



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Transcript

The following transcript represents the views of the speaker and not the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH AND MORMON STUDIES

Byron Merrill

Moroni

The Man and the Message (Parts 1 & 2)

F
A
R
M
S

Summary:

Byron Merrill discusses Moroni's mission, both during his mortal life and in his role as the angel who brought the Book of Mormon to the last dispensation. The scriptures tell of the strength of his educational preparation and his relationship with his father. Moroni deals with signs of the latter days such as pollutions, fashions, pride, and miracles. Merrill describes the latter-day functions of Moroni and the reason why his statue is atop so many temples.

Transcript
Book of Mormon, Teachings

FARMS
Brigham Young University
P.O. Box 7113
University Station
Provo, UT 84602
1-800-327-6715
(801) 373-5111
www.farmsresearch.com

\$3.00

MER-T1



Other FARMS publications on similar topics:

"I Only Am Escaped Alone to Tell Thee" by Lisa Bolin Hawkins and Gordon C. Thomasson
(H&T-84)

"The Book of Mormon: A Pattern in Preparing a People to Meet Christ" by E. Dale LeBaron
(LEB-T1)

"A Strange Order of Battle" by Hugh W. Nibley (N-APP-17)

"Fools before God" by Robert L. Millet (MIL-T6)

"BYU Commencement Speech: Leaders to Managers" by Hugh W. Nibley (N-CMS)

"Faith, Hope, and Charity" by Larry E. Dahl (DAH-T1)

"Gifts" by Hugh W. Nibley (N-GIF)

For a complete listing of FARMS publications,
call 1-800-FARMS-15 for a FARMS catalog.

@ 1996 by Byron Merrill

Transcript of a lecture given at the FARMS Book of Mormon Lecture Series.

Moroni: The Man and the Message (Part 1)

Byron Merrill

Good morning class. We're here today to talk about Moroni, the man and his message, the voice of one who lived alone for decades, was tempered by isolation, and gives to our every lonely society a message of both warning and hope.

Have you ever asked yourself who Moroni was? We have a statue of him on top of a very special hill in New York. We also have statues of him on pinnacles on the top of most of our latter-day temples. When you read the end of the Book of Mormon, who do you see? The lonely survivor of a once-mighty civilization whose mission bridged two dispensations. A prophetic seer who had been raised in a righteous home in the midst of a world probably not too far removed from our own, a world collapsing from violence and wickedness around his family. A man who saw our day and issued divine warnings and sacred counsel to us to give us the reasons and the courage to go on in the face of adversity.

Do you think of Moroni as the abridger of the Jaradite records? That was a calling of great magnitude. I don't think we give him enough credit for what he did there. Are you aware that Moroni is the one who engraved the entire sealed portion of the Book of Mormon, records so sacred that we don't even have them yet? Do you think of Moroni as the recorder of some plain and precious truths? These were deliberately deleted from the Bible and needed to be restored to clarify what we know about the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Have you reflected on him as a man who, after years of being alone hiding from the Lamanites who had killed his family and all his friends and associates, was able to refer to them as "my brethren whom I love" (Ether 12:38).

Personally, I see all of these together at the end of the book. I see him as one who had triumphed, one who had endured well, one who had the assurance of the Lord that his offering had been acceptable. Here is a prophet whose mortal lifetime had spanned the end of the fourth and the beginning of the

fifth centuries of the Christian Era. Remarkably, even though he had some ministry among his own people, his primary calling, his great mission in life, was to you and me who lived in the last days, through his writings.

Joseph Smith met this angelic being, now a resurrected being, when he was just seventeen years of age. It was the night of 21 September 1823, symbolically the first day of harvest. Joseph was only seventeen. He went to his knees to ask for forgiveness and for another revelation or vision, a knowledge of his standing in the sight of God, and Moroni appeared. Let's turn to the Joseph Smith—History in the Pearl of Great Price.

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people.

He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants;

Also, that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.

So, Moroni comes to Joseph Smith, introduces himself, and then talks about the Book of Mormon, the special plates that are in the Hill Cumorah, as it comes to be called. He talks about the Urim and Thummim being there with the plates in order for them to be translated. Immediately following this discussion, Joseph Smith tells us, Moroni begins to quote various scriptures to Joseph. He quotes part of the third chapter of Malachi and all of the fourth chapter of Malachi. He quotes the entire eleventh chapter of Isaiah and then portions of the third chapter of Acts and the second chapter of Joel. Joseph then says, in verse 41: “He quoted many other passages of scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here.”

In 1835 in the *Messenger and Advocate*, Oliver Cowdery wrote regarding the appearance of Moroni to Joseph Smith. Now, we don't know exactly how

much Oliver knew, but we have a sense that because he had been the scribe, largely, for the Book of Mormon and because he was then the assistant president of the Church in 1835, he and Joseph had spent much time discussing what Moroni had told Joseph. Cowdery mentions many scriptures that Moroni either read to Joseph or quoted to Joseph, or he at least mentions many scriptures in explanation of the things that Moroni told Joseph Smith. He mentions scriptures from Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and 1 Corinthians, in addition to those specifically listed in the Joseph Smith—History.

Moroni came three times that night to Joseph Smith, once the next morning, and then once later the next day at Cumorah. We know that at least four of those times, he repeated the same information. These scriptures were repeated over and over. They made an indelible impression on Joseph's mind. We wonder how long the visit took. Joseph had gone to bed we don't know when. He says that after the third visit that night, he heard the cock crow. Well, in September, how long would night be? A few hours at least. Our guess is, and this is a reasonable guess, that Moroni's visits each lasted one and a half to two hours. We can read, from the history, the entire record of Moroni's visit in about two minutes, which means there is a lot more material that was passed on and a lot more information than we have here.

In the course of the several years that followed, Moroni visited Joseph Smith on many occasions. We have at least twenty-two recorded instances that are listed. In essence, Moroni became Joseph's personal tutor over a period of time—What would it be like to have an angel for a tutor?—in preparing Joseph for the restoration of the gospel and all that was to happen. As we speak about Moroni today, it is useful to back up and look at the life of his father to give us a sense of the world in which Moroni was raised.

Moroni had a most illustrious father, Mormon. At the age of ten, the prophet of God, Ammaron, had observed that Mormon was a quick child, sober, quick to observe, and so Ammaron gave Mormon an assignment having to do with the plates of Nephi. At the age of fifteen, Mormon said he "was visited of the Lord, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus"

(Mormon 1:15). In that same year, he became a leader of Nephite armies. He led those armies for thirty-five to thirty-six years, approximately. Then he became so disturbed by the wickedness of his people that he backed away and called himself “an idle witness” to record what the people were doing (Mormon 3:16).

Moroni must have been born sometime during the decade of peace in the Nephite and Lamanite civilization, from about A.D. 350 to 360, or perhaps just thereafter, in the bitter war years that followed. We don’t know exactly how old he was at the battle of Cumorah, but he was old enough to lead a section of the army.

Do you think that Mormon would be excited to have a newborn son—that is, Mormon and his wife? All of us would be, yet he must have realized that his son Moroni was going to grow up in a very difficult world, a world where he was going to be torn in two different directions. In a profound sense, Moroni was born into two different worlds—a righteous family and a world of decadence. This was a world where, in Mormon’s words, people were “without principle, and past feeling” (Moroni 9:20). His new son was named Moroni, probably because of the great admiration he (Mormon) had for the Nephite military captain of four centuries earlier, Captain Moroni, from the book of Alma.

Let’s turn to Alma 48:11–13 and verse 17:

And Moroni was a strong and a mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery;

Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people.

Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.

Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men.

We rarely see in scripture a prophet writing about another prophetic individual, as the Captain Moroni was, in such glowing terms. It is easy for us to see why Mormon would name his new son Moroni. What an appropriate name, knowing the battles, both spiritual and temporal, that this young son was going to have to face in his lifetime. We know virtually nothing about Moroni's growing up years, but we do know that after fifteen to seventeen years, his father returns, because of his strong feelings of love for his people, to be their leader.

We have a clue that Moroni must not have had a great deal of formal education. He is continually, from the first time we meet him in chapter 8 of Mormon to the last time we see his writings on the title page of the Book of Mormon, worrying about his weakness in writing. He is saying, "Please don't make fun of this because of my weakness in writing." Perhaps he never had two weeks of school together where they were not fleeing or fighting some place. Maybe he was just tutored at home. Undoubtedly, it was in his home circle, too, where Moroni learned the lessons of salvation and the gospel and learned how to recognize the Spirit.

In one recorded letter from father to son, Mormon stated, "My beloved son, Moroni, I rejoice exceedingly that your Lord Jesus Christ hath been mindful of you, and hath called you to his ministry, and to his holy work" (Moroni 8:2). This work, which Moroni calls his calling to the ministry, must have been some leadership calling in the church, because his father also instructs him to try to do away with the gross error that has come into his area of the kingdom, having to do with infant baptism.

