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FOUNDATION FOR ANCIENT RESEARCH AND MORMON STUDIES

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Fools before God

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Summary:

Robert Millet discusses the evils of pride and the power of humility. The experiences related in the Book of Mormon depict the consequences of pride. Those scriptures also teach that if we trust in and rely upon the Lord, and if we are willing to acknowledge that he can make more of us than we could ever make of ourselves, we will be able us to avoid the perils of pride.

Transcript
Book of Mormon, Teachings

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Fools before God

Robert L. Millet

Our topic for this presentation is the evils of pride and the power of humility.

President Ezra Taft Benson once remarked that

the Book of Mormon brings people to Christ through two basic means. First, it tells the plain manner of Christ and his gospel. It testifies of His divinity and of the necessity for a Redeemer and the need of our putting trust in Him. It bears witness of the Fall and of the Atonement and the first principles of the gospel, including our need of a broken heart and a contrite spirit and a spiritual rebirth. It proclaims we must endure to the end in righteousness and live the moral life of a Saint.

Second, the Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ. It confounds false doctrines and lays down contention. It fortifies the humble followers of Christ against the evil designs, strategies, and doctrines of the devil in our day.

The type of apostates in the Book of Mormon is similar to the type we have today. God, with his infinite foreknowledge, so molded the Book of Mormon that we might see the error and know how to combat false educational, political, religious, and philosophical concepts of our time.

Examples of anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon are, of course, Sherem, Nehor, Korihor. Some of the more prominent ideas and doctrines were: ye cannot know of things which are to come; whatever a person does is no crime, no sin; no redemption; no need for a Savior or a Redeemer; all men and women will eventually be saved; every person fares in this life according to the management of the creature or according to his or her own genius; all is well with Zion; we have received all and we need no more; eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; there is no God today; the Lord, our Redeemer, hath done his work; the denial of miracles, signs, and gifts of the Spirit; lie a little; take advantage of one because of his word; and so forth.

There is another enemy of Christ that played a significant role in the rise and fall of both the Nephite and Jaredite civilization; that enemy is pride. Let me first read a quote from President Benson, who spoke so powerfully about this matter of pride:

In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride. It is always considered as a sin. We are not speaking of a wholesome view of self-worth, which is best established by a close relationship with God. But we are speaking of pride as the universal sin, as someone has described it. . . .

Essentially, pride is a "my will" rather than "thy will" approach to life. The opposite of pride is humbleness, meekness, submissiveness, or teachableness.

Pride does not look up to God and care what is right. It looks sideways to man and argues who is right. Pride is manifest in the spirit of contention.

Was it not through pride that the devil became the devil? Christ wanted to serve. The devil wanted to rule. Christ wanted to bring men to where he was. The devil wanted to be above men.

Christ removed self as the force in His perfect life. It was not *my* will, but *thine* be done.

Pride is characterized by "What do I want out of life?" rather than by "What would God have me do with my life?" It is self-will as opposed to God's will. It is the fear of man over the fear of God.

Humility responds to God's will—to the fear of His judgments and to the needs of those around us. To the proud, the applause of the world rings in their ears; to the humble, the applause of heaven warms their hearts.

Someone has said, "Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man." . . .

The two groups in the Book of Mormon that seemed to have the greatest difficulty with pride are the "learned, and the rich" (2 Ne. 28:15).¹

We want to talk about how pride manifests itself, under what circumstances it manifests itself, in the Book of Mormon. First, going to the Book of Mormon, pride seems to follow on the heels of the growth of the Church and on the heels of financial prosperity. We want to first turn to Jacob 2:11–16. This is Jacob, the brother of Nephi, son of Lehi:

Wherefore, I must tell you the truth according to the plainness of the word of God. For behold, as I inquired of the Lord, thus came the word unto me, saying: Jacob, get thou up into the temple on the morrow, and declare the word which I shall give thee unto this people.

¹ Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1988), 77–9.

And now behold, my brethren, this is the word which I declare unto you, that many of you have begun to search for gold, and for silver, and for all manner of precious ores, in the which this land, which is a land of promise unto you and to your seed, doth abound most plentifully.

And the hand of providence hath smiled upon you most pleasingly, that you have obtained many riches; and because some of you have obtained more abundantly than that of your brethren ye are lifted up in the pride of your hearts, and wear stiff necks and high heads because of the costliness of your apparel, and persecute your brethren because ye suppose that ye are better than they.

