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The Children of Christ

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The Children of Christ

NEAL A. MAXWELL

This address will attempt to “survey the wondrous cross” by focusing on the Christology in the book of Mosiah, using not only the words of King Benjamin, Mosiah, Abinadi, and Alma the Younger, but scriptures that lie in the suburbs of Mosiah and other related scriptures. The final focus will be on the requirements for our becoming what King Benjamin called “the children of Christ,” which is my text (Mosiah 1:11; 5:9, 11; 26:18).

Left unexplored are other possibilities, such as some of our LDS scholars are reconnoitering. For instance, the biblical term *mosiah* was probably a political designation; it also is an honorific title in Hebrew meaning *savior* or *rescuer* (*FARMS Update*, April 1989). Not bad for a bright but unschooled Joseph Smith who, while translating early on, reportedly wondered aloud to Emma if there were walls around Jerusalem (*The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, vol. 4, 1873–1890 [Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1967], p. 447).

There is so much more in the Book of Mormon than we have yet discovered. The book’s divine architecture and rich furnishings will increasingly unfold to our view, further qualifying it as “a marvelous work and a

wonder” (Isaiah 29:14). As I noted from this pulpit in 1986, “The Book of Mormon is like a vast mansion with gardens, towers, courtyards, and wings (*Book of Mormon Symposium*, 10 October 1986). All the rooms in this mansion need to be explored, whether by valued traditional scholars or by those at the cutting edge. Each plays a role, and one LDS scholar cannot say to the other, “I have no need of thee” (1 Corinthians 12:21).

Professor Hugh Nibley has reconnoitered much of that mansion, showing how our new dispensation links with the old world. There is not only that Nibley nexus, but also one between him and several generations of LDS scholars.

Scriptures of the Restoration

The book of Mosiah begins with a father instructing his sons, just as was done in ancient Israel. Alma the Younger remembered a critical Christ-centered prophecy of his father, you’ll

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recall (see Deuteronomy 6:7; Alma 36:17–18). The book of Mosiah ends as the successor son approaches death, having sought to “do according to that which his father [King Benjamin] had done in all things.” As a result, Mosiah’s people “did esteem him more than any other man” (Mosiah 6:7; 29:40). So did the Mulekites, who accepted him as their next king, though he was an immigrant among them.

Within the book’s sixty-plus printed pages occur not only family and political drama, but some stunning verses of Christology concerning the role, mission, and deeds of Jesus Christ. The Christology of the Restoration, brothers and sisters, restructures our understanding of so many fundamental realities.

A significant portion of King Benjamin’s towering sermon was given to him by an angel, and angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost (Mosiah 3:2; 2 Nephi 32:3). At its center is the masterful sermon about the exclusive means of salvation:

There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. [Mosiah 3:17; see also Mosiah 4:7–8]

It is not only the divinity but also the specificity of King Benjamin’s sermon that marks it. Hence Father Helaman, in sending his two sons, Lehi and Nephi, on a mission to the land of Nephi, exhorted them to “Remember, remember, my sons, the words which King Benjamin spake unto his people” (Helaman 5:9).

In Restoration scriptures, not only is salvation specific, but so also is the identity of the Savior as various scriptures foretell. A savior was to be provided in the meridian of time (Moses 5:57). His name was to be Jesus Christ (2 Nephi 25:19). Christ volunteered for that mission premortally (Abraham 3:27). He

was to be born of Mary, a Nazarene, but in Bethlehem—a fact over which some stumbled in the meridian of time (John 7:40–43; see also Micah 5:2, Luke 2:4, Matthew 2:23, 1 Nephi 11:13, Alma 7:10). There would even be a new star celebrating his birth (Helaman 14:5, 3 Nephi 1:21).

And then we learn from the holy scriptures of the sacrifice of the Father’s Firstborn premortally; his Only Begotten Son in the flesh was the sacrifice of a Creator-God. The Atoner was the Lord God Omnipotent, who created this and many other planets (D&C 76:24, Moses 1:33, Mosiah 3:5). Therefore, unlike the sacrifice of a mortal, Christ’s was an “infinite atonement” made possible, declared King Benjamin, by the infinite goodness and mercy of God (see Mosiah 4:6; 2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:10, 12; Mosiah 5:3).

