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The Prophetic Book of Mormon

Preliminary Report

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There are many prophecies in the Book of Mormon, far more than the casual reader would suspect; some have been fulfilled, some have yet to be. I want to talk about one dominant prophetic theme, which is for us here and now the most important of them all. The editors of the Book of Mormon, Mormon and Moroni, give it top priority and bring it to our attention as a matter of life and death; the whole Book of Mormon from beginning to end gives it maximum emphasis. As we all know, that strange and powerful book is a voice from the dust, a message from a departed people, a step-by-step account of how all their deeds and accomplishments came to be expunged from the memory of man while other far older civilizations in the Old World have survived to this day.

At the center of Ancient American studies today lies the overriding question, "Why did the major civilizations collapse so suddenly, so completely, and so mysteriously?" And the answer now given by the overwhelming majority of those scholars as contained e.g., in T. P. Culvert's valuable collection of studies on the subject, is that society as a whole suffered a process of polarization into two separate and opposing ways of life, "an increase distance between peasant and noble," as W. T. Sanders puts it, that went along with growing hostility between cities and nations "as resource margins declined." The polarizing syndrome is a habit of thought and action that operates at all levels, from family roots like Lehí's to the battle of galaxies. It is the pervasive polarization described in the Book of Mormon and sources from other cultures which I wish now to discuss briefly, ever bearing in mind that the Book of Mormon account is addressed to future generations not to "harrow up their souls," but to tell them how to get out of the type of dire impasse which it describes. Moroni is explicit: "And this cometh to you, O ye Gentiles...that you may REPENT, and not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done." (Eth. 2:11). And his father says the same: "...give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been." (Mor. 9:31).

What we are to avoid in particular is said polarizing process which begins as the first page of the Book of Mormon and continues to the last one. In the opening scene it is Egypt versus Babylon, West versus East, with Lehí's people caught in the middle, and the book ends with the climatic confrontation at Cumorah, with Moroni caught in the middle between two wicked and warring peoples in a battle of annihilation. The Book of Mormon is the story of the fearful passage that led from the one situation to the other. Every Latter-day Saint knows that it is a tale of Nephites versus Lamanites, conveniently classified as the Good Guys versus the Bad Guys. In a book called Since Cumorah I pointed out that a line drawn between the two peoples does not automatically separate the righteous from the wicked at all; far from it--the Lamanites were often the good guys and the Nephites the bad guys; and they had a way of shifting back and forth from the one category to the other with disturbing frequency. In the end, as Moroni sadly observes in letters to his son, it is a toss-up which of the two is the worse. Cumorah was no showdown between good and evil; it was not even a contest to pick the winner, for while the Nephites did get wiped out, the Lamanites went right on wiping each other out, "and no one knoweth the end of the war." (Mor. 8:8). Speaking of another such final showdown, which ended in the extermination of both nations, Moroni turns to address us directly: "And
watching some organism through a microscope, first undergoing a process of fission, after which one part attacks and convulsively consumes part or all of the other, and then after a pause begins to show signs of splitting to start the process all over again.

It will be necessary to run through this dismal tale at some length to bring out the full flavor of its insanity. A grand cycle running from unity of the nation to division, conflict, and hence to paralysis or extinction is repeated at least a dozen times, with significant variations over which we cannot linger here.

