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Learning to Love the Book of Mormon - The Book of Moroni

Author(s): Michael J. Preece

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Abstract: This work consists of a rather comprehensive commentary on the verses of the Book of Mormon. I believe it may be read and enjoyed by the casual student of the Book of Mormon who might, for example, find use for it as a reference source. The book's intended purpose, however, is to assist the serious student who would like to begin a thorough, intensive, and searching tour through the book.

Learning to Love the Book of Mormon

Updated August 2013 to February 2014

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Introduction

In the Church, our study and understanding of the Book of Mormon has undergone a most interesting evolution since the book's translation in 1829. As late as the early twentieth century our understanding of the book was not far advanced. Almost no serious studies of the book and its contents had been published, and the book was not heavily used in worship service discourse or in gospel instruction. There was even some skepticism about the literal divine origins of the Book within the LDS community, particularly among the more educated. By the mid 1900s, beginning with an acknowledged assumption of the book's divine origins, Sidney B. Sperry, Hugh W. Nibley, John L. Sorenson, and a few others had launched serious scholarly inquiries into the book. In the mid-1970s the rate of publications on Book of Mormon topics began to increase.

The rate of publications on the Book of Mormon particularly soared after President Ezra Taft Benson, soon after his ordination as president and prophet, called the Church to repentance in November of 1985 and at the April General Conference of the Church in 1986. The Church worked the Book of Mormon into the regular cycle of the new correlated curriculum for adults, and church leaders began using the Book of Mormon more frequently and systematically in speeches and instructional situations. Since then, the book's authenticity as an ancient scriptural record has become more firmly and generally established. Those who remain vocal doubters of the book's literal divine origins are no longer identified with the committed LDS community.

In the October General Conference in 1986, President Benson said:

We must make the Book of Mormon a center focus of our study [because] it was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us. . . . Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, [Mormon] abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us. . . .

If they [the Book of Mormon writers] saw our day then chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, is not that how we should study the Book of Mormon? We should constantly ask ourselves, "Why did the Lord inspire Mormon (or Moroni or Alma) to include that in his record? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?" (*Conference Report*, October 1986, 3-7).

President Benson would later write:

It is not just that the Book of Mormon teaches us truth, though it indeed does that. It is not just that the Book of Mormon bears testimony of Christ, though it indeed does that, too. But there is something more. There is a power in the book which will begin to flow into your lives the moment you begin a serious study of the book. You will find greater power to resist temptation. You will find the power to avoid deception. You

will find the power to stay on the strait and narrow path. The scriptures are called the “words of life” (D&C 84:85), and nowhere is that more true than it is of the Book of Mormon. When you begin to hunger and thirst after those words, you will find life in greater and greater abundance (“The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign*, November, 1986, 16:7).

Further:

I would like to speak about one of the most significant gifts given to the world in modern times. The gift I am thinking of is more important than any of the inventions that have come out of the industrial and technological revolutions. This is a gift of greater value to mankind than even the many wonderful advances we have seen in modern medicine. It is of greater worth to mankind than the development of flight or space travel. I speak of the gift of the Book of Mormon (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft] 1988, 51).

President Benson often reiterated the prophet Joseph Smith’s statement when Joseph referred to the Book of Mormon as “the keystone of our religion” (*TPJS*, 194). A keystone, sometimes called the headstone, is the central stone in an arch. It holds all the other stones in place, and if it is removed, the arch crumbles.

Your author has developed the habit, as I read the Book of Mormon, of reading slowly and actually looking for words or phrases or concepts whose meanings are unclear. I search for ideas that are not completely compatible with the framework of knowledge I already possess. I have been surprised to learn that I seldom have to read more than two or three verses before coming upon some puzzlement, large or small. On each occasion, I am left with an unsettled perplexity, a sort of uncomfortable disequilibrium. “Why are there so many verses in this basic scriptural work,” I have wondered, “that cause me to struggle so?” Disquieting as these feelings are, I have come to recognize them as a first step in learning some valuable new insight.

Once I come upon a phrase or verse I don’t understand, I begin my search for the answer by reading and re-reading the “offending” passage, by checking cross references, by reading supplemental explanatory materials, by sometimes asking help of my learned friends, and often praying about the verse. Mercifully, I have found that my efforts are most always fruitful. I am able to re-establish my equilibrium with the verse, and, at the same time, find myself possessing a greater insight on some particular point. With some satisfaction, I then continue on in my reading, only to find the process beginning again a verse or two later. I heartily recommend this same approach to my readers, and I have attempted in this commentary to spare you some of the pain of finding your answers. I hope I have anticipated many of your perplexities as you study the Book of Mormon, yet I suspect that each of us will encounter and be obliged to overcome our own unique set of questions. There is certainly a magic in enduring in this process, for certainly as we do so, we are “treasur[ing] up . . . the words of life” (D&C 84:85).

Your author prefers to think of this work as an “enrichment commentary.” I believe it may be read and enjoyed by the casual student of the Book of Mormon who might, for example, find use for it as a reference source. The book’s intended purpose, however, is to assist the serious student who would like to begin a thorough, intensive, and searching tour through the book. Though it may be useful to the student who wishes to skip from one verse here to another verse there, it is intended to be read sequentially. Some concepts discussed in earlier verses in the book or even earlier verses in a particular chapter may receive more casual attention when encountered later in the text.

This work consists of a rather comprehensive commentary on the verses of the Book of Mormon. Some may have reservations about the basic concept of this book. I am aware of Peter’s warning: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men: but Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). I have endeavored in this project not to add or detract from the scripture, but only clarify. Some will say that such a comprehensive commentary is not possible without placing a “private interpretation” on some verses. I have earnestly attempted to avoid assigning any purely individual or private interpretations to the scriptural verses. Your author is a student of the Book of Mormon and in no wise an expert. To create this volume I have prayerfully studied and utilized the thoughts and explanations of many authors and scholars whose explanations of the Book of Mormon verses might be generally considered to be “authoritative” and “scholarly.” I have collected materials from general authorities and from individuals with undeniable scholarly credentials who openly profess a spiritual witness of the book. When I have borrowed their ideas only, and have rephrased them for my purposes, no reference will be cited. When I have quoted another author’s wording, acknowledgment is provided. Indeed, I have begun and completed this project as a student who is simply trying to make it possible for myself and for others to understand the book’s sometimes difficult verses. I acknowledge the fact, however, that my private biases have not been completely eliminated.

I am also sensitive to the need to avoid proof-texting in a work such as this. That is, I have tried very hard to let the scriptures speak for themselves. An author guilty of proof-texting presupposes the doctrine and then seeks support from the scriptures. I have attempted to consider each verse in its historical and sequential context.

I have tried to include timely and necessary background information to make the book’s words, phrases, and verses really come alive. I have tried to avoid rhetoric and concentrate on the meat. It is not my purpose to preach about the principles contained in the book, rather my goal is to improve understanding. This work presupposes, in its reader, an “average” understanding of the Book of Mormon. I have tried to eliminate those commentary materials which would likely be redundant and unnecessary for my

so-called average reader. It is my intent to explain, clarify, and enrich your study and understanding of the book.

The work includes a variety of “supplemental articles” to which reference is made appropriately in the text. Among these supplemental articles is a purely historical telling of the Book of Mormon story entitled, *A Narrative Summary of the Book of Mormon*. From this “historical” summary, doctrinal materials have been omitted, but all characters, events, and places are included. It is hope that this historical account may be useful to the student who wishes to quickly “brush up” on the historical narrative.

A few “housekeeping” notes about this work are pertinent. The text of the Book of Mormon is included in bold with a blue color to clearly distinguish it from the commentary. All commentary is colored black. The paragraphs of commentary material are often preceded by a quoted phrase, also of blue color, without any punctuation except for quotation marks. These are phrases taken directly from the verse of text immediately above the commentary paragraph. The commentary then follows these quoted phrases. Sometimes the verse commentary for a group of verses will precede, rather than follow, the actual text rendering of the verses. This is done if it felt that a word of explanation before reading a passage would be helpful. Most block quotes appear in red print and are not double-indented. Finally, in this current updated version of this commentary (2014) page numbers have been eliminated, as they are considered unnecessary.

In reading the Book of Mormon, often we tend to regard some of the materials contained therein as non-essential. We wonder, “Why was the report of this battle or that incident included in the book?” As we study the book, we will assume that there is no “filler” material in the Book of Mormon. Every item in the book was placed there for a reason and purpose. In making his abridgment of the sacred records of the Book of Mormon people, Mormon wrote, “I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people” (Words of Mormon 1:5). Hence, we must assume that all items in the book have been included following thoughtful and inspired consideration.

There is a miracle in the scriptures. If a person reads the scriptures regularly, he or she will invariably have his or her life touched by them eventually. “Whosoever believeth on my words,” the Lord said in reference to the Book of Mormon, “them will I visit with the manifestation of my Spirit” (D&C 5:16). Isaiah prophesied that the Book of Mormon would bring a spiritually blind generation to an understanding of the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 27:35; Isaiah 29:24). It has been suggested by those experienced in gospel study that no individual who studies the scriptures daily will be remiss in keeping the commandments.

Our scriptures advise us of several other books of scripture yet to come forth. One day, “all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been . . . and which ever will be” (2 Nephi 27:11). Perhaps, though, we will never be privileged to receive additional scriptures until we learn to appreciate fully those we already have.

Consider the following testimony of The Book of Mormon by President Ezra Taft Benson:

We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, another testament of Jesus Christ.

The Bible sits on the pulpit of hundreds of different religious sects. The Book of Mormon, the record of Joseph, verifies and clarifies the Bible. It removes stumbling blocks, it restores many plain and precious things. We testify that when used together, the Bible and the Book of Mormon confound false doctrines, lay down contentions, and establish peace (see 2 Nephi 3:12).

We do not have to prove that the Book of Mormon is true. The Book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it! The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ” (*Conference Report*, October 1984, 7; *Ensign* November 1984, 8).

I am deeply committed to the book as an authentic ancient scripture. The Spirit has born witness to my soul on numerous occasions as I have studied and pondered its verses. I know with all my heart that the book was written by ancient prophets who intended for their writings to come forth to the world and be translated in our day by Joseph Smith, Jr., through the “gift and power of God.”

Michael J. Preece

The Book of Moroni

The sole original author of the book of Moroni was Moroni himself. Keep in mind that this is an unabridged record written by Moroni's own hand. These writings of Moroni serve almost as an appendix to the Book of Mormon containing some items of practical instruction, a sermon of his father Mormon, some epistles from his father, and his own final testimony and farewell.

Just for fun, let us summarize, the parts of the Book of Mormon that were not abridged by Mormon. They include: the first six books: 1 Nephi through Omni, the Words of Mormon (written by Mormon on the last page of the small plates of Nephi), the title page (written by Moroni on the final page of the plates of Mormon), chapters 6-9 of the book of Mormon (Chapters 1-5 were Mormon's abridgment of the longer record he had made of his own history and recorded onto the large plates of Nephi. Mormon later wrote chapters 6 and 7, and Moroni wrote chapters 8 and 9, directly onto the plates of Mormon), the book of Ether (written by Moroni), and the book of Moroni (see the supplemental article, *Those Confusing Book of Mormon Plates*).

