. 3 Nephi 5:1: "There was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken. [Now that is complete conversion. It's like the celebration of Salamis, isn't it?—a magnificent affair.] . . . And they knew that it must be expedient that Christ had come [they had already had the signs]. . . . Therefore they did forsake all their sins." Now this is going to be a happy state. Any bets? How long is this going to last. Well, six years is the outside limit. Within six years they were very wicked people. That's pretty good to hang on for six years. They didn't kill all the prisoners. They took all the robber prisoners and caused the word of God to be preached to them. They rehabilitated them, in other words. They gave them lands, and they were set at liberty. This is what they did to those terrible robbers; they preached the gospel to them and set them at liberty. Verse 5: "As many as were found breathing out threatenings against their brethren [if they hadn't laid down their arms] were condemned and punished according to the law." We are not told what it is here, but they weren't given the same satisfaction. For anyone who wanted to come around it was fine, and they gave them lands to settle on.

Then there is an account of the record here [in verse 8], of the things that happened. These were great times. "Yea, this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people in the space of twenty and five years [this is the twenty-five year period]. . . . There are records which do contain all the proceedings of this people; and a shorter but true account was given by Nephi. . . . I do make the record on plates which I have made with mine own hands. [This record is by Mormon, and this is made after it is all over. He is named after the waters of Mormon, where the church was first established by Alma.] And behold I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among the people"—where he first baptized them by the waters of Mormon, where it was so beautiful, and he sang a hymn about the waters of Mormon.

All he has given us is the Book of Mormon. In verse 15 it tells us what the Book of Mormon is; it's a small book. "Yea, a small record of that which hath taken place from the time that Lehi left Jerusalem, even down until the present time." We still call it the Book of Mormon because it was edited by Mormon after all these things were over. See, Mormon was the last survivor, except for his son Moroni. "And then I do make a record of the things which I have seen with mine own eyes. . . . There are many things which,

according to our language we are not able to write.” How is it possible that there could be something you couldn’t write because of your language—that your language wouldn’t lend itself to writing like this? I don’t think English would lend itself to writing like that at all.

This is a very interesting note on race [in verse 20]. “I am Mormon, and a pure descendant of Lehi.” Well, I thought everybody was a descendant of Lehi. Oh no, not by any means. It is something to boast about, to be a pure descendant of Lehi. The blood of dozen of stocks is all mixed up by now. So when he says he’s a pure descendant of Lehi, there’s a reason for saying that. It’s a kind of boast; he is proud of that. He said many have sneaked out of Jerusalem, including Rabbi Akiba, without anyone knowing. He said, we got out of Jerusalem, and you won’t find any record of it back there, because nobody knew about it when we left.

Verse 23: “Yea, and surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God. And surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth.” This includes far, far more people than you ever dreamed of. We see now how Abraham’s descendants multiplied and filled the earth at a time when the population had sunk almost to nothing. It had been a time of great extermination. “Even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them. And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth unto their own lands [notice there is more than one land for the gathering], from whence they have been dispersed.”

Now we begin a new epic here. We’re on the lap where we start racing. There is going to be one more very bad time, then the great destruction, and then the coming of the Lord. These things go fast, so we will have to take them fast. I want to get to the coming of the Lord. That’s very important. We’ve got to get at least that far here. We only have four more times [this semester]. These are the exciting chapters; they really pick up now.

Look at this: Joseph has been writing the Book of Mormon, and he has gone 410 pages. He has kept up a pretty good pace with every idea you could think of—all sorts of preaching, sins, and everything. He has given us a pageant of a civilization. What can he do to top this? This is a hard act to follow. What can he possibly say after that? Well, now comes the real climax. Now it really builds up to something absolutely colossal! How could you handle that if you were writing the Book of Mormon at the age of 23 to play a practical joke on your family. That’s what Mrs. Brodie said, you know.