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## RESEARCH AND MORE RESEARCH

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Daniel C. Peterson

**Abstract:** *Young members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have grown up with a plethora of information available to answer the questions they may have about the Gospel. This, in turn, has allowed discordant information to cause concern in many members, ultimately drawing some away from the Gospel. In a recent address to young, married members of the Church in Chicago, President Dallin H. Oaks advised that more research is often not the way to approach these concerns, but rather that members should rely on their faith in Jesus Christ. While many may not agree with this advice, when it comes to questions that will never have a provable answer, particularly of a religious nature, President Oaks's words are correct. Research can never completely replace true faith, only supplement it.*

**I**n our current day when the use of handheld, GPS-enabled devices has virtually supplanted the use of paper maps, it is possible that the following excerpt by Lewis Carroll may be lost on some. The message, though, is important.

“What a useful thing a pocket-map is!” I remarked.

“That’s another thing we’ve learned from *your* Nation,” said Mein Herr, “map-making. But we’ve carried it much further than *you*. What do you consider the *largest* map that would be really useful?”

“About six inches to the mile.”

“Only *six inches!*” exclaimed Mein Herr. “We very soon got to six *yards* to the mile. Then we tried a *hundred* yards to the mile. And then came the grandest idea of all! We actually made a map of the country, on the scale of a *mile to the mile!*”

“Have you used it much?” I enquired.

“It has never been spread out, yet,” said Mein Herr: “the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well.”<sup>1</sup>

Young, married Latter-day Saints in Chicago had a notable opportunity on 2 February 2019, when President Dallin H. Oaks, first counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, passed through the city as a visitor. There was some special meaning in his visit because he had lived in Chicago for a number of years, originally as a student at the highly-ranked law school of the University of Chicago and then, among other things, as a member of that law school’s faculty.

Subsequently, an article appeared in the *Church News* about his remarks, and I found a couple of passages from his speech, as reported in the article, of particular interest:

“Your generation has grown up with an avalanche of information about the history of the Church that is new to many and concerning to some,” he said. “The time-honored principles of relying on and trusting the Lord and His servants are questioned by some.” ... He acknowledged that some Latter-Saint couples face conflicts over important values and priorities. Matters of Church history and doctrinal issues have led some spouses to inactivity. Some spouses wonder how to best go about researching and responding to such issues. “I suggest that research is not the answer,” he said. The Church does offer answers to many familiar questions through its Gospel Topics Essays found at lds.org. “But the best answer to any question that threatens faith is to work to increase faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” he said. “Conversion to the Lord precedes conversion to the Church. And conversion to the Lord comes through prayer and study and service, furthered by loving patience on the part of spouse and other concerned family members.”<sup>2</sup>

“Research is not the answer”? Really?

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1. Lewis Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (London: Macmillan, 1893), 169.

2. Jason Swensen, “President Oaks’ advice to young married couples in Chicago on how to tackle faith-threatening questions,” *Church News* (February 4, 2019), <https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders-and-ministry/2019-02-04/president-oaks-advice-to-young-married-couples-in-chicago-on-how-to-tackle-faith-threatening-questions-48930>.

Some might expect me to disagree with President Oaks's statement. After all, I was deeply involved for many years with the old Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and its successor, the pre-2012 Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. And now I'm deeply involved with The Interpreter Foundation. These organizations have focused on fostering faithful research into the scriptures and claims of the Restoration and on publishing the results of that research as widely as possible.

If I didn't believe Gospel-related research and scholarship to be important, I certainly wouldn't have devoted so much of my time and effort to FARMS and Interpreter. And if others didn't believe such scholarship and research to be of great value, those organizations wouldn't have been launched in the first place.

Moreover, I believe that scholarship supplies many reasons to accept and sustain Latter-day Saint faith.

Nevertheless, in the last analysis, I agree with President Oaks. Apart from the most simple and noncontroversial topics, research and scholarly argument will almost always be tentative, inconclusive, reaching probable conclusions and arguing for positions that invite qualifications and counterarguments. What caused the fall of Rome? Who wrote the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*? What are the roles of nature and nurture in human personality? What is the ultimate origin of morality? These and thousands of other such questions have been and continue to be disputed — to say nothing of such far deeper and more essential questions as whether there is a God, whether Jesus really rose from the dead, or whether Joseph Smith was divinely inspired.

And yet, in matters of ultimate concern — religious questions, really, whether one answers them “religiously” or not — decisions must be made. Such decisions are inescapable. Not to decide is, itself, to decide. Moreover, they must be made in the absence of definitive, objective, publicly demonstrable “proof.”

We can research forever. And I think that we *should* do so. In the meanwhile, though, we must live — and life is ticking inescapably away. Moreover, the life of a disciple requires commitment. It's not a never-ending PhD program supported by an inexhaustible scholarship fund. Covenants need to be made or not made, kept or abandoned. Children need to be reared, in faith or without it. Infinite postponement is impossible.

Consider the case of the calling of the ancient apostles Peter, James, John, and Andrew, as it is described in the gospel of Matthew:

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway (εὐθέως) left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately (εὐθέως) left the ship and their father, and followed him.<sup>3</sup>

Please note the terms *straightway* (4:20) and *immediately* (4:22). Both of them render the same underlying Greek word (εὐθέως). The New International Version of the Bible translates them, respectively, as *at once* and *immediately*. J. B. Phillips gives them both as *at once*.

The sense is pretty clear. Neither Simon Peter nor Andrew nor James nor John pursued graduate studies in a theological school before responding to Jesus's call. None of them did any library research. They didn't even take the missionary discussions. They heard the call and felt impelled to accept it. εὐθέως. Immediately.

And at what a cost! Their acceptance of the divine call ripped these provincial Galilean fishermen out of the small rural lives they would otherwise have lived and made them figures of international historical importance — but not, necessarily, of international affection. The New Testament itself records that James (or Jacob), the brother of John and a son of Zebedee, was martyred by the sword in Jerusalem around AD 44, at the order of Herod Agrippa.<sup>4</sup> According to ancient tradition, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, died by crucifixion in Achaea, a region of today's Greece. Somewhere around AD 64, Simon Peter was crucified upside down in Rome. John, the brother of James, disappears from history not long after his exile on the island of Patmos, off the coast of modern Turkey.

Shouldn't they have engaged in extensive and rigorous research before making so momentous a choice?

I recently read a book by the always-stimulating Swiss journalist, philosopher, and novelist Dr. Rolf Dobelli that might shed some interesting light on such questions. It's entitled *Die Kunst des klugen Handelns: 52 Irrwege, die Sie besser anderen überlassen* — roughly, in English, *The Art of Smart Action: 52 Wrong Paths that Would Be Better*

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3. Matthew 4:18–22.

4. Acts 12:1–2.

*Left to Others*.<sup>5</sup> Among the brief chapters of his book is one called “Hast du einen Feind, gib ihm Information” (“If you have an enemy, give him information”).

Dobelli’s brief chapter begins with an allusion to an even briefer 1946 short story by the great Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, which appears in the form of an invented fragmentary literary forgery. (It may have been inspired by the above passage from Lewis Carroll.) Titled “Del Rigor en la Ciencia” (“On Rigor in Science”), the Borges story, in its entirety, reads as follows:

En aquel Imperio, el Arte de la Cartografía logró tal Perfección que el mapa de una sola Provincia ocupaba toda una Ciudad, y el mapa del Imperio, toda una Provincia. Con el tiempo, estos Mapas Desmesurados no satisficieron y los Colegios de Cartógrafos levantaron un Mapa del Imperio, que tenía el tamaño del Imperio y coincidía puntualmente con él.

Menos Adictas al Estudio de la Cartografía, las Generaciones Siguientes entendieron que ese dilatado Mapa era Inútil y no sin Impiedad lo entregaron a las Inclemencias del Sol y los Inviernos. En los desiertos del Oeste perduran despedazadas Ruinas del Mapa, habitadas por Animales y por Mendigos; en todo el País no hay otra reliquia de las Disciplinas Geográficas.

Suárez Miranda, *Viajes de Varones Prudentes*, Libro Cuarto, Cap. XLV, Lérida, 1658.<sup>6</sup>

Here is an English translation:

In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of one Province alone took up the whole of a City, and the map of the empire, the whole of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps did not satisfy and the College of Cartographers set up a Map of the Empire which had the size of the Empire itself and coincided with it point by point. Less Addicted to the Study of Cartography, Succeeding Generations understood that this Widespread Map was Useless and not without Impiety they abandoned it to the Inclemencies of the

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5. Rolf Dobelli, *Die Kunst des klugen Handelns: 52 Irrwege, die Sie besser anderen überlassen* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2014), 33–35. Translations from Dobelli’s book are mine.

6. Jorge Luis Borges, “Del Rigor en la Ciencia,” Ciudad Seva, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://ciudadseva.com/texto/del-rigor-en-la-ciencia/>.

Sun and the Winters. In the deserts of the West some mangled Ruins of the Map lasted on, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in the whole Country there are other relics of the Disciplines of Geography.

Suárez Miranda, *Viajes de Varones Prudentes*, Book Four, Chapter XLV, Lérida, 1658.<sup>7</sup>

Dobelli cites the Borges story to illustrate his point: “Borges’s map represents an extreme case of a mistake in reasoning called ‘Information Bias’: The false belief that more information leads automatically to better decisions.”<sup>8</sup>

He illustrates his point, also, with a personal story about searching for a hotel in Berlin. Having looked through a selection of possibilities, he chose one of them on an impression. But then, not trusting his “gut reaction” (*Bauchgefühl*), he did more research. He read dozens of comments, evaluations, and blog entries for a wide range of hotels and clicked through uncounted photos and videos. After two hours of intensive study, he decided on ... the same hotel he had chosen at the very start.

But how about some science? Some real data? Dobelli mentions a study by a researcher named Jonathan Baron. In it, Baron posed the following question to a group of physicians:

A patient is suffering from symptoms that point, with a likelihood of 80%, to Illness A. However, if the patient’s disease *isn’t* Illness A, it is either Illness X or Y. Unfortunately, each of these diseases must be treated in a different way. Each of the three is roughly equally serious, and each potential treatment has similar side effects. As a physician, which of the treatments would you prescribe? Logically, you would bet on Illness A and, accordingly, order up Therapy A.

But now suppose that there is a diagnostic test that will give a positive result in the case of Illness X and a negative result in the case of Illness Y. If, however, the disease in question really is Illness A, half of the test results will come out positive and half will come out negative. Would you, as a physician, recommend that the patient undergo this diagnostic test?

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7. Jorge Luis Borges, “On Rigor in Science,” in *Dreamtigers*, trans. Mildred Boyer and Harold Morland (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), 90.

8. Dobelli, *Die Kunst des klugen Handelns*, 33.

In fact, most of the physicians surveyed by Jonathan Baron, the researcher running the study, recommended the diagnostic test be administered to the patient. And they did so, remarks Dobelli,

even though the information derived thereby is irrelevant. Suppose that the test result is positive. In that case, the probability of Illness A is still much greater than for Illness X. The supplemental information delivered by the test is completely useless for the decision.<sup>9</sup>

In cases where the decisive facts are already on the table, Dobelli argues, “More information is not merely superfluous, it can also be detrimental.”<sup>10</sup> To illustrate this contention, he cites a little experiment conducted by the psychologist Gerd Gigerenzer, of the Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung in Berlin.

Gigerenzer asked a simple question of students at both the University of Chicago and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (i.e., the University of Munich, in Germany): “Which city has more residents, San Diego or San Antonio?”

Of the American students, 62% gave the right answer, “San Diego.” But fully 100% of the German students were able to answer the question correctly. Why? Because German students are so much better than American students, even at the elite University of Chicago? No. Because the German students knew less than the American students did:

All of the German students had at least heard of San Diego, whereas only a few had heard of San Antonio. So they chose the more familiar name. Both cities, however, were known to the Americans. They had more information, and for precisely that reason often chose incorrectly.<sup>11</sup>

Dobelli closes his chapter with a brief allusion to the Great Recession of 2008. Scores of thousands of government, academic, and private economists — armed with mathematical models and research reports, commentaries and terabytes of data — failed to foresee the financial crisis. When certain knowledge is beyond the reach of human reason, more data and more research isn’t going to give it to us.

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9. *Ibid.*, 34.

10. *Ibid.*, 35.

11. *Ibid.*

Another of Dobelli's chapters is worthy of note in this context. It's entitled "Wann Sie Ihren Kopf ausschalten sollen" ("When you should turn your head off").

There was once, he says, a highly intelligent millipede. It looked from the edge of one table over to another table, where a grain of sugar lay. It began to ponder whether it should descend the right or the left leg of the table on which it sat, and, whether it should ascend the other table by the right leg or the left leg. And should it begin the journey with its own left leg? Or with its right leg? And then, in which order should it move its other legs? The millipede was a skilled mathematician, so it worked its way through all the possible variants. Finally, it decided on the best course — and died of hunger in the very same spot where it had done all its calculations.<sup>12</sup>

And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action. (Hamlet, 3.1.92–96)

Dobelli tells an interesting story about preferences in strawberry jam. In the 1980s, it seems, *Consumer Reports* had 45 different types of strawberry jam rated by expert "tasters." Some years later, a psychologist by the name of Timothy Wilson did exactly the same thing with his students, and the results were very nearly identical: The students preferred the same varieties of strawberry jam as the experts had.

But that was just the first part of Wilson's experiment. He repeated it with a second group of students. However, this time he had the students fill out a form on which they were to justify their evaluations of the jams in some detail. And, this time, the rankings were completely turned around: Some of the very best types of jam were given the very worst rankings.<sup>13</sup>

"If one thinks *too* much," concludes Dobelli,

one cuts the head off from the wisdom of the feelings, ...  
[which] are simply a different way of processing information  
than is rational thinking — a more primitive way, but not  
necessarily a worse one. In fact, often a better one. ... Thinking  
might needlessly sabotage intuitive solutions. The same thing  
is true for decisions that already confronted our Stone Age

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12. *Ibid.*, 173.

13. Dobelli, *Die Kunst des klugen Handelns*, 174.

ancestors: the evaluation of foods, the choice of friends, or the question of who can be trusted.<sup>14</sup>

None of what I'm saying here, I hasten to add, is intended to argue against the value of knowledge or the importance and interest of research. It is, however, intended to suggest that, in matters where ultimate answers are unavailable to human reason — e.g., whether there is a God, whether life has meaning, whether there is a real distinction between good and evil, whether there is a purpose behind the cosmos — additional research really cannot deliver the answers we seek. Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? No quantity of scientific data and no amount of immersion in the library stacks will settle those questions beyond doubt.

President Oaks is right.

**Daniel C. Peterson** (*PhD, University of California at Los Angeles*) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served as editor-in-chief until mid-August 2013. He has published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled *Muhammad: Prophet of God* (Eerdmans, 2007).

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14. Ibid., 174–75.



# “COME UNTO ME” AS A TECHNICAL GOSPEL TERM

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Noel B. Reynolds

**Abstract:** *The Book of Mormon repeatedly outlines a six-part definition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but most writers within the book refer to only two or three of them at a time in a biblical rhetorical device called merismus. Throughout the scriptures, the term “come unto Christ” in its many forms is used as part of these merisms to represent enduring to the end. This article examines the many abbreviations of the gospel, connects the phrase “come unto Christ” with enduring to the end, and discusses some of the alternate uses of these types of phrases.*

While the oft-repeated scriptural invitation “to come unto Christ” is widely recognized and appreciated in Latter-day Saint discourse, no one has as yet undertaken the task of clarifying precisely how this broad phrase relates to the six-part definition of the gospel that is laid out in the Book of Mormon and is used in Church curricular materials, including *Preach My Gospel* and *Handbook of Instructions*. The phrase “come unto” occurs many times in the Book of Mormon, referring to situations where men or even the Lord come to each other in one context or another. By my count, 48 of these occurrences in 29 separate passages do not refer to a physical coming but to a spiritual one. The Lord has invited all men “to come unto him and be saved.” This indicates a more extensive use of this phraseology in the Book of Mormon than we see in either the Old or the New Testament, though it does occur in each.

Scholars have recognized some limited use of this terminology in the New Testament that seems consonant with this Book of Mormon usage. While the Greek verbs *érchomai* and *eisérchomai* are employed in a wide variety of contexts where they can mean “to come” or “to go,” the

gospels do feature a small subset of those passages that reflect a spiritual meaning similar to Book of Mormon usage. Geoffrey W. Bromiley has summarized all these usages succinctly. In one part of this entry, he reviews the occurrences in the Gospel of John where *érchomai* is used to imply a “coming to Jesus.”

Here again we find a general coming (3:6; 6:5; 10:41). Jesus invites people to come (7:37). Those who respond come in a special sense (6:35) by becoming disciples (cf. 1:47). Disciples can also issue the invitation (1:46). Jesus will not reject those who come (6:37) but give them life (6:35). Yet only those whom the Father draws (6:65) and who are taught by him (6:45) can come. Coming means believing in Jesus as the coming one (11:27), and believing means deliverance from judgment (5:24) and new birth by the Spirit (3:8). The opposite is a refusal to come to Jesus (5:40) or to come to the light (3:20).<sup>1</sup>

More generally, *eisérchomai* is often used in the New Testament for going into the temple, a synagogue, or even Jerusalem. But, as Bromiley points out, it is also used for the most significant theological statements:

The Synoptists speak about entering the kingdom, for which the following requirements are found: becoming as little children (Mark 10:15), keeping the commandments (Matthew 19:17), doing God’s will (Matthew 7:21), a new beginning (Matthew 5:20), a clean break (Matthew 18:8–9), vigilance (Matthew 25:10), and fidelity (Matthew 25:21ff.). Jesus and the disciples summon people into the kingdom; they are to enter by the strait gate (Matthew 7:13), but may be hindered by wealth (Mark 10:23) or by the self-righteous (Luke 11:52). John adds the need for regeneration by water and the Spirit (3:5) and stresses that access is only through Christ (10:2, 9). Tribulation precedes entry (Acts 14:22).<sup>2</sup>

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1. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 258.

2. *Ibid.*, 260.

## The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon

While several of the Nephite references are as general in their language as these biblical examples, a large number get right into specifics — telling hearers and readers how they can come to Christ. Even more impressively, these passages refer collectively to the various elements of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as repeatedly spelled out in the Book of Mormon, and do so with a specificity that would seem to point to some of those as preparatory steps for coming to Christ, and to others as constitutive of that coming. In previous publications, I have demonstrated how the Book of Mormon consistently presents a six-element gospel or doctrine of Jesus Christ. All who will (1) be saved in the kingdom of God or receive eternal life must (2) trust in Jesus Christ, (3) repent of their sins, (4) be baptized, (5) receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and (6) endure to the end.<sup>3</sup> Further, there are no shortcuts. Anyone who wishes to receive eternal life in the kingdom of God must meet all these requirements.

The first of these passages is found in 2 Nephi 31:4–21 and seems to be the primary source that informs the teaching of all the later Nephite prophets. Nephi presents the passage as the climax of his prophecies and teachings in the rhetorical form of an *inclusio* that begins and ends with an indication that the passage will explain the doctrine or gospel of Christ. The explanation presents these six basic elements in a series of combinations that show how they relate to one another and how they cumulatively constitute the means the Father and the Son have mandated for all mankind to follow as they seek eternal life. Nephi ensures that the authority of this gospel will stand beyond question. His unprecedented explanation incorporates three quotations from the Father and three from the Son.<sup>4</sup> The other two basic passages defining the gospel (3 Nephi 11:32–40 and 27:13–22) share some of these same characteristics. Both are constructed rhetorically as *inclusios* that point directly to their function as explanations of the doctrine or gospel of Jesus Christ. And both are presented as quotations from Jesus Christ. Further, each presents the gospel as a series of statements containing two or more of the six gospel elements and showing how the elements relate

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3. See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets,” *BYU Studies* 31, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 31–50; *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), s.vv. “Gospel of Jesus Christ,” and Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel according to Mormon,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 68, no. 2 (2015): 218–34.

4. See also Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel According to Nephi: An Essay on 2 Nephi 31,” *Religious Educator* 16, no. 2 (2015): 51–75.

to one another in one comprehensive account of how men and women might qualify for eternal life.

### Enduring to the End and Come unto Me

In a recent paper I demonstrated that six brief Book of Mormon passages — that quote Jesus Christ and exhibit the same unique rhetorical structure — use “come unto me” specifically as an equivalent of the gospel principle of enduring to the end.<sup>5</sup> The following example illustrates the shared rhetorical structure of these six distinctive passages:

And he [Christ] hath said:

A (1) *Repent*, all ye ends of the earth,  
and (2) *come unto me*

B and (3) *be baptized in my name*  
and (4) *have faith in me*,

Ballast line: (5) that ye may *be saved*. (Moroni 7:34)

As explained in the previous paper, the six-fold recurrence of this rhetorical form invites further investigation. Elements 1, 2, and 3 of the parallel lines A and B are nearly identical in all six passages. The ballast lines in all six contain the fifth element, which in each case articulates some version of a promised salvation. In a standard Hebrew couplet with two parallel lines, items 1 and 3 would be related as would items 2 and 4. Repentance and baptism are closely related throughout the teachings of the Nephite prophets, in which baptism is characterized as the public witnessing of the covenant to obey God one makes when repenting. Should the fourth elements, which are worded differently in each of the six passages, be similarly related to element 2, *come unto me*, these passages would be recognizable as variations on the standard Hebrew parallel couplet — with the addition of a ballast line — which is also a common feature of Hebrew rhetoric. As it turns out on closer analysis, all the phrasings in the 4 position can readily be read as versions or specifications of the Book of Mormon gospel requirement of enduring to the end. And so the six passages all quote Jesus directly, share an identical rhetorical structure, and repeat the same four principle elements of the gospel formula — with the variant versions of *enduring to the end* each being parallel to *come unto me*.

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5. Noel B. Reynolds, “How ‘Come unto Me’ Fits into the Nephite Gospel,” *Religious Educator* 18, no. 2 (2017): 28. The six passages include 3 Nephi 21:6, 27:20, 30:2, Mormon 3:2, Ether 4:18–19, and Moroni 7:34.

## Abbreviated Formulations of Book of Mormon Gospel References

Like the Bible, the Book of Mormon has many authoritative statements of the gospel that explicitly list only one or some subset of these elements as necessary for salvation. For example, Nephi quotes the Father teaching him in his first great vision that “he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (2 Nephi 31:15).<sup>6</sup> But as I have also shown, this should not be read as evidence that repentance and baptism are not necessary for those who can “endure to the end.” Nor are these passages to be read as relaxations of the full set of gospel requirements. Rather, they should be seen as abbreviations of the full gospel description. They exemplify a common biblical form of abbreviation labeled *merismus* by rhetoricians. The most common form of *merismus* is the abbreviated list wherein mention of some of the elements of a known list is intended to invoke the full list as context in the reader’s mind — without a tedious listing of all its elements. *Merismus* is just another rhetorical technique in which the part stands for the whole.<sup>7</sup>

As my study of gospel merisms in the Book of Mormon has shown, the most common versions of gospel merisms only include two or three of the six gospel elements. In most of these cases, one or two of the first five elements will be teamed with the sixth (salvation or eternal life) to constitute a two- or three-element merism that stands in for a complete articulation of the gospel message. Examples of this rhetorical device are plentiful. In prophesying the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Nephi promises that “all they that shall believe on his name shall be saved” (2 Nephi 25:13). A few chapters later, the same Nephi quotes the Father telling him, “he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved” (2 Nephi 31:15). Alma taught the people of Zarahemla that “except ye repent, ye can in no wise inherit the kingdom of heaven” (Alma 5:51). Because of the clarity and authority of the full versions of the gospel message as explained above, we would never read these brief statements as alternative or competing gospels. While these shorter merisms almost

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6. Readers should note that all Book of Mormon quotations, including punctuation, are taken from the new critical text edited by Royal Skousen. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). Throughout the paper I have introduced italics in these quotations to help readers focus on key words and phrases.

7. For a detailed explanation see Noel B. Reynolds, “Biblical Merismus in Book of Mormon Gospel References,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26 (2017): 106–34.

never focus on the baptism of water or of the spirit, the stand-alone references to faith in Christ, repentance, or enduring to the end provide repeated examples of these single elements of the gospel being used as a shorthand reference to all the rest. The same thing happens with the invitation to come unto Christ and be saved — which actually occurs as a two-part gospel merism even more often than its alternate form that promises salvation to those who endure to the end. In these meristic occurrences, the invitation to come unto Christ can refer specifically to the process of enduring to the end, while meristically representing all the other elements of the gospel formula.

Examples of this are also easy to find. In the very first chapter of the Book of Mormon, Lehi extols the “goodness, and mercy” of God who will “not suffer those *who come unto thee* that they shall perish” (1 Nephi 1:14). After reporting Lehi’s great vision, Nephi goes on to point out in a three-element merism that “the way [to salvation] is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and *come unto him*” (1 Nephi 10:18). A few chapters later, Nephi reports his own version of that same great vision and the words of the angel who taught him that “the Lamb of God is . . . the Savior of the world and that all men must *come unto him* or they cannot be saved” (1 Nephi 13:40). Clarifying the same teaching to his questioning brothers, Nephi explains that men must gain a knowledge of “the very points” (the elements) of the Redeemer’s doctrine, “that they may know how to *come unto him* and be saved” (1 Nephi 15:14). In his own teaching about Christ, Nephi borrows and modifies phrasing from Isaiah to quote Christ saying, “[c]ome unto me, all ye ends of the earth; buy milk and honey without money, and without price” (2 Nephi 26:25, cf. Isaiah 55:3). In a continuation of the same passage, Nephi clarifies that the Lord “inviteth them all to *come unto him* and partake of his goodness” (2 Nephi 26:33). And again, he quotes the Lord God’s promise to the Gentiles in another three-element merism that “if they will repent and *come unto me*,” he will be merciful to them (2 Nephi 28:32). In the closing sentence of his record, Enos describes his anticipated judgment scene, in which the Redeemer will say to him, “*Come unto me*, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father” (Enos 1:27). Understood as a gospel merism, this instance of “come unto me” calls to mind all five elements of the gospel that have been part of Enos’s life. Amaleki brings the small plates to a conclusion with a pair of merisms making this same connection, specifying in the process what he sees as the essential elements of enduring to the end: “*come unto Christ* . . . and partake of his salvation . . . *come unto him*, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him and continue in fasting and praying,

and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth, ye will be saved” (Omni 1:26). In his visit to the Nephites, Jesus includes one more three-element merism: “Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit which *cometh unto me*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (3 Nephi 12:3). From what we have learned in this study, we might paraphrase this saying that repentant persons with broken hearts and contrite spirits, who endure to the end, will be saved — a statement that is repeated in one form or another throughout the Book of Mormon.

But these abbreviated statements of the gospel also introduce another linguistic complication. Rather than list all the gospel elements they may have in mind in a particular statement, always using the same name or words for that element, they may use synonyms or even combine two or more elements under another label. For example, in the very sentence in which Nephi introduces the requirement of faith in Christ, he refers to it again as “relying wholly” upon Christ: “For ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken *faith* in him, *relying* wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19). Similarly, *faith* is referred to elsewhere as “trust.”<sup>8</sup>

In this same chapter where the gospel elements are most authoritatively and fully articulated, Nephi also introduces another term for repentance and baptism as a pair when he says, “*the gate* by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water” (2 Nephi 31:17). Having introduced this new terminology in support of his metaphor of the gospel as a path to eternal life, Nephi can then go on to simply refer to “the gate” (2 Nephi 31:18), without specifying repentance or baptism again, knowing his readers will understand the compound reference. The subject of this essay is just such a reference — *come unto me*, which obviously occurs in a number of gospel merisms, but which is nowhere so simply and straightforwardly defined as are the preceding examples.

### The Gospel Invitation

The text seems to invite such an analysis directly when Nephi quotes the angel in that same vision telling him “that all men must *come unto him* or they cannot *be saved*,” and then goes on immediately to stipulate that “*they must come* according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb,” which in turn would “be made known in the records” of the Nephites (1 Nephi 13:40–41). As demonstrated in the papers cited in the footnotes 1 and 3 above, all three passages that spell out the six-element gospel in the Book of Mormon are quoting directly from Jesus Christ, “the Lamb.” A starting assumption for this paper is

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8. See, e.g., 2 Nephi 4:19, 34; 22:2; Jacob 7:25; Mosiah 4:6.

that these passages constitute “the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb, and . . . made known in the records of [Nephi’s] seed” (1 Nephi 13:41). Nephi seems to confirm this same point later in explaining the vision to his resistant brothers when he says, “they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and *the very points of his doctrine*, that they *may know how to come unto him and be saved*” (1 Nephi 15:14). It seems to be the same point he made a few chapters earlier when he wrote: “For the fullness of mine intent is that I may persuade men *to come unto* the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob *and be saved*” (1 Nephi 6:3–4).

From beginning to end, the Book of Mormon announces this invitation in the most universal terms possible — including all the earth’s inhabitants. Lehi’s entire perspective on the prophesied destruction of Jerusalem was radically changed by the visions he received, leading him to exclaim: “Thy throne is high in the heavens and thy power and goodness and mercy is over all the inhabitants of the earth. And because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those *who come unto thee* that they shall perish!” (1 Nephi 1:14). And in the concluding chapters, Mormon quotes Jesus addressing all the ends of the earth: “Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and *come unto me* and be baptized in my name and have faith in me, that ye may be saved” (Moroni 7:34). It is clearly Nephi who articulates the universality of the invitation most vigorously in his own final sermon. Borrowing from Isaiah, he frames the Lord’s invitation: “*Come unto me*, all ye ends of the earth” (2 Nephi 26:25, cf. Isaiah 55:1). Rhetorically, he asks if the Lord has “commanded any that they should depart out of the . . . houses of worship,” or “that they should not partake of his salvation” or “of his goodness” and then goes on to answer, “Nay. But all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden” (2 Nephi 26:26–28). Nephi then goes on to emphasize and elaborate the same inclusiveness: “And he inviteth them all *to come unto him* and partake of his goodness. And he denieth none that *come unto him*, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen. And all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile” (2 Nephi 26:33). In welcoming home the successful missionary sons of Mosiah, Alma rejoiced to “see that God is mindful of every people in whatsoever land they may be in; yea, he numbereth his people. And his bowels of mercy is over all the earth” (Alma 26:37).

As I have explained elsewhere, one helpful way to understand the dynamic between the six elements of the gospel message is dialogically.<sup>9</sup> The dialogue begins with an invitation to each of the Father’s children that they trust in Christ and repent of their sins. In response, the individual can ignore or reject that invitation, or accept it by repenting or humbling him/herself before the Father and returning to the true path. It is also required that those who repent privately witness publicly to God and to all men that they have so repented and taken the name of Christ upon them — by going down into the waters of baptism. For those who do respond to his invitation in this way, the Father then responds in turn by sending them the remission of sins “by fire, and by the Holy Ghost” — the blessing promised to the repentant from the beginning. Having received the Holy Ghost, the convert has the spiritual testimony, inspiration, and guidance necessary to be able to endure to the end. This enduring is a life-long process — also in dialogue with God — by which he or she strives daily to follow the guidance of the Spirit, obey the commandments and laws of God, serve the Lord and his fellow man, and through which the Father is able to bless and strengthen, mold and correct — helping the convert each day to become more like the Father and the Son and to be prepared to enter into their rest — receiving eternal life — and appears to be the means by which they can “come unto him.”

### **Come unto Me in Other Book of Mormon Passages**

In passages where the invitation to “come unto me” is listed with one or more of the other gospel elements, it is most easily seen as one alternative phrasing for this fifth principle of the gospel — the requirement that men endure to the end.<sup>10</sup> 3 Nephi 27 contains one of the three key definitional passages for the gospel and provides the most complete example of this in verses 16–19:

- 16 And it shall come to pass  
 A that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled.  
 B And if he *endureth to the end*, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

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9. Noel B. Reynolds, “Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012): 11–13.

10. See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Fifth Principle of the Gospel,” *The Religious Educator*, BYU Religious Studies Center 15, no. 3 (2014): 117–27.

- 17 B\*           And he that *endureth not unto the end*, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire from whence they can no more return because of the justice of the Father.
- 19 A\*   And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom.  
Therefore  
          nothing entereth into his rest save it be  
          those who have washed their garments in my blood  
          because of their faith  
          and the repentance of all their sins  
          and their *faithfulness unto the end*.
- 20 Now this is the commandment:  
A   (1) repent, all ye ends of the earth,  
    and (2) *come unto me*  
B   and (3) be baptized in my name,  
    that (4) ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost,  
    Ballast line: that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

As with many other Book of Mormon statements of the gospel, the invitation begins with repentance and baptism, which lead to the remission of sins “by the reception of the Holy Ghost.” The eventual result will be that the person can “stand spotless” at the judgment. But there is no specific reference to the requirement of enduring to the end in this concluding restatement of the gospel. However, verse 20 is one of those six unique rhetorical structures discussed earlier, and it contains that extra phrase requiring the convert to “come unto me,” as another way of describing enduring to the end. The very next sentence affirms that “this is my gospel,” and goes on to remind the Nephites of the works they “must do in my church” if they will “be lifted up at the last day,” emphasizing again the expectation that all is not done and that the convert needs to work and endure to the end of this life (3 Nephi 27:21–22).

Mormon rephrases the same invitation once again in his closing words to the future descendants of Lehi who will receive his record and learn of the gospel and of their genealogical connection to ancient Israel:

3 Know ye that ye must *come unto repentance*, or ye cannot be saved . . . .

5 Know ye that ye must *come to the knowledge of your fathers* and repent of all your sins and iniquities and believe in Jesus Christ, that he is the Son of God ...

8 Therefore repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus and *lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, ...*

10 And ye will also know that ye are a remnant of the seed of Jacob. Therefore ye are *numbered among the people* of the first covenant. And if it so be that ye believe in Christ and are baptized — first with water, then with fire, and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior, according to that which he hath commanded us — it shall be well with you in the day of judgment. (Mormon 7:3, 5, 8, 10)

In this version, Mormon explicitly includes each of the elements of the gospel message except enduring to the end, which may be indicated in the unique commandment to “lay hold upon the gospel of Christ,” and once again by the reference to being “numbered among the people.” The phrase is used again by Moroni in an obvious reference to the process of enduring to the end for new members of the church:

And after that they had been received unto baptism and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were *numbered among the people of the church of Christ* and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way... (Moroni 6:4)

Moroni’s drastically condensed account of the Jaredite record contains various insertions of his own teachings, including one important quotation from the Lord’s words responding to his own expressed feelings of inadequacy in his assigned task:

27 And if men *come unto me*, I will shew unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble. And my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me. For if they humble themselves before me and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

28 Behold, I will shew unto the Gentiles their weakness. And I will show unto them that faith, hope, and charity *bringeth unto me*, the fountain of all righteousness. (Ether 12:27–28)

This passage is less obviously a gospel invitation as displayed in the previous examples. But when we remember that the three-fold reference

to men humbling themselves before God is an exact replication of Nephi's original characterization of repentance in 2 Nephi 31:7–11,<sup>11</sup> we can see that it includes repentance and faith, along with “come/bring unto me” interpreted as a synonymous phrasing for enduring to the end. This passage also gives us another unique support for this interpretation. In his foundational presentation of the doctrine of Christ, Nephi introduces faith, hope, and charity as a description of the mode of life of those who have entered into the path, received a remission of sins, and who are now enduring to the end:

Wherefore ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope and a love of God and of all men; wherefore if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:20)

This process of living in all things as directed by the Holy Ghost<sup>12</sup> is here explicitly identified with enduring to the end, a process which, in the Lord's words to Moroni, “*bringeth unto me* — the fountain of all righteousness” (Ether 12:28). This passage from Moroni begins referring to men who “come unto me” and then describes explicitly how the Lord works with the repentant, showing them their weaknesses that they may be humble and then, through their faith, making “weak things strong unto them.” This is a unique and powerful description, in the Lord's own words, of how he works with converts, bringing them unto him in the process of enduring to the end.

Earlier, he had taught them not to cast sinners out of their meetings: “For ye know not but what they will return and repent and *come unto me* with full purpose of heart and I shall heal them, and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them” (3 Nephi 18:32). As part of his expanded version of the Sermon on the Mount delivered to the Nephites, the Lord includes “come unto me” with faith and repentance as the formula for those who will be saved:

19 And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me and that ye shall repent of your sins and *come unto me* with a broken heart and a contrite spirit . . . .

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11. See Reynolds, “The Gospel according to Mormon,” 223.

12. Cf. 2 Nephi 32: 3, 5 for Nephi's explanation of this terminology.

20 Therefore *come unto me* and be ye saved, for verily I say unto you that except ye shall *keep my commandments*, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (3 Nephi 12:19–20)

It was Alma who first framed this gospel message as an invitation:

33 Behold, *he sendeth an invitation* unto all men; for the arms of mercy is extended towards them, and he saith: Repent and *I will receive you*.

34 Yea, he saith: *Come unto me* and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely.

35 Yea, *come unto me* and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be cut down and cast into the fire. (Alma 5:33–35)

Here “coming unto” the Lord is characterized as an invitation and as *being received* by him. It is further described as a way of life or process in which his followers “partake of the fruit of the tree of life,”<sup>13</sup> as they “eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely,” bringing “forth works of righteousness.” All of this fits most easily with the various descriptions of enduring to the end.

In all the examples cited so far, the divine invitation to “come unto me” occurs in combinations with two or more of the other six gospel elements, constituting in those occurrences gospel merisms that should bring all six elements of the gospel to the mind of the reader. And in each of these, this invitation seems to most easily describe enduring to the end — the gospel element that is not usually mentioned explicitly in those particular gospel merisms. This insight spares us the awkwardness that might otherwise arise if we had to explain the divine command to come unto Christ as one more recurring principle of the gospel without a specified meaning.

### Variations on Come unto Me

“Come unto me” is not the only form this invitation can take. Most prominent among the alternative formulations is the often-repeated call “to keep the commandments of God.” Over 80 Book of Mormon passages contain some version of this phrase in direct reference to either

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13. Compare 1 Nephi 8:15–18 where Lehi links the invitation to come to partaking of the fruit four times.

the Lord's covenant to Lehi that if his descendants would keep the Lord's commandments, they would prosper in the land, or to the covenant required of those who would be baptized that they would always keep the commandments, or, in many cases, to both simultaneously.<sup>14</sup> This is not surprising once we recognize that the Lord's promises given to Abraham and Lehi, articulated primarily in terms of blessings in this world, are in reality surrogates for the universal promise made by the Father to all his children that if they would follow Christ in accepting and living his gospel, they would receive eternal life in the world to come. A clear equivalence between the invitation to "come unto me" and "keep my commandments" is indicated in the parallel construction of the Savior's elaboration of the invitation in 3 Nephi 12:20:

- A Therefore *come unto me*  
 B and *be ye saved*, for verily I say unto you  
 A\* that *except ye shall keep my commandments ...*  
 B\* ye shall in no case *enter into the kingdom of heaven*.

Even more obvious is the equation between keeping the commandments and enduring to the end. While this connection may be self-evident, it is emphasized by the Savior himself in that critical verse in his sermon at the temple where he finally draws his presentation of the gospel to a completed stage by a double statement of the theretofore missing requirement of enduring to the end.<sup>15</sup> He links it doubly to eternal life and follows with a double reference to the commandments which are to be kept:

Look unto me and *endure to the end*, and ye shall *live*; for unto him that *endureth to the end* will I give *eternal life*. Behold, *I have given unto you the commandments*. Therefore *keep my commandments*. (3 Nephi 15:9–10)

Less prominent, but also important to notice, are invitations to look to the Lord, to listen to or heed his voice and the words of his prophets, and to follow him or his righteousness, etc., that can also be substituted into gospel statements in the place of "enduring to the end." Jacob appealed to his brethren to "*listen unto the word* of his commands and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls" (Jacob 2:16). The corrupting pride

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14. By my rough count, there are well over 40 passages that fall in each category.

15. How this passage is to be seen as included in the definition of the gospel provided in 3 Nephi 11:31–39 is explained in Reynolds, "The Gospel according to Mormon," 231.

of those who “follow after their own will” and thereby miss salvation is also a recurring theme (Alma 42:7) and leads to emphasis on the requisite humility of those who would follow God (1 Nephi 15:3, 2 Nephi 28:14, Alma 4:15, Helaman 6:5 and 39). The importance of *following* instead after Christ or his words or voice or after righteousness again recalls the metaphor of the gospel as a path or way and is invoked in a variety of phrasings.<sup>16</sup> Nephi stressed the example of Christ who “humbled himself before the father” and showed men the way to salvation that they should *follow* (2 Nephi 31:7, 10–13). Alma encouraged his people to *hearken* to the voice of the good shepherd and *follow* him (Alma 5:41). He also taught his son Helaman to *follow* the words of Christ which would carry him into a far better land of promise (Alma 37:45).

Mormon echoed these teachings in a more complete statement of the gospel which also appears to use “following the example of our Savior” in the place of enduring to the end:

And if it so be that ye believe in Christ and are baptized — first with water, then with fire, and with the Holy Ghost, *following the example* of our Savior, according to that which he hath commanded us — it shall be well with you in the day of judgment. (Mormon 7:10)

Mormon emphasizes the *following* metaphor again in a statement describing the process of developing oneself to be like Jesus Christ:

[P]ray unto the Father with all the energy of heart that ye may be filled with this love which he hath bestowed upon all who are true *followers* of his Son Jesus Christ, that ye may become the sons of God, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him — for we shall see him as he is — that we may have this hope, that we may be purified even as he is pure. (Moroni 7:48)

Similarly, Book of Mormon prophets frequently encouraged the people to *look unto God* or to *hearken to his words or commandments* (1 Nephi 18:16, 2 Nephi 2:28–29, Jacob 3:1, Mosiah 15:11, Alma 37:46–47). Alma’s blessing to his son Helaman makes clear how this looking to God amounts to enduring to the end:

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16. For a thorough explanation of the metaphor of the gospel as a path or way, see Noel B. Reynolds, “This is the Way,” *Religious Educator* 14, no. 3 (2013): 79–91. Book of Mormon discourse repeatedly adapts this metaphor to the ancient doctrine of the two ways as documented in Noel B. Reynolds, “The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2017): 49–78.

And now, my son, I trust that I shall have great joy in you, because of your steadiness and your faithfulness unto God; for as you have commenced in your youth to *look to the Lord your God*, even so I hope that you will continue in *keeping his commandments*; for blessed is he that *endureth to the end*. (Alma 38:2)

In another version of this injunction, the prophets repeatedly encouraged the Nephites to *look forward* to the atonement of Christ which would provide the means by which their sins could be remitted (Mosiah 18:21, Alma 4:14, 5:15, 7:6, 13:2, 6, and 25:15). Alma explains this “looking forward to the fruit” in terms of the process of preparing men for everlasting life as they “nourish the word,” another synonymous phrase for enduring to the end:

40 If ye will not *nourish the word*, looking forward with an eye of faith to the fruit thereof, ye can never pluck of the fruit of the tree of life.

41 But if ye will *nourish the word*, yea, nourish the tree as it beginneth to grow by your faith with great diligence, and with patience, *looking forward to the fruit* thereof, and it shall take root. And behold, it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life. (Alma 32:40–4 1)

### 3 Nephi 9:13–22 and 10:3–7:

#### Another Unique Announcement of the Gospel

Mormon’s abridgement of the Nephite record contains one other important meristic presentation of the gospel in the words of Christ himself in which *come unto me* is used prominently as a featured phrase. At the time of his crucifixion and approximately one full year prior to his actual appearance to the Nephites,<sup>17</sup> Jesus Christ spoke to them from heaven, listing and explaining the destructions they had witnessed and announcing that his gospel, which the Nephites had known and accepted since the great visions given to Lehi and Nephi, would now constitute a full replacement for the now-fulfilled law of Moses. While 3 Nephi 9:13–22 resembles the three other passages in which the gospel is taught by Jesus Christ in

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17. Because of the arrangement of the text, readers often assume Christ showed himself to the surviving Nephites immediately after the three days of destruction associated with the crucifixion. But the chronicler clearly states that the destructions began with a great storm on the fourth day of the 34th year. The visitation occurred “in the ending” of the 34th year. Compare 3 Nephi 8:5 and 10:18.

a series of gospel merisms, there is no attempt here to include and repeat all six elements of the gospel. It can occur to the reader that his stating the gospel meristically ten times may have been an implicit allusion to the ten commandments given to Moses and to the law of Moses that it officially replaced. In this series of gospel merisms, there are five explicit and five implicit appearances of the phrase "come unto me." Explicitly, the Nephites are promised that "if ye will *come unto me*, ye shall have eternal life," that "blessed are they which *cometh unto me*" (v. 14), that "whoso *cometh unto me* with a broken heart and a contrite spirit ... will I baptize with fire, and with the Holy Ghost" (v.20), that "whoso repenteth and cometh *unto me* as a little child ... will I receive," and commanded to "repent and *come unto me* ... and be saved" (v. 22). This same phrase may also lie behind five other phrasings in this passage: (1) "Will ye not now *return unto me* and repent of your sins and be converted, that I may heal you?" (v. 13) (2) "*And whosoever will come*, him will I receive" (v. 14). (3) "My own *received me not*" (v. 16). (4 and 5) "And as many as have *received me*, to them have I given to become the sons of God. And even so will I to as many as shall *believe on my name*" (v. 17).

As in the most obvious presentation of his gospel in 3 Nephi 27:13–21, Jesus begins here with a context-setting reference to the plan of salvation. Book of Mormon references to the "great" or "merciful" plan of God repeatedly provide the context that gives meaning to the gospel message.<sup>18</sup> While it may be true that much contemporary Latter-day Saint discourse merges these two as if they were the same thing, the Nephite prophets understood the plan of salvation as background context that gave the doctrine or gospel of Christ its meaning. The plan of salvation describes the great things the Father and the Son have done to make the salvation of man possible, including the creation, fall, Abrahamic covenant, atonement, proclamation of the gospel, judgment, and eternal life. The gospel tells men what they must do individually to qualify for eternal life.<sup>19</sup> This relationship between the two is illustrated clearly in this passage as ten references to elements of the plan of salvation (labeled as PS #s 1–10 below) are interspersed with the ten meristic presentations of the gospel.

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18. For a thorough discussion of the 31 Book of Mormon references to the plan of salvation or redemption, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Great Plans of the Eternal God" (working paper, Faculty Publications, Brigham Young University, 2018), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/2272/>.

19. See Reynolds, "This is the Way," 86–87.

The long litany of destructions that introduces this presentation is itself prefaced by an explanation of these calamities in terms of the gospel as part of the plan of salvation and the failure of a wicked people to accept and follow it. There is a devil, and he seeks the fall and destruction of the righteous (PS #1):

### 3 Nephi 9:2

- 2 A Woe woe woe unto this people!  
 B Woe unto the inhabitants of the whole earth  
 except they shall repent,  
 A\* for the devil laugheth and his angels rejoice  
 B\* because of the slain of the fair sons and  
 daughters of my people  
 Ballast line: And it is because of their iniquity and  
 abominations that they are fallen.

The negatively stated gospel merism in B is the universal message to “the inhabitants of the whole earth” that great woes await them “except they repent.” The Savior’s heavenly announcement continues with a sequence of ten small rhetorical structures that contain between them ten gospel merisms (labeled below as GM #s 1–10) — seven of which incorporate *come unto me* explicitly. Addressed to a people who have known and lived the gospel, Jesus focuses on his promise to come to his people and his repeated invitation to them to come or return to him and his promise to receive them if they will receive him first. The entire passage is permeated with the language of coming. Different ways of combining and presenting these concepts carry much of the weight in this series of couplets, triplets, and chiasms — all of which are delimited by their rhetorical forms from one another, and which exhibit structures that are characteristic of ancient Hebrew rhetoric.<sup>20</sup>

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20. For an explanation of Hebrew rhetoric as it has come to be understood by Bible scholars over the past seven decades and how it can be applied to readings of the Book of Mormon, see Noel B. Reynolds, “The Return of Rhetorical Analysis to Bible Studies,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 91–98, and Noel B. Reynolds, “Chiastic Structuring of Large Texts: Second Nephi as a Case Study,” in *To Seek the Law of the Lord: Essays in Honor of John Welch*, eds. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson (The Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 333–49.

3 Nephi 13:13–22

- 13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they,  
A will ye not now return unto me and repent of your sins  
B and be converted, that I may heal you (GM #1)?
- 14 Yea, verily I say unto you:  
A if ye will come unto me, ye shall have eternal life (GM #2).  
B Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you.  
B\* And whosoever will come, him will I receive (GM #3).  
A\* And blessed are they which cometh unto me (GM #4).
- 15 Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God.  
A *I created the heavens and the earth* and all things that in them is.  
B *I was with the Father* from the beginning (PS #2).  
B\* *I am in the Father* and the Father in me;  
A\* *and in me hath the Father glorified his name* (PS #3).
- 16 A *I came*  
B *unto my own,*  
B\* *and my own*  
A\* *received me not* (PS #4);  
A *and the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.*
- 17 B *And as many as have received me,*  
C *to them have I given to become the sons of God* (GM #5).  
C\* *And even so will I [give to become the sons of God]*  
B\* *to as many as shall believe on my name* (GM #6).  
A\* *For behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled* (PS #5).

- 18 A *I am* the light *and* the life of the world.  
 B *I am* Alpha and Omega,  
 C [*I am*] the beginning *and* the end (PS #6).
- 19 A And *ye shall offer up unto me* no more the shedding of blood;  
 B *yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings* shall be done away,  
 B\* for I will accept none of *your sacrifices and your burnt offerings*.
- 20 A\* And *ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me* a broken heart and a contrite spirit.  
 A And *whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit*,  
 B him will I *baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost* (GM #7),  
 A\* even as *the Lamanites because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion*  
 B\* were *baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost*—  
 Ballast line: and they knew it not (GM #8).
- 21 A Behold, I have *come unto the world*  
 B *to bring redemption* unto the world,  
 C *to save the world* from sin (PS #7).
- 22 A Therefore whoso repenteth and *cometh unto me* as a little child, him *will I receive* (GM #9),  
 for of such is *the kingdom of God*.  
 B Behold, for such I have *laid down my life*  
 B\* and have *taken it up* again (PS #8).  
 A\* Therefore *repent and come unto me*, ye ends of the earth, and *be saved* (GM #10).

The chronicler reports that this voice and message from heaven quieted the people in their distress, and after many hours of silence, the voice came again.

### 3 Nephi 10:3–7

- 3 A And it came to pass that *there came a voice*  
 B *again unto the people*—

- B\* and *all the people*  
 A\* *did hear [the voice], and did witness* of it — saying:
- 4 A O *ye people* of these great cities which have fallen,  
 B which are *a descendant of Jacob*—  
 B\* *yea, which are of the house of Israel*—  
 A\* O *ye people* of the house of Israel,  
  
 A how oft have I gathered you  
 B as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings  
 C and have nourished you!
- 5 A And again, how oft would I have gathered you as  
 a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!  
 B Yea, O ye people of the house of Israel which  
 have fallen  
 B\* —yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that  
 dwell at Jerusalem as ye that have fallen—  
 A\* yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen  
 gathereth her chickens  
 Ballast line: and ye would not (PS #9)!
- 6 A O ye house of Israel whom I have spared,  
 B how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her  
 chickens under her wings  
 C if ye will repent and return unto me with  
 full purpose of heart!
- 7 A\* But if not, O house of Israel,  
 B\* the places of your dwellings shall become  
 desolate  
 C\* until the time of the fulfilling of the  
 covenant to your fathers (PS #10).

In these 15 verses, Mormon reports two speeches of the crucified Christ as he spoke to the Nephites from heaven — possibly at about the same time as his resurrection. Both speeches are composed of a series of simple rhetorical structures that are typical of ancient Hebrew rhetoric. The first contains the most concentrated collection of *come unto me* phrasings in the entire Book of Mormon. Taken as a whole, these verses contain Christ’s personal appeal to the surviving Nephites to accept the gospel, which has been taught in preceding centuries by their own prophets, and to abandon the previously binding law of Moses with its

program of sacrifices and offerings. The “true points” of the gospel are not spelled out in this passage as they will be in the first speech he makes to them when he descends to meet with them at the end of the year (3 Nephi 11:30–39). But it is referred to meristically ten times in a way that has been established for centuries in Nephite discourse. The passage is distinguished from the other three basic passages where Christ teaches his gospel directly to Nephites in that ten references to elements of the plan of salvation are interspersed with the ten gospel merisms to provide the larger context of the gospel message and to make clear its central importance as the divinely provided means by which all peoples may receive the full benefits of the plan of salvation.

### Conclusions

In this paper I have reconciled the well-established six-element gospel of salvation taught by Christ and his prophets throughout the Book of Mormon with the recurring invitation to come unto Christ and be saved. Once we can understand that most statements of the gospel in the Book of Mormon are formulated meristically — that where only a few or even just two of the gospel elements are mentioned explicitly, the full set of six is implied — the door is opened for a more precise account for the invitation to come unto him. In this detailed survey, I have shown that in almost all cases, “come unto me” in its various formulations, can readily be understood as a parallel phrasing for the Book of Mormon requirement that converts must “endure to the end” to receive eternal life. As it turns out, there are a variety of alternative phrasings for “endure to the end” that are used in these passages, including “partake of the fruit of the gospel/tree,” be “numbered among his people,” and “lay hold on the gospel,” “keep the commandments,” etc., though “come unto me” is used with far greater frequency than the others. In longer passages explicitly mentioning most of the gospel elements, “come unto me” usually takes the place of “enduring to the end” specifically. But in very brief gospel merisms, it can invoke all the other missing elements as well in the minds of readers and convey the general conception of the gospel as the way back to the presence of God, linking such passages to the most common metaphor for the gospel or doctrine of Christ as a path or way

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# LIGHT AND PERSPECTIVE: ESSAYS FROM THE MORMON THEOLOGY SEMINAR ON 1 NEPHI 1 AND JACOB 7

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Kevin Christensen

Abstract: *The Mormon Theology Seminar has produced two volumes of essays exploring 1 Nephi 1 on Lehi's initial visions, and Jacob 7 on the encounter with Sherem. These essays provide valuable insights from a range of perspectives and raise questions for further discussion both of issues raised and regarding different paradigms in which scholars operate that readers must navigate.*

Review of Adam S. Miller, ed., *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1* (Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, 2017), 140 pp., \$15.95.<sup>1</sup>

Review of Adam S. Miller and Joseph M. Spencer, eds., *Christ and Antichrist: Reading Jacob 7* (Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, 2017), 148 pp., \$15.95.<sup>2</sup>

[I]t would be foolish to ignore an avenue that could potentially provide new insights into the Book of Mormon narrative.<sup>3</sup>

The Maxwell Institute recently published two new volumes of scripture studies, each based on the proceedings of the Mormon Theology Seminar. These events bring together groups of Latter-day Saint scholars for close readings of scripture, in these cases of 1 Nephi 1 on Lehi's initial visions and first public preaching; and Jacob 7, on the encounter with Sherem. The volumes each contain an introduction, an essay

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1. In-text citations from this book are noted as "M, page number."

2. In-text citations from this book are noted as "M&S, page number."

3. Julie M. Smith, "Huldah's Long Shadow" in *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1*, 12.

summarizing the findings of that seminar, and essays by contributors. *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1* contains seven essays on Lehi's initial visions. *Christ and Antichrist: Reading Jacob 7* contains eight essays on Jacob 7 and the encounter with Sherem.

We get different perspectives from male and female authors who draw on a range of backgrounds — including biblical studies, philosophy, humanities, and mathematics — offering fresh and interesting observations. For instance, the volume on 1 Nephi 1 includes essays by New Testament scholar Julie M. Smith on the possible influence of Huldah's encounter with the Book of the Law on Lehi's experience with the heavenly book, and Joe Spencer's investigation of what Messianism might mean for Lehi in Jerusalem circa 600 BCE. Adam Miller writes on "how it is possible to see many afflictions *and* still be highly favored" (M, 29). George Handley offers a philosophical meditation on the mediation of the sacred through imperfect and indirect human transmission and interpretation. Miranda Wilcox provides a historical walking tour on the expression "tender mercies" through a wide range of scriptural texts and translations. Michael Ulrich explores the experience of "joining the heavenly chorus" (M, 111). Benjamin Peters ponders the significance of the Book of Mormon as a text encountered in the absence of the original medium.

The volume on Jacob 7 includes Jana Riess examining the Sherem story in light of René Girard's theories of the scapegoat, as well as Adam Miller on Jacob as defending "the doctrine of Christ against the letter of the Mosaic law in a way that, in itself, seems in lockstep with the letter of the law" (M, 22). Kimberly Berkey looks at the implications of Jacob's two prayers compared to the Lord's prayer. Jacob Rennaker looks at how Jacob has a dreamlike view of time, compared to Sherem's orientation toward the past. Jeremy Walker suggests that Jacob's treatment of time "suggests a form of salvation available now in lived experience, a form of salvation that is recursive rather than linear and that, as a result, is capable of addressing the vicissitudes of human experience" (M, 59). Joseph Spencer offers an essay on "Weeping for Zion" as "consecrated melancholy" (M, 82). Sharon Harris writes on "Covenant Obligation to Scripture as Covenant Obligation to Family" (M, 111). Jenny Webb writes on how "Jacob 7 is haunted in unacknowledged ways by Jacob's own family" (M, 127) and makes fresh and notable observations that tie Jacob 7 to 2 Nephi 4. (M, 135-36). The volumes are attractively produced, and each is about the size and price of an issue of *BYU Studies*. The series overall looks to be a valuable resource.

## Huldah and Lehi in Jerusalem

Regardless of whether or not a person agrees with every author or everything in the essays, the books have value both in themselves and as a sampling of what is going on among a significant group of Latter-day Saint scholars. For instance, in the volume on 1 Nephi 1, *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire*, Julie Smith provides an essay on Huldah, the prophetess mentioned in 2 Kings 22:14-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:22-28.

And the king [Josiah] commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard;

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.

Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again. (2 Kings 22:12-20)

Smith discusses the account in the context of the discovery of the Book of the Law as reported in 2 Kings, and Josiah's response to reading that book, Huldah's status and prophecy. Smith raises the possibility that "Lehi was one of the people present at King Josiah's covenant renewal ceremony" and comments that "it only makes sense to consider how this event would have shaped the background to 1 Nephi 1; it would be foolish to ignore an avenue that could potentially provide new insights into the Book of Mormon narrative" (M, 12). She even postulates that Lehi and Huldah might have known one another, though I expect he would have been quite young and obscure when Huldah spoke, still decades from his own call as a prophet, while she, given her evident social status, had considerable maturity. Josiah became king at age eight, and in 2 Kings 22:3 "in the eighteenth year of King Josiah," he began repairing the temple, with the discovery of the Book of the Law that led to the purge. It is not clear whether that is the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his age or of his reign. The 2 Chronicles 34 account has Josiah beginning a purge in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, and the discovery of the Book of the Law in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of his reign.<sup>4</sup>

Temporally, the Book of Mormon account we have begins in the "first year of the reign of Zedekiah [a son of Josiah, installed as King by Babylon], ... Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days" (1 Nephi 1:4). At that point Lehi was old enough to have three sons older than the young but "large in stature" Nephi (2 Nephi 2:5), who could wear the armor of the adult Laban. So Lehi would not be the frail graybeard depicted in the Friberg paintings of the discovery of the Liahona. Lehi and Sariah must be young enough at the start of 1 Nephi to be able to parent Jacob and Joseph shortly before departing from Bountiful by sea after eight years in the wilderness (1 Nephi 18:7, 18). That leaves us a prime-of-life Lehi old enough to have married and sired at least four sons and possibly daughters (2 Nephi 5:6) before the reign of Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, who had been installed as king by the Egyptians who

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4. For a study of the differences between the Kings and Chronicles accounts and their implications, see Margaret Barker, "The Hidden Temple in 1 Kings" (paper, Temple Studies Group, July 2, 2011), [http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Papers/2Jul11\\_TempleHiddenInKings.pdf](http://www.templestudiesgroup.com/Papers/2Jul11_TempleHiddenInKings.pdf). See, also, Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord: Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple* (New York and London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 5-7.

had killed Josiah (2 Kings 23:34). Put it all together, and we have Lehi married and with at least four sons born some years before the 31-year reign of Josiah ended (2 Kings 22:1) and who grew to adolescence and manhood during Jehoiakim's 11-year reign. On her page 2 footnote 4, Smith cites evidence that Lehi lived in the same part of Jerusalem that was home to many who had previously migrated from the north and therefore in Huldah's neighborhood. So Lehi probably witnessed parts of the reforms, probably as a small child, possibly participated in the Passover, and perhaps knew Huldah.

Smith discusses Huldah's reading of the Book of the Law and her prophecies concerning Jerusalem and the King, the difficulties presented by both in light of subsequent events, and the nature of mercy. And she compares this with Lehi's later experience in reading the heavenly book and preaching in Jerusalem. This is all worth doing; her essay sheds valuable light and is recommended reading. Julie Smith has produced important work in the past (for example, a notable reading of the anointing scene in Mark,<sup>5</sup> a well-reviewed book on the gospels,<sup>6</sup> and an award winning *Interpreter* essay<sup>7</sup>), and I trust she will continue to do so in the future.

Given my own background and interests, I do have some concerns and questions. For instance, she discusses the report in Jeremiah 44:15-18 concerning debate whether the judgments on Jerusalem came as "the result of people's wicked idolatry or whether God was punishing people for getting rid of their idols." Here is a key section of the Jeremiah 44 passage in question, *which does not specify idolatry or idols*.

As for the word that thou [Jeremiah] hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee.

But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

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5. Julie M. Smith "She Hath Wrought a Good Work: The Anointing of Jesus in Mark's Gospel" in *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 5 (2013): 31-46, [https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/studies/5/Studies5\\_1\\_Smith.pdf](https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/studies/5/Studies5_1_Smith.pdf).

6. Julie M. Smith, *Search, Ponder, and Pray: A Guide to the Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014).

7. Julie M. Smith, "A Redemptive Reading of Mark 5:25-34," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015) 96-105.

But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine.

And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? (Jeremiah 44:16-19)

Smith comments that “this viewpoint — quoted disapprovingly in Jeremiah — has been making a comeback among Latter-day Saints under the influence of Margaret Barker, who argues that Josiah’s reforms negated earlier, more correct, worship practices” (M, 5n13). Her comment, offered without any details or supporting references, does not cast light on Margaret Barker’s arguments and significance nor on the views of many Latter-day Saint scholars who have explored her work. The lack of any reference is surprising, because one of her footnotes cites *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, which includes Barker’s important 2003 essay “What King Josiah Reformed,” and my own “The Temple, Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker” (M, 2n4). Smith also overlooks the importance and influence of Raphael Patai’s *The Hebrew Goddess* and William Dever’s *Did God Have a Wife?*, the most conspicuous among many others who have also explored the textual and archeological evidence for the Hebrew Queen of Heaven. For instance, Daniel Peterson reports that the catalyst for “Nephi and His Asherah” was the work of Biblical scholar Mark Smith, though he later acknowledged the convergence with and the importance of Barker’s work.<sup>8</sup> Important essays comparing the Latter-day Saint teachings about a Heavenly Mother with scripture and archeological findings appeared before Margaret Barker’s work became known among Latter-day Saint scholars, including a FAIR essay by Kevin Barney, which cites a range of Biblical scholarship and archeology and provides close reading of the Hebrew.<sup>9</sup> For the Latter-day Saint tradition, Barney

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8. Daniel Peterson, “A Divine Mother in the Book of Mormon?” in *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, ed. Gary Anderson (Academy for Temple Studies, Logan, 2013), 109–26, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>.