And now, my brethren, do ye suppose that God justifieth you in this thing? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. But he condemneth you, and if ye persist in these things his judgments must speedily come unto you.

O that he would show you that he can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!

O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls!

The second reference is the fourth chapter of Alma. In Alma 4:4 the church begins to be more fully established. The account says:

Many were baptized in the waters of Sidon and were joined to the church of God; yea, they were baptized by the hand of Alma, who had been consecrated the high priest over the people of the church, by the hand of his father Alma.

And it came to pass in the seventh year of the reign of the judges there were about three thousand five hundred souls that united themselves to the church of God and were baptized. And thus ended the seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and there was continual peace in all that time.

And it came to pass in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel.

It is interesting that costly apparel tends to find its way into those times of personal and group apostasy when pride is present. The phrase "costly apparel" appears about fourteen times in the Book of Mormon. Alma 4:7-9 reads:

Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people.

For they saw and beheld with great sorrow that the people of the church began to be lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and to set their hearts upon riches and upon the vain things [meaning the empty and worthless things] of the world, that they began to be scornful, one towards another, and they began to persecute those who did not believe according to their own will and pleasure.

And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God.

Then comes this very haunting verse, verse 10:

And thus ended the eighth year of the reign of the judges; and the wickedness of the church was a great stumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church; and thus the church began to fail in its progress.

We find the same pattern in the third and fourth chapters of Helaman, in the Book of Mormon, which we don't need to read, of growth of the Church, prosperity of the Church, pride within the Church. I remember several years ago being in a leadership meeting where Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke to a group of the priesthood leadership. He told us he had recently been in a South American country, and he had enjoyed being with the Saints there, had enjoyed the simplicity of their desires and their eagerness for the gospel and its blessings. He was introduced to a middle-aged sister who sacrificed no small amount to be at church each Sunday. She walked a great distance, some of that distance through water knee-deep. Elder Packer turned to us. "Do you think we worry about her?" he said. "No, we don't worry about her. She'll be fine." And I'll never forget the way he said this. He pointed his finger at us and said, "No, we worry about you, the affluent ones."

Secondly, pride may be associated with one's beliefs. I would like to turn to the first chapter of Alma. There is an episode that illustrates this problem. But before we

read it, I want to refer to a personal experience. Several years ago late one Sunday evening, I received a phone call from a young man who identified himself—we'll call him Brother Smith—and said he was from a different part of the country. He had just completed reading a book that Brother Joseph McConkie and I had done on anti-Mormonism and how to deal with opposition to the Church in a positive manner. Then he asked for some advice, and I said, "How can we help you?"

He said, "We have a lot of anti-Mormonism in this part of the country, and we've decided we're going to hold a large debate to put these people in their place."

He asked for my advice. I said, "Yes, well, I would suggest that you cancel your debate because that isn't the way the Brethren want to address opposition." I encouraged him to move on, do the work of the Lord, and know that opposition would follow. He thanked me.

A few weeks later, late one Sunday evening, the call came again. He called to ask for more advice about how to deal with his anti-Mormon associates. This went on month after month for a year or so. Finally, he stopped calling.

A few years afterwards, I was serving on a Church committee that was organized to ask hard questions about how to deal with opposition to the Church, and this man's name came up in the committee meeting. I indicated that I knew something about him. Someone said, "Well, what do you know?"

I said that I just hear from him occasionally late at night on Sundays, and he wants to know how to deal with the anti-Mormons. One of my colleagues in the meeting said, "Yes, it's unfortunate what happened to him."

I said, "What happened to him? What do you mean?"

He said, "Well, he was cut off from the Church."

I said, "No, there must be some mistake. This fellow is always fighting the enemies of the Church."

And my colleague said, "Yes, yes, that man from [and he named the part of the country where he was from] became so embroiled in becoming anti-anti that he lost the Spirit of the Lord and left the Church."

I came to appreciate the passage in Alma 1:19–24 that says:

But it came to pass that whosoever did not belong to the church of God began to persecute those that did belong to the church of God, and had taken upon them the name of Christ.

Yea, they did persecute them, and afflict them with all manner of words, and this because of their humility; because they were not proud in their own eyes, and because they did impart the word of God, one with another, without money and without price.

