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

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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 Enos

Enos Chapter 1

Scripture Mastery

Enos 1:4 Enos's prolonged prayer. I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

The book of Enos is the first of four small books which consist of only one chapter each. Together, the first three of these books (Enos, Jarom, and Omni) cover some three hundred and fifty years of history. The book of Enos begins with the death of Enos's father, Jacob, about 500 BC, and the book of Omni ends as Amaleki turned over the small plates of Nephi to King Benjamin about 145 BC. These three books conclude the writings on the small plates of Nephi. The fourth book, the Words of Mormon, forms the connection between the small plates of Nephi and Mormon's abridgment of the large plates of Nephi.

These four books contain the writings of some eight authors (Enos, Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, Amaleki, and Mormon) which is over one third of the twenty-three authors whose writings make up the entire Book of Mormon. These twenty-three authors are: Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Jarom, Omni, Amaron, Chemish, Abinadom, Amaleki, Benjamin, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, Shiblon (Alma 63:1, 11, 17), Helaman, Helaman, Nephi, Nephi, Amos, Amos (4 Nephi 1:21), Ammaron, Mormon, and Moroni.

The remainder of the small plates (through the book of Omni) now become increasingly focused on the history of Jacob's family rather than on the history of the whole Nephite group. The record is primarily genealogical. From Jacob on, the plates were no longer kept by the rulers (see Jacob 1:9). Jacob and his descendants were not kings. From all we know, they did not play a leading role in political or military matters. They occupied no significant position in the government. They are written from a perspective outside the community's official life (see, for example, verse 24 of this chapter). Jacob's family line also eventually passes out of the prophetic line as well. Only Jacob himself clearly held a position of religious authority equivalent to that of high priest (see Jacob 1:17- 19). His son Enos and grandson Jarom describe themselves as only one among many prophets (see verses 19, 22; Jarom 1:4). Jarom may not have done any public teaching or preaching at all. Although he referred to "my prophesying" and "my revelations," he spoke in the third person of "the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers [who] labor diligently, exhorting . . . the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses" (Jarom 1:11)—as if he were not one of them. Also he wrote, "Our kings

and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord; and they taught the people the ways of the Lord” (Jarom 1:7), sounding like a bystander outside the loop of government power and official church responsibility. Omni fought for the Nephites, but there is no evidence that he did so as a military leader or that he had any religious calling. Far from it, he confessed he was a “wicked man” (Omni 1:2). The same is true of Jacob’s other descendants who contributed to the book of Omni. Abinadom admitted that he knew “of no revelation save that which has been written” (Omni 1:11). Amaleki said that the people “were led by many preachings and prophesyings” (Omni 1:13). The impersonal, passive phrasing implies that he did not himself act as one of the prophets or preachers.

This lack of either government or religious authority among Jacob’s descendants does not mean that the Nephites had fallen into a complete dark age. Although they were not prophets themselves, these writers tell us prophets still lived among them. Enos even spoke of “exceedingly many” unnamed prophets (Enos 1:22). Jarom told of men “who [had] many revelations . . . mighty men in the faith of the Lord” (Jarom 1:4, 7). Amaron spoke of the Lord’s sparing the righteous portion of the Nephites during his day, proving there was a righteous remnant (see Omni 1:7). And Amaleki wrote of “many preachings and prophesyings” (Omni 1:13).

If we remember that this is a family record, we will be less likely to overgeneralize about the apostasy of the whole Nephite civilization. Perhaps there were great prophets mentioned in Mormon’s lost abridgment (the book of Lehi). We do not know, since this record, on the small plates of Nephi, comes from Jacob’s descendants who fell from prominence and perhaps from grace. Precisely because the plates are a family chronicle, their spiritual quality varies sharply with that of the family. This is the only place in scripture where a self-professed “wicked man” (Omni) wrote scripture. Later descendants of Jacob were merely ordinary men who happened to belong to an extraordinary lineage. They became scriptural authors only because they happened to have charge of the plates and each obviously felt a solemn obligation to make at least a nominal addition to them—to maintain the genealogical record—and then pass them along. Each evidenced a genuine reverence for the small plates of Nephi.