9. Kevin Barney, “Do We Have a Mother in Heaven?” (2001), <https://www.fairmormon.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Kevin-Barney-MotherInHeaven.pdf>.

cites Linda Wilcox's earlier essay on "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven."<sup>10</sup>

All this demonstrates that Barker is not responsible for Latter-day Saint interest in a Hebrew Goddess. Rather, our interests converge in unexpectedly complex and interesting ways. Indeed, for most Latter-day Saints, the interest in a Heavenly Mother goes back, not to Barker's recent books, or Patai, or Dever, or even to Latter-day Saint scholars like Barney, Peterson, Wilcox, or Carol Lynn Pearson's performances of her play *Mother Wove the Morning*, or to Janice Allred's untethered theological speculations, but rather to Eliza Snow's famous hymn *Oh, My Father*, and the approving comments of orthodox Latter-day Saint leadership.<sup>11</sup>

Readers looking for light on Margaret Barker's case should look to her most extensive commentary on Josiah and Jeremiah in *The Mother of the Lord, Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple*.<sup>12</sup> Barker shows that the book of Jeremiah itself was subject to editorial battles, and the Jeremiah texts we have contain much more to consider about Jeremiah's relationship to both the reform and Lady Wisdom than is or can be illuminated by this single proof-text.

I have published on the significance of Barker's work for the Book of Mormon<sup>13</sup> and have read the work of many other Latter-day Saint scholars who draw on her work, ranging from Daniel Peterson to M. Catherine Thomas, from Kevin Barney to Jon Hall, and Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt and D. John Butler and Eugene Seach, from John Tvedtnes and Frederich Huchel to Zina Peterson, from Brant Gardner and John Welch to Fiona Givens and Neal Rappleye, from Jeffrey Bradshaw, Noel Reynolds, David Larsen, Barry Bickmore, Martin Tanner, and LeGrand Baker, to Stephen Ricks, David Paulson, Hal Boyd, Val Larsen, Jeff Lindsay, Don Bradley, and several others. It is true that many of these scholars, including me, have been intrigued by Barker's approach to Josiah, but who among us and where have any of us suggested that we ought to burn incense and

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10. Linda Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven" in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, eds. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1992).

11. See Warren Aston, "The Other Half of Heaven: Debunking Myths about Heavenly Mother," *Meridian Magazine*, November 29, 2012, <https://ldsmag.com/article-1-11842/>; and David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There: Historical Teachings and Sacred Silence," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2011): 70-97, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/mother-there-survey-historical-teachings-about-mother-heaven>.

12. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 32-75.

13. "Kevin Christensen on the scholarship of Margaret Barker," *Thinly Veiled* (website), updated May 4, 2011, <http://www.thinlyveiled.com/kchristensen.htm>.

pour drink offerings to the queen of heaven in order to secure peace and plenty of victuals, let alone to practice idolatry?

For my part, when I published on Jeremiah 44, I wrote this:

When Jeremiah reproves those in Egypt who were “baking cakes to the Queen of Heaven” in Jeremiah 44, we should compare that with his complaints about those who trusted in the temple without taking care to “thoroughly amend your ways and your doings,” that is, trusting ritual without repentance and sacrifices without personal obedience. Jeremiah does look forward to valid worship in the house of the Lord (Jeremiah 33:11). Despite describing its status then as a “den of robbers” (Jeremiah 7:11), he is not anti-temple. He is against those who would forsake “the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”<sup>14</sup> (Jeremiah 2:13)

Indeed, Kevin Barney states directly, “I will not suggest pouring out drink offerings to Asherah poles or any such observance,”<sup>15</sup> but rather concludes by stating, “I can think of no finer, or profound way to worship our Mother in Heaven than to participate in temple worship.”<sup>16</sup> One reason Smith does not cite specific authors and texts on this point is that matching specific publications and claims to support her general charge against Latter-day Saint scholars like myself would be difficult.

### **Different Grounds for Dismissing or Exploring Barker’s Claims**

Smith comments that “there are solid reasons to dispute Barker’s thesis [regarding Josiah’s reform], not the least of which is that it requires taking the position that a vast portion of the Hebrew Bible advocates false religion” (M, 5n13). Again, Smith does not divulge any details of Barker’s case by mention or citation.<sup>17</sup> In a talk given at the Joseph Smith

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14. Kevin Christensen, “Prophets and Kings in Lehi’s Jerusalem,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 4 (2013): 185, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology/>.

15. Kevin Barney, “How to Worship Our Mother in Heaven (Without Getting Excommunicated),” *Dialogue* 41, no. 2 (2008): 132–33, [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V41N04\\_133.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V41N04_133.pdf).

16. *Ibid.*, 139.

17. Smith did briefly comment in a series of guest posts about Barker. See Julie M. Smith, September 27, 2008, comment on Ronan Head, “Barker Part 2,” *By Common Consent* (blog), September 28, 2008, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2008/09/28/barker-part-2/>. She expresses suspicion regarding Barker’s “canonization” by some

Conference in Washington, DC, in 2005, Barker commented that “one of the great moments of my own journey of discovery was reading an article published in 1980, showing that the religion of Abraham must have survived until the reign of King Josiah because that is part of what he purged from his kingdom.”<sup>18</sup> That is, important portions of the Bible as we have it advocate religious practices that Josiah overthrew. The evidence of conflict between different writers, editors, interpreters, and portions of the Bible does not go away by treating the question of difference as unthinkable. Barker asks:

Is it possible that almost all the kings in Jerusalem were misguided apostates, as the Deuteronomists claim, who permitted and even encouraged alien cults in their kingdom? And what would those kings have considered alien? And who has the right to make the judgement? History, as it is well known, is written, and rewritten by the winners, especially if they are also the publishers.

Almost all that Josiah swept away can be found in the older religion, even as it is described in the current Hebrew Scriptures. *It was the religion of the patriarchs and prophets, not the alien cults of Canaan* — if they really were alien.<sup>19</sup>

While both Jeremiah and Lehi quote Deuteronomy,<sup>20</sup> which shows they knew and respected a version of it, they both contradict Deuteronomy

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Latter-day Saint in light of her judgment of speculative aspects, which suggests that it is speculation emerging from a different paradigm (Barker’s Temple Theology approach), rather than speculation per se (for example, that Lehi knew Huldah), that is the issue. For links the entire series, see <https://bycommonconsent.com/2008/10/02/barker-part-4/>.

18. Margaret Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Religion,” *BYU Studies*, 44, no. 4 (2005): 80, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/joseph-smith-and-preexilic-israelite-religion>. For original article referenced, see John Van Seeters, “The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis,” *Biblica* 61 (1980) 220-33.

19. Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 77.

20. See Noel Reynolds, “Lehi as Moses,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1403&index=4>. This essay predates Reynolds’s reading of *The Great Angel* in 2002. After he read that and soon learned about my recently published “Paradigms Regained,” he asked me for contact information, and that eventually led to him visiting Barker at her home, which in turn led to her invitation to spend a week lecturing at BYU in 2003, and that in turn produced a great deal more ongoing contact, interaction, and collaboration with Latter-day Saint scholars. Reynolds also informed me that my writing “Paradigms Regained” had saved him the trouble of doing so.

on the issues that Barker identifies as key to her understanding of the reform.<sup>21</sup> In *The Great Angel*, she writes,

First, they were to have the Law instead of Wisdom (Deut. 4:6). ... What was the Wisdom which the Law replaced? Second, they were to think only of the formless voice of God sounding from the fire and giving the Law (Deut. 19:12). Israel had long had a belief in the vision of God, when the glory had been visible on the throne in human form, surrounded by the heavenly hosts. What happened to the visions of God? And third, they were to leave the veneration of the host of heaven to peoples not chosen by Yahweh (Deuteronomy 4:19–20). Israel had long regarded Yahweh as the Lord of the hosts of heaven, but the title Yahweh of Hosts was not used by the Deuteronomists. What happened to the hosts, the angels?<sup>22</sup>

In *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, she added these points: that the Jews were not to “enquire after secret things which belonged only to the Lord (Deut. 29:29). Their duty was to obey the commandments brought down from Sinai and not to seek someone who would ascend to heaven for them to discover remote and hidden things (Deut. 30:11).”<sup>23</sup> It should be obvious that these features also appear in Jeremiah and the Book of Mormon and do so despite their affinity for a version of Deuteronomy.<sup>24</sup>

A central point of Richard Elliot Friedman’s *Who Wrote the Bible?* was to demonstrate that an edition of the Deuteronomist History (that is, Joshua, Judges, and the books of Samuel and Kings) was written and edited during Josiah’s lifetime to honor him and justify his actions. After his unexpected death, additions were made to describe subsequent events and to assign blame for what went wrong. Much of Barker’s work has cast light on how the state of the biblical texts and translations and editions that we have, in relation to both archeology and nonbiblical

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21. Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies,” *Occasional Papers 2* (2001), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/periodical/occasional-papers-2/>.

22. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 13.

23. Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place: Revelation 1.1* (T&T Clarke, Edinburgh, 200), 17.

24. Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Regained.”

texts, is also part of the story.<sup>25</sup> She draws on sources outside the canon, such as the Damascus Document, *1 Enoch*, and Baruch to give a broader picture,<sup>26</sup> and to supplement her close reading of Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah. Barker's willingness to consider such noncanonical sources in considering Josiah and Jeremiah is one important factor that distinguishes her approach from Richard Elliot Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?* and Marvin Sweeney's *King Josiah of Judah: Lost Messiah of Israel*. She also considers many key passages from scripture that they *do not cite or discuss*, such as those in which Jeremiah and Lehi contradict their stated agenda and Jeremiah 1:19 on his call as a prophet, the year after the reform began against the kings, the social elites who implemented the reform, and the people of the land who installed the eight-year-old Josiah as king.<sup>27</sup>

Important parts of her case involve the tensions between different books and even different sections in the same book, for example, Third Isaiah's condemnation of the returning exiles.<sup>28</sup> But these parts of the story can be recognized only if we explore the evidence rather than place the question as out-of-bounds. Barker calls attention to significant book selection and book suppression,<sup>29</sup> differing versions of books (Masoretic Hebrew, Aramaic Targums, Greek, and Dead Sea Scrolls Hebrew), tensions between the Kings and Chronicles accounts,<sup>30</sup> variant passages, alternate readings, and the presence of opaque texts (that is, unreadable in the Hebrew), not as random occurrences, but in passages that were important to the Christians.<sup>31</sup>

The MT has changed "sons of God" to "servants," and removed all explicit references to the heavenly beings who were to be judged. It is important to remember that the changes in the

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25. For a concentrated summary, see Margaret Barker, "Text and Context" in *The Great High Priest: Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 294-315, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/TextAndContext.pdf>.

26. For her own summary of her approach, see Margaret Baker, "Temple Theology," accessed Nov. 23, 2018, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Temple/default.htm>.

27. See Barker, *The Mother of the Lord*, 57.

28. See Barker, *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Early Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1987), 205-06.

29. See Margaret Barker, *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988), and Barker, "The Secret Tradition" in *The Great High Priest*, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/SecretTradition.pdf>.

30. For example, Barker, "The Hidden Temple in 1 Kings."

31. See Barker, "Text and Context," 309; and Barker, *The Older Testament*, generally.

MT always follow the same pattern, and that this pattern distinguishes it from much at Qumran, and also from much in the New Testament.<sup>32</sup>

That is, there is a pattern of selection, editing within the canon, suppression of texts like *1 Enoch*, and corruption in Bible passages that also happen to resonate with the themes of 1 Nephi 1.

Texts dealing with Holy Ones and the Holy One have significant elements in common: theophany, judgement, triumph for Yahweh, triumph for his anointed son, ascent to a throne in heaven, conflict with beasts, and with angel princes caught up in the destinies of earthly kingdoms. Many of these texts are corrupted; much of their subject matter is that of the “lost” tradition thought to underlie the apocalyptic texts. The textual corruption and the lost tradition are aspects of the same question.<sup>33</sup>

The closer I look at how Barker explores the issues surrounding the controversies from the time of the reform, as reflected in the state and themes of the Bible texts, the more clearly the themes of 1 Nephi 1 emerge. Indeed, I think it remarkable that the first chapter of the Book of Mormon takes us directly into the world that she worked to recover via sources that were unavailable to anyone in Joseph Smith’s day.

Barker also considers shifts in the contexts applied to text by Bible readers:

All the texts in the chosen canon would have had an original context, which presupposed a certain pattern of shared beliefs within which the text was set. *The context was as much a part of the meaning as the words themselves.* Set in a new context, the same text would soon acquire a new meaning.<sup>34</sup>

She has explored the trends and fashions and ideologies at work in the history of the Bible and in Biblical scholarship, and how that affects what is read, not read, which questions are asked, which questions are not asked, what is assumed, what is explored, and what is overlooked and therefore dismissed without question.<sup>35</sup>

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32. Barker, *The Older Testament*, 211.

33. *Ibid.*, 119.

34. Barker, “Text and Context,” 12.

35. See Margaret Barker, “Reflections on Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century” (paper, Society of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 2000), <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/ReflectionsOnBiblicalStudies.pdf>.

Any form of faith commitment in biblical scholarship, any attempt to work within a theological framework can be suspect. One ploy is to keep one's biblical study in a separate compartment of one's life, to pursue the most radically destructive investigations of biblical texts and then go to evensong. People of commitment often take refuge in safe areas like Hebrew, or archaeology, although that is no longer "safe" as I shall show in a moment. Let me quote now from the introduction to Francis Watson's recent book *Text and Truth* 1997, "It is believed that theological concerns have an inevitable tendency to distort the autonomous processes of biblical exegesis, a prejudice so strong that to identify a theological motivation underlying an exegetical position is often held to be sufficient refutation."<sup>36</sup>

Barker explores tensions within the Bible on basic questions such as whether it was possible to see God.<sup>37</sup>

Deuteronomy denies emphatically that the Lord was seen by Moses at Sinai: 'You heard the sound of words but you saw no form' (Deut.4:12). The earlier account in Exodus 24 says that Moses and the elders *did* see the God of Israel. We assume that the Deuteronomists would also have denied Isaiah's claim that he had *seen* the Lord in the temple, and disagreed with Jesus when he said that the pure in heart would see God.<sup>38</sup>

One of the secrets of the priesthood must have been experiencing theophany, something described in the ancient priestly blessing: "May the LORD make his face/presence shine on you" (Numbers 6:25-26). At the end of the second temple period, this was one of the forbidden texts, which could be read in public, but not explained. (*m. Megillah* 4:10)<sup>39</sup>

It should be of interest that this priestly blessing in Numbers turns up in "Excavations in the late 1970s" of "First Temple period tombs at Ketef Hinnom, near Jerusalem. Among the artifacts discovered in this dig were two small silver plates dating to the seventh century BC, containing the priestly benedictions found in Numbers 6:24-26 and representing the

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36. Barker, "Reflections on Biblical Studies the Twentieth Century," 6.

37. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 30, and Barker, *Temple Mysticism: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2011), 54-55.

38. Barker, "The Temple Hidden in 1 Kings," 2.

39. Barker, "The Secret Tradition," 16.

‘earliest fragments of the biblical text known up to the present.’<sup>40</sup> That is, the oldest Biblical text known not only turns out to be writing on metal dating to Lehi’s day and quoting from a Book of Moses (making it relevant to the story of the Brass Plates), but it also contains a passage central to a key controversy from that time, faithfully reflected in 1 Nephi 1:8, and relevant to a climactic moment of the Book of Mormon as a whole in 3 Nephi 19:25, 30 when Jesus as Lord is present and shining at the temple.

Barker explores many conflicting Bible passages, versions, and textual corruption in key verses; and even shows patterns hidden underneath the pointing of the Hebrew.<sup>41</sup>

Here we come across one of the methods used to hide the temple in the Hebrew Scriptures: repointing. In Hebrew, the vowels were not written in the text but supplied by the reader, and so by choosing to pronounce the consonants differently, it was possible to change the meaning of a word and so of a whole text. The “prostitutes” that Josiah removed from the temple, with a change of vowel, become holy ones, angels: *qedeshim* are prostitutes, *qedoshim* are holy ones. The angels vanished from the text, and so reading the text according to the later vowels does not reveal what Josiah actually did.<sup>42</sup>

She shows how the Hebrew Bible we have now is different from what the earliest Christians used and provides historical and textual evidence that the Masoretic Hebrew text was selected and edited in response to the rise of Christianity.<sup>43</sup> The state of the texts, the selection of texts, and their contextualization are part of the story, and that story can be read, contextualized, and carefully considered in the same way as the surface narrative. Barker’s complex argument ought to be recognized and referenced as such. A name drop and blanket dismissal is not enough. At least it is not enough for me. Obviously a different school of thought can have different interests and values.

The Book of Mormon itself in 1 Nephi 13:23-41 offers its own view of what happened to Bible texts in transmission but also on the significance of other texts that have emerged since the publication of

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40. William Hamblin, “Sacred Writing on Metal Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean,” *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1461&index=7>.

41. See Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 144-49.

42. Barker, “The Temple Hidden in 1 Kings,” 2.

43. See Barker, “Text and Context,” 294-315, especially 298.

the Book of Mormon. It happens that Barker's essay "Text and Context" on the transmission of Biblical texts and 1 Nephi 13:23-42 tell the same story, including not only the importance of nonbiblical texts emerging after the publication of the Book of Mormon, but also the convergence in Nephi's declaration that the other texts would restore plain and precious truths, including the specific claim that "the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father," which happens to be the overall argument of Barker's *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God*, and *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, that Yahweh was seen as not only the Son of El Elyon but also the servant and lamb. I've made a case that Barker's work fulfills prophesy in 1 Nephi 13 on the restoration of plain and precious things relevant to Lehi's preaching what he "saw and heard" concerning "a messiah and the redemption of the world" (1 Nephi 1:19).<sup>44</sup> In contrast to what Lehi "saw and heard," and expressed plainly, I take Jacob 4:14 on "blindness" and "looking beyond the mark" in Jerusalem as a direct comment on the reform, and I read the encounter with Sherem as an important echo of the main issues.

In her next sentence after her citationless dismissal of Barker, Julie Smith does offer some balance by saying, "At the same time, it is worth noting that one of the items specifically mentioned as being destroyed in Josiah's purging of idols is a tree that symbolized the divine feminine" (see 2 Kings 23:6 on the Asherah, and she refers to Daniel Peterson's groundbreaking essay "Nephi and His Asherah"<sup>45</sup>). Smith continues, "So it may be that Josiah's reforms were fundamentally sound but slightly excessive, and Lehi's experience offers a recorection of Josiah's over correction."<sup>46</sup>

Some prominent Latter-day Saint scholars who appreciate Barker's work can and do agree with Smith's favorable approach to Josiah and the reform. The Latter-day Saint Old Testament manuals that mention Josiah accept the story at face value and do not discuss the controversy at all. William Hamblin, a Latter-day Saint scholar who approves of much in Barker's work, published an essay "Vindicating Josiah" in *Interpreter*.<sup>47</sup>

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44. See Christensen, *Paradigms Regained*, 86-87.

45. Daniel Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 1:8-23" in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 191-243.

46. Smith, "Huldah's Long Shadow", 5-6n13.

47. William Hamblin, "Vindicating Josiah," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2014): 165-76, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/vindicating-josiah/#more-2652>.

John Gee, for another, has blogged favorably on Hamblin's efforts to defend Josiah, though like Hamblin he finds much of value in Barker's work overall.<sup>48</sup> Aaron P. Schade's essay in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* accepts a favorable view of Josiah's reform.<sup>49</sup> For that matter, when I wrote "Paradigms Regained" I largely followed Richard Elliot Friedman's picture of the reform occurring in waves of activity as new kings arrived and political and social upheavals occurred. In that light I supposed that the later waves of activity by the Deuteronomists accounted for most of the differences with the Book of Mormon. I did so because I was relatively new even to thinking about Josiah. Friedman's *Who Wrote the Bible?*, rather than Latter-day Saint background, was my entry point before I encountered Barker's *The Great Angel* in 1999. (I cannot remember Josiah ever being discussed in any Latter-day Saint classroom, book, or sermon before that time.) To defend her view of Josiah to a Latter-day Saint audience familiar with Barker's work, Smith could at least have referenced Hamblin's essay rather than leave the argument to mostly unspecified "good reasons."

My views on Josiah changed as I have examined the question in more detail, as my subsequent essays demonstrate, including the one in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, which precedes and introduces Barker's "What King Josiah Reformed" in that volume. I later wrote a defense of my updated perspectives on the reform in *Interpreter* as a counterpoint to Hamblin's case.<sup>50</sup> Among other things, I note that Jeremiah was called in response to the reform the year after it began and against the kings, the princes, the priests, and the people of the land who had installed Josiah as King (Jeremiah 1:2, 18-19 and 2 Chronicles 34:3). Compare that list of groups with those in Ezekiel's tirade that includes details of their misbehavior in Ezekiel 22:6-31. Zephaniah also called in the days of Josiah (Zephaniah 1:1), mentions the blindness (Zephaniah 1:17), describes the princes as wolves, the prophets as treacherous, priests as having "polluted the sanctuary and done violence to the law" (Zephaniah 3-4), and speaks of "gathering her who was driven out" (Zephaniah 3: 14, 19).

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48. John Gee, "Was Josiah Evil?" *Forn Spoll Fira* (blog), December 10, 2012, <http://fornspollfira.blogspot.com/search/label/Margaret%20Barker>.

49. Aaron P. Schade, "The Kingdom of Judah: Prophets, Politics, and Scribes in the Late Preexilic Period" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, eds. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 299-336, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=10>.

50. See Kevin Christensen, "Prophets and Kings in Lehi's Jerusalem," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 4 (2014): 177-93, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/prophets-and-kings-in-lehis-jerusalem-and-margaret-barkers-temple-theology>.

I have read a variety of books about Josiah by a range of non-Latter-day Saint scholars, including those by Friedman, Doorly, Sweeny, Barrick, and others, and I have concluded that in comparison, *The Mother of the Lord* offers by far the most wide-ranging, insightful, powerful, relevant, and persuasive case regarding Josiah, Jeremiah, and the reform. And beyond this, there is the inescapable fact that the Book of Mormon agrees with Barker's findings in unexpected, elaborate, interconnected, meaningful convergences that extend far beyond the presence of a tree in Lehi's dream.<sup>51</sup> It is not just that Latter-day Saint scholars have noticed an elaborate convergence between Barker's approach and the Book of Mormon but that Barker has also publicly acknowledged and extended that case in her 2005 talk on the Book of Mormon published in *BYU Studies*.<sup>52</sup> So Lehi's vision of the Asherah is just the most obvious bit of low-hanging fruit on one branch of a beautiful, fruitful, lush, dense, deeply rooted, and still growing tree. To dismiss Barker as "not mainstream" misses the point that she deliberately and consciously offers her approach as an alternative to the mainstream. It does not acknowledge the interest in her work by such notables as the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, and others.

It also does nothing to account for or explain the elaborate convergence between her approach and the Book of Mormon.

In evaluating Huldah's story we should not ignore the nature of that reform relative to Jeremiah and Lehi. If the violence and upheaval of the reform is directed by God, then Huldah's comments have that context. On the other hand, if the violence and upheaval of the reform is what Jeremiah was called against (Jeremiah 1:2, 18) and involved the answer to his question "Hath a nation changed their Gods?" and his declaration that "my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:11, 13), then that too provides context. In either case, it was not Huldah's reform, not Jeremiah's, not Lehi's, not Zephaniah's, and not even Hilkiah's, but King Josiah's, whether we follow the version in 2 Kings 22, where the discovery of the book leads to the reform; or the version in 2 Chronicles 34, where the reform leads to the discovery of the book. It is clear that (1) by delivering uncompromisingly

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51. See, for instance, my *Paradigms Regained*. I've learned a lot since I wrote it.

52. Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion." Also see Margaret Barker and Kevin Christensen, "Seeking the Face of the Lord: Joseph Smith and the First Temple Tradition" in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, eds. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 143-72.

bad news that Huldah spoke in defiance of the desires and expectations for Jerusalem of those who came to see her regarding the book, and (2), what she said regarding Josiah's death is problematic, given that he died in battle, not at peace.<sup>53</sup> And (3), part of the context for the reports we have includes the agenda of the people who reported Huldah's story. They were not dispassionate reporters.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the willingness of the Deuteronomist writers to include unflattering information should not be taken as de facto evidence of their dispassionate objectivity and honesty.

Whoever wrote [the Deuteronomic Histories] was clearly setting out to discredit what had existed in Jerusalem in the time of the first temple: it was the voice of a new regime. Their description of the temple does not include items such as the veil and chariot throne, which appear in the Chronicler's account and were important elements of priestly theology. Other sources are mentioned, but they have not survived. Isaiah is the only one of the latter prophets who appears in this account.<sup>55</sup>

I think that Josiah and Huldah did what they understood to be best, given their upbringing and circumstances. A person can be sincere and mistaken at the same time.<sup>56</sup> (That is something I have to consider personally every time I see a mirror, and broadly whenever I think about contemporary American politics.) I think Josiah's upbringing from age

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53. Consider Lisa B. Hawkins and David Warby, "The Crime of False Prophecy Under Ancient Israelite Law" (Provo, UT: FARMS Preliminary Report, 1983); and Kevin Christensen, "Biblical Keys for Discerning True and False Prophets," FairMormon (website), [https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Biblical\\_Keys\\_for\\_Discerning\\_True\\_and\\_False\\_Prophets/Tests/Prophecy](https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Biblical_Keys_for_Discerning_True_and_False_Prophets/Tests/Prophecy).

54. Compare, for instance, Robert M. Price, "Joseph Smith: Inspired Author of the Book of Mormon," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, eds. Dan Vogel, and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Signature Books, Salt Lake City, 2002), 323–24. Price, who asserts that just as "virtually all critical scholars" agree that Hilkiah, Huldah, and Jeremiah created Deuteronomy to "win the impressionable young king to their religious agenda," just as Joseph Smith created, rather than discovered, the Book of Mormon. When Price says, "They penned the book in secret," one wonders what specific evidence, beyond his ideological suspicion, let Price in on the secret that ties Huldah and Jeremiah and Hilkiah together in a conspiracy to manipulate the young king. He does not share the evidence with his readers.

55. Barker, *Text and Context*, 308.

56. See D&C 1:24–28. And consider Joseph Smith's famous comment that it "don't prove that a man is not a good man because he errs in doctrine," Joseph Smith, "Discourse, 8 April 1843, as Reported by William Clayton—A," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed November 23, 2018, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-8-april-1843-as-reported-by-william-clayton-a/1>.

eight after the assassination of his father Amon<sup>57</sup> had a great deal to do with the set of values he acquired that underlies his reform, itself an echo of an earlier reform attempted by Hezekiah.<sup>58</sup> Friedman discusses rival priestly families whose influence rose and ebbed, depending on the favor of the Kings.<sup>59</sup> And the Book of Mormon makes the point that God is more merciful and tolerant with respect to the circumstances of our upbringing than we care to notice (e.g., Jacob 3:7). Still, there were many during the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 5:21) and Nephi (1 Nephi 13:32) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 12:2) who had eyes but did not see, and ears that did not hear what the prophets were saying. Margaret Barker often refers to passages in the Book of Enoch that describe a condition of blindness that prevailed in Jerusalem at that time.

And after that in the fifth week, at its close, The house of glory and dominion shall be built for ever.

And after that in the sixth week all who live in it shall be *blinded*, And the hearts of all of them shall godlessly *forsake wisdom*. And in it a man shall ascend; And at its close the house of dominion shall be burnt with fire, And the whole race of the chosen root shall be dispersed. (1 Enoch 93:7-8, emphasis added)

Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Nephi, and Jacob all report that many in Jerusalem were blind and that blindness and loss of wisdom are always contrasted with “seeing” and prophetic theophany. As a consequence of that blindness, according to Jacob, those at Jerusalem “looked beyond the mark.” The nature of that mark leads me to a second essay that deserves further discussion.

### **Messiah as Political King or as Atoning High Priest**

This is Joe Spencer’s essay, “Potent Messianism: Textual, Historical, and Theological Notes on 1 Nephi 1:18–20.” Like Julie Smith, Spencer has published significant, even path-breaking work, and like her, he has become a scholar to watch in Latter-day Saint circles. His *An Other*

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57. 2 Kings 21:23-24 and for a sense of possibility, read the assassination story in Alma 47:23-27 and consider that Ammon is an important Book of Mormon name, whereas Josiah is not.

58. See Margaret Barker, “The Original Setting of the Fourth Servant Song,” *Margaret Baker* (website), 2000, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/FourthServantSong.pdf>.

59. For example, Richard Elliot Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 48.

*Testament* is a brilliant reading of the Book of Mormon. In that book, he identifies an important structure that underlies Nephi's writing.<sup>60</sup>

Creation: (1 Nephi 1-18), that is, up to the arrival in the land of promise.

Fall: (1 Nephi 19 to 2 Nephi 5), that is, up to the division into Nephites and Lamanites.

Atonement: (2 Nephi 6-30), that is, from Jacob's Day of Atonement discourse to the gathering of Israel.

Veil: 2 Nephi 31-33, culminating with speaking with the tongues of angels, that is, to be able to participate in the same manner as Lehi and Alma amid the numberless concourses of angels.

Spencer discerns this overall pattern as being prefigured in the first verse of the Book of Mormon:

[Creation]: I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father;

[Fall]: and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days,

[Atonement]: nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days;

[Veil]: yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.

This is a profound illumination and just one of many notable insights in this and others of his books. Spencer himself reports being surprised and impressed, after working on this structure for years, to read Barker's *Temple Theology* and to find her chapters organized as "creation, (broken) covenant, atonement, (divine) wisdom."<sup>61</sup> Personally, I don't think the convergence of themes centered on the Temple is accidental; rather the fruit of common inspiration toward convergent insight. So I came to Spencer's essay with great respect and high hopes for new light.

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60. Joe Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2016), 42.

61. *Ibid.*, 49, 65n18.

Spencer's title in *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire* is "Potent Messianism: Textual, Historical, and Theological Notes on 1 Nephi 1:18-20" and the topic of Lehi's public discourse on "a messiah, and the redemption of the world" in 1 Nephi 1:19. After discussing the Old World backgrounds and the Book of Mormon narrative, Spencer eventually says that "Nephite Christology does not appear from the beginning of the Book of Mormon as a full blown phenomenon more or less borrowed from the clear writings of Old World prophets. Rather, it is presented as slowly developed from a number of distinct sources distinguished from what can be found in today's Hebrew Bible" (M, 61).

It is true that one of Spencer's insights in his *An Other Testament* involves his case that Nephi and Abinadi offered somewhat different views of the Messiah, and that in 3 Nephi, Jesus reconciles those differences. In arguing for slow development relevant to his case in "Potent Messianism," Spencer mentions but does not explore the discourse in 1 Nephi 10 as it pertains to the politically centered Davidic model he offers (M, 61). Lehi's words in 1 Nephi 10 come subsequent to his obtaining the brass plates (which, to be fair, includes sources distinguished from what became the Hebrew Bible) and also subsequent to Lehi's having his vision of the tree of life (an authentically ancient Wisdom/Temple symbol meaningful in Lehi's Jerusalem). Still, chronologically the 1 Nephi 10 account seems to me to come within a year of the end of Lehi's public preaching in Jerusalem,<sup>62</sup> and that has implications for whether or not Lehite teaching developed slowly over the course of the Book of Mormon account, and from what beginnings. In 1 Nephi 10 Lehi himself adds other significant titles that ought to contextualize what he, very early in the Book of Mormon account, understood as "a messiah."

However, in casting about for reliable light on the subject, at least with the purpose of building a case regarding how Lehi's listeners would have thought about a messiah, Spencer says, "I think it best to trust secular historians of the ancient world about what messianic belief in Lehi's day would have looked like, rather than to interpret the text solely according to our own received expectations" (M, 62). I agree

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62. Lehi waits in the Valley of Lemuel while Nephi makes two trips to Jerusalem and back, bringing first the brass plates (1 Nephi 5:6-7) and then Ishmael and the brides (1 Nephi 7:5). The longer Lehi preaches in Jerusalem before leaving, the older he has to be after the eight years in the wilderness, and the older Sariah has to be when giving birth to Joseph and Jacob shortly before the ocean voyage (1 Nephi 18:7, 19). So if Nephi is around 14, Laman must be nearly 20 at the start, which would put Sariah around 35 at the youngest, with nearly eight years to go before Joseph and Jacob arrive shortly before the ocean voyage. There is some room, but not a lot.

that we ought to challenge our “received expectations” as part of what Jesus calls casting out “the beam out of thine own eye” (Matt 7:3-5), a necessary prelude to seeing clearly. This is consistent with Nephi’s comments on the implications of being taught “after the manner” of the Jews (2 Nephi 25:1-5) to understand how they did. But why suppose the secular historians would have clearest vision regarding a messiah? Spencer argues that the ten words from verse 19 sound more like a secular reconstruction of seventh and sixth century views of what “a messiah” involved, in which “the redemption of the world” involves political and military prowess as expected of a Davidic king. I think the reflex to turn to a secular approach for light is part of why Spencer overlooks the implications of 1 Nephi 10, despite the close proximity in time to Lehi’s preaching in 1 Nephi 1:19. It happens that Kings of Israel shared the titles Lehi uses in 1 Nephi 10, although not in their political or military roles but specifically when they acted in their roles as anointed Melchizedek High Priests in the temple.<sup>63</sup> Spencer’s attempt here to cast light on the meaning of a messiah via politics and secular scholarship overlooks any discussion of the anointed Melchizedek priesthood of the first temple.<sup>64</sup>

Spencer claims that the “sort of messianism that would have been known to Lehi’s Jerusalem would have focused much more intensely on the then-still-existent Davidic dynasty than on anything else”; that is, according to Spencer’s reading here, a messiah had to do with Davidic Kings and politics because *messiah* means “anointed,” and Kings were anointed, and we can trust this thesis based on the objectivity and insight of secular historians. That premise, I think, can be tested and questioned. Lehi descended from the Northern Kingdom (2 Nephi 5:14, Alma 10:3), and one of the distinguishing traits of that tradition is a diminished concern and respect for David and the Davidic covenant.<sup>65</sup> Spencer cites

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63. Margaret Barker, “The High Priesthood” in *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007). Also see LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend Unto the Hill of the Lord? The Psalms in Israel’s Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011).

64. This distinction between political and priesthood approaches to a messiah also appears in comparing Marvin Sweeney’s *King Josiah: Lost Messiah of Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) to Barker’s *The Mother of the Lord*. Spencer refers to one of Sweeney’s earlier books; see Marvin Alan Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996).

65. See John L. Sorenson, “The Brass Plates and Biblical Scholarship” in *Nephite Culture and Society* (Salt Lake City: New Sage Books, 1997), 32. Also, Steven St. Clair,

Brueggman on Isaiah 1-39 on a Davidic and political approach and refers to Isaiah 9:6-7 as describing “a new king ascending to the throne and being adopted by the Lord as he fulfills the hopes the Davidic dynasty” (M, 64). This is the famous passage on the “wonderful counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace” as well as “the throne of David, and his kingdom.” Barker, who has also published formidable commentaries on Isaiah,<sup>66</sup> observes that in the Septuagint, these four throne names are replaced with one, “the Angel of Great Counsel.”<sup>67</sup> She shows that the four titles Isaiah uses were equivalent to the meanings of the angel names Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel, each title and name representing an aspect or role of the Lord.<sup>68</sup> The “Angel of Great Counsel” title converges with the implications of Lehi’s council vision in 1 Nephi 1 and also leads directly to all the divine titles Lehi uses in 1 Nephi 10, given a First Temple and priesthood context. The political interpretation Spencer cites does not.

In 1 Nephi 10, Lehi gives us “a Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 10:4), “this Redeemer of the world” (10:5) and “the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world” (10:10), who would be “slain” by the Jews and then would “rise from the dead” (10:11) and the true Messiah would be “their Lord and their Redeemer” (10:14), that “the Son of God was the Messiah who should come” (10:17). All of this points directly to the Temple and the Day of Atonement ritual as the dramatic enactment of the redemption of the world and ties directly and profoundly to the

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“The Stick of Joseph: The Book of Mormon and the Northern Traditions of Israel,” accessed November 23, 2018, [http://members.tripod.com/~osher\\_2/StickJoseph.html](http://members.tripod.com/~osher_2/StickJoseph.html). “The northern tradition tended to disparage — or ignore — Judah, Aaron, and David. None of the Biblical stories of Judah that give him a personality are found in the northern ‘E’ source. Aaron does receive some notice in ‘E,’ but it is uniformly negative; he is given full blame, for example, for the golden calf incident. A modern scholar notes that ‘only in E do we notice the propensity to find fault with Aaron.’ As important as he is in the Bible, Samaritan writings pay little attention to Aaron, other than grudgingly allowing that he is the brother of Moses and the start of their line of High Priests. As would be expected, the northern tradition had little interest in the line of David or the covenant with David, since his descendants after Solomon were kings exclusively of the southern kingdom.”

66. See Barker, *The Older Testament*, and Margaret Barker, “Isaiah” in *Eerdman’s Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman’s Publishing Co, 2003), and Margaret Barker, “The Original Setting of the Fourth Servant Song,” (paper, 2000), <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/FourthServantSong.pdf>.

67. Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, 26.

68. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 36.

First Temple theology Margaret Barker has worked to recover.<sup>69</sup> The Day of Atonement has everything to do with theological redemption of the world, the Everlasting Covenant,<sup>70</sup> and not primarily with politics and secular deliverance. So the question is not only “which interpretation is better?” but also “How do we go about measuring better?” In making and defending a decision, we simultaneously expose our ideological and evidential basis for deciding.

Spencer argues that on the basis of a political context, what Lehi’s hearers would “have heard in his preaching would most likely have been heard in his preaching a hope that Zedekiah would be replaced by a miraculous Judean king who would lead the Jews in a successful revolt that would mark the beginning of political independence — or even political ascendancy. To many, it would likely have seemed better that one such wild-eyed prophet should perish than that the whole Judean nation should dwindle and perish in a sustained Babylonian siege” (M, 66). Spencer grants that “Lehi seems to have been in the earliest stages of developing a fully Christian messianism, but his listeners likely could make little sense of his message” (M, 66). So to the degree that Spencer talks about why some of Lehi’s listeners may have misunderstood what he said, there are also grounds for considering the difference between those who see and hear and understand, and those who are blind.<sup>71</sup>

However, to me, the negative response to Lehi’s first public discourse on “a messiah and the redemption of the world” makes the most sense in light of Barker’s elaborate and well-supported case that the reformers, however sincere, zealous, and well-intended, had recently changed the role of the high priest so that he was no longer anointed, literally no longer “a messiah” and that they had removed the Day of Atonement from the sacred calendar in Deuteronomy 16. (Barker observes that in Zechariah 3, Joshua the High Priest is clothed but not anointed, and she points to Rabbinic tradition that the second temple priests were clothed but not anointed, since the oil had been lost with the first temple.) On the Day of Atonement, the anointed high priest of the First Temple ritually

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69. See, for example, Margaret Barker, “The Great High Priest”, *BYU Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3&4 (2003): 65-84, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/great-high-priest>.

70. See, for example, Margaret Barker, “The Everlasting Covenant Between God and Every Living Creature” (paper, 2014), <http://ecocongregationireland.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Everlasting-Covenant-Margaret-Barker-DD.pdf>.

71. And consider the theme of vision and blindness regarding Jesus as Messiah that runs through the Gospels, John 9, for example. Not coincidentally, this is an important theme in Barker’s *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John’s Gospel* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 2014).

enacted the redemption of the world by representing Yahweh offering his life to heal the creation.<sup>72</sup> The reformers had violently removed these aspects of worship in Jerusalem, and Lehi, by stating that they would return, immediately, and understandably in this context became a target. In discussing the Book of Mormon, Barker states that

the original temple tradition was that Yahweh, the Lord, was the Son of God Most High, and present on earth as the Messiah. This means that the older religion in Israel would have taught about the Messiah. Thus finding Christ in the Old Testament is exactly what we should expect. This is, I suggest, one aspect of the restoration of “the plain and precious things, which would have been taken away from them” (1 Nephi 13:40). The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Christ [that is, the Messiah, literally, the “anointed”] of the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 3:8; 3 Nephi 15:5).<sup>73</sup>

Ezekiel 9 discusses “a mark upon the foreheads” of certain men and his contemporary, fellow exiled temple priests; Jacob also discusses the “mark”(Jacob 4:14) and what had been “manifest plainly” (a direct allusion to that which ties the content of Lehi’s first public discourses in 1 Nephi 1:19 to Jacob’s own statements in Jacob 4: 4-12 on his foreknowledge of Christ). However, Spencer defers to the anointing of Davidic kings without considering their priestly roles<sup>74</sup> and refers to discussion points offered by secular historians who focus on politics. Barker characteristically looks at the temple priesthood in a way that illuminates the significance of Jacob’s mark as the anointing behind the title of Messiah:

An angel was sent to mark the faithful: “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who groan and sigh over all the abominations that are committed in it” (Ezekiel 9:4). The Lord then spoke to the other six angels: “Pass through the city after him and smite ...

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72. See Margaret Barker, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing” in *The Great High Priest*, 42-55, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/Atonement.pdf> and “The Original Context of the Fourth Servant Song.”

73. Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” 79-80.

74. Spencer, “Potent Messianism,” in *A Dream, a Rock, and a Pillar of Fire: Reading 1 Nephi 1*, 63-64. For the priestly aspects of Davidic Kingship, also consider LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the LORD: The Psalms in Israel’s Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2011). Many of the Psalms were temple liturgy, texts to be performed during the temple rituals.

but touch no one upon whom is the mark. . . .” (Ezekiel 9.5–6). The mark on the forehead was protection against the wrath. “Mark,” however conceals what that mark was. The Hebrew says that the angel marked the foreheads with the letter *tau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the ancient Hebrew script Ezekiel would have used, this letter was a diagonal cross, and the significance of this becomes apparent from the much later tradition about the high priests. The rabbis remembered that the oil for anointing the high priest had been lost when the first temple was destroyed and that the high priests of the second temple were only “priests of many garments,” a reference to the eight garments worn on the Day of Atonement. The rabbis also remembered that the anointed high priests of the first temple had been anointed on the forehead with the sign of a diagonal cross. This diagonal cross was the sign of the Name on their foreheads, the mark which Ezekiel described as the letter *tau*.<sup>75</sup>

Like Ezekiel, his exact contemporary Jacob is a consecrated temple priest in exile (2 Nephi 6:2). It seems to me this high priestly anointing that designated some as a messiah gives the clear meaning of Jacob’s mark in a passage that I take as a direct comment on the reform:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came from looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them.<sup>76</sup>

As we have seen, Jeremiah, Nephi, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and 1 Enoch also describe the blindness in Jerusalem in Lehi’s day and do so in express contrast to the seeing and hearing that came with their own theophanies. When Jacob attempts to cast light on the meaning of Messiah, he adds other titles, affirming that “the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, should manifest himself unto them in the flesh,” and they shall “crucify him” (2 Nephi 6:9). Jacob’s discourse, as Professor Hamblin has observed, contains themes

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75. Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 162.

76. Jacob 4:14, and note that the reference to *plainness* alludes to 1 Nephi 1:19 concerning what Lehi saw and heard as “*manifested plainly*” concerning a “Messiah,” that is, the “anointed” and the redemption of the world, that is, the day of atonement.

consistent with the Day of Atonement.<sup>77</sup> In 2 Nephi 9: 5, the Creator will show himself to those at Jerusalem and die and provide an infinite atonement (2 Nephi 6:7). In the passages in Jacob 4 leading up to the discussion of the mark and the blindness in Jerusalem, Jacob's themes also happen to resonate with the wisdom tradition that Barker works to recover.<sup>78</sup>

The First Temple High Priests were quite literally anointed with the name, and the symbolism of this act was so profound that “older texts suggest that before the reform, the Name had been simply a synonym for the presence of Yahweh, and not a substitute.”<sup>79</sup> Barker cites Isaiah 30:27 as an example:

Behold the Name of Yahweh cometh from far,  
 Burning in his anger and thick rising smoke;  
 His lips are full of indignation  
 and his tongue is like a devouring fire.

And this context has implications for how we ought to understand Jacob's report in 2 Nephi 10:3, 7:

Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ — for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name — should come among the Jews ... and they shall crucify him, ... and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.

... But behold, thus saith the Lord God: When ... they shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then I have covenanted with their fathers.

Here is the equivalence of the anointed [the Christ] and the Name as the visible presence of the Lord God who had covenanted with the Jews. Notice that this contextual reading does not require us to explain that this is the first time an angel explained to Jacob that Christ is his personal name while skipping over the fact that *Christ*, like *Messiah*, means “anointed one,” and is *not* a personal name. Notice too that

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77. See The Interpreter Foundation, “William Hamblin on ‘Jacob’s Sermon and the Day of Atonement,’” YouTube video, 26:17, September 22, 2012, <http://interpreterfoundation.org/william-hamblin-on-jacobs-sermon-2-nephi-6-10-and-the-day-of-atonement/>.

78. See Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, The Monarchy and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, eds. John Welch, David Rolph Seely and Jo Ann Seely (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 502-04, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1081&index=15>.

79. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel*, 97.

John Welch and Terrence Szink have compared Benjamin's discourse to the Day of Atonement rituals, observing that the expanded name *Lord God* is used seven times as an equivalent to the sacred name YHWH and that Christ is also used exactly seven times.<sup>80</sup>

There is a reason why Nephi says, "there is none other people that understand the things which were spoken unto the Jews like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the things of the Jew" (2 Nephi 25:5). There is a reason why, in reference to the parable of the sower, the same seeds (words) can generate vastly differing yields, depending on soil, nurture, and time. Jesus says, "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?" (Mark 4:13). And there is a reason why Barker herself explains that *we seek to stand where they stood, to look where they looked so as to glimpse what they saw.*<sup>81</sup>

### Human Personality in Revelation and in Scholarship

And this leads me to a third essay to discuss, George B. Handley's "Dreams, Visions, and Foolish Imaginations: Alternative History as Sacred History in the Book of Mormon." He addresses the common assumption that "a revealed text is believed to be distinguished from a secular one because it descends upon us, originating in an absolute sense from outside and above the context of human language" (M, 30). This would be a plenary view of scripture: that it is complete, inerrant, and sufficient, inherently transcendent of human taint, and not requiring any effort at contextualization, just harmonization and elucidation. In contrast to this, Handley observes that not only has the "Bible ... been tainted by the fingerprints of humanity, human culture, time, language, politics, bias, and so on" (M, 33), but also that the Book of Mormon "wants to directly confront the fact of human personality, culture, and language and how it relates to revelation. Its radical message appears to be that our humanity is not the obstacle but rather the very medium of revelation" (M, 32). Overall, Handley provides a provocative and interesting meditation, shedding valuable light along the way.

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80. Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, "King Benjamin's Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals" in *King Benjamin's Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom*, eds. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 179, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1087&index=8>.

81. Barker, "Reflections on Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century," 2, emphasis in original.

In passing, when discussing the response to the Book of Mormon by believers and critics, he compares those who seek to “authenticate the foundational narrative of the religion by means of historicizing the text” (M, 31) to critics who want to “debunk the book’s sacred status by reducing it to the psychology and life and times of Joseph Smith” (M, 32n1), suggesting that both groups operate under the “same methodology” (M, 32n1). After an interesting meditation on the humanity of the text, drawing on some William Faulkner for perspective, he finally observes that “our only escape from conflict and tribalism is to learn to read with enough charity to understand and extend a revelation’s universal relevance beyond our own small set of circumstances” (M, 46).

In setting himself up in opposition to the those mostly unnamed apologists who risk “painting themselves into ... corners” (M, 32n1) with their reductionism, he does not accurately represent why we all do what we do. The labeling of trying to authenticate and then saying we are the mirror image of skeptics, and risk painting ourselves “into similar corners” (M, 32n1) feels to me more like a tribal dismissal than an enlightening insight. We’re not trying to authenticate but to understand and defend. Most of us acquired testimonies long before we involved ourselves with scholarship. Most of us have learned that anyone can easily dismiss anything and everything we produce, so the notion of “proof” is far less meaningful than “cause to believe” (Alma 32:18-19), which cannot coerce but may invite. What we want is not repetition and reinforcement and static, approved thinking, but expansion, puzzle solving, testing, enlightenment, enlargement, more growth, the taste of more delicious fruit, and to discover promising questions to explore (see Alma 32). As Barker so aptly put it, “We seek to stand where they stood, to look where they looked so as to glimpse what they saw.” The interesting thing about “standing where they stood” is that we can’t predict in advance of doing so the difference that it may make — what we might see that we did not see before.

### **Jacob 7 and the Paths Explored and the Potential for Type-Scenes**

*Christ and Antichrist: Reading Jacob 7* offers a range of essays that strive to shed light, and they successfully do so in a range of interesting ways, generally through close reading and commentary rather than attempts at any larger contextualization. I do notice a few roads not taken, questions not explored. That is, I notice a number of essays mentioning that Sherem is “defender of the received tradition” (M&S, 23), which

are both accurate and important, but not one essay mentions the Deuteronomist Reforms, even though a few footnotes mention *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, where Margaret Barker and I both raise the issue of their obvious and crucial influence. And while a few essays mention John Welch's "The Case of Sherem" in his important book on *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon*, no one builds on his insights. Whereas Welch's detailed and insightful essay focuses on the legal aspects of the encounter, Riess, Miller, and Berkey focus on the intensely personal aspects. As one who has read both, I can synthesize both, and I appreciate how the different approaches increase the definition and depth and resonance of my understanding and appreciation. Each author in this volume stakes out an approach and lays claim to a bit of territory, but the tendency here neglects the context of a broader, inclusive picture. This is not necessarily a bad thing but just a notable observation, a consequence of exclusion due to focus elsewhere, of selection and emphasis, notice and value, and the boundaries of attention and interest.

A few authors mention the notion of Sherem as an outsider, but none explore the potential Mesoamerican social developments and historical contextualization that would provide Sherem with a motive for confronting Jacob, other than theological disagreement with Sherem as "a watchman over public piety" (M&S, 6). Brant Gardner had suggested that Sherem represented economic interests who wanted to eliminate Jacob's interference in trade.<sup>82</sup> Kimberly Berkey mentions the frequent thematic grouping of Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor and mentions studies by B. H. Roberts, Mark Thomas, and John W. Welch (M&S, 28n1). She also observes with this footnoted context that Jacob 7 becomes a "kind of type-scene for subsequent portions of Nephite history" (M&S, 28). However, the insights regarding Jacob's prayers that she pursues in her interesting essay do not elaborate on the notion of type-scenes. I've elsewhere cited this passage on type-scenes from Robert Alter:

Since biblical narrative characteristically catches its protagonists only at the critical and revealing points in their lives, the biblical type-scene occurs not in the rituals of daily existence but at the crucial junctures in the lives of the heroes. ... Some of the most commonly repeated biblical type-scenes I have been able to identify are the following: the annunciation ... of the birth of the hero to his barren mother; the encounter

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82. Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Textual Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Volume Two Second Nephite through Jacob* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 565-77, especially 567.

with the future betrothed at a well; the epiphany in the field; the initiatory trial; danger in the desert and the discovery of a well or other source of sustenance; the testament of the dying hero.<sup>83</sup>

Alter observes that not only the individual type-scenes, but also the set of available type-scenes “are the lineaments of a purposefully deployed literary convention,” where “the variations in parallel episodes are not at all *random*” but purposeful.<sup>84</sup> Alter explains that “the type-scene is not merely a way of formally recognizing a particular kind of narrative moment; it is also a means of attaching that moment to a larger pattern of historical and theological meaning.”<sup>85</sup> And as Alter explains, the way the biblical writers attach meaning is not just in repetition but in the variations and how they provide the basis for mutual comparison and contrast that reveal character and provide implicit commentary. We should consider “what is done in each individual application of the scheme to give it a sudden tilt of innovation or even to refashion it radically for the imaginative purposes at hand.”<sup>86</sup>

In his *Digging in Cumorah*, Mark Thomas (following Brodie and B. H. Roberts), while grouping Sherem with Korihor and Nehor, titles his discussion “Dying Heretics.” He concludes his chapter by saying that “from aesthetic, religious, and logical perspectives, the dying heretic is the weakest narrative form in the Book of Mormon.”<sup>87</sup> The reason he reaches that conclusion is that despite citing Alter, he focuses on similarities rather than the telling variations.

For a contrasting approach that does pay attention to variation, John Welch introduces a legal context neither Roberts nor Thomas had (or could have) considered, and concludes:

Thus, on careful inspection, the accounts of the cases of Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor differ in many respects; and given their time and circumstances, they differ in precisely the ways one could expect them to differ. Each proceeding was tailored to the individual facts and circumstances of the case. Some

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83. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 51. Compare discussion of Book of Mormon type-scenes on these themes in Kevin and Shauna Christensen, “Nephite Feminism Revisited,” *FARMS Review of Books* 10, no.2 (1998): 19.

84. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 50.

85. *Ibid.*, 60.

86. *Ibid.*, 52.

87. Mark D. Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 170.

surprising and unique twists and turns occurred and different legal issues were encountered in each case. Above all, the historical or jurisprudential value of each case was to establish different results: each proceeding raised legal problems of first impression that were of pressing importance for that particular moment in Nephite legal and religious history.<sup>88</sup>

So Welch discovers much of interest in variations and significance in the ancient legal context. However, if we consider Alter and the notion of the variations in type-scene as important and telling, why not also consider the variant Book of Mormon narratives in which *the heretic does not die*? For example, Alma the Elder was a wicked priest, Alma the Younger sought to destroy the church, and Zeezrom sought to discredit Alma and Amulek, but they do not die, even though all three came close. They recover and convert. And there are variations among converts, where Alma the Elder and Zeezrom repent in response to oral testimony, and Alma the younger encountered an angel and famously described himself as being born again while “nigh unto death” (Mosiah 27:28). And in considering the encounter with an angel that led to Alma’s repentance, why not consider the variant story in which Laman and Lemuel see an angel but do not fully repent nor do they die? If we compare the angel stories, the differences in response turn out to be crucially telling. We ought to notice that what makes the difference in Alma’s full conversion and Laman and Lemuel’s recurrent lapses and eventual complete apostasy is not the angel but the life review. Whereas Alma looks to his own sins (Alma 36:12-17), as Zeezrom had done without an angel (Alma 12:1, 14:6-7), Laman and Lemuel look to their own fears (1 Nephi 3:31) and resentments (1 Nephi 7:16, 16:35-38). And that lines up with the insights of 12 Step Recovery, noting the importance of a “searching and fearless” personal inventory (where Alma’s NDE life review also corresponds to the fourth step in recovery) and the importance of “dismantling the grievance story,” to stop using fear and resentment as Laman and Lemuel do to justify their actions.

So if we permit ourselves to pay attention to variations and to notice how different stories provide telling contrasts and points of comparison, we might conclude that an organizing notion of “dying heretics” too narrowly restricts our inquiry.

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88. John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press and The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2008), 308-309.

There is always danger of a metaphor once adopted becoming the master instead of the servant.<sup>89</sup>

We could examine the varied responses to “Liminal Encounter” as the more appropriate type-scene, rather than just dying heretics, and explore how different people in the Book of Mormon respond when confronted with some form of testimony and witness. How do people react on the threshold of a potentially life-changing invitation from God? And that reframing opens up the whole of the Book of Mormon as not just separate incidents that can be fully studied in isolation but invites us to consider how the stories holographically comment on one another by means of pattern and variation. In every dictionary, words are defined by means of comparison and contrast, what they are like and not like. The roots and contrasts and comparisons produce definition and therefore distinct meaning.

### **Reiss using Alter and Girard to Explore Sherem’s Encounter with Jacob**

And it is not just different Book of Mormon accounts that provide room to consider how different Book of Mormon stories reflect on one another but also how different scholars do the same thing. Consider, for instance, how Jana Riess’s fascinating essay “There Came a Man: Sherem, Scapegoating, and the Inversion of Prophetic Tradition” implicitly follows Alter’s type-scene and allusion approach (without mentioning Alter) and tellingly applies René Girard’s theory of the scapegoat. This not only resonates effectively with the essays by Miller and Berkey in *Christ and Antichrist* but also happens to intersect with the approaches of Welch and Gardner.

Riess begins by looking at different Bible narratives “where similar language is used and similar situations become apparent” (M&S, 2). She offers readings of a story of Eli’s sons, an account of a man of God who confronted Jeroboam, and another who confronted Ahab. She notes how these stories concern “wrong worship committed by people who inherited their responsibilities and were not directly called by God” (M&S, 4–5). These stories are introduced by the phrase “there came a man of God,” whereas in Jacob, when Sherem appears, the

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89. E. A. Payne, “The Modern Expansion of the Church: Some Reflections on Dr. Latourette’s Conclusions,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 47 (1946):151, quoted in Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 4:194n2.

phrase “there came a man.” Riess notes the foreshadowing and allusive significance of the “of God” not appearing “even though the story bears many of the external trappings of other man-of-God tales in which the outsider speaks truth to power. By choosing to craft his story in this way, Jacob not only highlights the fact that the stranger is a heretic but also calls attention to his own diminished and religious position. ... Jacob’s sermonizing has fallen on deaf ears” (M&S, 8).

In a section aptly titled “Sherem and the Inversion of the Prophetic Tradition,” Riess notes that “Sherem does not accuse Jacob of being *non*-religious, but *wrong*-religious. Jacob forsakes the religion of the past, the one based on Mosaic law, in favor of some unknown, unproven diety. ... When Sherem says there will be no Christ, he has logic and tradition *and religion* on his side” (M&S, 7). This is where some discussion of the Deuteronomists and First Temple could cast some light on whose religion and whose past and whose tradition are being invoked, but here those issues remain in the shade. The insights on type-scene, allusion, and ironic reversal are brilliant and notable, but I think we could have had more on the historical background of the traditions that Sherem and Jacob represent. Even so, Riess concludes the section with another astute insight based on type-scene comparison when she observes that “Sherem reveals that he is not a true ‘man of God’ when he asks Jacob for a sign rather than delivering one himself” (M&S, 9).

From here she introduces René Girard’s theory of the scapegoat, a fresh and telling framework for examining the Sherem story which intensifies the sense of ironic reversal so evident in her type-scene comparisons. As Riess explains, according to Girard,

When one person or group claims an object or privilege, suddenly the other wants it too, imitating the first person’s desire. It’s called mimetic desire because of this imitative function; if someone else values the thing, the thing itself must be valuable, and therefore we should want it too. The only way to restore order is if a third party functions as a scapegoat to end the conflict. ... Girard’s five necessary steps of scapegoating intersect in interesting ways in the story of Sherem. (M&S, 10)

The first of the five steps is (1) a social crisis, involving political instability, social chaos and looming danger, and “a blurring of boundaries of the boundaries and identity markers between people and groups,” perhaps intensified when Jacob claimed that in some ways, the Lamanites were more righteous, would scourge the Nephites, and would find favor and blessing from the Lord (M&S, 11-12).

In step (2), “the scapegoat must be slandered and accused” (M&S, 12-13), and Riess makes the case that this is what Jacob does, going so far as to observe that Jacob declares that Sherem is “under ‘the power of the devil’” (M&S, 13). Riess also says that “Sherem never launches the same accusation back at Jacob,” arguing that “Sherem believes Jacob has misunderstood the law” but does not “anathematize his interlocutor” (M&S, 13). On this last point I am not so sure, and that is because I come to her reading with my awareness of Welch and Gardner’s observations. Welch explains in great detail that Sherem’s accusations were to prove that Jacob was “violating the laws of God,” an order to remove Jacob from his High Priestly role, “since he would be denounced, removed, and punished.”<sup>90</sup> Welch explains that Sherem’s accusations involved the three crimes of (1) public apostasy, (2) blasphemy, and (3) false prophecy,” all capital crimes.<sup>91</sup> As Gardner observes, “Assuming that Sherem was the ‘hired gun’ for the powerful Nephites, the result of this confrontation might have done more than discredit Jacob. It could have legally put him to death.”<sup>92</sup> Riess’s points about the scapegoat patterns are correct and valuable, but I think we ought to recognize that both Jacob and Sherem are potential scapegoats, depending on the outcome of the confrontation.

Riess walks through Girard’s remaining steps, (3) the trial and guilt of the scapegoat (M&S, 14), and (4) the scapegoat being killed or banned (M&S, 14-16), and the result, (5) where social order is restored (M&S, 16-17). Overall, this is a notable use of Girard to cast light on a Book of Mormon account. Others have done so in the past,<sup>93</sup> and this successful application should encourage more. And in the *Christ and Antichrist* volume, the subsequent essays by Miller and Berkey shed more light on Jacob’s personality and intimate concerns and on the ironies involved in the confrontation with Sherem. Collectively, these essays intensify and deepen the insights of one another.

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90. Welch, *The Legal Cases of the Book of Mormon*, 115.

91. *Ibid.*, 117.

92. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 571.

93. See Eugene England, “A Second Witness for the *Logos*: The Book of Mormon and Contemporary Literary Criticism,” in *By Study and By Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley*, vol 2., eds. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 91-125, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1129&index=4>.

## Thoughts on Swimmers and Different Streams

I find the most valuable scholarship to be the kind that expands my mind and offers insights on important topics and issues I would not have considered if left to myself. Such enlightening experiences renew the scriptures in a way that repetition of the conventional and obvious simply does not provide. It leaves me excited by both the new insight and the rekindled awareness that there may be more to find in texts I thought I knew well. Both these books provide this expansive experience, and the overall series seems committed to doing so. So there is light. And diverging interpretations and interests are displayed, and that, I think, is partly due to the effects of the social networks involved, mine included. Whom do we trust and why? How do we measure the value or reliability of what we see and hear from different sources that claim to cast valuable light? On the one hand, the authors of the essays in these books and I have a lot in common as scholars, as believing Latter-day Saints, and as people who value the Book of Mormon. So in that sense, we belong to the same community.

Men [and women] whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science.<sup>94</sup>

On the other hand, we also have some clear differences and work in somewhat different communities.

No wonder, then, that in the early stages of the development of any science different men [and women] confronting the same range of phenomena, but not usually all the same particular phenomena, describe and interpret them in different ways.<sup>95</sup>

Why do Julie Smith and I have such very different views of the value of Margaret Barker's scholarship? And why did the community of scholars who discussed her work for the seminar accept her one sentence dismissal of Barker without asking her to provide so much as a footnote in explanation or defense? Clearly, the larger Latter-day Saint communities to which we primarily belong have subdivisions as well as overlap. And of course, when people point to mainstream scholarship as the standard against which to measure Barker, it turns out that closer observation will

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94. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 11.

95. *Ibid.*, 17.

reveal deep subdivisions and controversy there as well.<sup>96</sup> The available facts do not and cannot by themselves force everyone into a uniform conformity and unanimous interpretation. Paradigms, which we define by our selection of the standard examples scholarship that we follow, provide the controlling frameworks in which we subsequently order and interpret our experiences. A different standard example, say of Latter-day Saint apologetics following Nibley<sup>97</sup> or Sorenson, or of religious studies approaches that seeks acceptance within secular university academia,<sup>98</sup> or Barker writing as a Christian believer, will lead not only to the formation of different communities but also to different scholarship.