Apparently, late in his life, Mormon is given the assignment to abridge the records of the Nephite people. He says he is going to make a "small abridgment" (Mormon 5:9). This abridgment, plus the small plates of Nephi, are entrusted later to his son Moroni. At the terrible battle of Cumorah, where the Nephites are finally destroyed, Moroni leads a group of ten thousand men in that battle. His ten thousand are destroyed. Moroni is one of only twenty-four Nephites left alive. Mormon 6 is an account of the battle itself and its aftermath, where Mormon laments the destruction and loss of his people.

Mormon 7 records Mormon's final words, as addressed in powerful simplicity to the descendants of the Lamanites. Then, with Cumorah over and the Nephites as a people destroyed, the great future ministry of Moroni begins. That is where we meet the man Moroni, in Mormon 8. Let's turn there. This is the first time we really meet Moroni.

Try to put yourself in his position just a little bit. Have any of you ever been really lonely? I mean, *really* lonely? Moroni has been lonely for some time now. Cumorah is over. We don't know when Moroni's mother was killed or lost. All his family, all his friends, all his associates are gone. He begins to write in words of extreme loneliness and deep pain; he has no idea what God has in store for him as he records these words:

Behold I, Moroni, do finish the record of my father, Mormon. Behold, I have but few things to write, which things I have been commanded by my father.

And now it came to pass that after the great and tremendous battle at Cumorah, behold, the Nephites who had escaped into the country southward were hunted by the Lamanites, until they were all destroyed.

And my father also was killed by them, and I even remain alone to write the sad tale of the destruction of my people. But behold, they are gone, and I fulfil the commandment of my father. And whether they will slay me, I know not.

Therefore I will write and hide up the records in the earth; and whither I go it mattereth not.

Behold, my father hath made this record, and he hath written the intent thereof. And behold, I would write it also if I had room upon the plates, but I have not; and ore I have none, for I am alone. My father hath been slain in battle, and all my kinsfolk, and I have not friends nor whither to go; and how long the Lord will suffer that I may live I know not. (Mormon 8:1-5)

Can you feel Moroni's spirit through those words a little bit? He is completely, abjectly alone, and he doesn't know what the future holds. "I know not," he says over and over in these verses. He just doesn't know what's coming.

He then records for us briefly what is going on among the Lamanites. Terrible wars. He tries to stay away. He is hiding from them. He does, in just a little moment of lightness and happiness, mention, in verses 10 and 11 of this chapter, that he and his father had been visited and ministered to by the Three Nephites, who were translated beings. Then, apparently, he gets ready to close

his record in verse 12 and 13, not realizing what is going to come down the road for him:

And whoso receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these. Behold, I am Moroni; and were it possible, I would make all things known unto you.

Behold, I make an end of speaking concerning this people. I am the son of Mormon, and my father was a descendant of Nephi.

Most of us who have spent a bit of time with this text guess that Moroni left the record right there. He was done with that verse. He had no room. He had no plates. He was just finishing his father's record and gave us a few short closing verses, saying: "I don't know what the future holds. I make an end here." And then all of a sudden we have verse 14: "And I am the same who hideth up this record unto the Lord." It's as if he comes back and says, "I am the one who hid it. I am now back. He's identifying himself again. There is something remarkable that has happened between these verses, it seems to me, at least. The Moroni of verse 13 is not the Moroni of verse 14, by which, I mean, he is the same person, the same individual, but something remarkable has happened to him. All of a sudden, Moroni has a sense of mission that is not apparent in these first thirteen verses. He has received a call from God telling him what he must do with this record and what his responsibilities are. He now begins to speak with power, as if he were a prophet. We never hear words of loneliness from him again in all his writing.

He warns us, first of all, not to condemn their faults. "If there are faults in this book, they are the faults of a man," he says. He is concerned about his inability to write or express himself very well. You and I don't typically notice that as we are reading. Moroni was very self-conscious about that weakness in writing.

Then he starts to talk about the day when the Book of Mormon will come forth. Let me ask you the question—when did the Book of Mormon come forth? Oh, I hear 1823, Moroni's appearance; in 1827, when he got the plates; in 1828 or 1829, when it is translated; in 1830, when it's published. I would suggest to you that only a few thousands of people ever saw the Book of

Mormon in Joseph Smith's lifetime. How many millions will read it in 1995, or 1996, or 2000? How many million copies are we printing every year? When is the Book of Mormon coming forth to the world? I would suggest to you that it is in our day. Moroni is speaking very much to our day—much more so than he was speaking in some ways, to our forefathers, our pioneer forefathers, who had this record. He starts to speak in very strong terms, saying, "You, better be careful, you that 'breathe out wrath and strifes against the work of the Lord'" (Mormon 8:21).

In verse 23, he tells us, "Search the prophecies of Isaiah." Does that sound familiar? If you have been reading from the beginning of the book, you will know that Nephi quotes him and quotes him and quotes him. Moroni says, "I can't write them. I don't have room or time to write them. You have them. Just search them, because Isaiah spoke of all things having to do with the covenant of the Lord to the house of Israel." This is the beginning.

He then talks about the time when the Book of Mormon is going to come forth. Look at verse 26: "And no one need say they shall not come, for they surely shall, for the Lord hath spoken it; for out of the earth shall they come, by the hand of the Lord, and none can stay it; and it shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away." Does that sound familiar? Do we live in such a day, when not only the world at large, but even largely the Christian world says that miracles are done away? Those are New Testament things. Those are not current times.

Verse 27 says: "And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness." Moroni is going to talk more than anyone in the Book of Mormon about secret combinations. He attributes the destruction of the entire Nephite civilization to secret combinations. He is speaking here to our day and time. I think we need to be a little bit broad in our reading of "the blood of saints." I don't think he is speaking to just members of the Church. I think he is speaking of the blood of all innocents, all those whose blood will cry from the ground. Think of all that is going on in the world around us.

Verse 28 says: "Yea, it shall come in a day when the power of God shall be denied, and churches become defiled and be lifted up in the pride of their hearts." We should be thinking of current events when we read these verses.

In verse 29 we read: "Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be heard of fires, and tempests, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands." *Vapors of smoke*—that's a great phrase, isn't it? I asked a class recently what they thought that meant, and some of them suggested it was Kuwait on fire. Well, that is an interesting approach. Interestingly, as I was studying the Old Testament last year in Israel, it occurred to me that, in the book of Joel when it talks about blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the words in Hebrew are not really *pillars*, but *date palms* of smoke. I thought, "What a strange phrase, *blood and fire and date palms of smoke*." I thought it was strange until I saw some wild date palms in the Middle East. They are actually fairly short and squatty. They are not the tall elegant things that you see on the coast of California. And their fronds, untrimmed, hang to the ground. If you can envision a tree whose trunk looks like this with fronds hanging all the way to the ground, you would look at it and say, "Oh, now I know what Joel was saying." You and I don't call them "date palms"; we call them "mushroom clouds." It is almost the same thing. It is just a beautiful expression of a picture. "Blood and tempests, and fire, and vapors of smoke in foreign lands." Very picturesque. Moroni is seeing something and is trying to express it to us.

He continues: "And there shall also be heard of wars, rumors of wars, and earthquakes in divers places." How many earthquakes have there been this year? Anybody keeping a count? I lost track after about eight or ten in various places in the world. And then comes this remarkable verse, verse 31: "Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be great pollution upon the face of the earth." The word *pollution* is not used very much in the Book of Mormon. Does it sound like Moroni is looking at our time? The Book of Mormon will come in a day when there is great pollution upon the face of the earth. Admittedly, Moroni goes on to talk about spiritual pollution—verse 31 says, "There shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceiving, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations"—but I would suggest to you,

just to think about, that spiritual pollution and environmental pollution tend to go hand in hand. People who are committing these kinds of sins aren't terribly concerned about throwing out their hamburger wrappers on the freeway, are they? And this is a very small example.

Let me read you a statement by President Kimball:

I have traveled much in various assignments over the years, and when I pass through the lovely countryside or fly over the vast and beautiful expanses of our globe, I compare these beauties with many of the dark and miserable practices of men, and I have the feeling that the good earth can hardly bear our presence upon it. I recall the occasion when Enoch heard the earth mourn, saying, "Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me?" (Moses 7:48).¹

Moroni says the Book of Mormon will come in a day when there will be great pollution upon the face of the earth. As a church and people, do we take a stand on such things? Moral pollution, absolutely. Do we take a stand on other kinds of pollution? We do. From the days of Joseph Smith to the present time, we are told not to pillage and burn the earth. We are told that we are stewards over earthly things, from the very earliest times. We are to bless and till and care for the earth. When the Saints came across the plains, Brigham Young told them not to set the prairies on fire and not to kill the bison unless they were out of meat. I wonder how much Moroni is seeing of the actual polluted state of the earth as he makes a comment like that.

Let's go a little further and see what else Moroni sees in our day. All of a sudden, he starts to get quite personal. Verse 34 says: "Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you." Now, we need to read this in the first person, as if he were talking to us individually. The next verse reads: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing." Most of us read that verse and think that Moroni has some general view of the last days and that he knows there is going to be a lot

¹ Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *ENSIGN* (June 1976): 4.

of bad things happening. I think that is much too broad a reading. I think Moroni is being very personal here.

