

THE TWO WORLD VIEWS SECULAR AND SCRIPTURAL

BRUCE H. PORTER

We encourage all members, as citizens of the nation, to be actively involved in the political process, and to support those measures which will strengthen the community, state, and nation—morally, economically, and culturally.¹

—*Spencer W. Kimball*

The protection of our faith, freedom, and the temporal and spiritual welfare of our families requires an active responsibility. This activity in the political process is needed to ensure and maintain that these fundamental rights will be guaranteed for the generations that will need those blessings most. This *call to action* is by a divine mandate found in the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saints who do not ‘act’ will be ‘acted upon’ by the will of others as elected leaders set policies and enact laws that will control our children and our children’s children.

The Book of Mormon is a historical record of a spiritually and temporally fallen people. One of the important truths found in this text is written and presented with the intent to convey an inspired message for the temporal and spiritual prosperity of those who will live on the promised land. This assignment could only be accomplished by inspired historians who had all the histories and records available to them. Mormon’s and Moroni’s place at the end of this Nephite civilization offered them an unobstructed insight and point of view not accessible to a secular historian. Having the records and histories before them provided a vision from the beginning to the end of a whole culture and history. Using the historical records, coupled with the inspiration and prophetic insights of the latter-day Gentile culture and government, these prophets compiled the text specifically for the latter-day reader. The secular, political, and spiritual histories of the Nephite nation were edited for the respective latter-day inhabitants to ensure prosperity and freedom by making known the restrictions that hold destruction and captivity at bay.

Knowing the prophecies and promises recorded by other inspired men, as well as the revelations they personally received themselves, these prophet–historians address those who *will* come to *their* land of promise long after they are gone. Lehi, the founding patriarch and prophet of the Nephite culture, made known to his posterity those promises of the Lord he had received about the land of his family’s inheritance. Mormon and his son Moroni—the concluding authors of this text—carried forward the same responsibility to teach and remind the future readers and inhabitants of these promises and prophecies connected to the land they knew as their own.

¹ Quoted in Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon*, [Salt Lake City:Deseret Book, 1988], 33. Originally a letter from the First Presidency, 29 June 1979.

From his unique position in Nephite history, Mormon knew and understood what caused the collapse and end of his people who were selected to be led to the chosen land. He recorded these teachings “for a wise purpose” only to be revealed to the future generations of Gentiles and the posterity of his ancestor Lehi, generations who would have an inheritance together on the same land. President Benson spoke in General Conference about this very subject, teaching that the Book of Mormon was for our day:

We must make the Book of Mormon a center focus of 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. Mormon wrote near the end of the Nephite civilization. Under the inspiration of God, who sees all things from the beginning, *he abridged centuries of records, choosing the stories, speeches, and events that would be most helpful to us.*

Each of the major writers of the Book of Mormon testified that they wrote for future generations. Nephi said: “The Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation” (2 Nephi 25:21). His brother Jacob, who succeeded him, wrote similar words: “For [Nephi] said that the history of his people should be engraven upon his other plates, and that I should preserve these plates and hand them down unto my seed, from generation to generation” (Jacob 1:30). Enos and Jarom both indicated that they too were writing not for their own peoples, but for future generations (see Enos 1:15–16; Jarom 1:2).

Mormon himself said, “Yea, I speak unto you, ye remnant of the house of Israel” (Mormon 7:1). And Moroni, the last of the inspired writers, actually saw our day and time. He said,

“Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you.

“Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing” (Mormon 8:34–35).

If they saw our day, and chose those things which would be of greatest worth to us, isn’t 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 their records? What lesson can I learn from that to help me live in this day and age?” And there is example after example of how that question will be answered. For example, in the Book of Mormon we find a pattern for preparing for the Second Coming. A major portion of the book centers on the few decades just prior to Christ’s coming to America. By careful study of that time period, we can determine why some were destroyed in the terrible judgments that preceded His coming and what brought others to stand at the temple in the land of Bountiful and thrust their hands into the wounds of His hands and feet.

From the Book of Mormon we learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war. From the Book of Mormon we see the evils of secret combinations portrayed in graphic and chilling reality. In the Book of Mormon we find lessons for dealing with persecution and apostasy. We learn much about how to do missionary work. And more than anywhere else, we see in the Book of Mormon the dangers of materialism and setting our hearts on the things of the world. Can anyone doubt that this book was meant for us and that in it we find great power, great comfort, and great protection?²

²Ezra Taft Benson, CR October 1986, Ensign 16 [November 1986]:6–7.