Paradigms provide scientists not only with a map but with some of the directions essential for map-making. In learning a paradigm the scientist acquires theory, methods, and standards together, usually in an inextricable mixture. Therefore, when paradigms change, there are usually significant shifts in the criteria for determining the legitimacy both of problems and of proposed solutions.<sup>99</sup>

In politics, this is “controlling the narrative.” It turns out to be akin, as Barker explains, to one of the meanings of the word *mašal*, translated as *parable*:

The Hebrew lexicon lists three apparently distinct meanings for this word: to rule or have dominion; to be like, or cause to be like; and to speak in parables or poetry—the two latter clearly aspects of the same meaning. But in fact all three are

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96. See John McDade, “Jesus in Recent Research,” *The Month* (December 1998) 495-505. I’m particularly fond of this essay because he surveys a wide range of approaches to Jesus, all notable, all involving rigorous scholarship, but with different contextualization of both foreground and background assumptions, all leading to very different pictures of Jesus, most assuming the historical Jesus was quite different from the Jesus of Faith and thus view Christianity as a creation of the faith communities rather than emerging from the person of Jesus. McDade also cites scholarship by Ben Myer, N.T. Wright and Margaret Barker as providing promising alternative approaches that see a consonance between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith.

97. Hugh Nibley, “New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley Volume 8* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1112&index=5>.

98. See M. Gerald Bradford, “The Study of Mormonism: A Growing Interest in Academia” in *The FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1461&index=10>.

99. Kuhn, 109.

the same: the one who “rules” in this sense is the one who determines how and what things are, and does this by making or maintaining the correspondences.<sup>100</sup>

Joseph Campbell had explained that one of the functions of a mythology is “supporting and validating a certain social order.”<sup>101</sup> The exemplary stories told by a community model the ways things ought to be done, the acceptable thoughts and questions, the basis for addressing and resolving conflicts; and for exploring unanswered questions, and defining what we can ask, and what we should not ask.

The scientist, by virtue of an accepted paradigm, knew what a datum was, what instruments might be used to retrieve it, and what concepts were relevant to its interpretation.<sup>102</sup>

So the people and work and stories and exemplary texts or standard textbooks provide the models that define a community’s methods and social boundaries. While some may be compatible or have significant overlap or applicability within different communities, others may define very different communities.

Like the choice between competing political institutions, that between competing paradigms proves to be a choice between incompatible modes of community life. ... When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its own paradigm to argue in that paradigm’s defense.<sup>103</sup>

The differences in approach between different communities and within a community is not necessarily always a bad thing. Kuhn explains that

if all members of a scientific community responded to each new anomaly as a source of crisis or embraced each new theory advanced by a colleague, science would cease. If, on the other hand, no one reacted to anomalies or to brand-new theories in high risk ways, there would be few or no revolutions. In matters like these the resort to shared values rather than to shared rules governing individual choice may

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100. Margaret Barker, *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 45.

101. Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 31.

102. Kuhn, 122.

103. *Ibid.*, 94.

be the community's way of distributing risk and assuring the long-term success of its enterprise.<sup>104</sup>

When people dismiss Barker as “not mainstream,” my response includes my recognition that this is her point: she deliberately offers her work as an alternative to the mainstream and makes a serious effort to explain and justify that alternative.<sup>105</sup> A part of my own response is that Mormonism is not mainstream either. If just being part of the mainstream, being orthodox, is the first and great value upon which all judgments ought to be made, then it's hard to justify my covenant adherence to a community that is unpopular, demanding, restrictive, controversial, expensive, and a minority. Yet I can at least argue on other grounds besides popular acceptance that my choice of faith communities has a reasonable substance beyond my heritage, prejudice, naivety, and tribalism.<sup>106</sup> And I can also argue the same for my currently favored sources of academic enlightenment, including Margaret Barker, John Sorenson, Hugh Nibley, Ninian Smart, René Girard, Thomas Kuhn, Alan Goff, Ian Barbour, Robert Alter, Brant Gardner, and Terryl Givens, to name a few whose work I take as paradigmatic.

One issue for both individuals and groups is how we deal with information that does not come from our in-group, not from the teachers and traditions with which we are more familiar and that we already trust.

But there are two very different phenomena at play here, each of which subverts the flow of information in very distinct ways. Let's call them *echo chambers* and *epistemic bubbles*. Both are social structures that systematically exclude sources of information. Both exaggerate their members' confidence in their beliefs. But they work in entirely different ways, and they require very different modes of intervention. An epistemic bubble is when you don't *hear* people from the other side. An

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104. Ibid., 186.

105. Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, 32-33. Also see Margaret Barker, “Being and Independent Scholar,” *Providence, Divine Action and the Church* (blog), 17 November, 2012, <http://christpantokrator.blogspot.com/search/label/Barker%3A%20%27Being%20an%20Independent%20Scholar%27>.

106. For example, Kevin Christensen, “Sophic Box and Mantic Vista,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): 113-179, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/sophic-box-and-mantic-vista-a-review-of-deconstructing-mormonism/>.

echo chamber is what happens when you don't *trust* people from the other side.<sup>107</sup>

I will never forget a moment at the Salt Lake City Sunstone Symposium in 2002 when I spotted an acquaintance passing down the hall. I greeted her, and she asked what I was doing there. For an answer, I held up a copy of my newly published *Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies*. She said, "Before you say anything, the Book of Mormon is a 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction, and nothing you say could ever change my mind. I never read anything from FARMS. It makes me mad." Taken aback, I asked if my *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* essay on Near Death Experience research and the Book of Mormon had made her mad, and she admitted that it hadn't, but then she had no more to say. It was obvious that the only way she could judge material she refused to read on grounds that it "made her mad" is via the opinions drawn from her trusted social network, that is, secondhand gossip rather than firsthand exploration. It happens that this person, a lifetime member and a professional lawyer who ought to know about witness and testimony and evidence, had also once reported that she had never personally read the Book of Mormon. And though I had been an acquaintance for more than ten years, clearly I was not part of that trusted network.

In another case, I recall a scholar on a Latter-day Saint blog commenting that he was not inclined to join the growing enthusiasm for Barker's work among other Latter-day Saint scholars on the grounds that "no one I know takes her seriously." Given that people like Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew take her seriously, we can conclude that they were not part of this student's trusted network.

Jesus observed that "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better" (Luke 5:39). Alma encourages his listeners to "arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words" even if "Ye cannot know of their surety at first, unto perfection" (Alma 32:26-27). Both teachers emphasize that what should matter most is not the initial skepticism and resistance to what is new and contrary to preconception, but the nature and results of subsequent experiments upon the word.

In dealing with differing opinions, I want to evaluate persons and arguments fairly rather than settle for tribal dismissals, arguments that

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107. C Thi Nguyen, "Escape the Echo Chamber", *Aeon*, April 9, 2018, <https://aeon.co/essays/why-its-as-hard-to-escape-an-echo-chamber-as-it-is-to-flee-a-cult>.

really amount to saying, “Not us,” not the “orthodox religion,” not the in-group to which I belong or aspire. This can be overt, as simple as applying a label such as “Fake News” or “Witch Hunt” or “Apologist” rather than “honest and objective” or “faith-promoting” or “doctrinally sound.”<sup>108</sup> It can be covert, where the judgment comes in the form of a paradigm-dependent argument and ideologically driven sources as “each group uses its own paradigm in that paradigm’s defense.”<sup>109</sup>

This approach has the form of scholarship, but it avoids the power thereof by avoiding genuine risk, offering a dismissal as “Not us!” rather than framing the investigation in terms of “Why us?” A “Why us?” approach, a search for greater light and knowledge beyond current orthodoxy, invites risk and comes in the form of a fair comparison that acknowledges the influence of its own ideology and human limitations. It consciously strives to apply values not completely paradigm dependent; that is, testability, accuracy of key predictions, comprehensiveness and coherence, fruitfulness, simplicity and aesthetics, and future promise. It recognizes that paradigm choice always involves deciding which problems are more significant to have solved, that any decision about which paradigm is better also involves decisions about the standards chosen and applied to measure better.

So if trust in social networks is a key issue here, how can we go about encouraging trust among different scholars operating under different assumptions, using different methods, and wanting to appeal to different audiences? According to Nguyen, whereas epistemic bubbles can be broken simply by adding new information, the challenge with echo chambers involves encouraging trust. That takes time and involves an effort to follow Brigham Young’s advice to “understand men and women as they are, and not understand them as you are.”<sup>110</sup> To at least start in

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108. Hugh Nibley observes that “nothing is easier than to identify one’s own favorite political, economic, historical, and moral convictions with the gospel. That gives one a neat, convenient, but altogether too easy advantage over one’s fellows. If my ideas are the true ones — and I certainly will not entertain them if I suspect for a moment that they are false! — then, all truth being one, they are also the gospel, and to oppose them is to play the role of Satan. This is simply insisting that our way is God’s way and therefore, the only way. It is the height of impertinence.” Hugh Nibley, “Beyond Politics” in *Nibley on the Timely and Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh Nibley*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 320-21.

109. Kuhn, 94.

110. Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: George Q. Cannon, 1881), 8:37, <http://jod.mrm.org/8/37>.

a meaningful way, Ian Barbour observes that adherents “of rival theories can seek a common core of overlap ... to which both can retreat.”<sup>111</sup>

One approach to reconciling at least some differences in Smith and Barker would be to compare Barker’s 1994 essay “Atonement: The Rite of Healing”<sup>112</sup> and Julie Smith’s 2009 essay “Lessons from Leviticus: Point our Souls to Christ.”<sup>113</sup> Both authors draw not only on Leviticus, but specifically on the work of anthropologist Mary Douglas. Indeed, Barker reports,

I had the great privilege of knowing the late great Mary Douglas, the anthropologist and a wonderful, wonderful lady. She has been dead for some six or seven years now. But she was just an experience. She was at that stage of writing about atonement in Leviticus. When I was listening to her talking about atonement, all sorts of things clicked into place for me. That’s when the characteristic treatment I had of atonement came about.<sup>114</sup>

Smith explains how she will draw on Douglas’s work:

In recent years, the study of Leviticus has been galvanized by the late Mary Douglas, an anthropologist. Douglas’s central insight was that Leviticus relies on analogical thinking, which means that each part of the law cannot be understood on its own but only by comparing it with other parts of the law of Moses. ... Analogical reading helps us make sense of a document that, relative to the rest of the Old Testament, has very few imperatives or commandments. Herein I will employ an analogical reading of Leviticus to demonstrate what the Book of Mormon prophets already knew: that the Law of Moses, even in its details, points our souls to Christ.<sup>115</sup>

In the case of these two essays, Barker and Smith employ different techniques, but the overall conclusions complement and reinforce one another. Smith relies on close reading of Leviticus and pays attention to

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111. Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study of Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 113.

112. Margaret Barker, “Atonement: The Rite of Healing.”

113. Julie M. Smith, “Point Our Souls to Christ: Lessons from Leviticus,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 1 (2009):67-82, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1468&index=5>.

114. Margaret Barker in *Mormonism and the Temple: Examining an Ancient Religious Tradition*, ed. Gary Anderson (Logan, UT: Academy for Temple Studies, 2013), 12, <http://www.templestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MormonismAndTheTemple.pdf>.

115. Smith, “Point Our Souls to Christ,” 67-68.

literary techniques such as chiasmus, all in light of Douglas’s analogical reading, “which means that each part of the law cannot be understood on its own but only by comparing it with other parts of the law of Moses.”<sup>116</sup> For example, Smith looks at the first three chapters in Leviticus on offerings in three categories, meat, cereal, and peace, each with three subcategories. She discusses how the structure focuses attention on how the key offering is made only when the high priest is anointed: “A perceptive reader realizes that the role of the high priest — which is, fundamentally, to make atonement — is central to worship in ancient Israel.”<sup>117</sup>

Smith also discusses how “we can arrange the holy days in the following chiastic structure”:

- A Sabbath Day (23:3)
- B Passover (23:5-8)
- C Firstfruits (23:10-14)
- D Festival of Weeks (23:15-22)
- E Horn Blasts (23:24-25)
- E’ Day of Atonement (23:27-32)<sup>118</sup>
- D’ Festival of Tabernacles (23:34-43)
- C’ Perpetual Fire/Bread (24:2-9)
- B’ Sabbath Year (25:2...7)
- A’ Jubilee Year (25:8-55)<sup>119</sup>

All of this points to the centrality of the atonement and the importance of the role of the anointed high priest. This turns out to be consistent with Barker’s work overall, not just in her essay on atonement. Whereas Smith attempts a close reading of Leviticus in light of Mary Douglas’s scholarship, Barker’s approach characteristically offers a wider range of sources, including not only Douglas on atonement but also Milgrom on Leviticus, Robert Murray on *The Cosmic Covenant*, and discussion of the significance of *1 Enoch*, Isaiah 53, and the Qumran Melchizedek texts.

These six are the bases for any investigation of atonement: first, that it could be illuminated by the Enoch texts; second, that the

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116. Ibid., 67.

117. Ibid., 68.

118. Barker also discusses the significance of the absence of the Day of Atonement from the calendar in Deuteronomy 16.

119. Smith, “Point Our Souls to Christ,” 80.

atonement was associated with the eternal covenant; third, that the temple service was the service of heaven; fourth, that the temple represented the entire system of heaven and earth; fifth, that the blood was life; and sixth, that it was the places within the temple complex that were “repaired” to remove the effects of sin.<sup>120</sup>

Before considering the differences in approaches, notice the common ground as both scholars focus on the role of the high priest in the atonement rituals. Some critics complain that Barker uses late sources, though not often considering her arguments about why some sources popularly regarded as late might actually be quite early and why other sources represent memories of very old traditions as confirmed by earlier sources.<sup>121</sup> For example in the case of *1 Enoch* as casting light on the atonement rituals, Barker writes that “we do not date the biblical texts on the basis of either their actual MS remains, or of the latest redaction or allusion discernible within them. Such a procedure would be recognized as ludicrous, yet it is the one scholars employ to decide the date of the Enochic material.”<sup>122</sup> The oldest manuscripts of both *1 Enoch* and Isaiah come from Qumran. She observes that in *1 Enoch* we have “clear evidence of prophetic and wisdom forms used together within the framework of the angel mythology, in conflict with Deuteronomic ideology, indicating a deep-rooted dispute among the heirs to the traditions of Israel.”<sup>123</sup> Among other things, she notices that “before Hezekiah built the tunnel that brought [the Gihon’s water] into the city (2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:20), the water of the Gihon created a real stream in the Kidron Valley. It is interesting that Enoch’s journey [*1 Enoch* 26:1-2] describes accurately the geography of Jerusalem before the time of Hezekiah, that is, in the ministry of Isaiah.”<sup>124</sup> In her atonement essay, and at greater length and detail in *The Older Testament*, Barker also explores ties between *1 Enoch* and Isaiah. All this contributes to Barker’s assertion that

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120. Barker, “Atonement: Rite of Healing,” 48.

121. Compare Hugh Nibley, “The Enoch Figure,” *Enoch the Prophet: The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1986), 2:19-65, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1102&index=3>.

122. Barker, *The Older Testament*, 64.

123. *Ibid.*, 63.

124. Margaret Barker, “The Fragrant Tree”, in *The Tree of Life: From Eden to Eternity*, eds. John W. Welch and Donald J. Parry (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2011), 59.

the new paradigm is that the Enoch tradition is ancient, as it claims, and that it was the original myth of the Jerusalem temple, long before Moses became the key figure and the Exodus the defining history. The world of the first temple was the taproot of Christianity, and that is why the young Church treated Enoch as Scripture. Those who preserved the Enoch traditions were a formative influence on Christianity and its key concepts: the Kingdom and the resurrected Messiah. Since Enoch was a high priest figure, and Jesus was declared to be “a great high priest” (Hebrews 4.14), we should also concern ourselves with the high priesthood.<sup>125</sup>

If Barker is correct, then we should also find these themes in the Book of Mormon and the revelations to Joseph Smith. This is at least an experiment worth doing, and the basic shared assumption can be a starting point in exploring the importance of the high priest and the meaning of atonement.

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125. Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God*, 33.



# BARRIERS TO BELIEF: MENTAL DISTRESS AND DISAFFECTION FROM THE CHURCH

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Steve Densley Jr. and Geret Giles

**Abstract:** *People leave the Church for a variety of reasons. Of all the reasons why people leave, one that has attracted little or no attention is the influence of mental distress. People who experience anxiety or depression see things differently than those who do not. Recognizing that people with mental distress have a different experience with church than others may help us to make adjustments that can prevent some amount of disaffection from the Church. This article takes a first step in identifying ways that mental distress can affect church activity and in presenting some of the things that individuals, friends, family members and Church leaders can do to help make being a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints a little easier for those who experience mental distress.*

**[Editor's Note:** This paper was presented at the 2018 FairMormon Conference in Provo, Utah, August 2, 2018.<sup>1</sup> To prepare it for publication, it has been source checked and copy edited; otherwise it appears here as first presented.]

We probably all know people who have left the Church. Often, people become involved in apologetics because they want to help convince their friends or family members who have left the Church to come back. Or they want to understand why the friend or family member left. Or they want to help prevent others from leaving.

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1. For more information on the 2018 FairMormon Conference, see <https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2018>.

About 25 years ago, one of my best friends left the Church. I have struggled to understand why this young man, who was raised in the Church, had served a mission and was married in the temple, later left the Church. Other close friends, extended family members, and immediate family members have also left the Church. As a result I have thought a lot about why. I have had conversations with people who have left, I have studied perhaps hundreds of stories that have been shared online, and I have examined survey results and scientific literature to gain some understanding of their perspectives. Along the way, I've also met with many therapists and researchers. Dr. Geret Giles is one of those, and I'm grateful for his willingness to join me in making this presentation.

We would like now to share some observations with you, and I hope that this kind of discussion will help all of us to be better shepherds. We have come to understand that many factors contribute to disaffection from the Church. I'll begin with a general discussion of this topic, but we will then focus on mental distress as one of the many factors that can contribute to disaffection from the Church. And when we say "mental or emotional distress," we intend to include not only mental illness but also distress that perhaps falls short of meeting all the criteria for a clinical diagnosis. Mental and emotional distress can impact all of us even if we are not actually diagnosed with mental illness. And while mental distress is not the only factor (and perhaps not even the predominant factor), it is worth examining and understanding the role it may play in the development of a faith crisis as we seek to lift one another's burdens.

Disaffection from the Church is not new. Before we even came to this world, a third part of the host of Heaven turned away from God (Revelation 12:4; D&C 29:36). We can read throughout the scriptures stories of the children of "goodly parents" who denied their faith. But the reasons are not always clear.

In more recent times, we have all been aware of those among us who have drifted away. Growing up, I had relatives and neighbors who simply appeared to have lost interest in religion and just became more interested in doing other things on Sunday. We may have attributed their disaffection to the fact that they were offended or that they couldn't stop smoking or that they really liked the taste of coffee. Or they may have quietly continued attending church — even though they had lost their faith — for fear of becoming social outcasts in a large community of believers.

One thing different today is that there are more ways for people to share their stories of disaffection about the Church than ever before. And

the fact that there are new outlets for sharing these stories has perhaps emboldened people to be more open about their loss of faith.

It is not hard now to find a new community on the internet — a community of nonbelievers, a community with whom one can share one’s story of disaffection from the Church and instead of shock, fear and dismay, encounter compassion, understanding, and encouragement. Therefore, in seeking to prevent disaffection from the Church, it is more important now than ever that we extend compassion, understanding, and encouragement to those who express feelings of pain, doubt, and discouragement while they are still in the Church. We must prepare to address the sincere crisis with compassion and truth. After all, if people who are experiencing a faith crisis find more comfort and compassion outside of Christ’s community, we probably are not doing what Jesus would do.

Of course, some of the comfort offered outside the community of believers is false comfort, and we should be clear about that. One thing often said by online critics is that Church membership is in decline and that even Elder Marlin K. Jensen admitted that people are “leaving in droves.” However, it is not true that membership is in decline nor that Elder Jensen said that people are “leaving in droves.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, once people started claiming that Elder Jensen had said this, it was reported in the *Washington Post* that Elder Jensen insisted that critics of the Church were overstating the Mormon exodus over the Church’s history. He was quoted as saying, “To say we are experiencing some Titanic-like wave of apostasy is inaccurate.”<sup>3</sup> He is, however, concerned about people encountering troubling information on the internet and leaving the Church.

In the face of growing membership rolls for the Church internationally, critics of the Church claim there is actually a wave of apostasy simply obscured in the Church’s official numbers, since many people leave the Church and do not remove their names from the rolls. However, this speculation is refuted by the data. Attendance at other predominantly white, Christian churches in America is in decline. But researchers have noted that “there is little evidence to suggest that [The

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2. For a transcript and analysis of Elder Jensen’s remarks, see Stephen Smoot, “Reports of the Death of the Church are Greatly Exaggerated,” FairMormon Blog, January 15, 2013, <https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/2013/01/15/reports-of-the-death-of-the-church-are-greatly-exaggerated>.

3. Peggy Fletcher Stack, “Mormons confront ‘epidemic’ on online misinformation,” *Washington Post*, February 1, 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/mormons-confront-epidemic-on-online-misinformation/2012/02/01/gIQApuLJiQ\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.4194bce3fd5a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/mormons-confront-epidemic-on-online-misinformation/2012/02/01/gIQApuLJiQ_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4194bce3fd5a).

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is] experiencing similar declines.”<sup>4</sup> While it is true that church growth in the United States has slowed, when Americans are asked what Church they belong to, the same proportion of people, 1.9%, claimed they were Latter-day Saints in 2017 as they did in 2011.

It has been reported that Christian millennials in general, not just Latter-day Saint millennials, are “leaving in droves.”<sup>5</sup> It is therefore significant to note that “Mormons are also much younger than other white Christian religious traditions. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of Mormons are under the age of 30. Fewer than half (41%) are age 50 or older.”<sup>6</sup> In light of the fact that our church is younger than other churches and yet is not shrinking like other churches, it seems, as Mark Twain might say, the reports of the death of the Church are greatly exaggerated.

Of course, reports that people are leaving in droves may help those who leave the Church to feel more confident in their decisions, especially as they join online communities. When someone close to you leaves the Church, something shifts. The taboo against leaving diminishes, and the social prohibition that says leaving the Church is something you should not do also fades. Social media amplifies that because more people hear about it. As people feel supported in their decision to leave the Church and emboldened in finding they are not alone, we hear more about why they left. The bright side of this is that it gives us the opportunity to understand and to prepare a wiser, more compassionate, and more effective ministry to those who are struggling.

It can come as a surprise to those who have assumed that people leave only because they were sinning to hear all variety of reasons why people have left. It may also have come as a surprise to hear President Uchtdorf say that “sometimes we assume it is because they have been offended or lazy or sinful. Actually, it is not that simple. In fact, there is not just one reason that applies to the variety of situations.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, when the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life asked more than 2,800 Americans why they had decided to join a new church or leave religion

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4. Daniel Cox and Robert P. Jones, “America’s Changing Religious Identity,” Public Religion Research Institute, September 6, 2017, <https://www.prii.org/research/american-religious-landscape-christian-religiously-unaffiliated/>.

5. Daniel Burke, “Millennials leaving church in droves, study finds,” CNN, May 14, 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/05/12/living/pew-religion-study/>.

6. Cox and Jones, “America’s Changing Religious Identity.”

7. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign* (November 2013), 22.

behind entirely, “the answers were so varied that analysts nearly ran out of codes to categorize them.”<sup>8</sup>

Discussions regarding loss of faith among Latter-day Saints commonly identify intellectual or social factors such as troubling historical or doctrinal issues<sup>9</sup> or social or cultural factors such as not feeling like they belonged among Latter-day Saints or simply wanting to do other things with their time.<sup>10</sup> So there is not just one reason all people leave. But it is also true that for any one person, probably a complicated variety of factors led to an exit from the Church.

In my personal experience of examining the stories of people who have left the Church, I’ve found that people often point to some incident that ignited a flame under them, creating severe emotional pain. When the flame was not extinguished, it became too difficult to stay in the Church. They may have identified some point of doctrine or episode

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8. Amy Sullivan, “Church-Shopping: Why Americans Change Faiths,” *Time* magazine, April 28, 2009, <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1894361,00.html>.

9. See, for example, “What Mormons had to say about their faith crises,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, March 3, 2016, <http://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=3528999>, in which a poll of *Salt Lake Tribune* readers identified the following items as triggering a “faith crisis”: 1) 327 of more than 1,700 respondents mentioned Joseph Smith’s sealings to the wives of other husbands, his differing “First Vision” accounts, his character, and/or translation questions about Mormon scripture (presumably the Book of Mormon and Book of Abraham); 2) 322 respondents mentioned polygamy in Latter-day Saint history; 3) 373 respondents mentioned LGBT policies and practices; 4) A few (about 20 of more than 1,700 respondents) brought up their activities in the group Ordain Women, which advocates female ordination to the all-male Latter-day Saint priesthood.

10. See, for example, Stan L. Albrecht, Marie Cornwall and Perry H. Cunningham, “Religious Leave-Taking: Disengagement and Disaffiliation among Mormons,” in David G. Bromley, *Falling from the Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy* (Newberry Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1988), 68-70. The chapter reports that 54% of people wanted to spend their limited time and resources on other interests and activities. Forty percent indicated that they didn’t feel they belonged. Twenty-five percent reported feeling it didn’t matter to anyone whether they attended or not. About a third of the respondents gave contextual reasons (movement to a new community where they didn’t get involved, work schedule conflicts, etc.). Twenty-three percent reported problems with specific doctrines or teachings. Twenty percent reported problems with other members of the congregation. Some said the church demanded too much of their time and money (cf. 1 Timothy 6:10 and Matthew 13:22). Others said it no longer was a help in finding meaning in life. Female respondents in particular were affected by marriage to a nonmember spouse.

of history or a policy of the Church. Some have acknowledged being offended by a Church leader or other member. Some have reported that due to shame or guilt, they stayed away and found it difficult to return. And, of course, there are a myriad of other reasons.

Unfortunately, believers can sometimes dismiss the doubter's pain. For every person who identifies one particular issue that led to his or her exit, there are many others who have encountered the same issue and have decided to stay. Church apologists familiar with the arguments against the Church and the responses to those arguments are sometimes guilty of exclaiming, "They left because of that? That's just silly!" Every member of the Church has encountered difficult doctrinal or historical issues. All members have been offended or felt like they did not fit in. And every member has sinned (Romans 3:23). So when those of us who stay hear that someone left because of one particular issue, we may find it hard to understand unless it is an issue with which we have also personally struggled. And even then, we may conclude that we stayed, so that person should too.

Of course, some who have left the Church find it difficult to understand how we can stay. They often assume that if we just knew what they knew, if we just watched this movie, or if we read that letter, we wouldn't stay either. They are surprised to learn that many of us know everything they know but choose to stay anyway. And just as there are a variety of reasons why people leave, there are a variety of reasons why people stay. We hope the reasons we stay may help others see how they, too, can stay. However, because we are always ready to give a reason for the hope within us, we should do so with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). We should not trivialize, demonize, or dismiss those who choose to leave. We don't embrace the apostasy, of course, but we should seek to understand and love the lost sheep and, where we can, offer comfort, care, and compassion.

Whether one leaves or stays, a complex set of factors is involved. Once some incident lights a flame of discontent, various other experiences may feed the flame. For example, a person who is disturbed by some item of history or doctrine may begin to find it harder to avoid taking offense at the actions of Church leaders and Church policies. A person who feels overwhelmed by the demands of a religion that calls upon us to become "perfect" (Matthew 5:48) may stumble upon upsetting issues related to Church doctrine or history and feel relieved at the thought that perhaps it isn't true anyway. A variety of social, historical, doctrinal, spiritual,

and intellectual factors combine, so that if a person does not find a way to douse the flame of distress, he or she will feel compelled to escape.

Along with social, historical, doctrinal, spiritual, and intellectual factors, psychology may also play a prominent role in many cases. This concept first dawned on me as I searched for answers to the question of why people leave the Church. As I looked for common factors among those closest to me and among the stories of others who have shared their experiences on the internet, it occurred to me that many who leave the Church comment on the mental illnesses they are also experiencing. As I began to explore the possible connection between mental distress and disaffection from the Church, I found an emerging body of scientific literature that helps explain how depression and anxiety disorders can possibly contribute to disaffection from the Church.

A 2015 survey conducted by Michelle Medeiros, a non-Mormon PhD candidate at Palo Alto University, found that “more religious Mormons were more likely to report lower levels of obsessions and compulsions, and, correspondingly, less religious Mormons were more likely to report higher levels of these traits.”<sup>11</sup> One could say that either OCD is causing a decrease in religiosity, or a decrease in religiosity is causing an increase in OCD. However, because OCD has a strong biological component, it seems more likely that OCD may be causing a decrease in religiosity among Mormons.

Scientists have also observed that “there are major similarities in information processing between anxious and depressed patients. In both groups, maladaptive schemata systematically distort the processes involved in the perception, storage, and retrieval of information.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, people with depression and anxiety see things differently and remember things differently.<sup>13</sup> It has also been postulated that “‘an anxious patient will be hypersensitive to any aspects of a situation that are potentially harmful but will not respond to its benign or positive aspects.’ There is plentiful evidence that anxious individuals

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11. Medeiros, Michelle, PhD, “Intrusive Worries, Related Behaviors, and Religious Beliefs Among Mormons” (PhD dissertation, Palo Alto University, 2015), 42.

12. Michael W. Eysenck, *Anxiety: The Cognitive Perspective* (Hove, East Sussex, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Ltd., 1992), 20.

13. “An impressive body of empirical evidence ... has firmly established that emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression are accompanied by characteristic cognitive biases in the processing of emotional information.” Jenny Yiend and Bundy Mackintosh, “Experimental Modification of Processing Biases,” in *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 190.

selectively allocate processing resources to threatening rather than to non-threatening stimuli.”<sup>14</sup> “Non-anxious individuals, if anything, show the opposite kind of bias.”<sup>15</sup>

To illustrate this point, two friends of mine who are married were burglarized once while they were at church. She is anxious and he is not. It haunts her to remember how he left a side door unlocked, which allowed the burglar to enter their home while they were away. She ruminates on what might have happened if they had surprised the intruder by returning while he was there. Despite his wife’s distress, he still forgets to lock doors. When he is home he doesn’t lock the door to the house or garage, even at night. By contrast, she locks doors whenever possible, including times when she has locked him out of the house while he mowed the lawn. Their psychology results in completely different evaluation of likely threats, even after experiencing the same burglary through an unlocked door.

A substantial body of research that exists demonstrates that anxious people, whether diagnosed with an anxiety disorder or who simply have an anxious disposition, are drawn to threatening information, tend to dwell on threatening information longer than others, and tend to interpret information in a threatening way when the information is ambiguous.<sup>16</sup> Whether they

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14. Eysenck, *Anxiety: The Cognitive Perspective*, 21, quoting Aaron T. Beck and Gary Emery, *Anxiety Disorders and Phobias: A Cognitive Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 33. There is “considerable evidence that individuals with generalized anxiety selectively allocate their attentional resources to threat-related information. ... Attentional biases have also been studied in other anxiety conditions, such as social anxiety and specific fears. There is considerable evidence indicating that socially anxious individuals have an attentional bias favouring social-threat stimuli, such as angry faces and social-threat words.” Karin Mogg and Brenden P. Bradley, “A Cognitive-Motivational Perspective,” in *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 74 (citations omitted).

15. Susan Mineka, “The Positive and Negative Consequences of Worry in the Aetiology of Generalized Anxiety Disorder: A Learning Theory Perspective,” in *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 31.

16. Paula Hertel, “Habits of thought produce memory biases in anxiety and depression,” in *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 109–110. “There is abundant evidence that anxiety is associated with an attentional bias for threat .... There is also evidence that anxiety is associated with a failure to disengage from threat ....” Anne Richards, “Anxiety and the resolution of ambiguity,” *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 139. “Evidence that

experience a social phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, or generalized anxiety disorder, they have a harder time ignoring information they perceive as threatening.<sup>17</sup>

When the future is unclear, people who experience anxiety and depression tend to expect the negative and tend to expect the results to be more costly when compared to those who are not anxious or depressed.<sup>18</sup>

This research makes it easier to understand how two people can encounter the same information and respond to it in very different ways. Consider how this may play out when encountering information regarding Church history, policies, doctrine, or ambiguous social situations. An anxious person will tend to focus on the threatening information and will tend to think about it longer, and when it is open to multiple interpretations, an anxious person will tend to interpret it in a more threatening way. If you are generally more likely to identify a situation as threatening and more likely to expect the results of the issue to be devastating, your experience with challenging issues at Church is more likely to be painful and hard to ignore or dismiss.

For many of us, when we encounter Church history or doctrine that is upsetting or hard to understand, we find some relief in “putting it on the shelf.” We stop thinking about it and perhaps come back to it later when we have more information. However, those who are anxious or depressed seem to experience difficulties in ignoring or forgetting negative information.<sup>19</sup> It is more difficult for them to divert their attention from threatening information.<sup>20</sup> Many people cannot just “put things on the shelf” and forget about them. Instead, issues they find threatening just keep piling up but do not easily leave the forefront of their minds. In light of this, it is interesting to note that many ex-Latter-day Saints talk about how, after putting so many things “on the shelf,” their shelf finally broke. It is therefore important to ask how we might help unburden a loaded

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anxiety vulnerability is associated with the negative interpretation of ambiguity is equally compelling.” Colin MacLeod, et al., “Causal status of biases,” *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 174.

17. MacLeod, “Causal status of biases,” 173. “Selective allocation of attention toward threatening information” has been confirmed in generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder and specific phobia.” *Ibid.*, 174.

18. Richards, “Anxiety and the resolution of ambiguity,” 130.

19. Hertel, “Habits of thought,” 121–22.

20. Elaine Fox, “Maintenance or Capture of Attention,” in *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 100.

shelf before it breaks, strengthen the shelf, or repair a broken shelf and clean up the shattered mess beneath it.

In many instances you don't need a scientific study to tell that depression and anxiety can reduce Church activity. If someone is lying in bed for most of the day due to depression, that probably explains why he or she is not coming to Church on Sunday morning. We may wrongly assume such people have been offended or have lost their faith for some reason, without considering that those persons may need to be treated for depression. In the past, some bishops have maybe even felt reluctant to refer someone to a psychologist. However, the Church now provides bishops with resources to address mental illness, and lds.org<sup>21</sup> even lists phone numbers people can call, along with information on how to respond to mental illness. So as we minister to others and seek to build faith, it is important to recognize how mental distress can affect our experience at Church. Inactivity due to mental health issues may spiral into a faith crisis. Faith comes by hearing the word (Romans 10:17), and faith grows as we nourish the seeds of faith (Alma 32:37). Faith may begin to wither and weaken when persons reduce activity in the Church and isolate themselves from hearing the word.

Anxiety psychology probably impacts church participation in significant numbers in ways we may not have considered. Another interesting study is being conducted by Jana Riess, who commissioned a survey of 541 former Latter-day Saints to determine why they left the Church. She reports that among millennials, tied for first place among the reasons they gave for leaving the Church was that they “felt judged or misunderstood.”<sup>22</sup> This is especially interesting in light of the fact that “the defining feature of social anxiety disorder, also [sometimes] called social phobia, is intense anxiety or fear of being judged, negatively

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21. “Mental Health,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <https://www.lds.org/mentalhealth>.

22. Jana Riess, “Do Mormons leave the Church because they ‘got offended’?,” *Flunking Sainthood*, Religion News Service, January 27, 2017, <https://religionnews.com/2017/01/27/do-mormons-leave-the-church-because-they-got-offended/>. Tied for first place was “I did not trust the Church leadership to tell the truth surrounding controversial or historical issues.” This was followed by “The Church’s positions on LGBT issues”; “I could no longer reconcile my personal values and priorities with those of the Church,” and “I drifted away from Mormonism.” Riess further reports: “In the sample as a whole, the top answer was ‘I could no longer reconcile my personal values and priorities with those of the Church,’ closely followed by ‘I stopped believing there was one true church.’”

evaluated, or rejected in a social or performance situation.”<sup>23</sup> Of course, all of us experience some concern over being judged by others. But when the concern has begun to interfere with normal activities, this ordinary concern may develop into a psychological disorder. This is a condition that “affects approximately 15 million American adults and is the second most commonly diagnosed anxiety disorder following specific phobia. The average age of onset for social anxiety disorder is during the teenage years,” just the time when we see many begin to drift away from the Church. There are effective treatments available for social anxiety disorders through therapies and other means. Sadly, “despite the availability of effective treatments, fewer than 5% of people with social anxiety disorder seek treatment in the year following initial onset and more than a third of people report symptoms for 10 or more years before seeking help.”<sup>24</sup>

Our Church expects us to be social. We are expected to speak and pray in Church, to teach lessons, read things aloud, answer questions in class, and call people on the phone, and we are sometimes asked to knock on the doors of strangers and ask them if they are willing to drastically change their lives. These are difficult things for anyone to do, but they can be among the hardest to do or simply impossible when someone experiences an anxiety disorder. Someone may be sitting in the lobby during sacrament meeting because he or she finds it difficult to be in a room with a large group. Or someone may go home after sacrament meeting because he or she feels worn out after spending an hour in a crowd of people and needs to take a break. We may wrongfully assume the person has a weak testimony. As a consequence, we may begin to treat such a person as one who lacks faith or who has repudiated us and our faith. If such people begin to experience a sense of rejection, they may further distance themselves from members of the Church, they may seek out more supportive communities, or tragically, they may simply suffer in isolation. It is not hard to imagine how this kind of separation from members of the Church and Church activity can ultimately result in a loss of testimony.

Similarly, a person who turns down a request to pray in church or give a talk may not have a lack of faith but may simply have a fear of speaking in public. “As a syndrome, social phobia is the third most common psychiatric disorder, with estimated life-time prevalence rates

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23. “Understand the Facts: Social Anxiety Disorder,” Anxiety and Depression Association of America, <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/social-anxiety-disorder>.

24. *Ibid.*

of 7-13 per cent.”<sup>25</sup> “The fear of public speaking is called *glossophobia* (or, informally, stage fright). It is believed to be the single most common phobia, affecting as much as 75% of the population.”<sup>26</sup> It is said that people are more scared of public speaking than they are of dying. So when you attend a funeral, most people would rather be in the casket than giving the eulogy.

Someone who experiences maladaptive perfectionism or scrupulosity may feel overwhelmed with guilt and a painful sense of inadequacy in listening to a speaker talk about how her family reads the scriptures together every day or how her life was changed by a ministering brother or sister who came every month or how much she enjoys going to the temple every week. As others talk about how energized and uplifted they felt during the talk, a person with anxiety or depression may feel alone, scared and hopeless as that person wonders whether he or she really belongs in this church and whether going to heaven is really wanted if such perfect performance is expected.

Let me share one example of how mental distress can affect a faithful person and how wise leaders and family members can adapt the Church’s standardized ideals to meet the needs of individual circumstances.

We all know that Steve Young did not serve a mission. I always assumed the reason was that he felt a need to develop his football career, and considering the great influence he has been, I’ve never faulted him for that. But I was surprised to learn recently that he wanted badly to serve a mission, and the reason he did not had nothing to do with football. At the time he decided he would not serve a mission, he had been the eighth-string quarterback and had recently been moved to playing defense. More importantly, his decision had nothing to do with a lack of faith. Rather, as he thought about being away from home for two years, he began to feel overwhelmed with anxiety. It had been so difficult for him just to travel to Provo to go to school that he had not actually unpacked his clothes during the entire fall semester. Once he came home for the Christmas break, he decided to talk to his bishop and tell him he could not go on a mission. He felt terribly guilty.

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25. Colette Hirsch and David M. Clark, “Mental imagery and social phobia,” in *Cognition, Emotion and Psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions*, ed. Jenny Yiend (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 233.

26. Nazia Ali and Ruchi Nagar, “To Study the effectiveness of occupational therapy intervention in the management of fear of public speaking in school going children aged between 12–17 Years,” *The Indian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 45, No. 3 (September 2013 – December 2013).

But as he told his bishop that he decided it was best for him to continue going to BYU, his bishop told him about an impression he had received a couple of weeks earlier that Steve was going to visit him to tell him that he planned to return to school. The bishop also received the clear impression that he should tell Steve that it was right for him to return to BYU. Instead of trying to talk him into going on a mission, the bishop told him to serve Jesus Christ, live his religion, and be a great example.<sup>27</sup> It was not until he was 32 years old that he was finally diagnosed with separation anxiety.<sup>28</sup>

Steve Young had understanding parents and a bishop who was open to receiving a surprising revelation. It is not hard to imagine how, under a different set of circumstances, Steve Young may have decided that it was easier to leave the Church than it was to remain a member of a church that had expectations for him that he felt he could not satisfy.

As a church, we have gotten better at identifying the kinds of problems Steve Young faced and accommodating them. The process of applying for a mission call now includes considerations of mental health, and mission programs are adapted to the capabilities of the faithful youth who struggle with mental health issues. Calls can be issued for shorter assignments, can be closer to home, and assignments can be adapted to the strengths of faithful individuals without imposing crushing challenges. Our church is learning to deploy unique, faithful individuals into appropriate ministries without assuming that every person is the same and must adapt to a standardized pattern. Likewise, I believe apologists and ministering brothers and sisters can learn to adapt to the unique needs of people who are experiencing a faith crisis, including a faith crisis with mental health components.

Now, in introducing psychology as a factor that can contribute to disaffection from the Church, we hope we have made very clear that we do not think that any one factor causes a person to leave, including any particular psychological factor. In other words, mental illness is only one factor that could create a vulnerability that can lead to disaffection from the Church. Of course, like other factors mentioned, some people who struggle with mental health issues leave, and some stay.

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27. “The Surprising Reason Steve Young Didn’t Serve a Mission (and It Has Nothing to Do with Football),” *LDS Living*, February 24, 2018, <http://www.ldsliving.com/The-Surprising-Reason-Steve-Young-Didn-t-Serve-a-Mission/s/82995>.

28. Eric Branch, “In new book, ex-49er Steve Young details his battle with anxiety,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 28, 2016, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/49ers/article/In-new-book-ex-49er-Steve-Young-details-his-10421195.php>.

Our point, of course, is that it may help those who experience mental health issues to stay if they received proper treatment, if they were to consider new perspectives on history, practice, and doctrine, or if they received appropriate kinds of support from Church leaders, friends and family. So it is our hope in introducing this topic that we can encourage people to be more aware of mental illness issues and seek help for themselves and others.

A significant amount of research demonstrates that religion has a positive effect on mental health. Daniel K. Judd found that “the overall body of research from the early part of the twentieth century to the present supports the conclusion that Latter-day Saints who live their lives consistent with the teachings of their faith experience greater well-being, increased marital and family stability, less delinquency, less depression, less anxiety, less suicide, and less substance abuse than those who do not.”<sup>29</sup> As Daniel Peterson explained at last year’s FairMormon conference, regular church attendance is associated with “a roughly 30 percent reduction in mortality over 16 years of follow-up; a five-fold reduction in the likelihood of suicide; and a 30 percent reduction in the incidence of depression.”<sup>30</sup> This suggests that if a person struggles with mental illness, leaving the Church would be counter-productive with respect to mental health. Yet it seems that some people who experience mental illness choose to disengage from church activity in response to struggles they experience, perhaps assuming that leaving the Church will resolve their mental anxieties or depression.

This response would not be unlike that of a woman I heard about recently who had panic attacks when she entered parking garages. She initially responded to this by avoiding parking garages. Of course this made her life more difficult, since she often had to park a long way from where she wanted to go. Once she sought treatment for her anxieties, she learned how to begin using a parking garage again, which made her life easier and happier.

Similarly, if a person is distressed because of church activity, the answer would not be to stop going to church. Some may feel that it is

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29. Daniel K. Judd, “The Relationship Between Religion, Mental Health, and The Latter-day Saints,” *BYU Religious Education Review* (Winter 2018), 13, <https://rsc.byu.edu/review/winter-2018/relationship-between-religion-mental-health-and-latter-day-saints>.

30. Daniel Peterson, “What Difference Does it Make?,” FairMormon Conference, August 2017, <https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2017/what-difference-does-it-make>, quoting Tyler J. VanderWeele, “Does Religious Participation Contribute to Human Flourishing?” Big Questions Online, January 14, 2017, <https://www.bigquestionsonline.com/2017/01/14/does-religious-participation-contribute-human-flourishing/>.

church that is causing their depression and anxiety, but upon leaving, the mental illness does not go away. They have simply abandoned something that could have helped them. So the proper thing to do would be to seek treatment so those persons are able to gain all of the social, intellectual, spiritual, and mental health benefits that come from church activity.

In presenting these ideas, we do not mean to suggest that there are no issues of Church history or doctrine that are confusing or upsetting, or that Church members and Church leaders never do anything that might be considered offensive. We hope that you will take away from this that when someone with mental illness faces a challenging situation, there are things we can do as friends, family members, and Church leaders to help. Of course, there are those who will say we are stigmatizing those who leave and are suggesting we can dismiss those who leave the Church as merely being crazy. We are most certainly not saying that. However, the only way to avoid the accusation would be to simply ignore the problem. If we were to ignore the fact that mental illness can make it difficult for some people to remain active in the Church, we would be ignoring an opportunity and perhaps shirking a duty to help bear one another's burdens, to mourn with those who mourn, and to comfort those who stand in need of comfort (Mosiah 18:8-9).

Just as there are a variety of reasons why people leave, there are a variety of things we can do to help them to stay. So we would like to turn now to a discussion of some of the key features of mental distress that can affect Church activity and what friends, family, Church leaders, and individuals themselves can do to respond to the challenges posed by mental distress.

### **Features of Mental Distress That May Present Barriers to Belief and Participation**

In this section, we'll look at elements which contribute to mental distress and which also may block religious belief and participation. We will then consider ways that people can get help when suffering from mental distress.

One way to understand mental distress is to consider it through the lens of cognitive psychology, which is the basis of one of the most common evidence-based treatments for depression,<sup>31</sup> and one of the most effective.<sup>32</sup> Cognitive therapy says there is a link between what we think, how we feel,

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31. John Hunsley, Katherine Elliott and Zoe Therrien, "The Efficacy and Effectiveness of Psychological Treatments," *Canadian Psychology* 55, no. 3 (September 2013), 161-76.

32. Sarah R. Braun, Bettina Gregor, and Ulrich S. Tran, "Comparing Bona Fide Psychotherapies of Depression in Adults with Two Meta-Analytical Approaches,"

and what we do.<sup>33</sup> Our thoughts influence our emotions, and our emotions influence our actions. Using this model, mental distress, which is manifest by our emotions, is viewed as being impacted by our way of thinking. A number of distorted ways of thinking have been identified as contributing to mental disorders, such as Major Depressive Disorder.

As we will more fully explain, the cognitive distortions that contribute to mental distress can also be seen as barriers to belief and participation in religious activities. Mental distress is built upon cognitive distortions. Religious belief and participation may be negatively affected or blocked by those distorted ways of thinking.

For example, one common cognitive distortion is “All-or-Nothing Thinking.” Such thinking causes us to view the world in strict, mutually exclusive categories. This way of thinking contributes to depressed mood because when one categorizes one’s experience strictly between perfect and ruined, most experiences will end up in the ruined category — even if the person is nearly perfect. It’s either all or nothing. There is no in-between. This distortion may affect religious thinking by causing a person to expect that unless every aspect of doctrine makes sense, none of it can be true. It’s either all or nothing.

Another common distortion is Overgeneralization, which causes people to view a single event as a never-ending pattern. This pattern often includes the words *always* and *never*. This way of thinking contributes to depressed mood by incorrectly concluding that experience has only been of one type while overlooking other aspects of the experience. A single event is not the same as a never-ending pattern, but Overgeneralization would have you believe otherwise. This way of thinking may affect religious belief and participation by inaccurately assigning frequency to religious experience (e.g., when an answer to prayer is slow in coming, such people may tell themselves that their prayers never get answers, and so they stop praying entirely).

Mental Filter is another common cognitive distortion, causing people to pick one aspect of a situation and make that the focus of their attention while ignoring and filtering out other equally important aspects. This way of thinking contributes to depressed mood by orienting to only one aspect of a given situation — usually the negative or unfavorable aspect. An example of this would be when a person focuses on one unkind thing

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PLoS ONE 8, no. 6 (June 2013), <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0068135>.

33. David Burns, “Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy” (New York: Quill, 1980), 29.

said or done to them at church while ignoring or filtering out the many other kind things that have been said or done to them there.

There are other types of cognitive distortions, but the point to be made is that mental distress is sometimes significantly fueled by cognitive distortions. Such distorted thinking may also serve as a barrier to religious belief and participation.

Fundamental to mental distress related to anxiety is the Intolerance of Uncertainty, or fear of the unknown. Those who struggle with anxiety tend to have higher intolerance of uncertainty, as manifest by persistent thoughts about the unknowns in a particular situation.<sup>34</sup> Dwelling on the unknowns is a surefire way to increase anxious feelings. In other words, focusing on the unknowns, rather than the knowns, will create mental distress. In the words of the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, “He who fears he shall suffer, already suffers what he fears.”

Anxiety may also arise when new information conflicts with old. This conflict may make it unclear how to proceed and result in inconsistent thoughts, beliefs or attitudes. Such internal conflict is often referred to as *cognitive dissonance*.

Cognitive dissonance may cause us to choose from the following responses: reject the new information as false, consider the new information as unimportant, suspend judgment (“putting it on the shelf,” as discussed above), accept or reject the new information but with a greater understanding of context and definitions, or reject the old information (for example, rather than take the time to process how one’s former assumptions about Church history and doctrine might need to be readjusted, one might hastily decide the Church is not true in order to more quickly resolve the anxiety created by cognitive dissonance and uncertainty).

Besides creating a depressed or anxious mood, these distortions can also make it difficult to focus on the more subtle influence of what we call “the still, small voice,” thereby creating a sense of distance or isolation

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34. “Originally thought to be specific to generalized anxiety disorder, recent research has clearly demonstrated that IU [intolerance of uncertainty] is a broad transdiagnostic dispositional risk factor for the development and maintenance of clinically significant anxiety.” In other words, IU is more fundamental than anxiety; anxiety is built upon IU. R. Nicholas Carleton, “The intolerance of uncertainty construct in the context of anxiety disorders: Theoretical and practical perspectives,” *Expert Review of Neurotherapeutics* 12, no. 8 (August 2012), 937–47, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262794944\\_The\\_intolerance\\_of\\_uncertainty\\_construct\\_in\\_the\\_context\\_of\\_anxiety\\_disorders\\_Theoretical\\_and\\_practical\\_perspectives](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262794944_The_intolerance_of_uncertainty_construct_in_the_context_of_anxiety_disorders_Theoretical_and_practical_perspectives).

from God and communication with Him, which may be erroneously interpreted as “God doesn’t care or isn’t there,” instead of being more accurately seen as distorted thinking getting in the way. Some report that the medications they take also have the effect of muting their sensitivity to those spiritual feelings.

In summary, then, cognitive distortions contribute to mental distress. Those distorted ways of thinking affect our mood. Cognitive distortions may also serve to undermine the process of religious belief and participation by creating distorted ways of thinking that make it difficult to process new information when compared to information we already have.

### Ways in Which People Can Get Help

So when a person is experiencing mental distress, what can be done? How can that person be helped? In this section we’ll consider what can be done by the individual, friends and family, and the Church and Church leaders. Finally we’ll talk about the prospect of professional help.

It is useful to think about helping people with mental distress as three concentric circles. The first, in the center, is Self. Ultimately, the responsibility for overcoming mental distress lies with the individual. Unless the individual is motivated and engaged, very little progress will be made. Next is Family and Friends. These are the people closest to the person in need. They are those most intimately connected to the individual, who have the most access. Next, there is the Church. The Church consists of neighbors and leaders who also know and love the individual but are not as intimately acquainted with the individual, perhaps, as family and friends.

#### The Individual

Healthy practices that a person may adopt to help him or herself include exercise,<sup>35</sup> adequate rest, proper diet, and developing social connections.<sup>36</sup> Developing attitudes of generosity<sup>37</sup> and gratitude<sup>38</sup> have

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35. Ibid.

36. Rick Nauert, “Social Connections Can Help to Reduce Depression,” PsychCentral, <https://psychcentral.com/news/2014/03/20/social-connections-can-help-to-reduce-depression/67371.html>.

37. Steve Densley, Jr., “Science Confirms the Blessings of Generosity,” *Meridian Magazine*, December 19, 2017, <https://ldsmag.com/science-confirms-the-blessings-of-generosity/>.

38. Steve Densley, Jr., “Why ‘Count Your Many Blessings’ Isn’t Just a Nice Thing to Say,” *Meridian Magazine*, November 20, 2017, <https://ldsmag.com/why-count-your-many-blessings-isnt-just-a-nice-thing-to-say/>.

also been shown to be helpful for maintaining good mental health. These practices are clinically proven to contribute to good mental health.

### **Family and Friends**

Family and friends can help by knowing what to say (and what not to say), having the right attitude toward mental illness, and helping those afflicted make a plan of action. For the most part, the things to say should be messages of support and presence. Words can help or hurt. Efforts to explain or to fix usually have the unintended result of making the person feel bad or wrong for their condition. Friends and family don't have to fix their loved one or the situation he or she faces, but they should try to reassure and comfort them.

There is no way to list all the things to say or do for a loved one with emotional distress, but there are a few attitudes to cultivate which, when followed, will give some ideas about what to say or do. Emotional distress is a real thing. Depression and anxiety are legitimate medical conditions. If we were in a major auto accident, we might have bandages and bruises that would be visible to others and would verify or validate our injuries. Major emotional trauma often has few physical signs but can be no less debilitating than physical injuries.

It is important to be patient with the person struggling with emotional distress and with the process of recovery and healing. There may be setbacks. That is common.

Communication is very important to develop and maintain understanding among family and friends. Ask questions and make observations. Share your thoughts and feelings and ask the loved one about his or hers. You may be surprised at what the loved one says.

Accommodation and adjustment are powerful ways to show support. Creative problem-solving with humor and good will has the potential to say, "I love you," and "I am here for you," in powerful ways. We wouldn't be helping very much if we allowed our loved ones to avoid every distressing situation, but we can be resourceful in how we help them to meet the challenges they face every day.

Part of meeting the challenges of every day is helping to develop a plan of action which might include education, self-care, and the use of available resources. Knowledge is power, and becoming knowledgeable about the condition one finds oneself in will help everyone know what to do. Self-care, as has been covered previously, is essential to feeling better emotionally. While we can't provide self-care for our loved one, we can encourage and support his or her efforts for self-care. We can also help

identify available resources which may be found through family support, Church leaders and the priesthood, the blessings associated with temple worship, and the help to be found through healthcare.

## The Church

The Church can also help through existing doctrines, opportunities for activity, and shepherding from Church leaders. These three areas can contribute positively to alleviation of mental distress.

President Boyd K. Packer explained, “True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.”<sup>39</sup> President Packer lists two of the three elements of Cognitive Psychology in this statement: Thoughts and Actions, only he calls them Attitudes and Behavior. If attitudes and behavior are changed by true doctrine, it is reasonable to conclude that feelings could also be changed by true doctrine.

Some interesting research has found this to be the case: that true doctrine does change feelings. One study of Latter-day Saint people found that believing God is a loving God (a true doctrine) contributed to limiting or reducing anxious traits in those who held that belief. It also found that those who hold a view of God that is less loving or more controlling than what is commonly taught in Latter-day Saint doctrine were more likely to endorse more serious or frequent anxious traits.<sup>40</sup>

Other research has also found that increased views of the lovingness of God are most strongly related to a reduction of emotional symptoms for Latter-day Saint people. In other words, subscribing to the doctrine that God is our father and He is perfectly loving appears to have the effect of reducing mental distress. Similarly, other researchers found that those who reported having an experience confirming the doctrine of God’s grace as taught by the Church had a positive relationship with mental health while those who had a more legalistic view of God’s dealings with his children correlated with decreased mental health.<sup>41</sup>

As shown in Figure 1, there is a stark difference in levels of shame, anxiety and depression between Latter-day Saint Church members who view God through a construct of works being the most important (called “Legalism”) and those who view grace as the most important. As one can

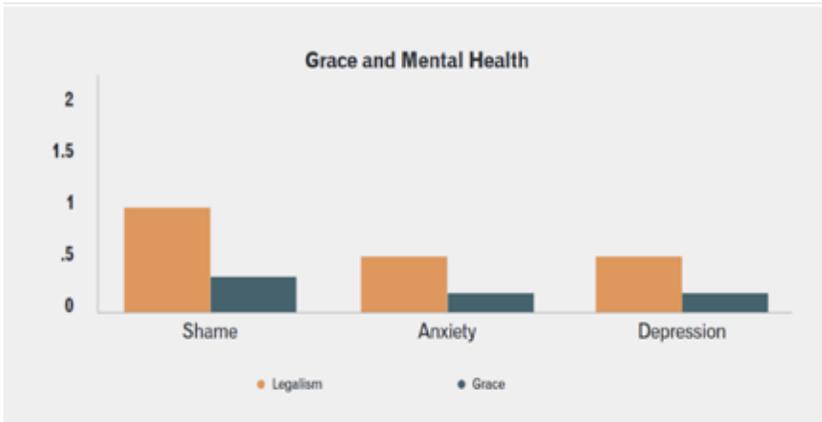
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39. Boyd K. Packer, “Little Children,” *Ensign* (November 1986), 17.

40. Medeiros, “Intrusive Worries, Related Behaviors, and Religious Beliefs Among Mormons.”

41. Daniel K. Judd, W. Justin Dyer, and Justin B. Top, “Grace, Legalism, and Mental Health: Examining Direct and Mediating Relationships,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (June 2018), 8, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/rel0000211>.

see, those with a Legalism outlook had noticeably higher scores on shame, anxiety, and depression than did the members with a grace outlook.



**Figure 1.** Grace and Mental Health.

Association with the Church also brings opportunities for church activity. Activity in the Church produces social connection through serving others, teaching and learning from others, and working toward the common good. As mentioned earlier, social connection can also help reduce mental distress.

### Church Leaders

Church leaders are in a position to have a powerful impact on those struggling with mental distress. Demonstrating compassion and a willingness to be attentive to the afflicted member can be a great comfort to the struggling member. As noted above, helping the brother or sister to develop a plan of action can also be very helpful and provide focus and motivation to the distressed. In addition, mobilizing ward resources may be appropriate.

Ward resources include involving the ward council, ministering brothers and sisters, and specifically called ward specialists. There may be ward temporal resources that could be brought to bear on the situation. Also, inspired ecclesiastical counseling could be included.

As demonstrated earlier, true doctrine changes attitudes and behavior, and there is evidence that it also can alleviate mental distress. If that is true, then teaching the pure word of God could be seen as important medicine for those who are distressed — and for all of us, really. When it comes to counseling from ecclesiastical leaders, consider how many true doctrines there are to understand and how they might change a person's functioning if they were better understood.

## Professional Help

Sometimes, the efforts of the individual and the support of family, friends, and the Church do not have sufficient impact on the emotional distress. When this is the case, it may be time to seek professional help. When the loved one is not responding sufficiently to the help offered or he or she is not maintaining the progress that should have been made, it may be that the problem is of a psychological nature, and professional help is required. One way to think about the severity of a loved one's symptoms is to consider the amount of distress combined with the inability to control the symptoms combined with the frequency of the difficulties.

For most mental disorders related to depression and anxiety, the research is clear that professional counseling is an effective treatment.<sup>42</sup>

For depression and anxiety, counseling and medication appear to be equally effective. For some people, the combination of counseling and medication will be more beneficial than either treatment separately.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which focuses on the link between our thoughts, feelings, and actions, is one of the most common evidence-based therapies for depression.<sup>43</sup> Such therapy also appears to be one of the most effective.<sup>44</sup>

In recent addresses, Elder Holland has discussed his struggle with depression. Clearly, the fact that one experiences anxiety or depression does not mean that one cannot fully participate in and accept significant responsibilities in the Church. He said, "If things continue to be debilitating, seek the advice of reputable people with certified training, professional skills, and good values. Be honest with them about your history and your struggles. Prayerfully and responsibly consider the counsel they give and the solutions they prescribe. If you had appendicitis, God would expect you to seek a priesthood blessing and get the best medical care available. So too with emotional disorders. Our Father in Heaven expects us to use all of the marvelous gifts He has provided in this glorious dispensation."<sup>45</sup>

## Summary

We've been talking about mental distress and its potential to affect religious belief and participation. Some interesting research suggests

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42. Hunsley, Elliott, and Therrien, "The Efficacy and Effectiveness of Psychological Treatments," 3.

43. Ibid.

44. Braun, Gregor, and Tran, "Comparing Bona Fide Psychotherapies of Depression in Adults."

45. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign* (November 2013), 41.

that the factors which produce depressive and anxious symptoms are also those which make it difficult to navigate conflicting information such as may exist about the Church's history, policies, and doctrine. There are a number of things individuals can do for themselves when experiencing depressive or anxious symptoms, and there are things that friends, family, and Church leaders may do for those individuals as well. Sometimes professional help is needed to address the mental distress.

We hope this presentation can be seen as a step toward more clearly understanding the factors that contribute to disaffection from the Church and what can be done to help ourselves and others remain close to the Church and the salvation found therein.

**Steve Densley, Jr.** is a Utah attorney (JD, Brigham Young University). He graduated with University Honors from BYU with a combined BA/MA in public policy and political science. He has published articles in the Utah Bar Journal, the Journal of Law and Family Studies, *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Faith and Scholarship*, and *Meridian Magazine*. He currently serves as executive vice president of *The Interpreter Foundation*. He was the executive vice president of *FairMormon* from 2013–15, a recipient of the John Taylor Defender of the Faith Award, and was a producer of *FairMormon's* podcast when it twice won the People's Choice Award for Best Podcast in the Religion & Spirituality category. He has served as an elders quorum president, high councilor, young men's president, gospel doctrine teacher, and is currently the 1st counselor in his ward's bishopric. He and his wife Heather have four children and one grandchild.

**Geret Giles** is a psychologist in private practice since 1995. He has a master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy from Brigham Young University and a PhD in Counseling Psychology from Pennsylvania State University. He treats couples, families, individuals, adolescents, and children for issues such as depression, anxiety, and relationship issues. For the past 15 years Dr. Giles has also worked with Utah's Division of Human Services to provide forensic evaluations when questions arise as to the competence and mental state of criminal defendants. He is married to the former Kelley Clements. Together they have four children—three of whom are married—and three grandchildren. Their youngest is currently serving an LDS mission in Brazil. Geret and his wife are getting used to being "empty nesters" and are finding the transition more delightful than they expected.



# TRANSLATING THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Stephen O. Smoot

**Abstract:** *A new translation of the New Testament by Thomas A. Wayment, a professor of Classics at Brigham Young University, offers Latter-day Saints a fresh look at this volume of scripture. Accompanying the translation are study notes that touch on historical, textual, and other items of importance in any critical reading of the New Testament. Wayment's new edition should prove a helpful aid to Latter-day Saint readers wishing to get more out of their study of the New Testament.*

Review of Thomas A. Wayment, trans., *The New Testament: A Translation for Latter-day Saints: A Study Bible* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018). 491 pp. \$29.99 (paperback).