Chapter Outline of Moroni

A brief outline of the book of Ether, worth committing to memory, is as follows:

Moroni 4-5 Sacramental Prayers

Moroni 7 Mormon's Teachings on Faith, Hope, and Charity

Moroni Chapter 1

1 Now I, Moroni, after having made an end of abridging the account of the people of Jared, I had supposed not to have written more, but I have not as yet perished; and I make not myself known to the Lamanites lest they should destroy me.

2 For behold, their wars are exceedingly fierce among themselves; and because of their hatred they put to death every Nephite that will not deny the Christ.

3 And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ; wherefore, I wander whithersoever I can for the safety of mine own life.

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.

verse 4 It is interesting that Moroni had the impression that his writings will be of particular value to the latter-day descendants of the Lamanites. When he wrote the title page for the Book of Mormon onto the last page of the plates of Mormon, he named his "target audiences" for the book. Note the order in which he named them: "Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—

Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile.” Obviously his feelings for his own people were strong. It is also obvious that the Lord regards the purpose of the Book of Mormon to be, at least in part, a witness to the latter- day Lamanites: “And for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people; And that the Lamanites might come to the knowledge of their fathers, and that they might know the promises of the Lord, and that they may believe the gospel and rely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, and be glorified through faith in his name, and that through their repentance they might be saved” (D&C 3:19-20).

Moroni Chapter 2

1 The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them—

2 And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall give the Holy Ghost; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles.

verse 2 It seems clear that the Lord is here ordaining his twelve disciples with the Melchizedek priesthood—the priesthood necessary to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost.

3 Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and the multitude heard it not, but the disciples heard it; and on as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost.

Moroni Chapter 3

One might suppose that Moroni, as he contemplated what he might write further into the Book of Mormon record, felt that not enough had been said about the church. There was after all a church in Book of Mormon times, but precious little has been said about its organization, its officers, or its ordinances. Hence we find some practical counsel in Moroni's writings about such matters.

Moroni chapters 3, 4, and 5 contain instructions regarding the manner in which priests and teachers should be ordained and the manner in which the emblems of the sacrament should be administered. These instructions may well have been given by the resurrected Lord during his visit to the Nephites as evidenced by Moroni 2:1.

Elder Boyd K. Packer, in speaking of the ordinances of salvation, said: "Good conduct without the ordinances of the gospel will neither redeem nor exalt mankind; covenants and the ordinances are essential" (*CR*, October 1984, 105). Why are ordinances so important? May I suggest three important reasons:

1. God has commanded them (D&C 52:15-16). This fact, in and of itself, should be sufficient reason for our unquestioning compliance. God, however, is never arbitrary in his instructions to us. There are always important *reasons* underlying his commandments. Perhaps the most important reason for the ordinances is that he intends for them to assist with our spiritual progression. At times they are even the central mechanism for our progression. Ordinances are the earthly manifestations of our entering into covenants with the Lord. It is by a system of covenants that the Lord seeks to lead us back eventually to his presence. An example is the ordinance of the sacrament which has an indispensable role in the process of our sanctification (see "The Role of the Sacrament" in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 18, *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth*).

Perhaps a brief editorial comment is appropriate here. Your author has noted that in the Church there are some members who are inclined to regard ordinances as ends unto themselves. That is, they would regard the completion of the ordinances as one of the primal purposes this earth's existence. After all, did not the Lord say to the apostle John, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). I have even been witness to the suggestion that one may be regarded as "perfect," by a scriptural definition, once one has completed the set of earthly covenants which the Lord requires of us. The implication of this thinking is that there is a spiritual level which we may complete or finish here in this life through our entering into the requisite ordinances, and that once these ordinances have been completed (the covenant entered into), the individual is well on his or her way to exaltation. It may appropriately be pointed out that Evangelical Protestants today seek for this same type of comfort and spiritual reassurance as they

“complete” the commandment to confess Christ and accept him as their Savior. Then, they feel, their salvation is virtually secure. It seems clear that ordinances, and the covenants of which they are the earthly manifestations, are a means to an end and not an end unto themselves. The purpose of this earth may be more appropriately stated: we must continually strive to overcome our “natural man” tendencies and rigorously obey the Lord’s commands. And especially should we endeavor to become primarily interested in the spiritual and temporal welfare of others first and place ourselves second. In this way, we gradually earn incremental gifts of the Spirit or increments of the divine attributes of God. The all-knowing, Lord, in his wisdom, knows our human proclivities intimately and perfectly. He seems primarily motivated by his yearning to live with us forever in his celestial presence. He has established a series of covenants (with their associated ordinances) because he knows they will be practically helpful in encouraging us to discipline ourselves in obeying the commandments. He is, for example, more interested in our being baptized because of the associated baptismal covenant which we enter into than he is interested in our being baptized just because he commands it. There is no question that he does command us to enter into and accept a prescribed set of covenants with their associated ordinances, and we must comply at the peril of our salvation. But he mainly wants us to diligently deny our natural selves and obey the commandments. This will result in basic spiritual changes in us and may qualify us for celestial resurrection. It is this latter that is his goal. He wants us home with him forever.

2. The symbolisms involved with the ordinances are useful teaching reminders.

3. The ordinances serve not only as reminders of the sacred covenants which we have entered into with God, but they also serve to actually renew those covenants.

It may also be helpful to the reader to review *The Lord’s Use of Ritual*, volume 3, chapter 29 in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

1 The manner which the disciples, who were called the elders of the church, ordained priests and teachers–

verse 1 “the disciples, who were called the elders of the church” The disciples, the twelve apostles, the presiding officers of the church, were also called elders. This terminology accords with the latter-day practice of designating apostles and other general authorities as elders.

2 After they had prayed unto the Father in the name of Christ, they laid their hands upon them, and said:

3 In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a priest, (or, if he be a teacher) I ordain you to be a teacher, to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ, by the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen.

verse 3 Though the text never makes it clear, it seems likely that the “priests” and “teachers” here spoken of are not officers in the Aaronic priesthood. Rather they are priests and teachers in a more general sense and likely functioned as officers in the Melchizedek priesthood who ministered to the people and taught the gospel.

However, President Joseph Fielding Smith has suggested another formulation: “When the Savior came to the Nephites, he established the church in its fulness among them, and he informed them that former things had passed away, for they were all fulfilled in him. He gave the Nephites all the authority of the priesthood which we exercise today. Therefore we are justified in the belief that not only was the fulness of the Melchizedek priesthood conferred, but also the Aaronic, just as we have it in the Church today; and this Aaronic priesthood remained with them from this time until, through wickedness, all priesthood ceased. We may be assured that in the days of Moroni the Nephites did ordain teachers and priests in the Aaronic priesthood; but before the visit of the Savior they officiated in the Melchizedek priesthood” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:124, 126).

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.

Moroni Chapter 4

Scripture Mastery

Moroni 4-5 (compare D&C 20:77, 79) Sacramental Prayers

1 The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it—

2 And they did kneel down with the church, and pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying:

verse 2 “And they did kneel down with the church” It is interesting to note that in the early days of the Church in this dispensation, the entire Church congregation knelt when the sacrament was blessed. This is largely impractical in modern congregations, though we must still have an attitude of humility and bend the “knees” of our hearts as the priest offers the prayers. It should be noted that all such changes in practice have been inspired, with prophetic authorization.

3 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

Moroni Chapter 5

1 The manner of administering the wine—Behold, they took the cup, and said:

2 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

verse 2 (also applies to Moroni 4:3) The ordinance of the sacrament is a vital and indispensable ordinance and covenant that is intimately associated with the process by which we grow spiritually, including the processes of justification and sanctification (please review *Justification and Sanctification* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17). During the ordinance, we renew the covenant of obedience we first made at the time of our baptism. We covenant to strive to remake ourselves to become like him. In association with the ordinance of the sacrament, the Holy Ghost functions not only to remove the penalty of sin (justify us) but to burn out of our soul an increment of the natural self and bestow upon us incremental gifts of the Spirit which we must acquire in our quest to become like the Savior and obtain his attributes for ourselves (sanctify us).

The emblems of the sacrament are, of course, symbolic of the Savior's flesh and blood, and hence, symbolic of his atonement.

Moroni Chapter 6

Scripture Mastery

Moroni 6:2-4 Moroni outlines the requirements for baptism in the Nephite church of his day.

Moroni 6:5-6 Moroni describes the habits of worship of the few remaining Nephites who were being hunted by the Lamanites. And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

verses 1-4 Elder John A. Widtsoe enhanced our understanding of the earthly priesthood ordinances such as baptism:

Great eternal truths make up the Gospel plan. All requirements for man's earthly guidance have their eternal spiritual counterparts. The earthly ordinances of the Gospel are themselves the reflections of heavenly ordinances. For instance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and temple work are really earthly symbols of universal realities and of truths that must be recognized if the Great Plan is to be fulfilled. The acceptance of these earthly symbols is part and parcel of correct earth-life, and being distinctly of the earth, cannot be performed elsewhere than on earth. In order that absolute fairness may prevail and eternal justice be satisfied, all men, to attain the possible fulness of their joy, must accept these earthly ordinances. There is no water baptism in the next estate, nor any conferring of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of earthly hands. The equivalent of these ordinances prevail, no doubt in every estate, but only as they are given on this earth can they be made to aid, in their onward progress, those who have dwelt on earth. For that reason those who have departed this life without having accepted the earthly ordinances which constitute in part the conditions of entrance to the Church, must have that work done for them on earth. By proxy they must be baptized by water, receive the laying on of hands and accept temple ordinances. By this method the path of eternal life, which all must tread, is made invariable in fairness and without discrimination. Were there any departure from this order, it would be a short time only until men might take upon themselves the authority of devising various methods whereby eternal joy might be obtained. This would be unnatural because order prevails throughout nature (*A Rational Theology*, 150-52).

1 And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it.

2 Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.

3 And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.

verses 1-3 Moroni describes the qualifications for baptism into the Nephite Church. They are virtually the same as those listed by the Lord through revelation in this dispensation: “And again, by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism—All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church” (D&C 20:37).

A “broken heart and contrite spirit” is a vital and specific gift of the Spirit we may earn through our diligent obedience to the Lord’s commands. It is the gift of divine motivation, that gift, once earned and acquired through personal revelation, provides the individual with constant and enduring motivation to obey the commandments. The reader should make certain he understands the concept of gifts of the Spirit. For a thorough discussion of this important topic see *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1 chapters 7 and 8: *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit* and *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts*. For a discussion of the specific gift of the Spirit called a “broken heart and contrite spirit” see “The Solution to Pride—A Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit” in *The “Natural Self” and “Spiritual Self,”* in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 5.

The word “meet” in this context means suitable, fitting, proper. The “fruits meet for baptism” are faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; an attitude of gratitude for the Savior’s atonement and a recognition of one’s total and complete dependence upon his merits and mercy; an anxious willingness and desire to obey and serve him at all costs; and a yearning to repent.

verses 4-9 It is fascinating to read in these verses Moroni’s description of the practices of the Nephite Church. At the time of his writing, with all the Nephites in constant danger, it is not possible to know how many church members remained and what the nature of their worship might have been. Moroni’s descriptions here of the practices of worship of the Nephites were likely based on the Nephites’ practices of worship prior to the great final battle of the Nephites and Lamanites.

4 And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and 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, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.

verse 4 **“they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered”** Here is the Nephite Church’s equivalent of our modern-day membership record system.

“nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way” They studied the scriptures. Obviously “perfecting the saints” was a major mission of the Church then, as it is now. We are also reminded of the necessity of diligently fellowshipping new converts. President Gordon B. Hinckley has recently taught that every new convert needs a friend, a church calling, and “the good word of God, to keep them in the right way.” Isn’t it interesting to learn that the need for fellowshipping has not changed in the last sixteen hundred years!

“relying alone upon the merits of Christ” This phrase implies that man lacks sufficient merit of his own to entitle him to return to the presence of the Lord. He must depend completely upon the grace of God. He is a beggar at the throne of grace (Mosiah 4:20).

“the finisher of their faith” Faith in the Savior must be converted to spiritual growth or progress. This is done through the process of sanctification wherein the blessings of the atonement are repeatedly extended to an individual as he repents of his sins and imperfections, re-covenants to obey the commandments at the ordinance of the sacrament, and then succeeds in actually obeying the commandments. Thus, is our faith “finished.”

5 And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls.

verse 5 **“the church did meet together oft”** Anthon H. Lund declared: “Unless the saints attend their meetings, it will be hard for them to keep alive in the gospel” (*CR*, October 1907, 9).

“speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls” They taught and fellowshipped one another.

6 And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

verse 6 The vital role of the sacrament in our spiritual progression has been abundantly discussed—again, see “The Role of the Sacrament” in *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth*, in volume 1, chapter 18 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

7 And they were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them; and whoso was found to commit iniquity, and three witnesses of the church did condemn them before the elders, and if they repented not, and confessed not,

their names were blotted out, and they were not numbered among the people of Christ.

verse 7 The importance of church discipline is two-fold. First, it maintains the spiritual integrity of the Church. Second, it helps the offending individual along the road to repentance. For additional discussion of the principle of church discipline, see the commentary for Mosiah 26:6, 29-30.

The principle of witnesses, outlined in this verse, continues to guide the modern Church (D&C 20:83; 42:80-83; 102; 134:10).

8 But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven.

9 And their meetings were conducted by the church after the manner of the workings of the Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Ghost; for as the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done.

verse 9 The word “whether” here is used with an archaic meaning and does not imply that only one alternative was possible. “Whether” here might be interpreted as meaning *when*.

Moroni Chapter 7

Scripture Mastery

Moroni 7 Mormon's teachings on faith, hope, and charity

Moroni 7:11-14 The prophet Mormon comments on the inward motivation of man: A man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ; and if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil.

Moroni 7:16-17 For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.

Moroni 7:27-29 The prophet Mormon asks the question, "Have miracles ceased?" He then describes the miracle of all miracles, the atonement of Jesus Christ with its consequent miracle of forgiveness.

Moroni 7:33 If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.

Moroni 7:40-42 The prophet Mormon teaches of the relationship between faith and hope: 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.

Moroni 7:44-48 Mormon's discourse on charity which uses terminology similar to that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Mormon said, For if [a man] have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. 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.

This chapter is Moroni's relating of a powerful sermon delivered by his father Mormon. We are not told the age of Mormon when he first delivered or wrote this sermon.

1 And now I, Moroni, write a few of the words of my father Mormon, which he spake concerning faith, hope, and charity; for after this manner did he speak unto the people, as he taught them in the synagogue which they had built for the place of worship.

2 And now I, Mormon, speak unto you, my beloved brethren; and it is by the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy will, because of the gift of his calling unto me, that I am permitted to speak unto you at this time.

3 Wherefore, I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven.

verse 3 “ye can enter into the rest of the Lord” Note that in this verse Mormon uses the concept of the “rest of the Lord” in two ways. We have previously discussed these separate meanings (see the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10).

Mormon clearly indicates that those with the gift of hope will enter into a state of rest here on earth.

4 And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men.

verse 4 “your peaceable walk with the children of men” In modern revelation, the Lord, in speaking of those who have already been baptized but are awaiting the opportunity to partake of the sacrament and be confirmed a member of the Church said, “And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures—walking in holiness before the Lord” (D&C 20:69). When a man manifests a “godly walk and conversation” or a “peaceable walk,” what he does and says is consistently in harmony with gospel standards. If he is without pretense, his behavior and conversation is underpinned with an often felt companionship with the Spirit of God which brings to him a comfortable and peaceful sense of security and spiritual self-assuredness. Through the ministrations of the Spirit, he forms a real and tangible companionship with the Savior.

5 For I remember the word of God, which saith by their works ye shall know them; for if their works be good, then they are good also.

verse 5 What a man really is in his heart will inevitably make itself manifest in his actions and speech (his works).

6 For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing.

verse 6 “a man being evil cannot do that which is good” Some have interpreted this phrase as serving as a warning that a man is incapable of earning his own salvation by a specified number of good deeds. He is not capable of becoming “justified by the law.” It would seem that in this verse’s context, however, it more likely to mean that an evil man is incapable of doing the right things for the right reasons. Initially he may do the right things for the wrong reasons, but eventually his heart will betray him and he will invariably do the wrong things.

“except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing” If a man offers a “gift” or a “prayer,” it is of no use to him lest he do so with proper motivation. In other words, he must do the right thing for the right reason. The phrase “real intent” may be interpreted to mean according to that which is truly in his heart.

7 For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness.

verses 6-7 The law of Moses required outward obedience—doing the right thing regardless of one’s motivation. The law of the gospel, the “new covenant” requires more than just doing the right thing. It requires doing the right things for the right reasons. For example, giving to the poor has always been an obligation placed upon the Lord’s covenant people, and apparently there is a certain almost “magical” spiritual benefit in doing so in secret, without regard to being seen of men or obtaining any outward recognition. The Lord, in his appearance to the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful said: “Verily, verily, I say that I would that ye should do alms unto the poor; but take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore, when ye shall do your alms do not sound a trumpet before you, as will hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly” (3 Nephi 13 1-4).

Righteous deeds need not necessarily be performed anonymously, but they should always be done without pretense; and perhaps even more for a secret, sacred reason. Giving without seeking or accepting any praise or recognition is certainly the highest form of giving.

These verses raise a most interesting question. Is it better to do the right thing for the wrong reason? Or, if one is not properly motivated, is it better to do nothing at all? Let us consider two separate examples of doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Let us say that a man makes a generous donation to a charity, but is careful to make his donation known publicly. Deep in his heart he desires the public recognition.

It is his “need” for widespread acknowledgment that compels him to give. He cares less for those who will benefit from his gift. Now, let us consider another example. A person may say, “Given the way I feel about going to church today [or doing my home teaching, or serving at Welfare Square], it would be better to just stay home!”

In the first instance, the man is selfishly motivated. Giving his gift was certainly the right thing to do, but the worldly recognition he receives is likely his only reward—“he has his reward” (Mathew 6:1-4). He might as well have not bothered to give the gift if we judge from the standpoint of the man’s spiritual progress. He not only lacked for “real” intent, but he was compelled by false and selfish intent. In the second case, there was no particular ulterior motive. Rather the man simply lacked for the proper motive, the “real” intent. In this case it is important not to stay home. He should go to church or do his home teaching, or serve at Welfare Square. As he does so, he is “experimenting upon [the] words” of Christ, and his purposeful doing the right thing even if he lacked the proper motivation might some day culminate in his acquiring the proper motivation, the “real intent.” Now, it should be noted that real examples are not as “black and white” as these two, and certainly we should be slow to judge others in their doing of good works.

8 For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God.

verse 8 “he doeth it grudgingly” Again, as discussed in the previous verse we must a bit cautious in interpreting this verse. Let us assume a man is presented with an opportunity to do a good deed (“give a gift”) for another. Yet, he has misgivings. Perhaps he doesn’t feel he has the time, or sufficient money, or the proper love for the other person. Should he then best decide not to give the gift, or should give anyway, even though he has misgivings—should he go ahead and “doeth it [give the gift] grudgingly”? In this situation it is obvious that he should give the gift in spite of his misgivings. This fits into the category of “denying his natural self,” and his deliberate giving in spite of his misgivings is a manifestation of deliberate faith. He should not be considered “evil.” Rather, he is to be commended. His misgivings in this situation are not to be counted against him and are not to be considered evil. He is not to be considered evil. He is simply growing in the way most all of us have to grow. Initially, it is necessary to deliberately deny our natural-man impulses, and that is often difficult. But once we have denied them, it is simpler the next time.

9 And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.

verse 9 Vain prayers that lack sincerity are of no value to him who offers them.

10 Wherefore, a man being evil cannot do that which is good; neither will he give a good gift.

verse 10 See the commentary for verse 8. The gift is not a good gift only if his motivation behind giving the gift is self aggrandizement.

11 For behold, a bitter fountain cannot bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water; wherefore, a man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ; and if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil.

verses 10-11 Mormon speaks here of the individual who is improperly motivated in doing his ostensibly “good works.” The honest feelings and intentions of a man’s heart are all-important. While we might imagine that a man’s motivations, in the real world, might be complex and contain something of both selfless and self-serving motivation—something of the world and something of the Spirit—Mormon suggests that there is a tendency to be one way or the other—“a man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ; and if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil.” This is the same sentiment as expressed by the Lord in his sermon on the mount: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24).

12 Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually.

verse 12 Mormon’s meaning here is clear, but perhaps the verse is a bit overly simplistic. Some have speculated that perhaps we give the devil “too much credit.” The ingredient that is left out here is the “natural self” tendency within each person. This “natural” inclination was not created by the devil, nor was it created by God. It has likely always existed as an integral part of each individual intelligence. Each of us has within us a tendency to act in ways that are immediately self-serving. We are naturally attracted to things of the world and immediate gratification, physical pleasure, materialism, a hunger for recognition, popularity, and power are all familiar to each of us. None of us is a stranger to the pulls of the world. Also within each of us is the inclination to seek for things of an eternal nature, an innate responsiveness to promptings of the Spirit of God. This innate goodness has also likely always been a part of us. While Satan did not create the “natural man,” he certainly applauds and encourages the exercise, to excess, of this “natural” tendency by each of us. Similarly, the Holy Ghost did not create our inclination to respond to his ministrations, but his purpose is to encourage and affirm us in that responsiveness.

The statement here, “that which is evil cometh of the devil” might be more accurately stated, “that which is evil cometh of the natural self.” It is true that Satan conspires against well doing, and he affirms the sinner who unsuccessfully attempts to resist his natural-self impulses.

13 But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

verse 13 While it is stated rather broadly, this verse seems to be a good litmus test for influences here on earth. If they invite an individual to do good works, to seek the things of God, to grow toward godhood, then they are of God.

verses 14-19 Mormon addresses the power of discernment and the power of righteous judgment, characteristics available to us mortals. Obviously great care must be exercised in setting about to judge another. There exists only one individual fully qualified to judge all men. There is only one who truly and perfectly understands the heart of each man to the point where he truly perceives the motives, mitigating circumstances, and intentions behind a man’s thoughts and behaviors. And he, in order to become our judge and Savior, had to undergo an ordeal so awful that no other mortal could even survive it.

14 Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil.

15 For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night.

16 For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

verse 16 “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man” For a discussion of the expressions “Spirit of Christ” and “light of Christ” (see verses 18-19) see “The Spirit or Light of Christ” in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 5, *The Holy Ghost*.