The Book of Mormon begins with a prophet father who is led away from wickedness for the protection of his faith, freedom, and family. The tribe of Judah had embraced the spiritual Babylon, thereby securing a promised destruction and captivity. The same Nephite text ends with the loss of their freedom and the murder and destruction of their wives and children because of their ‘collective’ loss of faith in Jesus Christ. The Nephites embraced the same Babylon from which their ancestors fled a thousand years before.

Mormon, another prophet father, and his son Moroni concluded this record with counsel and commandments given to a specific Gentile nation that would be living on the same land, teaching them how to protect and preserve their faith, freedoms, and families. Like a chiasmic structure, each end of the book is couched with an unfortunate destruction because the people (Judah as it begins, and the Nephites as it ends) have become wicked, thereby bringing the prophesied destruction because of the broken deed restrictions connected to their land. The chiasmic center of the text includes an account of a “Title of Liberty” raised over the same promised land. Because of the potential loss of freedom, an inspired military and political leader raised a non-denominational Title of Liberty to unite and rally those concerned about their ‘God and religion, their freedom and peace and their wives and children’ (Alma 46:12).

A Title of Liberty

Captain Moroni raised the Title of Liberty because a political leader who was a “man of cunning device and a man of many flattering words...led away the hearts of many people to do wickedly” (Alma 46:10). The political environment fostered prideful politicians to seek for power and gain, which is best accomplished by *the promise of unearned wealth* and position (Alma 46:4–5). As with today, politicians like Amalickiah knew and understood that the greatest threat to their goals would be those who called themselves “Christians,” the “true believers of Christ” (Alma 46:14). Throughout history, Christianity has been the greatest threat to practices, policies, politicians, and platforms that seek to take away freedoms. A communist and socialist government cannot prosper in the face of religious freedom and, in particular, Christianity. This has been seen in Europe as well as in the Middle and Far East where dictatorial leaders have realized that Christianity cannot co-exist with governmental control of fundamental rights. Belief in God instills and inspires the desire for freedom. The political flattery that accompanies socialism finds its greatest threat in the Christian sector of voters. Modern governments founded in this theory of temporal equality have found that religion and a belief in God cannot comfortably exist commensurate with the political goals of socialism, no matter how good these theories might sound.

Mormon, who abridged the text, realized that the threat of godless leaders and the seductive mantra of being ‘politically correct,’ would eventually seek to call good evil and evil good. The prophet recorded the threat of wicked leaders for the latter-day reader:

Yea, we see that Amalickiah, because he was a man of cunning device and a man of many flattering words, that he led away the hearts of many people to do wickedly; yea, and to seek to destroy the church of God, and to destroy the foundation of liberty which God had granted unto them, or which blessing God had sent upon the face of the land for the righteous’ sake. (Alma 46:10)

The Prophet Mormon continued to discuss this concern because members of the church began to believe, as Amalickiah deceived the elect, by explaining that “...there were many in the church who believed in the flattering words of Amalickiah, therefore they dissented even from the

church.” Mormon then concluded that because the members were deceived ‘...the affairs of the people of Nephi were exceedingly precarious and dangerous...’ (Alma 46:8).

In this political climate Captain Moroni raised the standard of political responsibility to a people concerned about freedom. “*And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole*” (Alma 46:12). Moroni, realizing the need for action, caused this Title of Liberty to be seen and understood by all and called the concerned into action by stating, “whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and *enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them*” (Alma 46:20). We as Latter-day Saints should have the same concern in maintaining our rights and our religion that the Lord God may bless us?

Realizing the importance of protecting religious freedom, peace, and the family, Moroni “caused the title of liberty to be hoisted upon every tower which was in all the land, which was possessed by the Nephites; and thus Moroni planted the standard of liberty among the Nephites” (Alma 46:36). Today more than ever, the message of Moroni should be carried throughout the land by those who feel a need to maintain their rights and religion in order to reap the promised blessings from God. *When understanding and knowledge from God is obvious, inactivity is simply sin.*

The Mount of Temptation

The Book of Mormon teaches that faithless leaders are the lifeblood of immorality and sin. The heart that pumps this blood into every artery of life is the apathy and inaction of those who know better and do nothing. “Wo unto him who has the law given” (2 Nephi 9:27). Speaking specifically about the Book of Mormon and neglecting what is written therein, the Lord stated that the “whole church” would ‘remain under condemnation for taking lightly the Book of Mormon’ until they “...do according to that which I have written” (D&C 84:54–57). That which is written in the Book of Mormon is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is also a divine command and responsibility to take action for the appropriate choice of leaders who will ensure the freedom to have faith in Jesus Christ. Leaders must be chosen that will protect those freedoms and secure the peace and the protection of the spiritual and temporal welfare of our families.