**I**n a sermon delivered in Salt Lake City, Brigham Young issued this charge:

If there is a scholar on the earth who professes to be a Christian, and he can translate [the Bible] any better than King James's translators did it, he is under obligation to do so, or the curse is upon him. If I understood Greek and Hebrew as some may profess to do, and I knew the Bible was not correctly translated, I should feel myself bound by the law of justice to the inhabitants of the earth to translate that which is incorrect and give it just as it was spoken anciently.

Putting a fine point on it, President Young asked rhetorically “Is that proper?” and answered in the affirmative: “Yes, I would be under obligation to do it.”<sup>1</sup>

English-speaking members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have long cherished the King James Bible, which is both the official English Bible of the Church and has informed Latter-day Saint theological vocabulary since the founding of the Church in 1830. Allusions to and citations of KJV passages and language are woven deeply throughout Latter-day Saint scripture and theological vernacular,<sup>2</sup> and Joseph Smith famously undertook a “new translation” or revision of the KJV as part of his larger restoration project.<sup>3</sup> Given that Latter-day Saint leaders have historically resisted the adoption of modern English translations of the Bible,<sup>4</sup> it would not be unfounded to assume that the KJV enjoys a supremacy over Bibles among English-speaking Latter-day Saints that will not be contested anytime soon.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, it simply cannot be denied that after 400 years of intense biblical scholarship since the publication of the KJV in 1611, to say nothing

1. Brigham Young, “Temperance,” *Journal of Discourses*, reported by David W. Evans 27 August 1871, Vol. 14 (London: Latter-Day Saint’s Book Depot), 226–27.

2. See generally Kent P. Jackson, ed., *The King James Bible and the Restoration* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), <https://rsc.byu.edu/recent/king-james-bible-and-restoration>.

3. See Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975); Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2004); Elizabeth Maki, “Joseph Smith’s Bible Translation: Doctrine and Covenants 5, 76, 77, 86, 91,” in *Revelations in Context: The Stories behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Matthew McBride and James Goldberg (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 99–104, <https://www.lds.org/study/manual/revelations-in-context/joseph-smiths-bible-translation>; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, “Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible,” <https://www.lds.org/study/history/topics/joseph-smith-translation-of-the-bible>.

4. Perhaps the most outspoken Latter-day Saint General Authority opponent of modern English translations of the Bible was J. Reuben Clark, who served in both the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency. See J. Reuben Clark, *Why the King James Version?* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1956); see further Philip L. Barlow, “Why the King James Version?: From the Common to the Official Bible of Mormonism,” *Dialogue* 22, no. 2 (Summer 1989), 19–42, [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V22N02\\_21.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V22N02_21.pdf).

5. See the discussion in Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

of 400 years of development of the English language, the time is long overdue for English-speaking Latter-day Saints to seriously re-examine their exclusive loyalty to the KJV.<sup>6</sup> While the KJV unquestionably remains unsurpassed in literary excellence among English Bibles — the veritable crown jewel in the diadem of English prose and poetry — the plain fact is that sole reliance on the KJV is in many regards a serious impediment to deeper understanding of the biblical text. President Young’s insistence that faithful scholars are obliged “by the law of justice to the inhabitants of the earth to translate that which is incorrect and give it just as it was spoken anciently” must be seriously reckoned with by members of the Church, as there is abundant justification for just such an undertaking.

Thankfully, Latter-day Saints have now been supplied with a landmark publication that meets this demand. Thomas A. Wayment, currently a professor of Classics and previously a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, who has published extensively on New Testament and early Christianity in both popular and academic venues,<sup>7</sup> has benefited members of the Church with a fresh, precise, engaging, and approachable translation of the New Testament (henceforth the WT for “Wayment Translation”) geared squarely at a mainstream Latter-day Saint audience.

At the outset, Wayment is quick to clarify what his translation is *not*: “This translation is not an attempt to replace the King James Bible for Latter-day Saint readers, but it is an invitation to engage again the meaning of the text for a new and more diverse English readership” of the New Testament. If Wayment’s translation, then, is not meant to replace the KJV, what precisely does it intend to accomplish? “This translation intentionally engages the possibility that the New Testament can be rendered into modern language in a way that will help a reader more fully understand the teachings of Jesus, his disciples, and his followers” (vii). This is a worthwhile undertaking, since the inspired words of Jesus and his first-century apostles are liable to be obscured if modern readers have access to them only through archaic language no longer suitable to their modern needs. “When the language of translation

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6. This point has been raised and explored more fully by Grant Hardy, “The King James Bible and the Future of Missionary Work,” *Dialogue* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2012), 1–44, [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/V45N02\\_244a.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/V45N02_244a.pdf).

7. A number of Wayment’s publications can be found online at <https://rsc.byu.edu/authors/wayment-thomas> and [https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/391597.Thomas\\_A\\_Wayment](https://www.goodreads.com/author/list/391597.Thomas_A_Wayment).

becomes too foreign,” Wayment observes, “too distant from the present age, it is time to consider the possibility of another translation” (vii). The fact that a portion of the revisions made by Joseph Smith in his “new translation” of the Bible were updates to the archaic language of the KJV puts Wayment in good company on this point.<sup>8</sup>

Besides providing a fresh translation, Wayment also endeavors to make his edition “a study tool, an aid to inviting readers into the text so that new meaning can be discovered, and new inspiration can be found” (vii). To that end, the WT overhauls the formatting of the text in some ways his Latter-day Saint readers are perhaps not too familiar with. This includes the use of “quotation marks to designate what was said, and by whom,” a “paragraph structure” as opposed to versification, the minimalization of “the intrusion of verse divisions” by “placing verse designations in a smaller superscript font,” the inclusion of headings to demarcate literary pericopes in narrative and thematic, doctrinal, or structural sections in epistles, and the rendering of intertextual quotations into italics with “notes [to] direct the reader to the source of those quotations” (viii–ix). It is apparent that Wayment and his editor(s) at the Religious Studies Center have put great care into making this an aesthetically pleasing and readable edition.

The study notes in the WT “favor intertextuality, especially with the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.” Wayment informs his readers that he included “those references to help the reader see how

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8. “In many places, the Prophet replaced an old form with a new form, sometimes changing a word to a modern counterpart. He changed the extinct word *wot* to *know*, and he gave instructions that it be changed every time it appears. He used *a* instead of *an* before words that begin with *h*. He changed *saith* to *said*, which both removes an obsolete form and revises the text from present to past tense to make the sentences clearer. He changed *that* and *which* to *who* when referring to humans. There are also places where *you* is used where the KJV would have *ye*, *thou*, or *thee*. In a few instances, verbal conjugations are in modern forms. In a passage from the Book of Moses, the Lord speaks to Moses of *this earth upon which thou standest* (Moses 1:40). In his final revision of the text, the Prophet changed this phrase to *this earth upon which you stand*. In the same verse, he changed *and thou shalt write* to *and you shall write*, and in the next verse, *like unto thee* is changed to *like unto you*. But the Prophet did not make changes like these universally. Most instances of such forms appear as they do in the King James Bible. Modernizing the words and grammar was clearly not the highest priority in the JST, but we do find evidence for it in the manuscripts.” Kent P. Jackson, “The King James Bible and the Joseph Smith Translation,” in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/king-james-bible-and-restoration/12-king-james-bible-and-joseph-smith-translation> (italics added).

the New Testament texts are engaged, developed, and interpreted in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.” References to the JST are also included in the notes, but Wayment is “selective” in how many JST variant readings he includes because “many of the changes that [Joseph Smith] made are inextricably linked to the King James Version.” Important variant readings found in different Greek manuscripts are likewise provided in the notes, as is commentary on disputed passages of “questionable origin” which “offer[s] an opinion regarding the authenticity” of said passages. Latter-day Saints, naturally, should not be scandalized by potential corruptions in the biblical text (see Article of Faith 8), and in any case, it is important to note disputed or variant readings to “show how the text of the New Testament developed over time.” In instances of clearly spurious passages (e.g., 1 John 5:7–8, the interpolation known commonly today as the Johannine Comma), the offending verses have “been removed from the text and placed in the notes” (ix).

In terms of what kind of the translation Wayment has produced, based on his own prefatory explanation and from a sampling of passages, it appears the WT is more or less a moderate to formal equivalence of the underlying Greek text, somewhere between the New Revised Standard Version and the New International Version. That is to say, Wayment has not “attempted to translate Greek words exactly the same way in each instance, nor the same [grammatical] order in which the words appear in their Greek sentences,” for such would come at the cost of readability. He has, essentially, “chosen to err on the side of context in determining” how to render the Greek (viii).

Take, for instance, the question of how to render the word ἀδελφός (*adelphos*). A straightforward translation of the word would be “brother,” and, as Wayment notes, there are some passages where “the author appears to have intended ‘men’ exclusively” (e.g., Matthew 2:16; 8:28; 14:21). However, many other uses of *adelphos* in the New Testament do not require a gender-exclusive rendering of the word. “The original context of the word was not intentionally exclusionary but rather an artifact of first-century common usage and parlance,” notes Wayment. Because the New Testament often uses the word “generically to refer to those who believe alike, regardless of gender,” Wayment opts to translate *adelphos* inclusively as “brother and sister” in many instances (ix). In my judgment, this is a perfectly reasonable, even laudable, way to stay true to the sense of the Greek (based on context) while adapting the English to be meaningful for a broader — in this case a gender-non-exclusionary — audience.

Accordingly, Wayment’s approach is welcome because “the New Testament is written in a variety of different Greek styles,” and so imposing a rigid and uniform rendition of English would obscure the range of refined to simple Greek encountered in the various New Testament books. “A translation that can represent the simple power of the language of Jesus and his followers is truly a gift,” Wayment correctly points out; “and as we are further and further removed from the seventeenth century, we have begun to lose sight of the realization that Jesus spoke like everyday people. Jesus did not speak using archaic English terms and phrases. His speech was quite ordinary, his meaning was quite profound, and his intent was often clear. As language evolves, so too translations need to evolve” (vii). So while Wayment’s translation is not likely to be heard being sung by the King’s Singers in Cambridge (or The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square in Salt Lake City) during Christmastime, it nevertheless does effectively render the Greek in a readable yet faithful manner.

It is clear the WT is aimed at a general, non-academic audience. The question might thus naturally arise as to how Wayment navigates historical or textual issues that become apparent from a critical reading of the New Testament. Wayment handles judiciously issues pertaining to authorship, historicity, and textual corruption in the New Testament. True to its self-styling as a “study Bible for Latter-day Saints,” the WT does not shy away from questions or concerns about the authorship and historicity of the New Testament books, but neither does it lose focus on its devotional and pastoral purposes. Nor does it appear to take any overly radical positions at odds with the restored gospel that are propounded by more “liberal” or secular scholars of the New Testament. On the contrary, I found the WT at times fairly “conservative” in how it approaches a number of issues.<sup>9</sup> Take these three examples:

- Concerning the depiction in Luke 22:43–44 of Jesus experiencing hematomidrosis, Wayment writes, “These

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9. I deliberately put “liberal” and “conservative” in scare quotes because I have found this dichotomous terminology unhelpful overall but am obliged to use it, given its currency in both academic and popular discourse on theological and historical-critical matters. In fact, much of Wayment’s “conservatism” is, based on my own survey of the literature, fairly mainstream among New Testament scholars. I designate it “conservative” only because, relatively speaking, a number of New Testament scholars (some very prominent) are more disposed to quickly dismiss the apostolic authorship of the epistles or the historicity of the gospels than Wayment allows in much of his commentary.

two verses are greatly disputed, and a number of important ancient manuscripts omit them. Other early and important manuscripts include these verses. Given the current evidence, it is unlikely that the question of their omission or inclusion can be resolved. However, the evidence is strong enough to suggest that they may be original to Luke's Gospel but were perhaps omitted over doctrinal concerns. Mosiah 3:7 seems to have these verses in mind (compare Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19)" (156–57).<sup>10</sup>

- Concerning the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11), Wayment writes, "The earliest manuscripts of the New Testament omit this verse and John 8:1–11. Some manuscripts place the story of the woman caught in adultery at John 7:36, after John 21:25, or after Luke 21:38. The story appears to have strong external support that it originated with Jesus, but it may not have originally been placed here in the Gospel of John or even to have been written by the author of the Fourth Gospel. It is placed in double brackets [in the WT] to indicate that it has questionable textual support, but it is included in the text because it has a reasonable likelihood of describing a historical event from the life of Jesus" (181).
- Concerning the disputed authorship of Hebrews, Wayment writes, "In one of the earliest Greek manuscripts (Chester Beatty papyrus 46), this epistle is included immediately following Romans, indicating that whoever made that copy of the New Testament felt that Paul was the author of the work because the scribe placed the book alongside the other Pauline epistles .... However, there are also

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10. See further Lincoln H. Blumell, "Luke 22:43–44: An Anti-Docetic Interpolation or an Apologetic Omission?" *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 19 (2014), 1–35, <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v19/TC-2014-Blumell.pdf>. The historicity of Luke 22:43–44 is especially important for Latter-day Saints, given the verse cited by Wayment from the Book of Mormon: "for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people" (Mosiah 3:7). The implications a text-critical reading of Luke 22:43–44 might have for the historicity of the Book of Mormon deserve fuller evaluation. My initial impressions are that Luke 22:43–44 doesn't necessarily have to be original to Luke, as it has at least to preserve an authentic experience of Jesus in Gethsemane.

significant concerns regarding Paul's authorship of the letter, and the style of Hebrews and the quality of the Greek writing is so markedly different from Paul's other letters as to suggest that Paul certainly did not write the letter in the same way, and under the same circumstances that he wrote his other letters .... Tradition suggests that Paul wrote Hebrews, which is a reasonable assumption; the evidence is fairly conclusive that an early Christian author who was connected to Timothy wrote this epistle with the intent of addressing the topic of Christ for a Jewish Christian audience" (401).<sup>11</sup>

Wayment is also straightforward in his discussions of the Synoptic Problem (1–2), the authorship of the gospels (1–2, 64–65, 105–106, 163), and the authorship of the (oft designated) pseudo-Pauline and catholic epistles (339, 378, 387, 393, 419, 427, 435, 442, 452). The recurring point Wayment returns to in most of his commentary on this final point is that “the question of Paul's [or Peter's, or Jude's] authorship cannot be settled simply” (387). This is a safe route to take as Latter-day Saints continue to come to terms with how they might accommodate potentially non-apostolic (or, at the very least, non-conventionally apostolic) authorship of these disputed portions of the New Testament. Further work needs to explore just how the Latter-day Saint views of the Bible might affect our overall hermeneutic in light of potential New Testament pseudepigrapha. Wayment wisely does not slam the door shut on the traditional authorship of these books, while also raising the very real issues Latter-day Saints need to seriously confront. Hopefully Wayment's notes and commentary will invite further reflection on and investigation into these matters from a Latter-day Saint perspective.

Wayment is careful not to allow sometimes decades of assumed Latter-day Saint readings of the New Testament to overpower a close

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11. For additional Latter-day Saint views on the authorship of Hebrews, see generally Sidney B. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 268–72; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 254–57; Terrence L. Szink, “Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews” in *How the New Testament Came to Be: The Thirty-fifth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Frank F. Judd Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 243–59, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/selected-articles/authorship-epistle-hebrews>; Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 193–98.

exegetical reading of the text. Two passages in 1 Corinthians will serve to illustrate my point. 1 Corinthians 8 records Paul’s teachings on whether or not it is proper for Christians to eat food sacrificed to idols. “Concerning food sacrificed to idols, we know that an idol in the world is nothing and that there is no God but one,” Paul declared (WT 1 Corinthians 8:4). The next two verses contain what would otherwise be a straightforward declaration were it not for a somewhat cryptic parenthetical comment:

KJV	WT	Greek (SBL NT)
(5) For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, ( <i>as there be gods many, and lords many,</i> ) (6) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.	(5) Even if there be so-called gods in heaven or on earth ( <i>just as there are many gods and lords</i> ), (6) however, there is one God for us, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and through whom we exist.	(5) καὶ γὰρ εἶπερ εἰσὶν λεγόμενοι θεοὶ εἶτε ἐν οὐρανῷ εἶτε ἐπὶ γῆς, <b>ὥσπερ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί</b> , (6) ἀλλ’ ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα καὶ ἡμεῖς δι’ αὐτοῦ.

The parenthetical comment in v.5 — “as indeed there are many gods and many lords” (my translation; ὥσπερ εἰσὶν θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί) — attracted the attention of the Prophet Joseph Smith in a discourse delivered on 16 June 1844. In this sermon the Prophet quoted vv. 5–6 as a proof-text for his own doctrine of a plurality of gods:

Paul says there are Gods many & Lords many — I want to set it in a plain simple man[n]er — but to us there is but one God pertaining to us, in all thro all. but if J. Smith says there is Gods many & L<sup>ds</sup>. many they cry away with him crucify him mankind verily say that the Scrip [i]s with them — Search the Script & they testify of things that apostates wo<sup>d</sup>. blaspheme — Paul[,] if Jo Smith is a blasphemer you are — I say there are Gods many & L<sup>ds</sup>. many but to us only one & we are to be in subjec<sup>tn</sup>. to that one & no man can limit the bounds, or the eternal existence of eternal time.<sup>12</sup>

12. Discourse, 16 June 1844–A, as Reported by Thomas Bullock, [1], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16-june-1844-a-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/1>.

It would be tempting merely to defer to the Prophet's exposition on this verse as authoritative without much further consideration. Wayment, however, provides additional commentary which, while not necessarily negating the Prophet's application of these verses to his own theology, nevertheless provides important context. "The wording of Paul's statement may suggest that he believed in the existence of other gods and lords, but such an interpretation of his words misses the criticism Paul is offering of those who believe in other gods" (300). In other words, the Prophet's appeal to this verse as giving justification to a sort of theological henotheism or monolatry may be supportable,<sup>13</sup> but it is not the immediate point in Paul's original usage, which was essentially to say that even if there were indeed multiple gods and lords, Christians are accountable to but one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, and so concerns over consuming food offered to idols is a non-issue. This kind of close reading offered by Wayment should in turn encourage modern Latter-day Saint readers to parse more carefully what is original to the New Testament authors, what is inspired expansion on earlier biblical material by modern prophets, and what is application or "likening" to meet pastoral concerns.

The second passage worth highlighting is well-known to Latter-day Saints:

KJV	WT	Greek (SBL NT)
Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?	Otherwise, why are they baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are they baptized on their behalf?	Ἐπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν; εἰ ὄλως νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, τί καὶ βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν

13. "We should note that in [1 Corinthians 8:6] it is possible to see the inclusion of Jesus Christ in the identity of the God of the Old Testament, but there is no exclusion of the existence of other beings that might in some sense be considered divine. Paul takes seriously the existence of those beings, but he is clear that Christ is far above them in authority, surely more in the category of the one God than of the lesser powers, demi-gods, so to speak. ... Paul does not question [their] existence." George Carraway, *Christ is God Over All: Rom. 9:5 in the context of Rom. 9-11* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 87, 89n141. I am grateful to Robert Boylan for alerting me to this source. See also Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism,"* 2nd ed. (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 95-96; David Bentley Hart, *The New Testament: A Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 332-33.

Beginning with the restoration of the practice of baptism for the dead in 1840, Latter-day Saints have cited this passage to great theological effect. It continues to be invoked as crucial scriptural precedent for their practice of vicarious baptism and thereby a powerful aspect of Latter-day Saint theodicy.<sup>14</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith himself devoted much attention to this verse (Doctrine and Covenants 127:5–12; 128), which laid the foundation to a crucial component to Latter-day Saint soteriology and eschatology.<sup>15</sup>

But while 1 Corinthians 15:29 has proven fertile soil for Latter-day Saint theological exposition, Wayment notes that, on its own, the verse offers very little actual information on the practice or purpose of vicarious baptism in the first century church. “Paul does not specify who *they* are in this verse,” he writes. “The reference appears to be obvious to the Corinthian saints, and therefore some members of the church in Corinth who likely practiced baptism on behalf of the dead understood the reference. This is the only mention of the practice in the New Testament, and no guidelines or details associated with the practice have survived” (310). As such, whatever additional significance Latter-day Saints attach to this verse must come from further light and knowledge imparted by modern prophets. That the verse in fact speaks of vicarious baptism for deceased persons cannot be seriously doubted (despite the sometimes ingenious ways writers have attempted to get around what is

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14. See David L. Paulsen and Blake T. Ostler, “Sin, Suffering, and Soul-Making: Joseph Smith on the Problem of Evil,” in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 237–84, especially 268–73; David L. Paulsen and Brent Alvord, “Joseph Smith and the Problem of the Unevangelized,” *FARMS Review* 17, no. 1 (2005), 171–204.

15. See David L. Paulsen, Roger D. Cook, and Kendel J. Christensen, “The Harrowing of Hell: Salvation for the Dead in Early Christianity,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010), 56–77; David L. Paulsen and Brock M. Mason, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 2 (2010), 22–49; David L. Paulsen, Kendel J. Christensen, and Martin Pulido, “Redeeming the Dead: Tender Mercies, Turning of Hearts, and Restoration of Authority,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 1 (2011), 28–51; David L. Paulsen, Judson Burton, Kendel J. Christensen, and Martin Pulido, “Redemption of the Dead: Continuing Revelation after Joseph Smith,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 2 (2011), 52–69; Terryl Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thoughts: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 248–55, 270–71.

the most plainly obvious reading of the text).<sup>16</sup> Modern Latter-day Saints should nevertheless be aware that the verse, while serving as significant biblical justification for their practice of vicarious baptism, leaves plenty to be filled in through the insight and guidance of modern prophets.

Overall, I found much in Wayment's new study edition of the New Testament to commend to its intended Latter-day Saint audience. It is precisely the sort of thing that qualified Latter-day Saint biblical scholars can and should be doing for each of the books in the Bible. The world already benefits from the *HarperCollins Study Bible*, the *Jewish Study Bible*, the *Catholic Study Bible*, and the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, to name just a few examples. It's time for an authoritative *Latter-day Saint Study Bible* (perhaps a *Restoration Study Bible*) for both the Old and New Testaments. Wayment has provided a promising glimpse at what a reliable, comprehensive study Bible for Latter-day Saints could look like. If Latter-day Saint scholars collaborated to synthesize the best of biblical scholarship with doctrinal and historical insights from Restoration scripture and the teachings of modern prophets and apostles, I am confident that the publication of just such a study Bible could be accomplished to great benefit for the Saints.

Until that time, every Latter-day Saint wishing to seriously engage the New Testament should pick up a copy of Wayment's new translation.

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16. "The practice of Christians receiving baptism on behalf of other persons who died unbaptized was evidently a common enough practice in the apostolic church that Paul can use it as a support of his argument without qualification. And the form of the Greek (ὕπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν) leaves no doubt that it is to just such a posthumous proxy baptism that he is referring." Hart, *The New Testament*, 348. See also the extended discussion in Kevin L. Barney, "Baptized for the Dead," in *To Seek the Law of the Lord: Essays in Honor of John W. Welch*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 9–57.

### Appendix: Parallel Comparison of Select KJV and WT Passages

Citation	LDS KJV	Wayment (2018)
<b>Matthew 5:14–16</b>	Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.	You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid: no one who lights a lamp places it under a basket but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all those in the house. Therefore, let your light shine before people so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
<b>Matthew 5:48</b>	Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.	Therefore, you will be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.
<b>Matthew 16:18–19</b>	And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever though shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.	I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth, it will be bound in the heavens, and whatever you undo on earth, it will be undone in the heavens.
<b>Matthew 28:19–20</b>	Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.	Go forward, making disciples of all nations and baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always, until the end of time.
<b>John 3:5</b>	Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God	Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a person is born of water and Spirit, that person cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Citation	LDS KJV	Wayment (2018)
<b>John 3:16</b>	For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.	For this is how God loved the world: he gave his Only Begotten Son so that all who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life.
<b>1 Corinthians 15:20–22</b>	But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.	Now, Christ was in fact raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have died. For since death came through one person, the resurrection from the dead came through one person, for just as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive.
<b>1 Corinthians 15:29</b>	Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?	Otherwise, why are they baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are they baptized on their behalf?
<b>Ephesians 4:11–14</b>	And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of man, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.	And he gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all arrive at the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, at being a mature person at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ so that we are no longer infants, tossed back and forth by the waves and carried about by every wind of teaching, by the cunning of people who with craftiness carry out deceitful schemes.

Citation	LDS KJV	Wayment (2018)
<b>2 Thessalonia- nians 2:3</b>	Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.	Let no one deceive you by any means, because that day will not come until the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness, who is the son of perdition, is revealed.
<b>James 1:5</b>	If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.	If anyone lacks wisdom, let that person ask God, who gives to everyone generously, and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
<b>1 Peter 4:6</b>	For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.	For this is the reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, so that they may be judged in the flesh by human standards, and they may live according to God's standards.
<b>Revelation 22:18–19</b>	For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.	I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will place the plagues that are written in this book upon that person. And if anyone removes anything from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will remove his part from the tree of life and his part in the holy city, which are described in this book.

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# MESSENGERS OF THE COVENANT: MORMON'S DOCTRINAL USE OF MALACHI 3:1 IN MORONI 7:29–32

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Matthew L. Bowen

**ABSTRACT:** *Although not evident at first glance, shared terminology and phraseology in Malachi 3:1 (3 Nephi 24:1) and Moroni 7:29–32 suggest textual dependency of the latter on the former. Jesus's dictation of Malachi 3–4 to the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, as recorded and preserved on the plates of Nephi, helped provide Mormon a partial scriptural and doctrinal basis for his teachings on the ministering of angels, angels/messengers of the covenant, the “work” of “the covenants of the Father,” and “prepar[ing] the way” in his sermon as preserved in Moroni 7. This article explores the implications of Mormon's use of Malachi 3:1. It further explores the meaning of the name Malachi (“[Yahweh is] my messenger,” “my angel”) in its ancient Israelite scriptural context and the temple context within which Jesus uses it in 3 Nephi 24:1.*

Mormon records that Jesus introduced a major block of Malachi's prophecies — Malachi 3–4 [MT 3]<sup>1</sup> — into the Nephite scriptural tradition. At some point before the final battle at Cumorah, Mormon copied those prophecies from the plates of Nephi<sup>2</sup> onto the plates that contained his own abridged record (see 3 Nephi 24–25). Jesus's transition to and introduction of Malachi's prophecies constitute perhaps the clearest juxtaposition of a proper name with its corresponding etymological meaning anywhere in scripture: “Thus said the Father unto **Malachi** [*mal'ākî*, ‘my messenger,’ or ‘my angel’] — Behold, I will send **my messenger** [*mal'ākî*; or my angel], and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even **the messenger of the covenant** [*mal'ak habbērît*; or angel of the covenant]” (3 Nephi 24:1).

The doctrinal significance of this onomastic juxtaposition was not lost on Mormon. He employs language that recalls Malachi 3:1 (3 Nephi 24:1) when he expounds the doctrine of the ministering of “angels” (Hebrew *mal’ākīm*, see especially Moroni 7:29–32) and their role in the fulfillment of divine covenants. This he does as part of a wider exposition of the necessity of faith, hope, and charity (Moroni 7). In this article, I will examine the meaning of the name Malachi (*mal’ākī*) and its doctrinal importance in the respective contexts of the canonical book of Malachi and in 3 Nephi 24. I will also compare the language of Malachi 3:1 (3 Nephi 24:1) and Moroni 7:29–32 to determine the nature and degree of Mormon’s use of the former. And finally, I will show how Malachi 3:1 (3 Nephi 24:1) and Mormon’s use of this text enhance our understanding of the nature and function of the ministering of angels.

### “My Messenger”:

#### The Name Malachi and Its Doctrinal Significance

The form of the name Malachi — Hebrew *mal’ākī* — suggests the meaning “my messenger” or “my angel.” Its identicalness to the appellation *mal’ākī* — “my messenger” — in Malachi 3:1 has led some exegetes to conclude that Malachi constitutes an artificial name derived from Malachi 3:1. This tendency has been amplified by text-critical issues in the incipit title of the Book of Malachi in Malachi 1:1, “the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi” (KJV follows the Hebrew Masoretic Text). The Greek Septuagint (LXX) reads *lemma logou kyriou epi ton Israel en cheiri angelou autou*, “the burden of the word of the Lord regarding Israel by the hand of his messenger [or angel].”<sup>3</sup> The LXX reading appears to boil down to reading *ml’kw* versus *ml’ky* — the *waw* (*w*, ך) and *yod* (*y/i*, ך) often appear nearly identical in many Hebrew manuscripts. The Latin Vulgate, the Syriac Peshitta, and the Greek texts of Symmachus and Theodotion, on the other hand, all render *ml’ky* as the personal name Malachi.<sup>4</sup> Gibson concludes that ultimately “the LXX ... only serves to reinforce the originality of the MT.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, the textual tradition that gave rise to the modern-day Masoretic Text, in this instance at least, appears to preserve the original and best reading.

The attestation of Malachi as a personal name outside the biblical corpus argues for its authenticity. Malachi finds its earliest attestation in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE as *ml’ky* on a jar handle among the Arad ostraca.<sup>6</sup> As a hypocoristic theophoric name, *mal’ākī* could represent an originally longer, putative form *ml’kyhw*.<sup>7</sup> Gibson also notes this possibility,<sup>8</sup> agreeing with Andrew Hill’s earlier suggestion that the *y/i* “may have

been a marker for the genitive case in older Classical Hebrew, not the first-person pronominal suffix *î*,” yielding “messenger of Yahweh.” But Gibson, Hill, and other exegetes shy away<sup>10</sup> from the more challenging and uncomfortable theological implications of the *yod* (*y/i*) in Malachi (*ml'ky*) constituting a theophoric hypocoristic. Under this scenario, Malachi would mean “[Divine Name is] my messenger”<sup>11</sup> — i.e., “Yahweh is my messenger,” “Yahweh is my angel,” or “[Yahweh] is a messenger unto me.”<sup>12</sup> Joel Burnett cites the Phoenician/Punic name *b'lm'l'k* (“Baal is [my] messenger”) as the relevant parallel for Malachi,<sup>13</sup> a name that appears in numerous inscriptions.<sup>14</sup> The name *b'lm'l'k*, Burnette adds, “accords with the apparent interchangeability between YHWH and ‘the messenger of YHWH’ (*mal'ak yhwh*) in biblical narratives portraying the announcement of the birth by a divine messenger (e.g., Gen[esis] 16:11, 13; 18:2–3, 10, etc.)”<sup>15</sup> Burnette further suggests, “if this is the relevant association for these names, the reference is not so much to a formal ritual or oracle as it is to the parent’s perception of divine visitation (but cf. Judg[es] 13:21–23). Alternatively, the name may express a more general reference to a deity as a messenger to the individual.” He concludes that “it is in this sense that the Hebrew name *ml'ky* can be best understood to express the deity’s accessibility and direct communication to the individual.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the meaning of Malachi as “Yahweh is my angel” or “Yahweh is my messenger” is perfectly compatible and congruent with the doctrinal notion put forward in Malachi 3:1 (3 Nephi 24:1) that “the Lord” (*hā'ādōn*) who would “suddenly come” to the temple as “messenger” was Yahweh himself. Notably, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 in just this way when he “suddenly came” to the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful in 3 Nephi 11. The quotation of Malachi 3:1 by Jesus — the messenger of the covenant *par excellence* — would have been particularly poignant and appropriate to that Israelite audience on that occasion (see further below).

The foregoing also helps us appreciate references in Genesis 48:16 to Jacob’s redeeming “Angel” (*hम्मal'āk haggō'ēl*) and in Exodus 23:23 and 32:34 to the theophanic Angel who went before Israel in the wilderness: “mine Angel [*mal'ākî*] shall go before thee” (Exodus 23:23; 32:34). That “Angel” (note KJV’s deliberate capitalization) may be a thinly-veiled reference to Yahweh, the “Lord” (*hā'ādōn*) of Malachi’s prophecy. In fact, in many instances the “angel of the Lord” or the “angel of his presence” appears indistinguishable from the Lord himself.<sup>17</sup> For example, one Isaianic text uses the expression “angel of his presence” in precisely this way: “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and **the angel**

**of his presence** [*mal'ak pānāw*] saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isaiah 63:9; see also D&C 133:53). The “angel of [Jehovah’s or Yahweh’s] presence”<sup>18</sup> that stood by Abram and “unloosed [his] bands” appears to have been the same being that said, “[Abram, Abram], behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee,” (Abraham 1:15–16).<sup>19</sup> In other words, Yahweh’s personal presence *was* the rescuing “angel” or messenger. Even the meaning “messenger of Yahweh” for Malachi can be understood to refer to the Lord within this scenario — the Lord’s “double” (see further below in the conclusion).

The foregoing framework may resolve the apparent silence of Jacob, Nephi’s brother, on having seen the Lord when he testifies “for I truly had seen angels, and they had ministered unto me” (Jacob 7:5). When Jacob saw the Lord, his “Redeemer,” (2 Nephi 2:3–4; 11:2), he had seen an “Angel” who “redeemed” him and ministered to him (compare the patriarch Jacob’s redeeming “Angel,” Genesis 48:12 with 28:12–13; Ether 3:13–18).

### **“He Is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts”: Priests as “Angels” or “Messenger[s] of the Covenant”**

The post-exilic prophetic book that bears Haggai’s name describes the prophet Haggai as a *mal'ak yhw* and his message as a *mal'ākūt yhw*. “Then spake Haggai the **Lord’s messenger** [*mal'ak yhw*] in the Lord’s **message** [*mal'ākūt yhw*] unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord” (Haggai 1:13). The prophet Malachi uses similar terminology to describe priests of the Second Temple.

After the incipit title of the book that includes his name (“the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi”), Malachi’s second use of *mal'āk* (“messenger,” “angel”) specifically describes the Aaronic priest as a *mal'āk*, even a *mal'ak yhw šēbā'ôt*: “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is **the messenger of the Lord of hosts** [*mal'ak yhw šēbā'ôt*]” (Malachi 2:7). This conceptual framework helps us to appreciate the message of Jacob, the son of Lehi and the brother of Nephi: “Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, having first obtained **mine errand** from the Lord. For I, Jacob, and my brother Joseph had been consecrated priests and teachers of this people, by the hand of Nephi” (Jacob 1:17–18).

Recently, biblical scholars such as Crispin Louis-Fletcher, Margaret Barker, and Devorah Dimant have assembled and synthesized an impressive amount of biblical and non-biblical textual evidence suggesting that priests in ancient Israel were, in fact, identified as angels.<sup>20</sup> Revelation 8:3 depicts

an *angelos* (i.e., a *mal'āk*) functioning as a priest in the heavenly temple that John saw in vision: “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” Isaiah, who was apparently a temple priest when his prophetic call came, became Yahweh’s messenger after a *seraph* (Hebrew “burning one”) touched a burning coal to his lips and “atoned” Isaiah’s sin (“thy sin is purged,” literally, “atoned,” *tēkuppār*, Isaiah 6:7). His prophetic career, in this sense, constituted an angelic ministration. Lehi’s throne vision, similar to Isaiah’s in important aspects,<sup>21</sup> helps us understand something of how the “Twelve” (*apostle* < Greek *apostolos* “sent one” for Hebrew/Aramaic *šālūiah/šēliah*)<sup>22</sup> fit into the Lord’s economy as messengers or “angels,”<sup>23</sup> even beyond the bounds of mortality (see 1 Nephi 1:9–10; cf. 1 Nephi 11:29).

**“Thus Said the Father unto Malachi — Behold, I Will Send My Messenger”: Jesus’s Doctrinal Use of Malachi 3:1**

Jesus Christ personally dictated the text of Malachi 3–4, concomitantly written by scribes,<sup>24</sup> to his Lamanite and Nephite audience as part of a larger body of scripture to which they previously had no access: “These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations” (3 Nephi 26:2). Presumably, Jesus dictated this text in Hebrew — a language the Nephites admitted using (see, e.g., Mormon 9:33)<sup>25</sup> — or at least in a putative, creolized Nephite dialect of Hebrew.

Malachi’s prophecies date from a time well after the Jews’ return from the Babylonian exile (i.e., sometime during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE). Thus, Malachi’s writings were not on the brass plates, which contained no prophecies originating after the time Nephi obtained the plates from Laban. With the exception of a few phraseological snatches<sup>26</sup> that plausibly have origins outside of and earlier than the body of Malachi’s prophetic work, Malachi’s prophecies enter the Nephite scriptural tradition when Jesus dictates them, and the Nephite record-keepers record them:

And it came to pass that he commanded them that they should write the words which the Father had given unto **Malachi** [*mal'ākī*], which he should tell unto them. And it came to pass that after they were written he expounded them. And these are the words which he did tell unto them, saying: Thus said the Father unto **Malachi** [*mal'ākī*] — Behold, I will send **my messenger** [*mal'ākī*], and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple,

even **the messenger of the covenant** [*mal'ak habbërit*], whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. (3 Nephi 24:1)

Jesus's dictation of Malachi 3–4 begins with his repetition of *mal'ākî*, first as a name and then as a referential noun. This repetition places additional emphasis on the importance of the name Malachi and its meaning, the identity of the Father's *mal'āk*, and the identity, role, and function of the “Lord” who “suddenly come[s] to his temple” as *mal'āk* of the covenant. The faithful Nephites “and those who had been called Lamanites”<sup>27</sup> at the temple in Bountiful would surely have appreciated the sense in which Jesus was fulfilling Malachi's prophecy right before their eyes, as the Father's “messenger” and the Lord whom they “s[ought]”<sup>28</sup> had “suddenly come to his temple.” As *mal'ak habbërit*, (“messenger of the covenant”) he reorganized and established the previously existing church under the “new covenant” (or “the law of the gospel”).

Jesus's recitation of Malachi's prophecy in this temple context would have recalled for this particular audience the temple imagery in words of “the angel” (*mal'āk*),<sup>29</sup> whose words King Benjamin relayed to the Nephites and Mulekites at the temple in Zarahemla generations earlier:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall **dwel** [*wayyiškōn*, i.e., temporarily dwell] in a **tabernacle** [*miškān*], and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases. (Mosiah 3:5)

Over a drastically condensed period of time, the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful saw what the Word-become-flesh and dwelling (cf. John 1:14. *eskēnōsen*, “tenting”) among them looked like in terms of Jesus's teaching, organizing, commissioning, and “working mighty miracles” in a physical body, temple, or tabernacle. The somatic interpretation of “temple” (*hēkal*) in “the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple” would have been almost impossible to avoid with Jesus bodily present there. Earlier, Jesus had taught this same audience: “And behold, this people will I establish in this land, **unto the fulfilling of the covenant** which I made with your father Jacob; and it shall be a New Jerusalem. And **the powers of heaven shall be**

**in the midst of this people; yea, even I will be in the midst of you**” (3 Nephi 20:22). Jesus’s ministrations to the people in 3 Nephi 17 and the powers of heaven or angels who ministered unto their children (see especially 3 Nephi 17:24) had already shown them what the fulfillment of this prophecy would look like.

3 Nephi 19 provides a similar picture of heavenly “ministrations.” Mormon records that after Nephi baptized the twelve disciples “whom Jesus had chosen” (3 Nephi 19:12) “angels” came down to minister to the disciples and Jesus also came down to do the same:

And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. And behold, they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven, and the multitude did witness it, and did bear record; **and angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them. And it came to pass that while the angels were ministering unto the disciples, behold, Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them.** (3 Nephi 19:13–15)

This description collapses the ontological distance between Jesus and “angels” and the perceived gap between “the ministering of angels” and Jesus’s own ministrations. Jesus ministered as the Father’s “messenger” (*mal’āk*) and chief among a multiplicity of ministering “messengers” or “angels.” This picture is consistent with both Malachi’s language in Malachi 3:1 (3 Nephi 24:1) and Moroni 7:29–32 (see further below).

### “Even the Messenger of the Covenant”

A component to the onomastic Malachi wordplay in Malachi 3:1 and 3 Nephi 24:1 that begs further discussion is the expression “messenger of the covenant” (*mal’āk habbērît*). As noted above, Malachi’s prophecy states that Yahweh as “Lord” — *hā’ādôn* — was the *mal’āk habbērît*. Jesus had reference to this divine role when he said to the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful:

And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and **ye are of the covenant** [*habbērît*] **which the Father made** [*kārat*] **with your fathers**, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. The Father having raised me up unto you first, **and sent me** [i.e., as a messenger] **to bless you** in turning

away every one of you from his iniquities; and **this because ye are the children of the covenant** [cf. Hebrew *bēnê bērit* or *bēnê habbērît*].<sup>30</sup> (3 Nephi 20:25–26)

All that Jesus did at the temple in Bountiful — just as everything he did in life, death, and resurrection — he did in his capacity as “messenger of the covenant.” This paradigm helps us appreciate the force of statements such as this one that Jesus makes earlier in the same (temple) setting: “**then will I fulfil the covenant** which the Father hath made unto [or, cut with] all the people of the house of Israel” (3 Nephi 16:5). Mormon also spoke from a similar frame of reference when he promised that his record (the Book of Mormon) would go forth “that the Father may bring about, **through his most Beloved**, his great and eternal purpose, in restoring the Jews, or all the house of Israel, to the land of their inheritance, which the Lord their God hath given them, **unto the fulfilling of his covenant**” (Mormon 5:14).

Peter preached a similar statement — perhaps one Jesus made during his forty-day post-resurrection ministry<sup>31</sup> — as recorded by Luke: “Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:25–26). What is noticeably missing from the NT version of this statement is the causal emphasis on which Jesus was acting as “messenger of the covenant” (the “sent” one): “this because ye are children of the covenant.” An excerpt from “the fulness of John’s record”<sup>32</sup> or “the fulness of the record of John”<sup>33</sup> preserved in D&C 93 describes Jesus’s role as “messenger of the covenant” thusly: “in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation” (D&C 93:8). The “covenant of the Father” (3 Nephi 24:1; Moroni 10:33) and its fulfillment in every particular constitutes Jesus’s “work of salvation” and the errand for which he, as “messenger of the covenant,” was sent.

### **“The Office of Their Ministry Is ...**

#### **To Fulfill and Do the Work of the Covenants of the Father”: The Ministering of Angels**

The dictated text of Malachi 3–4 constituted a part — albeit a minute part — of the records that Mormon had in his possession (see, e.g., Mormon 6:6). Mormon copied this text into his own record (see 3 Nephi 24–25). The importance that Mormon placed on these finds further expression

in Moroni 7, a sermon that Mormon's son Moroni included as part of his grand, final conclusion to the Book of Mormon (Moroni 7–10).

In that sermon — originally given to a group of faithful Nephites in a synagogue sometime during the waning days of Nephite civilization — Nephi briefly adumbrates the doctrine of the ministering of angels and cites the ministering of angels as an example of the consistency of God's character and dealings with the human family. In Moroni 7:29–32, Mormon explains the role and function of angels or messengers (*mal'ākīm*) in the divine performance of covenant promises. A comparison of 3 Nephi 24:1 (Malachi 3:1) and Moroni 7:29–32 reveals striking terminological parallels between the two texts:

On the strength of these terminological parallels, the textual dependence of Moroni 7:29–32 on Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1 appears more than likely. Nevertheless, our consideration of these four terms and collocations and the conceptual framework(s) within which Malachi and Mormon use them helps us better understand the immense significance and relevance of Mormon's use of Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1 in his sermon.

### *Mesengers, Angels, and “the Work”:*

#### *The Range of Meaning of mal'āk and melā'kā (Key #1)*

One key to understanding Mormon's use of Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1 is recognizing the range of meaning in the Hebrew word *mal'āk* and its cognates. In its broadest sense, *mal'āk* denotes “messenger,” but also came to connote “heavenly messenger”<sup>34</sup> (cf. Ugaritic *mlak šmm*, “heavenly messengers”<sup>35</sup> or “messenger[s] of heaven”) or “angel” as an ontological reference designating a class belonging to the divine realm (though it should be noted that Greek *angelos*, whence English “angel” derives, also originally denoted simply a “messenger”). Considering the literary and scriptural tradition within which Mormon worked, the word that he most likely used that is here rendered “angels” in translation was the Hebrew plural *mal'ākīm*.

Mormon's sermon also appears to employ a polyptoton involving “angels” (*mal'ākīm*) — “work” (*mēle'ket* < *mēlā'kā*). The “office of [the] ministry” of *mal'ākīm*, he says, is “to fulfill and do the work [Hebrew *mēle'ket*] of the covenants of the Father.” As a play on *mal'ākīm* and *mēlā'kā* or *mēle'ket*, this statement qualifies as something of a miniature etymology.<sup>36</sup> In other words, Mormon intimates the appropriateness of the word *mal'āk* for that distinctive class of beings assigned to “fulfill and do the **work** [*mēle'ket*] of the covenants of the Father.”

Moroni 7:29–32	3 Nephi 24:1 (Quoting Malachi 3:1)
<p>And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have <b>angels</b> [Hebrew <i>mal'ākīm</i>] ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and <b>to fulfil and to do <u>the work</u></b> [<i>mēle'ket</i>] <b>of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made</b> [<i>kārat</i>] unto the children of men, to <b>prepare the way among</b> the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, <b>the Lord God prepareth the way</b> that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and <b>after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants</b> [<i>bērītôt</i>] <b>which he hath made</b> [<i>kārat</i>] <b>unto the children of men.</b></p>	<p>And it came to pass that he commanded them that they should write the words which <b>the Father had given unto <u>Malachi</u></b>, which he should tell unto them. And it came to pass that after they were written he expounded them. And these are the words which he did tell unto them, saying: <b>Thus said the Father unto <u>Malachi</u></b> [<i>mal'ākī</i>] — Behold, I will send <b><u>my messenger</u></b> [<i>mal'ākī</i>], and <b>he shall prepare the way before me</b>, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even <b>the messenger of the covenant</b> [<i>mal'ak habbërit</i>], whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.</p>

The most significant terminological connections between Mormon 7:29–32 and 3 Nephi 24:1 (Malachi 3:1) can be distilled to these:

English Transliteration or Translated Term or Phrase	Verse	Hebrew Equivalent
1. Malachi my messenger messenger of the covenant angels work	3 Nephi 24:1 3 Nephi 24:1 3 Nephi 24:1 Moroni 7:29 Moroni 7:31	<i>mal'ākī</i> <i>mal'ākī</i> <i>mal'ak habbērīt</i> <i>mal'ākīm</i> <i>mēlā'kâ/mēle'ket</i>
2. The Father Cf. “the fathers”	3 Nephi 24:1 Moroni 7:31 Moroni 7:32 (3 Nephi 25:5)	'āb
3. covenant covenants	3 Nephi 24:1 Moroni 7:31–32	<i>bērīt</i> <i>bērītôt</i>
4. prepare the way prepareth the way	3 Nephi 24:1 Moroni 7:31 Moroni 7:32	(û)pinnâ derek

The noun *mēlā'kâ/mēle'ket* denotes “work” or “business” — originally, “work” or “business” to which or on which one is “sent” — i.e., a “mission.” This term is used to denote the “work” or “workmanship” of temple creation (e.g., Exodus 35:21, 24, 29, 31, 33, 35; 36:1–8; 1 Kings 5:16 [MT 5:30]; 7:14, 22, 40, 51; 9:23); temple maintenance (2 Kings 12:11, 14–15; 22:5, 9); and the divine “work” of world creation from which God rested or ceased (Genesis 2:2–3) and from which Israel was to cease on the Sabbath (see, e.g., Exodus 20:9–10; 31:14–15; 35:2).

A look at the root *l'k* in cognate Semitic languages also helps round out an etymological and semantic picture for *mal'āk* and *mēlā'kâ*. The Ugaritic verb *l'k* meant “to send (a message)” or “entrust with a message.”<sup>37</sup> The derived nouns *mlak* (“messenger”)<sup>38</sup> and *mlakt* (“message, mission, missive, [and] embassy”) closely match their Hebrew cognates in form and meaning. The Ethiopic verb *la'aka*, “send, commission,”<sup>39</sup> the derived nouns *mal'ak*, “messenger, angel, governor, prefect, prince, chief, captain, ruler, commander”<sup>40</sup> and *mal(ē)'ēkt*, “letter, message, epistle, duty, business, service, cult mission, ministry, function, office, legation”<sup>41</sup> all show how productive *l'k* became in that language. Old South Arabic attests the verb *l'k* “send,” which seems to have come to mean “dedicate.”<sup>42</sup>

*The Father (and “the Fathers”)* (Key #2)

A second key to understanding Mormon’s use of Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1 in Moroni 7 is recognizing the texts’ mutual emphasis on God the Father as the subject of divine action. Jesus’s teachings in 3 Nephi consistently emphasize God the Father as the ultimate source of all divine action. Mormon’s speech reflects a similar paradigm. In 3 Nephi passages in which Jesus quotes scripture, he often substitutes “the Father” for the divine title *yhwh* (e.g., 3 Nephi 20:35, quoting Isaiah 52:10; cf. also 3 Nephi 21:9 quoting Habakkuk 1:5).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, instead of using the usual collocation “saith the Lord” (*ně’um yhwh*, literally “utterance of Yahweh”),<sup>44</sup> Jesus similarly substitutes “the Father”: “saith the Father.”<sup>45</sup>

We should further note here that in the 3 Nephi version of the Malachi text, the term “Father”/“fathers” (*’āb/’ābôt*) helps to form an *inclusio* that brackets the text from 3 Nephi 24:1 (“Thus saith **the Father** unto Malachi ...”) to 3 Nephi 24:25–26: “Behold, **I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord**: and he shall turn the heart of **the fathers** to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5–6 [MT 3:23–24]; 3 Nephi 25:5–6). Another significant part of this *inclusio* is the very similar phrases *hiněni šölēah* and *hinnē ’anōki šölēah*, both rendered “Behold, I will send ...” in the KJV.

The similarity of these two phrases in addition to the structure of the text of Malachi 3:1 and 4:5–6 (MT 3:23–24), leads to a natural association of the Malachi/my messenger prophecy with the Elijah prophecy. Indeed, according to the NT Gospels, Jesus saw Malachi’s “messenger” (Malachi 3:1) prophecy as somewhat interchangeable with his Elijah prophecy (Malachi 4:5–6 [MT 3:23–24]), perhaps as an interpretive *Gezera Shawa* on the verb *šālah*, or “send.”<sup>46</sup> Regarding John the Baptist’s Aaronic priestly role, Jesus stated: “But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. [For] this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger [*ton angelon mou*] before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” (Matthew 11:9–10; Luke 7:26–27). To this he then adds, “and if ye will receive it, this is Elias [Elijah], which was for to come” (Matthew 11:14; see also JST Matthew 17:11; Luke 1:17; JST John 1:21–22).<sup>47</sup> Joseph Smith’s interpretation of the angel of Revelation 7:2 (D&C 77:9; see also D&C 110:12) and John the Revelator (D&C 77:14) as fulfillments of the promised Elias attests the great flexibility with which the two Malachi prophecies could be interpreted and understood. JST John 1:28 identifies Jesus as Elias.

Noting that the name Elijah means “Jehovah is my God” and its appropriateness for Malachi’s prophecy regarding the “fathers” and the “children,” Russell M. Nelson sees a Father-Son symbol in the name Elijah (’ēliyyāhû): “Embedded in Elijah’s name are the Hebrew terms for both the Father and the Son,”<sup>48</sup> namely ’ēlî (“my God”) and yāhû (“Jeho[vah]”).

*“The Covenant” and “the Covenants” (Key #3)*

A third key closely correlates with the second. “The covenant” in the collocation “messenger of the covenant” mentioned by Malachi (Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1) is “the covenant of the Father” of which Jesus speaks in 3 Nephi 21:4 and which Moroni mentions as he concludes the Book of Mormon record in Moroni 10:33. It is the covenant that subsumes all of “the covenants” (Moroni 7:31–32) that God “cuts” with humankind.

In 3 Nephi 20, Jesus places particular tremendous emphasis on the Father as the covenant-making party:

- “the covenant that the Father hath made” (3 Nephi 20:12);
- “my people with whom the Father hath covenanted” (3 Nephi 20:19);
- “ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers” (3 Nephi 20:25);
- “The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant ... then fulfilleth the Father the covenant which he made with Abraham” (3 Nephi 20:26–27);
- “Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled” (3 Nephi 20:46).

*“Prepare the Way” (Key #4)*

Mormon’s appropriation of the collocation “prepare the way” (Hebrew *pinnâ derek*) constitutes the fourth key to understanding his use of Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1. Mormon’s conception of a hierarchy of *mal’ākîm* who “fulfill and do the work of the covenants of the Father ... to prepare the way” surely reflects — and perhaps owes something to — what Zenos depicts as the hierarchy of the Lord of the vineyard, his servant, and the fellow-servants called by the Lord of the vineyard’s servant: “Wherefore, go to, and call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, **that we may prepare the way**, that I may

bring forth again the natural fruit” (Jacob 5:61); “And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit, then **shall ye prepare the way** for them, that they may grow” (Jacob 5:64). Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree is eminently the description of the fulfilling of a divine covenant against all apparent odds.

Many scholars believe that Malachi’s “prepare the way before me” phraseology in Malachi 3:1 deliberately recalls the language of Isaiah 40:3, “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, **Prepare ye the way of the Lord**, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3). Isaiah 40:3, as part of Isaiah 40:1–14, is widely seen as reflecting a divine council setting,<sup>49</sup> with the council commissioning divine or angelic messengers. Perhaps, both Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 should be understood as reflecting the conceptual framework of a hierarchy of divine beings or heavenly “messengers” or “servants” similar to Jacob 5:61, 64.

As additional background to Mormon’s appropriation of the language of Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1, the collocation “prepare the way” or its passive biform “the way is prepared” enjoyed a long currency in the Nephite scriptural tradition. In 1 Nephi 10, Nephi uses language akin to and drawn from Isaiah 40:3: “And he spake also concerning a prophet who should come before the Messiah, to prepare the way of the Lord — yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight” (1 Nephi 10:7–8).

He subsequently describes John the Baptist thus: “I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him [the Redeemer of the World]” (1 Nephi 11:27).

Nephi’s use of the phrase “prepare the way” twice in connection with the (Aaronic) priestly mission and role of John the Baptist describes how he desired to see and then saw the vision of the tree of life that his father had seen. Against the backdrop of his use of “prepare the way” in 1 Nephi 10:7–8, he first uses the passive form “the way is prepared” as a description of the doctrine of Christ: “**the way is prepared** for all men from the foundation of the world” (1 Nephi 10:18). In doing thus, Nephi’s language also perhaps reflects the influence of his own father Lehi’s words, “for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And **the way is prepared** from the fall of man, and salvation is free” (2 Nephi 2:4). In this example, “way” has reference to “the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24) and “the way” that Nephi would later use to describe the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 31).<sup>50</sup>

For Nephi, the collocation “prepare a way”/“prepare the way” constituted a key element in the great statement of his personal faith and

ethos: “I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save **he shall prepare a way** for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7). Nephi recorded this statement after decades of reflection on the events that defined his life (obtaining the brass plates, the Arabian wilderness experience, their transoceanic exodus, etc.), events in which an intermediary truly helped “prepare the way” (see, e.g., 1 Nephi 3:29–31; 4:3; 7:10; 11:14–14:29; 15:29; 16:38; 17:45; 19:8, 10). Thus, Nephi knew the reality that “the Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, **he prepareth a way** to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words” (1 Nephi 9:6).

In fact, Nephi relates the Lord’s promise regarding their journey through the Arabian wilderness and ahead of their own “exodus” through “the sea”<sup>51</sup>: “I will also be your light in the wilderness; and **I will prepare the way before you**, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments” (1 Nephi 17:13). That promise echoes the symbolic language with which Isaiah described Israel’s exodus from Egypt:

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut **Rahab** [mythologizing codename for Egypt], and wounded the **dragon** [*tannîn*]? Art thou not it [he] which hath dried the **sea** [*yām*, i.e., Yamm], the waters of the great deep; that **hath made the depths of the sea a way** [*derek*] for the ransomed to pass over. (Isaiah 51:9–10; 2 Nephi 8:9–10)

As Daniel Belnap has pointed out, Yahweh acts as Divine Warrior to redeem his covenant people from their enemies.<sup>52</sup> Jacob, Nephi’s brother, gave an extraordinary exegesis of this very text when he described the resurrection — of which the priesthood ordinance of baptism is, of course, a figure — in exodus language:

O how great the goodness of our God, who **prepareth a way** [*derek*] **for our escape** from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, **death and hell**, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit. And because of **the way of deliverance of our God**, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave. (2 Nephi 9:10–11)

Belnap additionally noted the correspondence between the Levantine deity Mot (*môt*, death) and what Jacob refers to as “death”

and between Sheol (*šē'ôl*, the world of spirits) and “hell.”<sup>53</sup> Jacob refers to them collectively as “this awful monster” and “that monster.”

In his exegesis of Isaiah 51:9–10, Jacob appears to connect “the sea” — or Yamm — with Death and Hell. However, Jacob may also have a connection in mind between Rahab (“surger,” which “plays upon the restlessness and crashing of the sea”)<sup>54</sup> — a codename for Egypt elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>55</sup> and the “black land” (Egyptian *km.t*) of Israel’s bondage and captivity — with Sheol, “the dark and benighted dominion,”<sup>56</sup> and the land of the captivity of spirits. Appropriately, then, “the dragon” or *tannin* (LXX Greek *drakōn*) would correspond with the devil:

Isaiah 51:9–10	Correspondence in 2 Nephi 9 (Jacob’s Exegesis)
“the sea” ( <i>yām</i> ) — i.e., Yamm	≈ Death (Mot, <i>môt/māwet</i> )
Rahab (Egypt)	≈ Hell (Sheol, <i>šē'ôl</i> )
Tannin ( <i>tannîn</i> , “the dragon”; cf. Leviathan, “that piercing serpent” and “that crooked serpent”) <sup>72</sup>	≈ The devil (cf. “that old serpent, the devil”) <sup>73</sup>

Jacob very appropriately<sup>57</sup> describes the devil in similar terms to death and hell (Mot and Sheol): “that awful monster the devil” (2 Nephi 9:19). In this sermon, Jacob offers the best description anywhere in scripture of what the human situation would be if Jesus Christ had not performed the atonement — or had not acted as Divine Warrior on our behalf. We would become *mal’ākîm*, but not angels of the Lord in his economy and not doing his *mēlā’kâ*:

O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, **angels to a devil**, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, **who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light**, and stirreth up the

children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness. (2 Nephi 9:8–9)

Regarding this passage, Daniel Belnap observes that “in such a state, there was no way in which any of the covenantal promises could have been kept. Israel, indeed all mankind, would have been cut off, cast out, and helpless in the face of such. Death is a monster that must be defeated by God for salvation and deliverance to even be possible; all other creative, martial endeavors are but types of this battle.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, Jesus Christ’s atonement makes the promises and “covenants of the Father” sure promises and covenants, upon which men and women can lay hold to the degree that they are true and faithful. Perhaps that is why Alma the Younger,<sup>59</sup> Samuel the Lamanite,<sup>60</sup> and Moroni<sup>61</sup> all use the collocation “prepare the way” as metonymic for living the doctrine of Christ. Notably, the ministrations of the Aaronic priesthood — including baptism and the administration of the sacrament (of the Lord’s supper), which Jesus institutes at the temple in Bountiful in 3 Nephi 18 — enable one to “always have his Spirit to be with [him or her]” and “the ministering of angels[, which] is one of the manifestations of that Spirit.”<sup>62</sup> In this way, we, like *mal’ākīm* or as *mal’ākīm*, are enabled or empowered to “prepare the way” and to “fulfill and do the work of the covenants of the Father” (Moroni 7:31). As Nephi declared, “then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 31:13).<sup>63</sup>

In light of all of the foregoing, we can appreciate the significance of Nephi’s use of Deuteronomy 18:15 as a prophecy of Jesus’s post-resurrection appearance among the Nephites and Lamanites at the temple in Bountiful: “And the Lord will surely **prepare a way** for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things **whatsoever he shall say unto you**” (1 Nephi 22:20). At the temple in Bountiful, Jesus, as messenger of the covenant (*mal’ak habbērit*), uses the collocation “prepare the way” to promise the reversal of Israel’s scattered condition throughout the world: “Yea, **the work** [Hebrew *hammēlā’kâ*] shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to **prepare the way whereby they may come unto me**, that they may call on the Father in my name” (3 Nephi 21:27). Jesus makes this statement just previous to and in the same context that he dictates the Malachi text. The ministering of angels as described by Mormon in Moroni 7:29–32 is no more or less than the “work” of “messengers”/“angels” on both sides of the veil to “prepare the way.”

### “Have Angels Ceased to Appear unto the Children of Men”?

Thus, Moroni 7:29–32 offers one of the most vivid and instructive scriptural glimpses into what the New Testament writers described as God’s *oikonomia* (“responsibility of management, management of a household, direction, office,”<sup>64</sup> literally, “the work of an estate manager [*oikonomos*]”<sup>65</sup>; cf. English economy). It is similar in range of meaning to *mēlā’kâ* or *mēle’ket*. Mormon cites the ongoing “ministering of angels” as evidence of the consistency of God’s economy and character throughout time and eternity:

And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. And he hath said: Repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved. And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you, and God will show unto you, with power and great glory at the last day, that they are true, and if they are true has the day of miracles ceased? Or **have angels** [*mal’ākîm*] **ceased to appear unto the children of men?** Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and **it is by faith that angels** [*mal’ākîm*] **appear and minister unto men;** wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. (Moroni 7:33–37)

Mormon’s sermon preserves a statement that is not attested in his account of Jesus’s ministry among the Lamanites and Nephites in 3 Nephi: “And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33). Moroni replicates a version of this statement in Moroni 10:23: “And Christ truly said unto our fathers: if ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient in me.”<sup>66</sup> John Gee observes that “Mormon (whom Moroni quotes) uses this passage to show that faith allows one to ‘lay hold upon every good thing’ (Moroni 7:21–39).”<sup>67</sup> As noted above, one of the “good thing[s]” that faith, repentance, and baptism — the doctrine of Christ — help one to lay hold upon or access is the ministering of angels (*mal’ākîm*), which in turn helps one to lay hold upon salvation and eternal life.

Mormon’s exposition of the ministering of angels in the context of the doctrine of Christ and the “power of the Holy Ghost” recalls the

words of Nephi: “Angels [*mal’ākīm*] speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

### Conclusion

The shared terminology of Malachi 3:1/3 Nephi 24:1 and Moroni 7:29–32 makes textual dependence of the latter upon the former highly likely. Mormon appears to have used the version of Malachi 3:1 dictated by Jesus and recorded by scribes at the temple in Bountiful to adumbrate the doctrine of the ministering of “angels” as “messengers” of the covenant who “prepare the way”<sup>68</sup> and “fulfill and do the work of the covenants of the Father.” Just as the name “Elias” — partly on the basis of Malachi 3:1 with which the Elijah prophecy in Malachi 4:5–6 (MT 3:23–24) is strongly linked — became a title used of John the Baptist and other angelic-priestly ministrants, the term *mal’ākī* (“my messenger”) grew beyond being a personal name to refer to a number of heavenly messengers, including the Lord himself. This is particularly appropriate if the name Malachi originally meant “Yahweh is my messenger.” However, it is also appropriate even if “Malachi” meant “messenger/angel of Yahweh,” especially if “angel” (*mal’āk*, *angelos*) in this context can be understood, like Greek *paraklētos*, as “*Doppelgänger*,” or “alter ego”<sup>69</sup> — i.e., spiritual “double” as it clearly is in Matthew 18:10 and Acts 12:14–15.<sup>70</sup>

Moroni, who took pains to preserve the sermon in which Mormon his father explained the doctrine of the ministering of angels (Moroni 7), becomes just such a messenger (see Joseph Smith — History 1:33, 44, 46–47, 49–50, 52–54, 59–61).<sup>71</sup> In revealing the location of the gold plates and preparing Joseph Smith to carry out the translation, Moroni acted as the “messenger of the covenant” — i.e., “the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon” (D&C 84:57).