Now, I will make this up. This is just Brother Merrill's version of what's happening, but try to think of this for a moment. Moroni is living in a cave. He's been reading a lot of Isaiah lately from the plates that are in his possession. One starlit night, he is sitting at the mouth of the cave with a little fire and wondering about what he has been reading, just contemplating it. An angel from heaven comes down and sets up a screen and puts on a video for him. And what does he see? Us. Here. He sees us in our homes, at school, at work. He sees what we do at night and during the day, on our dates, in our classes. He just sits and watches us for a while. Is it possible for the Lord to show him us that way? Sure it is. There is no time in the presence of God. He just sits and watches us. "I have seen you. Jesus Christ has shown you unto me," he says.

What makes me really nervous about that is the very next line: "And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts" (Mormon 8:35). Oh, he really did see us. He's got our number. Notice what he says about pride: "There are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying" (v. 35). Why do you think that Moroni automatically associates pride with fine clothing? It is a Book of Mormon thing, isn't it? It really is. It starts in 1 Nephi 8 with Lehi's vision, with the great and spacious building representing the pride of the world. Lehi saw this building and noted, "Their manner of dress was exceeding fine" (1 Nephi 8:27). A few chapters later, Nephi sees the same vision, and he sees the growth of a great and abominable church, the kingdom of the devil. He writes, "And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing" (1 Nephi 13:7). And he says they "are the desires of this great and abominable church" (1 Nephi 13:8). That makes me a little nervous. Then I read Moroni's words. He is watching us. "You are all wearing fine clothing," he says. Are we in big trouble, or what?

Keep in mind, why this issue? Why this thing? Because it is so apparent. Appearances are very important. We make big statements by what we wear. Stop and think for a minute about what Moroni is seeing and what he means by it. Silks, fine-twined linen—why are they so much spoken about in the Book of Mormon? I'm wearing a silk tie. I can almost read the label. This is fine-twined linen. You can't see the individual threads of this shirt very well. Do any of you know much about fabric? How long would it take you to weave by hand the fabric to make this shirt? A long time. Could the ancients do that? Sure they could. They could weave anything as fine as we can, virtually. But only the wealthy could wear them, because took too long. Poor people wore coarse cloth or skins. And what about scarlets and purples? Why are they used in this same context? Because they were such expensive dyes. I am teaching New Testament now. Lydia, in the book of Acts, the first convert on the European Continent, is a seller of purple dye. She makes a really handsome living out of selling one color of dye, because it was so hard to find and so expensive.

You and I can all afford to dress like this, can't we? Some of us are dressed like this right now. So, what is the big deal? What is Moroni working on right here? I have a sense that Satan has decided that it is no longer a matter of whether I can afford to buy a silk tie, but whether it has the right label on it. When I was a little boy, labels used to be on the inside of clothing. That may seem odd to you. They used to be on the inside, but now they have moved to the outside of clothes. That's the way you can tell from a distance if someone is important—from the labels he or she is wearing on various items of clothing. It is a serious thing in our society, is it not? I sat behind a young lady in a class not long ago in the Eyring Science Center. I was on the top row. I had gone in early and was going to attend the class. She sat a couple of rows ahead of me. I was looking down over her shoulder as she was reading a magazine. She kept flipping page to page. I thought, What kind of a magazine is this? It was nothing except clothing and cosmetic ads. I thought, there has to be some text in here. After a multitude of pages, she finally came to the front

page of the magazine. It was entitled *Self*, and I thought, What an appropriate title for a magazine. It fits our generation. It works really well.

President Benson gave the famous talk on pride. In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride. It is always considered a sin. No matter how the world uses the term, we must understand how God uses the term so that we can understand the language of holy writ and profit thereby. President Benson defined pride this way: "The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and toward our fellowmen. *Enmity* means 'hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.' . . . Pride is essentially competitive in nature." And then, quoting the well-known Christian writer C. S. Lewis, he said, "'Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man.'"² That's a beautiful statement. It's not a matter of having things; it is a matter of having more than someone else. Pride comes in the competition, in looking sideways to judge how much we have compared to someone else, as opposed to looking up to God.

Moroni notices here and comments in these next few verses, verses 36, 37, and 38, that the churches of the world have become proud. He says, in verse 37, "For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted."

As we read through these verses, I wanted you to note something that I have noticed over the years in studying the Book of Mormon. Much of what Moroni says is a mirrored image of something Nephi said toward the end of Nephi's writings, starting about 2 Nephi 25, as he is winding up his work at the end. There is a frequent repetition of themes over and over. We get the same ideas and even in the same words at times. Why? Well, Moroni has obviously been reading Nephi's words a lot. But in addition to that, I would suggest that the Book of Mormon is one of the evidences of the law of witnesses. The law of witnesses says there will be two or three witnesses to all things. Nephi is the witness at the beginning of the Book. Mormon puts the record together and is the great bearer of witness that this is his work. And

then his son Moroni steps into the picture and is the third witness at the end of the book, using almost identical language as that used in the beginning. We see this quite often.

For instance, 2 Nephi 28:12–13 says, “Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing.” It is almost as if Moroni is just paraphrasing those verses. Then we proceed to a clarion call to repentance in these last few verses of chapter 8 of Mormon. Verse 38: “O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker.”

Why pride? Why is it such a huge issue? I have wondered about this, especially since President Benson’s landmark talk on the issue. It seems to be that we have lost a sense of our personal relationship with our Heavenly Father, of being his children. If we knew who we were and really believed that, we would be filled with gratitude and love, with thanksgiving and humility. Instead, having lost a sense of that relationship, it’s as if we stand naked and vulnerable before the whole world. We don’t know who we are. We don’t know what we are supposed to be. And so we seek to surround ourselves with things, with prominent things, not just so that we look important to someone else, but so that we feel important to ourselves. It is almost a sense of hopelessness.

In case, as we read these verses in this chapter of Moroni’s writing, we don’t think he is talking to us, all of a sudden, in the middle of verse 38, he says: “Why have ye polluted the holy church of God?” You can read that a number of ways. He could be talking about the early church that went into apostasy, or is he speaking to us as members of the Church in this day? There is only one holy church of God. We belong to it. I think Moroni is asking, “Why have you polluted that church by your attitudes?” Don’t ever read this and point the finger elsewhere. Moroni is wanting us to point it straight in. He wants us to be introspective with all these things he is talking about.

² Ezra Taft Benson, “Beware of Pride,” *ENSIGN* (May 1989): 4.

I am speaking to a group of good people here who probably aren't terribly concerned with some of these things, especially at your age. You don't worry too much about having the fanciest new clothing, or the fastest new car, I hope, or the biggest house, or the newest boat. But you know, sometimes, regardless of where we are, we have some difficulties, because, as President Benson said, "Pride is the universal sin, the great vice." For emphasis, he repeated, "Yes, pride *is* the universal sin, the great vice."³ It afflicts all of us from time to time in one way or another. Maybe you would like to get better grades or have someone you like know you get better grades. Maybe you would like to have a different calling at church, one that is more visible. I joke with people your age, saying that anyone who really wants to be a bishop deserves it. You deserve to have that opportunity and find what it is really like.

I had the occasion, a few years ago, to call a young man and his wife to be the nursery leaders in the ward. He did most of the talking. It was a ward with lots of children—over thirty in the nursery! We chatted for some time, and he had all kinds of potential excuses. When I finally pinned him down, he said, "Brother Merrill, I will be real honest with you. I am afraid that if you put me in the nursery, I will be forgotten." I appreciated the fact that he finally came clean with me. I didn't have enough time to sit around and listen to this forever. And then a feeling came to me very powerfully. I had a good legalistic answer. That was my training. I had a good legal answer as to why he ought to take the calling, when all of a sudden, the power of the Spirit came upon me, and I said, "I promise you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that if you will accept this calling, in faith, and fulfill it humbly, you will never ever be forgotten by those that matter." I learned something very powerful from what I had just said. I had always known it in my head, but I had never felt it so strongly in my heart. All the members are needed; all the callings, are needed. The Lord has a perfect program to fit together.

A dozen years ago, I lost my mother to cancer. She had a favorite poem that became her favorite when she stood at my father's side through many

³ Ibid., 6.

church callings over the years. A lot of people felt she didn't have an "important" calling in the Church. Her responsibility was to stand at his side, to support and sustain him so that he could do all that he was called to do. And that is why I think she liked this little phrase so much. It goes like this:

"Father, where should I work today?"
and my love flowed warm and free.
Then He pointed me out a tiny spot
and said, "Tend that for me."
I answered quickly, "Oh no, not that!
Why, no one would ever see
No matter how well my work was done,
Not that little place for me."
And the words He spoke, they were not stern,
He answered me tenderly,
"Oh little one, search that heart of thine;
Art thou working for them or me?
Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee."

Anonymous

When we read this chapter of Moroni—a strong, stern warning—I suggest we all look inside and ask ourselves if we are doing what the Lord wants us to do here and now—if we are on the right path, basically.