Political candidates and leaders who are willing to compromise their morals and belief in God for the sake of a vote cannot be trusted to fulfill a promise to constituents, regardless of political party, faith, or religion. If a most sacred commitment and covenant to a spouse has not been kept by a politician, can we expect a commitment to be kept to the constituents they don’t know? Can we expect their commitment to preserving the foundational and fundamental principles and inalienable rights of the God-given Constitution that they swear at inauguration to uphold if they cannot keep other promises?

When righteous men are elected, then votes need not be purchased by political promises. LDS candidates who might be willing to compromise the doctrines established by God and His prophets in order to be elected have not only turned from their faith, but from God Himself. This is especially true for those leaders and potential leaders who have made a covenant to ‘render to God all that they have and are’ (Mosiah 2:34) for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God on earth and the establishment of Zion.

...Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall *lose his life for my sake and the gospel's*, the same shall save it.

Or *what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. (Mark 8:34–38)

Potential leaders—both LDS and non-LDS—who might compromise their morals to support a political platform that they may argue is for the better good, such as giving into ‘gay rights’ and supporting ‘pro choice’ do not have in their heart a true concern for the welfare of people they represent.

The supreme test on the Mount of Temptation is presented to all political wannabes, as the promise of power is more sure if they will but compromise their belief in God, their faith, and their morals, and turn to the god of this world. The rationalizations are endless as religious commitments and covenants are broken, while believing all along they have God on their side. For a candidate or elected official (and this is especially true for LDS politicians) who chooses to compromise his/her morals and beliefs blatantly and intentionally, they likewise compromise the freedom of the people they claim to represent. The issues of the promised land are not problems of economic policies, or even national security, but issues of faith.

...if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes... (2 Nephi 1:7)

And behold, all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; and he has promised you that *if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land...* therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you. (Mosiah 2:22)

And he had sworn in his wrath unto the brother of Jared, that *whoso should possess this land of promise, from that time henceforth and forever, should serve him, the true and only God, or they should be swept off* when the fulness of his wrath should come upon them.

And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning *this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off* when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity.

For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore *he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God*. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off.

And this cometh unto you, *O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God*—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.

Behold, *this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.* (Ether 2:8–12)

The Book of Mormon declares by prophecy with promise that the blessings of God upon the land are connected to faith (and in particular the worship of the God of the land who is Jesus Christ), not political platforms, agendas, and national concerns. For the promised land to remain free, prosperous, and secure, *political philosophies cannot supersede the morality of a Christ-based faith.* Political leaders should be chosen that will, above all, guarantee a faith-based freedom and morality without compromise.

According to the Book of Mormon, when Christian morals are compromised by our leaders and candidates, our security and prosperity—both temporally and spiritually—is placed in jeopardy by those same officials. This is a two-edged sword that not only holds those leaders responsible, but also those who placed them in this position either by the voice of their vote or the screaming silence of their apathy. Political platforms that promote and support issues that are contrary to the moral teachings of God, like abortion, gay rights, and same-sex marriages will threaten our very thread of life. These platforms advocate programs of sin without guilt and consequence and subtly deny the existence of God in our secular and daily life. As the Book of Mormon explains so well, these philosophies themselves are a threat to the national security and economic stability of the chosen land.

The work and glory of God has been and will always be the same work and glory. We are either ‘for him or against him’, and we ‘cannot serve two masters’, nor can we expect salvation having one foot in Babylon and the other in Zion. This apathetic attitude is “lukewarm” and will be ‘spewed from the mouth of God’. Nephi, explains there are only two philosophies, two ways and two churches: the Church of the Lamb of God, and the church of the devil.