Ironically, the Mortal Messiah would be disregarded and crucified, said Benjamin and Nephi:

And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, . . . and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. [Mosiah 3:9]

And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men. [1 Nephi 19:9]

This pattern of denigrating Jesus that existed in the meridian of time has continued in our time as noted in this next quotation:

The sweetly-attractive human Jesus is a product of 19th-century skepticism, produced by people who were ceasing to believe in Jesus’ divinity but wanted to keep as much Christianity as they could. [C. S.

Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis* (London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd., 1966), p. 181]

However mortals regard him, there is no other saving and atoning name under heaven! (See Mosiah 3:17, Moses 6:52.)

O remember, remember, . . . that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world. [Helaman 5:9]

All other gods, brothers and sisters, fail and fall, including the gods of this world. Currently we are seeing Caesars come and go—"an hour of pomp, an hour of show."

The Christology of Restoration scriptures constitutes the answer to what Amulek called "the great question," which is: Will there really be a redeeming Christ? (See Alma 34:5.)

If, as Abinadi declared, Christ were not risen as the first fruits with all mortals to follow, then life would end in hopelessness (Mosiah 16:6, 7). But he is risen, and life has profound purpose and rich meaning! One day, said King Benjamin, such knowledge of the Savior would spread:

The time shall come when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. [Mosiah 3:20]

This spreading is happening in our day at an accelerated rate, brothers and sisters. At a later day, divine disclosure will be total and remarkable:

And the day cometh that. . . all things shall be revealed unto the children of men which ever have been among the children of men, and which ever will be even unto the end of the earth. [2 Nephi 27:11]

There will be so much to disclose that we don't now have. All the prophets have testified of the coming of Jesus Christ (Mosiah 13:33). Jesus, the Lord of all the prophets, even called them all "my holy prophets" (3 Nephi 1:13). How could he, as some aver, merely be one of them? Worse still, some consider Jesus only as another "moral teacher." Pronouncements such as Abinadi's underscore Jesus' transcending triumph:

And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—

Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taking upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice. [Mosiah 15:8, 9]

It is very significant, brothers and sisters, that leaders and founders of other world religions made no such declarative claims of divinity for themselves, though millions venerate these leaders.

No wonder the Book of Mormon was urgently needed for "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ" (title page). Such testifying is the purpose of all scripture. The Apostle John stated:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. [John 20:31]

Of the Christ-centered plan of salvation, Nephi declared, "How great the importance to make these things known unto the inhabitants of the earth" (2 Nephi 2:8).

Jesus is even described as the Father, because he is the Father-Creator of this and

other worlds. Furthermore, he is the Father of all who are born again spiritually (see D&C 76:24). When we take upon ourselves his name and covenant to keep his commandments, we then become his sons and daughters, “the children of Christ” (see Mosiah 5:3–7; 15:1–5; 27:24–29).

In addition, since he and the Father are one in attributes and in purpose, Jesus acts for the Father through divine investiture, sometimes speaking as the Father (see D&C 93:3–5).

The world desperately needs such divine declarations and instructions concerning *why* we are here and *how* we should live—concerning what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. Much needed, too, is the Restoration’s verification of the reality of the Resurrection. Much needed, too, is the Restoration’s clarification as to the nature of God and man. Likewise, much needed is the Restoration’s enunciation of the divinely determined purposes of this mortal existence.

Feasting on Essential Truths

The millions who have lived on this planet in the midst of the famine foreseen by Amos, one of hearing the word of God, have never known the taste and nourishment of whole-grain gospel (see Amos 8:11–12). Instead, they have subsisted on the fast foods of philosophy. When Jesus spoke of himself as the bread of life, it caused some to walk no more with him (see John 6:66). No wonder Jesus said, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Matthew 11:6; see John 6:61). To which I add, “Blessed is he who is not offended by the Restoration!”