The sorry round begins when one Corihor, the great-grandson of the original Jared, rebelled against his father the king, moved out of the land, and "drew many people away from him," until he had an army which was able to beat the king and take him captive. Corihor was now what he wanted to be—Number One; until his brother Shule beat him and restored the kingdom to their father, again Number One. Then Corihor does a surprising thing, he repents, and Shule gives him a share of the kingdoms; that is the first time around. Each cycle ends with repentance; it is repentance alone that saves the people from total extinction as they move from one period to the next. Later Corihor's son rebelled "and drew away...all his brethren and many of the people," whereupon he captured Shule and became Number One; until the sons of Shule conspired and murdered him, and Shule became Number One for the 3rd time. Under his rule there came prophets telling the people to repent or be destroyed. The people did repent—and prospered: 2nd cycle. Years later one Jared "did flatter many people...until he had gained half the kingdom" from his father, whose other sons beat him and reinstated him again as Number One. To get back the kingdom Jared formed secret combinations bound by oaths by him, "the oaths...given by them of old who also sought power...to help such as sought power to gain power..." The secret of the operation being "to keep (the people) in darkness." (Eth. 16:18). We shall have something to say of power hereafter—the word occurs 386 times in the Book of Mormon. Jared was killed by his son-in-law Akish with the help of his daughter, then Akish, wary of his own son, starved him to death, whereupon another son left the country and joined the deposed king with his followers. Akish was a hard man to beat because he had "won the hearts of the people" by knowing just what they wanted: "The people of Akish were desirous for gain, even as Akish was desirous for power;" but his sons could also play the game, "therefore with money they drew away the more part of the people after them." The war that ensued encompassed "the destruction of nearly all the people of the kingdom," only 30 having the good sense to leave the scene instead of standing up to be counted. With things thus sadly set to rights, the Lord took the curse off the land, until one Heth "began to embrace the secret plans again of old, to destroy his father" and (need we add?) to become Number One: he "slew him with his own sword and he did reign in his stead." Enter the prophets again, announcing that the people "should be destroyed if they did not repent." It was a terrible drought and famine that brought repentance and better conditions until one "Morlanton...gathered together an army of outcasts" and after a long war "he did gain power over all the land, and did establish himself king over all the land." And he was a very good king; his son and successor was captured by his brother who became Number One, but his son made war against him and he became Number One, and was also a good king. One Com, whose father had lost the kingdom and had been imprisoned for 24 years, "drew away half the kingdom," and after 40 years challenged the king of the other half, Angid, and following a long war "obtained power over the remainder of the kingdom." His son Shiblom slew the prophets who had again stated the proposition—repent or be utterly
army of Corihor; and the people who were for Shiz were gathered together unto the army of Shiz...for the space of four years they were gathering together the people," total mobilization including women and children, "everyone to the army which he would." Everybody had to stand up and be counted. Corihor sizing up the situation repeated his offer of coexistence to Shiz, but nobody would have it, "for they were given up unto hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds that they might be destroyed; wherefore they went again in battle." But the insanity could have been halted even then if they would think of repenting. Not a chance, "...they were drunken with anger, even as a man is drunken with wine; and they slept again upon their swords." Then "Shiz arose, and also his men, and he swore in his wrath that he would slay Coriantumr or he would perish by the sword," which he did. Corihor enjoyed the advantage of being a little less bad (he had suggested peace talks) and was allowed to live a little longer, alone in utter misery. Thus the polar tension was dissolved, the wicked destroyed the wicked, and Coriantumr remain all alone, the undisputed Number One. In The World of The Jaredites we showed that the Jaredite scenario is not at all as fantastic as it sounds to us: it was the normal perennial Asiatic madness of the great Khans and War-Lords of the Steppes. But now, thirty years after, it does not sound fantastic at all, this picture of two halves of humanity destroying each other—it is alarmingly prophetic.