Moroni was one of numerous messengers or angels to minister to Joseph, messengers that included the Lord himself. We should count it no mean detail that the first intimation of the building of a temple in the revelations that became the Doctrine and Covenants came in a revelation through the prophet Joseph Smith to Edward Partridge on December 9, 1830 in which the Lord quoted Malachi 3:1: “I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God; wherefore, gird up your loins and **I will suddenly come to my temple**. Even so. Amen” (D&C 36:8). The Lord here, in effect, identified himself as the “messenger of the covenant” or *mal’ak habbērīt*. It took the Latter-day Saints about five more years to

get a temple built, but once they built it “the Lord ... suddenly c[a]me to his temple” (see D&C 110:2–10) along with other messengers (D&C 110:11–16) in fulfillment of Malachi 3:1 and 4:5–6 (MT 3:23–24; see further D&C 110:14–15).

In light of all the foregoing we can better appreciate the Lord’s promise regarding divine messengers that include angels (deceased loved ones not least), apostles, prophets, and even himself: “And whoso receiveth you, there I will be also, for **I will go before your face**. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, **and mine angels** round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88). These are the messengers of the covenant of which Malachi and Mormon spoke.

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### Endnotes

1. Current editions of the Masoretic Text (i.e., the Hebrew Bible) and the Greek LXX have Malachi 3–4 arranged as a single chapter.
2. Cf. 3 Nephi 26:6–8.
3. The LXX reads *ml' kw* in its *Vorlage* (parent text) as an appellative or an official title and not as a personal name, cf. Zechariah 1:9, 11.
4. Cf. Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 1245, 1247.

5. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 212, quoted in Jonathan Gibson, *Covenant Continuity and Fidelity: A Study of Inner Biblical Allusion and Exegesis in Malachi* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 26.
6. Arad ostrakon 97:1. Yohanan Aharoni (*Arad Inscriptions* [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981], 109) writes: “The engraving is crude and the form of most of the letters is distorted. Thus it would seem that this inscription is incised by a man not used to writing, as in several inscriptions from Beer-Sheba, and perhaps two horizontal strokes are written in the wrong direction. We would therefore have the name Malachi or perhaps Malachi[yahu]. This name appears in the Bible only as the name of one of the prophets. Even though the reading is not entirely certain, it supports the theory that Malachi is the name of the prophet and not his title.” G.I. Davies (*Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991]), 36, 423) also understands *ml'ky* in this inscription as a proper name. See also Joel S. Burnett, “Divine Silence or Divine Absence? Converging Metaphors in Family Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant” in *Reflections on the Silence of God: A Discussion with Marjo Korpel and Joannes de Moor*, ed. Bob Becking (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 52. Burnett cites Johannes Renz and Wolfgang Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik, Band I: Die althebräischen Inschriften* (Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995).
7. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, 109.
8. Gibson, *Covenant Continuity and Fidelity*, 27. See also p. 27n15.
9. Andrew Hill, *Malachi* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 135–36; Hill, s.v. “Malachi, Book of,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
10. Hill (“Malachi, Book of”) concedes regarding “‘Yah(weh) is my messenger’ or ‘Yah(weh) is an angel’” that “While highly irregular, this is not impossible given the unusual revelatory ministry of the angel of the Lord in the OT (cf. Judges 13:18; 1 Chr 21:18; Zech 1:11; 3:5; 12:8).”
11. Burnett, “Divine Silence or Divine Absence?” 52.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*

14. See, e.g., Frank L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972), 96.
15. Burnett, “Divine Silence of Divine Absence?” 52.
16. *Ibid.*
17. John W. Welch, “Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ from the Book of Mormon” in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2003), 316–42.
18. Robert F. Smith, in a letter to the author (December 3, 2018), notes that the chiasmic structure comprising Abraham 1:1–2:4 centers on “voice” in 1:15 (“I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God”) and 1:16 (“and his voice was unto me ... my name is Jehovah”). In between both instances of voice, “visions of the Almighty” and “the angel of his presence” stand in parallel. See also “Pearl of Great Price,” Chiasmus Resources, *BYU Studies Quarterly*, last accessed December 20, 2018, <http://chiasmusbibliography.com/pearl-great-price>.
19. See footnote “a” to Abraham 1:16 in 1981 and 2013 editions: “Abram” in 1:16–17; 2:3, 6, 14, 17, in *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1842, but “Abraham” in all publications since *Millennial Star*, July 1842. The first publication of the Book of Abraham contained the short-form “Abram” at Abraham 1:16–17, 2:3, 6, 14, and 17, though several earlier Kirtland manuscripts employed it also at Abraham 2:2, likely reflecting the no longer extant original manuscript. See *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 703–6; *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): 719–22; *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 14 (May 16, 1842): 783–84; *Book of Abraham* MSS 2 and 3 (MSS 1–4 employ the short-form at Abraham 2:2); these short-forms were lengthened in the July 1842 *Millennial Star* [likewise in B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1950), 4:520–34], and in the Pearl of Great Price; Walter L. Whipple, *An Analysis of Textual Changes in “The Book of Abraham” and in the “Writings of Joseph Smith, the Prophet” in the Pearl of Great Price* (Master’s Thesis, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1959), 52; cf. Hugh W. Nibley, “The Meaning of the Kirtland Papers,” *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (Summer 1971): 350–99. Though they are incomplete, the Book of Abraham MSS 1–4 agree in using the short-form from Abraham 1:16 2:17 (MSS 2 and 3 cease before this point). Aramaic *’nh ’brm* (“I, Abram”) is characteristic of

the Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran Cave 1 (1QapGn) (Robert F. Smith, personal communication).

20. Crispin Louis-Fletcher, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 65–87. Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 103–45; Devorah Dimant, “Men as Angels: The Self-image of the Qumran Community,” *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Adele Berlin (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, 1996), 93–103.
21. See, e.g., William J. Hamblin, “The Sod of YHWH and the Endowment,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Studies* 4 (2013): 147–54.
22. Cf. 1 Kings 14:6 (*šālûah*, “sent,” LXX = *apostolos*); Ezra 7:14 employs the form *šēliah* (LXX = *apestalē*). See especially Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 231–32.
23. See, e.g., Geo Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book (King and Saviour III)* (Uppsala, Sweden: Lundequist, 1950).
24. 3 Nephi 24:1 begins: “And it came to pass that he commanded them that they should write the words which the Father had given unto Malachi, which he should tell unto them.”
25. Mormon 9:33: “And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record.”
26. See, e.g., the phrases, “And the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall” (1 Nephi 22:24) “he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings” (2 Nephi 25:13); “the S[u]n of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them” (2 Nephi 26:9). It is possible that these expressions do not originate with Malachi at all but constitute quotations of an earlier prophet whose unattested writings were preserved on the plates of brass.. For more on this subject, see Book of Mormon Central, “What Parts of the Old Testament Were on the Plates of Brass? (1 Nephi 5:10),” *Kno Why* #410, Book of Mormon Central, February 22, 2018, <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/what-parts-of-the-old-testament-were-on-the-plates-of-brass>.

27. 3 Nephi 10:18.
28. 3 Nephi 11:1–2: “And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together, of the people of Nephi, round about the temple which was in the land Bountiful; and they were marveling and wondering one with another, and were showing one to another the great and marvelous change which had taken place. And they were also conversing about this Jesus Christ, of whom the sign had been given concerning his death.”
29. See Mosiah 3:2–4.
30. Cf. the phrase “sons [children] of the land of the covenant [treaty, league]” (Ezekiel 30:5, author’s translation).
31. Luke records: “To [the apostles whom Jesus had chosen] also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Jesus’s “forty-day” teaching was likely, in nature and function (i.e., church leadership-building) similar to much of what we read in 3 Nephi 11–27.
32. D&C 93:6: “And John saw and bore record of the fulness of my glory, and the fulness of John’s record is hereafter to be revealed.”
33. D&C 93:18: “And it shall come to pass, that if you are faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John.”
34. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 585. Hereafter cited as HALOT.
35. Gregorio Del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, s.v. “mlak” in *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003).
36. Michael H. Floyd, s.v. “Etiology” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 2007), 2:352. He observes, “As a critical term applied to narrative, *etiology* refers to stories that tell how something came to be or came to have its definitive characteristics. In Scripture such stories are typically told about names of persons and places, rites and customs, ethnic identities and other natural phenomena.”
37. Del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, s.v. “l’k,” *Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language*.
38. *Ibid.*, s.v. “mlak.”

39. Wolf Leslau, s.v. “la’aka” in *Concise Dictionary of Ge’ez* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010).
40. Ibid., s.v. “mal’ak.”
41. Ibid., s.v. “mal(ë)’ëkt.”
42. Joan Copeland Biella, s.v. “l’k” in *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004).
43. 3 Nephi 20:35: “The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father.”
44. The Hebrew noun *nē’um* or *nē’um* (construct *nē’um*) appears to be the source of the name of the prophet Neum mentioned in 1 Nephi 19:10. If so, Neum would be a hypocoristic name meaning “(divine) utterance” or “utterance [of Yahweh].” See Book of Mormon Onomasticon, s.v. “Neum,” last modified January 21, 2016, 13:14, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/NEUM>. Alternatively, “according to the words of Neum” (1 Nephi 19:10) might be equivalent to Hebrew *kidbar nē’um*, or *kēdibrē nē’um* “according to the words of prophecy,” which is similar to the frequently used biblical formula (Genesis 44:2; Exodus 8:9; Leviticus 10:7; 2 Kings 2:22, 5:14; Jeremiah 13:2, 32:8; Haggai 2:4). The scribes may have misunderstood the original meaning during transmission of the text (Robert F. Smith, personal communication).
45. 3 Nephi 16:7–8, 10, 13–14; 20:20, 28–29; 21:14, 20, 29.
46. The exegetical conjoining of Malachi’s “messenger” and Elijah’s prophecies on the basis of *šālah* (LXX *exapostellō/apostellō*) roughly conforms to Arland Hultgren’s (*Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011], 182) description of *Gezera Shawa*: “According to the [*Gezera Shawa*] principle, two texts using the same word can be brought together, and what is taught in the one can be applied to the other as well.”
47. In Matthew 17:10–1, Jesus explicitly connects John the Baptist with the figure of Elijah from Malachi 4:5–6 (MT 3:23–24) and JST Matthew 17:11 even more explicitly connects John and Elijah with the “messenger” prophecy of Malachi 3:1: “And again I say unto you that Elias has come already, concerning whom it is written, Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and they knew him not, and have done unto him, whatsoever they listed”; Luke 1:17: “And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and

- the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”
48. Russell M. Nelson and Wendy W. Nelson, “Open the Heavens through Temple and Family History Work,” *Ensign* (October 2017): 36.
  49. See Frank Moore Cross, “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12 (1953): 274–77. See also John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 22.
  50. Noel B. Reynolds, “This Is the Way,” *Religious Educator* 14, no. 3 (2013): 79–91; Reynolds, “The Ancient Doctrine of the Two Ways and the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 56, no. 3 (2017): 49–78.
  51. Cf. Jacob’s characterization of the family’s journey as a kind of exodus: “And now, my beloved brethren, seeing that our merciful God has given us so great knowledge concerning these things, let us remember him, and lay aside our sins, and not hang down our heads, for we are not cast off; nevertheless, we have been driven out of the land of our inheritance; but we have been led to a better land, for the Lord has made the sea [*yām*, cf. Yamm] our path, and we are upon an isle of the sea” (2 Nephi 10:20).
  52. Daniel Belnap, “I Will Contend with Them That Contendeth with Thee’: The Divine Warrior in Jacob’s Speech of 2 Nephi 6–10,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, no. 1–2 (2008): 20–39.
  53. *Ibid.*
  54. HALOT, 1193.
  55. In addition to Isaiah 51:9, see also Isaiah 30:7; Psalm 87:4. Cf. Psalm 89:11; Job 9:13, 26:12, 9:13.
  56. D&C 121:4. In his exhortation to his son Corianton, Alma calls the non-paradisiacal “state” within Sheol “that endless night of darkness” (Alma 41:7).
  57. Book of Mormon Central, “Why Does Jacob Choose a ‘Monster’ as a Symbol for Death and Hell? (2 Nephi 9:10),” *KnowWhy* #34, Book of Mormon Central, Feb 16, 2016, <https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/why-does-jacob-choose-a-%E2%80%9Cmonster%E2%80%9D-as-a-symbol-for-death-and-hell>.
  58. Belnap, “I Will Contend with Them,” 31.

59. Alma 7:9: “But behold, the Spirit hath said this much unto me, saying: Cry unto this people, saying — Repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth.”
60. Helaman 14:9: “And behold, thus hath the Lord commanded me, by his angel, that I should come and tell this thing unto you; yea, he hath commanded that I should prophesy these things unto you; yea, he hath said unto me: Cry unto this people, repent and prepare the way of the Lord.”
61. Ether 9:28: “And there came prophets in the land again, crying repentance unto them — that they must prepare the way of the Lord or there should come a curse upon the face of the land; yea, even there should be a great famine, in which they should be destroyed if they did not repent.”
62. Dallin H. Oaks (“The Aaronic Priesthood and the Sacrament,” *Ensign* [November 1998]: 37) asks: “What does it mean that the Aaronic Priesthood holds ‘the key of the ministering of angels’ and of the ‘gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins’? The meaning is found in the ordinance of baptism and in the sacrament. Baptism is for the remission of sins, and the sacrament is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. Both should be preceded by repentance. When we keep the covenants made in these ordinances, we are promised that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. The ministering of angels is one of the manifestations of that Spirit.”
63. For more on what being empowered to “speak with the tongue of angels” means in a temple context, see Neal A. Rappleye, “Angelic Speech as a Form of Deification,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 21 (2016): 303–23. Rappleye fruitfully compares the “baptism of fire” in 2 Nephi 31:13 to Isaiah’s prophetic commission in Isaiah 6.
64. Walter Bauer, et. al, s.v. “oikonomia,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Fredrick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 697.
65. *Ibid.*
66. John Gee, “Quotations of the Sealed Portions of the Book of Mormon,” *Insights* 24 (2004): 2–3.

67. Ibid.
68. For an excellent treatment of the doctrinal significance of the phrase “prepare the way” from a Latter-day Saint perspective as pertaining to the function of the Aaronic Priesthood, see Gérald Caussé, “Prepare the Way,” *Ensign* (May 2017), 75–78.
69. John Ashton, s.v. “Paraclete,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:152–53. The Greek term *angelos* originally had the sense of “a messenger or envoy” and was used to describe “birds of augury” (see Richard John Cundliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* [Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963], 2.) Later on, *angelos* came to connote a “divine messenger, angel” (see H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1889], 4). Job 33:23 uses Hebrew *mēlîš* “interpreter, mediator, helper” (in parallel there with “angel, messenger”) which, in turn, is rendered in the Aramaic Targum as *p̄raqlītā*, a Greek loanword familiar to us in the form of New Testament *paraklētos*. Building on the work of numerous scholars, Ashton suggests the possibilities “advocate,” “intercessor,” “counselor,” “comforter”; “*Doppelgänger*,” “alter ego.” See Ashton, s.v. “Paraclete,” 152–53.
70. Matthew 18:10 and Acts 12:14–15 clearly use *angelos* in the sense of “*Doppelgänger*” or “double” — i.e., what we would understand as one’s spirit: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10); “And when she [Rhoda] knew Peter’s voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.” (Acts 12:14–15). Additional study forthcoming.
71. In Joseph Smith — History, Joseph Smith uses the noun “messenger” fifteen times to describe Moroni. He uses “messenger” three additional times to describe John the Baptist.
72. Isaiah 27:1; see also Amos 9:3; Job 3:8; 40:15–41:26; Psalm 74:13–23; 104:26.
73. 2 Nephi 2:18; see also Mosiah 16:13.

# READ THIS BOOK: A REVIEW OF THE MAXWELL INSTITUTE STUDY EDITION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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**Brant A. Gardner**

**Abstract:** *The Maxwell Institute Study Edition of the Book of Mormon is an important tool for personal and class study of the Book of Mormon. Not only does it provide a better reading experience, it has important features that enhance study.*

Review of Grant Hardy, ed. *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Maxwell Institute Study Edition* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018). 648 pp. \$35.00 (paperback).

During the October 2018 Women's session of general conference, President Russell M. Nelson challenged the sisters (and presumably all readers) to read the Book of Mormon by the end of 2018. This particular edition of the Book of Mormon arrives too late to help with that challenge, but the very next time Latter-day Saints are admonished to read the English version of the Book of Mormon, this is the edition they should read.

Because the *Maxwell Institute Study Edition* is not the official edition of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I am aware of the audacity of my suggestion to read this edition rather than the official one. One reason I am comfortable with that statement is that the *Study Edition* is based on the official version (1981, with 2013 updates). That means the words read will be the very words one would read in the official text. It is what the *Study Edition* adds that improves both the reading and the study experience.

The *Study Edition* is not totally new, but it is clearly totally revised and reexamined. In 2003 Grant Hardy published *The Book of Mormon:*

*A Reader's Edition* through the University of Illinois Press. At that time, he used the 1920 edition (in public domain) rather than the official version. What he innovated in that edition was a formatting designed, as the title indicated, for the reader. The text retained all the chapter and verse apparatus that allowed a reader to engage with any and all references to the Book of Mormon's verses, but they were formatted into paragraphs. Along with the paragraphs were section headers that provided in-context information about the subject of the following set of verses. Hardy also included a footnote to indicate where the original chapters ended, prior to the changes in the 1879 version of the Book of Mormon. It was a much nicer reading experience than the official text, which is broken into chunks by no logic other than whatever drove the decision to create a set of text as a verse.<sup>1</sup>

Grant Hardy himself is the editor of the new *Study Edition*, and it is clearly built upon his earlier work. Although he kept much, if not most, of the paragraphing from the *Reader's Edition*, he went through the text anew and at times changed his mind on where paragraphs would begin. The reason the same person could see the text in two different ways is that there is no precise way to capture paragraphs.

Also, neither the original nor the printer's manuscript contained much punctuation. Not only were there few periods, the capitalization was random, based more on words than on conceptual paragraphs. Having personally attempted similar paragraphing, I believe the text does not conform to the choices that drive modern paragraphing. Thus, creating paragraphs imposes on the text a logic not necessarily inherent in the text. All that means is that any two people creating paragraphs, and even the same person at different times, will create different paragraphs. The purpose of the paragraphs does not matter much. They are there to make reading easier, not to provide meaning in and of themselves.

Where the *Reader's Edition* marked the original chapters in footnotes, the original chapters are much more explicit in the *Study Guide*. At the center of each page's header, Hardy notes in brackets the original chapter number. To keep references clear, Hardy uses Arabic numerals for the current chapters and verses and Roman numerals for the 1830 chapters. Additionally, the original chapter numbers are shown in brackets when

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1. Orson Pratt versified the text for the 1879 version. A chapter and verse designation made it much easier to refer to the text and enable all readers to easily find the same passage. The decisions to create verses followed no specific logic. Pratt used the sentences as they were created for the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon and made selections based somewhat on size and on the meaning of the selected verses.

they appear within the text. Most of these appear before current chapters, but at times Orson Pratt divided the original chapter to provide ending information of one chapter at the beginning of the next.

Understanding the original chapters allows for a type of understanding unavailable in editions that follow only the modern chapters. No matter which edition we read, we can know which stories Nephi<sub>1</sub> included. Knowing which set of stories Nephi<sub>1</sub> thought belonged together in a chapter (for example chapter I comprises our chapters 1–5) helps us understand Nephi<sub>1</sub> himself rather than only the stories.

An important visual change comes in the sections quoting Isaiah. Rather than simply providing the text, Hardy highlights in bold the additions to the KJV text and provides footnotes for significant removals of text. This allows the reader not only to read the text but also to identify the differences easily. This is one of the places where the concept of study and easy reading combine. The reader learns important information simply through the process of reading the text, while the visual markers supply information quickly and easily.

Those who will read this text for study will find a wealth of information in the footnotes. Some footnotes indicate references to the Bible, others to intratextual links. Good study notes help the reader understand the text better. One of the ways Hardy supplies important information is by providing a footnote for references to important variant readings.

The authoritative work in the multiple changes in the text, from the manuscripts through all published versions, is Royal Skousen's *Analysis of the Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, an exhaustive look at all changes. Hardy combed that source to provide the important or interesting variants. Most readers of the *Study Edition* will be unaware that the *Analysis of the Textual Variants* is a work in six volumes and 4,060 pages. They will therefore be unaware of the significant labor Hardy undertook to digest the possible variants to identify those he deemed worth entering in the footnotes.

The *Reader's Edition* contained many helpful maps and charts, and many of those are included in the *Study Edition*, updated as needed. One difference is that the *Reader's Edition* was written for both Latter-day Saint and secular readers, and some of the notes were directed at the secular reader. The *Study Edition* is clearly for Latter-day Saints, and the secular-facing notes are not required. They are replaced by excellent introductions to information important to the faithful reader. A nice touch is placing the testimonies of the three and eight witnesses *before*

Emma Smith's and Joseph's testimonies. The statements are not new, but their placement in such prominence is.

I am sure one feature of the text will be mostly ignored, if not assumed to be an error. At the end of Words of Mormon and before the page indicating that Mormon's abridgment of the large plates is to begin, there is a single completely blank page. I hope that isn't an error, rather an effort to subtly remind the reader of an important distinction between what he or she has just read and the text that follows. Although we call the whole *The Book of Mormon*, technically, Mormon's book doesn't begin until Mosiah (and begins after the lost beginning to the book of Mosiah). That single blank page may be a striking reminder of a significant difference between the two parts of the text.

The *Study Edition* has the same text as the officially published Book of Mormon. Thus there is nothing to lose by reading this version. However, there is so much to gain that this is the version to prefer. Were I to teach a class on the Book of Mormon at any level, I would want the class to be reading this version.<sup>2</sup> There is simply much more to be understood as one reads.

Of course, read the Book of Mormon in any format, but if you have the option, read this version. It is currently the best edition of the Book of Mormon available.

**Brant A. Gardner** (MA, State University of New York Albany) is the author of *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* and *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, both published through Greg Kofford Books. He has contributed articles to *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl* and *Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community*. He has presented papers at the *FairMormon* conference as well as at *Sunstone*.

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2. Other versions are available. The use of paragraphs rather than verses is quite common in these editions, so the paragraphing is not the reason I recommend this version. Rather, it is in the additions that provide an easier interface into a deeper and more enriching understanding of the text.

# FEASTING ON THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Stephen O. Smoot

**Abstract:** *The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship has recently published a new study edition of the Book of Mormon. Edited by Grant Hardy, the Maxwell Institute Study Edition (MISE) incorporates important advances in Book of Mormon scholarship from the past few decades while grounding the reader's experience in the text of the Book of Mormon. The reformatted text presented in the MISE improves the readability of the Book of Mormon, while footnotes, charts, bibliographies, and short explanatory essays highlight the strides made in recent years related to Book of Mormon scholarship. The MISE is a phenomenal edition of the Book of Mormon that is representative of the sort of close attention and care Latter-day Saints should be giving the text.*

Review of Grant Hardy, ed. *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Maxwell Institute Study Edition* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University / Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018). 648 pp. \$35.00 (paperback).

Whether reading it as an act of piety, out of a desire to debunk its pretensions to divine revelation, or as an exercise in academic curiosity, one thing cannot be denied: the thoughtless handwaving and blithe dismissal past critics had for the Book of Mormon can no longer be seriously entertained. We are long past the days when the Book of Mormon can be feasibly deemed “a bungling and stupid production ... [with] nothing to commend it to a thinking mind,”<sup>1</sup> or

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1. “The Mormons,” *The Episcopal Recorder* 18, no. 7 (Philadelphia, April 9, 1840).

“a yeasty fermentation, formless, aimless, and inconceivably absurd.”<sup>2</sup> Rather, an informed, intelligent, and fair-minded evaluation of the book reveals “a remarkable text ... worthy of serious study,”<sup>3</sup> a text that “should rank among the great achievements of American literature,”<sup>4</sup> indeed, “a fascinating tale well worth reading for a number of reasons”<sup>5</sup> that tells a “dramatic story in a fine biblical style.”<sup>6</sup>

As such, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should avail themselves of resources that will enhance their study of the Book of Mormon in a manner befitting the book’s importance. Latter-day Saints are obliged by prophetic command to seek “out of the best books words of wisdom” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118). If they do not, if they treat the Book of Mormon lightly or “trifle with sacred things” intellectually as well as spiritually, they are liable to bring themselves and “the whole Church under condemnation” for having squandered “this great and marvelous gift the Lord has given to us.”<sup>7</sup>

The latest publication that seeks to engage the Book of Mormon is Grant Hardy’s new *Maxwell Institute Study Edition*.<sup>8</sup> The *MISE*, to borrow a useful acronym from Blair Hodges,<sup>9</sup> aims to help its intended Latter-day Saint readers “learn to read this sacred text as carefully as possible, with detailed attention to language, structure, and historical context,” the desired outcome for readers that “its message of salvation

2. Bernard DeVoto, “The Centennial of Mormonism,” *American Mercury* 19, no. 73 (January 1930), 5.

3. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 273.

4. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848*, *The Oxford History of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 314.

5. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, “Introduction,” in *The Book of Mormon*, trans. Joseph Smith, Jr. (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), viii.

6. “Freeman Dyson: By the Book,” *New York Times* (April 16, 2015), [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/books/review/19bkr-bythebook\\_dyson.t.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/books/review/19bkr-bythebook_dyson.t.html).

7. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Book of Mormon — Keystone of Our Religion,” *Ensign* (November 1986), 6, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1986/11/the-book-of-mormon-keystone-of-our-religion>.

8. Grant Hardy, ed. *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, Maxwell Institute Study Edition* (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University, and Deseret Book, 2018). Citations of this volume appear in the body of this review.

9. Blair Dee Hodges, “A Marvelous New Book of Mormon Study Edition,” *BYU Religious Education Review* (Fall 2018), 12–15, 33, <https://rsc.byu.edu/review/fall-2018/marvelous-new-book-mormon-study-edition>.

through Jesus Christ will become more compelling and its lessons for life more clear” (xvii). Hardy is certainly well-prepared to guide readers through the Book of Mormon. “In 2003, Hardy published his *Reader’s Edition* of the Book of Mormon with the University of Illinois Press to help scholars and students of other faiths engage more closely with” the book.<sup>10</sup> This edition has accomplished its purposes well, having become a valuable resource for Book of Mormon scholarship.<sup>11</sup> Hardy has likewise produced an important monograph that analyzes the Book of Mormon from the perspective of literary theory and criticism.<sup>12</sup> Himself a committed member of the Church who recognizes the need for unflinching intellectual honesty while also respecting faith,<sup>13</sup> it would be no exaggeration to say Hardy is one of the best-prepared individuals to offer a study edition of the Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saints.

The *MISE* “reproduces the official 1981 (2013) text exactly, aside from the modifications in punctuation needed for the addition of quotation marks and poetic stanzas” (xvi). That Hardy was given a license by the Church to use its official text of the Book of Mormon, besides the fact that the *MISE* is published by a Church-sponsored academic institution, should quickly assuage any doubts readers may have about whether Church leaders feel it is appropriate to undertake a critical study of the Book of Mormon. In fact, besides offering bibliographies of scholarly resources on the Book of Mormon (xvii–xviii, 624), the *MISE* also directs its readers’ attention to official “[Latter-day Saint] resources on the history, transmission, and translation of the Book of Mormon” in the form of the Joseph Smith Papers website and the Gospel Topics essays (xviii). Latter-day Saint readers may therefore rest assured, knowing that the *MISE* represents a synthesis of some of the best institutional and independent research on the Book of Mormon available.

In terms of structure, the *MISE* foregoes the traditional versified double columns Latter-day Saints are familiar with and opts for a reformatted layout that includes “original chapter divisions (since these were apparently on the gold plates and thus were intended by the ancient authors), modern paragraphing, superscripted verse numbers,

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10. Hodges, “A Marvelous New Book of Mormon Study Edition,” 12.

11. Kevin L. Barney, “An Elegant Presentation,” *FARMS Review* 16, no. 1 (2004), 1–10. The 25th volume of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* (2016) is devoted entirely to evaluating Hardy’s impact with his *Reader’s Edition* and other publications.

12. See Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*.

13. Hardy’s testimony can be read online at <https://www.fairmormon.org/testimonies/scholars/grant-hardy>.

indentation of embedded documents, a hypothetical map based on internal references, and multi-chapter and section headings that highlight the narrative context and structure” (xvi–xvii). Accompanying “footnotes point out textual variants, direct quotations, references to specific events, chronological markers, alternative punctuation, and a few explanations of language, literary forms, and transmission” (xvii). While “these explanations represent only a sampling of the kinds of features that could be observed from close readings of the text,” they nevertheless highlight “the narrative complexity and coherence of the Book of Mormon,” which in turn “offer[s] some of the strongest evidences of its historicity and miraculous translation” (xvii).<sup>14</sup> For this reason alone, Latter-day Saints should be very interested in picking up a copy of the *MISE*.

Another key component to the *MISE* is the incorporation of Royal Skousen’s fundamentally important Book of Mormon Critical Text Project. Skousen, “a professor of linguistics and English language at Brigham Young University, is the central figure in the academic analysis of the Book of Mormon text, including its origins, transmission, variants, and grammar” (xvi). Any reliable study edition of the Book of Mormon must utilize Skousen’s work, which Hardy of course recognizes:

The footnotes [in the *MISE*] highlight instances in which earlier readings of the original and printer’s manuscripts may be more accurate, clearer, or more felicitous. All of the textual notes in this edition are derived from Skousen’s work, as are many of the suggestions for alternative punctuation and word order. The notes here, however, are simplified, dispensing with Skousen’s indications of variants within a source, original and corrected readings in the manuscripts, spelling anomalies, and types of manuscript changes. (xvi)

This acknowledgement serves nicely in giving general readers some exposure to Skousen’s voluminous work without overwhelming them with the finer technical points of his scholarship. The *MISE* thus balances well the need to make the Book of Mormon readable while also providing useful critical notes.

The maps and charts provided as appendices in the *MISE* are helpful study aids that should help readers better visualize the Book of Mormon, keep straight its underlying sources and transmission process, and

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14. On this point, see Daniel C. Peterson, “An Apologetically Important Nonapologetic Book,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 25 (2016): 52–75.

remain grounded in both its internal chronology and the chronology of its translation and publication in the nineteenth century (599–610). The reproduction of primary sources from Joseph Smith and others involved in the coming forth of the Book of Mormon (including Emma Smith, Martin Harris, Lucy Mack Smith, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Mary Musselman Whitmer, and Elizabeth Ann Whitmer Cowdery) is likewise helpful and may give readers a glimpse into the rich documentary record connected to the same (611–19).

Perhaps the most noticeable difference between the *MISE* and Hardy's 2003 *Reader's Edition* is the "general notes" that appear toward the end of the book (620–624). Topics discussed include "anachronisms," "chronology," "coherence," "demographics," "geography," "language," "translation," and "witnesses." In each case Hardy summarizes the issue and provides a plausible answer provided by Latter-day Saint apologists. For example, after listing the most commonly mentioned anachronisms in the Book of Mormon ("horses, elephants, cattle, sheep, goats, swine, barley, wheat, steel, silk, swords, and chariots"), Hardy writes,

Several of these [anachronistic] items are mentioned only in passing, and it may be that the attention of the translator was focused on other, more significant matters. The King James Bible similarly includes anachronistic references to silk, steel, brass, and candles, and the Book of Mormon follows that translation in many respects. Or familiar terms may have been used to represent things unknown to the early Nephite settlers or to readers in Joseph Smith's day, as happened when the Spaniards first encountered New World animals, plants, and artifacts. For instance, many of the "swords" in the Book of Mormon could have been *macuahuitl* — wooden clubs embedded with obsidian blades (such weapons, unlike metal swords, could be stained with blood, as at Alma 24:12-15). Some of the anachronistic items may have had very limited production, though it is possible future discoveries will validate at least a few. References to cement at Helaman 11 were long thought to be anachronistic but have since been amply documented in Mesoamerica of the first century BC, and a New World species of barley was confirmed in the 1980s (though not yet in Mesoamerica). Perhaps the most troublesome of the commonly mentioned anachronisms is horses, which Joseph Smith certainly had experience with, yet there may be more to the story. The Nephite scripture

mentions horses in ten verses (aside from biblical quotations), but no one in the Book of Mormon is ever said to have ridden a horse. This is odd from a nineteenth-century American perspective. In any case, lists of apparent anachronisms should be considered alongside lists of correspondences with the ancient Americas such as roads, large cities, seasonal warfare, earthwork and timber fortifications, and sophisticated writing systems as well as cultural connections to the ancient Near East recognized only after the publication of the Book of Mormon, including prophetic commission and covenant patterns (1 Nephi 1, Mos 2–6), literary devices (e.g., 2 Nephi 4, Alma 6), a few Hebrew and Egyptian names (e.g., Nephi, Sariah, Mosiah, Alma, Jerushon, Paanchi), and details regarding ancient olive cultivation (Jacob). (620)

This essentially boils down the apologetic answer given by believing Latter-day Saint scholars on the issue of Book of Mormon anachronisms since at least the early work of Hugh Nibley and John L. Sorenson. Hardy’s purpose with the *MISE*, however, is not to get bogged down in polemics, so he keeps his discussion of apologetic issues to a minimum (enough to raise the points being debated and spark readers’ interest by giving a concise summary) and instead directs interested readers’ attention to a bibliography and online sites that offer “valuable resources for Book of Mormon scholarship” (624).<sup>15</sup> That Hardy included this material in the *MISE* seems to clearly indicate that his intended audience is not the same as that for his *Reader’s Edition*. Since it is at times both overtly pastoral and overtly apologetic, the *MISE* is geared toward a mainline Latter-day Saint readership, as opposed to the inter-faith and academic readership intended with the *Reader’s Edition*.

The design quality and look of the *MISE* is nothing short of superb. The type is crisp, the layout clean, and the notes and critical apparatus nonintrusive. This minimalism ensures that the reader is not distracted from what should be the main focus: the text. The original woodcuts by noted Latter-day Saint artist Brian Kershnik that illustrate the *MISE* amplify its aesthetic appeal. In short, the *MISE* looks good; an obvious care for aesthetic detail has gone into its production.

Lest I am misunderstood by my earlier comments, let me be clear that I by no means suggest that those who do not pick up a copy of

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15. Hardy recommends in particular the Neal A. Maxwell Institute, the Religious Studies Center at BYU, the Interpreter Foundation, and Book of Mormon Central.

the *MISE* will suffer divine punishment. Rather, I am saying that the sort of serious, close, careful, and thoughtful analysis and presentation Hardy gives the Book of Mormon with his new study edition is *precisely* the sort of engagement with the book that Latter-day Saints are obliged to undertake; both for their own sake as well as for ensuring that the Book of Mormon is received positively by non-Latter-day Saints. We Latter-day Saints do ourselves no favors in presenting the Book of Mormon to the world in a sloppy, amateurish, or uncritical manner that is likely to turn the book into a stumbling block rather than a foundation for admiration and testimony.

So, while one does not necessarily have to read the *MISE* to gain a testimony of the Book of Mormon (or even just a basic appreciation for it), reading it certainly wouldn't hurt. In fact, I cannot imagine how anyone (except perhaps the most doggedly cynical) could engage the *MISE* without having their opinion of the Book of Mormon elevated. For members of the Church who already have a testimony, I likewise cannot imagine how any who took the time to become familiar with the *MISE* would not have their testimony strengthened. I can therefore unreservedly recommend the *MISE* to anyone wishing to gain more from their study of the Book of Mormon.

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# CURIOSLY UNIQUE: JOSEPH SMITH AS AUTHOR OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

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Brian C. Hales

**Abstract:** *The advent of the computer and the internet allows Joseph Smith as the “author” of the Book of Mormon to be compared to other authors and their books in ways essentially impossible even a couple of decades ago. Six criteria can demonstrate the presence of similarity or distinctiveness among writers and their literary creations: author education and experience, the book’s size and complexity, and the composition process and timeline. By comparing these characteristics, this essay investigates potentially unique characteristics of Joseph Smith and the creation of the Book of Mormon.*

Historically, many critics have dismissed the Book of Mormon by classifying its creation as remarkable but not *too* remarkable. As naturalist Dan Vogel explains: “The Book of Mormon was a remarkable accomplishment for a farm boy .... While Smith continued to produce religious texts, the Book of Mormon remained his most creative, ambitious work in scope and originality.”<sup>1</sup> Like Vogel, skeptics commonly assume that human *creativity*, *ambition*, and *originality* can produce texts like the Book of Mormon and imply that past authors have used those abilities to produce similar volumes. Despite such assumptions, no attempts to duplicate his effort or to actively compare Joseph Smith to other authors have been published.

Admittedly, devising a scheme for comparison can be tricky. Multiple variables could be chosen, each detecting a potentially useful parallel or nonparallel. This essay will compare six criteria regarding the author, the book, and the composition process:

1. Author Age
2. Author Education
3. Book word count
4. Book complexity
5. Composition timeline
6. Composition methodology

Each of these elements represents an observable characteristic that can be generally, if not specifically, measured. Other criteria, like authors' writing experience, book genre, intended audience, language, etc. might have been included and hopefully can be explored in future analyses.

I should point out that none of these criteria seems very useful if isolated from the others. In other words, Joseph Smith recited the Book of Mormon when he was in his mid-twenties, but many other authors of similar age and younger have written impressive novels. Similarly, his schooling was minimal, but limited education has not stopped other authors from writing their manuscripts. The Book of Mormon is long, but thousands of writers have equaled or eclipsed that word count. The complexity of the Book of Mormon is not particularly singular, and many books have been written in short periods of time.

Determining whether the Book of Mormon creation was unique in any observable way requires contrasting multiple characteristics simultaneously. Diagramming all six variables at the same time is not possible, but convergences and divergences can be detected by charting several of the characteristics together.

### **Joseph, the Book, and the Composition Process**

Before attempting any comparisons, details regarding Joseph Smith's age and education, the Book of Mormon's length, complexity, and the composition process must be understood.

#### **Joseph Smith's Age and Education**

Born December 23, 1805, Joseph Smith was 23 when he dictated the Book of Mormon and 24 when it was published. Precisely how much education he had acquired by that time is controversial. In 2016, scholar William Davis wrote that Joseph Smith's "overall estimated time ... in formal education" was "equivalent of approximately *seven full school years*."<sup>2</sup> While Davis's research is useful, his conclusions seem incomplete for several reasons. First, Davis assumes Joseph attended school without documenting that he actually did. Several reminiscences report he frequently did not show

up for classes.<sup>3</sup> Second, the vast majority of recollections from individuals who knew Joseph Smith described him as ignorant<sup>4</sup> or illiterate.<sup>5</sup> Isaac Hale recounted in 1834: “I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith, Jr. in November, 1825 . . . His appearance at this time, was that of a careless young man — not very well educated.”<sup>6</sup> Lastly, we are not told how “seven full school years” of frontier schooling might compare to modern standards. It would probably be much inferior to a seventh-grade education in the United States in the twenty-first century.

Joseph Smith’s recollection that he was “deprived of the benefit of an education” seems accurate. His statement: “I was merely instructed in reading, writing and the ground rules of arithmetic”<sup>7</sup> would place him with about a third-grade education in modern Western schools.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Book of Mormon Word Count and Complexity**

The 1830 Book of Mormon word count (from computer calculation) is 269,528.<sup>9</sup> However, when used to compare to other books, this total could be justifiably modified. Twenty-six chapters in the Book of Mormon closely resemble chapters in the King James Version of the Bible.<sup>10</sup> In all, 15,527 similar words could be subtracted, representing approximately 5.8% of the Book of Mormon total. In contrast, Joseph Smith dictated many additional words comprising the Book of Lehi, which were lost by Martin Harris as part of the 116 pages. Since the total number of missing words is unknown, the 1830 Book of Mormon word count (269,528) will be used without modification in this article.<sup>11</sup>

The complexity of the Book of Mormon can be assessed through general observations, as well as technical measurements. The text mentions the activities of more than 175 individuals and groups who existed in at least 125 different topographical locations.<sup>12</sup> Found within the narrative are 337 proper names, of which 188 are unique to the Book of Mormon.<sup>13</sup> The chapters reference more than 425 specific geographical movements.<sup>14</sup> Also included are 430 identifiable chiasms, with more than thirty being six-level or greater.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the Book of Mormon Joseph Smith used more than 100 different names for deity.<sup>16</sup> The storyline includes complex words that BYU Professor Roger Terry finds surprising to have been in “Joseph’s ‘available vocabulary’ in 1829.”<sup>17</sup> Examples include:

abhorrence, abridgment, affrighted, anxiety, arraigned, breastwork, cimeters, commencement, condescension, consignation, delightful, depravity, derangement, discernible, disposition, distinguished, embassy, encompassed, enumerated, frenzied, hinderment,

ignominious, impenetrable, iniquitous, insensibility, interposition, loftiness, management, nothingness, overbearance, petition, priestcraft, probationary, proclamation, provocation, regulation, relinquished, repugnant, scantiness, serviceable, stratagem, typifying, unquenchable, and unwearyingness.<sup>18</sup>

### Measuring the Readability and Complexity of the Book of Mormon

The specific characteristics mentioned above of the Book of Mormon are essentially impossible to directly compare to other books. Yet multiple analytic calculations have been used for decades to determine text readability and complexity.<sup>19</sup> The outcomes of such evaluations can be compared easily. Submitting the text of the 1830 Book of Mormon to the most widely used of these computerized tests reveals a span of recommended reading grades (see appendix):

Scale	Book of Mormon	
	Score	Suggested Reading Grade
Coleman Liau index	7.92	8
ATOS	9.6	8
Lexile	1150	8 (6–11)
Fry Graph	9–10	9
Dale-Chall Adjusted Grade Level	8.4	11–12
SMOG	12.55	12
Flesch Kincaid Grade Level	15.74	High School plus 2 years
Gunning Fog index	17.69	Post-Graduate year 1
Automated Readability Index (ARI)	17.50	Post-Graduate year 1

Averaging these scores places the Book of Mormon reading level around the *eleventh* grade (high school junior) but with a range from the sixth to post-graduate.

An additional measure of complexity is the Flesch Reading Ease Scale, where the Book of Mormon scores 51–56, which correlates to “Fairly difficult to difficult to read.”<sup>20</sup> To put this in context, “Low scores indicate text that is complicated to understand .... For most business writing, a score of 65 is a good target, and scores between 60 and 80 should generally be understood by 12 to 15 year olds.”<sup>21</sup>

Score	School Level	Notes
100–90	5th grade	Very easy to read. Easily understood by an average 11-year-old student.
90–80	6th grade	Easy to read. Conversational English for consumers.
80–70	7th grade	Fairly easy to read.
70–60	8th & 9th grade	Plain English. Easily understood by 13- to 15-year-old students.
60–50	10th to 12th grade	Fairly difficult to read.
50–30	College	Difficult to read.
30–0	College graduate	Very difficult to read. Best understood by university graduates.

The most common of all complexity scales, with more than 300,000 books scored, is the “Lexile Framework for Reading.”<sup>22</sup>

The Lexile Framework for Reading is a scientific approach to measuring reading ability and the text demand of reading materials. The Lexile Framework involves a scale for measuring both reading ability of an individual and the text complexity of materials encountered. The Lexile scale is like a thermometer, except rather than measuring temperature, the Lexile Framework measures a text’s complexity and a reader’s skill level.<sup>23</sup>

Grade	Mid-percentile	Range 25th to 75th percentile
1	210	120–295
2	360	170–545
3	590	415–760
4	795	635–950
5	925	770–1080
6	1010	855–1165
7	1080	925–1235
8	1140	985–1295
9	1195	1040–1350
10	1245	1085–1400
11–12	1285	1130–1440

The Book of Mormon Lexile score is 1150,<sup>24</sup> which correlates to an *eighth*-grade reading level, with a range that includes some sixth graders and most in the eleventh grade:<sup>25</sup>

Since many books have been analyzed and assigned Lexile scores, these can be used when comparing authors and their books to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Other popular books with an 1150 Lexile score include *Brothers Karamazov* (Fyodor Dostoyevsky, 364,153 words), *Moby Dick*, (Herman Melville, 206,052 words), and *Great Expectations* (Charles Dickens, 162,690 words).<sup>26</sup>

As discussed above, even the most optimistic historical estimates of Joseph Smith's 1820s education assume seven years of upstate New York district schooling. When presented with this data, Don Bradley, author of a forthcoming book on the lost 116 pages, responded, "People have readily assumed the Book of Mormon was within Joseph Smith's *writing* ability, when it's actually questionable how well it was within his *reading* ability."<sup>27</sup>

### Composition Timeline

Several authors have calculated a productivity timeline for the full dictation of the original Book of Mormon.<sup>28</sup> The most recent chronology is from John W. Welch, who identified five anchor dates in 1829<sup>29</sup>:

- April 7, when Oliver Cowdery began scribing in Harmony, Pennsylvania.
- May 15, the day corresponding to the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist (D&C 13).
- May 31, when the Title Page of the Book of Mormon was translated.
- June 11, when Joseph Smith obtained the copyright from the Library of Congress.
- June 30, the established date for completion of the translation although it might have been a day or two earlier.

Within this framework, Welch starts with the 85 days between April 7 and June 30 and shows multiple distractions would have prevented Joseph Smith from translating every day. Welch approximates that 11 days were needed for travel, with another deduction of 16 for time spent farming, Sunday observance, doing business, visiting with guests, religious activities, performing needed chores, and other distractions. Another day is subtracted to account for 13 revelations received during those weeks. These reductions support that perhaps 57 days were all that were devoted to translation and writing of the original Book of Mormon manuscript.

Dividing the final word count by 57 days equals about 4,700 words per day. The average adult handwriting speed using a ballpoint pen or pencil is around 68 letters or 13.8 words per minute equating to translation times of just under six hours a day.<sup>30</sup> Several observations suggest the process could have taken much longer. Martin Harris asserted that after Joseph dictated a sentence and Martin would write it down, Martin would then say “written” before they would move on.<sup>31</sup> In contrast, David Whitmer reported that the scribe wrote down Joseph’s words “exactly as it fell from his lips,” then “the scribe would then read the sentence written” back to Joseph to assure accuracy.<sup>32</sup> While the details are less clear, it appears the scribe and Joseph spent additional time trying to assure the text was correctly recorded.<sup>33</sup>

Also, using a quill and ink reservoir would likely have slowed the process (as compared to handwriting speeds using a pen or pencil). Issues of fatigue for continuous writing are common and might have further slowed the overall progress.<sup>34</sup> If breaks were taken for food and other distractions, the process could easily have extended to most of the waking hours.<sup>35</sup>

David Whitmer recalled: “It was a laborious work for the weather was very warm, and the days were long and they worked from morning till night. But they were both young and strong and were soon able to complete the work.”<sup>36</sup> “Elsewhere Whitmer reported: “The boys, Joseph and Oliver, worked hard, early and late, while translating the plates. It was slow work, and they could write only a few pages a day.”<sup>37</sup>

### **Composition Methodology**

Multiple witnesses declared that Joseph Smith spoke the words of the Book of Mormon rather than personally writing them.<sup>38</sup> This observation separates him from more than 99% of all authors who ever published a book.

Historically, the composition technique taught in schools worldwide is called *creative writing* and comprises three general steps.

1. Pre-writing: choosing a subject, creating an outline, and performing the required research.
2. Writing: making the initial draft and combining sections.
3. Re-writing: revising, content-editing, and all subsequent drafts.<sup>39</sup>

When dictating a book to a scribe (or stenographer), as Joseph Smith did, step one is restricted to memory, and step three is eliminated. There is no evidence Joseph engaged in step one in any discernable way,

although mental preparations would not be detectable. The manuscript went straight to press without step three enhancements.

Dictating a book without pre-writing or re-writing might be called *creative dictation*. The advent of smart phones and voice-to-text apps has facilitated cell phone users today to produce long manuscripts using creative dictation and thereby attempt to replicate Joseph Smith's efforts. The need for a scribe is removed by dictating text messages of 20 to 30 words each (the apparent word blocks Joseph spoke to his scribes<sup>40</sup>) into the app. These are received in order and copied into an expanding document. Before hitting send, grammar and spelling can be corrected, but once sent, the sequence of the sentences cannot be changed.<sup>41</sup> The author does not consult manuscripts or books while dictating.<sup>42</sup> Repeat this process 10,000 times until a document of roughly 270,000 words is formed that can be sent to a publisher for typesetting and printing.

Creative dictation is more difficult than creative writing because, as Louis Brandeis, who served as an associate justice on the Supreme Court of the United States from 1916 to 1939 explained: "There is no good writing; there is only good rewriting."<sup>43</sup> Popular novelist and essayist Robert Louis Stevenson concurred: "When I say writing, O, believe me, it is rewriting that I have chiefly in mind."<sup>44</sup> This inherent limitation of creative dictation is probably why none of the authors in the comparisons charted below elected to recite their books from memory and then send them directly to the printer. Even genius-level intellects today pre-write, write, and rewrite their books prior to completion.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the remainder of this article, all the authors listed in the comparisons except Joseph Smith used creative writing techniques, rather than creative dictation, to produce their books. The possible significance of this distinction deserves additional study that is beyond the scope of this essay.<sup>46</sup>

## **Automatic Writing**

A possible exception to the near universal implementation of creative writing techniques, rather than creative dictation methodology, is "automatic writing." It occurs when authors produce their texts spontaneously through recitation or other types of communication.<sup>47</sup> Automatic writing has two forms. Shorter writings may be induced by psychologists (generally through hypnosis) to discover feelings and memories hidden in a client's unconscious mind. Psychologist Anita M. Muhl, author of *Automatic Writing*, explains: "The use of automatic writing in conjunction with psychoanalysis is invaluable in getting at unconscious processes quickly."<sup>48</sup>

Naturalists may allege this process explains Joseph Smith's ability to dictate the Book of Mormon,<sup>49</sup> but multiple psychological studies demonstrate the unconscious mind lacks the ability to systematize memory elements or to perform complex cognitive functions.<sup>50</sup>

A second and much older form of automatic writing is also called "spirit writing" or "channeling."<sup>51</sup> Irving Litvag explicates: "One type of psychic activity, known as 'automatic writing,' began to attract attention through the activities of a group of mediums, mostly English, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Automatic writing involves the reception and transcription of various types of communications in written form. The medium claims to have no control over the writing that is produced."<sup>52</sup> This latter form can produce very long manuscripts even lengthier than the Book of Mormon. Their authors universally attribute the words they produce to extra-worldly sources.<sup>53</sup>

Since secular theorists disallow supernatural influences, they generally credit all the words generated by automatic writers to their unconscious minds<sup>54</sup> or charge them with deception (including self-deception).<sup>55</sup> No prospective scientific experiments have demonstrated that automatic writing can produce manuscripts like the Book of Mormon. All studies and conclusions are based upon retrospective analyses of existing manuscripts. Consequently, possible parallels between the Book of Mormon and automatic writings await reproducible data identifying the naturalistic methodologies ostensibly employed by the writers including Joseph Smith.

### Comparing Young Writers

Throughout the remainder of this essay, the potential for one or more of the lists to be incomplete should not be ignored. Even with the information readily obtainable on the Internet, identifying all writers that are pertinent to each category below might not be possible. Acknowledging that hundreds of thousands of books have been printed in English over past centuries, the lists below compare more popular titles primarily because those are more publicly known. If any of the following compilations have missed a particular author who parallels Joseph Smith more closely, it is independent of my earnest attempts to be absolutely thorough. Scrutiny is encouraged and suggestions for expansion and modification are welcome.

Throughout recorded history, young writers have tried their quills, pencils, pens, typewriters, and keyboards at book-writing. Born

December 16, 1775, Jane Austen began in her twenties writing novels that are still popular today.<sup>56</sup>

<b>Author</b>	<b>Education at Time of Publication</b>	<b>First Book Title</b>	<b>Age when Published</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
Taylor Caldwell	Public schools	<i>The Romance of Atlantis</i>	12	73,320	n/a
Zlata Filipović	Public schools	<i>Zlata's Diary</i>	13	74,400	640
Alexandra Adornetto	Secondary school	<i>The Shadow Thief</i>	14	64,480	1060
Nancy Yi Fan	Secondary school	<i>Swordbird</i>	14	79,360	760
Flavia Bujor	Secondary school	<i>The Prophecy of the Stones</i>	14	124,000	830
Amelia Atwater-Rhodes	High school	<i>In the Forests of the Night</i>	15	54,560	900
Isamu Fukui	High school	<i>Truancy</i>	15	133,920	960
Malala Yousafzai	Private school	<i>I Am Malala</i>	16	114,080	1000
Beth Reekles	Secondary school	<i>The Kissing Booth</i>	16	138,880	780
Catherine Webb	Secondary school	<i>Mirror Dreams</i>	16	97,200	n/a
Pamela Brown	High school	<i>The Swish of the Curtain</i>	17	99,200	n/a
Gordon Korman	High school	<i>I Want to Go Home!</i>	18	57,040	n/a
Alex Harris	College	<i>Do Hard Things</i>	18	99,200	n/a
Percy Bysshe Shelley	Secondary school	<i>Zastrozzi</i>	18	101,600	n/a
Suresh Gupta	Secondary school	<i>The Conspiracy of Calaspia</i>	18	186,000	n/a

<b>Author</b>	<b>Education at Time of Publication</b>	<b>First Book Title</b>	<b>Age when Published</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
S.E. Hinton	High school	<i>The Outsiders</i>	19	69,440	750
Arthur Rimbaud	Secondary school	<i>A Season in Hell</i>	19	106,020	1080
Georgette Heyer	High school	<i>The Black Moth</i>	19	120,900	n/a
Christopher Paolini	High School	<i>Eragon</i>	19	163,680	710
Esther Earl	High school	<i>This Star Won't Go Out</i>	20	138,800	960
Mary Shelley	Home tutoring	<i>Frankenstein</i>	21	51,460	900
Helen Oyeyemi	Secondary school	<i>The Icarus Girl</i>	21	109,120	n/a
Maureen Daly	High school	<i>Seventeenth Summer</i>	21	119,040	1130
Matthew Gregory Lewis	College	<i>The Monk</i>	21	128,960	990
Jessica Khoury	College	<i>Origin</i>	22	133,920	740
Samantha Shannon	College	<i>The Bone Season</i>	22	173,600	n/a
Eleanor Catton	Secondary school	<i>The Rehearsal</i>	23	106,160	n/a
Carson McCullers	College	<i>The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter</i>	23	114,080	760
F. Scott Fitzgerald	College	<i>This Side of Paradise</i>	24	53,940	1070
Zoe Sugg	College	<i>Girl Online</i>	24	109,120	720
Joseph Smith	Frontier school	<i>Book of Mormon</i>	24	269,528	1150

How does the length of the Book of Mormon compare to the first books published by other young authors in the past centuries? The names of writers of 24 years and younger (whom I have been able to identify), their educations,

books, word counts (for books of more than 50,000 words), publishing ages, and Lexile scores (when available) are charted above.<sup>57</sup>

The chart indicates that Joseph Smith's education was less than that of any of the other authors except perhaps Mary Shelley. The word count of the Book of Mormon surpasses the next lengthy volume by more than 80,000 words, nearly a 50% increase.

While not a specific criterion, only three of the books on the chart were published before the Book of Mormon: *The Monk* (128,960 words) by Matthew Gregory Lewis in 1796, *Zastrozzi* (101,600 words) by Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1810, and *Frankenstein* (51,460 words) by Mary Shelley in 1818. For that era, the Book of Mormon word count more than doubled the works of previous young authors.<sup>58</sup>

Also, the Lexile score of the Book of Mormon is higher, although many books have no score available. The lower Lexile scores of young writers are generally unsurprising, since writers generally draw from their own life's experiences or from expansions of those experiences coupled with imagination. Most youthful authors will have limited and less mature material to reference. Their books are generally written for readers between grades 5–9 with science fiction, fantasy, and romance themes being common.

### Prolific Young Writers

Several youthful writers, whose first books were much shorter than the Book of Mormon, immediately proceeded to write additional volumes. Their cumulative total word counts exceeded 269,528 by the time they reached 24 years, the age when Joseph Smith printed the Book of Mormon.

Catherine Webb published her first book, *Mirror Dreams*, by age sixteen and had almost a million words in print by age 24.<sup>59</sup> While none of her books have been assigned a Lexile score,<sup>60</sup> her early target audience seems to have been older elementary school children.<sup>61</sup> On her personal website blog, she described some of her early writing experiences: "I actually won a prize for how much I used the library . . . I have written sizeable chunks of novels in numerous libraries, and been shushed for typing too loud."<sup>62</sup>

Born April 16, 1984, Amelia Atwater-Rhodes began writing her first novel in May of 1997, completing her manuscript by the end of the year. After additional revisions, the 53,680-word *In the Forests of the Night* was published in 1999. With a Lexile score of 770, it targeted fourth and fifth graders. By her 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, Atwater-Rhodes had published more than 600,000 words.

<b>Book</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>In the Forests of the Night</i>	1999	15	53,680	770
<i>Demon in My View</i>	2000	16	58,560	820
<i>Shattered Mirror</i>	2001	17	107,360	790
<i>Midnight Predator</i>	2002	18	78,080	780
<i>Hawksong</i>	2003	19	78,080	930
<i>Snakecharm</i>	2004	20	53,680	940
<i>Falcondance</i>	2005	21	63,440	870
<i>Wolfcry</i>	2006	22	63,440	870
<i>Wyvernhaul</i>	2007	23	53,070	830
<i>Persistence of Memory</i>	2008	24	68,320	860
Total			677,710	

In a question-and-answer forum posted online, Atwater-Rhodes explained her early writing: “I started my first ‘novel’ in first grade .... In second grade I tried to co-write a novel called *The Hope to Get Out* with my best friend. Shortly after, my father allowed me the use of his computer and I began a story about people who lived on rafts .... I love to write; I tell the stories for myself, because I want to know how they go.”<sup>63</sup>

A third prolific young author, Christopher Paolini, has become more famous than the others. Born in 1983, he authored his first book, *Eragon* in 2002 at age nineteen, which was made into a big-budget movie in 2006 that opened to mixed reviews.

<b>Book</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Word Count</b>	<b>Lexile</b>
<i>Eragon</i>	2002	19	163,680	710
<i>Eldest</i>	2005	22	218,240	970
<i>Bresingr</i>	2008	25	248,000	1050
Total			629,920	

Homeschooled by his parents, by the age of three Christopher was “comfortably working at a first-grade level.”<sup>64</sup> When a teen, he entered public schools, earning his high school diploma at age 15. At that time, Reed College in Portland, Oregon, offered him a full college scholarship, but his father thought he was too young to enroll.<sup>65</sup> Instead, Christopher tried his hand at fictional writing, publishing *Eragon* four years later. His biographer explains the process:

Paolini had ideas swimming around in his head, but he realized that he knew very little about the actual art of writing — for example, how to construct a plot line. So he set out to do some research. He studied several books on writing, including *Characters and Viewpoint* (1988) by Orson Scott Card and Robert McKee's *Story* (1997), which helped him to sketch out a nine-page summary. Paolini then spent the next year fleshing out his story, writing sporadically at first, but then picking up the pace. The task went much more quickly after he learned how to type....

Paolini spent the bulk of 2000 reworking his first draft, smoothing out problems and fine-tuning such things as language and landscape.... By 2001 Paolini had a second draft, but he was still not satisfied, so he turned the book over to his parents for editing. They helped him streamline some of the plot sequences, clarify some of the concepts, and pare back some of what Paolini called “the bloat.” ... In 2002 the Paolinis had *Eragon* published privately.<sup>66</sup>

In the years that followed, Paolini continued to write consistently every day from his home. He told an interviewer: “I get bolts of inspiration about once every three months ... and between those bolts of inspiration the writing, while enjoyable, is definitely work. And I just treat it like a job. Every day I get up, I sit down, and I work on the book.”<sup>67</sup> Paolini encouraged aspiring authors: “Read everything you can get your hands on .... Reading is probably the single most important skill I’ve learned in my life.”<sup>68</sup>

While the ages and literary productivity of these authors are impressive, when compared to Joseph Smith, divergences are detected regarding their levels of education, books’ complexities, and composition methods.

### **One Hit Wonders and Repeat Authors**

As the author of only one lengthy book, Joseph Smith joined the club of one-hit-wonder authors or books that became popular but were not followed by additional books. The authors seemed satisfied with a single literary success:

One-Hit Wonder Authors Compared					
Author	Education	Book	Age	Words	Lexile
Anna Sewell	Elementary	<i>Black Beauty</i>	57	59,520	760
John Kennedy Toole	College	<i>A Confederacy of Dunces</i>	43	125,550	800
Arthur Golden	College	<i>Memoirs of a Geisha</i>	41	134,540	1000
Margaret Mitchell	College	<i>Gone with the Wind</i>	36	418,053	1100
Harper Lee	Law school	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	34	119,040	1120
Sylvia Plath	College	<i>The Bell Jar</i>	31	89,280	1140
Emily Bronte	Academy	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	29	128,960	880
Joseph Smith	Frontier school	<i>Book of Mormon</i>	24	269,528	1150

Historically, a more common pattern for authors is to start their writing careers with shorter volumes that remain less known, only to later compose a book that might be considered their magnum opus:

Authors of Popular Books of More than 250,000 Words							
Author	Education	First Book	Age	Words	Popular Book	Age	Words
George Eliot	Middle School	<i>Adam Bede</i>	40	213,323	<i>Middlemarch</i>	52	316,059
Vikram Seth	College	<i>The Golden Gate</i>	34	99,200	<i>A Suitable Boy</i>	41	591,554
Ayn Rand	College	<i>We the Living</i>	31	143,840	<i>The Fountainhead</i>	38	311,596
Fyodor Dostoyevsky	Academy	<i>Poor Folk</i>	25	54,336	<i>Brothers Karamazov</i>	58	364,153
Leo Tolstoy	College	<i>Childhood</i>	24	40,783	<i>War and Peace</i>	37	587,287
Larry McMurtry	College	<i>Horseman, Pass By</i>	24	59,520	<i>Lonesome Dove</i>	49	365,712
Joseph Smith	Frontier Schooling.	<i>Book of Mormon</i>	24	269,528			

As the author of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith could have written sequels or prequels. Continuing to describe Lamanite activities after 400 AD would have been a natural second volume, maybe involving an unknown Nephite population. Or he may have afterwards penned

a narrative describing the journey of the Mulekites who left Jerusalem to come to the American continent where they were discovered by the Nephites.<sup>69</sup> While he produced no additional Book of Mormon genre manuscripts, his early death allows only speculations on what he might have composed later in life.