17 But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

verse 17 “**whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil . . . is of the devil**”

Again, we see again evidence of the well known tendency of the Prophet Mormon to give Satan credit for all evil. Here, he seems to ignore the well established “evil” effects of the natural self of all men.

18 And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.

19 Wherefore, I beseech of you, brethren, that ye should search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil; and if ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ.

verse 19 “**search diligently in the light of Christ**” Seek to become responsive to the light which emanates from Christ, so that you may learn the truth of all things.

“**lay hold upon every good thing**” Seek to obtain and accept every aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“**child of Christ**” We become a child of Christ when we are “born again” by the purifying and sanctifying influence of the Spirit, and we overcome the influences of the world. We may be said to be “totally converted,” “justified,” “reconciled to God,” “born of the Spirit,” “born of God,” “quickened in the inner man,” “new creatures,” and “perfect in Christ.”

verses 20-26 Here Mormon counsels us on how we may obtain “every good thing.” Just what “good things” are being spoken of here? It seems reasonable to suppose that “every good thing” is each and every incremental gift of the Spirit we must earn as we progress spiritually toward godhood. The process of earning and receiving these gifts involved justification and sanctification (see *Justification and Sanctification in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 17), and we are motivated to participate in these processes of as we acquire faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in his ability to forgive and purify (sanctify) us. The incremental gifts, or characteristics of God himself, are given to us as we strive to be obedient and submissive to his will, and as we repent. We are then allowed to partake of the light of Christ, and we begin to acquire some of that light, a ray at a time, from him. He is the source of all “good things”—of all spiritual gifts (Moroni 10:18).

20 And now, my brethren, how is it possible that ye can lay hold upon every good thing?

21 And now I come to that faith, of which I said I would speak; and I will tell you the way whereby ye may lay hold on every good thing.

22 For behold, God knowing all things, being from everlasting to everlasting, behold, he sent angels to minister unto the children of men, to make manifest concerning the coming of Christ; and in Christ there should come every good thing.

23 And God also declared unto prophets, by his own mouth, that Christ should come.

24 And behold, there were divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men, which were good; and all things which are good cometh of Christ; otherwise men were fallen, and there could no good thing come unto them.

verse 24 Without any gifts of the Spirit, man would be left to his carnal nature and subject to all of the carnal influences in the world.

25 Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ.

verse 25 “and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing” This statement is simple and has a clear and unambiguous meaning. An individual exercises faith by deliberately denying his natural self and obeying the Lord’s commandments. When the Spirit (“the Holy Spirit of Promise”) judges the individual’s efforts and success in obeying as being adequate, then he will reveal to the individual an increment of an attribute of Christ—a gift of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are “every good thing” and are the basis of spiritual growth.

26 And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God. And as sure as Christ liveth he spake these words unto our fathers, saying: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you.

verse 26 “And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name” Mormon’s meaning is, Before he came to earth in mortality (see prior verse), men were saved by faith in his name. And after he came, men were still saved in the same way.

“Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good . . . it shall be done unto you” The key phrase here is “which is good.” If we do not ask “amiss,” our desires shall be granted. See also the commentary for 3 Nephi 14:7-11.

verses 27-39 These verses teach the principle of the “ministering of angels.” Essentially, the concept is that if the kingdom of God is on the earth and the people

exercise sufficient faith, then angels will minister unto them. Bruce R. McConkie taught: “So unvarying is this principle that it stands forth as the conclusive test of the divinity of any organization on earth. If angels minister to a people, they are the Lord’s people, and his kingdom is with them. If angels do not minister unto them, they are not the Lord’s people, and his kingdom is not with them” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 503).

27 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men?

verse 27 “to claim of the Father his rights of mercy” This is an interesting way of expressing the principle: Because of his atoning sacrifice, Jesus has the “right” to exercise the principle of mercy for the salvation of mankind. And he can claim this right before the Father and before those that enforce the demands of justice.

This miraculous extension of mercy has not ceased just because the resurrected Christ has ascended into heaven.

28 For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing; wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men; and he dwelleth eternally in the heavens.

verse 28 In the previous verse, Mormon asks, “Have miracles ceased?” In this verse he mentions the greatest miracle of all, the atonement, with its consequent miracle of forgiveness.

29 And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men.

30 For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness.

verse 30 Angels do not appear to the unrighteous and unstable. Just as miracles are given as rewards to the faithful, so do angels minister only “unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness.”

31 And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him.

verse 31 Angels “call men unto repentance.” They preach the gospel and help to gather Israel. They also “do the work of the covenants of the Father” which means to make available the gospel covenants and ordinances done by proper authority. An example of this type of work is the restoring of keys of the priesthood once they have been lost from the earth during times of apostasy. Examples include John the Baptist (keys of the Aaronic priesthood); Peter, James, and John (keys of the Melchizedek priesthood); Moses (keys of the gathering of Israel); Elias (keys of the Abrahamic covenant); and Elijah (keys of the sealing power).

In addition, angels teach and testify “unto the chosen vessels of the Lord” so that these may in turn bear testimony of Christ to the world. For a discussion on the scriptural word *chosen*, see the commentary for 1 Nephi 1:19-20. This pattern of angels’ teaching chosen vessels who in turn bear testimony and teach others is followed repeatedly in the Book of Mormon. For example, Nephi (1 Nephi 11-15), king Benjamin (Mosiah 3), Alma (Mosiah 27), and the brothers Nephi and Lehi (Helaman 5) all conversed with heavenly messengers. Mormon and Moroni were taught by the three translated Nephite disciples. The ministry of angels, however, is not limited to the righteous. An angel visited Laman and Lemuel, the rebellious Alma, and the four sons of Mosiah.

32 And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men.

verse 32 The use of the word “residue” is interesting here. The word “residue” means the part that remains after part has been removed. In the prior verse, Mormon explains that it is the work of ministering angels to “call men unto repentance” and help to gather Israel. Not all will repent and only the “residue of men [those that do repent] may have faith in Christ.”

33 And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me.

verse 33 Faith is a principle of power—power to do any “good” thing, anything that “is expedient in me.” For a discussion of this aspect of faith, see “Faith as Power—the Third Type of Faith” in *Other Notes on Faith*, volume 1, chapter 11 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

34 And he hath said: Repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved.

verse 34 “**have faith in me**” Remember that to have faith in Christ is to obey his commandments.

35 And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you, and God will show unto you, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true, and if they are true has the day of miracles ceased?

verse 35 “And now, my beloved brethren” Mormon is addressing the latter-day remnant of the Book of Mormon people. He seems to be asking an implied question, “Will not the latter days also be a day of miracles?”

36 Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?

37 Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain.

verse 37 “for it is by faith that miracles are wrought” See *Miracles in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 3 chapter 20.

“all is vain” All is empty, hollow, and meaningless. Miracles will cease only when there is universal unbelief.

38 For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made.

verse 38 If there were a complete absence of faith—a complete lack of obedience to the Lord’s commandments—then there might as well have never been an atonement made. All mankind would be lost and assigned to outer darkness.

39 But behold, my beloved brethren, I judge better things of you, for I judge that ye have faith in Christ because of your meekness; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church.

verses 40-48 Mormon now discourses on faith, hope, and charity. Before studying these verses, please review “The Fruits of Faith” in *Other Notes on Faith in Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 1, chapter 11.

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?

41 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.

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

verses 40-42 It is clear that hope is a gift of the spirit that follows faith. It grows out of faith. Yet these verses might cause some confusion regarding the sequence in which these two gifts are granted. In verse 40 there is a suggestion that hope is necessary before one can develop faith: “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?” A cursory reading of this passage might lead us to think that in order to have faith you have to have hope. This suggests that hope comes first. Yet in verse 42 we read: “for without faith there cannot be any hope.” I submit that the intended meaning of this passage is that if one exercises faith, then hope will follow. As one is obedient to the commandments, which obedience requires the deliberate exercise of faith (deliberate faith), the inevitable byproducts include the gift of the Spirit associated with the particular commandment obeyed (D&C 130:20-21); a greater inclination to obey due to a softening of the pulls of the natural self; a revealed increment in one’s relationship with the Savior which adds to one’s faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; a contribution to one’s gift hope—that whispered assurance that one is celestial bound; and usually a contribution to one’s gift of charity. Why the gift of charity? Because the great majority of the Lord’s commandments to us are aspects of the general commandment for us to love our neighbor, or to be charitable.

Then how do we explain verse 40? We know that something does precede faith. What is it? Alma called it a “desire to believe” (Alma 32:27). This desire to believe may be thought of as an earthly type of the principle of belief or hope. We are willing to experiment upon the words of Christ because we believe and hope that our obedience will bear spiritual fruit. This is not, however, the saving hope, the spiritual gift of hope. Saving hope follows faith.

Probably the simplest explanation of verse 40 is that its intended meaning is “How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall [as a consequence] have hope?” This meaning is true to the faith-leads-to-hope sequence.

43 And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

verse 43 Revealed faith, which is the sum total of an individual’s gifts of the Spirit or the spiritual progress of man, can come only to him who is humble and submissive to the will of God. A byproduct of a person’s gifts of the spirit is a revealed change of heart—a revealed meekness and lowliness of heart.

44 If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

verse 44 “If so” This phrase in this context means, if a man has a type of “faith” but is not “meek, and lowly of heart. . . .”

“none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart” The “meek” are the poor in spirit, the humble, the submissive, the teachable. The “meek” are not the timid, the spiritless, the fearful. In fact the most forceful dynamic personality who ever lived described himself as being “meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Meekness and humility are the opposite of pride. True humility is a gift of the Spirit which, like all gifts of the Spirit, must be earned. The individual blessed with the gift of humility sees himself and his relationship to God in a proper eternal perspective. While he may honestly acknowledge his own efforts—his accomplishments and knowledge—he feels keenly his frailties and weaknesses. He is loath to elevate himself above others.

Mormon then introduces the highest of all the gifts, charity. Your author urges you to study *Charity as Empathy* and *Charity as a Revealed Sense of Others* (chapters 6 and 7 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2) if you have not already done so.

45 And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

verse 45 It is interesting to compare this verse with the writings of the apostle Paul: “Charity suffereth long, [and] is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). How could it be that this verse written by the prophet Mormon is so unmistakably similar to the verses written by Paul to the saints in Corinth? Mormon could have had no access to the writings of Paul. How do we explain this similarity? The best answer is that both Paul and Mormon were quoting an unknown Old Testament prophet. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: “Both Paul and Mormon expounded with great inspiration about faith, hope, and charity, in many verses using the same words and phrases. If there is any difference between them it is that Mormon expounds the doctrines more perfectly and persuasively than does Paul. It does not take much insight to know that Mormon and Paul both had before them the writings of

some Old Testament prophet on the same subjects” (“The Doctrinal Restoration,” in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, 18).