Enos was the son of the prophet Jacob. Jacob and his descendants were custodians of the small plates of Nephi for almost four centuries, from 544 BC to 145 BC. It is interesting to note that these small plates were not passed on through Nephi’s posterity, the “royal line,” but rather were kept in the possession of the progeny of his younger brother Jacob. From here to the end of the book of Omni the text takes on the flavor of a family chronicle created to preserve the family genealogy. Its authors were not necessarily the most righteous or the most qualified to write, rather they wrote because they were descendants of Jacob. Some of the authors seem to see their roles as primarily recorders of genealogies. These authors were also not necessarily prophets or presiding ecclesiastical officers.

It is clear that Enos lived in a day of much war between the Nephites and Lamanites. Also it was a day of much sin even among his brethren the Nephites.

1 Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man—for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—and blessed be the name of my God for it—

verse 1 Note that Enos begins his record with a eulogy of his father, Jacob. Enos refers to his father as a “just man.” The word “just” means far more than simply fair and impartial. In the scriptures, several men are referred to as being “just.” Some examples include Noah (Genesis 6:9), Jesus (Matthew 27:19- 24), Joseph, the husband of Mary (Matthew 1:19), Joseph of Arimathaea (Luke 23:50), Simeon, who was promised before his death he would see the Christ (Luke 2:25), John the Baptist (Mark 6:20), and Cornelius the centurion (Acts 10:22). “Just” is a rich word which means faithful in keeping one’s covenants, righteous, justified according to the law.

“he taught me in his language” Enos refers here to the language in which the Book of Mormon plates were engraved. This is basically the Hebrew language written using a “reformed” cursive style of Egyptian-style hieroglyphics. If you have not yet read the supplemental article, *The Language of the Book of Mormon*, you might want to do so now. Mastering this language system was undoubtedly a difficult challenge and consisted of more than just having to learn the Hebrew language. One also had to learn the reformed Egyptian style for writing it.

Enos gives his father Jacob credit for teaching him this language system. Other Book of Mormon prophets have expressed or will express gratitude to their fathers for the same privilege (1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:2).

“also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” Jacob had nurtured and admonished him in the things of God. It is interesting that the phrase “nurture and admonition” is found in no other place in the Book of Mormon. In all of the scriptures, it is found in but one other place, Ephesians 6:4.

“blessed be the name of my God for it” Enos’s heart is filled with gratitude to his father Jacob for teaching him to write and for instructing him in spiritual matters.

2 And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins.

verse 2 “I, Enos . . . will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God” Occasionally in the Book of Mormon text we find a peculiar form of expression in which the author makes a statement that certifies he is the author and usually tells what is to come in the following verses. Alternatively he explains at the end of a section what has just been said. Examples include: “I [Nephi] make a record of my proceedings in my days (1 Nephi 1:1),” and “And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon (Mormon 1:1).” These have been

pointed out by Dr. Hugh Nibley who refers to them as “colophons” (*Lehi in the Desert, in The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988], 5:17-19). See the discussion of colophons in the introductory commentary for the First Book of Nephi. The word “colophon” is usually used to refer to the distinctive mark or emblem of a publisher found on a book’s title page. Earlier in church history these have been regarded by critics of the book as awkward oddities which were likely due to Joseph Smith’s ignorance. Dr. Nibley has pointed out, however, that they appear in several ancient documents and should probably be regarded as evidence of the book’s authenticity.

The word “wrestle” in this verse should serve to remind us that real spiritual progress requires genuine effort and is not a passive process. As Alma tried to convince the Lord to bless the recalcitrant people of Ammonihah he “labored much in the spirit, wrestling with God in mighty prayer” (Alma 8:10). In your daily prayers, do you exert yourself and strive earnestly to make yourself heard and to obtain an answer, or are you more passive? I’m afraid that most of our daily prayers do not include much “wrestling.” Apparently Enos needed to labor intensely to place himself in position to receive a remission of his sins and communicate with God. Achieving and maintaining a relationship with God and with our Savior is clearly not a passive process. If we are not continually “wrestling,” then we are invariably drifting away from them.

verses 3-4 We learn a couple of valuable lessons from Enos about receiving answers to prayers. He sought for a place that afforded him solitude, and then he took advantage of that privacy to meditate and to pray. Here was a righteous man whose motives for wanting an answer to prayer were pure—he simply wanted to experience the joy which he had been taught by his father was available to those who accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet the answer to his guileless prayer did not come until after he had prayed all day and into the night. Then the Lord’s voice did come to him, and he enjoyed marvelous spiritual blessings as a result.