### Books Written in Fewer than Nine Weeks

Several online sources have compiled lists of books written in four to six weeks.<sup>70</sup> This time span is shorter than the total translation days of the Book of Mormon of between 57 to 85 days. Even nine to 13 weeks is fast compared to the time generally required to write a lengthy manuscript. For example, Eleanor Catton related her speed in writing her 2008 debut novel, *The Rehearsal* (104,160 words): “I wrote the bulk of the novel in quite a short period of time – about eighty thousand words in eight months – and during that time I really immersed myself in the novel’s world.”<sup>71</sup> She also explained her writing technique: “I spent a lot of time with my thesaurus.”<sup>72</sup>

Comparing these writers shows that in each case, they were older and more educated than Joseph Smith. With one exception, their books are generally less complicated. Even doubling the word counts to compensate for the added time needed to create the Book of Mormon does not reach Joseph’s word production.

Books Written in Fewer than Nine Weeks					
Author	Education	Book	Age	Words	Lexile
Elizabeth Jenkins	College	<i>The Tortoise and the Hare</i>	49	89,280	n/a
Fyodor Dostoyevsky	Academy	<i>The Gambler</i>	46	39,060	1050
Ian Fleming	College	<i>Casino Royale</i>	45	58,280	n/a
Anthony Burgess	College	<i>A Clockwork Orange</i>	45	66,030	1310
Muriel Spark	College	<i>The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie</i>	43	49,600	1120
Mickey Spillane	College	<i>I, the Jury</i>	39	82,604	n/a
John Boyne	College	<i>The Boy In The Striped Pyjamas</i>	37	66,650	1010
Jack Kerouac	College	<i>On the Road</i>	35	90,830	930

Books Written in Fewer than Nine Weeks					
Author	Education	Book	Age	Words	Lexile
Graham Greene	College	<i>The Confidential Agent</i>	35	64,480	880
William Faulkner	College	<i>As I Lay Dying</i>	33	82,770	870
Charles Dickens	Academy	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	31	28,944	920
Arthur Conan Doyle	Physician	<i>A Study In Scarlet</i>	28	35,340	1020
Joseph Smith	Frontier	<i>Book of Mormon</i>	24	269,528	1150

### Charting Authors' Lifetime Productivity

An additional approach to compare authors plots their ages and productivity over time. Starting with Joseph Smith, his literary creations begin by first excluding the lost 116 pages, which are unavailable. His first written documents included two revelations, one dictated July of 1828, now Doctrine and Covenants section 3 (609 words) and possibly parts of section 10 (1937 words).<sup>73</sup> The text of the Book of Mormon followed the next year. Then, between 1829 and 1832, came the Book of Moses, along with dozens of revelations.

The Joseph Smith Translation (JST) began in early 1831 and was mostly completed by mid-1833. Determining a word count is difficult because the Biblical revisions were recorded at different times, in different ways, and on different types of paper.<sup>74</sup> The 1979 LDS scriptures includes Joseph's more significant changes to the King James Bible yielding 13,976 words of JST text. For simplicity, this number (split over the years 1831–1833) will be used in this study to represent the Joseph Smith Translation.

Beyond 1832, a few revelations were dictated during the remaining twelve years of his life, but no other book-length manuscripts were seemingly anticipated or produced. Charting Joseph Smith's published word counts (Figure 1) shows a rapid expansion of productivity between ages 23 and 24 that quickly diminished throughout the remainder of his life.

## Comparing Word Counts per Year

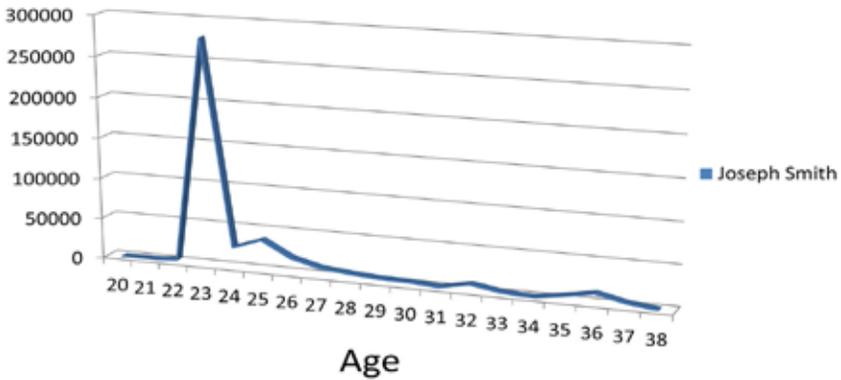


Figure 1. Joseph Smith's word counts, by age.

### Comparing Joseph Smith to J. R. R. Tolkien

Joseph Smith has occasionally been compared to J. R. R. Tolkien who wrote the three-volume work, *The Lord of the Rings*.<sup>75</sup> While not complimenting either author or book, Yale Professor Harold Bloom wrote in 1999: "Sometimes, reading Tolkien, I am reminded of the Book of Mormon."<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, the authors of the MormonThink essay titled "Could Joseph Smith have written the Book of Mormon?" (available online) list Tolkien's works as a parallel in complexity: "The Book of Mormon is no more complicated than other works of fiction, such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and related works."<sup>77</sup> So if the complexity and word counts were similar, do other parallels also exist concerning the authors' ages and education or the composition process of the books?

Born in 1892, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien received a typical English education until age 19 when he enrolled at Exeter College, Oxford, graduating four years later. Technically, his first publication was *A Middle English Vocabulary* at age 30, but his first fantasy book came later after seven years of writing. The 97,364-word, *The Hobbit*, published in 1937 received wide acclaim.<sup>78</sup> Years later Tolkien finished the trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*.

Words	Age	Name
94,903	30	<i>A Middle English Vocabulary</i>
97,364	45	<i>The Hobbit</i>
44,640	57	<i>Farmer Giles of Ham</i>
177,227	62	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>
143,436	62	<i>The Two Towers</i>
134,462	63	<i>The Return of the King</i>
94,240	70	<i>The Adventures of Tom Bombadil</i>
54,560	72	<i>Tree and Leaf</i>
49,600	75	<i>Smith of Wootton Major</i>
20,770	75	<i>The Road Goes Ever On</i>
9,920	82	<i>Bilbo's Last Song</i>

J. R. R. Tolkien's word count output over time contrasts with that of Joseph Smith, as shown in Figure 2. The chart shows that Joseph Smith's major book-writing occurred much earlier than that of Tolkien, who composed his well-known fairy tale after years of writing experience and academic activity.<sup>79</sup>

### Comparing Word Counts per Year

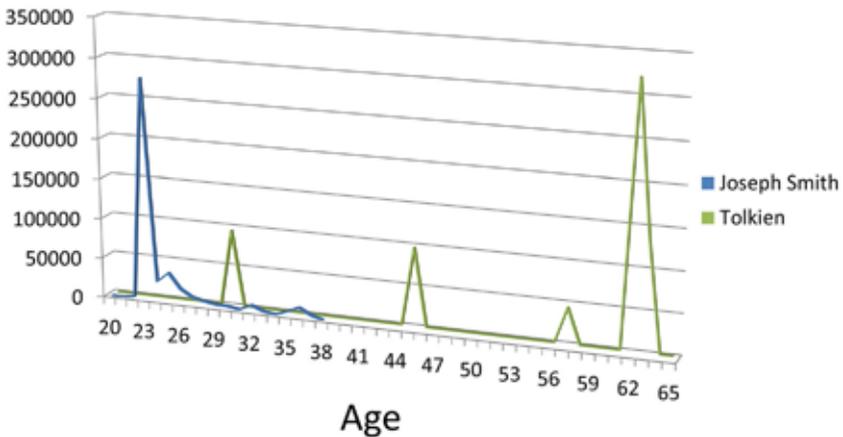


Figure 2. Word count comparisons, by age, for Joseph Smith and J. R. R. Tolkien.

## Comparing Joseph Smith to William Shakespeare

Some critics reason that if Shakespeare, who started at a relatively young age, could write all the plays he did, then Joseph Smith could author the Book of Mormon. For example, the MormonThink essay also discusses “extraordinary accomplishments by others” and writes: “Shakespeare—need we say more?”<sup>80</sup> Perhaps a more detailed comparison would be helpful to discern whether a genuine parallel between the authors actually exists.

The most accepted date for Shakespeare’s birth is April 23, 1564. Little is documented concerning his youth, but scholars believe he attended a local grammar school where he would have encountered an emphasis on memorization, writing, and the Latin classics.<sup>81</sup> Shakespeare wrote his first two plays at age 26, *Henry VI*, parts II and III, with a combined word count of 49,733. For the next 22 years with one exception, he produced between 16,633 words and 63,133 words each year:

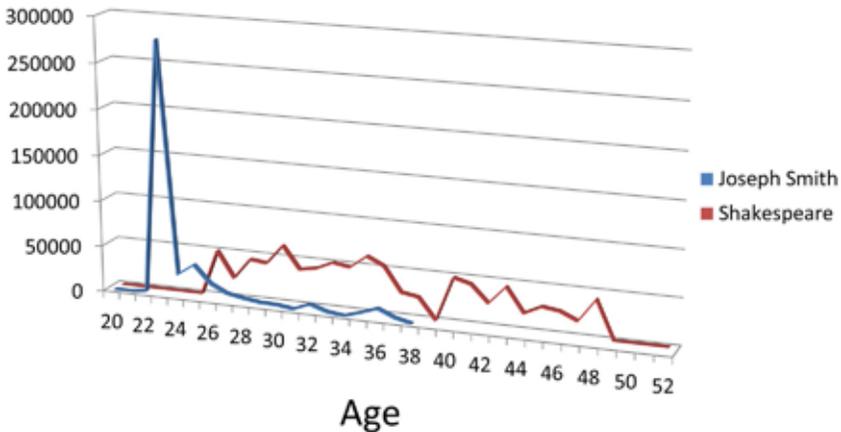
Age	Word Count	Age	Word Count
26	49,733	38	23,009
27	21,607	39	0
28	43,979	40	48,230
29	41,798	41	43,269
30	63,133	42	24,905
31	38,934	43	44,710
32	42,063	44	18,529
33	50,268	45	27,565
34	47,276	46	24,914
35	61,230	47	16,633
36	52,402	48	41,758
37	26,089		

During his lifetime Shakespeare composed at least 38 plays and more than 150 short and long poems. His productivity and the complexity of his works are very impressive.

As demonstrated in Figure 3, Shakespeare’s play-writing abilities manifested themselves first at age 26. Then for the next two decades, new plays and poems flowed as a steady stream from his mind and imagination. At his death in 1616 (age 52), he had produced more than 850,000 words. In contrast, Joseph Smith’s lifetime literary output

was less, approximately 420,000 words. But more than 85% of them emerged from Joseph by the time he reached his 26<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 23, 1831. In other words, the vast majority of the Prophet's revelations, translations, and dictations were finished by the age at which Shakespeare had completed his first play.

### Comparing Word Counts per Year



**Figure 3.** Word count comparisons, by age, for Joseph Smith and William Shakespeare.

To summarize, Joseph Smith was slightly younger, with less formal schooling, who completed most of his words in a shorter time span than Shakespeare.

### Comparing Joseph Smith to J. K. Rowling

Another comparison to a more modern author would juxtapose Joseph Smith with J. K. Rowling, author of the popular Harry Potter series. Rowling published her first volume, the 77,325-word *Philosopher's Stone* at age 32. Other volumes soon followed. The graph of their word productions (Figure 4) shows both authors completed long complicated books, but their ages and productivity patterns differed.

### Charting These Four Authors

While certainly not representing an exhaustive study, a snapshot of Joseph Smith, Shakespeare, Tolkien, and Rowling together, shown in Figure 5, shows that Joseph's early burst of creativity without subsequent productivity contrasts the writing patterns of the other authors. They

all started later in life with writing that continued steadily or increased over time.

### Comparing Word Counts per Year

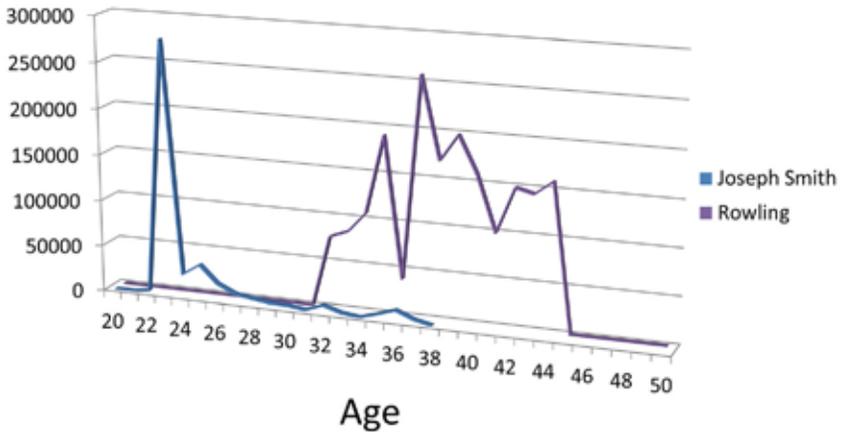


Figure 4. Word count comparisons, by age, for Joseph Smith and J. K. Rowling.

### Comparing Word Counts per Year

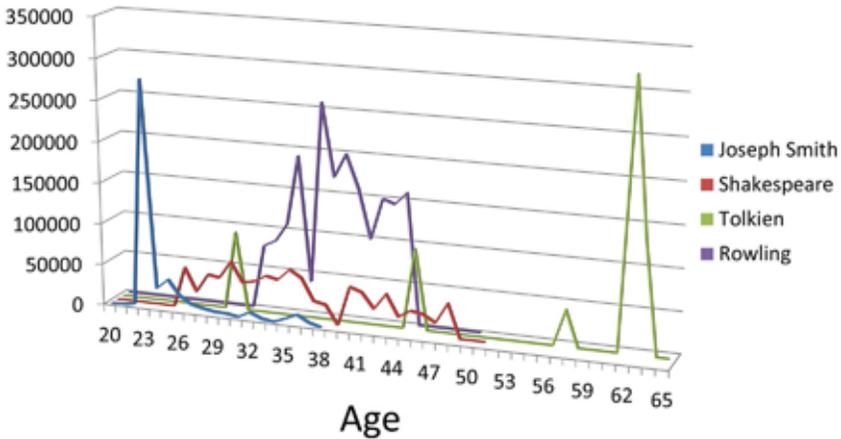


Figure 5. Word count comparisons, by age, for four authors.

Other differences can be identified in that all these writers had more education and wrote their words at a slower pace than that at which Joseph dictated the Book of Mormon text.

## **Comparing Joseph Smith to Orson Pratt**

In 1835, Church leaders hired Joshua Seixas to teach Hebrew to 40 students over the course of seven weeks. In that class Joseph Smith's intellectual abilities were put to the test. While he apparently worked very hard, he was not the top student. BYU Professor Matthew Grey explains:

Joseph Smith was proud to be in a group of advanced students that included W. W. Phelps, Oliver Cowdery, Orson Hyde, and Orson Pratt who were singled out by Seixas to receive additional instruction .... Upon completion of the initial seven-week course, Seixas issued two certificates of Hebrew proficiency to Mormon leaders, one to Joseph, and one to Orson Pratt. It is sometimes claimed that Joseph was the best student of the class, but of the two, Orson Pratt's certificate qualified him to teach the language while Joseph Smith's indicated that "by prosecuting the study he will be able to become proficient in Hebrew."<sup>82</sup>

Later in life, Orson Pratt wrote several complicated books and pamphlets allowing his literary accomplishments to be compared to Joseph's. The chart shown in Figure 6 is seemingly unremarkable but documents Pratt's beginning his writing career later in life. While Orson's ability to learn Hebrew surpassed Joseph Smith's, it is impossible to discover whether he bested the Prophet intellectually in any other area.

### **Joseph Smith: Curiously Unique**

This examination of authors and their writings attempts to identify parallels to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. By comparing authors' ages and education, the complexity and length of their books, and their composition techniques and timelines, single, double, and even triple parallels can be found. Yet overall, it appears that if Joseph Smith created the Book of Mormon from his own intellect, his efforts as an author stand out as curiously unique.

## Comparing Word Counts per Year

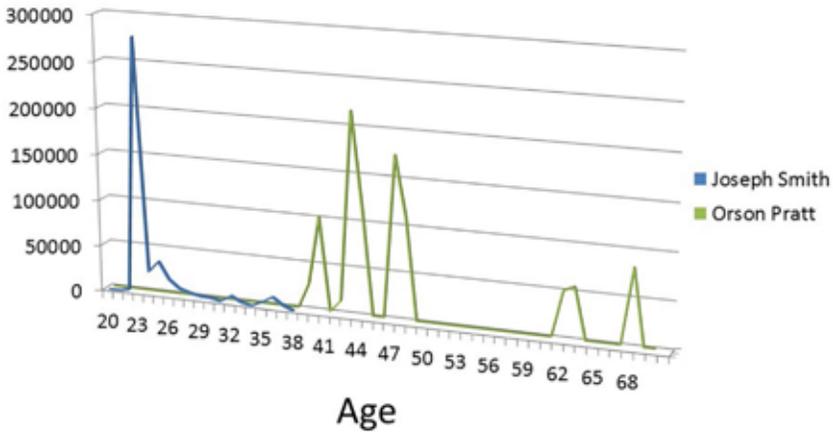


Figure 6. Word count comparisons, by age, for Joseph Smith and Orson Pratt.

### Appendix: Readability and Complexity Scores of the Book of Mormon

While currently there are dozens of formulas to calculate complexity and readability of a text, a handful are more commonly used.<sup>83</sup> By evaluating a document's sentence length, word length, number of word syllables and presence of challenging words, a level of comprehension difficulty is calculated. Readability pioneer author Rudolf Flesch explains:

When you read a passage, your eyes and mind focus on successive points on the page. Each time this happens, you form a tentative judgment of what the words mean *up to that point*. Only when you get to a major punctuation mark — a period, a colon, a paragraph break — does your mind stop for a split second, sum up what it has taken in so far, and arrive at a final meaning of the sentence or paragraph. The longer the sentence, the more ideas your mind has to hold in suspense until its final decision on what all the words mean *together*. Longer sentences are more likely to be complex — more subordinate clauses, more prepositional phrases and so on. That means more mental work for the reader. So the longer a sentence, the harder it is to read.

Exactly the same thing is true of words. Some words are short and simple, others are long and complex. The complexity shows up in the prefixes and suffixes. *Take* is a simple, short word that doesn't present much difficulty to a reader. But *unmistakably* has the prefixes *un-* and *mis-* and the suffixes *-able* and *-ly* and gives the mind much more to think about than *take*.<sup>84</sup>

Calculations derived from the text can be used to determine reading grade recommendations.<sup>85</sup> Besides counting words and characters, some scales also employ lists of difficult words to further distinguish reading difficulty for grade school students. The following tests have been applied to the Book of Mormon.

Scale	Book of Mormon	
	Score	Suggested Reading Grade
Coleman Liau Index	7.92	8
ATOS	9.6	8
Lexile	1150	8 (6–11)
Fry Graph	9–10	9
Dale-Chall Adjusted Grade Level	8.4	11–12
SMOG	12.55	12
Flesch Kincaid Grade Level	15.74	High School plus 2 years
Gunning Fog index	17.69	Post-Graduate year 1
Automated Readability Index (ARI)	17.50	Post-Graduate year 1

### **Coleman Liau Index: (Book of Mormon 7.92)**

Rather than working with syllables per word and sentence lengths, “The Coleman Liau Index relies on characters and uses computerized assessments to understand characters more easily and accurately.”<sup>86</sup> The Book of Mormon’s score of 7.92 supports that a near-eighth grade education would be sufficient for understanding.

### **ATOS : (Book of Mormon 9.6)**

ATOS is an acronym for Advantage/TASA Open Standard.<sup>87</sup> “ATOS takes into account the most important predictors of text complexity — average sentence length, average word length, and word difficulty

level.”<sup>88</sup> At 9.6, the ATOS score supports an eighth-grade reading level for the Book of Mormon.

**Lexile Framework for Learning: (Book of Mormon 1150)**

As discussed in the text, the Lexile score measures sentence length and word frequency as overall indications of semantic and syntactic complexity.<sup>89</sup> The proprietary system is widely used, but demands educational financial resources to implement. The Book of Mormon’s score of 1150 represents an eighth-grade reading level with a span between sixth and eleventh.

**Fry Graph: (Book of Mormon 9)**

The Fry Graph plots the number of sentences per 100 words (Book of Mormon is 2.56) against the number of syllables per 100 words (Book of Mormon is 131). The resulting point on the graph (see Figure 7) identifies a ninth grade reading level.

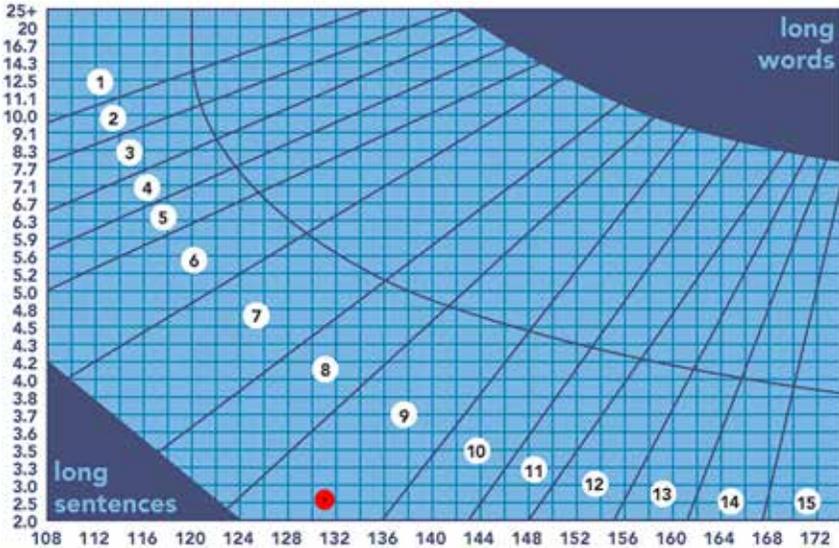


Figure 7. A rendition of the Fry Graph.<sup>90</sup>

**Dale-Chall Readability Formula:  
(Book of Mormon adjusted 8.4)**

The Dale-Chall Readability Formula employs a list of about 3000 words that would be in the vocabulary of up to 80% of fourth graders (around

age 10). Words not found on that list may be considered difficult and are included in the formula. The Book of Mormon adjusted score is 8.4, making it understandable to the average 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade student.<sup>91</sup>

### **SMOG: (Book of Mormon 12.55)**

SMOG is an acronym for “Simple Measure of Gobbledygook.” The SMOG Index estimates the years of education a person needs to comprehend a piece of writing by assessing the sentence count and the number of polysyllabic (more than three syllables) words in those sentences.<sup>92</sup> “The grades are supposed to be those which a reader needs to ensure complete comprehension.”<sup>93</sup> The Book of Mormon score of 12.55 correlates to the twelfth grade or having completed high school.

### **Flesch Kincaid Grade level: (Book of Mormon 15.74)**

The Flesch Kincaid grade level readability formula is oldest and most widely used readability index. It is based upon the average number of words per sentence and the average number of syllables per word. After multiplying by predetermined coefficients, the final number is the grade recommendation in the U.S. education system. According to this scale, the Book of Mormon at 15.74 would be suited to college juniors and seniors.

### **Gunning Fog index: (Book of Mormon 17.7)**

The Gunning Fog Index is calculated based upon the numbers of words, sentences and complex words, which are defined as having three or more syllables. The Book of Mormon’s score of 17.69 suggests that a person would need at least 17 years of formal schooling in order to “comprehend a passage of text on the first reading.” “A Gunning Fox Index score of 7 or 8 is ideal,” recommends an online source “Anything higher than 12 is too complex for most people to read. Popular magazines, such as *TIME* and the *Wall Street Journal*. average Gunning Fog scores of 11, while Shakespeare has a Gunning Fog Index of about 6.”<sup>94</sup>

### **ARI (Automated Readability Index): (Book of Mormon 17.50)**

The ARI combines calculations of the characters per word with the number of words per sentence to generate “an estimate of the U.S. grade level necessary to comprehend a passage of text.”<sup>95</sup> The Book of Mormon’s score of 17.5 supports that post-graduate education might be necessary to understand it.

**Brian C. Hales**, is the author of six books dealing with polygamy, most recently the three-volume, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology* (Greg Kofford Books, 2013). His *Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto* received the "Best Book of 2007 Award" from the John Whitmer Historical Association. He has presented at numerous meetings and symposia and published articles in *The Journal of Mormon History*, *Mormon Historical Studies*, and *Dialogue* as well as contributing chapters to *The Persistence of Polygamy* series. Brian works as an anesthesiologist at the Davis Hospital and Medical Center in Layton, Utah, and has served as the President of the Utah Medical Association.

### Notes

1. Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004), 466.
2. William Davis, "Reassessing Joseph Smith Jr.'s Formal Education," *Dialogue* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 46.
3. See Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1867), 14–15; Perry Benjamin Pierce, "The Origin of the 'Book of Mormon,'" *American Anthropologist* 1 (October 1899): 677, 680; William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Steam Book and Job Office, 1883), 6.
4. See George Peck ed., "Mormonism and the Mormons," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 25 (1843): 112; Orlando Saunders, William Van Camp, and John H. Gilbert, quoted in "The Early Days of Mormonism," *Lippincott's Magazine* 26 (August 1880): 198; John W. Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collection of the State of New York* (New York: S. Tuttle, 1841), 580–1.
5. Jonathan Hadley, "Golden Bible," *Palmyra Freeman*, (August 11, 1829); Daniel Hendrix in "Origin of Mormonism. Joe Smith and His Early Habits. How He Found the Golden Plates. A Contemporary of the Prophet Relates Some Interesting Facts," *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 14, 1893), 12; William H. Kelley, "The Hill Cumorah, and the Book of Mormon," *Saints' Herald* 28 (1 June 1881): 166.
6. Isaac Hale quoted in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio: E. D. Howe, 1834), 262–63.

7. Joseph Smith, “History, Circa Summer 1832,” in *Histories: Volume 1, Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1, eds. Karen Lynn Davidson *et al.* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 11 (spelling and punctuation corrected and standardized).
8. Davis, “Reassessing Joseph Smith Jr.’s Formal Education,” 10–11. Davis writes that Joseph’s school curriculum would have been “more accurately depicted” if he had included: “reading, writing, arithmetic, basic rhetoric, *composition*, geography, and history” (*italics added*). Despite this opinion, virtually all references to district school curriculums in the United States in the 1810s and early 1820s fail to include either rhetoric or composition. “The great majority of the one-room elementary schools which sprang up over America in the early nineteenth century” write R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, “were simple institutions providing a simple educational fare .... Reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic constituted the principle elements in the offering. (R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, *A History of Education in American Culture* [New York: Henry Holt, 1953], 269–70.) Studying composition would have required Joseph to acquire paper and ink, expensive items in rural America at that time.
9. This Book of Mormon word count was calculated using Microsoft Word and the text from, “Book of Mormon, 1830,” The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed December 21, 2018, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/book-of-mormon-1830/1>, after removing the witnesses’ testimonies, copyright page, and bracketed insertions.
10. Compare 1 Nephi 20–21 to Isaiah 48–49 (1654 words), 2 Nephi 7–8 to Isaiah 50–51 (1218 words), 2 Nephi 12–24 to Isaiah 2–14 (7548 words), 2 Nephi 27 to Isaiah 13 (611 words), Mosiah 14 to Isaiah 53 (392 words), Mosiah 15 to Isaiah 52 part (40 words), 3 Nephi 12–14 to Matthew 5–7 (2755 words), 3 Nephi 22 to Isaiah 54 (508 words), 3 Nephi 24–25 to Malachi 3–4 (801 words) for a total of 15,527 words.
11. A sidebar discussion asks why Joseph Smith would write such a long book. Book of Mormon scholar Grant Hardy observed: “If the primary purpose of the Book of Mormon were to function as a sign — as tangible evidence that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God — that mission could have been

accomplished much more concisely ... A longer tome might be more impressive to some, but it would put off other readers, in addition to offering a broader target for critics. In any case, the book represents a significant amount of work on the part of Joseph Smith and his scribes” (Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* [New York: Oxford, 2010], 5). The New Testament has 138,020 words and the Qur’an 77,701. A commonly accepted rule today recommends a 60,000 to 80,000-word range for general novels, allowing more than 100,000 words for thrillers or more complicated plots. Driving these numbers is public preference. Longer novels may discourage readers before they begin, especially for an author’s very first book.

12. See John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, (Provo, UT: FARMS), 217– 326.
13. Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Book of Mormon Names,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:186.
14. See Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, 217–326.
15. Modified from Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, UT: FARMS., 1992); James T. Duke, *The Literary Masterpiece Called the Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: CFI, 2004), 116.
16. Earl M. Wunderli, *An Imperfect Book: What the Book of Mormon Tells Us About Itself* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013), 329–33.
17. Roger Terry, “The Book of Mormon Translation Puzzle,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 23, (2014): 182. Terry observes that most of these words “do not appear in the Bible.”
18. Emma Smith reported that, while dictating, when Joseph “came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out” (Quoted in Edmund C. Briggs, “A Visit to Nauvoo in 1856,” *Journal of History* 9 [October 1916]: 454.)
19. “Tests Document Readability: Readability Calculator,” Online Utility, accessed December 21, 2018, [https://www.online-utility.org/english/readability\\_test\\_and\\_improve.jsp](https://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp); “ATOS for Text,” Renaissance, accessed December 21, 2018, <http://www1.renaissance.com/Products/Accelerated-Reader/ATOS/ATOS-Analyzer-for-Text>; “Readability Formulas,” Readability Formulas, accessed December 18, 2018, <http://>

- www.readabilityformulas.com/; “Free Lexile Analyzer,” Lexile Framework for Reading, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://la-tools.lexile.com/free-analyze/>.
20. “Tests Document Readability: Readability Calculator,” Online Utility.
  21. “Flesch-Kincaid,” Readability Test Tool, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.webfx.com/tools/read-able/gunning-fog.html>.
  22. “What Does the Lexile Measure Mean?,” The Lexile Framework for Reading, accessed December 18, 2018, <https://doe.sd.gov/octe/documents/WhatDoesTheLexileMeasureMean.pdf>.
  23. “Understanding Lexile Measures,” Lexile Framework for Reading, accessed December 18, 2018, <https://lexile.com/about-lexile/lexile-overview/>.
  24. The Lexile Framework for Reading, Publisher Report, containing the certified Lexile score for the text of the 1830 Book of Mormon was issued August 17, 2017, commissioned by Brian C. Hales for LDS Answers, Inc. Due to the lack of an ISBN number for the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, the Lexile score is not included in the Lexile score database at Lexile Framework for Reading, accessed September 2, 2018, <https://lexile.com>.
  25. See “How Do Lexile Measures Relate to Grade Levels?” Lexile Framework for Reading, accessed September 2, 2018, <https://lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/lexile-measures-grade-equivalents/>; See also Gary L. Williamson *et al*, “The Text Complexity Continuum in Grades 1–12,” (report, MetaMetrics Research Brief, October 1, 2012), [https://metametricsinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Research\\_Brief-Text\\_Continuum\\_Grades\\_1-12\\_1.pdf](https://metametricsinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Research_Brief-Text_Continuum_Grades_1-12_1.pdf).
  26. Scores can be obtained at “Book Results,” The Lexile Framework for Reading, accessed December 18, 2018, <https://fab.lexile.com/>.
  27. Don Bradley to author, December 19, 2018, used by permission.
  28. John W. Welch, ed., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations 1820–1844*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2017), 79–125. See also Elden J. Watson, “Approximate Book of Mormon Translation Timeline,” April 1995, <http://www.eldenwatson.net/BoM.htm>. John W. Welch, “How long did it take Joseph Smith to translate the Book of Mormon?” *Ensign*

- (January 1988), <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1988/01/i-have-a-question/how-long-did-it-take-joseph-smith-to-translate-the-book-of-mormon?lang=eng>. See also John W. Welch and Tim Rathbone, “How Long Did It Take to Translate the Book of Mormon?” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1110&index=1>.
29. John W. Welch, “Hours Never to Be Forgotten: Timing the Translation of the Book of Mormon,” YouTube video, 1:17:48, November 16, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RT4bF3g4yHA>.
  30. David Bledsoe, Jr., “Handwriting Speed in an Adult Population,” *Advance for Occupational Therapy Practitioners* 27, no. 22 (2011): 10, <http://rehab-insider.advanceweb.com/handwriting-speed-in-an-adult-population-30461/>. Another study measuring maximum handwriting speeds of 36 adults using a pen and paper reported an average speed of 97 characters per minute for one hour of the testing time. (R. A. Hardcastle and C. J. Matthews, “Speed of writing,” *Journal of the Forensic Science Society* 31, no. 1 [January 1991]: 25.) John W. Welch estimated between 15 and 20 words per minute. See Welch, “Hours Never to Be Forgotten.”
  31. Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 149, 151.
  32. *Ibid.*, 166, see also 175.
  33. Royal Skousen, “How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998): 25–27.
  34. Hardcastle and Matthews, “Speed of writing,” 26–27.
  35. Skeptic Dan Vogel disagrees, writing that Joseph “averaged about 8 pages per day, which could be done in a few hours; he therefore had the rest of the day to think of what to dictate next, perhaps while praying in the woods or skipping stones with Harris” (Dan Vogel, email message to author, December 22, 2015). Vogel’s timeline appears too optimistic and contradicts several witnesses’ accounts.
  36. David Whitmer, quoted in James H. Hart, “About the Book of Mormon,” *Deseret Evening News*, March 25, 1884.
  37. E. C. Briggs, letter to the editor, *The Saints’ Herald* 31, no. 25 (June 21, 1884): 396.

38. The following men and women reported Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon text while placing his face in a hat holding a seer stone: Martin Harris, David Whitmer, William Smith, Isaac Hale, Joseph Knight Sr., Emma Smith, Alva Hale, Elizabeth Whitmer Cowdery, Michael Morse, Joseph Lewis, and possibly Thurlow Weed. See Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 126–227.
39. See Jean Wyrick, *Steps to Writing Well*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2014).
40. Skousen, “How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon,” 25–27.
41. See Brian C. Hales, “Why Joseph Smith’s Dictation of the Book of Mormon Is Simply Jaw-Dropping,” *LDS Living*, November 10, 2018, <http://www.ldsliving.com/Why-Joseph-Smiths-Dictation-of-the-Book-of-Mormon-Is-Simply-Jaw-Dropping/s/89568>.
42. David Whitmer quoted in *Chicago Times*, October 17, 1881, cited in Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, UT: Grandin Books, 1991), 76; Whitmer quoted in *St. Louis Republican* (16 July 1884), as cited in Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 139–40; Whitmer as quoted by J.W. Chatburn, in *The Saints’ Herald* 29, no. 12 (June 15, 1882) 189; Emma Hale Smith quoted in Welch, *Opening the Heavens*, 145; Joseph Smith III, “Last Testimony of Sister Emma,” *Saints’ Herald* 26, no. 19 (October 1, 1879): 289–90.
43. The exact source of this quote is unknown.
44. Robert Louis Stevenson, quoted in Richard C. Hoefler, *Creative Preaching and Oral Writing* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 1978), 152.
45. See Stephen Hawking, *My Brief History* (New York: Bantam Books, 2013), 93–94; Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory and other Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956), 195.
46. See Brian C. Hales, “Opening the Black Box: Applying a Dictation Model to a Popular Naturalistic Theory of the Book of Mormon ‘Translation,’” (presentation, The Book of Mormon Studies Association Conference, October 14, 2018, Utah State University).
47. See Brian C. Hales, “Automatic Writing and the Book of Mormon: An Update,” *Dialogue* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2019), forthcoming.

48. Anita M. Muhl, *Automatic Writing* (Dresden: Theodor Steinkopff, 1930), 96.
49. See Ann Taves, *Revelatory Events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 248–62; Scott C. Dunn, “Automaticity and the Dictation of the Book of Mormon,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 25–44. For general support, see James H. Hyslop, “Apparent Subconscious Fabrication,” *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 1, no. 5 (1906): 208, 213.
50. See John A. Bargh and Ezequiel Morsella, “The Unconscious Mind,” in *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science* 3, no. 1 (2008): 73–79; Anthony G. Greenwald, “New look 3: Unconscious Cognition Reclaimed,” *American Psychologist* 47, no. 6 (June 1992): 775; Paul Campbell Young, “An Experimental Study of Mental and Physical Functions in the Normal and Hypnotic States,” *The American Journal of Psychology* 36, no. 2 (April 1925): 214–232; Joseph Barber, “Hypnosis and Memory: A Hazardous Connection,” *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 19, no. 4 (October 1997): 311, 313; John F. Kihlstrom, “Hypnosis, Memory and Amnesia,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 352, no. 1362 (December 1997): 1727–32; Steven Jay Lynn and Irving I. Kirsch, “Alleged Alien Abductions: False Memories, Hypnosis, and Fantasy Proneness,” *Psychological Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (1996): 151–5; Peter W. Sheehan, “Memory and Hypnosis — General Considerations,” in *International Handbook of Clinical Hypnosis*, ed. Graham D. Burrows, Robb O. Stanely, and Peter B. Bloom, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 52; Graham F. Wagstaff, *et al*, “Facilitating Memory With Hypnosis, Focused Meditation, and Eye Closure,” *The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 52, no. 4 (2004): 434; Peter Farvolden and Erik Z. Woody, “Hypnosis, Memory and Frontal Executive Functioning,” *The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 52, no. 1 (2004): 19.
51. See Robert A. Rees, “The Book of Mormon and Automatic Writing,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 5.

52. Irving Litvag, *Singer in the Shadows: The Strange Story of Patience Worth* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 8.
53. Examples include Pearl Curran and *The Sorry Tale* (from deceased spirit Patience Worth), Catherine-Elise Müller and *From India to the Planet Mars* (from Martians via trances while sleeping), Geraldine Cummins and *The Scripts of Cleophas* (from a spirit-guide name “Astor”), Helen Schucman and *A Course in Miracles* (from an inner voice she identified as Jesus), Jane Roberts and *The Seth Material* (from an energy personality named “Seth”), John Ballou Newbrough and *Oahspe: A New Bible* (from “Jehovih,” “The Great Spirit”), an unidentified author and *The Urantia Book* (from Celestial beings), Levi H. Dowling and *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (transcribed from the Akashic records).
54. Morton Prince, “The Unconscious,” *The Fundamentals of Human Personality, Normal And Abnormal* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 15–48.
55. See Irving Litvag, *Singer in the Shadows: The Strange Story of Patience Worth* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 65–85; Robert Todd Carroll, s.v. “Automatic Writing (Trance Writing),” *The Skeptic’s Dictionary*, accessed November 14, 2018, <http://skepdic.com/autowrite.html>.
56. Wikipedia, s.v. “Jane Austen,” last edited January 12, 2019, 11:26, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane\\_Austen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Austen). Austen’s works were not published until she was in her thirties, so they are not included in this study. Her novels and word counts are: *Sense and Sensibility* (114,080), *Pride and Prejudice* (148,800), *Mansfield Park* (121,520), *Emma* (158,720), *Northanger Abbey* (89,280), and *Persuasion* (46,500).
57. Data is compiled from multiple websites. Word counts are primarily from <http://www.readinglength.com/>, which uses a calculation based upon page count and may not be strictly accurate.
58. The next young authors publishing after 1830 are Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud who published *A Season in Hell* (106,020 words) in 1873 and Taylor Caldwell who wrote *The Romance of Atlantis* (73,320 words) in 1912.
59. See the books listed on the author’s website, “About Claire North/Kate Griffin,” Claire North, accessed December 16, 2018, <https://www.kategriffin.net/about/>.

60. The absence of a Lexile score for any of Webb's books is puzzling. It is possible her publisher did not want to pay the evaluation fee or that her books did not meet a Lexile requirement.
61. The LoveReading website recommends her early books to "11+ readers." See "Catherine Webb – Author," LoveReading 4 Kids, accessed December 12, 2018, <https://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/author/1602/Catherine-Webb.html>.
62. Catherine Webb, "My local library," Claire North, accessed December 17, 2018, <https://www.kategriffin.net/2018/12/13/my-local-library-2/>.
63. Amelia Atwater-Rhodes, "FAQ, About the Author," *Larmaen Nyeusi: a genolaahar* (blog), January 22, 2009, <http://nyeusiwiki.blogspot.com/2009/01/faq-about-author.html>.
64. Encyclopedia of World Biography, s.v. "Christopher Paolini Biography," accessed August 18, 2017, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/news/Ow-Sh/Paolini-Christopher.html>.
65. Lisa Wade McCormick, *Christopher Paolini* (New York: Rosen Publishing, 2013), 22.
66. Encyclopedia of World Biography, s.v. "Christopher Paolini Biography,"
67. McCormick, *Christopher Paolini*, 78–80.
68. *Ibid.*, 80–81.
69. Mulek, a Book of Mormon character, son of Zedekiah, escaped the sack of Jerusalem (587 BC) and went with others to a place in the Western Hemisphere that they called the land of Mulek (Helaman 6:10; see also Mosiah 25:2).
70. Jill Harness, "6 Famous Novels Penned in Under a Month," *Mental Floss*, October 31, 2011, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/29126/6-famous-novels-penned-under-month>; "AfsheenF," "10 Novels Written in About a Month," *Bookstr*, November 4, 2015, <https://www.bookstr.com/10-novels-written-in-about-a-month>, Hillary Kelly, "6 Great Works of Literature Written in 6 Weeks or Less," *The New Republic*, November 1, 2013, <https://newrepublic.com/article/115441/6-great-books-written-6-weeks>.
71. Eleanor Catton: "I am still astonished and a little bit suspicious that *The Rehearsal* has even been published' — An Interview with Eleanor Catton," interview by Annie Clarkson, *Bookmunch* (blog), August 4, 2009, <https://bookmunch.wordpress.com/2009/08/04/i-am-still-astonished-and-a-little->

bit-suspicious-that-the-rehearsal-has-even-been-published-an-interview-with-eleanor-catton/.

72. Ibid.
73. Michael Hubbard MacKay et al, *The Joseph Smith Papers: Documents Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2013), 6–9, 37–44.
74. F. Henry Edwards, ed., *Joseph Smith’s “New Translation” of the Bible* (Independence Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1970), 15.
75. See for example “Could Joseph Smith have written the Book of Mormon?” MormonThink, accessed September 17, 2017, <http://www.mormonthink.com/josephweb.htm>; Bill McKeever, “Is J.R.R. Tolkien Also Among the Prophets?” Mormonism Research Ministry, accessed January 3, 2018, <http://www.mrm.org/tolkien>.
76. Harold Bloom, ed., *J. R. R. Tolkien’s Lord of The Rings (modern Critical Interpretations)* (New York: Chelsea House Publications, 1999), 2.
77. “Could Joseph Smith have written the Book of Mormon?” MormonThink.
78. David Doughan, “J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biographical Sketch,” The Tolkien Society, accessed December 25, 2018, <https://www.tolkienesociety.org/author/biography/>.
79. See Katie Behrens, “J.R.R. Tolkien’s Epic Quest: Writing The Lord of the Rings,” *Books Tell You Why* (blog), December 16, 2014, <https://blog.bookstellyouwhy.com/jrr-tolkienes-epic-quest-writing-the-lord-of-the-rings>.
80. “Could Joseph Smith have written the Book of Mormon?” MormonThink. This essay reports numerous alleged parallels between Joseph Smith’s authoring of the Book of Mormon and other artists, geniuses, musicians, and scholars and their creations. Absent from the lists is an author of Joseph’s age and education who produced a book as complex and lengthy as the Book of Mormon by dictation in a compressed timeline.
81. “Shakespeare’s Life,” Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed December 19, 2018, <http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>.
82. Matt Grey, “‘The Word of the Lord in the Original:’ Joseph Smith’s Study of Hebrew in Kirtland,” in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, eds. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: Religious

- Study Center, 2015), 266, <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/approaching-antiquity-joseph-smith-and-ancient-world/word-lord-original-joseph-smith-s>.
83. Shixiang Zhou, Heejin Jeong, and Paul A. Green, “How Consistent Are the Best-Known Readability Equations in Estimating the Readability of Design Standards?” *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* 60, no. 1 (March 2017): 97–111.
  84. Rudolf F. Fleisch, *How to Write Plain English: A Book for Lawyers and Consumers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 21.
  85. Several popular scales were not used to evaluate the Book of Mormon. The *Powers-Sumner-Kearl Readability Formula* calculates reading difficulty based on sentenced length and number of syllables, but it is not considered ideal for assessing readability “for children above the age of 10 years.” (“The Powers-Sumner-Kearl Readability Formula,” Readability Formulas, accessed December 23, 2018, <http://www.readabilityformulas.com/powers-sumner-kearl-readability-formula.php>.) The *Spache Readability Index* is similar to the Dale-Chall Readability Formula. While Spache was designed to assess the readability of primary texts through the end of third grade, The Dale-Chall is ideal to gauge the readability of more advanced texts — i.e., fourth grade and above. And the *Linsear Write Formula* was designed for detecting the readability of Air Force manuals and is less applicable to the Book of Mormon.
  86. “Coleman Liau Index,” Readability Test Tool, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.webfx.com/tools/read-able/coleman-liau-index.html>.
  87. ATOS analytic software is available jointly from Advantage Learning Systems and Touchstone Applied Science Associates.
  88. “Text complexity, ATOS, and Lexile® Measures,” Renaissance, accessed December 18, 2018, <https://www.renaissance.com/products/practice/accelerated-reader-360/atos-and-text-complexity/>.
  89. Sheida White and John Clement, “Assessing the Lexile Framework: Results of a Panel Meeting,” (paper, National Center for Education Statistics, August 2001), <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/200108.pdf>.
  90. Wikipedia, s.v. “Fry readability formula,” last edited February 2, 2018, 06:33, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Fry\_readability\_formula. The original figure has been modified to show the plot point for the Book of Mormon.

91. "The New Dale-Chall Readability Formula," Readability Formulas, accessed December 18, 2018, at <http://www.readabilityformulas.com/new-dale-chall-readability-formula.php>. If the number is over 4, then 3.6365 is added to determine adjusted score to determine grade level.
92. "SMOG Index," Readability Test Tool, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.webfx.com/tools/read-able/smog-index.html>.
93. Harry Mc Laughlin, "SMOG Grading-a New Readability Formula," *Journal of Reading* 12, no. 8 (May 1969): 645.
94. "Gunning Fog Index," Readability Test Tool, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.webfx.com/tools/read-able/gunning-fog.html>.
95. "Automated Readability Index (ARI)," Readability Test Tool, accessed December 21, 2018, <https://www.webfx.com/tools/read-able/automated-readability-index.html>.



## ASSESSING THE CRITICISMS OF EARLY-AGE LATTER-DAY SAINT MARRIAGES

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Craig L. Foster

**Abstract:** *Critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have accused Joseph Smith and other early Latter-day Saint men of pedophilia because they married teenaged women. Indeed, they have emphatically declared that such marriages were against 19th-century societal norms. However, historians and other experts have repeatedly stated that young people married throughout the 19th-century, and such marriages have been relatively common throughout all of US history. This article examines some of the accusations of early Latter-day Saint pedophilia and places such marriages within the greater historical and social context, illustrating that such marriages were normal and acceptable for their time and place.*

Modern critics of the Latter-day Saint Church and even some of its members have expressed discomfort over the Prophet Joseph Smith's marrying teenage women, including at least one and probably two as young as 14 years. Criticism can be found in both regular and social media. Many people have unfortunately and ignorantly compared Joseph Smith to FLDS leader Warren Jeffs.<sup>1</sup> Others have specifically called Joseph Smith a pedophile because of his marriages to teenage women. For example, a meme found on Pinterest and other sites has a picture of Joseph Smith with the following: "My wife called me a pedophile. I said, 'That's a pretty big word for a 14 year old.'"<sup>2</sup> A radio listener responded, online, to a broadcast about Smith's polygamy: "So the official position of the LDS Church is to blame God Almighty for Joseph Smith's polygamy, polyandry and pedophilia. The mormon leadership cannot be SERIOUS! [sic]"<sup>3</sup> And yet another person commented regarding a *Salt Lake Tribune* article about post-Manifesto plural marriage: "Imagine that you are 37. Now imagine marrying an

eighth or ninth grader. If that's anything but repulsive to you then you're probably a sicko."<sup>4</sup>

As a professional genealogist, I have been disappointed by people such as those above regarding historical marriages to teenage women as a form of pedophilia. While the idea of marrying women so young is foreign and even repulsive to modern Americans, it was not always so. In the course of my genealogical research, I have seen numerous examples of marriage at an early age. While certainly not dominant, early marriage age was also not uncommon and was socially acceptable in the past. In other words, people in the past had a different understanding and definition of childhood, adolescence, and appropriate age to marry than what is accepted, even expected, in the present.

In 2010 Newell G. Bringham and I co-edited *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy*. In that volume I co-authored with David Keller and Gregory L. Smith an essay titled "The Age of Joseph Smith's Plural Wives in Social and Demographic Context,"<sup>5</sup> in which we argued that early marriage age was not uncommon and was socially acceptable in Joseph Smith's time.

Reaction to the essay was mixed. Some people agreed with the findings, while others were critical, accusing the authors of overstating their argument. There was even a counter-essay in the same volume by historian Todd M. Compton, titled "Early Marriage in the New England and Northeastern States, and in Mormon Polygamy: What was the Norm?" Compton shows that marriage age was much higher in New England and argues that Latter-day Saints were outside of the norm with their early marriages.<sup>6</sup> Compton's findings were certainly not surprising to anyone with a genealogical background and who is aware of historical marriage patterns in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic United States. While Compton focuses on East-Coast-marriage patterns, he did not adequately explain early marriage patterns that existed on the frontier.

### **Pedogamy: The Series**

More recently, a writer reignited the controversy about young marriage ages by publishing a series of blog posts on the topic. Without trying to hide apparent bias, he wrote that by "marrying very young girls to much older men," the "FLDS church is doing what the mainstream LDS church did from the 1840s through at least the 1870s." Not stopping there, the writer then announced that "the data that [he has] collected on American marital practices of the mid-1800s" does not support claims

of young girls marrying older men. “Child brides marrying significantly older men were very rare everywhere I investigated, except in Utah.”<sup>7</sup>

In an unfortunate attempt at neologism, this same writer coined the term pedogamy to refer to “older men marrying young girls.”<sup>8</sup> In an interesting twist, the writer suggests (without any published documentation) that such marriages were “especially noxious to non-Mormons, not necessarily polygamy per se. They clearly transgressed the mores of those days as well, bringing down the ire of the world on Mormonism.”<sup>9</sup> Despite the lack of documentation, one of the people commenting at the end of the essay wrote, “I work for a historical society in Massachusetts, but I was born and raised in Utah and have polygamous Utan [sic] ancestry. You are so right about the data. This was unusual in the 19th century, and even in the 18th century and earlier. Most of what I see is people who marry pretty late, into their mid 20s. I always heard that excuse and thought it was true because you hear about it with figures in various royal families. It just wasn’t the case for everyday people.”<sup>10</sup>

When documentation or endnotes were requested, the editor of the articles (Cristina Rosetti) assured readers that “the research is solid” and that readers should “wait and read the whole series.”<sup>11</sup> Responding to additional requests in the comments to the second article in the series, the editor of the blog (Steve Urquhart) claimed that “the style guidelines of the Utah Bee do not permit them” and suggested contacting the author directly.<sup>12</sup>

The fourth essay dealing with pedogamy, “Observations and Accusations of Pedogamy,” included a rather dramatic photo of a young girl standing next to an older man. The girl’s height was about midway between the man’s waist and shoulders, demonstrating her young age and petite frame, to which one reader responded, “Great terrible story and picture!”<sup>13</sup> Although almost every other picture in the series was identified, particularly pictures of people, this photo was unidentified, suggesting an authorial or editorial oversight. Further research, however, identifies the young girl as 11-year-old Francesca Carboni, who immigrated to New York from Italy and was forced to marry a 27-year-old man who beat and kicked her until she was able to run away. Her plight was tragic, and the husband was arrested and tried for abuse. Neither she nor her husband was a Latter-day Saint. The event occurred in 1891, which is even outside the time frame focused on by the series of blog posts. The man in the photo was an agent of the Brooklyn Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the photo is held

in the collection of the Brooklyn Public Library.<sup>14</sup> There is a point at which misinformation becomes propaganda and does nothing but feed sensationalism. Without documentation, the entire series becomes less credible.

### Comparing Apples to Oranges

In the concluding article of the pedogamy series, the author compared couples getting married in Utah to couples in Springfield, Hamden County, Massachusetts; and Branch County, Michigan. As with Compton's findings, anyone with a genealogical background and awareness of historical marriage patterns in the Northeast and the Eastern Seaboard would not be surprised. Nor should they be surprised by the findings in Branch County, Michigan, which is located on the Michigan-Indiana border.

Michigan, in the East North Central States, was a part of the historic Northwest Territory, or Old Northwest, and became a state in 1837. By 1857, Michigan had been a state for 20 years, and most of it, particularly in the southeast and south-central part of the state, was no longer considered the frontier. Nevertheless, the statistics from the final pedogamy essay were quite interesting. According to the author, the average age of the Massachusetts brides was 24.1, while the average age of the Michigan brides was 22.6.

As will be discussed later, the general marriage-age pattern was for marriage age to decrease the farther west and the more frontier the settings. Once frontier conditions no longer existed, marriage age would slowly increase to be similar to that in the older, more settled areas, particularly the eastern part of the country. Jack Larkin wrote in *The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790-1840*:

A trip westward was almost a demographic journey back in time; family sizes in communities further west mirrored those in much-longer settled places a generation or two previously. The women of Sugar Creek, Illinois, for example, were marrying four to five years younger on the average than those in Sturbridge or Deerfield, Massachusetts.<sup>15</sup>

In Michigan's early settlement phase in the 1800-teens and twenties, young women "often said yes [to marriage] at the age of fourteen or fifteen if the right young man popped the question."<sup>16</sup> Comparable demographics appear in other parts of the old historic Northwest

Territory. According to one historian, in Ohio of the 1820s “girls were generally married before they were seventeen.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Generalizing a Narrow Time Window**

In the concluding article, the author also explained that to “learn how extensive the system of child brides was in Utah, ... [he] began collecting data on all marriages performed in Utah in 1857.”<sup>18</sup> In his first article, he explained that he noticed “a large percentage of [Martin Handcart Company] young girls married in 1857, at the height of the so-called Reformation that was sweeping Mormon territory with its religious zeal and excesses, and that many of the men they married were much, much older than they were.”<sup>19</sup>

The author was correct to mention the zeal of the time-period. Latter-day Saint historian Eugene E. Campbell wrote about marriages during the Mormon Reformation, “Many Saints were urged to live polygamy, and this push resulted in considerable competition for wives. The competition became so intense in some places that men volunteered to go on missions to find new wives.”<sup>20</sup> Whether or not men going on missions to find wives was appropriate is a discussion best left for another article.

Historian Kathryn M. Daynes also mentioned the effect of the Mormon Reformation on Utah marriage rates:

The large number of women entering plural marriage in the frontier period, particularly in 1856 and 1857, adversely affected the availability of mates for men by creating a scarcity of marriageable women. It also had an impact on the age at which women married. Finding few women at the usual ages for marriage, men sought wives among increasingly younger women, thus intensifying the decline in women’s mean age at marriage. ... the mean marriage age for both monogamous and plural wives declined rapidly and bottomed out during the Mormon reformation period in 1856-57 and its aftermath.<sup>21</sup>

In light of such explanations about the effect of the Mormon Reformation on marriages and marriage age in Utah, one is left to wonder why the author of the pedogamy essays picked 1857, the peak of religious zeal and excess. Particularly since, according to Daynes, the mean age for women marrying decreased from a mean of between 18 and 19 in 1850 to lows during the reformation. Monogamous marriages bottomed out in 1857 at the mean age 16.49 and for plural wives in

1860 at 16.42. From that time, the mean marriage age of monogamous women steadily increased throughout the rest of the 19th century. The increase of mean marriage age for polygamous wives was not as steady, experiencing a sharp decrease in marriage age in the 1870s, but even at that time, the mean age was 17+ years.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, focusing on 1857 marriage ages would not fairly represent Utah marriage patterns during the whole of the territorial period. While there certainly were marriages to teens of all ages before and after the Mormon Reformation, the high number of marriages to girls in their early teens during this period was an anomaly. So why, then, would the author focus on that year? Perhaps the author's conclusion gives readers a hint. He explains that "some might want to whitewash, or even deny, these stories and statistical findings."<sup>23</sup> He then declares it was time for "those of us with a Utah Mormon heritage and ancestry to confront this unsavory part of our history and recognize clearly the dangers of theocratic rule, whether blatant or subtle."<sup>24</sup>

Understandably, readers might be concerned about "whitewashing" past events; and the biases of apologists or detractors may prevent accurate portrayals of what actually occurred. The goal, instead, should be to seek transparency on this topic, arguably something the pedogamy series does not actively seek to deliver to its audience. Why is this obvious? Because of the volumes of relevant data not discussed. Judging historical incidents without sufficient context invariably results in distortions rather than accurate reconstructions. Transparency helps us in our time to understand previous occurrences through the eyes of the participants.

### **Pedogamy and Joseph Smith's Young Brides**

The pedogamy author began and ended his series by referring to Joseph Smith's "marriages to children."<sup>25</sup> By so doing, he touched on a point of discomfort for some Latter-day Saints who have expressed shock and angst over Joseph Smith's marriages to younger wives. Because some of Joseph Smith's wives were teens, at least one 14, critics have viewed Joseph Smith's marriages to young teens as pedophilic, which is inaccurate. *Pedophilia* is defined as the primary or exclusive sexual interest in prepubescent children. That automatically rules out Joseph Smith and the men discussed in the "pedogamy" essays, for there is no evidence of their being sexually interested in prepubescent children.

But what about marriages to teens? *Hebephelia* is defined as the strong, persistent sexual interest by adults in pubescent children

between the ages of 11 and 14. *Ephhebophilia* is defined as the primary sexual interest in later adolescents, which is typically ages 15 to 19.<sup>26</sup> As for Joseph Smith, the majority of women he married were in their twenties, thirties, and older, so it is obvious he was not fixated on teens. Therefore, while it makes for sensationalistic criticism of Joseph Smith to accuse him of pedophilia, the reality is that both science and history demonstrate that his marriages to teenage women were not “pedophilic behavior.” In addition, the evidence is strong that his marriage to 14-year-old Helen Mar Kimball was never consummated.<sup>27</sup>

### **Changing Attitudes and Definitions of Childhood and Marriage**

It has been said that the past is a foreign country — things are done differently there. One example is how our modern understanding of what constitutes childhood has drastically changed from that of previous centuries. In the past hundred-plus years, western culture has redefined and extended childhood to the point that even people in their early to mid-twenties are viewed as still in a stage of childhood.<sup>28</sup> New definitions and an extension of childhood started to become prevalent near the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. Previous to that time, children, especially those living in rural settings and frontier conditions were considered adults by the time they reached puberty and were expected to perform adult labor.<sup>29</sup> These children were “initiated into adulthood at a tender age” and were entrusted “early with responsibilities that would horrify a modern parent.”<sup>30</sup>

As one writer mentions, “The ages at which men and women mature and become adults in their own eyes and in the eyes of their elders have varied considerably in the past, reflecting not only legal practices but also — and more importantly — the effects of custom, parental influence, and the varied social and economic circumstances of a given period.”<sup>31</sup> Nicholas L. Syrett explains further in his book *American Child Bride: A History of Minors and Marriage in the United States* that “the precise line of when childhood ended and adulthood began” was not well defined. In fact, “For most of American history there was no distinction between the marriage of two minors or that between one party who was older (sometimes considerably so) and one who was younger.”<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, according to Syrett, “marrying at the age of fourteen was not at all uncommon ... throughout the nation in the middle of the nineteenth century.”<sup>33</sup> Syrett explains, “It is clear that young people married throughout the nineteenth-century United States.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed,

“the marriage of legal children, in fact, has been relatively common throughout US history.”<sup>35</sup>

There are numerous examples throughout North American history of people marrying at a young age, and in some cases a very young age. Discussing marriage patterns of young people, one early settler reminisced about growing up in the Willamette Valley on the Oregon frontier and the prevalence of such early marriages:

It is remarkable at what an age young girls developed into women and the early marriages are surprising to us of the present day. I know of several brides of 13 years. One neighbor girl between 12 and 13 eloped with her lover and was married before her parents could intervene. That couple is living yet. Their oldest child is 30 years older than their last one. There was no state law regulating the marriage age nor license required.<sup>36</sup>

Before the middle of the 19th-century, age was not as important in determining marriage readiness because it was believed that marriage could transform a child into an adult, and “her marital status trumped her chronological age.”<sup>37</sup> In fact, the term *child bride* didn’t appear in American newspapers until the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>38</sup> But the age of consent and marriage in our nation was still very young. In most states and territories, the minimum marriage age for girls was twelve and for boys fourteen, both ages being based on English common law.<sup>39</sup> However, “either could actually marry at age seven, but between the ages of seven and twelve/fourteen, the marriage would be considered imperfect or inchoate, almost like a trial run for real marriage. A girl or boy could opt to leave an inchoate marriage, but only on reaching the age of 12 or 14, and only if the couple had not consummated the marriage.”<sup>40</sup> As incredible as these ages sound, “there is plentiful evidence, both from England and the early colonies, that children as young as eight, nine, and ten did marry. ... [And] parental consent was not required at these young ages.”<sup>41</sup> In New France and New Spain, the minimum ages for marriage were eleven for girls and thirteen for boys.<sup>42</sup>

What is surprising is that the age of legal consent to sexual intercourse was even younger than the traditional age of marriage, 12 and 14. As late as 1880, the majority of states had age 10 as the minimum age of consent. Incredibly, Delaware’s age of consent for a girl was seven.<sup>43</sup>

However, the focus of this discussion is on marriage age. In 1880, the first year the US census linked marital status, almost 12% of girls aged 15 to 19 were wives.<sup>44</sup> Based on research of historical marriage patterns,

it appears that even as early as the 1850s, “the marriage of young people was least common in the industrializing Northeast, and most common in the South, Midwest, and West.”<sup>45</sup> In the mid-1850s, 22% of marriages in Massachusetts were by young women under the age of 20. Obviously, most of those young women were in their later teens. At the same time, 42% of young women in Kentucky married before the age of 20. While most would also have been in their later teens, a number would also have been in their younger teens.