We then go to Mormon 9. Moroni is winding up warning us strongly. He is speaking in the first few verses to those who do not believe in Christ, and he is almost sarcastic. He says to the unbelieving, essentially, "Will you still not believe when God rolls the heavens together like a scroll and burns the whole earth with fire? Will you still not believe in that day?" (see Mormon 9:2). (Almost every verse in this chapter could be a topic for a lesson or talk, if you are interested.)

Note again the similarity of Moroni's words to those of Nephi: "For behold, I am God; and I am a God of miracles; and I will show unto the world that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and I work not among the children of men save it be according to their faith" (2 Nephi 27:23). Notice how Moroni says it in Mormon 9:9–11:

For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing?

And now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is shadow of changing, then have

ye imagined up unto yourselves a god who is not a God of miracles.

But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

I can't help read this chapter, as he talks about miracles, specifically in verse 21, without wondering about miracles in my own life: "Behold, I say unto you that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth" (Mormon 9:21).

He mentions in verse 20 that if miracles cease, it is because faith has ceased. So I ask you, When was the last time you wrote in your journal, "A miracle happened to me"? Have you written that lately? I sit down at the office early in the morning and type my journal for the previous day or two. Miracles in our lives are usually the manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. Sometimes I think we are so used to having them, because the Holy Ghost is so close, that we don't pay attention to them. Someone said that "a coincidence is a miracle in which God remains anonymous." When was the last time you had a really good coincidence happen? Are you having miracles in your life? My impression is that if you are not, it is because you are not recognizing them as such, for one, or because there's a lack of faith. I hope that, for most of us, that second reason is not a possibility. Maybe we need to be paying a little more careful attention.

Let's move on to Mormon 9:29: "See that ye are not baptized unworthily; see that ye partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily; but see that ye do all things in worthiness, and do it in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God; and if ye do this, and endure to the end, ye will in nowise be cast out." Do you want to know how to gain eternal life? Be baptized worthily, and then partake of the sacrament worthily every week. You are on your way to eternal life. That is a very good formula right there in that little verse.

As we come to the end of this chapter, Moroni apparently thinks he is finishing his work. He bids us a very strong farewell, saying that those who have gone before him have prayed that these words would come to us, and he prays that their prayers will be answered. Now look at verse 37: "And

may the Lord Jesus Christ grant that their prayers may be answered according to their faith; and may God the Father remember the covenant which he hath made with the house of Israel; and may he bless them forever, through faith on the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." This is an ending. It almost sounds as if Moroni has finished. It is possible that Moroni even buried plates at this point in time. And then at a later date, he apparently returns. The Lord has given him a very big assignment: to abridge the record of Ether, the record of the Jaradite people. And so that is what Moroni does in the book of Ether.

This record, from the twenty-four plates of gold found by the people of Limhi, was originally translated into the Nephite tongue by King Mosiah. But it seems to us, as we read Moroni's rendering of it here, that he is not using Mosiah's translation, but that he is translating it afresh. I say that because he talks about the power of the language of the brother of Jared. He is probably reading it in the original, to get a sense of the power.

Moroni, at this point, has absolutely no one else to talk to except you and me. Moroni is alone for the better part of thirty-five years—from the time of Cumorah until the time of his final writing to us in Moroni 10. He has no one else to visit with, and so he just talks to us. He is writing the record of the Jaradites, but every so often, he stops and says, "By the way . . ." Look with me at Ether 2:9: "And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land." *We* who? Moroni and us. That is who he is talking to. We are his class, if you will.

Notice, in verse 10 he says: "For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off." I have been really intrigued by that phrase, *the fulness of iniquity*. How bad do you have to be? Seems to be that many nations today are pretty ripe. How do you stop a fruit from ripening once it starts? I have thought about that quite a bit, and I have come up with only one possible conclusion: a miracle. A miracle is about the only way to stop a fruit from turning from ripe to rotten.

President J. Reuben Clark made this interesting statement about this verse in Ether:

We are not given the step-by-step backsliding of this Jareditic civilization till it reached the social and governmental chaos the record sets out, but those steps seem wholly clear from the results. Put into modern terms, we can understand them. First there was a forsaking of the righteous life, and the working of wickedness; then must have come the extortion and oppression of the poor by the rich; then retaliation and reprisal by the poor against the rich; then would come a cry to share the wealth which should belong to all; then the easy belief that society owed every man a living whether he worked or not; then the keeping of a great body of idlers; then when community revenues failed to do this, as they always have failed and always will fail, a self-helping by one to the goods of his neighbor; and finally when the neighbor resisted, as resist he must, or starve with his family, then death to the neighbor and all that belong to him. This was the decreed "fulness of iniquity."⁴

That is a strong statement. It sounds like current events, the history of the twentieth century.

In the context of these chapters, Moroni gives us a powerful discourse and a heavy warning about secret combinations, in chapter 8. He gives us a lot of information in these early chapters about the brother of Jared. That is a different discussion. We are talking about Moroni here. But one of the great prophets of the Book of Mormon, whose name we don't even have in the text, is the brother of Jared. After giving us the record of the brother of Jared in Ether, Moroni comes to Ether 3 and tells us a couple of interesting things. He says that when the brother of Jared went up on the mountain, he had sixteen smooth, transparent stones that he "had molten out of the rock" (Ether 3:3; see also Ether 3:1). When he comes down from the mountain, he has eighteen stones. The Lord has given him two more stones called interpreters (see Ether 3:23-24). You and I know them as the Urim and Thummim. Doctrine and Covenants 17 indicates that the Urim and Thummim Joseph Smith used to translate the Book of Mormon were the same ones that the brother of Jared received on the mountain. Those were apparently in Moroni's possession and put in the box with the plates.

⁴ James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1975), 6:99.

In Ether 4, as Moroni begins to comment about what he has just told us, he makes an interesting revelation. Look at verse 4: "Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared." What things? A revelation from the very beginning of the world to the end, it says in 2 Nephi 27:7. "Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up." I wonder if, when the Lord told him to write all this, he was going to have to seal it too. He may not have indicated that at the outset. Moroni may have learned that after the fact. The Lord often leads us a step at a time, gives us one commandment and then a follow-up commandment.

From verse 6 until the end of Ether 4, Moroni is recording the words of the Lord himself that He has spoken to Moroni about what He is going to do. Part of that indicates that we will not have this sealed portion of the Book of Mormon until we have faith like the brother of Jared, which speaks to us as a group, as a church.

Let's go down to Ether 5:1: "And now I, Moroni, have written the words which were commanded me, according to my memory; and I have told you the things which I have sealed up; therefore touch them not in order that ye may translate." Those are Moroni's words. Now let me read you Nephi's words, from 2 Nephi 27:21: "Touch not the things which are sealed, for I will bring them forth in mine own due time." Remember that I mentioned that Nephi in the beginning and Moroni at the end are using almost the same words in certain areas. Verse 4 of Ether 5 reads: "And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established." Nephi also said: "The eyes of none shall behold it save it be that three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God" (2 Nephi 27:12).

Ether 5:4 continues: "And the testimony of three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God and also his word, of which the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear record—and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day." Nephi said: "And the words

which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you" (2 Nephi 25:28). There is the witness at the beginning of the book and the witness at the end. What is truly unique to me about this particular verse is what Moroni says in the middle of verse 4 about "the testimony of three [the three witnesses], and this work [the Book of Mormon itself], in the which shall be shown forth the power of God." Have you ever thought about that? This book itself, its very existence, shows the power of God. "The testimony of three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God . . . and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day."

Moroni, anticipating some of us being just a little bit skeptical says, in Ether 5:6: "And now, if I have no authority for these things, judge ye; for ye shall know that I have authority when ye shall see me, and we shall stand before God at the last day. Amen."

In this hour we have largely talked about what little we know about Moroni's growing up years, about his biography, about some of the themes he works with, especially at the end of the Book of Mormon and early in Ether. He is preaching to us powerfully, telling us to repent, to get pride out of our lives, to have faith, so that we might experience the miracles that we should, because God is a God of miracles. Moroni proceeds to talk about the record of the brother of Jared and to bear witness of the work that he is writing right here.

It seems to me that Moroni does not realize in advance what the Lord has in store for him. The first few verses of Mormon 8, he doesn't realize he is going to do any of this, I am convinced. Then all of a sudden, he realizes and has a sense of mission. He needs to preach repentance to us, and he does. Then he comes back at a later date to give us the record of the Jaradites. Where will he go from here? He does not have a sense at this point that he is going to come back at a much later date and give us the book of Moroni.

We have been talking largely about Moroni as a preacher of righteousness, warning us with a loud call to repentance. From here on in Moroni's writings, as we will discuss next hour, Moroni is largely talking about the great virtues of faith, hope, and charity. He comes back to the theme over and over and

over. If the world is going to be this bad, if times are going to be this tough, and if we are going to be so tempted by pride, how do we overcome that pride? How do we make God pleased with us as we seek his influence in our life? Moroni will talk about faith, hope, and charity, and ultimately about the Holy Ghost and the gifts of the Spirit. That is where we will proceed in the next hour.