3 Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.

verse 3 “the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart” Here is a poignant reminder for all parents that the lessons they teach by example and by spoken words will not be in vain (see also Alma 36:16-18). We learn that Jacob spoke often of the gospel in his home. Gospel messages taught and testimonies borne in the home often appear to have no immediate impact on a child. Yet, apparently the message is not lost to that child.

The phrase “sunk deep into my heart” suggests that the Holy Ghost had a role in convincing Enos of the truth of the “words concerning eternal life” spoken by his father and of the “joy of the saints.”

4 And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens.

5 And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

verse 5 This voice was not necessarily an audible one. It may have been simply an impression of the Spirit made in the mind and heart of Enos (see verse 10).

6 And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

verse 6 “I, Enos, knew that God could not lie” The Spirit of the Holy Ghost not only delivers information, but he also communicates a confirmation of the truthfulness of his message. Additionally, he conveys comfort and peace to the receiver.

7 And I said: Lord, how is it done?

verse 7 Enos asks the Lord, “How didst thou do that? How didst thou simply sweep away all my guilt?”

8 And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole.

verse 8 Here is the key to having your sins forgiven. It is to have faith in Jesus Christ. The specific and essential elements in having your sins remitted are: (1) a humble admission that you are a sinner, (2) the belief that Jesus Christ can help you, and (3) a determined effort to seek Jesus and receive the desired blessing. There is nothing generic or non-specific about this last step. It includes the determined effort to resist one's natural self and obey the Lord's commandments.

“Go to” is a biblical expression meaning, “Go to work” or, in the vernacular, “Go get ‘em.”

Enos is “whole” in that he is free from sin and in touch with the Spirit.

9 Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them.

verse 9 An important concept is illustrated by this verse. Conversion results in a love for one's fellow man and a desire to do good works for them. See also Mosiah 28:3 which reports the responses of Alma the Younger and the four sons of Mosiah to their conversion.

There is actually a more complete "sequence" that naturally flows following an individual's conversion. This chain of events is evident in the book of Enos and other places in the Book of Mormon. It consists of (1) receiving the gospel and having it confirmed in one's heart by the Holy Ghost (Enos 1:1-3; Mosiah 4:1; Mosiah 27 11:16; Alma 36:5); (2) a desire to repent of one's sins (Enos 1:4-8; Mosiah 4:2; Alma 36:16); (3) being filled with joy (Mosiah 4:3; Alma 36:20); (4) a desire to share the message of the gospel and the resultant joy (Enos 1:9-26; Mosiah 4:13-18; 6:3; Mosiah 27:32, 36);

10 And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind again, saying: I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments. I have given unto them this land, and it is a holy land; and I curse it not save it be for the cause of iniquity; wherefore, I will visit thy brethren according as I have said; and their transgressions will I bring down with sorrow upon their own heads.

verse 10 "while I was thus struggling in the spirit" Again we see evidence of vigorous and active, rather than passive, prayers being offered up by Enos.

"the voice of the Lord came into my mind" This is the most common type of revelation experience. It need not be an audible voice but rather a feeling and an impression. Scripturally, this is referred to as the "still small voice" (1 Nephi 17:45).

"I will visit thy brethren according to their diligence in keeping my commandments" Two modern scriptures come to mind: "If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness" (D&C 95:12). And, "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (D&C 130:20-21).

"I have given unto them this land, and it is a holy land" In what sense is the land of the Book of Mormon a "holy land"? It is a land consecrated by the Lord for the fulfilling of his purposes. If we broaden this "land" to include the entire western hemisphere, then consider the purposes the Lord has in store for it. It is the place of the restoration of the gospel, the translation and dissemination of the Book of Mormon, the fountain of the gospel to be poured over the earth in the latter days, and it is the site of the New Jerusalem.

11 And after I, Enos, had heard these words, my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord; and I prayed unto him with many long strugglings for my brethren, the Lamanites.

verse 11 “my faith began to be unshaken in the Lord” Some may prefer the word “unshakable” here. It seems clear that there occurs a progressive strengthening of faith as one seeks and is allowed communication with the Spirit.

“many long strugglings” Enos has certainly taught us that there is no “free lunch” in spiritual communication.