“In all societies men marry later in life than women and the gender differential in age at first marriage tends to be largest in more traditional societies. The nineteenth century United States is no exception. . . . The male-female differential in median age at first marriage was quite large in the nineteenth century.”<sup>46</sup> While discussing community studies, historian Christopher Waldrep writes about how an examination of marriages “may find very young brides marrying older grooms, or the inverse.”<sup>47</sup> *Significantly older* has been considered an 11-year differential and up.<sup>48</sup>

While marriages of a significant age differential were not as common as most marriages, still there are examples of such with mixed results of acceptability by the community. Consider these anecdotal examples:<sup>49</sup>

- Fifteen-year-old Ann Ball married a rich South Carolina plantation owner, Captain Philip Dawes, age sixty.<sup>50</sup>
- In California in 1841, forty-one-year-old Abel Stearns married fourteen-year-old Arcadia Bandini. Both the Catholic Church and the California colonial government gave permission to this marriage. The couple was popular, well respected, and for years was the center of Los Angeles society.<sup>51</sup>
- In 1769, fifty-eight-year-old widower Reverend John Camm approached fifteen-year-old Betsy Hansford about the importance of marriage. Tradition has it that both used Biblical scripture to demonstrate interest in one another and to justify their marriage. Because Reverend Camm had known the Hansford family long enough that he presided over her baptism as a baby, there was some comment on their age difference. Nevertheless, they married later that year, and he eventually served as the seventh president of William and Mary College in Williamsburg, Virginia.<sup>52</sup>

- Forty-four-year-old F. C. Scott of Mound Valley, Nevada, his sixteen-year-old wife, Mary, who had in 1880 a six-month-old baby.<sup>53</sup>
- Jose Abeta, age forty, and Maria, age fourteen of Conejos Valley, Colorado.<sup>54</sup>
- Jose Baca, age thirty-five, and thirteen-year-old M'a Delicia of Huerfano, Colorado.<sup>55</sup>
- William Skelton was in his early thirties when he married fourteen-year-old Vaitleain Vann in 1879 in Geysler, Montana. Vaitleain's own mother, Marie, was fifteen when she married thirty-five-year-old Pierre Venne in 1862.<sup>56</sup>
- William Turnage was twenty-one years older than Elizabeth Silverthorn, a part-Native American, who had barely turned thirteen at the time of their marriage in Lolo Fork, Montana, in 1871. After Elizabeth's death in 1878, he married her younger sister, Annette Anna Silverthorne, in 1880. He was forty-three and she was sixteen. The girls' mother, Elizabeth, was fifteen when she married forty-year-old John Samuel Silverthorn.<sup>57</sup>

Such marriages as well as others to young girls no doubt shock modern sensibilities.<sup>58</sup> But such was not the case at that time, as Nicholas L. Syrett explains:

From the perspective of a man, the precise age of a girl — especially if she were in the fuzzy region between thirteen and seventeen that we would now call adolescence — might be less important than attractiveness, capability, and willingness. Americans of the nineteenth century [and earlier] did not identify particular men as child predators or pedophiles, so sexual desire for a younger girl was not stigmatized as it is now. Modern statutory rape laws were not passed before the 1880s. The age of consent to sex outside of marriage was ten in most states. And precisely because a man who married a young girl legitimized his relationship with her through matrimony, socially and legally, both his intentions and their relationship would not achieve the notoriety that it might today.<sup>59</sup>

If the culture had frowned on such relationships between older men and young girls, “these men would not have come calling if they thought

their attentions unreasonable.”<sup>60</sup> Thus society, depending on place and time, generally accepted these marriage relationships.

Yet another example of the male-female age differential was the 1762 marriage of 73-year-old Arthur Dobbs, sixth governor of the royal colony of North Carolina, to 15-year-old Justina Davis. Criticism of this match was not surprising. However, at no point does concern for Justina Davis’s age appear. “The problem here was not Davis’s youth but rather Dobbs’s age. ... He was a fool for allowing himself to fall for someone so youthful, but that she might be suitable for marriage at age fifteen was certainly not in doubt.”<sup>61</sup>

But why were there teen marriages and why were they prevalent in some parts of the country while barely existent in other parts? That is because of what genealogists and historians refer to as the product of time and place that might encourage earlier marriages. This article will discuss what defined the correct time and place for early marriage age in North America.

### **Reasons for and Examples of Early Marriage**

Several factors created the right climate for early-age marriages, and numerous social and family historians have discussed these factors. They were economic, demographic, and cultural and involved at least two and usually all three factors. Furthermore, locality and timing were very important and usually influenced or were influenced by the above three factors.

For example, while conditions encouraged early marriage along the eastern seaboard in the 17th and early part of the 18th centuries, they didn’t later. The locality was obviously the same, but the times had changed. Further, while there may still have been some economic benefits, demographics, and culture which made early marriage less conducive, that was not always the case, even in New England.

### **Economic Influence**

A major economic factor involved the availability of work and land. “North American colonists tended to get married early due to several factors. The first, and perhaps most important, was simply that they could.”<sup>62</sup> Good, stable employment with relatively high wages and year-round work “helped to encourage younger marriage,” even in parts of the British Isles with such industries as the weaving industry and mining.<sup>63</sup>

Economic factors and job opportunities were even better in North America. In colonial New England, for example, there was significant immigration and large population growth because “freedom from indenture, a balanced sex ratio, a healthy climate, and plentiful food encouraged early marriage, a high birth rate, and low mortality.”<sup>64</sup> It has been noted that “at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, fertility in the United States was much higher than that found in Western Europe.” Economic structure of the region impacted “the dynamics of the family.”<sup>65</sup>

A large part of economic advantage was the availability of inexpensive land. More than one historian has argued that “high frontier fertility was directly related to land abundance, resultant economic opportunity and early marriage.”<sup>66</sup> “Descendants of English immigrants, who had far more land at their disposal, jumped quickly into marriage.”<sup>67</sup> One English traveler noted during a journey in 1704 between Boston and New York, “They generally marry very young; the males oftener, as I am told, under twenty than above.”<sup>68</sup> Even Benjamin Franklin acknowledged, “Marriages in America are more general, and more generally early, than in Europe.”<sup>69</sup> Franklin also noted that more and earlier marriages came, in part, from cheap and plentiful land that allowed large families, in which children were taught “examples of industry ... and industrious education.”<sup>70</sup>

Cheap and plentiful land was generally located on the unsettled or little-settled frontier. And the frontier was constantly in flux as it moved westward with the expanding population. So in early colonial Massachusetts, Puritan settlers had “earlier marriages and hence larger families than had been typical in England.”<sup>71</sup> For these early Puritans, “early marriages were the rule,” because the moral and economic conditions, as well as the political and ecclesiastical system all worked not only to allow but put a premium on early marriage.<sup>72</sup> Still, when Massachusetts became an older colony and later a state, cheap unsettled land with the accompanying economic benefits that encouraged marriage at a younger age was no longer available because of the large population. These economic conditions and resultant opportunities of early marriage had moved on with the ever-expanding frontier, leaving behind a population that began to marry at a later age for both men and women.

Early marriage and large families were considered an economic advantage on the frontier.<sup>73</sup> “Sometimes the pressure to move west or to acquire new land necessitated early marriages. Reasons to marry

were accelerated. Reasons not to marry were eliminated.”<sup>74</sup> The frontier “tended to blur the meanings of age and allow for marriage of girls who might be seen as too young for marriage in other situations.”<sup>75</sup> Because of frontier conditions, “young girls in the West matured rapidly into women’s roles. They were courted at a very young age by much older men and were sometimes married when only a few years into their teens.”<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, “women in newer regions started childbearing earlier and continued longer.”<sup>77</sup>

Anecdotal evidence confirms this trend for early marriage. One example among many was early Oregon settler Charlotte Matheny, who described how she married John Kirkwood after having met him only a few times. Her brother was to be married the next day, and John Kirkwood, visiting for the wedding, asked her to marry him at the same time. She later recalled, “I was nearly fifteen years old and I thought it was high time that I got married so I consented.”<sup>78</sup> Memoirs suggest that fifteen was a typical age for women to marry during the earliest years on the Willamette Valley frontier. One woman recalled that “in those days the young men began wondering why a girl wasn’t married if she was still single when she was 16.”<sup>79</sup>

Historian John Mack Faragher has argued that marriage for romance was neither accessible to nor a priority for people raised on the frontier. Marriage “was a necessity, and frontier men and women lacked the luxury of searching for romantic love.” Certainly, mutual attraction and companionship were desired, but for most, “the financial necessity of a partner in labor superseded their desire for a romantic companion.”<sup>80</sup> Cynthia Culver Prescott has contended that the “chief purpose of early frontier marriages was to combine men’s outdoor work with women’s domestic labor to overcome chronic labor shortages.” On the frontier, a wife was “an equal partner in everything,” particularly labor.<sup>81</sup>

The need for partners in labor as well as the potential to claim twice the amount of land as could a single man “encouraged teenage girls to marry at even younger ages” than in other places, even some other frontier regions.<sup>82</sup> Jennie Stevenson Miller, an early Oregon settler, recalled, “I had my first offer of marriage when I was 13, and from then till I was 24 I had numerous proposals.”<sup>83</sup> So much pressure to marry as soon as physically possible was placed on single girls and women in the Willamette Valley that marriages took place quickly and “with little or no attention to social compatibility.” Teenage girls who migrated to Oregon with their families “were sometimes pressured to marry significantly older men, and at least a few young women married men whom they

hardly knew. For example, one fourteen-year-old married a man twice her age whom she had known only a week.”<sup>84</sup>

Such was the emphasis on marrying quickly and usually young that 13-year-old Elizabeth Keegan wrote back to her home in the East and warned, “I want you to let Kate O’Shea see this letter. Tell her that I would not encourage her to come here. For there is no encouragement for females here unless she were married.”<sup>85</sup> Women’s rights activist Abigail Scott Duniway, who arrived in Oregon in 1852 and married a year later at age 19, complained about men “forty, thirty, or even twenty-five” marrying “a child of fourteen.”<sup>86</sup>

Despite the remonstrations of a few naysayers like Duniway, “mid-nineteenth-century men and women across rural America married at relatively young ages.” In Oregon, it is estimated that “the median age of marriage of female settlers at first marriage in [the Willamette Valley] was only 17.4 years, far younger than the 1860 national norm of 23 years. This was, however, comparable to the first marriage age of women who settled in Sugar creek, Illinois, several decades earlier.”<sup>87</sup>

Sugar Creek, located a few miles east of present-day Springfield, Illinois, was first settled in 1817. Its main growth was in the early 1820s. John Mack Faragher’s *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* explains that as a result of “both commercial and urban development, the age of marriage for American women increased, and by 1800 much of coastal North American society had fallen in line with the European pattern” of later marriage and smaller families. On the other hand, Sugar Creek and other backcountry or frontier settlements continued to experience earlier marriage and larger families.<sup>88</sup>

As noted earlier, this was certainly the case for the Oregon Territory as well as other parts of the western frontier. In mid-19th-century Colorado, for example, most women married from their mid-teens to their early twenties. While there are a number of anecdotal examples, I will give a personal one. My second great-grandmother, Minerva Ellis, married the prominent Elizabeth, Colorado, cattleman Charles Garland when she had recently turned 16 and he had barely turned 39.<sup>89</sup> In spite of Minerva’s youth and the age disparity between her and Charles Garland, they continued to be among the most respected members of the small community.

This marriage reflected the frontier conditions found across the West that allowed for economic opportunities and encouraged marriage at a young age, sometimes with much older and more established men. Frontier conditions waxed and waned depending on the locality and the

first-to-second generation of settlement. More often than not, marriage age began to rise after the first generation, and certainly after the second or third.

### Demographic Influence

Another factor that encouraged early marriage was a marriage squeeze in which marriageable women were scarce. A scarcity of marriageable-aged women (or men, for that matter) could be caused by different factors. For example, in post-Civil War America, some parts of the country experienced a population imbalance in which there were more women than men and a resulting marriage squeeze. This was particularly true in the South, where so many men had been killed in that great war. Chances of remarriage, or marriage at all, were “significantly reduced because the pool of marriageable men was so much smaller than normal.”<sup>90</sup> Indeed, “far more women remained permanently unmarried in the East than on the frontier, where they continued to marry at young ages and high proportions characteristic of the early colonial period.”<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, and remarkably, not as many women were forced to remain unmarried as originally feared at the close of the Civil War. In times of extraordinary or catastrophic events, extraordinary actions are taken. Perhaps “fears of spinsterhood spurred women to accept unconventional suitors — men who were younger, much older, of a lower social class, from a distant community, or of a different ethnic group — and thus reduced what would otherwise have been a larger cohort of unmarried women.”<sup>92</sup>

In certain periods in history and places, a dearth of marriageable women encouraged a much younger marriage age. An example of such was in mid-1600s Québec, Canada, where large numbers of men had been sent to trap for fur, harvest timber, and perform other economically important work. To make sure the men remained in Québec, the French government attempted to remedy the lack of women by importing *filles du Roi* (“King’s daughters”). These were mainly poor and orphaned young women who were willing to risk their lives crossing the Atlantic and living in North America in order to better their lives. Almost 800 women traveled to Québec, and, today, most French Canadians and many other Canadians and Americans descend from these women. Of the 774 women identified as “King’s daughters,” 76 — almost 10% — were between the ages of 12 and 15. Almost 42% were age 20 and younger.<sup>93</sup>

Not as well-known as the *filles du Roi* were the *filles à marier* (“marriageable girls”) who were recruited to settle in Québec between

1634 and 1663. Some 262 women traveled to Canada. Of those 262, the age of the woman is available for 181: about 16.5% were age 15 and under. Most of these were 13 or 14 years old.<sup>94</sup>

Interestingly, the second generation of French settlers in Québec married as young as and sometimes even younger than those in the first generation. This was because there still existed a population imbalance of more men than women. Françoise Boucher married in 1650 at age 14, while her younger sister, Marie Boucher, married at age 12 in 1656 at Chateau Richer.<sup>95</sup> In 1637 two Couillard sisters married within a week of each other. Twelve-year-old Louise married a close family friend, Olivier Le Tardiff, age approximately 36, a week after her 11-year-old sister, Marguerite, wed Jean Nicolet, age approximately 39.<sup>96</sup> Another 11-year-old girl who married was Anne Cloutier, who married in 1637 to Robert Drouin, age approximately 37.<sup>97</sup>

Marrying that same day was 13-year-old Marie-Magdeliene Robin Guyon to François Belanger, age about 25. Marie-Magdeliene was the daughter of Jean Guyon and Mathurine Robin. This marriage is of special interest to me because they are my ancestors. Another 13-year-old ancestor of mine who married in 1648 was Marie Martin, the bride of Jean Cloutier, age 28.<sup>98</sup>

French brides were not only sent to Québec, they were also sent to America's Gulf Coast. In 1704, 23 women, between the ages of 14 and 19, sailed on the ship *Le Pelican*. These young women were known as "casket girls" because the wooden boxes holding their dowry they carried were called "casquettes." They arrived in Mobile, Alabama, married, and settled in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Illinois.<sup>99</sup> There were other efforts to provide women of marriageable age to French settlers and trappers. In 1721, a group of French young women arrived in Biloxi, Mississippi, aboard the ship *La Baleine*. These women, 24 of whom married within a month or so of arrival and eventually had large families, ranged in age between 12 and 30.<sup>100</sup>

As would be expected, within a few generations, the age of marriage began to increase and eventually came more to reflect western European marriage patterns. Eastern Canada experienced a significant upward trend in marriage age in the early- to mid-19th century.<sup>101</sup> In mid- to late-Victorian Ontario, for example, because the ratio of marriageable age men and women was closer — as well as the lack of land and the high cost of any available land — about 90% of women married between the ages of 18 and 28, while the age range for men was about three to four years older. This mid- to late-Victorian marriage pattern resulted

in “comparatively late marriage, small age differences between spouses, and significant numbers of unmarried.”<sup>102</sup>

Previous to the mid-19th-century, however, the early settlement patterns of Anglo-Canadians were similar to those of their French-Canadian neighbors who had first settled in the 17th century. For example, Cornwall, Ontario, located across the St. Lawrence River from upstate New York, was founded in 1784. In the early years of pioneer Cornwall, 6% of brides married younger grooms for their first marriage, compared to 12% in the second half of the 19th century. In early Cornwall, grooms were generally almost six years older than brides. Brides in their teens “almost invariably married men considerably older than themselves.” Furthermore, the “older the men grew, the more likely they were to take a younger wife, and the greater the spread in their ages.”<sup>103</sup>

Similar to the French-Canadian “*prêtes au mariage*” girls, French girls were also sent to New Orleans and up the Mississippi River to French outposts. Amos Stoddard wrote shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, “The French are prompted to marry early in life; the climate dictates this practice.”<sup>104</sup> Like the French settlers in 1600s Québec, the first-generation females married at a much younger age. Sister Marie-Madeleine Hachard wrote from New Orleans in 1728, “The custom here is to marry girls of twelve to fourteen years.”<sup>105</sup> While she might have been exaggerating a little, there was certainly evidence of early marriages. In Natchitoches, located some two hundred and fifty miles northwest of New Orleans, “A fourth of the females to marry ... prior to 1733 (all of whom were French-Indian) were known to be fourteen or under; and in half of the marriages of the next decade (1734-1743), the bride was not yet fifteen.”<sup>106</sup>

In French Louisiana, in “90 percent of all marriages, the male outranked the female by a mean of 11 years. Some far more extreme age gaps appeared.” Three marriages had a 28-year age gap, while one marriage had a thirty-two-year age gap.<sup>107</sup> The author of a book about settlement in St. Louis, Missouri, noted that among the French, “marriages between very young brides and older grooms were not uncommon.”<sup>108</sup>

The French were not alone in marrying young when women of marriageable age were hard to find. In other places across the United States with a high male population and low female population, “young girls were often courted when they were barely into their teens.”<sup>109</sup> “Marriages of twelve-and-thirteen-year-old girls were not unheard of

in the Chesapeake colonies and were noted during the California Gold Rush.”<sup>110</sup>

Early Oregon territory settlers, experiencing not only abundant land and labor possibilities, but also a significant marriage squeeze, produced numerous young brides. “For many women it was assumed that they would marry early — nearly six out of every ten emigrant women were married before their twentieth birthday, and by age twenty-five, only one in ten women remained unmarried.”<sup>111</sup> Fifteen-year-old Sallie Hester, residing in Oregon in 1850, wrote, “I am invited out so much that I am beginning to feel quite like a young lady. Girls are scarce; I presume that is the reason. Young men are plenty.”<sup>112</sup> And when 12-year-old Molly Sheehan attended her first dance in Virginia City, Montana, she was one of very “few females in attendance and was therefore sought out by many young men.”<sup>113</sup>

Even before the gold rush and the invasion of thousands of gold-seeking Forty-Niners, California apparently lacked marriageable women. Western historian Albert L. Hurtado wrote about California’s population, “There were too many men competing for too few women. This basic fact was plain in the operation of the marriage market, where women had many opportunities to marry and men had few.”<sup>114</sup> Thirteen-year-old Virginia Reed of Donner Party fame wrote back to Illinois advising that a girl who wanted to get married should come to California, where “she can get a spanyard [sic] any time.”<sup>115</sup> Reed received a marriage proposal shortly after being rescued but turned her suitor down. She married another man three years later when she was 16. Another Donner Party member, Mary Murphy, married three months after her rescue; she was 13 at the time.<sup>116</sup>

At the height of the California gold rush, the “populace was overwhelmingly young and male.”<sup>117</sup> In 1850, there were 12.2 males per female. While this imbalance had decreased in 1852 to 7.2 and in 1860 to 2.4, there was, nevertheless, an imbalance, and women were scarce to the point that, as a former pioneer emigrant remembered, “It was customary in early days [in California] for girls to marry at fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen years of age.”<sup>118</sup> Even more significant, according to Hurtado, the sex ratios for white age cohorts in 1860 had 3.1 males per female for those aged 20–29, and 4.3 males per female in the 30–39 age cohort. This obviously meant significant competition for marriageable females and naturally would have driven the marriage market toward younger girls.<sup>119</sup> Historian Kenneth L. Holmes observed about California in that

period, “Men courted young girls barely into their teens, and a girl could get married ‘halfway through her adolescent years.’”<sup>120</sup>

In the different agricultural communities and even most mining towns of settled regions that had previously exhibited frontier conditions, typically within a generation the average age at first marriage began to increase, following the course of earlier places such as Massachusetts and localities west of there. “Eventually, as population density increased and the numbers of males and females evened out, the average marriage age of women increased and their fertility declined.”<sup>121</sup>

### **Cultural Influences**

Culture was another factor in marrying at a young age, as certain ethnic and other groups tended to marry earlier than others. “Southern women, as a rule, married very young — younger than their northern counterparts and much younger than men.”<sup>122</sup> Southerners in general married at a younger age than they did in other regions, such as New England. In a pattern from colonial times, some “planter families had married their children (as young as eight or nine) to each other to solidify family dynasties; this practice had largely been eliminated by the antebellum period.”<sup>123</sup>

Teenage marriages, however, did continue. This was particularly the case in the southern backcountry, which included the piedmont and Appalachian Mountains, extending from Virginia down through Georgia. In fact, historians have noted that in particular regions of the southern backcountry — upcountry Georgia, for example — “marriage beginning at fourteen or fifteen was common.”<sup>124</sup> For example, one writer noted that southern backcountry “frontier marriages were early and prolific.” He added, probably with some exaggeration, “In one Carolina back-country district with 17,000 white inhabitants, there was not a woman at age twenty-five who was neither wife nor widow.”<sup>125</sup> In 1737, John Brickell, in describing his travels through North Carolina, wrote that women there “marry generally very young, some at thirteen or fourteen; and she that continues unmarried until twenty is reckoned a stale Maid, which is a very indifferent character in this country.”<sup>126</sup>

Thus both brides and grooms on the southern frontier or “backcountry” were particularly young. These young “backsettlers” appear to have been following cultural norms:

This was partly the result of a frontier environment, but not entirely so. Other frontiers were very different. And it is interesting to observe that of all the regions of England, age

at marriage was lowest in the north — as much as three years below southern England. Here again the backsettlers followed their ancestral ways.<sup>127</sup>

The north of England was actually specifically the Scottish-English border or what the lowland Scots referred to as *the borders*. A number of these borderers chose or were forced to immigrate to Ulster. Their descendants later immigrated to North America, bringing with them their customs and traditions. These Ulster Scots were known in the Americas as the Scotch-Irish.

The customs of the Scotch-Irish “encouraged very early marriage; common was age fourteen for boys, and twelve for girls.”<sup>128</sup> These Scotch-Irish drew on the tradition of early marriage and large families replicated elsewhere in the American colonies. One contemporary wrote about the Scotch-Irish of the backcountry, “There’s not a Cabin but has 10 or 12 Young children in it — When the Boys are 18 and the Girls 14 they marry — so that in many Cabbins [sic] you will see 10 or 15 children.”<sup>129</sup>

This Scotch-Irish culture spread out from 18th-century Appalachia and influenced the greater American culture, particularly on the ever-expanding frontier. Part of that cultural influence involved early marriage when economic and other conditions were right. This was witnessed repeatedly in American history from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific coast as descendants of the Scotch-Irish as well as others moved westward.

### **Timing and Incidence of First Marriage**

As Nicholas L. Syrett has explained, throughout most of the 19th-century, “Marriage in the middle teen years, and sometimes earlier, while by no means the norm, was relatively common.”<sup>130</sup> Plenty of anecdotal evidence demonstrating that early marriage age was accepted by most of society in the 19th century and earlier has been given in this article, but works such as Syrett’s *American Child Bride* and “The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns” have also provided statistical evidence of such. Following are the nuptiality measurements for the white population of the United States, 1850-1880, provided in “The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns.” While the charts in that article cover males and females ages 15 to 54, only the mean age at marriage and the married males and females ages 15 to 19 will be discussed here.<sup>131</sup>

Census Year	Mean Age at Marriage		Percent Married 15-19	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>United States</b>				
1850	26.8	23.1	1.7	12.2
1860	26.9	22.8	1.6	12.4
1870	26.8	23.2	1.6	10.9
1880	27.1	23.4	1.1	11.0
<b>Northern Census Regions</b>				
1850	26.9	23.4	1.3	10.3
1860	26.6	23.0	1.1	10.7
1870	27.0	23.3	1.1	9.7
1880	27.4	23.8	0.7	9.0
<b>Southern Census Regions</b>				
1850	26.5	22.4	2.7	16.5
1860	26.6	22.3	2.8	15.8
1870	25.9	23.0	2.6	13.2
1880	25.9	22.4	2.1	16.7
<b>New England Census Region</b>				
1850	27.5	24.9	1.9	7.7
1860	26.9	24.1	1.6	7.1
1870	27.7	25.0	1.3	6.9
1880	27.5	24.9	1.1	6.7
<b>Mid-Atlantic Census Region</b>				
1850	27.0	23.8	1.3	8.5
1860	26.6	23.7	1.1	8.7
1870	26.7	23.9	1.5	8.3
1880	27.4	24.5	0.7	6.5
<b>East-North Central Census Region</b>				
1850	26.1	22.2	1.1	12.4
1860	26.1	22.1	1.0	12.9
1870	26.5	22.8	0.7	10.5
1880	27.3	23.5	0.6	9.8
<b>West-North Central Census Region</b>				
1850	26.6	21.4	1.0	20.5
1860	26.6	21.5	1.1	16.0

Census Year	Mean Age at Marriage		Percent Married 15–19	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1870	27.0	22.2	1.5	13.3
1880	27.6	22.3	0.7	13.0
<b>South Atlantic Census Region</b>				
1850	26.2	22.9	2.8	15.2
1860	26.4	22.9	2.7	12.5
1870	25.6	23.4	2.7	10.9
1880	25.8	23.2	2.2	12.4
<b>East-South Central Census Region</b>				
1850	25.9	22.1	2.8	16.0
1860	26.3	22.3	2.9	16.8
1870	25.7	23.3	2.6	12.5
1880	25.8	22.4	2.0	17.9
<b>West-South Central Census Region</b>				
1850	27.2	20.9	1.8	24.6
1860	26.7	20.5	3.0	23.8
1870	26.1	21.4	2.8	20.9
1880	26.0	21.0	2.1	24.1
<b>Mountain and Pacific Census Regions</b>				
1850	--	--	--	--
1860	32.8	--	1.8	32.4
1870	30.2	20.1	0.8	27.5
1880	29.2	21.9	1.0	15.1

Of particular interest, when the statistics are analyzed by census region, they tell a very interesting story about marriage-age trends. The regions were analyzed by northern regions and southern regions where the percentage of married 15- to 19-year-olds was greater in the southern regions. Even more significant, both the New England and Mid-Atlantic women were above the U.S. average for mean age and below the average percent of females married. The statistical difference between the East-North Central census region and the West-North Central region is fascinating. In the 1850s East-North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin) the percentage of married women age 15 to 19 was 12.4. The percentage rose to 12.9 in 1860 but by 1880 had fallen to 9.8. The West-North Central region (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri,

Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota) had a mean marriage age below the national average at 21.4.<sup>132</sup> These statistics demonstrate why using localities in Massachusetts and Michigan as a comparison with Utah — as was done in the pedogamy series — truly is like comparing apples to oranges.

The East-South Central region (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee) and the West-South Central region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) had even lower mean marriage ages and higher percentages of married women in the 15 to 19 cohort.<sup>133</sup> Unfortunately, no statistics were available for the 1850 census in the Mountain and Pacific census regions, and there was no mean marriage age for females from the 1860 census. However, the percentage of married women between 15 and 19 was 32.4, and in 1870 it was 27.5%. These percentages represented a third in 1860 and well over a quarter in 1870 of married women in the combined Mountain and Pacific regions — a significant number, indeed. Moreover, the mean marriage age for women in 1870 was 20.1 — almost five years younger than women’s mean marriage age in New England, almost four years younger than women in the Mid-Atlantic, and two years younger than women in East-North central.<sup>134</sup>

Census Year	Cases	Average Years Older than Wife	Percentage of Women Married to Men 15+ Years Older
<b>Northern Census Region</b>			
1850	2,658	5.4	5.0
1860	3,642	5.5	5.6
1870	4,426	5.5	5.4
1880	5,846	5.6	5.2
<b>Southern Census Region</b>			
1850	1,383	5.9	7.6
1860	1,768	5.8	6.4
1870	2,067	5.6	8.0
1880	2,859	5.6	6.0

Also of interest to this discussion was the percentage of women married to a man fifteen or more years older. The statistics, according to “The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns,” divided by northern and southern census regions, as shown above.

Obviously, the numbers and percentages were not high for women married to a man fifteen years or older. The percentages were higher in the southern census region.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, despite accusations of

so-called “pedogamy” being a Latter-day Saint thing that shocked and offended the rest of the nation, while far from being in the majority, still, thousands of couples across the country obviously were in similar relationships that involved a wife much younger than the husband.

### **Early Marriage Age Continues into the Twentieth Century**

By the end of the 19th century, most states and territories had changed the laws governing marriage age and age of consent, the majority raising the ages. The social trend toward a higher marriage age started in the industrialized Northeast in the mid-1800s, where “marriage at fifteen was indeed increasingly seen as bizarre.”<sup>136</sup> The trend continued into the first decades of the 20th century. After World War II, marriage age dropped significantly. In fact, a higher percentage of girls age fourteen married in 1970 than in 1940, albeit both groups were quite low compared to the rest of the population.<sup>137</sup>

Nevertheless, in some parts of the country, marrying early was still not only acceptable but also fairly common.<sup>138</sup> This was especially so in places like the rural South, particularly Appalachia, where one person explained, “Marriage comes early in the mountains.” “Rural southerners particularly were much more likely to marry at younger ages than those in other regions of the country.” In fact, in the 1920s and 1930s, it was claimed that “a girl [was] a spinster at eighteen, and on the ‘cull list’ by twenty.”<sup>139</sup> In 1937, the marriage of Eunice Winstead to her neighbor, Charlie Johns, brought unwanted national and even international media attention to youthful marriages in eastern Tennessee. The bride was of the extremely young age of nine while the groom was 22. While the couple had married without parental permission, both sets of parents accepted the marriage and allowed the newlyweds to set up house.<sup>140</sup>

Obviously, this marriage was extraordinary and even shocked the couple’s family and neighbors. Still, Eunice’s mother had married at age 16 and her older sister was 13 when she married.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, in 1930, only seven years before this marriage, there were still 4,506 wives (including widows and divorcées) under the age of 15.<sup>142</sup> Thus, while young-age marriage trends had changed significantly from the middle of the 19th century, marrying at a young age had not completely disappeared and was a way of life in some parts of the United States.

### **Conclusion**

This essay does not attempt to justify past marriages, including plural marriages, among the Latter-day Saints, which involved young brides.

A primary concern about the recent discussion of such unions is the apparent lack of context regarding 19th-century marriage patterns. As portrayed in the pedogamy series, the men were seemingly libido-driven pedophiliacs and the women gullible pawns. Further, pedogamy was implied as predominantly practiced by members of the Church in Nauvoo and Utah during the 19th century. Such one-dimensional depictions are not really that useful or knowledgeable, even if applauded by a host of online commentators and Facebook posters.

A more accurate view of history demonstrates that our modern understanding of what constitutes childhood and proper age of first marriage has drastically changed from earlier times. This, then, results in a more nuanced view of the topic. What shocks and offends 21st century sensibilities was accepted, sometimes even expected, in the centuries leading up to at least the later decades of the 19th century.

As a number of non-Latter-day Saint historians and researchers have demonstrated, early-age marriages were a part of the wider American social fabric in the mid-1850s — the same period ostensibly examined in the pedogamy series. They have demonstrated that time, place, economics, demographics, and culture all played a role in determining the marriage ages of both females and males. Places where land and work were readily available encouraged early marriage, as did a high male-to-female ratio. The frontier almost always provided the right circumstances for early marriage, and the frontier was constantly in flux.

Moreover, Nauvoo of the 1840s, on the edge of the western frontier, exhibited many of the characteristics of frontier society; and Utah was certainly a frontier setting through much of the latter 19th century. It is understandable that marriages in both Nauvoo and Utah would reflect frontier marriage patterns, resemble patterns of other western and frontier states and territories, and would not reflect marriage trends of most states in the non-frontier eastern portion of the United States.

So rather than Joseph Smith's and other Latter-day Saints' marriages to teens being out of the norm or an evidence of pedophilia, these marriages seem to fit comfortably into the culture and setting of that period.<sup>143</sup> Despite the concerns and possible good intentions of those writing about 19th-century Latter-day Saint marriages, writers and commentators may find themselves spinning the historical data rather than accurately reporting it when they fail to take the greater historical context into account.

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### Notes

1. See “JosephSmithvsWarrenJeffs;Visualized,” *MormonInfographics* (blog), August 2, 2012, <http://www.mormoninfographics.com/2012/08/joseph-smith-vs-warren-jeffs-visualized.html>; Brett Williams, “Was the Mormon ‘prophet’ Joseph Smith a pedophile?” Quora, October 11, 2016, <https://www.quora.com/Was-the-Mormon-%E2%80%9Cprophet%E2%80%9D-Joseph-Smith-a-pedophile>; Steve Benson, “History, not Mystery: Joseph Smith was a Pedophile (as confirmed by even Mormon sources);” *Recovery From Mormonism*, March 2012, <https://www.exmormon.org/d6/drupal/Joseph-Smith-was-a-Pedophile-Mormon-sources>; “Joseph Smith Was a Sexual Predator,” *Issues Facing the Mormon Church: Historical and Doctrinal Issues of the LDS Faith* (blog), August 31, 2016, <http://www.116pages.com/2016/08/evidence-that-joseph-smith-was-sexual.html>; and Jeremy T. Runnells, *CES Letter: My Search for Answers to My Mormon Doubts* (CES Letter Foundation, 2017), 59 & 128, <https://cesletter.org/CES-Letter.pdf>, are just a few examples.
2. Tapirofzelp, “My wife called me a ‘pedophile,’” June 21, 2015, image, <https://imgur.com/gallery/ooVtrqr>. There are variations to that same meme. A few memes include vulgar and obscene words, while one meme was posted on Sam Young’s Facebook page by Stan Zielinski on September 16, 2018, shortly after Young was excommunicated, whose text was “If you sing the praises of a rapist you are the problem” over the cover of the Tabernacle

- Choir CD, “Praise to the Man,” <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10156320552240041>.
3. Zeke, 2015, comment on Doug Fabrizio, “The LDS Church and Joseph Smith’s Polygamy,” Radiowest audio recording, 52:26, December 4, 2014, <http://radiowest.kuer.org/post/lds-church-and-joseph-smiths-polygamy>.
  4. Ds1st, comment on Peggy Fletcher Stack, “LDS essay: Mormons practiced polygamy after Manifesto,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 27, 2013, <http://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?id=57272299&itype=CMSID>.
  5. Craig L. Foster, David Keller, and Gregory L. Smith, “The Age of Joseph Smith’s Plural Wives in Social and Demographic Context,” in Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster, eds., *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of Mormon Polygamy* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 152-83.
  6. Todd M. Compton, “Early marriage in the New England and Northeastern States, and in Mormon Polygamy: What was the Norm?” in Bringhurst and Foster, *The Persistence of Polygamy*, 184-232.
  7. Connell O’Donovan, “Pedogamy: ‘Sealing Girls to Old Men,’” *The Utah Bee*, November 13, 2018, <http://www.theutahbee.com/2018/11/13/sealing-girls-to-old-men-institutionalized-pedophilia-in-early-lds-church/>.
  8. Even though *pedogamy* is an invented word, I shall reluctantly adopt it throughout this essay for ease of reference and for clarity in referring to the article series to which this essay refers.
  9. O’Donovan, “Pedogamy: ‘Sealing Girls to Old Men.’” This article was the first of a series of articles on the topic of marriages of young girls in Utah. It was explained at the end of a later article that *The Utah Bee* does not allow people to have citations and sources in their articles. This begs the question of why O’Donovan chose this publication and format to publish these essays.
  10. Sara Lunberg, 2018, comment on O’Donovan, “Pedogamy: ‘Sealing Girls to Old Men.’” If this is the correct Sara Lundberg, she appears to work for the Arlington Historical Society in Arlington, Massachusetts.
  11. Cristina Rosetti, 2018, comment on O’Donovan, “Pedogamy: ‘Sealing Girls to Old Men.’” Rosetti also wrote, “There some [sic]

historical information that I was surprised by, including hard evidence that sexual relations were happening with the young women and people knowing about it. I think it is fair to argue that this is a case of people abusing a religious principle.” It may be fair to argue that point, but it is inappropriate to do so using only anecdotes and without substantial documentation.

12. Stephen Urquhart, 2018, comment on Connell O’Donovan, “Sarah Ann Briggs: A Child Bride from the Martin Handcart Company,” *The Utah Bee*, <http://www.theutahbee.com/2018/11/19/sarah-ann-briggs-a-child-bride-from-the-martin-handcart-company/>. The problem is that when a reader is evaluating the historical record based on information presented in an article, that evaluation should be done not on anecdotal evidence, but on a broader base of information. Further, the reader should not need to contact the author for additional information. Relying only on anecdotal information (as the series did) leads, understandably, to emotional responses based on incomplete information instead of a reasoned historical examination. For instance, after the second essay was published in which the author asserted that a 42-two-year-old man fathering a child with his 14-year-old wife indicated “not just pedogamy, but pedophilia as well,” concern was again expressed about the continued lack of documentation. A reader angrily responded, “Seriously, the girl was 14! A Child! Do you have a daughter who is 14? Do you want a nan [sic] in his 40s having a child with your daughter? It’s pedophilia!” Dana Robinson, 2018, comment on O’Donovan, “Sarah Ann Briggs: A Child Bride from the Martin Handcart Company.”
13. Robert D. Anderson, 2018, comment to Connell O’Donovan, “Observations and Accusations of Pedogamy,” *The Utah Bee*, December 4, 2018, [http://www.theutahbee.com/2018/12/04/observations-and-accusations-of-pedogamy-2/?fbclid=IwAR3Aa\\_L5Mzkm1fGjMfVjfoFjU5cnrp4Iy8iGqFckHnQu-mHBGyRAa2CvMaY](http://www.theutahbee.com/2018/12/04/observations-and-accusations-of-pedogamy-2/?fbclid=IwAR3Aa_L5Mzkm1fGjMfVjfoFjU5cnrp4Iy8iGqFckHnQu-mHBGyRAa2CvMaY).
14. Joy, “The Brooklyn Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children,” Brooklyn Public Library, March 25, 2010, <https://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/blog/2010/03/25/brooklyn-society>. The photo is also found in an article discussing Nicholas Syrett’s book *American Child Bride*. See Andrea Dukakis, “Child Marriage, Common In The Past, Persists Today,” Colorado

- Public Radio, April 4, 2017, <http://www.cpr.org/news/story/teen-marriage-isnt-just-a-thing-of-the-past>. Unlike *The Utah Bee* article, Colorado Public Radio identifies the girl and properly credits the photograph.
15. Jack Larkin, *The Reshaping of Everyday Life: 1790–1840*, rep. ed. (New York City: Harper Perennial, 1989), 69.
  16. Willis F. Dunbar, George S. May, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State*, rev. ed., (1965; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 175.
  17. James E. Davis, *Frontier America, 1800–1840: A Comparative Demographic Analysis of the Settlement Process* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark, 1977), 51–52.
  18. Connell O'Donovan, "Statistical Data on Pedogamy," *The Utah Bee*, December 11, 2018, <http://www.theutahbee.com/2018/12/11/statistical-data-on-pedogamy/>.
  19. O'Donovan, "Pedogamy: 'Sealing Girls to Old Men.'"
  20. Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847–1869* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 197.
  21. Kathryn M. Daynes, *More Wives Than One: Transformation of the Mormon Marriage System, 1840–1910* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 106–07.
  22. *Ibid.*, 107.
  23. It should go without saying that minus source documentation, it is virtually impossible for anyone else to independently verify whether the stories are truly representative or the findings statistically sound.
  24. O'Donovan, "Statistical Data on Pedogamy."
  25. *Ibid.*
  26. Wikipedia, s.v. "Pedophilia," last edited January 18, 2019, 21:36, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedophilia>; *Psychology Today*, s.v. "Hebephilia," January 23, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/hebephilia>; and, Wikipedia, s.v. "Ephebophilia," last edited January 11, 2019, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephebophilia>.
  27. Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 2:295–98.
  28. See Bret Stetka, "Extended Adolescence: When 25 Is the New 18," *Scientific American*, September 19, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/extended-adolescence-when->

- 25-is-the-new-181/; and Suzanne McFarlin, “We Make It Easy for Our Children to Not Grow Up,” *Huffington Post*, September 13, 2014, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/suzanne-mcfarlin/we-make-it-easy-for-our-children-not-to-grow-up\\_b\\_5581856.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/suzanne-mcfarlin/we-make-it-easy-for-our-children-not-to-grow-up_b_5581856.html).
29. Cynthia Culver Prescott, *Gender and Generation on the Far Western Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 16.
  30. Rebecca Price Janney, *Then Comes Marriage? A Cultural History of the American Family* (Chicago: Moody, 2010), 45, 46.
  31. Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970), 31.
  32. Nicholas L. Syrett, *American Child Bride: A History of Minors and Marriage in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2016), 3.
  33. *Ibid.*, 1.
  34. Syrett, “Statutory Marriage Ages and the Gendered Construction of Adulthood in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Age in America: The Colonial Era to the Present*, ed. Corinne T. Field and Nicholas L. Syrett (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 106. On the same page, Syrett reiterates that “there is plentiful evidence of individual cases from across the growing nation to indicate that marriage in the middle teen years, and sometimes earlier, while by no means the norm, was relatively common.”
  35. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 2.
  36. Joseph D. Lee, “Annual Address,” *Transactions of the Annual Reunion of the Oregon Pioneer Association* 41–45 (Portland, OR: Chausse-Prudhomme, 1916): 64.
  37. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 4.
  38. Lee, “Annual Address,” 64. Syrett noted in *American Child Bride*, 13, that “from the moment that it entered Americans’ vocabulary, the phrase ‘child bride’ has regularly been applied to those in their teens and even twenties. . . . The phrase encompasses the discomfort that Americans feel about young people marrying, even when those young people may or may not be, by one definition or another, ‘children.’”
  39. S.N.D. North, comp., *Marriage Laws in the United States, 1887–1906*, ed. Desmond Walls Allen (Conway, AR: Arkansas Research, 1993). As late as 1906, six states still had 12 as the

- minimum age for girls. Also, according to Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 28, throughout the colonial period, New York had no minimum marriageable age.
40. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 19.
  41. Ibid. It should be noted, according to p. 21, that these young ages have their roots in religious canon law and were sometimes called “canon ages.”
  42. Ibid., 27. New France at one time included the Mississippi River basin, the Ohio River basin, the Great Lakes and into Canada with most of Ontario, all of Québec, and most of the Maritime Provinces. New Spain included Florida, most of Texas, and areas westward.
  43. Mike A. Males, *Teenage Sex and Pregnancy: Modern Myths, Unsexy Realities* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 40. See also Richard A. Posner and Katharine B. Silbaugh, *A Guide to America’s Sex Laws* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 44; and Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 46.
  44. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 2. Also, on p. 5, “Before the eighteenth century, children as young as eight or nine married in America, and children in their teen age years have been marrying in the United States since then.”
  45. Ibid., 43.
  46. Claudia Olivetti and M. Daniele Paserman, “In the Name of the Son (and Daughter): Intergenerational Mobility in the United States, 1850–1940,” *The American Economic Review* 105, no. 8 (August 2015): 2706.
  47. Christopher Waldrep, “Creating a Metaphor for the Past: Uniting History and Computing in the Classroom,” *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 33, no. 3 (March 1995): 13.
  48. Sheri Stritof, “May-December Marriage — Marriage Age Difference,” Very Well Mind, November 17, 2017, <https://www.verywellmind.com/may-december-marriage-age-difference-2303203>. Admittedly, this article concerns modern marriages like Tony Randall and Heather Harland with 50 years difference, Dick Van Dyke and Arlene Silver with 46 years difference, right down to Jay-Z and Beyoncé Knowles with 12 years difference.
  49. These are examples of couples with a 15-or-more-year age difference found in the process of genealogical and historical research. Although they are not representative of the majority of

U.S. married couples, they still reflect unions with a significant age difference from the mid- to later-19th-century. While some marriages might have been surprising and perhaps even frowned upon, they nonetheless existed and were legal, and those involved were accepted into society.

50. Anne Simons Deas, *Recollections of the Ball Family of South Carolina and the Comingtee Plantation* (1909; repr., Charleston: South Carolina Historical Society, 1978), 52.
51. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 39-42.
52. *Ibid.*, 56.
53. 1880 United State Census, Mound Valley, Elko County, Nevada; p. 96B; June 1, 1880; National Archives Microfilm Roll 758.
54. 1880 United State Census, Conejos Valley, Conejos County, Colorado; p. 176C; June 1, 1880; National Archives Microfilm Roll 89.
55. 1880 United State Census, Huerfano, Colorado; p. 226A; June 1, 1880; National Archives Microfilm Roll 91.
56. 1880 United State Census, Callatta Mining, Meagher County, Montana; p. 421A; June 1, 1880; National Archives Microfilm Roll 742; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *FamilySearch*, Pierre J. Venne (1827) and Marie Belgarde (abt 1847) family group record, accessed July 28, 2018, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/KPDT-97L>.
57. *FamilySearch*, William Turnage Sr. (1837) and Elizabeth Silverthorn (1857) family group record, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/L2WG-DV4>.
58. The following are some additional examples of such marital unions: John B. Aiken, 55, and Sarah Aiken, 12, living in Danville, Indiana, in 1880 (this was obviously a second marriage for him, as he had an eleven-year-old-daughter living in the household, no doubt making interesting family dynamics); Reuben F. Beals, 47, and Amanda M. Beals, 13, living in Clover, Illinois, in 1880; Lucas Andausky, 45, and Agnes Andausky, 13, living in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1880; John Bewes, 42, and Mary Bewes, 16, living in Cherry Creek, Nevada, in 1880; Ventura Lopez, 31, and Maria Lopez, 13, living in Pueblo, Colorado, in 1880; and John Brown, 34, and Ann Brown, 15, of Pioneer, Montana, in 1880. These examples simply personalize and put a face, so to speak, on such unions. With that in mind, the final example is that of Jonas Dalton, 23, and Isabelle Dalton, 13, living in Callands,

Virginia, in 1880. Both were obviously below the fifteen-year age difference. But at the time of the census, they had an eleven-month-old son, Charles, meaning that Isabelle was at least twelve and perhaps a bit younger at the time of marriage.

59. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 46.
60. *Ibid.*, 56
61. *Ibid.*, 15.
62. April Sanders, "Age of Marriage in the U.S. in the 1800s," *The Classroom*, accessed January 25, 2018, <http://classroom.synonym.com/age-marriage-us-1800s-23174.html>.
63. Emma Griffin, "A Conundrum Resolved? Rethinking Courtship, Marriage and Population Growth in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, no. 215 (May 2012):141-42.
64. Joseph E. Illick, "Childhood in Three Cultures in Early America," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 64, Empire, Society, and Labor: Essays in Honor of Richard S. Dunn (Summer 1997): 311.
65. Kristin Senecal, "Marriage and Fertility Patterns in Cumberland County, 1800-1859," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 71, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 193.
66. Jim Potter, "Population," in *Reader's Guide to American History*, ed. Peter J. Parish (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), 551.
67. Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 228.
68. Alice Morse Earle, "Old-Time Marriage Customs in New England," *The Journal of American Folklore* 6, no. 21 (Apr-Jun 1893): 99.
69. Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers*, 228. Ben Marsh, *Georgia's Frontier Women: Female Fortunes in a Southern Colony* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 32, demonstrates that marrying quickly and early extended from New England down to the southern colonies, as far as Georgia: "The colonial records of Georgia highlight the young age of many first-time brides and the celerity with which they became wives after their arrival in the province" (p. 31).
70. Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers*, 228.

71. David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 139.
72. J. A. Doyle, *The English Colonies in America: The Puritan Colonies* (New York: Henry Holt, 1887), 3:5. Obviously, it depends on how “early marriage” is defined as well as on locality. Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970), 32-33, wrote that while historians have assumed that men and women in the 17th and 18th-century Massachusetts married at a very young age — in their teens or early twenties — that was not always the case. He found that marriages in early Andover were at a higher age, similar to those of 17th-century England. Further, women’s age at first marriage ranged between 21.1 and 22.5 for 1680-1705 (pp. 120-21). After 1705, the age at marriage sharply increased. While the second generation had 35.8 % of women who married do so under age 21, the third generation only had 27.6% do so. Of the third generation who married under age 21, the youngest was age 16, but 17 was more common. There were no marriages of females age 12 to 15. Greven notes that as with other places and people of that time, marriages “were as much an economic as an emotional affair, involving the transference of property from one generation to another and from one family to another” (p. 74).
73. *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*, s.v. “Women,” last updated May 30, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=400>. In *The Book of History, A History of all Nations from the Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: The Grolier Society, 1915), 12: 6314, when discussing the American frontier, explains that “Early marriage was the rule and families were large.” Furthermore, according to Richard H. Steckel, “Antebellum Southern White Fertility: A Demographic and Economic Analysis,” *The Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 2 (June 1980): 350, “A demographic analysis reveals that relatively higher child-woman ratios in the West are explained primarily by earlier marriage and a higher proportion of women who married.”
74. Henry Garrison, quoted in Jim Tompkins, comp., “In Their Own Words: Teenagers On The Trail,” Oregon Pioneers (website),

accessed February 16, 2018, <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/TeenagerQuotes.htm>.

75. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 44. The explanation that while no longer on the frontier, early marriage in the South was particularly common for two populations: “the landed gentry and their slaves. Plantation owners smiled on the marriages of their youthful daughters to suitable mates (sometimes their own relatives)” (p. 44).
76. Jeremy Agnew, *Brides of the Multitude: Prostitution in the Old West* (Lake City, CO: Western Reflections Publishing, 2008), 43.
77. Richard A. Easterlin, et al., “Farms and Farm Families in Old and New Areas: The Northern States in 1860,” in *Family and Population in Nineteenth-Century America*, eds. Tamara K. Hareven and Maris A. Vinovskis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 40.
78. Lillian Schlissel, *Women’s Diaries of the Westward Journey* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982, 1992), 45; and Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 70.
79. Cynthia Culver Prescott, “‘Why She Didn’t Marry Him’: Love, Power, and Marital Choice on the Far Western Frontier,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 38 (Spring 2007): 29.
80. Prescott, *Gender and Generation on the Far Western Frontier*, 60.
81. *Ibid.*, 61.
82. *Ibid.*, 62–63.
83. *Ibid.*, 64.
84. *Ibid.*, 65 and 63.
85. Elizabeth Keegan, quoted in Tompkins, “In Their Own Words: Teenagers On The Trail.”
86. Prescott, *Gender and Generation on the Far Western Frontier*, 63.
87. *Ibid.*, 62.
88. John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 87–88. Faragher explains that Sugar Creek’s first generation of women married at the average age of 19 while their daughters married at the average age of 21. Only one in 10 women had five or fewer children. Their size of family was about average for both north and south backcountry families but significantly higher than in rural and urban centers of the Northeast.

89. *FamilySearch*, Charles Garland (1831) and Minerva Ellis (1847) family group record, <https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/KH3S-289>.
90. Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, 2nd ed. (200; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 78.
91. J. David Hacker, Libra Hilde, and James Holland Jones, "The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns," *Journal of Southern History* 76, no. 1 (2010): 43.
92. *Ibid.*, 50.
93. Silvio Dumas, *Les Filles du Roi en Nouvelle-France: Études Historique avec Répertoire Biographic* (Québec: Société Historique de Québec, 1972), 67; and "Most French Canadians are descended from these 800 women," CBC, March 30, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/2017/canadathistoryofus/most-french-canadians-are-descended-from-these-800-women-1.4029699>. The ages of 11.5% of the women could not be identified. Within a few generations, the age of marriage began to increase and reflect more the western European marriage patterns. According to Cynthia R. Comacchio, *The Infinite Bonds of Family: Domesticity in Canada, 1850-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 72-73, a significant upward trend in marriage age in eastern Canada began in the mid-nineteenth-century. By 1901, it had decreased a little. Although the marriage rate had risen, the birth rate continued to fall, "a pattern found when marital fertility declines. Fertility was markedly lower in towns and cities than in rural areas."
94. "The Filles à Marier, 1634-1662," We All Came From Somewhere (website), accessed January 16, 2018, [http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/filles\\_marier.html](http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/filles_marier.html).
95. "The Boucher Matriarch," We All Came From Somewhere (website), accessed January 18, 2018, [http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/perrine\\_mallet.html](http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/perrine_mallet.html).
96. "A Plowman's Daughter," We All Came From Somewhere (website), accessed January 18, 2018, [http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/louise\\_couillard.html](http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/louise_couillard.html). Marguerite did not have a baby until three years after their marriage, so they may have waited until she was older to consummate the marriage.

97. "The Cloutier Sisters," We All Came From Somewhere (website), accessed January 18, 2018, [http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/cloutier\\_sisters.html](http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/cloutier_sisters.html).
98. "Life on the Beupre Coast," We All Came From Somewhere (website), accessed January 18, 2018, [http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/mariemag\\_guyon.html](http://www.oocities.org/weallcamefromsomewhere/Kebec/mariemag_guyon.html); "Généalogie Marie Guyon," Généalogie du Québec et d'Amérique française, accessed January 18, 2018, [http://www.nosorigines.org/GenealogieQuebec.aspx?genealogie=Guyon\\_Marie&pid=3956](http://www.nosorigines.org/GenealogieQuebec.aspx?genealogie=Guyon_Marie&pid=3956); and "Généalogie Marie Martin," Généalogie du Québec et d'Amérique française, accessed January 18, 2018, [http://www.nosorigines.org/GenealogieQuebec.aspx?genealogie=Martin\\_Marie&pid=1174](http://www.nosorigines.org/GenealogieQuebec.aspx?genealogie=Martin_Marie&pid=1174).
99. Geovanni M., "The Women The King Of France Used To Populate His Colonies," January 12, 2017, <https://cultura colectiva.com/history/casket-girls-louisiana-french-colonies/>; and Kelly Kazek, "When French orphans called Casket Girls came to Alabama as wives for colonists," *Alabama Living*, September 14, 2015, [http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2015/09/when\\_french\\_orphans\\_called\\_cas.html](http://www.al.com/living/index.ssf/2015/09/when_french_orphans_called_cas.html).
100. Mary Perez, "Are you descended from one of the 'brides' of Biloxi?" *Sun Herald*, May 7, 2017, <http://www.sunherald.com/news/local/counties/harrison-county/article149077319.html>. The French were not alone in bringing marriageable women to a place lacking such. In the mid-1800s, Seattle, Washington had its own version of "filles du Roi" and "filles à marier." According to Marshall Trimble, "Courtship and Marriage in the Territories," *True West Magazine*, November 1, 2017, <https://truwestmagazine.com/courtship-marriage-territories/>, in the early 1860s, Asa Mercer, a native New Englander, noting the lack of marriageable women, traveled back to Lowell, Massachusetts to recruit some women. Eleven, known as "Mercer Girls," went with him in 1864. Their ages ranged from Annie Mae Adams, age 16, to Lizzie Ordway, age 35. In 1866, mercer recruited about 100 women known as "Mercer's Belles." The 1968-1970 television series "Here Come the Brides" was loosely based on Mercer Girls.
101. Comacchio, *The Infinite Bonds of Family: Domesticity in Canada, 1850-1940*, 72-73. According to Comacchio, by 1901, marriage age had decreased a little. Although the marriage rate had risen,

- the birth rate continued to fall, “a pattern found when marital fertility declines. Fertility was markedly lower in towns and cities than in rural areas.”
102. Peter Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Canada: McGill-Queens University Press, 1990), 51.
  103. *Ibid.*, 58. The average age gap of men in their late twenties and early thirties was eight years.
  104. Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Family and Social Patterns of the Colonial Louisiana Frontier: A Quantitative Analysis, 1714-1803,” (BA thesis, University of Alabama, 1981), 131.
  105. *Ibid.*, 135.
  106. *Ibid.* By the 1790s, fewer than 10 percent of girls were marrying before age 15 and 45 percent were marrying after the age of 20 (136). Despite the previous quotes and statistics, Mills stated that the generalization about early marriages had been made about French Louisiana and “numerous societies.” She then added on the same page that “occasional examples of very early marriages can be found at Natchitoches, as well as elsewhere, and females did exhibit a tendency (a decreasing tendency) to marry somewhat earlier than their contemporaries in France and early Anglo-America” (131).
  107. *Ibid.*, 140.
  108. Patricia Cleary, *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil: A history of Colonial St. Louis* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 20.
  109. Linda Peavy & Ursula Smith, *Frontier Children* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 141.
  110. Courtwright, *Violent Land*, 137.
  111. “Domestic Challenges,” Bureau of Land Management, National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, accessed February 18, 2018, [https://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail/files/LoveCherish\\_Domestic\\_Challenge.pdf](https://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail/files/LoveCherish_Domestic_Challenge.pdf).
  112. Sallie Hester, quoted in Jim Tompkins, comp., “In Their Own Words: Teenagers On The Trail.”
  113. Peavy & Smith, *Frontier Children* , 141.
  114. Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 104-05.

115. Kenneth L. Holmes, ed., *Best of Covered Wagon Women Vol. 2: Emigrant Girls on the Overland Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 20.
116. Daniel M. Rosen, "Survivors and Casualties," Donner Party Diary, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.donnerpartydiary.com/survivor>.
117. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers*, 76.
118. Ibid. and Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 69.
119. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers*, 77. Hurtado further explained on p. 129, "For a century and more, California had too many men. This basic demographic fact meant intense competition for women, some of whom benefited from a favorable marriage market. This condition encouraged families to betroth prepubescent californianas in the Spanish and Mexican eras, a custom that harked back to Iberian practice."
120. Holmes, *Best of Covered Wagon Women*, 20.
121. Courtwright, *Violent Land*, 138.
122. Jessica Hager, "Love and marriage in Appalachia," *Smoky Mountain Living: Celebrating the Southern Appalachians*, February 1, 2011, <http://www.smliv.com/features/love-and-marriage-in-appalachia/>.
123. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 55.
124. Ibid., 57.
125. Allan C. Carlson, *Conjugal America: On the Public Purposes of Marriage* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2008), 81.
126. James M. Gallman, "Determinants of Age at Marriage in Colonial Perquimans County, North Carolina," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (Jan. 1982), 180. Gallman calculated his own marriage age totals for men and women residing in Perquimans County from before 1680 to 1740. These totals do not agree with the statement regarding early marriage, including ages 13 and 14, and show higher averages ranging between 18 to 22 for brides for the period being discussed. "This statement is clearly inaccurate for Perquimans women; the records show none marrying at age thirteen, and only two each marrying at fourteen and fifteen" (180). This statement and accompanying statistics show that not all places had very early marriages. It should be noted that Perquimans County is located in the northeast part of North Carolina, one county to the south of the North Carolina-Virginia border and fewer than 25 miles

- from the Atlantic coast. The writer was probably describing the Carolina backcountry rather than this part of North Carolina.
127. David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 675. There are numerous anecdotal examples of early marriage. Two are provided. According to "American Revolutionary War Record of William Warren," *Central Kentucky Researcher* 4, no. 12 (December 1974): 2-3, William Warren married Rhoda (no maiden name given) in about 1775 when she was fourteen years old. They eventually had thirteen children, the first born eighteen months after their marriage. Another example found in John J. Roark, *Hardtack and Hardship: The Life and Times of Confederate Veteran James A. Roark and His Family* (Dallas, Texas: Personal Profiles Publishing, 1996), 42, James Roark's sister, Sarah Elizabeth, known as Liz, married at age 12 in 1846 in Hamilton County, Tennessee to 23-year-old Joel A. Talley. Their first child was born in 1847.
  128. Allan C. Carlson, *Family Cycles: Strength, Decline, and Renewal in American Domestic Life, 1630-2000* (London: Routledge, 2017), 58.
  129. *Ibid.*, 58, 60.
  130. Syrett, *Age in America*, 106.
  131. Hacker, Hilde, and Jones, "The Effect of the Civil War on Southern Marriage Patterns," 52-54. The article notes all statistics between 1850 and 1870 are based on imputed relationships.
  132. *Ibid.*, 53.
  133. *Ibid.*, 54.
  134. *Ibid.*
  135. *Ibid.*, 66.
  136. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 55.
  137. *Ibid.*, 232. The table shows that the percentage of girls age fourteen who were married in 1940 was 0.28%, compared to 1.07% in 1970. The percentage of girls age 15-17 in 1940 was 4.55% compared to 4.30% in 1970. On page 233, the table showing the "Percentage of Married Teens Age Fifteen to Nineteen by Year, Sex, and Region, 1940-1960" shows 1.9% of boys and 8.6% of girls in the Northeast in 1950, compared to 4.5% of boys and 23.7% of girls in the South and 3.7% of boys and 20% of girls in the West. By 1960, the percentage was 2.5% for boys and 10.2% for girls in the Northeast, 4.9% for the boys and 20.3% for the

girls in the South, and 4.5% for the boys and 18.4% for the girls in the West.

138. An example of such would be, according to Steven Mintz and Susan Kellog, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 103, coal mining villages of northeastern and western Pennsylvania, southern West Virginia, and the Midwest. In these places, “coal miners tended to marry at an unusually early age and to have large numbers of children. A low marriage age was encouraged by the fact coal miners reached their peak earnings at an early age, usually in their late teens and early twenties. ... Independent wages permitted sons to set up their own households at a relatively early age.”
139. Syrett, *American Child Bride*, 203-04, 221.
140. *Ibid.*, 202-03, 206. It should also be noted that Eunice had obviously not experienced menarche and, when the subject of sexual relations was broached by members of the press, it was made clear that they were not having sexual relations and would not do so until she was old enough. Her first child was not born until she was 15 years old.
141. *Ibid.*, 203.
142. *Ibid.*, 218.
143. Critics may respond by reminding anyone who will listen that Joseph Smith’s plural marriages were an aberration and outside of accepted marriage practices in 19th century America. This is a case of stating the obvious — they were polygynous marriages in a monogamous society. Most will admit that fact, but Joseph Smith’s polygynous marriages were just as obviously not the focus of this article.



## CAMPBELLITES AND MORMONITES: COMPETING RESTORATION MOVEMENTS

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RoseAnn Benson

**Abstract:** *In October 1830, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer Jr., Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson were the first missionaries sent to travel through the western states to the Indian territory at the far reaches of the United States. Pratt, a former resident of northeastern Ohio, suggested they stop in the Kirtland, Ohio, area and visit his preacher friend, Sidney Rigdon. It was Rigdon who had earlier convinced Pratt that the restoration of the ancient order that included faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit could be found in Alexander Campbell's restoration movement. Within a few weeks, the four missionaries baptized Rigdon and more than 100 new converts into Joseph Smith's restoration movement — many of whom had been members of Campbell's restoration movement. Although both Alexander Campbell and Joseph Smith called their movements restorations, the foundation upon which each was built was very different.*

The title “Campbellites and Mormonites” refers to pejorative names for the religious movements founded by Alexander Campbell and Joseph Smith. These two men were major leaders of restorationism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most Latter-day Saints recognize Sidney Rigdon as a Campbellite preacher but don't connect him to Alexander Campbell and his important restoration movement. Alexander and Joseph were contemporaries during the Second Great Awakening, an important American religious movement that began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and peaked between 1830 and 1840. Both men were idealists in a new democratic society that promoted religious freedom and the dissolution of state sponsored churches.