Thirty years ago I also wrote another study of polarization in the ancient world, the situation in the time of Constantine, which I have already mentioned. It is such an apposite illustration of what we are talking about that I may be forgiven for quoting from it at some length. Here the Roman and the new Super-States of the East were facing each other in a fatal showdown that exhausted both civilizations. At that time, we wrote, "the concept of Romanitas (was) very close indeed to that Western Civilization by which one conjures in our own day. "Rome [citing Aelius Aristides and Prudentius, for this was a well-documented article]...is civilization itself, the free world of free men, a new race sprung from the mixed blood of all the nations," its way of life was the only one for civilized men and was bound to become that of all mankind, etc... The Romans were the Good Guys: "Hic est Ausonia, the Western World of clean, fresh, simple, unspoiled pioneers...Rome was great because Rome was good. The emperors who...took the names of Pius and Felix were giving expression 'to the old Roman belief in the close association between piety and success...Teachers and orators drilled the essentials of Western goodness into their pupils and auditors until, by the fourth century, when hardly a speck of ancient virtue remained, men could talk of nothing else but that virtue." Again I cannot resist quoting what I wrote 30 years ago because it seems so prophetic, too. The principal exponents of the doctrine from the beginning had been the Roman Patres, "aristocratic, senatorial, traditionalist, anti-oriental"...No word was dearer to them than freedom—libertas, but 'the nobles conceived of this popular catchword as meaning freedom for them to exercise their dignitas,' and not for people without money. In the 4th century they 'had plenty to say about their humanitas, philanthropia...their mercy, their pious serenity...But such self-praise carries no weight; the choice words are mere empty form...' The Senate called loudly for arms to defend civilization—when no personal sacrifice was involved; and when the barbarians were at the gates they spent their time not in meeting the foe but in hysterical attacks on possible subversives." Scholars have marvelled that the magnificent military equipment and huge armies of professional soldiers "were not more effective than they were, and that the closely-knit network of skillfully deployed fortresses let the invaders pass through it many times." (Ch. Diehl). This grim defect is attributed 1) to the economies of the government, which, while giving away enormous wealth to
the emperors of Rome and Asia to describe themselves in identical terms, while each accused his rival of being nothing but a base forgery and depraved imitation of himself." "...we have not here a real clash of ideologies at all, but only the rivalry of parties animated by identical principles and racing for the same objectives." What they were both after was to use the Book of Mormon formula, "power and gain." And the secret of commanding loyalty on both sides was, of course, to play up the wickedness of the other. In the 4th century, this was done systematically in church and school.

"Just as all obedient subjects are embraced in a single shining community, so all outsiders are necessarily members of a single conspiracy of evil... It can be shown by a most convenient syllogism that since God is on our side we cannot show any degree of toleration for any opposition without incurring infinite guilt...one does not need to quibble; there is no such thing as being partly wrong or mistaken; the painful virtue of forbearance and the labor of investigation no longer embarrass the champions of one-package loyalty. No matter how nobly and austere the heretics may live, for St. Augustine they are still Antichrist—all of them, equally and indiscriminately; their virtues are really vices, their virginity carnality, their reason unreason, their patience in persecutions mere insolence; any cruelty shown to them is not really cruelty but kindness...For heresy in any degree is a crime against God, and is not any crime against God an infinite sin? As Alfröldi points out, the logic of polarization is irrefutable—and utterly without conscience, but it is also inevitable.

The Empire of the 4th century was a world of displaced persons, inevitably drawn towards the Big City. To take the place of the old lost loyalty to hearth and homeland—the prisc fides—strong measures had to be taken; a new superloyalty was needed to guarantee the permanence of the social order: men were taught to declare allegiance to a super-thing, a noble abstraction loosely designated as Romania or Romanitas, the binding cement of which was a carefully cultivated hostility to Barabria, the threatening world of the Steppes of Asia. The idea of the two worlds was moreover no mere fiction of government propaganda; it was an intimate reality. It was "the age-long struggle to repel, check, or annihilate the perennial enemy," described by J. B. Bury as "the eternal question...the strife between Europe and Asia, between East and West, between Aryan and non-Aryan." All around the civilized periphery of Asia, "the hordes of the heartland" had for centuries been dealt with in the same ways: by subtle and disruptive diplomacy, by the long and costly limes, by punitive and deterrent expeditions, and, when all else has failed, by the reluctant absorption of their barbarian conquerors."