Now there was a strict law among the people of the church, that there should not any man, belonging to the church, arise and persecute those that did not belong to the church, and that there should be no persecution among themselves.

Nevertheless, there were many among them [Note this:] who began to be proud, and began to contend warmly with their adversaries, even unto blows; [Now we call that a major "scripture discussion"!] yea, they would smite one another with their fists.

Now this was in the second year of the reign of Alma, and it was a cause of much affliction to the church; yea, it was the cause of much trial with the church.

[And note this in verse 24:] For the hearts of many were hardened, and their names were blotted out [I think that's the scriptural phrase for excommunication], that they were remembered no more among the people of God. And also many withdrew themselves from among them.

There's a great lesson there. The Savior will later teach the Nephites that "he that hath the spirit of contention . . . is of the devil" (3 Ne. 11:29). And even if we have the truth and we're right in what we preach, if we approach that preaching in the spirit of debate, argument, or contention, we are wrong. We lose the Spirit of the Lord and its sustaining influence.

The other episode that is fairly obvious concerning pride in one's belief is found in the thirty-first chapter of Alma among the Zoramites. These were a people, you recall, who had dissented from the Nephites and were possessed with a strange sort of belief in a type of predestination, as it were—they believed they were the chosen

of God, and all others were the reprobates or the castoff. The nature of their pride is particularly evident in the memorized prayer they offer atop the Rameumptom. Let me read a portion of that from Alma 31:15–18:

Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, and we believe that thou art holy, and that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.

Holy God, we believe that thou hast separated us from our brethren; and we do not believe in the traditions of our brethren, which was handed down to them by the childishness of their fathers; but we believe that thou hast elected us to be thy holy children; and also thou hast made it known unto us that there shall be no Christ. . . .

Again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people.

That's pride manifesting itself in beliefs.

Third, pride may come because of one's opportunities or chances for learning. Let's read 3 Nephi 6:10–13. There is an interesting pattern that follows in the early chapters of 3 Nephi prior to the coming of the Savior to the Nephites, a pattern for, as President Benson has taught us, things we should look for, a pattern of the kinds of difficulties we may face as we prepare for the second coming of the Savior.

But it came to pass in the twenty and ninth year there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceedingly great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions;

For there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers.

And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.

Some were lifted up in pride, and others were exceedingly humble.

To sort of summarize, I want to turn to chapter 12 in the book of Helaman. The twelfth chapter of Helaman is what I sometimes call "Mormon's musings." It's the great prophet-editor Mormon looking back with years and years and years of

perspective before him, commenting on the plights of men and women. Let's read Helaman 12:4 now:

O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!

Behold, [Here is an interesting manifestation of pride:] they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide.

We won't turn to it, but in Moroni 8:27 we learn that it was pride that proved the downfall of the Nephite nation.

Well, if that's the problem, does the Book of Mormon provide solutions? What are some of the cures, some of the antidotes, some of the preventative measures against pride? I am going to stress four words: acquiring, yielding, hearkening, and acknowledging. First, acquiring charity, the pure love of Christ (thus, serving others) tends to provide an interesting antidote to pride. I want to go to 2 Nephi 26:29. This is the description by Nephi of priestcraft. We are very familiar with this verse, but it's the verses that follow that are very interesting.

He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.

Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. And except they should have charity they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have charity they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish.

But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish. (2 Ne. 26:29-31)

Let's turn back to the first chapter of Alma. Just after we discussed the hearts of many being hardened because of their disputings, contending over doctrine and beliefs, in verse 25 we find the following:

Now this was a great trial to those that did stand fast in the faith; nevertheless, they were steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God, and they bore with patience the persecution which was heaped upon them.

And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength.

[Notice now what the people begin to do.] And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely.

And thus they did establish the affairs of the church; and thus they began to have continual peace again, notwithstanding all their persecutions.

And now, because of the steadiness of the church they began to be exceedingly rich, having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood in need. . . . [Going on to verse 30:]

And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, [notice this:] whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.

And thus they did prosper and become far more wealthy than those who did not belong to their church. (Alma 1:25-31)

Acquire charity, then, by serving.