12 And it came to pass that after I had prayed and labored with all diligence, the Lord said unto me: I will grant unto thee according to thy desires, because of thy faith.

verse 12 “I will grant unto thee according to thy desires” Surely this denotes an advanced stage of spiritual progress. Enos is granted by the Lord a promise that he will receive according to his desires, reflecting the Lord’s comfort and confidence in that which he will desire and request.

13 And now behold, this was the desire which I desired of him—that if it should so be, that my people, the Nephites, should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed, that the Lord God would preserve a record of my people, the Nephites; even if it so be by the power of his holy arm, that it might be brought forth at some future day unto the Lamanites, that, perhaps, they might be brought unto salvation—

verse 13 “if it should so be, that my people, the Nephites, should fall into transgression, and by any means be destroyed, and the Lamanites should not be destroyed” Enos was not just idly speculating here, nor was he necessarily expressing what he had learned in personal revelation. He obviously possessed and had studied the small plates of Nephi. He had probably read many times the account of Nephi’s vision and knew the prophecies contained therein pertaining to the future of the Nephites and Lamanites (1 Nephi 12; see also 1 Nephi 15:5).

In his fervent desiring, Enos was fulfilling one of Nephi’s prophecies concerning the Lamanites and the Book of Mormon. Referring to a time after the complete apostasy of the Lamanites, Nephi said: “The words of the righteous shall be written, and the prayers of the faithful shall be heard, and all those who have dwindled in unbelief shall not be forgotten” (2 Nephi 26:15).

The “record of my people the Nephites” is obviously the Book of Mormon.

14 For at the present our strugglings were vain in restoring them to the true faith. And they swore in their wrath that, if it were possible, they would destroy our records and us, and also all the traditions of our fathers.

verse 14 “the traditions of our fathers” Reference is made here to the *Nephites*’ “traditions of [their] fathers.” Among these “traditions” would be the belief that father Lehi was brought out of Jerusalem, led through the wilderness, and brought to a choice and promised land, all by the hand of God. This land could be possessed only by those who kept the “commandments of God” which included the law of Moses (Alma 9:8-14). The Nephite “traditions” included the concept that the birthright was bestowed by Lehi upon Nephi rather than upon his eldest son, Laman. Also contained in these traditions was a belief in the gospel or doctrine of Jesus Christ including a belief in his future mortal advent, atonement, and resurrection (Mosiah 25:12).

We have also learned that the Lamanites maintained a set of traditions of their fathers as well. These included the idea that father Lehi exercised unrighteous dominion over his family in leading them out of Jerusalem in the first place. Later Nephi treated them unfairly in the wilderness and while crossing the sea. The Lamanites believed that the right to govern, the birthright, rightfully belonged to Laman and not to Nephi (see the commentary for 1 Nephi 16:37). They felt that when Nephi moved out of the land of their first inheritance, the place of their initial settlement in the New World, and took with him the records of the people and the plates of Laban, he had robbed the Lamanites of what was rightfully theirs (see also Mosiah 10:12-17).

15 Wherefore, I knowing that the Lord God was able to preserve our records, I cried unto him continually, for he had said unto me: Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it.

verse 15 “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it.” Does this statement express an unconditional truth, or is the promise conditional? Certainly Enos had labored diligently to earn this promise from the Lord (see verse 12). Sometimes the Lord does include conditions when he gives this promise to a person or to a group. He includes the idea that it is based upon the premise that the individual or group ask for only those things which are right or righteous. An example is 3 Nephi 18:20 wherein the resurrected Lord offers a conditional promise to the Nephite multitude gathered at the temple in Bountiful. On other occasions, as here, he gives the promise without condition to those whom he trusts to ask for only that which is right. An example of the latter is that promise given to his twelve Nephite disciples in 3 Nephi 27:28: “And now I go unto the Father. And verily I say unto you, whatsoever things ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be given unto you.” Generally, we might regard it as an unconditional statement of spiritual truth, as we can assume that when an individual acts in faith, he is deliberately obeying a true principle.

16 And I had faith, and I did cry unto God that he would preserve the records; and he covenanted with me that he would bring them forth unto the Lamanites in his own due time.