To command loyalty and secure their own power the rulers of Rome made the most of this confrontation. "To the lessons of the schools, carefully supervised by the government, was added a more aggressive policy of deliberately widening the gulf between the Two Worlds"—Planed Polarization. "For centuries barbarian and Roman, East and West, had been mingling on terms of greatest intimacy, producing a borderline culture in which it was quite impossible to draw the line between one culture and another. Priscus mentions quite casually the presence of people from the West, visiting relatives in the camps of the Asians; he notes the busy coming and going of merchants between the Two Worlds, and describes the kind hospitality shown him, a complete stranger, in the homes of the Easterners. But with this he gives us the other side of the picture—the official side: the ubiquitous activity of spies and agents in Roman pay, the infusion into the very court of Attila of large sums of Roman
and that is by power—the enemy understands no other argument: "To meet the
tackle of our own survival...we must drastically increase our military
power, shore up our economic power, reinvigorate our will power, strengthen
the power of our Presidents, and develop a strategy aimed not just at avoiding
defeat [that would leave us still feeling threatened] but at attaining victory."
"Victory requires knowing when to use power..." He quotes Jas M. Burns:
"Presidents must have a will to power...they must constantly search for power,
building it, if necessary out of every scrap of formal authority or personal
influence they can locate. They must constantly guard whatever power they
have achieved. They must hoard power so that it will be available in the
future." One man alone has "the specific responsibility" to "ensure the
nation's survival and the free world's future," through the "effective use
of power...that only experience can teach..." etc. At this point we cannot
but call to mind the situation in the days of Enoch: "In those days Satan had
great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth
came wars and bloodshed...because of secret works, seeking for power."
(Nos. 6:15). Which also brings up Moroni's statement referred to above about
"oaths...given by them of old who sought power...and they were kept up by the
power of the devil to administer...unto the people to keep them in darkness,
to help such as sought power to gain power..." (Eth. 8:16). Granted that such
power-seeking is bad on their side, what else can it be in those who imitate
them? Secret works? To be sure, "secrecy is the sine qua non in the conduct
of international relations, whether dealing with allies or adversaries." The
Enoch situation recalls another quotation, far more recent, from President
Kimball in his great bi-centennial address: "We commit vast resources to the
fabrication of ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for
deliverance. When threatened, we become antienemy instead of pro-kingdom of
God...What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord
at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? ...We must leave off the
worship of modern-day idols and a reliance on the 'arm of flesh'..." Mr. Nixon
has an answer to that one: "Faith without strength is futile." What a revealing
statement! Faith is the source of strength, the very power by which the worlds
were created. To say it is helpless without military backing recalls an ancient
saw: "I trust God but I feel better with money in the bank." In the spirit of
the times we preach that to expect security without a four-man body-guard, is
futile, when security is not to need a body-guard; that charity without a
guaranteed profit is futile, when charity means asking no profit; that free
agency without strict supervision is futile, etc. Mr. Nixon rejects Napoleon's dictum
that in the end it is the spirit that always wins—Napoleon should know, but
Nixon will have none of that: only goes for the long run, he says, but "In
that short run in which we all live, the sword is the essential shield for the
spirit...In the final analysis victory will go to the side with the power.
Power is the ability to make things happen...to set the course of history."
313. "The uses of power cannot be divorced from the purposes of power." In his
book, God is indeed on the side of the big battalions. (All italics ours)

Mr. Nixon insists 1) that there can be no thought of avoiding World War III,
because it has already begun; and 2) that we can win it. "If we win World War
III, all peoples can survive...with the chance to advance toward freedom and
prosperity. If the Soviets win, all will become slaves and satellites." He
can't resist an ethnic racial slur—anything to widen the breach—when he
reminds, quite incorrectly, that "the word 'Slav' is itself related to the word
'slave.'" "All peoples can survive?" Never once does he mention the suicidal-
Jaredite—nature of the war he heralds. "The American people want to win [who
doesn't]? the first necessity is to recognize that we can win, and that we
still more things and a still better life," which "imprints many Western faces
with worry and anxiety" indicative of "active and intense competition." Though
they have "almost unlimited enjoyment of freedom," they insist on preserving it
not by teaching self-control, but by making laws to take care of everything:
"The limits of human rights and righteousness are determined by a system of laws,
--everything must be settled in court, "any conflict is solved according to the
letter of the law... One almost never sees voluntary self-restraint. Everybody
operates at the extreme limit of the legal frames."

On the one hand "a Communist regime... without any objective legal scale is
a terrible one indeed. But a society with no other scale but the legal one is
not quite worthy of man either." Thus "an oil company is legally blameless when
it purchases an invention for a new type of energy in order to prevent its use.
A food-product manufacturer is legally blameless when he poisons his product to
make it last longer; after all, people are free not to buy it." Within the past
ten days we have seen even more shocking examples in the cases of the 8 major
oil companies and the three dominant cereal processors. Which is good and which
is bad in these two extremes? Solzhenitsyn will relegate neither society to
either pole: "But should someone ask me whether I would indicate the West such
as it is today as a model to my country, frankly I would have to answer nega-
tively; No, I could not recommend your society in its present state as an ideal
for the transformation of ours." In other words, we need repentance--and who
would deny it? Over against "an abyss of lawlessness," in the Soviet Union,
"it is also demeaning to erect such mechanical legalistic smoothness as you have,"
which is far more dehumanizing, "weakening of human beings in the West, while
in the East they are becoming firmer and stronger."