As we read through this record about Moroni, I want you to have a sense of the man, of the magnitude of his calling and of the difficulty of it. Can you imagine living alone for this vast period of time, having the scriptures at your disposal, knowing the beauty and the wonders that come from living the gospel of Jesus Christ, and being deprived of all connection to family and friends? Having it all, and having no one to share it with—except you and me. I have a great love for this man. I have come to have a great reverence and respect for the magnitude of his mission. I would pray that we might listen carefully to what he has to say, to the power of his words that he is trying to convey to us, that they might be communicated by the Spirit, that you and I may individually come to know what he wants us to know and therefore be as close to our Father in Heaven and His Son Jesus Christ as Moroni would like us to be. I would ask that, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Moroni: The Man and the Message (Part 2)

Byron Merrill

Last time we met and discussed the prophet Moroni; we talked about his upbringing and a little about his father. We discussed the fact that we know very little about Moroni's early years, except that he seems to have had some hesitance about his ability to write. He senses that he is very weak in that area. We talked about the early chapters where we meet him—first in Mormon 8 and 9, where he starts out lonely and depressed, and then he changes character almost, and begins to speak prophetically to warn us powerfully about the dangers that will exist in the day that the Book of Mormon will come forth. He warns us, with a clarion call to repentance, to get pride out of our lives and to submit ourselves and our will to our Father in Heaven.

He then talks about miracles. We discussed the need for having miracles in our lives, that God will grant miracles and that he continues to be a God of miracles as long as there is faith on the earth. If we are not having miracles, maybe it is because we are not exerting enough faith, or maybe we are not recognizing them for what they truly are.

We then began a discussion of the book of Ether, where Moroni is giving us an abridged version of the twenty-four gold plates—the record of the Jaradites, which was closed by Ether—found by Limhi. Who can you think of, in all the standard works, who could have related better to Ether's circumstances? Not only to his faith and testimony, but to his experience with loneliness, being the last survivor of a once-mighty civilization? It was left, perhaps most appropriately, to Moroni to give us the record that Ether left.

We talked about the fact that Moroni is the one who engraved the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon. After he had engraved it, the Lord commanded him to seal it up to come forth at a future day when our faith is like the faith of the brother of Jared.

We now come to chapter 12 of the book of Ether, and that's where I would like you to turn with me, if you would. Moroni continues to have, in abridged form, a record of what happened among the Jaradites. He is now

talking about the prophecies of the last Jaradite prophet, Ether. He is explaining that Ether had many difficulties with his people because they were so unbelieving. Turn with me to Ether 12:4 and 5:

Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.

And it came to pass that Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe, because they saw them not.

The people didn't believe what Ether prophesied because they couldn't see his prophecies fulfilled at that moment.

Moroni then stops right in the middle of writing about the Jaradites and digresses for the remainder of this chapter. This is one of the truly great, powerful chapters of the Book of Mormon. Moroni is going to talk about the three great virtues: faith, hope, and charity. He begins to talk about them here, and then he continues nonstop throughout the book of Moroni at a later date.

Moroni had a great sense of what these virtues were all about. He knew that it was the lack of these virtues of faith, hope, and charity that had resulted in the total annihilation of his people. He sensed, looking down through the stream of history to our day, that if we were to make it through the days of wickedness and vengeance that are going to come upon the earth, the only things that would keep us in tact individually, as families, and as a people are faith, hope, and charity. He begins his digression with Ether 12:6: "And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith."

Faith, as a virtue, has many dimensions, but as a starting place, maybe it has a lot to do with trust, that is, trusting God. Having faith in him is believing him and trusting him. I love the verses Moroni has defined here. We see Alma's definition of faith in Alma 32. We see Paul's definition of faith in Hebrews 11. They all differ slightly, yet when you read them together, they come together well.

I like these particular verses from Mark 9:20–24. The Savior was approached by a man whose son was possessed of an evil spirit. “And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” Isn’t that a remarkable line? If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. I believe the father in the New Testament story responded a lot like I feel some times. “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Ever been there? Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

In Luke 17:5 we read: “And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.” How do we increase faith? That is a tough question at any moment. Our faith grows in measure to our obedience to the truth. The more truth we receive and the more we are obedient to it, the more we are true to the truth and live the principles we know, the more faith and truth we receive. I would suggest, at least in a threefold way, we can increase faith, as Moroni is so anxious for us to do, by spending time with the scriptures. Look up experiences in the scriptures that have to do with faith. Look in our own family circumstances—your immediate history, your parents, your ancestors—for examples of faith. And then look forward. Ask yourself, How can I incorporate these principles or attitudes into my own life?

One of my favorite stories in the whole of the Old Testament is the story in the book of Daniel of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the three Hebrew youths. King Nebuchadnezzar, the king of gold, the golden city of Babylon, has created an idol ninety feet high made of gold. He has commanded everyone in the kingdom to bow down and worship it. If you knew something about ancient Babylon, you would realize how powerful this man was. These three Hebrew youths refused to do so. In great anger, the king had them bound and brought before him. Faith has to do with courage, too, folks. They

responded to the king: "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" (Daniel 3:17). They are saying, "If we have to go there, our God will deliver us. We are not worried. We have faith and trust in him." But then come the three words in the Old Testament, that really speak to what the depths of faith are: "But if not . . ."—if it is not in God's program to save us from the fiery furnace, if it doesn't meet his time table or schedule for our future—"But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:18). That's faith. They say, "We are sure that God will save us, but if not, if it's not in his time table to do so, we will still not worship your golden image."

It says that Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose in haste and fury and had them make the furnace seven times its normal heat and had these men bound in their clothes—it says, "their hosen," their garments—so they would burn quickly, and he had them thrown in the fire (see Daniel 3:21). The guards who threw them in fell dead in the mouth of the furnace from the heat (see Daniel 3:22–23). And then they stood there, walking and talking, and there was a fourth being with them (Daniel 3:25). When they came forth, it says in Daniel 3:27, "upon [their] bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed; nor the smell of fire had passed upon them." I can't even get within a hundred feet of a barbecue and not smell like something roasted. This is a remarkable story of faith, the kind of thing we should be sharing with our families.

I brought with me a little book that is very special to my family. It is the autobiography of my great-great-grandmother. Her name was Lucy Hannah White. She was a young girl who walked across the plains. At the age of sixteen she married her dream prince, who was eighteen. His name was William Jordan Flake. She talks about how they settled down in Beaver, Utah. Some of you know where Beaver is; it's a small town still in Southern Utah. They were living very comfortably, and then she records that one of the great trials of their life came. Her husband had gone to the dedication of the St. George Temple. She had not gone, because she had a young child who was

very ill. "I was so relieved when they drove up, but it only took one minute to look at my husband to know that something terrible had happened. 'William, what is the matter? You act so strange.' Then that strong man who had passed through all the sorrows that could come to man, except sin and disgrace, took me in his arms and, with tears streaming from his eyes, said, 'Lucy, we must leave this beautiful home forever.' He could say no more." Men were needed to settle Arizona and extend the settlements further south. So terrible had been the men who had gone out with William in 1873, and so discouraging had been their report, that until three years later, no further attempt had been made to colonize Arizona.

The company was set out in 1876, consisting mostly of young couples from Salt Lake, but at the conference in St. George when the temple was dedicated, men were called for this new assignment. William's name was mentioned to President Young as a good man, and President Young said, "Well, if William Flake is anything like his father, he will go and be depended upon to stay." The names were read out in a general assembly, and William's was among them. "Leave nothing to come back to," advised President Young. "Sell all you have and take your families with you." And then my great-great-grandmother records: "Another crisis in our lives, another decision to be made. Would we accept the call and go to this new country Arizona? The very name made me shudder. There were probably more Indians there than in any other part of the United States." The Apaches were considered the most bloodthirsty of all the tribes. Arizona—much land, little water.

And then she talks—what a wonderful thing to have recorded in a journal her feelings about this event: "We had just arrived at a place where we could live in comfort. There had been long months of separation. Through the strictest of economy, we had purchased the 240-acre farm we had always wanted. Then there was my mother. How could I leave her? We needed each other so much." She continues to work through her thinking on paper. What a blessing to have a record like this. "Conditions were different. We didn't have to go. There was no compulsion, no force to be brought. Others had made excuses. We could too, but we have a conviction that this work we were

engaged in was of the Lord, and Brigham Young was his vice-regent on the earth. He had called us and we would go. The ancient prophet Amos says in the third chapter and seventh verse: 'Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.' If we were needed to build up the waste places, we would go, even to the last frontier." Her autobiography is entitled *To the Last Frontier*. The Flakes went south to Arizona as they had been asked. The city of Snowflake, Arizona, was named for the Snows and the Flakes.

What is Moroni trying to teach us in Ether 12? He wants us to understand that believing is seeing. The scientific method teaches the opposite: seeing is believing. The scientific method is a wonderful tool in its own sphere. But when it comes to faith, we have to turn it around.