In this verse are enumerated the characteristics of a charitable person:

1. “suffereth long” “beareth all things” This individual has the gift of a God-like perspective for people and circumstances, a divine patience.
2. “kind” “envieth not” This person has the gift of charity and no inclination to compete with or envy or resent another person. He yearns for the success of others as much or more than he desires success for himself.
3. “not puffed up” Devoid of pride
4. “seeketh not her own” This individual is self-effacing and turned outward toward others giving little thought to themselves. He seeks to turn attention away from himself, consistently giving credit to others.
5. “is not easily provoked” Not easily angered
6. “thinketh no evil” “Virtue garnishe[s] [their] thoughts unceasingly” (D&C 121:45).
7. “rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth” Repulsed by sin but basks in the spirit of true and wholesome things
8. “believeth all things” Readily accepts the truth as prompted by the Spirit.
9. “hopeth all things” Has the gift of hope
10. “endureth all things” Not deterred by any type of adversity

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

verse 46 “if ye have not charity, ye are nothing” No one has stated better the importance of the gift of charity than the apostle Paul: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed [the poor], and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

“which is the greatest of all” Charity is obviously the loftiest, the highest, the most advanced spiritual gift of them all—the “granddaddy” of them all.

47 But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

verse 47 “charity is the pure love of Christ” Again, an appropriate definition of charity: When you come to yearn for the exaltation of another individual as much as

you yearn for your own exaltation, then you possess the gift of charity. The Father and the Son so yearn for each of us.

verses 46-47 All things of the world are temporary. They will all eventually fail. Among all the precious gifts of God, charity is one that will endure throughout all eternity. Therefore “charity never faileth.”

48 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.

verse 48 Probably the gift of charity renders the possessor of that gift more God-like than any other gift.

Certainly prayer is a vital prerequisite for our earning the gift of charity, but the Lord is likely to answer that prayer by providing us situations in our lives where we may have an opportunity to serve others.

Moroni Chapter 8

Scripture Mastery

Moroni 8:11-12 Mormon's letter to his son Moroni on the evils of original sin and infant baptism. Little children are alive in Christ .

Moroni 8:16 Mormon passionately condemns those who would teach of original sin and infant baptism: Wo be unto them that shall pervert the ways of the Lord after this manner. Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear .

This chapter consists of a letter written by the prophet Mormon to his son Moroni. It's likely that Mormon sent this letter on the occasion of Moroni's first call to the ministry. The size, organization, and prominence of the Church of Jesus Christ at this point in time is not clear. It is clear that Mormon was the prophet and that some organization of the Church was still intact.

The main purpose of the letter is to point up the evils of an apostate doctrine that had crept into the Church—that of original sin with its consequent need for infant baptism.

Before proceeding with our study of Mormon's letter, let us briefly review some basic formative doctrinal issues.

The transgression and fall of Adam and Eve introduced into the world, for all mankind, physical death and a temporary separation from God or spiritual death. All men will eventually die, and all men will live out their lives on earth outside the presence of God. The Lord's atonement has completely abolished, for all men, these two consequences of Adam's transgression. No man is responsible for Adam's fall, and no man will have to suffer, at least eternally, any consequences of it. Because of the Savior's atonement all men will be resurrected, and all men will return, following this mortal phase, to the presence of God, at least long enough to be judged by him.

The long-term problem shared by each man is the "fall of you"—the "permanent" spiritual death or separation from God that results from a man's committing even a single sin. The law of justice is unyielding. If a man commits a sin, he is then ineligible for entrance into any degree of glory. Fortunately, for those of us who are accountable, the atonement also includes provisions whereby we can overcome the consequences of our own sins, based on our obedience and repentance. In this way each of us may one day overcome the otherwise "permanent" spiritual death each of us has suffered because each of us has committed sin. Our sins can be forgiven by our Savior.

There are some among us who are not accountable. These include children under the age of eight years and people who are mentally handicapped. These may break a commandment, but they cannot be accounted as guilty of sin (D&C 29:47).

They are assessed no penalty by the law of justice. They therefore cannot bring about their own spiritual death. They are thus “alive in Christ” (verses 12, 22) and automatically qualify for entrance into a kingdom of glory. They, like the rest of us, are free from the consequences of Adam’s fall because of the atonement.

For completeness, one other point is worth our consideration. At the end of this *second* phase (second estate) of our existence, which includes both our earthly mortal sojourn and our stay in the spirit world, we will all be judged as to which kingdom of glory is appropriate for us.

An important issue is sin. Each and every person who inherits a degree of glory must become free of sin, justified, or “reconciled to God” (2 Nephi 10:24; 25:23; Jacob 4:11). In the end, every knee shall bow and every person will accept Jesus Christ and his atonement. Every man will repent, and the blessings of that atonement will be extended to him. The effects of his sins will be overcome. The penalty for his sins—assessed by the law of justice—will be removed, and he will be admitted into a kingdom of glory. Only a few will refuse to repent and will remain “filthy still.” These will go forever with Satan and his angels. The judgment of each of us will be evident in the resurrection. We will come forth with an eternal body that is celestial, terrestrial, telestial, or a “perdition” body.

And what are the essential factors in this judgment? How will the Lord determine which degree of glory each of us inherits? There are three major factors in the judgment of each of us:

1. The level of spiritual progress each of obtained in the premortal world is the first important factor in the judgment. Of those to whom much has been given, more will be expected. “For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation” (D&C 82:3; see also Luke 12:48). At the end of the premortal phase of our existence, we all had progressed to various degrees. Some had, because of their diligence and obedience, progressed to an advanced level of achievement. Others were less obedient in the premortal world and made less progress. As we enter mortality, the veil is drawn, but the veil does not completely hide our premortal proclivities. We are responsible for the progress we made there before coming to earth. Those who had reached a higher level in their progress will be expected to continue on to progress here at a more accelerated rate. Of those who had attained a lesser level there, less will be expected here.

2. In addition to our premortal attainments, another factor is vital in the judgment. Here in mortality people face a wide variety of circumstances that will significantly impact the progress they are able to make here. Were they born in or out of the Church? Did they inherit an advanced and enlightened culture with all of its opportunities, or were they born into a disadvantaged “third world” situation where they had to deal with poverty and deprivation? Did they have an opportunity to hear the gospel, or did they live and die without ever encountering the gospel message? How

were they treated here? Did they have loving parents who nurtured and encouraged them? Or, did they live in an unfavorable situation where they were abused and neglected? The variety of circumstances faced by mortals here on earth is practically endless, and surely these circumstances are considered by an all-knowing Savior as he judges us for the progress or lack of progress which we have made.

3. The final essential factor in the judgment is the spiritual progress each of us has made in this second phase of our existence. This spiritual progress consists of the spiritual gifts we have earned in the process of obedience, justification and sanctification. How much progress have we made in acquiring the attributes of Christ? How have we done in trying to become like him? Only the Savior is able to judge our progress. There is no set amount of progress that will qualify us for the celestial heaven. The absolute amount of progress will be assessed by an all-wise Savior based upon the other two factors.

All three of these factors will combine and reveal what the individual truly is in his heart. Some of us will be of celestial ilk, some of us terrestrial, and some terrestrial. The Lord will judge. Ultimately we will be placed in a degree of glory where we belong, where we are happiest, where we feel comfortable, where we fit in, where the people are like us.

If we consider all of the people that have died on earth in an unaccountable state, we would certainly conclude that not all of them would be comfortable and happy in a celestial state. Even among unaccountable children, there are great differences. It is apparent that some of them are inclined to yearn for celestial glory. Others would be uncomfortable in a celestial setting, and they will fit better, and be happier, in a lesser degree of glory. Like all of us, each will be judged, by an all-wise Lord who will know their heart and judge them as if they had received the gospel in an accountable state. He will place them where they are eternally comfortable (D&C 137:5-9).

The essential doctrinal errors responsible for the practice of infant baptism include:

1. The failure to understand that Christ's atonement automatically and unconditionally abolishes for everyone any eternal consequences of Adam's transgression, hence "men will be punished for their own sins and not for Adam's transgression" (Article of Faith 2).

2. The failure to understand also that no one is responsible for his own sins unless he is accountable. Infants and young children who have not reached the age of eight years or mentally deficient individuals are regarded as "innocent" and free of sin by the Lord. Baptism is regarded by the entire Christian world as the mechanism for removing sins. Unaccountable individuals, therefore, need no baptism.

It is interesting to note the evolution of the "original sin" doctrine. It seems to have, at its fundament center, the false notion that Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden was an act of overt rebellion against God, an attempt to usurp the knowledge

available only to the gods. This notion paints a dark and negative picture of Adam and Eve. It is then quite natural to see how the notion evolved toward the assumption that all mankind inherited their evil tendencies, that they corrupted the whole human race, and that those tendencies were manifest from the very birth of each person. Perhaps this notion is simply a perversion of the true doctrine of the “natural man” (see the commentary for Mosiah 3:19).

Parenthetically, it should be noted how much more ennobling and soul-satisfying is the true doctrine of the fall and the true nature of Adam and Eve. We know that the fall was a foreordained act, a God-inspired and pre-designed plan for the perpetuation of the human family, and that Adam “fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25).

A further extension of the apostate doctrine is that because of Adam’s corrupt and evil nature, man does not really possess agency. He has no ability to choose good over evil. He is bound to sin. It is possible that such passages as Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 7, might have contributed to this notion. In that letter Paul refers to himself (and by presumption to all men) as being “carnal [and] sold under sin” (Romans 7:14). Paul portrays himself as a depraved and helpless creature who muddles in sin as a result of a carnal nature. He is an evildoer with little or no hope of deliverance. Joseph Smith’s inspired revision of Romans paints a truer picture of Paul (see JST Romans 7:14-17).

Since infants, according to the apostate doctrine, from their births possessed the evil nature of Adam through inheriting it from Adam himself. Since the apostates failed to understand the nature of the atonement and the concept of accountability, then logically they falsely concluded that infants need baptism.

One other point is worth mentioning. In the scriptures, it is clear that the blessings of the atonement have been extended to all mankind since the days of Adam. Even though Christ’s blood was not shed until the meridian of time, the blessings of his atoning blood have always been available to all men. The scriptures refer to this phenomenon by saying that Christ is the Lamb “slain from the foundations of the world” (Revelation 13:8; Moses 7:47). It has been suggested that declaring an infant or young child innocent and free of sin until the age of eight years may not be simply an arbitrary designation by the Lord. Infants are also not innocent because they are good by nature. Certainly there was an opportunity to sin in the premortal world, and doubtless all individuals left that realm guilty of sin. Infants and children are innocent because the Lord has decreed them so. The actual mechanism whereby they are made innocent is that at the moment of their mortal birth into mortality all infants are cleansed by the blood of Christ’s atonement. This has been so since the time of Adam.

What a difference it might have made in the Christian world if the following simple truths had not been lost from the Bible: “And the Lord said unto Adam: Behold, I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden. Hence came the saying abroad

among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world” (Moses 6: 53-54; also JST, Genesis 6:55-56).

1 An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me, Moroni; and it was written unto me soon after my calling to the ministry. And on this wise did he write unto me, saying:

verse 1 “An epistle of my father Mormon, written to me . . . soon after my calling to the ministry.” The date at the bottom of the page shows the date to be “between AD 400 and 421.” We know that this date refers to the time Moroni transcribed this letter onto the plates of Mormon. This letter and the one that follows (Moroni 9) must have been written by Mormon sometime shortly before or after the hill Cumorah battle of AD 385. We know that Mormon was slain shortly after that great battle (Mormon 8:3).

It would appear that prior to Mormon’s death, Moroni had been called to an important priesthood calling, and in that calling he had become involved in a doctrinal dispute. Perhaps he presided over a congregation. Apparently the notion of infant baptism had crept into the Nephite church. Moroni probably wrote to his father seeking counsel. In his letter, the prophet Mormon expresses his dismay over the fact that a disputation has arisen and then discusses the concept of accountability and the false notion of infant baptism, calling it a “gross error.”