The pages of Restoration scriptures ripple and resound with so many essential truths! For example, through correct Christology we learn about Christ’s premortal pinnacle as the Creator-God and how, even so, only later did he receive a fulness (see D&C 93:12–13, 16). The Lord has told us how important it is to understand not only “what” we worship, but

also “how” to worship (see D&C 93:19, John 4:22).

After all, real adoration of the Father and Jesus results in the emulation of them! How shall we become more like them if we do not know about their character and nature?

Said King Benjamin, “How knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” (Mosiah 5:13).

Furthermore, unless we understand how the schoolmaster law of Moses was a preparing and a foretelling type, we will not understand dispensationalism, including the place of meridian Christianity in the stream of religious history.

It is expedient that ye should keep the law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient. . . .

[For] God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth. [Mosiah 13:27, 34; see also Mosiah 3:15; 13:29–35; 16:14; Galatians 3:24]

For modernity, brothers and sisters, the relevancy of the message in Mosiah is especially real. For instance, we are clearly indebted to our English ancestors for our precious King James Version. Yet, that nation subsequently suffered from a wave of irreligion. Your academic vice president, Stan L. Albrecht, wrote of that wave of irreligion:

The pattern of downturn in religious activity in British society . . . made “agnosticism respectable if not universal by the turn of the century.” . . . By the early 1900s Arnold Bennett could say, “. . . The intelligentsia has sat back, shrugged its shoulders, given a sigh of relief, and decreed tacitly or by plain statement: ‘The affair is over and done with.’”

. . . By the 1970s only about 5 percent of the adult population in the Church of England even

*attended Easter religious services, and the percentage continues to decline. [Stan L. Albrecht, "The Consequential Dimension of Mormon Religiosity," *BYU Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, Spring 1989, p. 98]*

This next mid-twentieth century expression is from a candid dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London:

All my life I have struggled to find the purpose of living. I have tried to answer three questions which always seemed to be fundamental: the problem of eternity; the problem of human personality; and the problem of evil.

I have failed. I have solved none of them and I know no more than when I started. And I believe no one will ever solve them.

*I know as much about the after-life as you — NOTHING. I don't even know that there is one — in the same sense in which the Church teaches it. I have no vision of Heaven or of a welcoming God. I do not know what I shall find. I must wait and see. [Dean William Ralph Inge, former dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral, London, England, *Daily Express*, London, England, 13 July 1953, p. 4]*

I marvel with you at how the Restoration scriptures are repetitively able to inform us and inspire us; they enthrall us again and again. Ordinary books contain comparative crumbs, whereas the bread of life provides a feast!

Through those scriptures we learn that salvation is specific, not vague; it includes individual resurrection and triumph over death. We each will stand before God as individuals, kneeling and confessing (see Alma 12:13–15, 34–35). The faithful will even sit down, as individuals, with the spiritual notables of ages past, for God has said he will

land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out.

[Helaman 3:30; see also Alma 7:25, Matthew 8:11, D&C 124:19]

Thus we will not be merged into some unremembering molecular mass. Nor will we be mere droplets in an ocean of consciousness.

In one way or another, sooner or later, all mortals will plead, as Alma did at his turning point, "O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me" (Alma 36:18). Thus we are blessed with enlarged perspectives because "through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, [we] have great views of that which is to come" (Mosiah 5:3).

Many in the world today are like some among the Book of Mormon peoples who believed "when a man was dead, that was the end thereof" (Alma 30:18). For others, there are certain existential "givens" as now quoted: "There is no built-in scheme of meaning in the world" (Irvin D. Yalom, Stanford University psychiatrist, "Exploring Psychic Interiors," *U.S. News & World Report*, 30 October 1989, p. 67). "No deity will save us; we must save ourselves" ("Humanist Manifesto II," "Liberal Family," *The Encyclopedia of American Religions: Religious Creeds*, edited by J. Gordon Melton [Detroit: Gale Research Company, p. 641].

No wonder the Restoration is so relevant and so urgent, having come, as the Lord said, so "that faith also might increase in the earth" (D&C 1:21).