The Book of Mormon maintains that freedom and worship of Jesus Christ is contingent upon the choice of leaders who are true to the morality and commandments of God. After discussing those who ‘dissented’ from the church because of political propaganda and promises of prosperity, Mormon added his editorial comment for the latter-day reader:

Thus we see how quick the children of men do forget the Lord their God; yea, how quick to do iniquity, and to be led away by the evil one. Yea, and we also see the great wickedness one very wicked man can cause to take place among the children of men. (Alma 46:8–9)

Flattering Words

There are many in the church who—either through blindness, ignorance, or choice—accept platforms that are contrary to scripture and the moral teachings that have come from modern and ancient prophets. Some are led away by flattering words that evoke emotions to support actions that God, His prophets, and scripture have called sins. Seduced by phrases like ‘choice, rights, tolerance’ and the promise of something for nothing, some members embrace platforms that have goals to restrict freedoms that will eventually control religious rights. This is discussed in the book of Helaman as the wicked leaders and their philosophies “had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and *partake of their spoils*” (entitlements). By this clever seduction of the righteous to “partake of their spoils,” the wicked “did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the

humble followers of God.” This control of the government by the wicked evoked the editorial comment from Mormon that “they were in an awful state, and ripening for an everlasting destruction” (Helaman 6:38–40). The inspired message from Mormon and Moroni reveals the fact that history can become prophecy if we fail to recognize the symptoms of spiritual decay.

Abortions and same-gender relationships are given titles like “*gay rights*” and “*pro choice*” to subtly flatter the populace (member and non-member alike) into what scripture calls ‘iniquity and wickedness.’ As these actions turn from immoral choices to ‘civil rights,’ religious freedoms and beliefs will be taken away by law. These “rights” are coupled with words like ‘*freedom, justice, and equality*’ as the words of God become null and void in an amoral society. Even welfare and taking care of the poor is couched in a way that fosters a belief that charity is not a character trait but instead a tax rate and a government responsibility. Politicians deceive the public as they champion the distribution of wealth under an anti-Christ philosophy called socialism. And who can be against *rights, choice, or equality* guaranteed or forced by law?

Forced salvation for all, temporally or spiritually, *will* take away the agency of man. This was the plan fostered by Satan before Adam was introduced into the Garden of Eden. The lie of socialism is that one soul shall not be lost, despite one’s choice. The cost? Our freedom, our Bill of Rights. Satan was the first socialist seeking to make sure none would suffer, and that not one soul would be lost. Free health care, education, no tests, no merit, all equal, but to do so he had to take away the agency of mankind. Thank God, God said that would not do. For ‘without agency there is no existence’ (D&C 93). Satan’s plan was to make sure no one could sin, The plan of Salvation requires that all be able to sin, if they choose.

The rhetorical battle of politics seems always to center around ‘social rights’ that pretend to promise something for nothing. This is the best way to ensure votes; however, something for nothing does not (and cannot) exist. Government entitlements and special programs must be funded by the people as, by their vote, they allow the government to take from them. Socialism seeks to center security by placing faith in man and government, while divine decree declares that freedom and economic security can *only* be found by faith in Jesus Christ.

The ‘economic ideal’ of socialism does not—nor is it designed to—create wealth, but only to mobilize envy. Proponents insist that the socialist aim is to distribute wealth evenly. This cannot be done. There will always exist outside of Zion social elites who retain the powers, privileges, and wealth. The idealism of socialism is only an intellectual deception used to flatter the unsuspecting into submission and control.³

Speaking on this very subject, the First Presidency issued a statement about the problems of socialism that may be seen in historical and contemporary accounts:

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

³ Michael Novak, in *The March of Freedom*, 266–267.

family, then death to the neighbor and all that belonged to him This was the ‘decreed fulness of iniquity.’⁴

Intrinsic Messages in the Book of Mormon

In overview, the Book of Mormon contains multiple insights, but rising to the top are three main intrinsic messages that are directed to three specific groups of people. The first and foremost message found within its pages is that it contains the ‘fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.’ The second message found from the beginning to the end is what the Lord calls, in modern revelation, a “record of a fallen people” (D&C 20:9). The third and final message that is repeated throughout the text is connected to the land and how to maintain the freedoms that have been set upon the chosen land by God. This book of scripture contains then:

- 1:the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
- 2:a record of a fallen people, and
- 3:the deed restrictions of the promised land.

The question that should be asked by the serious reader is, To whom are the messages directed? The answer: The world, the Saints, and those living on the promised land.

The World

Because of the messages outlined above, the Book of Mormon was written to three specific groups of people who would be living during the time of the restoration and dispensation of the fulness of times. The *first* is *the world*. The restoration of the fulness of the gospel is for all humanity, as it begins the process of gathering righteous Israel from among all nations. This book is written to everyone, just as the gospel of salvation is offered to *all* who will come unto Christ. The title page of this record states that it was ‘written for the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.’ That statement is restrictive to none on earth, as all fall into one of these two categories.