2 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.

verse 2 We find evidence of a powerful parental bond between father and son. Mormon addresses Moroni on three additional occasions as “my beloved son” (Moroni 9:1, 6, 11).

3 I am mindful of you always in my prayers, continually praying unto God the Father in the name of his Holy Child, Jesus, that he, through his infinite goodness and grace, will keep you through the endurance of faith on his name to the end.

4 And now, my son, I speak unto you concerning that which grieveth me exceedingly; for it grieveth me that there should disputations rise among you.

5 For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children.

6 And now, my son, I desire that ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you; for, for this intent I have written this epistle.

verse 6 Mormon exhorts Moroni, as the newly ordained priesthood leader, to “labor diligently” to eradicate this apostate doctrine.

7 For immediately after I had learned these things of you I inquired of the Lord concerning the matter. And the word of the Lord came to me by the power of the Holy Ghost, saying:

verse 7 Mormon's letter obviously does much more than express his opinion. Rather it expresses the "word of the Lord" on the matter.

8 Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me.

verse 8 As mentioned above, one of the most insidious of Satan's heresies, which he has promulgated on earth, is the notion that little children are born in sin and, unless baptized, are doomed to eternal damnation. Satan has been at it almost since the beginning of the earth and has spread this heresy to all corners of the earth. As far back as Abraham's day it was necessary for the Lord to rebuke those who espoused this false doctrine and to clarify the doctrines of accountability and baptism as they apply to little children (see JST, Genesis 17:4-8, 11). By the third century the false notions of original sin and infant baptism had crept into the church in the Old World and obviously in the New World as well.

"the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them" Christ's atonement automatically and completely removes the consequences of Adam's transgression and fall, not only for little children, but for all men.

"and the law of circumcision is done away in me" Among the Jews, circumcision was regarded as a sign of the covenant of the Lord with Abraham. After the Savior's atonement and fulfillment of the law of Moses, circumcision was no longer necessary (see D&C 74:5-7). At first, this phrase seems rather unrelated to this discussion of accountability, but a second look indicates that it is closely related. Apparently the level of innocence in children was a matter which arose in discussions between the Christians and the Jews in the meridian of time. Paul wrote that the law of circumcision and "the tradition [should] be done away, which saith that little children are unholy; for it was had among the Jews" (D&C 74:6). This suggests that one of the factors that lay behind the tradition of circumcision was a notion that children are not innocent.

9 And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children.

10 Behold I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach—repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin; yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.

verse 10 “humble themselves as their little children” The Savior’s command for us to “become as little children” (Matthew 18:3) is not alone a call to humility and submission. It is also a call to become clean, innocent, and justified by virtue of the blood of Christ, through the justifying and sanctifying powers of the Holy Ghost.

“and they shall all be saved with their little children” All children who die before the age of accountability are saved in a degree of glory.

11 And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.

12 But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; if not so, God is a partial God, and also a changeable God, and a respecter to persons; for how many little children have died without baptism!

13 Wherefore, if little children could not be saved without baptism, these must have gone to an endless hell.

verse 13 Mormon, in this verse, assumes for a moment that the doctrine of “original sin” is a true doctrine. He then concludes that the myriad children who had died without baptism would then end up in outer darkness.

14 Behold I say unto you, that he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell.

15 For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism.

16 Wo be unto them that shall pervert the ways of the Lord after this manner, for they shall perish except they repent. Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God; and I fear not what man can do; for perfect love casteth out all fear.

verses 13-16 It is obvious that Mormon is passionate in his feelings against those who espouse the doctrine of original sin and infant baptism.

The subjects of original sin and infant baptism in the Book of Moroni have resulted in criticism of the Book of Mormon. Some have accused the book of being “anachronistic” in that it addresses issues that would not likely have arisen at the time or in the setting of Mormon and Moroni. Some have seen the treatment of these issues as evidence that the Book of Mormon was created in nineteenth century North America. William J. Hamblin and Daniel C. Peterson addressed this criticism which has often

been leveled by evangelical Christians against the Church. They wrote of these allegedly “anachronistic subjects”:

They also fit many other periods of biblical and Christian history. Original sin and predestination, for instance, were major sources of contention between Augustine and Pelagius in the early fifth century, and in the years leading up to the Second Council of Orange in AD 529, Tertullian and the Anabaptists rejected infant baptism in, respectively, early third-century North Africa and sixteenth century Germanic Europe, which would seem to indicate that controversy on the subject is not limited to “nineteenth century North America” (*FARMS Review of Books*, volume 11, number 2, 1999, 203).

Mormon and Moroni both lived and wrote in the fourth and fifth centuries AD. It is most interesting to note that the same practices had crept into the Christian church in the New World.

“perfect love casteth out all fear” Fear of what? It would seem that there are many things in this world that may cause fear. Fear of death, fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear and uncertainty about a life after this one, fear of people. This verse suggests that if we have a perfect love of God and of all people, then we will not fear. Modern revelation promises that on condition of “persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned” (D&C 121:41), “[their] confidence [shall] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). This parallels the promise of John: “Perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18-19).

17 And I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love; wherefore, all children are alike unto me; wherefore, I love little children with a perfect love; and they are all alike and partakers of salvation.

verse 17 “And I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love” For a discussion of the fascinating concept of charity, see *Charity as Empathy* and *Charity as a Revealed Sense of Others* in chapters 6 and 7 in volume 2 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

18 For I know that God is not a partial God, neither a changeable being; but he is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity.

19 Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy.

20 And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption.

21 Wo unto such, for they are in danger of death, hell, and an endless torment. I speak it boldly; God hath commanded me. Listen unto them and give heed, or they stand against you at the judgment-seat of Christ.

22 For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing—

verse 22 The phrase “all they that are without the law” likely is intended to refer to those who are mentally deficient and are therefore incapable of understanding the law. It would seem that the doctrine is clear regarding the judgment of all those who, for whatever reason, die “without the law.” They are judged by the Savior as if they had received the law (D&C 137:5-9). Those who would have accepted it and endured in living the commandments had they heard it will be assigned, at their death, to paradise and later to the celestial kingdom. Those not inclined to abide the gospel law fully will be assigned to a lesser glory (see also the commentary for 2 Nephi 9:25-26).

23 But it is mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ, and the power of his Holy Spirit, and putting trust in dead works.

verse 23 “putting trust in dead works” “Dead works” are religious works without saving merit because they are performed in the absence of true doctrine, true procedure, or true authority. An example is the baptism of little children.

24 Behold, my son, this thing ought not to be; for repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law.

25 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;

verse 25 “the first fruits of repentance is baptism” For a discussion of the phrase “first fruits” and its variations, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 2:9.

A person is motivated to true repentance by his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in his atonement. An individual with this faith is naturally drawn to repent. Does baptism produce a remission of sins? How important is that remission of sins produced by baptism? Certainly baptism does produce in each individual a “clean slate.” His sins to that point are blotted out. Baptism by itself, however, does not change the nature of any individual. If a baptized individual possesses a sinful nature, then he must still undergo the more gradual process of self-analysis, repentance, obedience, and the “remission” or purging of his sinful nature by the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. See *Baptism, the Ordinance that Brings Spiritual Growth* in volume 1, chapter 18, in *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

26 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.

verse 26 Mormon suggests that “meekness, and lowliness of heart” come as the result of “the remission of sins.” As our sins are remitted, we tend to be imbued with a profound gratitude to the Lord and a heightened awareness of our dependence upon him and his saving mercy and grace. We begin to acquire the quality of “divine indebtedness” discussed in the introductory commentary for Mosiah 2:19. Please review that important commentary if you have not done so recently. An individual who possesses the gift of divine indebtedness also possesses a “broken heart and contrite spirit” (2 Nephi 2:7). He is truly meek and lowly of heart. He is hence more susceptible to promptings of the Spirit.

“which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love” This phrase refers to the two most lofty gifts of the Spirit, hope and charity. See “The Fruits of Faith” in *Other Notes on Faith*, volume 1, chapter 11 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

verses 25-26 These two verses demonstrate the Hebrew form of poetry called climax. For an explanation of this poetic form see the commentary for Mormon 9:12-13. Here in this verse the form can be seen in the following diagram:

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.

There are six repeated words or phrases in this climax—*baptism, the fulfilling the commandments, remission of sins, meekness and lowliness of heart, Holy Ghost (paralleling Comforter), and love*. The beginning point of the climax (or ascension of expression) is *repentance*, an essential step onto the path of eternal life. Repentance is followed by baptism, obedience, and so on, finally culminating in salvation as the righteous receive an eternal station with God.

27 Behold, my son, I will write unto you again if I go not out soon against the Lamanites. Behold, the pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction except they should repent.

28 Pray for them, my son, that repentance may come unto them. But behold, I fear lest the Spirit hath ceased striving with them; and in this part of the land they are also seeking to put down all power and authority which cometh from God; and they are denying the Holy Ghost.

verse 28 Mormon is likely describing the Nephite people in general rather than any specific subgroup. They are perverting the ways of the Lord, and they are past feeling.

“they are denying the Holy Ghost” This phrase likely simply means that they are not responsive to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. It seems unlikely that these Nephites had ever achieved a level of light that would qualify them to commit the unpardonable sin.

29 And after rejecting so great a knowledge, my son, they must perish soon, unto the fulfilling of the prophecies which were spoken by the prophets, as well as the words of our Savior himself.

30 Farewell, my son, until I shall write unto you, or shall meet you again. Amen.

Moroni Chapter 9

Chapter 9 is yet another letter from the prophet Mormon to his son Moroni. In this letter he mostly describes the sorry state of his own people, the Nephites. The date of this letter is unknown. It was obviously written before the great final battle between Lamanites and Nephites described in Mormon 6. It would seem that Mormon and his son Moroni are separated and that Mormon is with his armies.

1 My beloved son, I write unto you again that ye may know that I am yet alive; but I write somewhat of that which is grievous.

2 For behold, I have had a sore battle with the Lamanites, in which we did not conquer; and Archeantus has fallen by the sword, and also Luram and Emron; yea, and we have lost a great number of our choice men.

verse 2 “Archeantus has fallen by the sword, and also Luram and Emron”

Mormon’s singling out of Archeantus, Luram, and Emron here may indicate their military importance to the Nephites, or personal friendship with Moroni, or both.

“Luram” For commentary on the name *Luram*, see the supplemental article, *Names in the Book of Mormon*.

3 And now behold, my son, I fear lest the Lamanites shall destroy this people; for they do not repent, and Satan stirreth them up continually to anger one with another.

verse 3 “for they do not repent” The pronoun *they* modifies “this people,” the Nephites, as do the pronouns *them* and *they* in the next verse. It seems likely that Mormon is largely referring to those Nephites fighting the Lamanites, though likely some of what he says is also true of all of the Nephites—the older men, the women, and the children.

4 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.

verse 4 “I speak the word of God with sharpness” McConkie, Millet, and Top in their book *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, comment on the word “sharpness”: “Testifying with ‘sharpness,’ as Moroni is here using the word, does not mean he was being contentious or mean-spirited. It means direct and to the point. It means not couched in soft, comfortable language but focused on what need to be said more than on how to say it” (359). When Mormon speaks to them sharply, they become angry. When his preaching is softer and lacks sharpness, they ignore him.