17 And I, Enos, knew it would be according to the covenant which he had made; wherefore my soul did rest.

verses 16-17 These are critically important verses. One is reminded of the statement in James 5:16: “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

In this last dispensation the Lord confirmed to Joseph Smith that the plates had been preserved at least in part for the conversion of the errant 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 . . . 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).

18 And the Lord said unto me: Thy fathers have also required of me this thing; and it shall be done unto them according to their faith; for their faith was like unto thine.

verse 18 Apparently some of Enos’s ancestors, perhaps his father Jacob or his uncle Nephi, also pled with the Lord to preserve the Book of Mormon record that it might eventually come forth to aid in the salvation of the remnant of the disbelieving Lamanites. It is interesting, however, that we have no scriptural record of these entreaties Enos’s ancestors made of the Lord. In this dispensation, the Lord referred to these requests made by the ancient Nephites (D&C 10:46-48).

19 And now it came to pass that I, Enos, went about among the people of Nephi, prophesying of things to come, and testifying of the things which I had heard and seen.

verse 19 It seems likely that although Enos was diligent in teaching and testifying to his “stiffnecked” people, he did not experience dramatic success among them. Yet, we will learn in verse 27 that his joy was full and his satisfaction complete.

20 And I bear record that the people of Nephi did seek diligently to restore the Lamanites unto the true faith in God. But our labors were vain; their hatred was fixed, and they were led by their evil nature that they became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness; feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven; and their skill was in the bow, and

in the cimeter, and the ax. And many of them did eat nothing save it was raw meat; and they were continually seeking to destroy us.

verse 20 Enos paints a graphic picture of the degenerate secular and spiritual culture of the Lamanites.

“the Lamanites . . . became wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people, full of idolatry and filthiness” Millet and McConkie, writing in their book, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, ask and then answer an interesting question:

Why do those given up to wickedness, those who have rejected the true and living God, practice idolatry? Why don't they just forsake worship in all forms, denouncing the very idea of a God? Why are simulated forms of true religion so frequently found among those who have spurned purity, righteousness, and obedience? Why must true religion be opposed by false religion? Why is religious ceremony so important to the irreligious?

Perhaps the universality of idolatry is an evidence that the desire to worship is innate to the soul. We think of no instances, however, in which the practice of idolatry is anything more than a manifestation of the desire on the part of its practitioners to recreate God in their own image and likeness. To create one's own god is to have control over the demands and appetites of that god. It is said that religion is the system in which man serves a higher will, while magic is a system whereby man attempts to control higher powers. Such is the distinction that exists between true religion and idolatry (*volume 2—Jacob through Mosiah, 102-03*).

We usually define idolatry as the sinful practice of making and worshipping graven images, or idols made of wood, stone, or metal. In a broader sense, however, idolatry is idolizing, worshipping, or making more important anything other than God. Hence, the love or worship of such things as money, costly apparel, power, or worldly pleasures, is also a form of idolatry. Even idleness is considered a form of idolatrous behavior (Alma 1:32).

“cimeter” Cimeters will be mentioned several more times in the Book of Mormon. Did such things as cimeters—swords with curved blades—exist as early as the sixth century BC? A recent research paper by William Hamblin on warfare in the Book of Mormon documents the existence of such weapons from the ancient Near East, Egypt, and Mesoamerica dating to before Book of Mormon times (“Hand Held Weapons in the Book of Mormon,” a FARMS reprint).

21 And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses.

verse 21 Please review the material on domestic animals in the Book of Mormon found in the commentary for 1 Nephi 18:25.

verses 20-21 The Book of Mormon portrays prosperous agriculture as a consequence of righteousness and associates famine, plundering, and subsistence on wild beasts with wickedness. Note here that the Lamanites were “wild, and ferocious, and a blood-thirsty people . . . feeding upon beasts of prey; dwelling in tents, and wandering about in the wilderness.” In several instances in the Book of Mormon, the wicked will obtain their subsistence by plundering the agricultural production of the righteous (Mosiah 9:14; 10:2-4, 21; 11:15-17; 21:17-21; Alma 17:25-28, 39; 3 Nephi 4:2-6, 18-20, 24). Famine will not be uncommon, and more than once the Lord will use famine to humble his people (Mosiah 12:4-7; Helaman 11:4-17; 12:2-3; Ether 9:28-35).