The Saints

The *second* group are the *members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. To the ‘believers,’ the text contains the spiritual activities of those who ‘know’ or, historically speaking, ‘knew’ the gospel. It contains a record of the faults, failings, and even the sins of those who ‘professed’ to know God and considered themselves the Lord’s chosen people. This scripture is a record of how to ‘perfect the Saints’ in those activities, if we can ‘liken the scriptures unto ourselves.’ All scripture loudly declares that the sins of the saints in Israel are the sins of Israel in every dispensation and every generation. To assume immunity in one age from the human foibles, sins, and pride of previous dispensations is foolish. Enlightenment is the recognition of one’s weaknesses and wickedness, and the Book of Mormon explains, in a historical context, the sins of the saints *today*. Perfecting of the saints requires knowledge of what caused the fall of previous saints, as well as the doctrines and teachings that reveal how—after one comes unto Christ through His gospel—they might then be perfected and sanctified in Him (Moroni 10:32–33).

⁴ James R. Clark, comp., *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City:Bookcraft, 1965–75), 6:99.

Those on the Promised Land

The *third* group belongs to *all those living in the promised land* of the Book of Mormon. This scripture is replete, from beginning to end, with prophecies about the land and the Gentiles who will come to it. This book contains the promises made to them concerning the freedoms, rights, and protection guaranteed them only through their faith in Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon declares, in no uncertain terms, how to protect our faith, freedom, and families on this land. This third group of all those living on the promised land can only be taught these truths when the responsibility is recognized by those ‘who will not take this book lightly’ (D&C 84:57). It must be done by those who know and understand that these freedoms and protections promised from God are guaranteed by faithful action rather than apathy.

The Book of Mormon is a historical record of three migrations, and a prophetic history of a fourth—that of the Gentiles who come out of captivity. The Book of Mormon was written to include these Gentiles who would be “set up as a free people” in the promised land so this record and history of a fallen people could come forth. The Book of Mormon then becomes a text to address the political structure of the promised land. This sacred text contains the Gospel yet also exists as a legislative textbook for freedom. A message from God that is ignored or only partially understood is no excuse for transgression—it is sin. This Gentile nation was established on the land of promise for the restoration of Israel, as prophesied in scripture and promised to the prophets and patriarchs from Adam to Moroni. The importance of this scripture is not only in the fact that it contains a fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, but that it taught and revealed how to retain the promised blessings of protection and safety for those living in the chosen land. This it does by prophetic statement, counsel, and commandment. At the same time, it shows by inspired history why the nations that came to the same land were unable to retain those same blessings and ultimately were destroyed, in fulfillment of the promises that are connected to this land.

This book of scripture declares clearly and without reservation how to preserve the freedom and peace that has been promised for those living on the land. These freedoms are linked to the righteousness of the individuals and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the God of the land (Ether 2:12). The requirements and restrictions to maintain the freedom and peace of the land is taught not just to the Nephites, but to the latter-day Gentiles who will come out of captivity for the religious freedom necessary for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the gospel. These freedoms are discussed at length within the scriptural text and have been presented in this work along with the requirements issued to these Gentiles to preserve and maintain them.

What Does It Matter?

Some members of the church often express their opinion that it doesn’t matter where the Book of Mormon took place, or where the promised land of Lehi and the Gentiles might be. They justify this view because every land eventually will be encompassed in the term ‘Zion,’ as the conversions and membership of the Church of Jesus Christ increase throughout the world. Even though this viewpoint is expansive, it is also limited because it doesn’t take into consideration the many events that are prophesied to occur on the promised land even though ‘Zion’ may be worldwide. There is a *specific* promised land and there exists—within the text—*specific* prophecies and blessings as well as promised judgements that are particular to the promised land of the Book of Mormon, regardless of the expanse of Zion. These specific blessings and prophecies associated *with the land* and *to the land* should be understood, especially by those living upon that land. If that land cannot be located definitively, or the issue of a setting becomes

a point of argument, then the promises and prophecies cannot be realized, nor the blessings of freedom retained.