Compared to the great, divine declarations being noted this evening, which are central to real faith, what else really matters? Illustratively, two Book of Mormon prophets in referring to a lesser concern, death, used the phrases "it mattereth not" or "it matters not" (Ether 15:34, Mosiah 13:9). Happily, the reality of the Atonement does not depend upon either our awareness of it or our acceptance of it! Immortality is a free gift to all, including to the presently unappreciative (see 2 Nephi 2:4).

Meanwhile, however, even the spiritually sensitive feel less than full joy because, said C. S. Lewis:

We have a lifelong nostalgia, a longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, this is . . . the truest index of our real situation. [C. S. Lewis, *A Mind Awake* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), p. 23]

In that sense, brothers and sisters, we are all prodigals! We, too, must come to ourselves, having determined, “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18). This reunion and reconciliation is actually possible. Because of the Atonement, we are not irrevocably cut off.

Great Teachers and Leaders

The book of Mosiah has so many jewels, including what seem to me, as a political scientist, to be some marvelous principles of politics and leadership. As more and more people on this planet are currently reaching out for a greater voice in their affairs, how relevant and instructive are the words of King Mosiah:

Now it is not common that the voice of the people desireth anything contrary to that which is right; but it is common for the lesser part of the people to desire that which is not right; therefore this shall ye observe and make it your law—to do your business by the voice of the people. [Mosiah 29:26]

However, a democracy devoid of spiritual purpose may remain only a process, one within which citizens are merely part of a “lonely crowd,” feeling separated from the past including their ancestors.

In contrast, King Mosiah’s people had spiritual purpose; they deeply admired his profound political leadership.

And they did wax strong in love towards Mosiah; yea, they did esteem him more than any other man . . . exceedingly, beyond measure.
[Mosiah 29:40]

Laboring with his own hands, he was a man of peace and freedom. He wanted the children of Christ to esteem neighbors as themselves (see Mosiah 27:4). King Mosiah was deeply anxious that all the people have an “equal chance” (see Mosiah 27:3; 29:38). Yet there would be no free rides, because “every man [would] bear his [own] part” (Mosiah 29:34).

King Benjamin wanted his people to be filled with the love of God, to grow in the knowledge of that which is just and true, to have no mind to injure another, to live peaceably, to teach their children to love and serve one another, and to succor the needy, including beggars (see Mosiah 4:12–30).

Mosiah was certainly not without his personal trials, for Mosiah went through that special suffering known only to the parents of disobedient children. The wickedness of his sons, along with Alma the Younger, created much trouble. Only after “wading through much tribulation” did they finally do much good and repair much of the damage they had done (see Mosiah 27:28). Even later, however, after his sons had repented, before they were to have an enlarged missionary role, Mosiah first consulted with the Lord (see Mosiah 28:6).

Mosiah also faced the challenges of leading a multigroup society: Nephites, Zoramites, Mulekites, Nehorites, Limhites (in Gideon), as well as those covenanters in Alma’s group. How varied these interest groups were, and yet how united in love of their leader!

Ponder this indicator of how Mosiah was an open, disclosing, and teaching leader:

And many more things did king Mosiah write unto them, unfolding unto them all the trials and troubles of a righteous king, yea, all the travails of

soul for their people, and also all the murmurings of the people to their king; and he explained it all unto them. [Mosiah 29:33; emphasis added]

The political leader as a teacher of his people: King Benjamin and King Mosiah are examples of the leader-servant; they followed the pattern of their master, Jesus. Prophets and leaders like Benjamin and Mosiah were charged to “regulate all the affairs of the Church.” They did so both with style and with substance. There was love, but also admonishing discipline—with the repentant numbered among the Church and the unrepentant having their names blotted out. Missionary work went well; many were received into the Church by baptism (see Mosiah 26:35–37).

So it was that their people became the children of Christ. The children of Christ in any dispensation willingly make the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20, D&C 59:8, Psalms 51:17). The children of Christ are meek and malleable—their hearts can be broken, changed, or made anew. The child of Christ can eventually mature to become the woman or man of Christ to whom the Lord promises that he will lead “in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery” (Helaman 3:26).