22 And there were exceedingly many prophets among us. And the people were a stiffnecked people, hard to understand.

verse 22 When the Lord contemplates the destruction of a people, it seems to be his pattern to send “many prophets” among them to make certain they are abundantly warned. Nephi reported on the condition of Jerusalem shortly before its destruction by the Babylonians in 587 BC: “And in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed” (1 Nephi 1:4).

“hard to understand” Even the Nephites were not always inclined to understand spiritual things. We would word this differently—something like: The prophets had difficulty making them (the Nephites) understand.

23 And there was nothing save it was exceeding harshness, preaching and prophesying of wars, and contentions, and destructions, and continually reminding them of death, and the duration of eternity, and the judgments and the power of God, and all these things—stirring them up continually to keep them in the fear of the Lord. I say there was nothing short of these things, and exceedingly great plainness of speech, would keep them from going down speedily to destruction. And after this manner do I write concerning them.

verse 23 It would seem that the Lord may vary his approach depending on his audience and their inclination to understand. To some a soft and gentle approach is sufficient. To others, such as the Nephites at the time of Enos, a rougher, more direct “hell, fire, and damnation” type of approach was necessary.

“And after this manner do I write concerning them.” Enos places his “signature” upon his writings concerning his people. It is as though Enos were concluding this section of his writings by saying, “And that’s the way it was in my day.”

**24 And I saw wars between the Nephites and Lamanites in the course of my days.
25 And it came to pass that I began to be old, and an hundred and seventy and nine years had passed away from the time that our father Lehi left Jerusalem.**

verse 25 It is interesting to speculate regarding the age of the prophet Enos at the time of his death. We have previously speculated that Nephi was about seventy or seventy-one years old when he delivered the small plates to his brother Jacob in 544 BC (see 1 Nephi 2:16). Jacob was probably about fifty-four years of age when he received the plates from Nephi (see the introductory discussion for Jacob 1) and probably about ninety-eight years old when he delivered the plates to his son Enos. Presumably Jacob died shortly thereafter. Enos gave up the plates and died somewhere around 420 BC which was eighty years after receiving the plates. We don't know Enos's age at the time he received the plates, but judging from his father Jacob's age, Enos might well have been twenty to forty or more years of age. Thus at Enos's death shortly after 420 BC, he might well have been over one hundred years old.

26 And I saw that I must soon go down to my grave, having been wrought upon by the power of God that I must preach and prophesy unto this people, and declare the word according to the truth which is in Christ. And I have declared it in all my days, and have rejoiced in it above that of the world.

verse 26 “**have rejoiced in it above that of the world**” Apparently Enos came to know that the joy provided by the Spirit as a reward for righteousness far exceeds that resulting from satisfying any worldly craving. We learn yet another great lesson from Enos. His mission was not particularly fruitful in his own day. He apparently saw little in the way of immediate effects of his preaching and prophesying. Yet he was blessed to experience joy and satisfaction from his efforts, and, as we will learn in the following verse, he was visited by the Second Comforter.

27 And I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then shall I see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father. Amen.

verse 27 “**I soon go to the place of my rest**” For a discussion of the concept of the rest of the Lord, see the commentary for 2 Nephi 21:10. Here Enos likely intends the state of paradise where righteous men may go immediately after death and where they may rest from the cares of the world. What does this really mean? Will they spend a lot of time resting? Likely they will be free of major cares or uncertainties having to do their eternal future, but it is likely they will have little time to actually rest.

Does this verse betray any arrogance on the part of Enos? Is he assuming too much? Certainly not. Here he is simply expressing his testimony that he would one day return to live with his Redeemer. That testimony is received by a righteous man as a gift of the Spirit and may be referred to as the gift of hope (See further discussion of this important spiritual gift in “Two Little-Appreciated Gifts of the Spirit” in *Ye Shall Know of*

the Doctrine, chapter 10, *Deliberate Faith and Revealed Faith* and in “The Fruits of Faith” in volume 1, chapter 11, *Other Notes on Faith*. Still further discussion of this topic is found in “The Rest of the Lord—the Gift of Hope” in volume 1, chapter 17, *Justification and Sanctification*). It is likely that Enos’s calling and election had been made sure. For a discussion of the concept of having one’s calling and election made sure, see the commentary for Helaman 10:4-7 and also *Ye Shall Know of the Doctrine*, volume 2, chapter 16, *Calling and Election Made Sure*.