This ennervating "mechanical legalistic smoothness" is nowhere more in
evidence than here in our midst, where for years short skirts were modest and
long slacks immodest--because the rules said so; mustaches and beards, mandatory
among our grandfathers, became by decree carnal, sensual and devilish. Last
week students enrolling in my classes had just one question to ask, How do we
get grades? Grades are acquisitive, competitive, and phony; but they are the
official legal certificates that everyone must have, issued in fixed denomina-
tions on a mathematically graduated scale, to be converted it is hoped here-
after into legal tender of the land--and that is the only thing that interests
these young people in the study of religion, of all things! This is no trifling
thing, the seeds of such corruption are all-pervasive.

Poles apart in some things, it is where they are weakest that the two
societies described by Solzhenitsyn are most alike. Like poles repel each other
and it is when as in Roman times the two halves of the world are playing for the
same stakes and using exactly the same methods that they most resent each other.
They are rivals; for many years each has announced that it intends, and expects
to convert the world. The two great principles of action that dominate both
communities are the same. First, the belief that the economy is the most
important thing in the world--they are by profession "dialectical materialists,
while we rest our case in all human affairs on the bottom line. Both sides
fancy themselves before everything as realists. The second principle is that
man is "the center of everything that exists," having no "higher task than the
attainment of happiness on earth"--success is what we are both after, and success
means here and now; no "pie in the sky" for either party. "Everything beyond
physical well-being and the accumulation of material goods (is)... left outside
the range of attention of the state and the social system;" as both "state
systems were becoming increasingly materialistic" it was all "endless materialism;
But if evil is by definition that of which one does not approve; you ask, then what danger is there of anyone's deliberately choosing it? One does not; one follows "the desires of his heart"--the ultimate choice, as Alma explains, and all the time insists that he is choosing what is good and in so doing puts the stamp of righteousness on his life. Thus Satan enticeth and inviteth men to go his way by "puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world" (3 Ne. 6:15), having taken which course men invariably justify it by depicting it as the very path of virtue. "Wherefore," says Moroni, "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." From which it is apparent that such neat reversions of value are not only possible but common--something to be earnestly warned against. And then comes the important principle: "For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night." We cannot plead ignorance in yielding to temptation. 16. "For behold the spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil;..." Moroni repeats then that everything which "inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ...ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God," while "whatsoever thing persuadeth men to evil,...then ye may know with a perfect knowledge is of the devil." Again, no mention of force or compulsion on either side. 17. Again the admonition: "See that ye judge not wrongfully...search diligently in the light of Christ that ye may know good from evil." The only deception here is self-deception, since every individual can know perfectly which is right and which is wrong. It is against self-deception that Moroni passionately warns us.

The point is that all men find themselves between the two poles; in this life no one has as yet arrived at a point of complete perfection or of complete depravity. Ezechiel devotes a whole chapter to this theme: 18:23f, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live? But when the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity...shall he live? All his righteousness which he hath done shall not be mentioned...and in his sin...shall he die." While we remain alive it is never too late for the wicked to choose righteousness and vice versa; the pressure is always on--"the devil...inviteth and enticeth to sin...continually. But...God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually." (7:12). To imagine the wicked as already gathered at one pole, and all the righteous at another is to reject the whole plan of probation; it renders the gospel of repentance null and void, the wicked being beyond repentance, the righteous not needing it; whereas God keeps the door open to both as long as they are in this time of testing. This life as "a probation time, a time to repent and serve God..." (Al. 42:4). Nay, the life of man is lengthened long beyond his prime to give him the full benefit of the doubt, Al. 12:24: "And we see that death comes upon mankind...nevertheless there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state." The door is left open, says Nephi, "until the end of the day of probation." (2 Ne. 33:9)."