The children of Christ are described by King Benjamin as being submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, and—then the sobering line—“willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [them], even as a child doth submit to his father” (Mosiah 3:19). Significantly, twice in the ensuing book of Alma the very same recitation of these important qualities is made with several added: to be gentle, temperate, easily entreated, and longsuffering (see Alma 7:23; 13:28).

These virtues are cardinal, portable, and eternal. They reflect in us the seriousness of our discipleship. After all, true disciples will continue to grow spiritually because they have “faith unto repentance” (see Alma 34:16, 17; 13:10). These

qualities will finally rise with us in the Resurrection. Interesting, isn’t it, in contemplating each of the qualities in this cluster, how they remind us of the need to tame our egos? Blessed is the person who is progressing in the taming of his or her egoistic self. King Benjamin, for example, had not the least desire to boast of himself (see Mosiah 2:16). He was unconcerned with projecting his political image because he had Christ’s image in his countenance.

We are instructed not only in what we are to become, but also in what we are to avoid. Abinadi noted how Jesus suffered temptation but yielded not (see Mosiah 15:5). Unlike many of us, Christ gave no heed to temptations (see D&C 20:22). This is yet another instructive example to us, his children, for even if we evict temptations we often entertain them first.

The development of these cardinal virtues is central to God’s plan for us. Lack of perspective about God’s plans is part of the failure of Laman and Lemuel:

And thus Laman and Lemuel, . . . did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them. [1 Nephi 2:12; see also Mosiah 10:14]

Illustratively, we are advised that on occasion God will chasten his people and will try our patience and faith (see Mosiah 23:21). Is not the question “Why, O Lord?” one that goes to the heart of the further development of faith amid tutoring? Similarly, the question “How long, O Lord?” is one that goes to the very heart of developing patience. Thus we see how interactive all of these things are in the developmental dimensions of God’s plan of salvation that culminates in eternal life.

Accepting God’s Greatest Gift

Immortality comes to all by God’s grace—it is unearned “after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). Full salvation, eternal life, is God’s greatest gift (D&C 6:13; 14:7). However, unlike

the blessing of immortality, eternal life is conditional. Eternal life, said King Benjamin, is more than endless existence; it is endless happiness! (See Mosiah 2:41.) It was this that was promised to Alma the Younger: “Thou art my servant; and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life” (Mosiah 26:20).

Eternal life will feature the joys of always rejoicing and being filled with love (Mosiah 4:12), of growing in the knowledge of God’s glory, of being in his presence, of being in eternal families and friendships forever (see D&C 76:62; 130:2; 132:24, 55).

Eternal life also brings the full bestowal of all the specific promises made in connection with the temple’s initiatory ordinances, the holy endowment, and temple sealings—thereby God “may seal you his” (Mosiah 4:15). In addition, all other blessings promised upon the keeping of God’s commandments will likewise flow in the abundant Malachi measure, so many “there shall not be room enough to receive [them]”! (See Malachi 3:10.) John declared that the faithful shall “inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7). Modern scriptures confirm that the faithful will eventually receive “all that [the] Father hath” (D&C 84:38). Meanwhile, how much of that promised birthright will some of us sell and for what mess of pottage?

Comparing the magnitude of this and all the great gifts given to us of God and our meager service to him, no wonder, said King Benjamin, we are beggars and unprofitable servants (see Mosiah 2:21; 4:19).

As we accept Christ and become his children, there begins to be a change—even a “mighty change” in us. As we earnestly strive to become one with him and his purposes, we come to resemble him. Christ who has saved us thus becomes the Father of our Salvation, and we become the “children of Christ,” having his image increasingly in our countenances and conduct (see Mosiah 5:7).

The children of Christ understand the importance of feasting regularly on sacred records that testify of Jesus (see 2 Nephi 31:20; 32:3; Jacob 2:9; JS–M 1:37). Without such records, belief in him and in the glorious resurrection can quickly wane:

And at the time that Mosiah discovered them, . . . they had brought no records with them; and they denied the being of their Creator. [Omni 1:17]

There were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.