The second word seems to be a cure, or an antidote, or a preventative measure: yielding, meaning yielding ourselves, our hearts, and our resources unto God. Turn back to the book of Jacob, chapter two. What I believe to be one of the most powerful lessons on how to keep balance and perspective when we are prospered is found in

Jacob 2:17. You recall that Jacob has discerned two major problems among his people. One was immorality; the other was pride.

Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they might be rich like unto you.

But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God.

And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted. (Jacob 2:17–19)

In the third chapter of Helaman, which we [mentioned earlier but] did not read, there is also this powerful message in one verse, verse 35. It's almost, as it were, "the best of times . . . [and] the worst of times."² There is personal apostasy; there is personal growth. There is much pride mentioned in chapter 3 of Helaman. Then comes this, beginning with verse 34:

And they were lifted up in pride, even to the persecution of many of their brethren. Now this was a great evil, which did cause the more humble part of the people to suffer great persecutions, and to wade through much affliction.

Nevertheless they [that is, the more humble part of the people] did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

The next point is hearkening to the counsel of God. I'd like to go to 2 Nephi 9:28–29. In the middle of Jacob's great discussion of Atonement and the gathering of Israel come many commandments and much counsel, including the following:

O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish.

But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God.

² Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), bk. 1, ch. 1.

In that same chapter, 2 Nephi 9, in verses 42–43, Jacob makes this profound statement, from which I have chosen the title of this presentation:

And whoso knocketh, to him will he open; and the wise, and the learned, and they that are rich, who are puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom, and their riches—yea, they are they whom he despiseth; and save they shall cast these things away, and consider themselves fools before God, and come down in the depths of humility, he will not open unto them.

But the things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid from them forever—yea, that happiness which is prepared for the saints.

Acknowledging is the next category. In Mosiah 2, King Benjamin, as a part of his final sermon to his people, teaches what we may call the principle of divine indebtedness. He teaches that without the Lord, we are nothing, we are at best “unprofitable servants” (Mosiah 2:21). In Mosiah 2:18–19 and 22–24, Benjamin says:

Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to serve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another?

And behold also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to thank your heavenly King!

It then goes on at some length talking about how much we owe the Lord for his “lending” us our breath, and “supporting [us] from one moment to another,” and yet we are still “unprofitable servants” (verse 21). He continues in verses 22–24:

And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you.

And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

Later in the sermon in chapter 4, Benjamin hits this point again. The people of King Benjamin, earlier in the chapter, have been so deeply touched by what has been discussed—especially by what has been discussed in the previous chapter concerning putting off the natural man and putting on Christ—that they fall to the earth. The fear of the Lord has come upon them. They cry out to the Lord to have mercy and apply the atoning blood of Christ. They receive a remission of their sins. They know peace of conscience. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon them. That having happened, now in Mosiah 4: 11, King Benjamin deals with a very important principle: Once you have had a remission of sins, how is it you can retain or keep a remission of sins from day to day? Let's read that verse.

And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have know of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

[Now note:] And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this [that is, if you acknowledge the Lord, if you acknowledge his greatness, if you acknowledge his power, if you acknowledge your nothingness without him] I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true.

That's acknowledging, acknowledging the limitations of our own merits. We won't turn to it, but in the 2 Nephi 2:2–3, Lehi turns to Jacob and says, "Jacob . . . thou art redeemed." I think that if most of us were to say why Jacob was redeemed, we would answer, "Because he was so obedient," "because he was so faithful," "because he followed the pattern of his older brother Nephi," "because he was so dependable." That isn't what Lehi says. He says. "I know that thou are redeemed, because of the righteousness of thy Redeemer." In 2 Nephi 31:19 Lehi teaches a

similar lesson, that “after [we] have gotten into this strait and narrow path,” we eventually have to rely “wholly [and] completely upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.” A person who understands that he or she must rely wholly upon Christ will probably not be found puffing himself or herself up in pride. In Moroni 6:4 Moroni teaches the same lesson. We are to rely only, or alone, upon the merits of Christ, who is the “author and the finisher of [our] faith.” That’s acknowledging.