The Book of Mormon explains in detail what will become of the Gentile nation if they do not know, understand, and act upon their responsibilities in the preservation of the freedoms guaranteed by obedience to the stipulations presented within its text. To act upon the requirements and stipulations, one must know where that land is and who lives upon that land. By looking at the prophecies and promises of the chosen land and Gentile prophecies collectively, one should, from the text itself, be able to identify that land. Many have been carried away with the pseudo-intellectual jargon of those trying to connect a setting of the Book of Mormon with ‘monumental ruins’ and creating ‘hypothetical maps’ while ignoring the prophetic record. To think or believe that the prophecies and promises of the Gentile nation discussed in the Book of Mormon are fulfilled in Guatemala is foolish.⁵ Nephi himself explains that the ‘Gentiles who come out of captivity’ will come to the same land that Lehi was given for an inheritance (1 Nephi 13:30; 2 Nephi 1:5–7). How different the ‘theoretical maps’ might be if one used the prophecies, promises, instructions, and warnings to the Gentiles when compared to the map using the ‘geographical passages’ espoused by Mesoamerican theorists! If the geographical passages only must be used to find the land promised to Lehi and the Gentiles, then the text has failed, and the reader is left in ignorance.

What difference does it make where the Book of Mormon took place? The answer to this question should make a tremendous difference to those who live in the promised land of the Book of Mormon if they understand that there are ‘deed restrictions’ connected to it (see Ether 2:8–12). The answer to this question can make a difference between freedom and captivity, prosperity, and destruction. The spiritual and temporal security of one’s faith, freedom, and peace—as well as the security of their family—may depend on where the land of promise is that Lehi was led to, and the prophecies and promises associated with it. To not care where the Book of Mormon lands are, or say it doesn’t matter, would require one not to realize or understand the messages of the Book of Mormon, and would be the result of choosing ignorance or apathy. The Book of Mormon could be a spiritual ‘Title of Liberty’ from the sins and lack of truth for all readers of the text. This book can also be a temporal ‘Title to Liberty’ for those readers who live on the land that was promised to the brother of Jared, to Mulek, to Lehi and their posterities, as well as the Gentiles of the latter-days.

There are two powers taught about in the Book of Mormon: one military, the other missionary; one compulsion, the other conversion; one is force, the other is freedom. One power can only create a temporary control, the other results in a changed character. The force of ‘freedom’ is connected to a responsibility resting upon those who know it and have it. There exists a non-denominational call to liberty proclaimed in the Book of Mormon which can only be taught and issued by those who know the promises and prophecies found in the Book of Mormon about this promised land of the United States. President Benson, speaking about the United States, questioned, “What will become of our civilization?” as he reviewed the promised land history.

Two great American Christian civilizations—the Jaredites and the Nephites—were swept off this land because they did not “serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ” (Ether 2:12). What will become of our civilization?⁶

⁵ Hugh Nibley also echoes this sentiment by stating, “A closer approximation to the Book of Mormon picture of Nephite culture is seen in the earth and palisade structures of the Hopewell and Adena culture areas than in the later stately piles of stone in Mesoamerica.” (Donald Parry, ed., *Temples of the Ancient World*, (Deseret Book/FARMS, 1994), 408.

⁶ Donald Q. Cannon, ed., *Latter-day Prophets and the United States Constitution* [Provo:BYU Religious Studies Center, 1991], 209.

Understanding the Book of Mormon and taking what is written therein seriously may be the only hope that we, our children, and our children's children have to survive the temporal and spiritual calamities of the last days. This sacred book of scripture describes in detail what is needed for both the *spiritual* salvation of the individual and the *temporal* protection promised by God. To those who live on this land of promise, freedom and prosperity is promised in the worship of Jesus Christ.

All is Well

The prophet Nephi explained the signs of apathy and apostasy that would be prevalent among those who would claim to be the latter-day Zion. His passage which follows could fit well within the political environment today, which accompanies the Latter-day Saint responsibilities in the selection of the leaders on the promised land.

For behold, at that day shall he (Satan) rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls,

Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!

Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well!

Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!

And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts shall be given by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts. (2 Nephi 28:20–21, 24–26, 28, 31–32)

The 2010 General Election statistics show that the state of Utah (the 'land of Zion') was ranked forty-eighth out of the fifty states in voter turnout. The difficult question to ask, in spite of the painful answer, would be: Why? Why would the state that should be *most* concerned about their faith, freedom, and families be almost the lowest in the nation to show concern for their elected leaders? Why would those who have this sacred and prophetic book of scripture (which explains how the blessings of prosperity and security are linked to the choice of political leaders) be too busy to exercise their voice? Is it apathy and lack of interest, or a feeling that all is well in Zion?