“and when I use no sharpness they harden their hearts against it” See the discussion of hard-heartedness in the commentary for Alma 10:6.

5 For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death; and they have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually.

6 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.

verse 6 The reader cannot help but be overcome by the God-like patience and love of Mormon for his people. The evidence of their hopeless spiritual intransigence has been overwhelming, yet he continues to urge his son, “Let us labor diligently.” This is certainly a consummate scriptural example of enduring to the end.

7 And now I write somewhat concerning the sufferings of this people. For according to the knowledge which I have received from Amoron, behold, the Lamanites have many prisoners, which they took from the tower of Sherrizah; and there were men, women, and children.

8 And the husbands and fathers of those women and children they have slain; and they feed the women upon the flesh of their husbands, and the children upon the flesh of their fathers; and no water, save a little, do they give unto them.

9 And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which was most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue—

verse 9 The reader should take careful note of Moroni’s describing chastity as “that which [is] most dear and precious above all things.”

10 And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery.

verses 9-10 The barbarism contained in these verses is probably unparalleled in all history. Note that it was the Nephites and not the Lamanites who raped and murdered the captive women. It is apparent that throughout the Book of Mormon, sexual immorality was essentially a Nephite crime, and it was less pervasive among the Lamanites (see Jacob 2:23 and the commentary for Jacob 3:5).

“they do it for a token of bravery” A characteristic of wickedness is mistaking cowardice for bravery.

11 O my beloved son, how can a people like this, that are without civilization—

verse 11 “that are without civilization” To be “without civilization” is to be without any human restraint, in which condition the natural man rules and even runs amok. Ordinarily, mankind encounters self restraints in the form of religious proscriptions, human considerations, and civil laws. A person who lacks any of these is characterized by the wanton giving in to any and all natural man cravings.

12 (And only a few years have passed away, and they were a civil and a delightful people)

verse 12 Only a few years have passed away since the the Nephites were a civil and delightful people.

13 But O my son, how can a people like this, whose delight is in so much abomination—

14 How can we expect that God will stay his hand in judgment against us?

15 Behold, my heart cries: Wo unto this people. Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy face!

verse 15 “Come out in judgment, O God, and hide their sins, and wickedness, and abominations from before thy face” Moroni seems to be urging God to destroy the Nephite people to cleanse the earth of their abominable sins.

16 And again, my son, there are many widows and their daughters who remain in Sherrizah; and that part of the provisions which the Lamanites did not carry away, behold, the army of Zenephi has carried away, and left them to wander whithersoever they can for food; and many old women do faint by the way and die.

verse 16 Zenephi is obviously a Nephite leader whose army has taken food out of the mouths of Nephite widows and their daughters in order to save themselves from starvation.

17 And the army which is with me is weak; and the armies of the Lamanites are betwixt Sherrizah and me; and as many as have fled to the army of Aaron have fallen victims to their awful brutality.

verse 17 Mormon bemoans the fact that he is not in a position to rescue the starving Nephite widows and their daughters. He then describes the unbelievable barbarity of the army of the Nephite Aaron. When the widows and their daughters

sought help among the Nephites in Aaron's army, they were likely raped, killed, and perhaps their bodies were eaten for food (verse 19).

18 O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy. Behold, I am but a man, and I have but the strength of a man, and I cannot any longer enforce my commands.

19 And they have become strong in their perversion; and they are alike brutal, sparing none, neither old nor young; and they delight in everything save that which is good; and the suffering of our women and our children upon all the face of this land doth exceed everything; yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written.

20 And now, my son, I dwell no longer upon this horrible scene. Behold, thou knowest the wickedness of this people; thou knowest that they are without principle, and past feeling; and their wickedness doth exceed that of the Lamanites.

21 Behold, my son, I cannot recommend them unto God lest he should smite me.

22 But behold, my son, I recommend thee unto God, and I trust in Christ that thou wilt be saved; and I pray unto God that he will spare thy life, to witness the return of his people unto him, or their utter destruction; for I know that they must perish except they repent and return unto him.

23 And if they perish it will be like unto the Jaredites, because of the wilfulness of their hearts, seeking for blood and revenge.

24 And if it so be that they perish, we know that many of our brethren have deserted over unto the Lamanites, and many more will also desert over unto them; wherefore, write somewhat a few things, if thou art spared and I shall perish and not see thee; but I trust that I may see thee soon; for I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee.

verse 24 “write somewhat a few things, if thou art spared and I shall perish and not see thee” Mormon urges Moroni to write to him soon in case Mormon dies before he has the opportunity of seeing his son Moroni again.

“for I have sacred records that I would deliver up unto thee” Presumably Moroni already had in his possession the complete set of the plates of Mormon and the small plates of Nephi. What additional “sacred records” Mormon may yet want to deliver to Moroni we are not told. But wouldn't it be exciting to know what they were?

25 My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

verse 25 “and the hope of his glory and of eternal life” See the commentary for Jacob 4:4. Mormon urges his son Moroni to have hope in the future possibility of exaltation.

26 And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen.

verses 25-26 Mormon concludes his letter on a positive and uplifting note. This is the last we read of the great prophet and abridger of the Book of Mormon.

Moroni Chapter 10

Scripture Mastery

Moroni 10:3-5 Moroni's promise: And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye 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.

Moroni 10:18 Every good gift cometh of Christ.

Moroni 10:32-33 Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; then is his grace sufficient for you, and ye are perfect in Christ.

Moroni will never really say why he included his father's sordid and shocking letter in the previous chapter. In this chapter Moroni will extend to the reader an invitation to come unto Christ. There is a striking contrast between the two chapters. This is what Gerald Lund has called a "scriptural foil" ("An Anti-Christ in the Book of Mormon—the Face may be Strange, but the Voice is Familiar" in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, the Testimony of the Word*, 108). A *foil* is a person or thing that sets off or enhances another by contrast (Webster). In this setting a scriptural foil is the technique of placing two contrasting principles or examples side by side to demonstrate even more clearly the lessons they are trying to teach.

1 Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ.

verse 1 Moroni writes to the latter-day descendants of the Lamanites. Thirty-five years have passed since the great final battle between the Lamanites and Nephites, and about that same amount of time has passed since the death of his father Mormon.

2 And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

verse 2 "I seal up these records" There is no one else to pass them on to. Moroni will prepare the plates—the plates of Mormon and the small plates of Nephi—to remain buried for fourteen hundred years. There is no way to know his location at the time of his writing this verse. If he is about to bury the plates in the place where they will remain buried until they are delivered to the prophet Joseph Smith, then he has wandered into the area that is now western New York State. Moroni will deliver the plates himself to Joseph Smith, Jr., on September 22, 1827. The Doctrine and

Covenants makes it clear that the Lord gave to Moroni the keys of the Book of Mormon for this latter dispensation (D&C 27:5; cf. 128:20).

“I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you” *Exhortation* is the act of inciting to laudable deeds; the incitement to do that which is good or commendable.

verse 3-5 These verses contain Moroni’s well-known promise to anyone in the latter days who reads the Book of Mormon. It is, in a sense, the divine formula for testing the truth of religious matters.

3 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 unto the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

verse 3 “I would exhort you” To *exhort* is to urge by argument to a good deed; to incite by words.

“if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them” One might well wonder if there would ever be a person, time, or place in which it would not be “wisdom in God” that the person should read the Book of Mormon. Perhaps the meaning of the phrase would be rendered clearer if it were restated: “if it be wisdom about God that you seek as you read them.”

“remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down unto the time that ye shall receive these things” This phrase suggests a perspective that invites one to realize that God is a personal and loving individual who has been dealing with humanity for their salvation since time began on this earth. It also implies a reference to the Bible, for it is the most commonly possessed scripture that provides knowledge of God’s dealings with his children since the creation.

“ponder it in your hearts” This phrase invites soulful seeking and wondering and praying.

4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye 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.

verse 4 There are several expressions in the Book of Mormon which are Hebrew-like, almost as if they had been translated directly from the Hebrew. This sometimes results in awkward English. One interesting example involves this particular verse. In Hebrew if/then statements are expressed in a peculiar way. In English we say: “If you go, then I will go.” The *then* is optional. We might also say, “If you go, I will

go.” In Hebrew the literal translation of the way if/then statements is, “If you go *and* I will go.” Obviously this is not acceptable English. It is interesting to note that the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon rendered Moroni 10:4 as follows: “And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, *and* he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Royal Skousen, “The Critical Text of the Book of Mormon,” a FARMS reprint, italics mine). In the second edition of the Book of Mormon, this *and* was removed, presumably because it did not constitute acceptable English. In the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon there were at least eight other examples where the Hebrew “and” was used in an if/then statement (1 Nephi 17:50; Helaman 12:13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, and 21).

“if these things are *not* true” (italics added) Some critics of the Book of Mormon have claimed that a positive answer to the suggested prayer here indicates that the Book of Mormon is not true. This claim has been made because of the negative form of the question. There is actually an interesting Hebraism that is illustrated here which has not received much attention. It is the Hebrew use of negative rhetorical questions. When an emphatically positive meaning is intended, sometimes a negative question will be asked. In other words, when the questioner is completely certain of the answer and wishes to convey positive or even emphatic force, he may ask a negative question. A couple of biblical examples will serve to illustrate. In Judges 4:14 Deborah wishes to say to Barak, “The Lord is indeed going out before you,” but instead she asks him, “Is not the Lord gone out before thee?” In Deuteronomy 11:30, the intended meaning is, “As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan.” Instead, the author asks, “Are they not on the other side [of the] Jordan?” In this verse, Moroni wishes to convey, forcibly the idea that the book is true, he therefore suggests that a negative rhetorical question be asked of the Lord: “if these things are not true.”

“with a sincere heart, with real intent” These phrases imply openness and determination. Each investigator must read the book with a phrase borrowed from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “a willing suspension of disbelief.” They must genuinely allow for the possibility that the book just might be true.

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

verses 4-5 It is through the ministrations of the Holy Ghost, and only through his ministrations that we can come to truly know the truth about any eternal or spiritual matter. It is probably true also that the Holy Ghost participates at time in facilitating the acquisition of secular knowledge. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Knowledge comes to us as flashes of light from heaven.”

How might we summarize the essential steps of the divine formula for testing and gaining a testimony or spiritual witness of any gospel truth? I would suggest the following:

1. A person must first be brought to the point where he sincerely desires to know the truth. This desire may come about in several different ways. Perhaps some of the Lord's elect come to realize that in the world, regardless of the type of worldly experience one has had, there is not to be found complete satisfaction and spiritual fulfillment. There is something still missing. He must then manifest this desire by regular and persistent and sincere prayer to the Father.

2. He must search the scriptures and other writings and set about to learn all he can about the spiritual truth being tested.

3. He must then "experiment upon the word" or deliberately conform his life to that gospel truth. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:16-17).

4. He must bear testimony of the Savior and of the truth of the principles of the gospel. He thereby manifests his commitment and faith.

5. Then by personal revelation in the Father's own good time, the Father will manifest the truth of it unto each who seeks by the power of the Holy Ghost, "and by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."