Finally, let’s look at one more point on acknowledging. It seems to me there are three great object lessons in the Book of Mormon of people who acknowledged their dependence on the Lord and their own weakness. It would never be thought that Nephi, or in some cases, the people of Benjamin, or the brother of Jared, would be guilty of pride. In 2 Nephi 4 we find Nephi speaking about how much he delights in the scriptures and the things of God, but then he says that there are moments when he feels he must cry out, “O wretched man that I am!” (verse 17). And he speaks of how he is “encompassed,” or surrounded, and so troubled by the “sins which do so easily beset him” (verse 18). Now, the first Nephi is the Nephi we know so well, and whom we love and respect, a Nephi who delights in the things of God. But Nephi acknowledged that he was also surrounded by temptation, but he adds this important phrase: “Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted” (verse 19).

It is just so with the people of Benjamin. They are described in the first chapter of Mosiah, verse 11, as a very diligent people; and yet, as we have seen in the fourth chapter, having heard the sermon, they fall to the earth. They view themselves in their own carnal state as less than the dust of the earth. They acknowledged their weakness without the Lord.

In the third chapter of Ether, in the last part of the Book of Mormon, in the record of the Jaredites, we find the brother of Jared faced with the dilemma of moving those eight barges across the waters for many months. It seems there are two major problems: the problem of air and the problem of light. Perhaps the problem of air was beyond the brother of Jared, but the Lord gave instructions about

how to deal with the air. With the light, the Lord essentially says to the brother of Jared, "Well, what would you have me to do?" The brother of Jared, as you recall, prepares sixteen small stones, brings them to Jehovah, and asks that he touch them. I think it is worth reading Ether 3:2 where, as a part of his prayer, the brother of Jared says:

O Lord, thou hast said that we must be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires.

I think these three cases—Nephi, the people of Benjamin, and the brother of Jared—are but illustrative of many others who demonstrate that the greatest ones who have ever lived are people who knew their weakness, who knew their mortal limitations; therefore, they knew the need to rely upon and trust in a power greater than their own. People who rely wholly upon the merits of Christ, people who trust completely in the grace and mercy of the Savior, are much less prone to being caught in their personal pride.

As I was thinking a few days ago about the matter of pride, the following ideas came to my mind: In short, pride leads us to be impatient with the Lord's timetable, while humility leads us to trust in His omniscience and in the divine orchestrations of the events in our lives. Pride leads us to concern ourselves with saving face, while humility focuses on saving souls. Pride leads us to focus on externals and appearances, while humility prompts us to value what is within, what is real. Pride leads us to pamper the natural man, while humility calls for the death of the natural man and for the birth of the man and woman of Christ. Pride leads us to be obsessed with acquiring this world's toys, while humility inspires us to consecrate our hearts, our minds, and our resources to our Lord and His kingdom. Pride leads us to feel enmity toward God and our fellow man, while humility leads us to feel

love, to submit to God, and to value all His creations, especially mankind. Pride leads us to sorrow, ultimate alienation, and eventual powerlessness, while humility brings peace, union, and divine guidance and strength.

It is of interest to me that in one of the early revelations, recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 38:39, the Lord issues this interesting warning:

And if ye seek the riches which it is the will of the Father to give unto you, ye shall be the richest of all people, for ye shall have the riches of eternity; and it must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give; [now note this:] but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old.

Let me give these concluding thoughts from President Benson:

Pride affects all of us at various times and in various degrees. Now you can see why the building in Lehi's dream that represents the pride of the world was large and spacious and great was the multitude that did enter into it.

Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. Yes, pride *is* the universal sin, the great vice. . . .

God will have a humble people. Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. Alma said, "Blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble" [Alma 32:16]. . . .

My dear brethren and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It was essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites.

Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat: Pride *is* the great stumbling block to Zion.

We must cleanse the inner vessel by conquering pride. We must yield "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit," put off the prideful "natural man," become "a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord," and become "as a child, submissive, meek, humble."

That we do so and go on to fulfill our divine destiny is my fervent prayer.³

I have come to appreciate that of all the things we have talked about, for me at least, the most significant seems to be a trust in and a reliance upon the Lord

³ Ezra Taft Benson, "Beware of Pride" *ENSIGN* (May 1989): 6-7.

himself, being willing to acknowledge that he can, as President Benson said so many times, make so much more of us than we could ever make of ourselves. I have a witness that as we trust in His timetable, and in His plan, and in His purposes, and rely upon His merits and mercy and grace, we will not yield to, and thus suffer the consequences of, the evils of pride. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.