They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ. [Mosiah 26:1–2]

For those either untaught or unheeding of the essential gospel truths, the lapse of faith in Christ is but one generation away!

So many scriptures point to the reality that Jesus really is to be the specific example for the children of Christ. We really are to emulate him in our lives. Consider these examples:

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. [Matthew 5:48]

Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect. [3 Nephi 12:48]

Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am. [3 Nephi 27:27]

Ye shall be holy; for I am holy. [Leviticus 11:44]

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. [Luke 6:36]

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. [John 13:15]

Jesus Christ [shows] forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. [1 Timothy 1:16]

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps. [1 Peter 2:21]

And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them. [2 Nephi 31:9]

Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do. [3 Nephi 27:21]

Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you. [3 Nephi 18:16]

No wonder, in view of these and many other scriptures, that Joseph Smith taught, “If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, . . . drawing towards God in principle” (*Teachings*, p. 216).

The loving kindness of the Lord that Nephi spoke about is likewise noted in Exodus.

And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. [Exodus 34:6]

In this soaring scriptural declaration, mercy and justice both make their rightful claims, but even so, mercy “overpowereth justice” (Alma 34:15).

Since his qualities are to be emulated by his children, as the Prophet Joseph Smith taught us, it is vital for us to comprehend the character and personality of God if we are to comprehend ourselves (*Teachings*, p. 343). However, as

we truly emulate Jesus’ example, we will thereby encounter the costs of discipleship through our own micro-experiences. We will come to know what it is to suffer and to be reproached for taking upon ourselves the name of Christ (see Luke 6:22, 1 Peter 4:14). Therefore, our fiery trials, said Peter, should not be thought of as “some strange thing” (1 Peter 4:12).

There Is No End to His Works

As the believing and trusting children of Christ become more Christlike, it will be evident in their daily lives, whether in the treatment of the poor or in the management of their civic affairs (see Mosiah 4:16). Ammon taught, for instance, of how those who become the children of Christ will truly be “a great benefit to [their] fellow beings” (Mosiah 8:18). Alma, Mosiah’s successor, learned from the Lord how the illuminated individual can actually evoke faith in other people by “words alone” (Mosiah 26:15, 16; see also 3 Nephi 11:2, D&C 46:13–14).

With his highly developed sense of proportion, King Benjamin said, “Even so I would that ye should . . . always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you” (Mosiah 4:11; see also Moses 1:9–10). We who have the Restoration scriptures have further reasons to feel overwhelmed by the greatness of God. We are told that there is no space in which there is no kingdom (D&C 88:37). God’s works are without end, and he has created worlds “innumerable . . . unto man” (Moses 1:4, 33, 35). The very heavens and planets do witness that there is a Supreme Creator (Alma 30:44).

Mortal astrophysics confirm the awesome nature of the universe. Astronomers recently indicated they have discovered a collection of galaxies “so extensive that it defies explanation by any present theory.” Dubbed “the great wall,” these “galaxies form a sheet . . . 3,000 billion billion miles.” One scientist said, “We keep

being surprised that we keep seeing something bigger as we go out farther” (*The Sacramento Union*, Sunday, 19 November 1989, p. 22).

And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works. [Moses 1:38]

At the Judgment Day, declared Mosiah’s successor, everyone at that assemblage will “confess that [God] is God.” When one considers history’s disbelieving notables who will be there, these lines are subduing:

Then shall they confess, who live without God in the world, that the judgment of an everlasting punishment is just upon them; and they shall quake, and tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye. [Mosiah 27:31; see also Mosiah 16:1, Alma 12:15]

This is while the faithful “shall stand before him” and “see his face with pleasure” (Enos 1:27). His piercing eyes will likewise emanate perfect, overwhelming love, a love, which, alas, few will have reciprocated. The sense of undeservingness will be deep and profound! And thus we have a sense of the rendezvous that lies ahead. There is no end to his works.

Furthermore, Benjamin, Abinadi, Mosiah, and Moroni will be present at the Day of Judgment (see Moroni 10:27), and out of their words we will be judged. At the judgment, we will not only have the prophesied “bright recollection” and “perfect remembrance” of misdeeds, but of happy things as well (see Alma 11:43; 5:18). The joyous things will be preserved, too (see D&C 93:33).