6 And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is.

7 And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

verses 8-26 In these following verses, Moroni discourses on the gifts of the Spirit. Prior to studying these verses, please review two chapters in volume 1 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. They are chapter 7, *Spiritual Growth—Gifts of the Spirit* and chapter 8, *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts*. Moroni will list various spiritual gifts including teaching the word of knowledge, faith, healing, working of mighty miracles, prophecy, ministering of angels, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. This list of gifts is only a small sample of the many gifts available.

8 And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

9 For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom;

verse 9 “**teach the word of wisdom**” Moroni is not referring here to the Church’s health law—D&C 89. Rather he is referring to the gift of being able to effectively teach the principle of wisdom.

10 And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

11 And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

12 And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles;

verse 12 Miracles are gifts of the Spirit sometimes given through individuals who have qualified themselves to possess the gift of requesting miracles for purposes that are “expedient unto” God (verse 23).

13 And again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things;

verse 13 In the book of Revelation we read the rather enigmatic statement, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (19:10). Perhaps the best explanation of this phrase is that through personal revelation from the Spirit of God come all gifts including the testimony of Jesus and the ability to prophesy.

14 And again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits;

verse 14 Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “If a man has power to part the veil and converse with angels and with the ministering spirits who dwell in the realms of light, surely this is a gift of the Spirit. Also, how can anyone discern between the spirits sent of God and the evil spirits that do the devil’s bidding except by revelation? Among us, there are those so endowed” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 374).

15 And again, to another, all kinds of tongues;

16 And again, to another, the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues.

verses 15-16 There seem to be at least three manifestations of the gift of tongues: (1) when individuals are enabled to speak with ease or with fluency a foreign but known language (see Acts 2); (2) when persons are enabled to speak the pure or Adamic language; and (3) when persons speak under the influence of the Holy Ghost, they speak with the tongue of angels; they speak what God or his ministering servants would speak if they were present. The prophet Joseph Smith cautioned the saints about the gift of tongues. He explained that it is one of the least of the gifts but generally the one most sought after (*TPJS*, 246). He warned that Satan may seek offer his own counterfeits in order to deceive the people (*Ibid.*, 25, 229).

17 And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

verse 17 The preceding verses have described the role of the “Spirit of God,” the Holy Ghost in imparting spiritual gifts to man. This verse states that “all these gifts come by the “Spirit of Christ.” Is the “Spirit of Christ” simply another name for the Holy Ghost? The verses that follow suggest that the Spirit of Christ is not the same as the Spirit of God. The phrase Spirit of Christ is generally used to refer to the “light of Christ.” For a discussion of the relationship between the Holy Ghost and the light of Christ, see *The Concept of Light* in volume 1, chapter 15 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. The Holy Ghost transmits gifts of the Spirit through the light of Christ, the light that emanates from the Savior “to fill the immensity of space” (D&C 88:11-12). Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that the light of Christ is “the agency used by the Holy Ghost to manifest truth and dispense spiritual gifts to many people at one and the same time” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 70).

18 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ.

verse 18 “every good gift cometh of Christ” Gifts of the Spirit are the increments of the attributes of Christ which we receive by personal revelation as a result of our obedience to gospel commands. The Holy Ghost has a vital role in this process of sanctification. In his role as the Holy Spirit of Promise, he judges us for worthiness and readiness to receive the gifts, and it is then through his agency that they are imparted to us or not imparted to us. He also burns out of our soul “as if by fire” the increments of our natural self. These are the two processes that characterize the process of sanctification. But the gifts of the Spirit do not originate with the Holy Ghost. They do not come from him. Rather, the Savior himself is the source of those gifts of the Spirit which we receive. As we are allowed to receive a gift of the Spirit, we are allowed to partake of a portion of the light of Christ. In his light are contained his attributes, and as we receive them we partake of the light of Christ. A portion of the Lord’s light becomes ours, and we then radiate that portion of light as a part of our own light.

19 And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

20 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.

verse 20 Again, we read the familiar sequence of faith, hope, and charity. There is logic and reason in this sequence. See “The Fruits of Faith” in *Other Notes on Faith* in volume 1, chapter 11 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*. Faith starts the sequence. Without the conscious exercise of deliberate faith, there can be no gifts of the Spirit.

When faith ceases, so do spiritual gifts. Without spiritual gifts there is no perfection. Without perfection there is no possibility of exaltation. Therefore, Moroni concludes in this verse, “there must be faith.”

21 And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope.

verse 21 One well-known, but commonly misunderstood, scriptural verse indicates plainly that no man can be exalted without his possessing hope. This verse is D&C 131:6: “It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.” This verse means that no man can be exalted while he is still ignorant of the fact that he’s is going to be exalted. An ever-increasing confidence incrementally revealed to a diligently righteous individual is called the gift of hope.

22 And if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity.

verse 22 Despair is a state of hopelessness.

23 And Christ truly said unto our fathers: If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me.

24 And now I speak unto all the ends of the earth—that if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief.

verse 24 Moroni speaks through the Book of Mormon to “the ends of the earth.” His message is that as long as the Spirit of God ministers to people upon the earth, there will be gifts of the Spirit. The absence of gifts means the absence of the influence of the Spirit of God, a most desperate situation indeed.

25 And wo be unto the children of men if this be the case; for there shall be none that doeth good among you, no not one. For if there be one among you that doeth good, he shall work by the power and gifts of God.

verse 25 If a man neither possesses nor exercises faith, he will receive no gifts of the Spirit. In this case, inevitably, his natural man tendency will manifest itself rampantly and unopposed.

26 And wo unto them who shall do these things away and die, for they die in their sins, and they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God; and I speak it according to the words of Christ; and I lie not.

verse 26 “**them who shall do these things away and die**” To “do some thing away” is to deny that thing. Those who deny the influence of the Holy Ghost and gifts of the Spirit will die spiritually—they will be separated eternally from God..

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?

28 I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.

verse 28 “**his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation**” For discussion of the colorful word “hiss,” see the commentary for 3 Nephi 29:8.

29 And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true.

verses 27-29 The Book of Mormon will stand as a witness against all people in the last days who disregard its message. At the judgment bar of God, Christ will confirm the testimonies of all of the Book of Mormon prophets.

30 And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

verse 30 For a discussion of evil gifts, see “Do Evil Gifts Exist?” in *The Blessings of Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1, chapter 8 of *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*.

31 And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

verse 31 This verse is a combination of Isaiah 52:36 and Isaiah 54:2. It is basically a rallying cry for the gathering of the house of Israel, particularly the tribe of Judah, in the latter days just prior to the Millennium.

In this verse Isaiah personifies Zion as a woman who should put on her beautiful garments. This verse is an example of a figure of speech called a *synecdoche* in which a part stands for the whole. See also the introductory commentary for Jacob 5.

“strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders” The term “stakes,” as we use it in the Church today has its origin in the Book of Isaiah. The word “stakes” is used twice by Isaiah (Isaiah 33:2; 54:2). Tents formed the dwellings of some people in the ancient Hebrew world. Stakes, which tethered the “cords,” formed the anchors for the tents or dwellings. They gave the tents their structural strength and stability.

Here Moroni delivers an inspired call to action to the house of Israel in the latter days: “Strengthen and enlarge your house or dwelling place and prepare for the gathering of Israel.”

verses 32-34 These wonderful verses may well be among the richest, most meaningful, and most important in all of the Book of Mormon. To get the most out of them, review the concepts in the introductory commentary for Alma 5. Then savor the breadth and depth of these priceless passages. They are a fitting denouement for this incomparable book of Scripture.

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

verse 32 “deny yourselves of all ungodliness” “And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments” (JST, Matthew 16:26). If you “take up [your] cross,” you consistently deny the natural self within you.

The verse says that if you hunger and thirst after righteousness “then is his grace sufficient for you.” This means that the Lord will extend his grace—the blessings of his atonement—and you will be cleansed of your sins and therefore become “perfect in Christ.” While the Lord expects the individual to do the best they can at keeping the commandments, no one can ever live the commandments well enough to merit being called “perfect.” It is only through the Lord’s grace—his matchless love and willingness to be merciful—that the blessings of his atonement are extended. It is only then, “in Christ,” that we can be considered “perfect.” We cannot do it on our own, but with his help we can. It must be said also that in this mortal life we will not reach or even approach perfection in absolute terms; yet the Lord applies to us the term *perfect* when we are striving with all our hearts to follow his example.

33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

verse 33 “if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ” Again, the idea is reiterated that we may find relative perfection only through the grace of Christ. Please recall that grace is the love of God—particularly that aspect of his love that inclines him to extend to us blessings that we don’t really merit. In order to qualify for that grace we must consistently strive to keep his commandments (see D&C 6:8-9; 11:21; 20:77); and

we must “list to obey” his commandments (D&C 29:45; see also Alma 3:27). After the resurrection, there will be time to perfect our performance, receive the desires of our hearts, and eventually to keep all the commandments, therefore ultimately receiving the fulness of the Father.

34 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.

verse 34 “I soon go to rest in the paradise of God” Moroni will likely not do much “resting” while in paradise. For a discussion of the *rest* of the Lord, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10. It is interesting that the Book of Mormon is silent on the concept of post mortal repentance and the spirit prison, yet Moroni obviously understands the concept of “paradise.”

The word *quick* means living flesh. Thus the phrase “both quick and dead” refers to all mankind, the living and the dead.

Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and now Moroni, the four most prominent writers of the Book of Mormon all have testified in sobering farewell statements that we of this final dispensation will stand with them at the judgment bar of God to answer for what we have done with the teachings of the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 33:10; Jacob 6:5-13; Mormon 7:5-10; Moroni 10:24-34).

The travels and fate of Moroni following his last entry onto the plates of Mormon is unknown. We do know that Joseph Smith, Jr. retrieved the plates from a hill in Manchester County, New York, on September 22, 1827. Whether or not they were buried there personally by Moroni is also not known. It is possible in his later years that Moroni did make his way to the area of western New York and personally bury the plates. The box in which the plates were buried was made of flat stones laid on the bottom and sides which were cemented together to make it waterproof.

There exists only one account of the death of Moroni, and that is a fourth-hand account. It probably ought to be accepted with some reservation:

At a meeting at Spanish Fork, Utah Co., in the winter of 1896, Brother Higginson stated in my presence that Thomas B. Marsh told him that the prophet Joseph Smith told him (Thomas B. Marsh, he being then president of the Twelve), that he became very anxious to know something of the fate of Moroni, and in answer to prayer the Lord gave Joseph a vision, in which appeared a wild country and on the scene was Moroni after whom were six Indians in pursuit; he stopped and one of the Indians stepped forward and measured swords with him. Moroni smote him and he fell dead; another Indian advanced and contended with him; this Indian also fell by his sword; a third Indian then stepped forth and met the same fate; a fourth afterwards contended with him, but in the struggle with the fourth, Moroni, being exhausted, was killed. Thus

ended the life of Moroni (Charles David Evans, "The Fate of Moroni, 1897." Archives Division, Church Historical Department, Salt Lake City, Utah).

In this last dispensation, we have become the third Book of Mormon civilization to enter into the covenant to serve Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon record of the covenant is our own record. Our civilization's survival, like that of the Nephite and Jaredite nations, depends on our keeping the covenant to serve him.

In the spirit of Moroni's farewell, and using words of the longing soul-cry of John the Revelator (Revelation 22:20), we conclude: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."