I share with you now an important example from Brother Packer's life. Elder Packer says that when he was called to be a general authority, he was told to find an adequate home for his family in the Salt Lake area. They found a place that fit their needs ideally, but, he said there was no way he could proceed. Elder Packer had just completed the course work on a doctor's degree and was writing the dissertation. With the support of his wife and eight children, all the resources they could gather over the years had been spent on education. By borrowing on their insurance, gathering every resource, they could barely get into the house, without sufficient to make the first monthly payment.

He then went to Brother Harold B. Lee of the Twelve, who insisted that he go ahead, because he knew it was right. "I was in deep turmoil, because I had been counseled to do something I had never done before—to sign a contract without the resources to meet the payments," recalls Elder Packer.

Sensing the turmoil, Brother Lee sent him to President David O McKay, who listened very carefully, then said: "You do this. It is the right thing." But he extended no resources to make it possible.

Brother Packer recalled, "When I reported to Brother Lee he said, 'That confirms what I have told you.'

"I was still not at peace, and then came the lesson.

"Elder Lee said, 'Boyd, do you know what is wrong with you—you always want to see the end from the beginning.'

"I replied quietly that I wanted to see at least a few steps ahead. He answered by quoting from the sixth verse of the twelfth chapter of Ether. 'Wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith.'

"And then he added, 'My boy, you must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and perhaps a few steps into the darkness, and you will find that the light will appear and move ahead of you.'"¹

What a great lesson! I have been there a few times in my life.

There have been moments when the Spirit tells us to do something and doesn't tell us why. It doesn't tell us where it's going. We have a lot of animals at our house. We raise chickens every year. We had about three hundred baby chicks this spring. I have a five-year-old son. We put the chicks under little brooder lamps, and the chicks group together in a little batch. They never move to the edge. They just move as a little sea of humanity, kind of, together under that light. As I was sitting there watching them this past spring, I thought, "They are a whole lot like us." As long as the light is really bright, we know what we are supposed to do, and everything is in order, we are happy. We just go along and we are comfortable. But all of a sudden, this little voice says to us, "Step out in the darkness." We look around and say, "Who me? Are you talking to me? Who said that?" And there is no answer. Then it comes again, "Step out into the darkness." I have a witness, brothers and sisters, that if we follow the promptings of the Spirit, the light will appear and shine before us. The witness comes after the trial of our faith.

Moroni then moves from this topic to its sister topic: hope. Look at Ether 12:9: "Wherefore, ye may also have hope, and be partakers of the gift, if ye will but have faith." Hope is a companion attribute of faith and charity. It supports and strengthens the other two. In a very simplistic way, let me define the two for you. Faith is my belief in God. I know that he lives and that Jesus Christ is my Redeemer. It is very general and very broad. Hope is intimately personal. Because of my faith in Christ, there is hope that even Byron Merrill can be saved if he repents of all his sins.

Turn with me to Moroni 7:40:

And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

Do you get a sense of the personal nature of hope by those verses? You have to have faith, and then there is hope for a personal glorious resurrection. It is an assurance that God gives us of blessings and future potentiality. This assurance comes only by placing faith in God and receiving the influence of the Spirit.

Hope is sometimes best understood by its opposite, despair. Isn't it interesting that Moroni is the one who defines despair for us, in Moroni 10:22: "And if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity." It may be my iniquity or maybe someone else that puts me in a state of despair. We are not talking about just having a down day. All of us get a little depressed or a little bit low once in a while, don't we? Do you know anyone who is always up, always happy, always cheerful, always smiling, always outgoing? They are probably nuts too. No one is like that. We all fall just a little, but despair is giving up hope; despair is the opposite of hope. We live, unfortunately, in a world that tends to be increasingly despairing.

There is a great line in a modern movie that I appreciate. The movie is *Anne of Green Gables*. She is a young girl, thirteen, red-haired, freckled, orphaned, always dreaming. She is adopted by an elderly brother and sister on Prince Edward Island in Eastern Canada at the turn of the last century. She has had a particularly bad day at school. She's thirteen, Junior high age. As she comes into the home, she turns to the lady who has adopted her and says, with this huge sigh that only a thirteen year old could generate, "Oh, can't you imagine being in the depths of despair?"—that is a great line for a

¹ Lucile C. Tate, *Boyd K. Packer: A Watchman on the Tower* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 137–8

thirteen year old—to which this very wise woman responds, “No, I cannot. To despair is to turn your back on God.”² Oh, that is a classic of modern literature.

Moroni understood that ever so well. How do we continue to be of good cheer when life is tough? Last January at a fireside at BYU, Elder Russell M. Nelson said, “Insufficient hope often means insufficient repentance.”³ That is a good statement—the only one I wrote down—from a wonderful talk. Through prayer and fasting, studying the scriptures, getting a sense of the eternity of things so that we are not caught up in the immediacy of things, building relationships, and keeping covenants, eventually, the Lord will bless you with the peace that surpasses all understanding. It comes only from the Prince of Peace himself.

In Ether 12:29, Moroni expresses his appreciation for understanding of these virtues, and he is comforted: “And I, Moroni, having heard these words, was comforted, and said: O Lord, thy righteous will be done, for I know that thou workest unto the children of men according to their faith.” And then look at verse 32: “And I also remember that thou hast said that thou hast prepared a house for man, yea, even among the mansions of thy Father, in which man might have a more excellent hope; wherefore man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared.”

As we come to the middle of this chapter, Moroni is talking about these great virtues, and all of a sudden in verse 23, he himself starts to feel kind of low: “And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing.” And in verse 24, he says: “And thou hast made us that we could write but little, because of the awkwardness of our hands.” The Lord responds to Moroni very quickly and very tersely in verse 26: “Fools mock, but they shall mourn.” That is a strong statement. And then the Lord follows up with this great instructive paragraph: “My grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness;

² *Anne of Green Gables* (Burbank, Calif.: Walt Disney Productions, 1985), based on the book by L. M. Montgomery.

³ Russell M. Nelson, ““A More Excellent Hope,”” *BYU 1994–95 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo: BYU Publications and Graphics, 1995), 76.

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:26-27).

Where do you get weakness? From God. He doesn't give us sin. Don't misread this. He does give us weakness. Why? So that we might be humble before him. And if we will come to him in humility, then he will make weak things become strong unto us. Nephi says the same thing in these words, in 2 Nephi 33:11: "Ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness." Paul, in the New Testament is very concerned about his weakness. He calls it the "thorn in his flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7). He pleaded with the Lord that it might be removed, to which the Lord responded: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Isn't that a beautiful statement? My strength, God's strength, is made perfect in my weakness. Paul therefore says, essentially, "If I have to glory in infirmities and weakness, I will, to feel the strength of God" (see 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Moroni is talking about that here. What is Moroni's weakness? His inability to write and to express himself. Wouldn't you feel just a little bit intimidated if you were reading the words of the brother of Jared, and that is apparently right where he is?

So, he's talked about faith and hope. What do you guess he is about to talk about next? Charity. It fits. Mormon, in the great sermon Moroni gives us in Moroni 7, talks about charity and defines it as the pure love of Christ (see Moroni 7:47). I would suggest that it means at least three things: the love that Christ has for each of us, the love that we are commanded to have for him, and the kind or quality of love that Christ has that we are to have for each other. That pretty well covers the territory. It's the pure love of Christ.

From John 13:34 we read: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

When was the last time someone recognized you as a member of this church because you loved everyone so much? Usually it isn't for reasons such as that. Usually it is for what we wear, or don't wear, or eat, or smoke. What would it be like if we were all living in such a way that the pure love of Christ was so evident in our lives, that people recognized us as members of the Lord's church, as disciples, because of the love we had for each other. That is what he says is the one true mark of a disciple. John 14:15 says: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." What are his commandments? Love him and love our fellowmen. Those are the great commandments.

I worked for many years as a tax attorney. I helped people give millions of dollars, literally, to various charities. I had some great experiences and some not-so-great experiences. I learned a very important lesson over the years. Charity has nothing to do with money. Contrary to what we think in our society, charity and money are not closely related. Charity is one of the great spiritual gifts. In fact, Paul would say it is the *greatest* of all spiritual gifts. It is something that comes into our hearts; it's an attitude we have. I have heard people once in a while say that they can't do anything charitable because they don't have any money or excess. That is not what charity is. Charity is an attitude of the heart.

I share with you one little poem, again, a favorite of mine. It is entitled *Somebody's Mother*. I had a great group of boys I worked with one time, and this little poem speaks to the heart of what charity is.

The woman was old, and ragged, and gray,
And bent with the chill of the Winter's day.
The street was wet with a recent snow,
And the woman's feet were aged and slow.
She stood at the crossing and waited long;
Alone, uncared for, amid the throng
Of human beings, who passed her by,
Nor heeded the glance of her anxious eye.
Down the street, with laughter and shout,
Glad in the freedom of "school let out,"
Came the boys, like a flock of sheep;
Scattering the snow piled white and deep.
Past the old woman so old and gray
Hastened the youngsters on their way,
Nor offered a helping hand to her,

So weak, so timid, afraid to stir
Lest the carriage wheels or the horses' feet
Should crush her down in the crowded street.