Most of you are too young to appreciate how those of us who are older feel as the sense of memory slips away. I can safely hide my own Easter eggs now.

Among “all things . . . restored” will be our memories (see Alma 11:43; 40:23), including eventually our premortal memories. What

a flood of feeling and fact will come to us then, as a loving God deems wise, increasing our gratefulness for God’s long-suffering love and Jesus’ atonement. What joy upon being connected again with the memories of both the first and second estates!

Meanwhile, during this life, we will continue to experience the unwelcome sense “of having ended a chapter. One more portion of one’s self slipping away into the past” (*Letters of C. S. Lewis*, p. 306).

Mary Warnock wrote about how “Anything that is *over* . . . is a lost *possession*. . . . The past is a paradise from which we are necessarily excluded” (Dan Jacobson, “Of Time and Poetry,” *Commentary*, November 1989, vol. 88, no. 5, p. 52). And speaking about one writer reflecting on his memories, Warnock said he realized past experiences once shared “are now his alone. . . . The past continually comes to him; but he knows that he can never go back to it” (ibid.). But one day it will all come back!

The children of Christ know now whose they are, whence they came, why they are here, and what manner of men and women they are to become (see 2 Peter 3:11, 3 Nephi 27:27). Still, the children of Christ, like Alma, will “long to be there” in the royal courts on high (Alma 36:22). It is the only destination that really matters. Resplendent reunion awaits us! What is more natural and more wonderful than children going home? Especially to a home where the past, the present, and the future form an everlasting and eternal now! (See D&C 130:7; 38:2; *Teachings*, p. 220.)

Let us do as King Benjamin urged us to:

Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend. [Mosiah 4:9]

Meanwhile, how can there be refining fires without heat? Or greater patience without some instructive waiting? How can we develop empathy without first bearing one another's burdens? Not only that burdens may be lightened, but that we may thereby be enlightened by developing greater empathy. How can we increase individual faith without some customized uncertainty? How can we learn to live in cheerful security without some insecurity?

How can there be later magnification without some present deprivation? Except we are thus tutored, how else shall we grow spiritually to become the men and women of Christ? In this brief mortality, therefore, reveries are often rudely elbowed aside by tutoring adversities! Meanwhile, as faithful children, the challenge is: Will we prove ourselves, in King Benjamin's phrase, "willing to submit?" (See Mosiah 3:19.)

Finally, I should like to leave my own witness. In my life, whichever way I turn, brothers and sisters, there looms Jesus, name of wondrous love. He is our fully atoning and fully comprehending Savior, and in the words of scripture, "There is none like unto him."

Whether taught in the holy scriptures or in the holy temples, his gospel is remarkable. Whether it concerns the nature of God, the nature of man, the nature of the universe, the nature of this mortal experience, it is remarkable. His gospel is stunning as to its interior consistency. It is breathtaking as to its exterior expansiveness. Rather than existing without

the gospel in a mortal maze, instead I stand all amazed at the wonders of that gospel that we should be privileged to be his children.

Whatever my experiences, the spiritual facts that have emerged from these experiences encompass me. They encompass me and echo the testifying words of King Benjamin as follows, "The goodness of God, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men" (Mosiah 4:6). Everyone of those virtues of God I have counted on, I count on now, I will count on again—whether it is his long-suffering, his matchless power, or his goodness. And so do you! Those are the very virtues that must come in a measure to be ours, my brothers and sisters.

This constitutes the journey of discipleship. We must, like the prodigal son, arise and go to our father and be prepared for that resplendent reunion. We can hasten the journey only insofar as we hasten the process of becoming like him, as the children of Christ going home of which I testify. For his help in my personal journey I plead and for his help for you.

You are the leaven for mankind. And all the winds of political freedom that blow intrinsically carry within them the added prospects that the children of Christ will reach out more expeditiously to their brothers and sisters on this planet with this wondrous message. As we "survey the wondrous cross," as his children, may it be so, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.