The prophet Joseph Smith spoke of the *future* Latter-day Saint feeling of all being well in Zion in a prophecy most often used to bolster the pride and abilities of a Zion people in saving the Constitution and freedoms of this country. However, the Prophet first explained the disinterested attitude of strengthening the watchtower of righteousness because the Saints seemed to be "at

ease in Zion” in a time of peace. He explained that the Saints took lightly their responsibilities, neglecting that which they were counseled to do in the scriptures:

“We shall build the Zion of the Lord in peace until the servants of that Lord shall begin to lay the foundation of a great and high watch Tower and *then shall they begin to say within themselves, what need hath my Lord of this tower seeing this is a time of peace &c.* Then the Enemy shall come as a thief in the night and scatter the servants abroad. When the seed of these 12 Olive trees are scattered abroad they will wake up the Nations of the whole Earth. Even this Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground and when the constitution is upon the brink of ruin this people will be the Staff upon which the Nation shall lean and they shall bear the constitution away from the very verge of destruction.”⁷

Perhaps it is time to recognize the responsibility placed upon the Latter-day Saints by the Book of Mormon in choosing the leaders that will preserve our faith and freedom. This statement of the Prophet teaches that “this Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces” when “the Constitution is upon the brink of ruin.” If this is not now, it is not far away. It is time to “awake and arise” and become the “staff upon which the nation shall lean” to save the God-given constitutional freedoms from being lost. There exists a righteous voice, but it must be used to make a difference. President John F. Kennedy in a speech in 1963, paraphrased a passage in Dante’s *Inferno*, stating, ‘The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis maintain their neutrality.’

Awake and Arise

There are two types of wickedness explained in the Book of Mormon that have the power to bring destruction upon the inhabitants of the promised land.

The first is *individual wickedness* that exists because of the “will of the flesh and the evil which is therein which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate...” (2 Nephi 2:29). It also is the loss or lack of truth where an “...exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them” (1 Nephi 13:29) which lack of truth is described as the “chains of hell” (Alma 12:11).

The second type of wickedness is that of *secret oaths and combinations* that are set up specifically to destroy the church of God and to take away the freedoms and inalienable rights granted to man by God and the Constitution. These ‘secret oaths and combinations’ upon the promised land of the last days was a major concern of the prophet Moroni in his concluding message to the members of the Latter-day Church and the readers of the Book of Mormon. Speaking directly to the Gentile church of the last days, Moroni demanded our attention to the evil he knew would be rampant. His words are not just passing notes in a historical text. They are the words of the Lord for our day, our time, our country, our church, our government, and these words demand our action.

For the Lord worketh not in secret combinations...

...for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people...

And they have caused the destruction of this people of whom I am now speaking, and also the destruction of the people of Nephi.

⁷ The Historians Corner, BYU Studies, vol. 19 (1978–1979), Number 3 - Spring 1979, 390.

And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold, they shall be destroyed...

Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain—and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be.

Wherefore, *the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation*, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up.

For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning.

Wherefore, *I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things* that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved. (Ether 8:19–26)

With no Nephite reader left to read the abridgment of his father or even his own record, Moroni focused this history and prophecy to the Gentiles that would in the future be on that land of promise. Specifically, it can only be directed to the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as they are the only readers and believers of this text.

This is a political warning and a call to action as Moroni declared that he is “commanded to write these things” to the readers that “evil may be done away” so that man can be “persuaded to do good” and be saved. Under this command to write, the Lord exclaimed that we should ‘awake to a sense of our awful situation’ when we see these combinations. Moroni explained that these organizations and combinations are set up to “overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries” and to control and destroy the people. Moroni also proclaimed that inaction will lead to the fall of the nation and destruction of the people. We as Latter-day Saints have an *obligation* to “awake, and arise from the dust...” and then are admonished to “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” (Moroni 10:31) This can only be accomplished by the freedom guaranteed by Constitutional law and the election of leaders who will not compromise their faith, religion, and commitment to the God of the land.

The responsibility of the Latter-day Saint is not only to vote, but to be actively involved in their community and in the choice and support of leaders and candidates that will ensure freedoms through faith in Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon history shows clearly what happened to the nations that occupied the land of promise when they turned from the God of the land and were governed by wicked men who were chosen as their leaders. Modern elected officials should be willing to stand with an “oath and sacred ordinance...to keep the peace and the freedom of the

people, and to grant unto them their sacred privileges to worship the Lord their God, yea, to support and maintain the cause of God all his days, and to bring the wicked to justice according to their crime” (Alma 50:39). These leaders should also seek to “establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments...” (Mosiah 29:13).