At last came one of the merry troop—
The gayest laddie of all the group—
Who paused beside her, and whispered low,
"I'll help you across, if you wish to go."
She lifted her eyes to meet
The pitying glance of his brown eyes, sweet,
As her aged hand on his strong young arm
She placed. And so, without hurt or harm,
He guided the trembling feet along,
With the steady step of his own, so strong.

Then back again to his mates he went,
His young heart happy and well content.
For "she's Somebody's Mother, boys, you know,
For all she's aged, and poor, and slow.
And I hope some fellow will lend a hand
To help my Mother, you understand,
If ever she's poor, and old, and gray,
And her own dear boy perhaps far away."

And "Somebody's Mother" bow'd low her head
In her home that night, and the prayer she said
Was—"God be kind to the stranger lad,
Whose heart can pity the old and sad;
And guide and lead till life's journey is done,
The kindly boy who is Somebody's Son."⁴

It doesn't take any money to have charity. It just takes a little love in your heart.

I was married about a quarter of a century ago, and Elder Tuttle of the Presidency of the Seventy was a dear friend of my parents. We had hoped that he could marry us, but his schedule wouldn't allow it. He had a conflict, but he arranged to come to our home in Southern California shortly before our wedding at the Los Angeles Temple. He sat my fiancée and I down, after a Sunday afternoon meal. He dismissed everyone else except the two of us. We sat at the table, and it was really wonderful. He said, "I want to tell you what I would tell you if you were being married by me in the temple." I'd have been too nervous at the temple to take notes, but I could take notes at my parents' table. At one point, he turned to my sweetheart and said to her, "Tricia, you

⁴ Mary D. Brine, *Somebody's Mother* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1892).

will learn that Byron loves the Lord more than he loves you, and you must learn to love the Lord more than you do your husband. If you don't love the Lord more than you love each other, then all your other efforts are worthless."

I don't think I understood that very well years ago, but I have come to understand it since. The more love I have had for the Lord, the more love he has given me for my dear wife. When we stand together side by side, looking up, with our priorities straight, nothing from the outside can bother us or affect that relationship. If there has been a moment's hesitation or problem in my marriage, it is because we stopped looking up and turned and faced each other. It has been one of the great revelations of my life, how love works. We must love God first, above and beyond everything and everyone.

How do we get this charity? Turn to Moroni 7:48 for a moment: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen." We must pray with all the energy of heart for the gift, but praying for it is not enough. Look at Moroni 8:25-26:

And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;

And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.

"Filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer"—that is a beautiful line. We get it by prayer. We get it by living for it. How do we live for it? By praying for it. Think about the gift of charity.

Back to Ether 12. Moroni prays to the Lord for the Gentiles, knowing how important charity is. He prays, in verse 35, "If the Gentiles have not charity, because of our weakness, that thou wilt prove them, and take away their talent." In verse 36, he says, "And it came to pass that I prayed unto the Lord

that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity." Notice the Lord's answer to Moroni: "If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful" (Ether 12:37). That is a very unusual answer, isn't it? Moroni has been praying for the Gentiles, those of us in the last days, and the Lord says, "Moroni, if they don't have charity, it shouldn't matter to you. You are saved in my kingdom."

Notice the rest of verse 37: "And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father." This particular verse appears elsewhere in our standard works. It is a marvelous verse. Let me read to you from Doctrine and Covenants 135:4:

When Joseph went to Carthage to deliver himself up to the pretended requirements of the law, two or three days previous to his assassination, he said: "I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I SHALL DIE INNOCENT, AND IT SHALL YET BE SAID OF ME—HE WAS MURDERED IN COLD BLOOD."—The same morning, after Hyrum had made ready to go—shall it be said to the slaughter? yes, for so it was—he read the following paragraph, near the close of the twelfth chapter of Ether, in the Book of Mormon, and turned down the leaf upon it: [then in the Doctrine and Covenants we are given verse 37 of Ether 12 as verse 5 of the 135th section]

... And it came to pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness, thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father.

What a profound scripture. What a beautiful tribute to Hyrum and Joseph, just as here it is a tribute to Moroni.

Having said that, we come back to Moroni. Moroni could preach to us forever about faith, hope, and charity. I could talk about it forever, but his life is an example of these virtues, even more than his preaching. Ether 12:38–39 reads: "And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked

with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things.”

The next time you want a really powerful experience with the Book of Mormon, get yourself alone, spend some time in grateful prayer for all your blessings, and seek the influence of the Spirit. Then sit quietly and read and ponder Ether 12. I would suggest to you that something along these lines happened: Moroni is writing his abridgment of the record of Ether. He is struggling with the difficulty of writing with a metal stylus on plates of gold. He is stumbling, struggling, and begins to ponder over the importance of what Ether is saying, and feeling his own weaknesses, and in a very low moment, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in person.

The discussion we have from verse 23 to the end of this chapter is not just a response to prayer as you and I would typically receive responses to prayer. I would suggest to you that the Lord came in person to Moroni to comfort and sustain and bless him. It will give you a whole new sense of what is happening in these verses. Listen to what he’s saying in Ether 12:41: “And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen.”

After Ether 12, Moroni returns to his record of the Jaradites. He begins talking for a few verses in the next chapter about the New Jerusalem and about some things that Ether said about the New Jerusalem. We are starting to get really excited, we of the house of Joseph, about what was prophesied. All of a sudden, in Ether 13:13, Moroni says: “And I was about to write more, but I am forbidden; but great and marvelous were the prophecies of Ether.” Moroni never speaks to us again from that verse until the end of Ether. He’s done. He has just given us his great farewell in chapter 12 of Ether. He finishes the book of Ether, three more chapters, with the words of the prophet Ether, never addressing us again. As far as Moroni knew at that point in time, he was finished with his record.

And then what do we have all of a sudden out of the blue? The book of Moroni. Moroni comes back and says, "Surprise! I'm not dead yet. I thought I would be by now, but I'm not. There are a few more things I ought to tell you," which is undoubtedly why he's not gone yet. He says that a good deal of time has past. He will not deny the Christ, and anyone who will not deny Christ is put to death by the Lamanites. He is still living a life of hiding. Our estimate here is that he wrote the book of Moroni about thirty-five years after Cumorah. The date is given in Moroni 10:1. It sounds like the book of Moroni was put together all at the same time.

Moroni says, in Moroni 1:4: "Wherefore, I write a few more things, contrary to that which I had supposed; for I had supposed not to have written any more; but I write a few more things, that perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord." And what is he going to write? Chapters 2 to 6 are a repository of some of the most sacred practices among the ancient Nephites. He is not just giving us an historical record so much as he is trying to tell us that these were things that were extremely significant to his people that no one has ever told in the course of this record. "We have never given you the specifics of any of this in the whole Book of Mormon," he is saying. "I need to give it to you now, because you need these things to stay strong and to understand the administration of the gospel of Christ in your day."

He begins in Moroni 2 with how the disciples of Christ in the New World bestowed the Holy Ghost. They did it by the laying on of hands after mighty prayer, it says in verse 2. Moroni 3 is the ordination of priests and teachers by the laying on of hands. Notice Moroni 3:4: "And after this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; and they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them." How do we ordain people today? By the power of the Holy Ghost that is in us, and we do it according to the gifts and callings of God—the gifts and callings of God within us and the gifts and callings of God that are to be pronounced upon or bestowed upon those being ordained.

Moroni 4 and 5 are our sacramental prayers, verbatim. You notice there, as we do elsewhere in Moroni and the Book of Mormon, the great importance of the words *remember* and *remembrance*. They're said over and over. When the Nephites remembered God, they were faithful. When they forgot him is when they had their great calamities.

Moroni 6 is about church administration. He talks about the first ordinances and principles of the gospel. He uses the word *remembered* again. Notice Moroni 6:4, in the middle of the verse, "Their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer." That is almost like home teaching and visiting teaching right there in that verse. It says, in Moroni 6:5-6, "And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray. And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus."

Moroni, miraculously, in nine verses, covers everything from preaching the gospel and baptizing to the ordinances and administration of the church, all the way to disciplinary councils. This is like a short course, nine verses, in church administration.

And then Moroni 7 is the greatest discourse we have in sacred writ on the interplay of faith, hope, and charity and on what it means to choose good from evil. In our classes, we spend an hour on this chapter or two hours on this chapter. We don't have the luxury to do that here. Besides, even though Moroni included it, and he believes it, it is a talk that his father, Mormon, gave and is, therefore, more correctly covered in a discussion of Mormon. It is a talk that Mormon gave forty or fifty years before Moroni reported it in this record, back when the Nephites still had a synagogue to attend church in, a long time earlier.