"The devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually," (7:12), and God permits it! He has expressly allowed Satan, the common enemy, to try men and to tempt him--that is the whole point of the thing, men must be exposed to both influences so each can make his own choice. None has gone so
and know who the bad people are, because we are on the Lord's side. "Fight for Zion, down with error, flash the sword above the foe, every stroke disarms a foe man," etc. No error on our side? The point of all such hymns is that it is sin and error that we are fighting, not people guilty of sin and error—for we are all such people, and each one can only confront and overcome sin and error in himself, "You cannot tell the righteous from the wicked," the Lord told Joseph Smith, "you cannot tell your friends from your enemies...be still and let me decide the issue!"

In his last letter to his son, Mormon considers the battle already lost; sometime before he had decided that his people had passed the point of no return: "I saw that the day of grace was past with them, both temporally and spiritually..." (Mor. 2:15). Yet he insists that he must go right on struggling as long as he is alive: "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," (9:6). Only after this life are we safe in home. And what was the "labor" he had to perform? Who was this "enemy of all righteousness?" Not the Lamanites!

"...notwithstanding the great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people...." No, the call was to "labor diligently" with his own people, "notwithstanding their hardness," even though "I fear lest the Spirit of the Lord hath ceased striving with them. For they have lost their love, one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually." Earlier, though the leader of the army, Mormon had lain down his arms and "utterly refused" to march against the Lamanites, because his own people were going to battle seeking revenge for the blood of their brethren. And what was wrong with the "Green Beret" scenario? The Lord had strictly forbidden it. And now, in the letter he tells Moroni that he is actually praying for the "utter destruction" of the Nephites "except they repent." (9:22). And they had not repented, and he had given up hope. And yet Mormon died fighting the Lamanites, who were not as wicked as his own people!

Is there no solution to the cruel dilemma? There is, and the Book of Mormon gives it to us in a number of powerful examples. Perhaps the foremost is Ammon; the mightiest man in battle of all the Nephites, he became wholly convinced that there was a better way of handling even the most vicious and determined enemy than by killing them. They laughed at him but he went right ahead: he would go on a mission and preach to them. You are crazy, they said, there is only one sermon those wretches understand: (Al. 26:23ff). "Now do ye remember my brethren, that we said unto our brethren in the land of Zarahemla, we go up to the land of Nephi, to preach to our brethren the Lamanites, and they laughed us to scorn? 24. For they said unto us: Do you suppose that you can bring the Lamanites to the knowledge of the truth...as stiffnecked a people as they are; whose hearts delight in the shedding of blood; whose days have been spent in the grossest iniquity; whose ways have been the ways of a transgressor from the beginning? Now my brethren, ye remember that this was their language." And what could be more sensible? There is only one possible solution, "And moreover they did say: Let us take up arms against them, that we may destroy them and their iniquity out of the land, lest they overrun and destroy us." But not for Ammon: "We came...not with the intent to destroy our brethren, but with the intent that perhaps we might save some few of their souls." Nothing guaranteed, you understand, but anything was better than the other solution. So Ammon recalls how he and his friends went "forth among the people...patient in our sufferings, going "from house to house...We have entered into their houses and taught them in their streets...and we have been cast out, and mocked, and spit upon, and
Moroni has told us of the pains he took to compile, edit, preserve and conceal the record, and makes it clear that he did it all with the express understanding that someone in the future, reading it, might decide to repent; that some people might just be wiser than the Nephites, Lamanites and Jaredites. As to the rest, those who will not listen and repent, "as it was in the days of Noah," they have been given fair warning "so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). Either way, Moroni's efforts were not to be in vain.

After reading this over, I thought, "So what else is new? Can't I say something a bit more original; must we always deal in truisms and platitudes?" What is new is this, that only a few years ago this little spiel would have sounded like the most extravagant science-fiction or futuristic horror-fantasy; it would have been quite unthinkable. In my youth I thought the Book of Mormon was much too preoccupied with extreme situations, situations that had little bearing on the real world of everyday life and ordinary human affairs. What on earth could the total extermination of nations have to do with life in the enlightened modern world? Today no comment on that is necessary. Moroni gives it to us straight: This is the way it was before, and this is the way it is going to be again, unless there is a great repentance.