The Book of Mormon must also be taken seriously as a political text, as the inspired prophets ‘saw our day’ and knew centuries before those things that we should know as the latter-day Gentile nation upon the promised land. In the preparation of this sacred record, histories were chosen: (1) that taught the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, (2) that conveyed to Latter-day Saints a record of fallen chosen people. And (3) the text presents a political message specifically written to the Latter-day Saints who should read and understand the book. The prophets no doubt hoped and prayed (D&C 10:46–51) that the readers would ‘do according to that which is written’ (D&C 84:55) within the text to preserve the freedom of the land. There is no greater endeavor than to protect; the right to worship Jesus Christ, our freedom, peace, and prosperity, for our families’ temporal and spiritual welfare.

Taking seriously the teachings and responsibilities contained within the Book of Mormon is our only hope for the temporal and spiritual salvation of mankind. This sacred text contains not only the story of the Title of Liberty but actually becomes, in the hand of the honest and sincere reader, a “Title to Liberty” as it contains the ‘deed restrictions’ to the promised land.

And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity.

For behold, this is a land which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God or shall be swept off; *for it is the everlasting decree of God*. And it is not until the fulness of iniquity among the children of the land, that they are swept off.

And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God—that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fulness come, that ye may not bring down the fulness of the wrath of God upon you as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done.

Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ, who hath been manifested by the things which we have written. (Ether 2:9–12)

The Book of Mormon teaches without reservation how to maintain the freedom, prosperity, and security for “our God, our religion, and freedom and our peace, our wives, and our children” (Alma 46:8). We have been given—by the gift and power of God—the record and history that bears witness and testimony that the restrictions placed upon this land of the Jaredites, Lehi, Mulek, and Gentiles, are an “everlasting decree of God” to those who live upon the land of promise...the United States of America.

The Book of Helaman teaches about the Nephites living on the promised land, who, threatened with the loss of their freedom, turned from their apathy towards their faith and the choice of their leaders. The Prophet Nephi prayed for those who repented, remembered, and recognized their responsibility in connection to the ‘deed restrictions’ that were set upon the land, by saying “O

Lord, wilt thou turn away thine anger, and try again if they will serve thee? And if so, O Lord, thou canst bless them according to thy words which thou hast said” (Helaman 11:16).

We have been given, by the gift and power of God, the record and history of three fallen migrations. This bears witness and testimony that the restrictions placed upon this chosen land, are an “everlasting decree of God” and are in effect upon the land today. There are no possessions more dear and sacred than those mentioned by inspiration on the Title of Liberty. Life itself and these inalienable rights are God-given and should be provided to every individual and protected by the Declarations and Constitutions of *all* leaders and nations. These are the sacred freedoms that allow every individual to exercise their chosen faith in the worship of their God, with the guarantee of the freedom and peace of the individual and the protection of the sacred institution of the family.

The existing problems of this great Gentile nation are the same that were present in the Old Testament prior to the collapse of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The same sickness that plagued the people of ancient Israel existed in the Jaredite and Nephite cultures also. The issue then, like today is not one of economics, national security, foreign policy or the ‘gross domestic product.’ The problems or the issues, was and is and shall be, one of faith in Christ. Peace, prosperity and protection are by products and blessing promised to the righteous and does not come from government policy. The repeated promise in the Book of Mormon is that “inasmuch as ye keep my commandment ye shall prosper in the land” (2 Nephi 1:20). The cancer of nations is spiritual depredation and cannot be treated by a political or temporal solution. The promises of every candidate are but hollow and empty suggestions, if faith in Christ and his commandments are neglected by apathy or rejected by choice.

The Book of Mormon teaches without reservation how to maintain the freedom, prosperity, and security of our ‘faith, freedom, and our families’ upon the chosen land. This scriptural record places a prophetic and binding responsibility upon all Latter-day Saints and all those who now live upon the land of promise...the United States of America.

Our temporal and spiritual security depends upon the works and fruit of our faith in Christ and the Book of Mormon, which should lead to action rather than apathy in the choice of those who will represent the voice of the people. There exists a sacred responsibility for the faithful to help maintain the freedom and security of the land. This scriptural responsibility lies within each individual who understands the Book of Mormon to seek the righteous remnant and become a collective voice in the security of our faith, freedom and family.