Moroni 8 and 9 are two letters from Mormon to his son. If you had been wandering around for thirty-five years all alone, would you be comforted by some letters from your father, whom you had not seen for many decades? Missionaries can relate to this. They are always carrying patriarchal blessings or letters in their inside coat pockets. Try to envision Moroni, in one of those

low lonely moments out in the wilderness some place, reaching in his back pocket and pulling out a little parchment and reading words like this, from Moroni 8:2-3: "My beloved son, Moroni, I rejoice exceedingly that your Lord Jesus Christ hath been mindful of you, and hath called you to his ministry, and to his holy work. I am mindful of you always in my prayers." I would think that would speak a lot of comfort to the heart. Chapter 8 is Mormon's letter to his son about the abomination of infant baptism and what the Lord has told him about that particular act. There are powerful verses in here about love as well, and what it means. Moroni 9, the second epistle, concerns the depravity of both Nephites and Lamanites. It tells us, in interesting ways—and I am sure that is the reason Moroni gave us this letter—some things that we might want to understand—for instance, how people who are hardened respond to the prophets of God. We look for similar signs in our own dispensation.

Moroni 9:4 reads: "Behold, I am laboring with them continually; and when I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me; and when I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it; wherefore, I fear lest the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them."

In verse 6, Mormon tells us why he and his son continue on in the face of sure knowledge about what is going to happen to their people: "And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God." We sometimes think we have difficult assignments, difficult missions, difficult callings. How would you like to have a mission like Mormon and Moroni's, knowing what you knew about what the future held? Or what the past had been? In fact, the people had become so bad that in verses 20 and 21, Mormon says to his son, "They are without principle, and past feeling. . . . Behold, my son, I cannot recommend them unto God lest he should smite me." The people had become so wicked that he dared not even recommend them to God, lest he be smitten by God. You'd have to have a pretty wicked people to

be in that posture. But he says, in verse 22, "But behold, my son, I recommend thee unto God, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved."

After the second letter, we finally come to Moroni 10, his last great chapter of writing. After all that he has said, all that he has pressed upon us, what can he say yet? What is the message of chapter 10, largely? Get the Holy Ghost, and he will tell you all things that you should do. He begins in Moroni 10:2: "And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you." Moroni uses the words *exhort* or *exhortation* nine times in this short chapter. The word *exhort* means "to animate or urge by words or advice to a good deed or any laudable course of action; to advise; to warn; to caution."

We then have given to us three of the most famous verses of scripture, Moroni 10:3-5:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that you would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

Those are fairly famous verses, aren't they? They are quoted as often as any verses in the Church, because of missionary work. You know the verses—some of you know them by heart. But has it occurred to you that part of the power of these verses comes not only from the fact that the Lord gave them, that they are in scripture, that they happen to be true, that they promise a true witness, but that maybe some of their power comes from who said them, from who wrote them? Who could be a more powerful witness than Moroni that the Holy Ghost can teach you all things? Who had been his teacher for the decades he lived alone? Would that all of us had the kind of witness of the Holy Ghost that Moroni had.

He wants us to come to the Holy Ghost, to lay hold upon every good thing, and then he begins talking about the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of the Spirit. This is one of the three places in the standard works that we have a list of the gifts of the Spirit. (The others are in 1 Corinthians 12 and Doctrine and Covenants 46.) Each of the lists is somewhat different, slightly different, and I find the differences very interesting.

For instance, I pull from my notes 1 Corinthians 12:8. Paul is writing. He says, "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit." Doctrine and Covenants 46:17–18 says, "To some is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of wisdom. To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge." All of a sudden, there is an element of teaching added to the gifts of wisdom and knowledge. Moroni does even more than that with it. He says, in Moroni 10:9–10: "For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom; And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit." It is one thing to have the gift of wisdom or the gift of knowledge; it is quite another to have the gift to teach those things.

The gifts of the Spirit. What gifts of the Spirit do you have? Doctrine and Covenants 46 makes it quite clear that all of us are blessed with at least one and perhaps several gifts of the Spirit. The Lord gives them to us to edify one another, to bless each other's lives—not just to consume them upon our own lusts, but to bring us together and to share and work together.

We have a major discussion here of the gifts of the Spirit, and then Moroni comes down to Moroni 10:20 and starts his discussion of faith, hope, and charity again, as if he is giving a summary of all he has written: "Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity." He is walking up a stair step, saying that you have to have faith and hope and charity. And then in the next verse, he backs right off it, saying, basically, "If you are going to have charity, you have also got to have faith; and if you have faith, you have also got to have hope." He repeats the phrases twice to us.

And then in verse 24, Moroni just opens his arms really wide. He realizes he is at the end. Moroni 10:24 reads: "And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth—" What does he want us to know? Look at verse 27: "And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?"

Do you think that we might actually meet Moroni at the judgment bar of God? Do you think that might even be literal? You and I sit in our Book of Mormon classes and ask, "What do you think I'm going to say at the judgment bar?" The Lord is going to say, "Didn't you attend seminary? Didn't you take an institute class? Didn't you used to go to Sunday School?" And Moroni will be standing there. The Lord will say, "Moroni, would you like to remind them what you wrote?" What are we going to say? "I was really rushing. It was at the end of the book, and I didn't have time to get that far. I know a lot about Nephi, by the way. I just don't know a whole lot about Moroni"? What are you going to say when he meets you at the judgment bar?

Moroni then says, in Moroni 10:30: "And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift." To invite us to come unto Christ means that Moroni must be somewhere near him. Otherwise, the correct English would be "*go* unto Christ." Notice how the prophets say *come*. They say, "Come unto him." Think about that.

He then breaks into the words of Isaiah as if in a song. He is so full of love and happiness. Read Moroni 10:31: "And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion." Skip to verse 32: "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him." We read in verse 32 about being perfected, or justified, in our standing before God. In Moroni 10:33, Moroni talks about us being sanctified before God, becoming not only *whole*, as verse 32 indicates, but *holy*, as verse 33 indicates.

And then come Moroni's final written words to us: "And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to

meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.”

We can't leave Moroni here, however. What else do we know about him? There are six other events. We know, from the 27th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, that the Lord has given Moroni the keys of the stick of Ephraim—not to his father, Mormon, who abridged this great work, but to Moroni, who finished it and wrote the title page and named the book after Mormon, his father. To Moroni is given the keys of the book. He is in charge of it, if you will.

I asked you at the beginning of our discussion why you thought Moroni's statue was on the top of so many temples. It is because he is the bringer of the message of the Book of Mormon and all that goes with it. It also may have something to do with the fact that he quoted to Joseph Smith the fourth chapter of Malachi, which talks about Elijah's return and the saving ordinances that are going to come to save all mankind. It talks about there being neither roots nor branches. Do you think that Moroni, as long as he was alone, knew something about being deprived of earthly roots and branches, of posterity, ancestors?

Why Moroni on the temples? Let me give you a clue. This is from a Brother Warren S. Snow. It is a discussion about where the Manti Temple should be built. Should it be in the city of Manti or at the stone quarry? There was some controversy among the Saints. He writes in his journal: “We two were alone: President Young took me to the spot where the Temple was to stand; we went to the southeast corner, and President Young said: ‘Here is the spot where the prophet Moroni stood and dedicated this piece of land for a Temple site, and that is the reason why the location is made here, and we can't move it from this spot.’”⁵ The patriarch of the Richfield Stake in 1881 wrote that he had heard Joseph Smith say that Moroni dedicated the temple sites of

⁵Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 436.

what we call St. George, Nauvoo, Jackson County, Kirtland, and other sites not yet known.⁶ Moroni had a lot of time to do things like that.

He buried the plates. We know nothing about his death, really. We only know some rumors that are not primary sources. In 1854 Orson Hyde, of the Council of the Twelve, said that Moroni is the guardian angel of America. This same angel was with Columbus and gave him deep impressions by dreams and visions respecting the New World. Moroni was with him on the stormy deep, calmed the troubled elements, and guided his frail vessel to the desired haven. Elder Pratt further said Moroni was in the camp of Washington and by an invisible hand, led our fathers to conquest and victory. Who is this man Moroni? The guardian angel, or as Elder Pratt says further, the prince of America?

Moroni is a resurrected being, according to Joseph Smith. Just as he saw the sunset of his great civilization, so he was privileged to be a major participant in the sunrise of this last and greatest of all dispensations. We have the most complete description of a resurrected being in scripture from Joseph Smith as he tells us of Moroni's appearance. I conclude with a few lines from Joseph's rendition:

While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor.

He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little bit above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom.

Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole personage was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person.

⁶See *The Diary of Charles Lowell Walker* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:524-6.

When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me.

He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do. (Joseph Smith—History 1:30–33)

With that introduction begins what all that you and I know as the restoration of the gospel of Christ.

I hope that our short time together has given you reasons to go back to the end of the Book of Mormon to find out who this man was, what he wrote, why it was so significant, why he was shown our day and allowed to speak to specifically to us. My prayer for you and for me, from the depths of my soul, is that we might pay heed to Moroni's counsel to come unto Christ. May each of us incorporate those qualities of faith, hope, and charity in our lives in such a way as to be worthy to meet Christ and Moroni at the judgment bar of the Great Jehovah. I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.