Alexander Campbell and Joseph Smith were firm believers in restorationism — the effort to recover or recreate a pure Christianity like that which existed during the time of Jesus and the apostles, which had been lost, defiled, or corrupted. This definition assumes that at some point in Christian history an apostasy or loss of significant doctrines occurred.<sup>1</sup> Many have sought for a restoration of the ancient Christian church since the time of Puritans and other early settlers of America. Roger Williams, the well-known 16th-century religionist, lamented: “*After all my search, and examinations, and considerations, I said, I do profess to believe that some come nearer to the first primitive churches, and the institutions and appointments of Christ Jesus than others. ... I professed that if my soul could find rest in joining unto any of the churches professing Christ Jesus now extant, I would readily and gladly do it, yea unto themselves whom I now opposed.*”<sup>2</sup> On a mission to Toronto, Canada, Latter-day Saint missionary Parley Pratt heard a prayer offered by a congregant at the close of a nondenominational church meeting that echoed this dissatisfaction: “We have neither apostles, visions, angels, revelations, gifts, tongues, ordinances, nor a Christian ministry; we acknowledge that we are destitute of everything like the pattern of the true Church, as laid down in thy holy Word, and we pray thee to send whom thou wilt.”<sup>3</sup>

Both Alexander and Joseph agreed on the same simple *ordo salutis* — order of salvation — faith, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Alexander called these the Plan of Salvation or Gospel Restored based on the requirements given by Peter on the day of Pentecost.<sup>4</sup> Joseph called them the first principles

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1. Richard T. Hughes, “The Meaning of the Restoration Vision,” in *The Primitive Church in the Modern World*, ed. Richard T. Hughes (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1995), x.

2. Roger Williams, *The Complete Writings of Roger Williams* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 37–38. See also C. Leonard Allen, “Roger Williams and ‘the Restauration of Zion,’” in *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, ed. Richard Thomas Hughes (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 40–42. “Queries of Highest Consideration” was a tract written to counteract the recommendations of the Westminster Assembly and to persuade Parliament to embrace religious liberty rather than the officially established Church of England or the model of Scottish Presbyterianism. Edwin S. Gaustad, *Roger Williams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 75.

3. Parley Parker Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley Parker Pratt (New York: Russell Brothers, 1874), 154.

4. Acts 2:38. The creator of a simple memorization mnemonic called the “five finger exercise” for these simple steps was Walter Scott in 1827, an evangelist for Campbell’s restoration.

and ordinances of the gospel from several Book of Mormon passages delineating the “doctrine of Christ.”<sup>5</sup> In contrast to many other Christian churches of their day, they rejected the Creeds as postapostolic additions. They each held simple meetings on Sundays without any of the high church ritual or accoutrements but with weekly partaking of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>6</sup> Theirs was the hope that in some way their restoration would help prepare for the Millennium. They saw the same passage in Revelation as referring to the Millennium they believed was imminent: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”<sup>7</sup> Alexander printed this on the masthead of his monthly publication, the *Millennial Harbinger* beginning in 1830, to call Christians to unite in preparation for bringing forth the Millennium. Joseph saw himself as having experienced that messenger flying in the midst of heaven proclaiming the everlasting gospel in the coming of the angel Moroni in 1824 to show him the location of the plates he translated that became the Book of Mormon. At first glance they may appear to be two similar restoration movements led by different men; however, there were significant differences.

Alexander and Joseph diverge on many points, including when the pure beginning of Christianity occurred, how to restore the primitive church and which of the offices should be included, and when Christ would come as part of the Millennium. A foundational separation, and the difference upon which this paper focuses, is in their basic approach to how restoration should take place. Alexander approached restoration through the logic and rational thinking of the Enlightenment. Joseph approached restoration through what in the 19th century was called *enthusiasm*.

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5. 2 Nephi 31:2, 21; 3 Nephi 11:31–40; 3 Nephi 27:13.

6. Initial revelations on church organization, church government, and the Lord’s Supper gave few details for procedures in administering the Lord’s Supper, and early on, persecution, influence of converts from other religious backgrounds, and lack of church meeting houses, among other difficulties, caused “the sacrament to be irregularly and inconsistently administered.” Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; 27:2–3; Justin R. Bray, “The Lord’s Supper in Early Mormonism,” in *You Shall Have My Word: Exploring the Text of the Doctrine and Covenants*, eds. Scott C. Esplin, Richard O. Cowan, and Rachel Cope (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2012), 64–65.

7. Revelation 14:6–7.

## Enlightenment

This philosophical and intellectual movement began in the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and dominated European thought during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>8</sup> It is defined as the “process of freeing human understanding from the accepted and customary beliefs sanctioned by traditional, especially religious authority chiefly by rational and scientific inquiry.”<sup>9</sup> This philosophy was the enemy of superstition, mysticism, and religious enthusiasm. Reason and observation were sufficient evidence that a Creator existed, according to this natural religion philosophy, albeit a disengaged and non-interventionist God. Logic dictated that the universe was a self-sufficient machine that ran on its own.<sup>10</sup> From this viewpoint, visions, visitations, revelations, and miraculous events were intrusions into the natural order and processes of the universe. Expressions of religious enthusiasm such as were commonly evident in the revivals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were considered eccentric, marginal, misguided, or even “fanatical” and “extravagant,” causing some religious leaders to worry about the creation of a frenzied atmosphere leading to disorder, manipulation, and delusion of the audience.<sup>11</sup>

Alexander’s restorationist views focused on a rational and reasoned interpretation of the scriptures through the lens of Enlightenment philosophy, so it is not surprising he was alarmed by Joseph’s visions, revelations, additional scripture, and acceptance of some forms of religious enthusiasm. Alexander believed all churches could agree on the essential doctrines and ordinances and unite in one great Christian church if they would focus on the express teachings found in the New Testament. Alexander thought Joseph’s expanding ideas from revelation and more scriptures would prevent church unity. Therefore, Joseph’s restoration movement was to be condemned and disparaged. Alexander

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8. Romanticism is considered the philosophical counter to Enlightenment and is cited by Church of Christ scholar, Richard Hughes, as Joseph Smith’s “defining intellectual influence.” Richard T. Hughes, “Two Restoration Traditions: Mormons and Churches of Christ in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Mormon History* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 44.

9. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. “enlightenment.”

10. Some seventeenth-century Enlightenment philosophers promoted deism as a comprehensive religion that would be an “intellectual and social improvement on traditional Christianity.” Ordinary human intelligence could understand God without the need for revelation, and this would “cleanse Christianity of its vulgar supernaturalist superstitions.” Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143–44.

11. James D. Bratt, ed. *Antirevivalism in Antebellum America: A Collection of Religious Voices* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), xvii–iii.

“launched a devastating attack on everything and everyone who did not agree with his vision of the ancient Christian faith.”<sup>12</sup> As a defender of Christianity, Alexander was highly sensitive to ideas he believed did not fit within the proper order of rational religious practices. Alexander saw the claims of religious enthusiasm as threatening to the foundations of reasoned thinking upon which enlightened Christians based their beliefs. He warned that “enthusiasm flourishes, [and] blooms under the popular systems.” He exhorted his readers, “from all this scene of raging enthusiasm, be admonished, my friends, to open your Bibles and to hearken to the voice of God, which is the voice of reason. God now speaks to us only by his word. By his Son, in the New Testament, he has fully revealed himself and his will. This is the only revelation of his Spirit which we are to regard.”<sup>13</sup> Sober-minded rationalists such as Alexander worried that religious excitement — and extreme emotionalism would manipulate truth and cause believers to be deluded into false forms of worship and, perhaps later, disbelief in “real” Christianity.<sup>14</sup>

To call Alexander strictly Enlightenment directed, however, does not recognize some of the nuances of his beliefs. He was not a traditional high church Christian leader; instead, he was an intelligent, highly educated, well-read, and reasoned thinker who believed that reading the facts in the scriptures provided the foundation for faith in Jesus Christ. He saw his approach to faith as rational and an alternative to the mindless piety he observed in the impassioned climate of revivalism. He opposed the idea that faith was a feeling or emotional experience that brought about conversion. Further, he believed preachers at revivals deliberately manipulated those present to encourage ecstatic expressions. He believed in revelation — *past* revelation — for the Bible was indeed the revealed word of God. He was, however, adamantly opposed to the so-called miraculous presence of gifts of the Spirit in the modern day. He believed that gifts of the Spirit were essential but unique to the apostolic era and should not be expected until Christ returns. As a cessationist, he believed that the charismatic gifts of the Spirit accompanying the conversion of thousands, as recorded in Acts 2:41, were essential for

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12. Richard Thomas Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 22. See, for example, Alexander Campbell, “Delusions,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2, no. 2 (February 7, 1831): 85–96.

13. Alexander Campbell, “To the Readers of the Christian Baptist, Part IV,” *Christian Baptist* 1, no. 8 (March 1, 1824): 188.

14. Bratt, *Antirevivalism in Antebellum America*, xviii.

the establishment of the New Testament Church. Once it was formed in its pristine purity, however, the extraordinary gifts ended, and all who anticipated a restoration of spiritual gifts before the Second Coming of Christ became “liable to all delusion.”<sup>15</sup>

### Enthusiasm

The etymology of the word *enthusiasm* comes from the Greek *enthousiasmos* and initially meant “possessed by a god” or “god within.”<sup>16</sup> The little syllable “thous” in the middle of the word comes from the Greek word *theos*, meaning god. As the word *enthusiasm* developed in our language, it began to lose that meaning. By the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries it meant pretended inspiration, distinguishing it from true revelation. The term *enthusiasm*, derogatorily referred to as “fanaticism,” and “extravagance” was an epithet that lumped together all forms of revival and was part of an anti-revival movement.<sup>17</sup> Today we don’t use *enthusiasm* in a religious sense, and it just means being excited about something.

The religious revivals of the Second Great Awakening spawned a new and dynamic religious fervor that was popular, evangelical, ecstatic, personal, optimistic, and widespread. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, such meetings included Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist ministers, preaching, singing, praying, and ecstatic experiences. The center point of the meetings was the delivery of a call to action sermon followed by communion. The “frontierization” of American Christianity had its own unique flavor with large numbers of families traveling distances of 30 to even 100 miles and camping to attend a multi-day revival meeting. The crowds of people exceeded the capacity of the inns and the homes of local Christians, which necessitated camping. Hence, the term “camp meeting” became synonymous with revival. For those involved in leading revivals, it was not just a venue to convert the unchurched, it was also an event to reclaim backsliders and reheat the lukewarm.<sup>18</sup>

Profound feelings of the Spirit were felt by many seekers at these meetings. Children, men, women, old and young, black and white were “struck down and exercised” by the Spirit in different ways. A neighbor reported that

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15. Alexander Campbell, “Queries,” *Millennial Harbinger* 5, no. 3 (March 1834): 143.

16. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (1989), s.v. “enthusiasm.”

17. Bratt, *Antirevivalism in Antebellum America*, xvii–xviii.

18. Grant Underwood, “Awash in a Sea of Faith,” in *Lectures on Religion and the Founding of the American Republic*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies Quarterly, 2002), 100.

when Emma Hale was young, she “often got the power,” a phrase meaning to have or feel the power of God within you. “Getting the power was an important part of religious worship through[out] the Allegheny foothills where they lived.”<sup>19</sup> Some of the camp participants manifested signs that were notable “for their intensity and variety and the astonishing ease and rapidity with which they were communicated (affecting at times an entire congregation).”<sup>20</sup> Sometimes, those who were struck down awakened to deliver powerful sermons for an extraordinary “length of time, matter, and loudness of voice.”<sup>21</sup> Others participated in what were termed “spiritual exercises” that included jerks, barking, dancing, visions, and happy, melodious singing that seemed to emanate from the breast.<sup>22</sup>

In this climate, visions, dreams, prophesying, and spiritual experiences became somewhat more acceptable.<sup>23</sup> But not all claims to religion were tolerable. Some religious leaders were concerned that constitutional disestablishment of religion, separating the state from sponsoring religion, “had left too much room for religious expression” and that without the anchor previously provided by formalist state-attached religions, Christianity was left dangerously unmoored.<sup>24</sup>

Joseph was enthusiasm driven, with his acceptance of visions, revelations, visitations, healings, and the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. In describing his experiences with heavenly influence, however, he used phrases such as “[o]ur minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of,”<sup>25</sup> and “[b]y the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of

19. Mark L. Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People: The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2009), 599, 127.

20. Catharine C. Cleveland, *The Great Revival in the West, 1797–1805* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959), 87.

21. Reverend Thomas Moore, *Massachusetts Missionary Magazine* 1 (March 1803): 198–99, quoted in Cleveland, *Great Revival in the West*, 95.

22. Cleveland, *The Great Revival in the West*, 98–103.

23. Staker, *Hearken, O Ye People*, 12–13.

24. Spencer J. Fluhman, *“A Peculiar People”: Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 9, 21.

25. Joseph Smith — History 1:74.

God ... from the beginning, *before the world was*.”<sup>26</sup> Joseph’s enlightenment was of a very different type. To characterize Joseph exclusively as enthusiasm directed is too simplistic. He described revelation as appealing to both the mind and heart, thoughts and feelings, as mediated through the Holy Ghost, and as “pure Intelligence” flowing into the mind and giving rise to strokes of ideas.<sup>27</sup> Latter-day Saint historian Davis Bitton noted that Joseph’s revelations had much in common with the rationalism of Enlightenment philosophy: “Rejecting the traditional Christian creeds, Mormonism turned *away from* the mystery of the Trinity, the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, the depravity of fallen man, predestination, and a hell of eternal punishment to the Godhead as comprised of three individuals united in purpose, the creation of the world from previously existing matter, free will, the dignity and high destiny of man, and a graded salvation for all.”<sup>28</sup>

Joseph reported that as a young boy, while attending a revival meeting with his mother and several of his siblings, “he wanted to get religion too, he wanted to feel and shout like the rest but could feel nothing.”<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, within a few years he embraced visions, revelations, and gifts of the Spirit as part of his personal experience and the restoration of the primitive church. Later, he would acknowledge the existence of conflicting opinions regarding the gifts of the Spirit:

Some people have been in the habit of calling every supernatural manifestation, the effects of the Spirit of God, whilst there are others that think there is no manifestation connected with it at all; and that it is nothing but a mere impulse of the mind, or an inward feeling, impression, or secret testimony, or evidence, which men possess, and that there is no such thing as an outward manifestation. It is not to

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26. Doctrine and Covenants 76:12–13, emphasis added. The emphasized phrase was by Alexander Campbell as pursuing illicit knowledge or forbidden fruit. He mocked Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon as having “become wiser than any of the Prophets and Apostles of God.” Campbell, “Mormonism,” *Millennial Harbinger* 7, no. 8 (August 1843): 347.

27. Joseph Smith, “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1,” November 2, 1838–July 13, 1842, <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-3-july-1842?p=544>; Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.

28. Davis Bitton, “Anti-Intellectualism in Mormon History,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1, no. 3 (1966): 112.

29. Dean C. Jessee, “The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, eds. John W. Welch with Erick B. Carlson (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), 25.

be wondered at that men should be ignorant ... of the nature, office, power, influence, gifts and blessings of the gift of the Holy Ghost[,] when we consider that the human family have been enveloped in gross darkness and ignorance for many centuries past without revelation, or any just criterion to arrive at a knowledge of the things of God, which can only be known by the spirit of God.<sup>30</sup>

Upon his arrival in Kirtland, Ohio, in late January 1831, Joseph found that ecstatic worship and religious enthusiasm had become a significant issue among the new members. Lucy Mack Smith recalled that he found about one hundred members in the church: "They were fine brethren in general but that they had imbibed some very strange Ideas which it cost some pains to rid them of as the Devil had been deceiving them with a specious appearance of powe[r]." Joseph objected to the "strange contortions of the visage and unnatural Motions which they supposed as being occasioned by an operation of the power of God,"<sup>31</sup> declaring that "the Lord had sent him there, and he or the devil would have to leave. ... After he arrived the false spirits which had been operating through the members of the Church ceased for awhile."<sup>32</sup> Initially, there were no boundaries regarding extreme ecstatic experiences as part of missionary meetings or spiritual rebirth, perhaps because God had not yet revealed any and Joseph had not yet asked. In quick succession, between March and June 1831, three revelations clarified what God found acceptable.

In March 1831, Joseph received a revelation regarding the importance of directing all meetings by the Holy Ghost to prevent the problems they had been having with deception. In the revelation, every person was encouraged to earnestly seek after the best gifts by the power of the Spirit and receive them by that same power. Reviewing Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians and Moroni's last words in the Book of Mormon, these gifts included a powerful testimony of the Savior, wisdom and

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30. Joseph Smith, "History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 Addenda", June 15, 1842, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-addenda?p=64>; Joseph Smith, "Gift of the Holy Ghost," *Times and Seasons* (June 15, 1842): 823.

31. Lucy Mack Smith, "History, 1844–1845," 10:12, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1844-1845?p=124>; Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 506–7.

32. Philo Dibble, "Philo Dibble's Narrative," in *Early Scenes in Church History* (Salt Lake City: *Juvenile Instructor*, 1882), 78.

knowledge, healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, and so forth. The next part of the revelation governed the source of such manifestations and whether they were truly gifts from God: “All these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God. And unto the bishop of the church, and unto such as God shall appoint and ordain to watch over the church and to be elders unto the church, are to have it given unto them to discern all those gifts lest there shall be any among you professing and yet be not of God.”<sup>33</sup> In Joseph’s restoration, the gifts of the Holy Ghost were rational, meaningful, purposeful, consistent with scripture, and contrary to the wild and foolish ideas of men or women.<sup>34</sup>

In May 1831, Joseph received another revelation cautioning the church about “false spirits” and condemning some behaviors as “abominations.” He warned “deceivers and hypocrites” in the church that they would be detected and “cut off.”<sup>35</sup> Rather than a list of accepted or prohibited behaviors, the members were to judge by the Holy Ghost what was true or counterfeit. In the revelation, God revealed guidelines and principles: “Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God. ... [H]e that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? If it be some other way it is not of God.”<sup>36</sup>

In a revelation received in June 1831, a pattern was given for identifying those who were under the influence of God, because there were some who through “gross wickedness and hypocrisy ... who by a long face, and sanctimonious prayers, and very pious sermons had power to lead the minds of the ignorant and unwary and thereby obtain such influence.”<sup>37</sup> Talent in rhetoric or overwhelming emotion is not evidence of being under the influence of the Holy Ghost. God revealed how to discern spiritual character.

Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances. He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth,

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33. Doctrine and Covenants 46:26–27.

34. “Baptism,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 16 (June 15, 1842): 823, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/times-and-seasons-15-june-1842/9>.

35. Doctrine and Covenants 50:4, 6, 8.

36. Doctrine and Covenants 50:17–20.

37. Joseph Smith, “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1,” 872.

the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances. And again, he that trembleth under my power shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you. And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me. Wherefore, by this pattern ye shall know the spirits in all cases under the whole heavens.<sup>38</sup>

As the result of the growing crisis brought about by unrestricted enthusiasm and emotionalism, Joseph, through revelation, “showed the brethren clearly the mistake under which they had been laboring”<sup>39</sup> and explained the discipline God required. Thus, Joseph recognized not all enthusiastic expressions manifested in Kirtland were from God. Guidelines were given so members were empowered to discern what was from God, and what was not. Just as labeling Alexander’s restoration as strictly Enlightenment directed is not accurate; neither is labeling Joseph’s strictly enthusiasm driven.

Charismatic expressions of faith were characteristic of the Second Great Awakening. Criticism of this type of religious experience was also common. Alexander’s cessationist beliefs caused him to completely reject extraordinary spiritual manifestations as delusions. Joseph’s restoration claims, which included visions, visitations, and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, did not fit within Alexander’s belief system. Joseph, on the other hand would not be bound by the limitations and restrictions of Enlightenment thinking. They were contemporaneous restorationists with very different approaches.

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38. Doctrine and Covenants 52:15–19.

39. Smith, “History, 1844–1845,” 11:1; Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 507.



# WAS ADAM A MONOTHEIST? A REFLECTION ON WHY WE CALL ABRAHAM FATHER AND NOT ADAM

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Taylor Halverson

**Abstract:** *The three great monotheistic religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) all claim Abraham as father and prototypical monotheist. Though Adam is the putative first father in all of these traditions, he is seldom remembered in Judeo-Christian scriptural, apocryphal, or pseudepigraphic texts as an exemplary monotheist. This essay briefly reviews why Abraham retains the lofty title “Father of Monotheism” while exploring how Latter-day restoration scripture adds to and challenges this ancient tradition vis-à-vis enhanced understanding of Adam’s covenantal and monotheistic fidelity to God.*

Was Adam a monotheist? Though he was the first to know God, Adam is seldom even an afterthought in the topic of monotheism. Why is this so? When we think of the great monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it is not Father Adam whom we turn to but rather Father Abraham. Abraham retains the lofty title “Father of Monotheism.”<sup>1</sup> This article briefly addresses (1) several reasons why Abraham, not Adam, is considered the first monotheist, (2) how Latter-day Saint restoration scripture affects this conversation, and (3) the implications that this tradition has for our understanding of the historical development of monotheistic faith.

## What is Monotheism?

The term “monotheism” does not appear in or originate from Biblical texts. In fact, as a categorical term, “monotheism” is an invention of the English Enlightenment, coined by Cambridge Platonist Henry More in

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1. Abraham is claimed as father by the three great monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christian, and Islam. David Klinghoffer, *The Discovery of God: Abraham and the Birth of Monotheism* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

the 1660s in a treatise attempting to establish a typology of religions,<sup>2</sup> where monotheism was set up as an antonym to atheism.<sup>3</sup> However, I think monotheism is better defined by what it is than by what it is not.

I define monotheism as the belief in, the reverence of, and the faithful commitment to one God, with reciprocal promises or covenants from God offered as rewards to the faithful. We might consider this “covenantal monotheism,” the monotheism at the heart of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

### **Popular and Scholarly Treatments of the Origins of Monotheism**

What is being said about the origins of monotheism? Popular works on monotheism assume and perpetuate the idea that Abraham was the first monotheist. Consider the work by Jonathan Kirsch, *God Against the Gods*, where he claims,

The first person to recognize and worship the single all-powerful deity variously known as “Yahweh” or “Lord” or “Allah” was Abraham, whose encounter with the God of Israel in the land of Canaan is memorably depicted in the Book of Genesis.<sup>4</sup>

Or consider the book *The Discovery of God: Abraham and The Birth of Monotheism*.<sup>5</sup> This book chronicles the life of Abraham but in the

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2. Nathan MacDonald, “The Origin of ‘Monotheism’”, in *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism*, ed. Loren T. Stuckenbruck and Wendy E.S. North (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 204–15.

3. For those who are disposed to slice the conversation more precisely, other terminology extends the typology of religious belief: pantheism (the belief in all gods); polytheism (the belief in many gods); henotheism (the belief that one particular god should be worshipped, though other gods may also be available to worship); atheism (the belief that there is no god); and monolatry (the belief that only one god exists, who should be worshipped). Most of these terms are modern inventions to help us categorize. What we should note here is that the idea of monotheism as popularly conceived today does not reflect with 100% accuracy what it meant at the time of its invention, nor does it purely describe in categories native to ancient Jews, Christians, and Muslims the belief in one God. All of this is to say that we cannot help but use modern eyes to see the past or to use modern concepts or tools to understand the past. As long as we understand how our modern perceptions translate the past, we can proceed.

4. Jonathan Kirsch, *God Against the Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism* (New York: Viking Compass, 2004), 21.

5. These are two valuable introductions to monotheism but none seriously consider Adam in the story of monotheism: Klinghoffer, *The Discovery of God*; Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

process assumes as correct and perpetuates the tradition that Abraham was the first monotheist.

On the scholarly side, treatments of monotheism may pay lip service to the possibility of Adam as the first monotheist, but no pause is taken to explore the idea and its implications.<sup>6</sup> Typical of this approach is the book *Three Faiths, One God: The Formative Faith and Practice of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*.<sup>7</sup> In this book, the authors describe how Muslims explain Islam's relationship to Judaism and Christianity:

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6. This is a "short" list of important treatments on the origin and development of monotheism, often from the perspective of the origin and development of ancient Israelite religion: Gosta W. Ahlstrom, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Ranier Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, trans. J. Bowden, vol. 1, *OLT* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1994); W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957); Michael David Coogan, "Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the Religion of Ancient Israel", in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds. P. Miller, P. Hanson, and D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 115–24; W. Dietrich and M. Klopfenstein, eds., *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, OBO 139 (Göttingen, DE: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); S. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. K. Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1939); Baruch Halpern, "'Brisker Pipers than Poetry': The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, eds. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest R. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 77–115; Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. M. Greenberg (New York: Schocken Books, 1972); Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979); P. Miller, P. Hanson, and D. McBride, eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); P. Radin, *Monotheism among Primitive Peoples* (New York: Bollingen, 1954); Mark Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); T. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 1992); and John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).

7. Jacob Neusner, Bruce Chilton, and William Graham, *Three Faiths, One God: The Formative Faith and Practice of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002). The three traditional monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all claim to be God's people. This tradition derives from the story of God covenanting with Abraham to bless him and his seed in perpetuity. Adherents of these religious traditions believe that they are the physical descendants of Abraham, and therefore have a right and access to God's special covenants, and that by being part of God's covenants, they should do the works of Abraham.

Islam ... is held to be identical with the true monotheism to which humankind was called again and again ever since Adam was created as the first of God's human creatures and the first of His messengers.<sup>8</sup>

Though Adam is credited indirectly as the first monotheist, the authors quickly move on to say, "Abraham [is] the paradigmatic person of faith for all three monotheistic traditions"<sup>9</sup> and "Abraham's pure monotheistic faith has been the model for ... ages."<sup>10</sup> Based on the way the Bible portrays Adam and Abraham, it's difficult to reach any other conclusion. However, Latter-day Saint scripture and sacred tradition offers a tantalizing twist to the question of who was the first covenantal monotheist.

### Adam on the Biblical Stage

I'll briefly review what the Bible presents to us as the story of Adam. According to Genesis 2–3, after God created Adam, he placed him in the Garden of Eden with the command to care for the garden but to not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God then brought all the animals to Adam for naming, but no helpmeet (Hebrew: *'ezer k'negdo*) was found for Adam. God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and, withdrawing a rib from Adam, formed Eve. Soon thereafter, the serpent tricked Eve into eating from the forbidden tree; she then shared with Adam, who also ate of the forbidden fruit. In response to the transgression, God cursed Adam and Eve individually.<sup>11</sup> God then cast Adam and Eve out of the paradisiacal garden.

Being the first created man in the holy texts of the three monotheistic religions, one would expect Adam to be portrayed as the model monotheist, worshipping the one god who gave him life. And to an extent, Adam behaves in ways fitting this role. Consider that upon God alone is Adam dependent. It is to God alone that Adam is accountable. And it is from God alone that he receives a curse, the inverse of a blessing for faithfulness, a curse that incidentally is interpreted by later generations to have been passed down through Adam's posterity — the curse of death.

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8. Neusner, Chilton, and Graham, *Three Faiths*, 101–102.

9. *Ibid.*, 102.

10. *Ibid.*, 102.

11. Specifically, he said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:17–19, translation from the English Standard Version bible).

Adam is not portrayed as worshipping other gods, going after other gods, or disbelieving in God, as is the case for later generations of Israelites.

Nonetheless, the story of Adam in the Old Testament does not suggest that he was a covenantal monotheist. There is no mention of Adam's single-minded devotion to God, no mention of God's covenantal promises extended to Adam and his posterity for faithfulness, and no mention of Adam's exertion to faithfully believe God and believe in God in the face of suffering and trial. In a word, as the Bible tells the story, Adam is not a compelling representative of monotheistic belief. Adam is not considered the first monotheist not so much because he didn't worship God,<sup>12</sup> but rather because he failed to be an *exemplary* monotheist.

### Adam in Biblical Memory and Tradition

How is Adam remembered in Biblical memory and tradition? He is remembered (1) as the father of humanity and (2) as a transgressor.

#### Adam as a Father

Remarkably, after the creation and Garden of Eden stories, very few passages in the Old Testament reference Adam. Genesis 4–5 refers to Adam in his role as a father. Then there is silence until the end of the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy 32:8 loosely references Adam as the eponymous ancestor of all people.

When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance,  
when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of  
the people according to the number of the children of Israel.  
(Deuteronomy 32:8)

Another reference to Adam as the father of humanity is found in 1 Chronicles, which, appropriately, is a book about genealogies and generations.<sup>13</sup>

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12. In Genesis there is no mention or depiction of Adam worshipping God. However, the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price records, "And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord" (Moses 5:4–5).

13. Curiously, 1 Chronicles 1 lists the "righteous" line of Adam's posterity borrowing from Genesis 5. I say "curiously" because there is a general negative sentiment against Adam in the Bible, yet in 1 Chronicles 1, the listing of the

## Adam as a Transgressor

Other Biblical passages remember Adam as a transgressor. When arguing for his innocence, Job asks if he has been like Adam, seeking to hide his transgressions. “[Have] I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom [?]” (Job 31:33). Another possible memory of Adam as a transgressor is found in Hosea 6:7. Here Hosea references a geographical place named Adam where the children of Israel transgressed against God. However, the Hebrew could read “like Adam they transgressed” instead of “at [the place called] Adam they transgressed.” The remaining references to Adam in the Old Testament remember him as the father of humanity. Not one biblical reference honors Adam as a monotheist, not one reference speaks of his faithfulness and devotion to God.

In summary, the memories of Adam preserved in the Bible do not portray a compelling record of a covenantal monotheist. Instead we see an eponymous ancestor of all humans who transgressed against God.

## Adam in Second Temple Memory and Tradition

What memories are preserved of Adam in Second Temple and Early Christian literature? After the stunning paucity of references to Adam in the Bible, there are a number of writings that mention Adam, some in which he is a major character.<sup>14</sup> These writings convey some diversity of their assessment of Adam. This diversity is likely due to each author’s *Tendenz*, though a majority of the memories concerning Adam relate to themes already present in the Bible: Adam as the father of humanity, Adam as a transgressor, and by extension Adam as the cause of human misery. For brevity sake, I will share only a few representative examples from Second Temple period literature, looking first at negative memories of Adam and then at positive.

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righteous generations of his posterity may suggest a subtle approval of Adam, despite his original unfaithfulness to God’s commands.

14. Many of the writings that reference Adam include Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, Jubilees, Josephus, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, the Life of Adam & Eve, and Paul. For a relevant discussion of how each of these Jewish writers treated the memory of Adam, see John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 1* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988). What is significant about Levison’s work for our discussion is that there is little, if any, attention paid to Adam’s monotheistic character. In other words, whether Adam was monotheistic is never the question; it is not a topic of consideration in Levison’s analysis.

## Negative Memories of Adam

Abraham is far more often talked about, referenced, and remembered in ancient scripture and in Second Temple and Early Christian texts than is Adam. The majority of these memories of Adam see him in a negative light. My purpose here is not to be exhaustive, but rather to give a selective taste of the type of negative remembrances of Adam we typically find in ancient texts.

- **Adam's transgression caused transgression among his descendants:** "For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him." (4 Ezra 3:21/2 Esdras 3:21)<sup>15</sup>
- **Adam brought sorrow to the world:** "I answered and said, 'This is my first and last comment: it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants.'" (4 Ezra 7:116–118 / 2 Esdras 7:116–118)<sup>16</sup>
- **Adam brought death and sin into the world:** "Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:18–19)
- **Adam was a covenantal monotheist, but he left the covenant:** "And [God] said [to Adam], 'Since you have forsaken my covenant, I have submitted your body to seventy plagues. The pain of the first plague is affliction of the eyes; the second plague is of the hearing; and so one after the other all the plagues shall pursue you.'" (Apocalypse of Moses 8:2)<sup>17</sup>

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15. 4 Ezra is also known as 2 Esdras. Translation from New Revised Standard Version bible (NRSV).

16. 4 Ezra is also known as 2 Esdras. Translation from NRSV.

17. *The Apocalypse of Moses* is the Greek version of the pseudepigraphic work *The Life of Adam and Eve*. "Life of Adam and Eve (First Century AD)," ed. M.D. Johnson, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 273.

## Positive Memories of Adam

The passages we have shared so far remember Adam in a negative light. However, other Second Temple texts of this period portray Adam more positively, indeed, even as an exemplary figure of monotheistic integrity.

- **Adam is the father of humanity:** “Shem and Seth and Enosh were honored, but above every other created living being was Adam.” (Sirach 49:16)<sup>18</sup>
- **Adam made offerings to the Lord after he left the garden:** “And on that day when Adam went out from the Garden of Eden, he offered a sweet-smelling sacrifice — frankincense, galbanum, stacte, and spices — in the morning with the rising of the sun from the day he covered his shame.” (Jubilees 3:27)<sup>19</sup>
- **Adam has the same blessings as Abraham:** “Jacob, my beloved son, whom my soul loves, may God from above the firmament bless and may he give you all of the blessings with which he blessed Adam and Enoch and Noah and Shem.” (Jubilees 19:27)<sup>20</sup>

What is significant about the positive memories of Adam in the post-biblical tradition is the evidence that Adam was considered an exemplary, covenantal monotheist. However, these ideas and traditions did not become dominant, instead losing out to views of Adam as the cause of death and misery in the world, as exemplified in 4 Ezra and Romans, as we saw above in the section on negative memories.<sup>21</sup>

## Biblical Memories of Abraham

We return now to the question of why Abraham is considered the first monotheist and not Adam. In contrast to Adam’s failure at faithfulness, as depicted in the Bible, just a few chapters later (Genesis 12) a most

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18. Sirach is also known as *Ecclesiasticus* and also as *The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach*. Translation from NRSV.

19. “Jubilees (Second Century B.C.),” ed. O.S. Wintermute, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 2*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 60.

20. “Jubilees,” ed. Wintermute, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 93.

21. We should pause to consider briefly Adam’s portrayal in Qumranic literature. Adam is a relatively minor figure at Qumran mentioned in but a few documents, namely the *Commentary on Psalm 37* (1QpPs 37 3.1–2), in the *Community Rule* (1QS 4.23), the *Damascus Document* (CD 3.20), and in *Hymns* (1QH 17.15). His portrayal at Qumran is not significantly different from what we have seen already in other Second Temple Jewish literature.

remarkable story emerges. For no apparent reason, and in what appears to be a capricious act of self-disclosure, God calls out to a most inconspicuous character, Abraham, to offer him the most fantastic and desirable blessings: posterity, property, and protection from enemies — the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>22</sup> What was the catch? Simply to worship God with a single heart and mind by obeying His will. As the story unfolds over the next dozen chapters (Gen. 12–25), we see Abraham exercise faithful devotion to God and resilient belief in the promises of God in the face of stark and contrary evidence. Abraham’s monotheistic faithfulness climaxes in the *akedah* (Genesis 22) story where without question he willingly gives up his most prized possession, his son Isaac, as an expression of total devotion to God’s wishes. When put to the most extreme test of devotion, Abraham emerges as the undeniable zenith of faithfulness. The cumulative stories of Abraham’s monotheistic faithfulness are unquestionably dramatic and memorable. Who else can compare to Abraham in exemplary monotheistic faithfulness?

According to the Biblical report, in monotheistic devotion Abraham seems to be everything Adam was not. Adam was given everything from the beginning; Abraham had to give up all he had (his family, homeland, and traditions) to gain God’s blessings. Adam was disobedient to the simplest command: do not eat the fruit of that tree. Abraham was resiliently steadfast in obedience in the most taxing of circumstances (e.g., he nearly lost his wife, his promised land was in a state of perpetual famine, and he nearly executed his own son). Adam was cursed to death by God (a curse apparently passed down through posterity). Abraham was blessed with life, a blessing available through Abraham to all the families of the earth. Adam had the presence of God but lost

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22. Fundamentally, we cannot understand the monotheistic tradition of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam apart from Abraham *because* of the covenant he received from God (Genesis 12, 15). In fact, it is God’s covenant to Abraham that is the central pillar for these monotheistic traditions. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam profess that they are the true inheritors of the covenant and promises between God and Abraham. Therefore, to receive the promises of Abraham one must do the works of Abraham and believe like Abraham. For further reading, see Paul R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis*, eds. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). For another perspective, see R. Oden, “The Place of Covenant in the Religion of Israel,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds. P. Miller, P. Hanson, and D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 429–47.

it. Abraham, for no obvious reasons, was brought into the presence of God from the obscurity of a polytheistic homeland. Thus it is no wonder that later tradition remembered Abraham as the first monotheist while considering Adam a blight on human existence.

### **Latter-day Saint Scriptural Portrayal of Adam**

Scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rehabilitates Adam from the general negative thrust of theological history. In the Book of Moses, Adam is portrayed as faithfully worshipping God.

And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. (Moses 5:4–6)

After having been cast out of the Garden for disobedience, we find Adam expressing unstinting devotion and obedience to God, even if he did not understand the reasons. In this regard, he is like faithful Abraham who apparently did not know why God required him to sacrifice Isaac but nonetheless went forward with the intent to commit the unthinkable act.

Moreover, Latter-day Saint scripture affirms there was a powerful positive purpose in Adam's act of disobedience. Additionally, Eve, who is so often marginalized in post-Biblical memories, plays a primary role in expressing devotion to God.

And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy<sup>23</sup> concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known

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23. This is a significant departure from tradition as well and deserves attention: the fact that Adam was a prophet, not just the first man. (Thank you to an unnamed reviewer of this article who pointed this insight out to me.)

good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. (Moses 5:10–11)

The Book of Mormon expresses this same sentiment succinctly: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25). This revolutionary concept, that Adam’s disobedience to a simple command in the paradisiacal garden was actually a wise step to bring joy to humanity, is a stunning reversal of fortunes for the memory of Adam and for his place in the annals of monotheistic devotion to God. Instead of viewing Adam as the cause of humanity’s curses, Adam, according to restoration scripture, is instead viewed as an exemplary monotheist, as exemplary as Abraham. Adam is the one who set the stage for all humans to receive the promise that is desirable above all others — joy.<sup>24</sup>

Though it is not as clearly expressed in Latter-day Saint sacred literature, it is significant that in the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Adam and *not* Abraham is the prototype of the soul’s journey back to God (i.e., the covenant ritual and narrative of the temple). In this regard, Latter-day Saint sacred literature honors Abraham for his consistent faithfulness towards God, securing for himself and his posterity great blessings. Yet Adam is also honored as a faithful servant and worshipper of God, one who remained constant and faithful after the initial lapse in the garden, which, incidentally, is explained in Latter-day Saint sacred literature as an absolutely essential aspect of God’s plan for humanity. Instead of seeing Adam’s disobedience as a catastrophe for humans and the created order, Adam’s disobedient choice was a calculated and bold move to protect God’s plan.

### Implications

The unavoidable question for us now is “so what?” Even if Adam really was the first monotheist, what value does that have for us in the study of the Bible or biblically related material? Setting aside the enormous challenge of attempting to provide a convincing rationale for the historicity of Adam, according to the current standards and assumptions of Biblical scholarship, if Adam truly was the first monotheist, how does that change the conversation? It does so in several ways.

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24. More restoration scripture that relates to this theme of joy are: Suffering can lead to joy (2 Nephi 2:11; Alma 7:11–12; D&C 29:39; D&C 121:7–8; Moses 6:55); we are in this life to grow and develop (Alma 34:32; Abraham 3:25; D&C 101:5); we needed the Fall so we could practice being like Jesus and God (3 Nephi 27:27; D&C 122:5–8); but ultimately the Greatest of all suffered for all (D&C 19:16–19).

If Adam is the first monotheist, we'd have to account for a much more complex history of monotheism that did not develop in some evolutionary format but perhaps in waves of revolutionary reintroduction. We would have to ask why more of Adam's story — his devotion and faithfulness *after* the expulsion — is not present in the biblical account. Why are these elements of Adam's experience with God excluded from the story as we now have it in the Bible? Did Second Temple literature (such as Jubilees, which portrays Adam in a much more favorable light) have access to other memories and traditions about Adam? Where did they receive these traditions? How might early Christian theology have been expressed differently had Adam not been remembered as a failed monotheist?

### Conclusion

Monotheism requires complete, faithful devotion to one God from whom promises and rewards are received. Given this definition in the context of the current Biblical texts, there are clear and sustainable reasons Abraham is remembered as the first monotheist instead of Adam. Abraham had a covenant and Abraham was an exemplary monotheist.

Outside of restoration scripture and interpretation, Adam is typically remembered for his disobedience, expulsion from the garden, curses against him and his posterity, and loss of God's presence and the glorious garden. On the other hand, Abraham is remembered for his righteousness and his faithfulness. Abraham exercised courageous fidelity to God and trust in his promises. Instead of bringing curses to his posterity, as did Adam, Abraham brought blessings. Instead of losing the presence of God, Abraham was brought into the presence of God. Abraham is the prototype of the righteous soul wending its way through fidelity on the path of life back to God. Adam, on the other hand, is remembered as having squandered humanity's opportunity to remain forever in the presence of God and instead to be condemned to a life of toil, suffering, and ultimately death.

Latter-day Saint scripture challenges the Biblical depiction and received interpretation of Adam. According to restored scripture, after his initial transgression, Adam faithfully worshipped God, made covenants with God, taught his posterity faith in God, and lived in honorable, faithful, covenantal monotheism through the end of his days. If these Latter-day Saint traditions are taken seriously, contemporary models of the origin and development of monotheism must be reconsidered.<sup>25</sup>

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25. As one reviewer of this article insightfully noted, the definition of monotheism may need "reconsidering, away from the belief in one God, into the

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## SEEING PSALMS AS THE LIBRETTI OF A HOLY DRAMA

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Janet Ewell

**Abstract:** *Psalms was the favorite Old Testament book at Qumran and in the New Testament; the Book of Mormon contains more than three dozen allusions to Psalms. While Psalms contains both powerful, poetic words of comfort and doctrinal gems, many psalms also seem to careen between praise, warning, comfort, military braggadocio, and humility, sometimes addressing the LORD, sometimes speaking in the voice of the LORD or his prophets. The texts that most strongly exhibit such abrupt shifts may yield greater meaning if they are read as scripts or libretti of a sacred, temple-based drama.*

Psalms was the favorite Old Testament book at Qumran,<sup>1</sup> as it was in the earliest centuries of the Christian Church.<sup>2</sup> The Book of Mormon contains more than three dozen allusions to Psalms,<sup>3</sup> and the New Testament quotes Psalms more than any other Old Testament book.<sup>4</sup> Psalms contains powerful, poetic words of comfort and doctrinal gems, but many psalms also seem to careen between praise, warning, instruction, comfort, military braggadocio, and humility; sometimes addressing the LORD, sometimes addressing assembled Israel; speaking in the voice of the LORD, or a prophet, or a priest, or as Israel, or a sufferer, or a victor; sometimes in the plural, sometimes in the singular; sometimes intensely introspectively and sometimes nationally — that is, dealing with the security of the country and the fertility of the land. The texts that most strongly exhibit these abrupt shifts may yield greater meaning to both readers and serious students of scripture when they are placed within the context of sacred drama, as Jeffrey Bradshaw suggests, and read as scripts — the libretti, if you prefer — of a sacred drama.

In his July 3, 2018 “Old Testament KnoWhy,” Jeffrey Bradshaw wrote a thoughtful, close reading of psalms 22, 23, and 24, a reading that focused on the use of these psalms in a proposed sacred drama, as a “ritual journey of the king.”<sup>5</sup> The outline of the ritual journey of

the king — and the reconstruction of larger sacred drama of which some suggest it is a part — remains a scholarly proposal, a hypothetical construct. The shape of sacred drama, in this view, follows a persistent pattern across a wide range of cultures. Included in this pattern may be the idea of the king as the incarnation of the national god.

Nibley supported this construct, pointing out that “the force of the evidence is cumulative and is based on extensive comparative studies.” He mentions 20 studies and identifies 36 ways in which King Benjamin’s Book of Mormon discourse at the temple follows the pattern of the “Great Assembly at the New Year,” a pattern widely spread across many cultures, including Israel’s neighbors. He notes, however, that in the Book of Mormon “everything takes place on a far higher spiritual plane than that implied in most of the Old World ritual texts.” Nibley writes that, according to this pattern, the “year rite” takes place at a temple and includes coronation and royal marriage, sacrifice and burnt offerings, thanksgiving, the “ritual descent of the king to the underworld — he is ritually overcome by death, and then ritually resurrected.” (This is part of the ritual journey of the king to which Bradshaw refers.) His people are promised victory and prosperity if they will be obedient. They are overcome: “*proskynesis* was the falling to the earth (literally, “kissing the ground).” The members of the assembled congregation make covenants and receive a “ritual begetting of the human race by a divine parent,” that is they become children of a divinity.<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars, noting similarities between the Hebrew psalms and the ritual poetry of neighboring cultures, have attempted to reconstruct the Israelite’s sacred festivals by looking at patterns seen elsewhere. The Psalms, they suggest, are tantalizing remnants of early temple worship and festivals.<sup>7</sup> Nibley’s outline of the sacred drama draws on the work of scholars who studied the ritual text and poetry of multiple cultures including those surrounding the ancient Israelites: the Babylonian, Sumerian, Hittite, Ugaritic, and Canaanite.

An example of this type of scholarship is proposed by Theodor H. Gaster who draws connections between the Hebrew Psalm 29 and ritual texts in five surrounding languages.<sup>8</sup> Gaster, however, is reticent to apply this scholarly construct without reservation to ancient Israelite practices. While pointing out Psalm 29’s numerous analogs in neighboring cultures, Gaster also addresses the tension between the idea of a unique Israelite religion and its similarity to neighboring practices. He writes,

[I]t would appear that Psalm 29 is a form of the ritual laudation of the victorious god which formed part of the seasonal pantomime of the New Year Festival. **It must be emphasized however, that it in no way implies that the seasonal pantomime actually obtained in official Israelitic cultus, as has been so frequently supposed.**<sup>9</sup>

He suggests instead that Psalm 29 is a “Yahwization of current pagan compositions” (p 64) and suggest that the psalm made its way into the “cult of YHWH” as “propagandists ... may frequently have tried to ‘fetch the public’ by adopting and adapting the songs and airs” of “primitive folk religion from the length and breadth of Palestine.” He cites an example of this process in a report of the children in India “enthusiastically singing” an adapted version of the mid-19th century children’s hymn “Jesus Loves Me” (Jesus loves me, this I know / For the Bible tells me so.) They sang: “Buddha loves me; this I know / For the Sutras tell me so!”<sup>10</sup>

Gary Rendsberg also doubts the Psalms’ importance in Israel before the Exile. Speaking at the Temple Studies Conference “Passion and Passover: Jesus and Temple,”<sup>11</sup> he suggests that psalms, even those of early composition, were later additions to the Jerusalem Temple, though they may have been used somewhat earlier at the temples at Arad and Bethel. He suggests, referencing two scholars — Yehezkel Kaufman (*The Religion of Israel*) and Israel Knohl (*The Sanctuary of Silence*) — that for most of the First Temple period, priests “went about their business in silence,” that is, without song, procession, musical accompaniment, or vocal prayer; this in contrast to the temple practices of their cultural neighbors and those of the Second Temple period, where the use of psalms, music, and processions are well-attested. He suggests these elements were added to temple worship because “the voices of the congregational people wanted to do more than simply bring their goat or their sheep and hand it to the priest. They did not want to do nothing but watch. They did not want to be observers. They wanted to be participants. The way they were able to do that as non-priests was through the use of the psalms in the temple rituals.” (*Chronicles*, written 350–400 BCE, he suggests, may have retrojected Second Temple practices back onto the First Temple.)<sup>12</sup>

Returning to Bradshaw’s reading of psalms 22, 23, and 24, Bradshaw indicates that these psalms serve as the “ritual journey of the king” where the king led the worshippers in procession and “ascended the steps to enter the temple” in a “sequence of events [that] is replicated in the ritual journey of the priest-king, the redemptive journey of the Messiah, and

the salvific journey of each one of the faithful.” He wrote, “In order to enter fully into the peace of Psalm 23, one must first journey through the distress of Psalm 22. This journey culminates in the joy of exaltation in the presence of God depicted in Psalm 24.” He added,

Of course, the entire liturgical sequence from heartrending lament to triumphal entry not only typifies the journey of the king of Israel from the place of his trials to the outer gates of the Lord’s earthly sanctuary but also foreshadows the humiliation of the coming Messiah on the cross (Psalm 22:1 (Mark 15:34): “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”) and His eventual ascent in glory to His Father within the innermost gate of the heavenly temple (Psalm 24:7, 9 (John 20:17): “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.”)<sup>13</sup>

Though some of this symbolic journey, scholars suggest, would have taken place in the closed and sacred spaces of the Temple or Tabernacle, much of it was narrated, sung, danced, or enacted in public spaces in the presence of the throngs of worshipers who came up to the Temple to “appear before the LORD God” (Exodus 23:17).<sup>14</sup> They were more than spectators waiting outside the temple gates. Sigmund Mowinckel explains that the festal drama was the “divine service”<sup>15</sup> of ancient Israel. It was a matter that “concerns both God and the congregation.” The congregation is “the real actor.” The “one in whose name the action and speaking takes place, is the congregation.” The king “is also man’s representative before the gods. In him the people is one. According to the corporate view of those times the people was somehow incorporated in him, and the strength and blessing which he receives from the gods were partaken of by the whole country and people.”<sup>16</sup>

The festival goers were participants in the drama not only vicariously but also because they were directly addressed by those leading in the drama: the priest, the prophet, the king, and the LORD. They responded in a manner Charles Thomson identified as a sort of Greek chorus, anticipating and reacting to what they saw and heard.<sup>17</sup> David Calabro, drawing on the work of Erving Goffman, notes the presence of *lamination* in ritual drama, saying, “*lamination* ... refers to instances where frames of discourse are overlapped in such a way that the narrator and the audience becomes part of the narrative, with the result that the distinction between frames becomes blurred ... This technique is frequently employed in ritual because it imparts efficacy and also makes

the ritual more exciting for the participants.”<sup>18</sup> In ritual, unlike theater, there is no fourth wall.

Many psalms, scholars suggest, are remnants of those festivals.<sup>19</sup> Almost a third of the Old Testament psalms appear to contain more than one voice or to be addressed to more than one audience, for instance, to the LORD and to the congregation in psalms 27 and 97.<sup>20</sup> Proportionally, a third or more of the Psalms quoted in the New Testament appear to contain more than one voice or to be addressed to more than one audience.<sup>21</sup> Yet few of modern readers’ most popular psalms have more than one voice or audience.<sup>22</sup> It is important to consider why.

Devotional readers — perhaps even serious students of the scriptures — may have felt disengaged from these multi-voiced psalms because they experience a “reader’s whiplash” when the Hebrew poetic texts seem to change tone, voice, or intention without apparent logic. However, the psalms become both more intelligible and more engaging if they are read as if they were libretti<sup>23</sup> from which the first two inches of left-hand side — the part that indicates the speakers and the stage directions — have been sliced off.

So thought Charles Thomson, the first English translator of the Septuagint.<sup>24</sup> Margaret Barker writes,

There are indications that Thomson imagined the writings of the prophets as the scripts of a Greek-style drama, in which there were only two or three characters on stage, and then a chorus of others — citizens perhaps, or slaves — who commented on the action or the debate they had just witnessed. Having received an education in the Classics, he would surely have known about the Greek dramas that were constructed in this way, and marks in his translation show that he was dividing up the writings of the prophets as though they were play scripts that had lost their character designations and stage directions. He marked up some parts of Isaiah, Amos and Micah, and large sections of Hosea and Jeremiah with J for Jehovah, P for prophet and C for chorus.<sup>25</sup>

Thomson did not mark the speakers in the Book of Psalms,<sup>26</sup> but his general approach when applied to other poetic texts can increase clarity and meaning. For instance, Psalm 95 is now generally acknowledged to be a temple psalm in both the Old Testament<sup>27</sup> and the Book of Mormon.<sup>28</sup> In the marked text below, each speaker is tentatively identified based on Old Testament scholarship, including what has been proposed as the action of the festival.<sup>29</sup> The transitions between speakers have been

identified by shifts in tone, *tone* being defined as the speaker's attitude toward the audience, toward the subject, and toward self. Pronoun shifts also suggest a change in speaker or audience.

The first part of Psalm 95 may be in the voice of two groups of temple-goers who are encouraging each other in their ascent to the temple.<sup>30</sup> The verses recount the LORD's mastery over creation, the purpose of their pilgrimage — to worship, to bow down, to kneel, that is, to make covenants — and His loving kindness toward Israel. In the middle of seventh verse, the tone abruptly changes, becoming stern, almost threatening. This is voice of a prophet<sup>31</sup> who cautions the temple-goers of the peril they face if they enter into covenants lightly; “Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”<sup>32</sup> In midsentence (according to most renderings of the Greek and Hebrew texts into modern English), the prophet's voice becomes the voice of the LORD,<sup>33</sup> speaking sternly in the first person, “when your fathers tested *me*.” He warns that failure to keep these covenants carries a great penalty, to lose access to His rest.

### Psalm 95

Temple-goers (Group 1)	<p><b>1</b> O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.</p> <p><b>2</b> Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.</p> <p><b>3</b> For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.</p> <p><b>4</b> In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.</p> <p><b>5</b> The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.</p>
Temple-goers (Group 2)	<p><b>6</b> O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.</p> <p><b>7</b> For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.</p>
Temple prophet	<p>Today if ye will hear his voice,</p> <p><b>8</b> Harden not your heart,</p>

Voice of the LORD	<p>as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:</p> <p><b>9</b> When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.</p> <p><b>10</b> Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:</p> <p><b>11</b> Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.</p>
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Though scholars and readers may choose to identify the multiple voices in the psalm in various ways, acknowledging the psalm's possible role as the libretto of a participatory festal temple drama serves at least three purposes. For the reader of scripture, some confusion may be removed, thus making this psalm more accessible. For the teacher, it provides an avenue for student engagement with the scriptures and their historical milieu, especially if read aloud as reader's theater. For the serious student of the scriptures, interesting questions and possibly interesting answers may arise, including the role of warning before covenant-making in rituals. Questions concerning the roll of the cultic prophet are also brought into focus.

Building on Bradshaw's work, the same approach enriches psalms 22, 23, and 24, which he identifies as three consecutive psalms from the temple festival. He writes they are a unit that "might have provided fitting words for the entrance liturgy that would have been sung in ancient Israel as worshipers in procession, led by the king, ascended the steps to enter the temple mount at Jerusalem."<sup>34</sup> Other scholars have amplified the settings Bradshaw suggests. Mowinckel writes of festal processions with "various acts and scenes" that include "the way to the temple, before the gates, and when the procession winds in through the gates,"<sup>35</sup> "as well as the walking round about the city walls" and "the circumambulation of the altar."<sup>36</sup>

John Eaton writes, "As Yahweh came back to his city and Temple, good tidings of victory were brought by messengers (68:12; cf. 17) and celebrated by the singers and player who were part of the column (68:25-6 ) Perhaps birds were sent flying over the city with the message of triumphant kingship."<sup>37</sup>

Writing of the enthronement ritual he adds:

The most likely direction of the procession would be from the east via the Mount of Olives or Mount Scopus and the Kidron Valley as indicated by the orientation of the Temple (entrance

from the east, Ezekiel 8:16, etc.), the sacred sites on the east (2 Samuel 15.32, 1 Kings 1.33), and Ezekiel's vision of the exit and return of Yahweh's glory via the east gate and the Mount of Olives (10.19, 11.23; 43.1–5). The ancient cultic traditions reflected in Zechariah 14 include Yahweh's going forth to the Mount of Olives to conquer enemies and so to return to his city to begin his reign."<sup>38</sup>

A reader who is aware of the settings of psalms 22, 23, and 24 and reads them as Bradshaw suggests, such that these three psalms record the king's deepest distress, his delivery, and his exalted re-entry into the temple, may begin to identify those who have speaking parts in the sacral drama.

The first 21 lines of Psalm 22 are easily identified as the voice of the king who is speaking from the lowest point in his symbolic journey. Perhaps the congregation, led by temple singers, sang the tormentors' line in verse 8. Between line 21 and 22 of Psalm 22, a marked shift is apparent. Eaton suggests the first 21 lines were sung in the dark of the night, just before dawn.<sup>39</sup> The temple-goers in those dark hours could witness, identify with, and be moved by the king's distress.

Nothing in the psalm indicates what action took place at the end of verse 21, but Eaton suggests that the autumnal sun might have risen over the Mount of Olives just before verse 22, when the King's grief is changed to praise. He promises to witness his deliverer's goodness and praise him in the congregation, which could include those present at the festal reenactment. The Prophet then addresses the congregation in verses 23 and 24, commanding them to praise the LORD.<sup>40</sup> In verses 25 to 27, the King praises the LORD and makes reference to those near and then far: his brethren, then the "great congregation," (v. 22), then those that fear him (v. 25), and finally "all the kindreds of the nations" (v. 27). The prophet explains further that the scope of the King's redemption includes those who have died, "they that go down to the dust shall bow before him" (v. 29), and those who shall yet be born (v. 31).

**Psalm 22**

<p>The king</p>	<p><b>1</b> My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?</p> <p><b>2</b> O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.</p> <p><b>3</b> But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.</p> <p><b>4</b> Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.</p> <p><b>5</b> They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.</p> <p><b>6</b> But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.</p> <p><b>7</b> All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,</p>
<p>Chorus as Tormenters</p>	<p><b>8</b> He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.</p>
<p>The king</p>	<p><b>9</b> But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.</p> <p><b>10</b> I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.</p> <p><b>11</b> Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.</p> <p><b>12</b> Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.</p> <p><b>13</b> They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.</p> <p><b>14</b> I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.</p> <p><b>15</b> My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.</p> <p><b>16</b> For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.</p>

<p>The king</p>	<p><b>17</b> I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.</p> <p><b>18</b> They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.</p> <p><b>19</b> But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.</p> <p><b>20</b> Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.</p> <p><b>21</b> Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.</p>
	<p><b>Dawn comes over the Mount of Olives</b></p>
<p>The king</p>	<p><b>22</b> I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.</p>
<p>Prophet</p>	<p><b>23</b> Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.</p> <p><b>24</b> For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.</p>
<p>The king</p>	<p><b>25</b> My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.</p> <p><b>26</b> The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.</p> <p><b>27</b> All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.</p>
<p>Prophet</p>	<p><b>28</b> For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.</p> <p><b>29</b> All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.</p> <p><b>30</b> A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation.</p> <p><b>31</b> They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.</p>

Psalm 23, unlike the one before it and the one after it, may be spoken or sung by only one voice, which may contribute to its accessibility and popularity. However, the voices in Psalm 24 are much more complex; the psalm yields a clearer, richer reading if seen as an exchange between several voices, including an assembled company,<sup>41</sup> most likely led by temple singers. As Bradshaw suggests, it “would have been sung in ancient Israel as worshipers in procession, led by the king, ascended the steps to enter the temple mount at Jerusalem.”

Sigmund Mowinckel divides Psalm 24 “into three main parts which were used during the procession on the way to the Temple, before the gates, and when the procession winds in through the gates.”<sup>42</sup> The priest from within, or perhaps a priest serving as gatekeeper to the House of the LORD, specifies the entry requirements, clean hands, a pure heart, a soul devoid of vanity, and faithfulness to previous vows.<sup>43</sup> In response to the priest, the congregation identifies their purpose in coming and identifies the king of glory whom they accompany. The congregation joyfully go with their LORD into the temple mount and perhaps vicariously into His glory in the temple.<sup>44</sup>

### Psalm 24

Priest	<b>1</b> The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. <b>2</b> For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.
Chorus	<b>3</b> Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?
Priest	<b>4</b> He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. <b>5</b> He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
Chorus	<b>6</b> This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.
Priest	<b>7</b> Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. <b>8</b> Who is this King of glory?
Chorus	The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Priest	<b>9</b> Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.
Chorus	<b>10</b> Who is this King of glory?
Priest	The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah

The Psalms suggest ancient Israelites were deeply engaged in the rituals of the temple, participating both emotionally and musically in the renewing of covenants and in celebrating their God. As modern readers view psalms as libretti to sacred dramas, they also have the opportunity to engage deeply and to celebrate.

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### Notes

1. Peter W. Flint, "The Book of Psalms in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Vetus Testamentum* 48, no. 4 (October 1998): 453, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/1585719?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A0a5a979a58233dfbcf86ec8906f7e9e2&seq=1#pge\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1585719?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A0a5a979a58233dfbcf86ec8906f7e9e2&seq=1#pge_scan_tab_contents).
2. Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2006), 19.
3. John Hilton III, "Old Testament Psalms in the Book of Mormon," in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, eds. David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2013), <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/ascending-mountain-lord-temple->

praise-and-worship-old-testament/old-testament-psalms-book. Hilton identifies 43 allusions to Psalms in the Book of Mormon.

4. Harold W. Attridge, “Giving Voice to Jesus: Use of the Psalms in the New Testament,” in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical and Artistic Traditions*, eds. Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 110, [https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Y82LLs5DP3AC&oi=fnd&pg=PA101&dq=attridge+Giving+Voice+to+Jesus&ots=sLzK4Pzw85&sig=dzexYTaPQYH\\_RCL9cWnEVZc6yIQ#v=onepage&q=attridge%20Giving%20Voice%20to%20Jesus&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Y82LLs5DP3AC&oi=fnd&pg=PA101&dq=attridge+Giving+Voice+to+Jesus&ots=sLzK4Pzw85&sig=dzexYTaPQYH_RCL9cWnEVZc6yIQ#v=onepage&q=attridge%20Giving%20Voice%20to%20Jesus&f=false).
5. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Gospel KnoWhy OTL25A — Is there more to Psalm 23 Than Words of Solace and Comfort?” *The Interpreter Foundation*, July 3, 2018, <http://interpreterfoundation.org/knowhy-otl25a-is-there-more-to-psalm-23-than-words-of-solace-and-comfort/>.
6. See Hugh Nibley, “Old World Ritual in the New World,” in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, rev. ed. (1957; repr. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1107&index=26>.
7. See John Eaton, “An Outline of the Pre-exilic Festival and the Ideal of Kingship,” in *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1979), 8–37.
8. Theodor H. Gaster, “Psalm 29,” *Jewish Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (July 1946): 55–65, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1452551>.
9. *Ibid.*, 64; emphasis added.
10. *Ibid.*, 64–65.
11. “The Psalms as Hymns in the Jerusalem Temple—at Passover and throughout the Year,” *Passion and Passover: Jesus and Temple* (Provo, UT: Academy for Temple Studies, 2015), YouTube video, 49:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOgi8i-n1VE>. See also the question and answer session following the presentation, YouTube video, 10:13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7iwXmiTcXw>.
12. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may feel less discomfort from the idea of both a unique Israelite religion and similarities to widely-spread practices in neighboring

cultures because of the belief that sacred rituals were revealed to the earliest man; echoes and remnants of them would be expected to persist.

13. Bradshaw, "Gospel KnoWhy OTL25A."
14. Margaret Barker, "The First English Translation of the LXX Read to the Society for Old Testament Study," MargaretBarker.com, January 2016, <http://www.margaretbarker.com/Papers/SOTSCTLXX.pdf>. Barker points out in that Exodus 23:17 is more accurately translated as "to see the face of the Lord."
15. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 37–38.
16. *Ibid.*, 51.
17. Barker, "The First English Translation of the LXX Read to the Society for Old Testament Study."
18. David Calabro, "Joseph Smith and the Architecture of Genesis" in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Eborn Publishing, 2016), 168.
19. Eaton, "An Outline of the Pre-exilic Festival and the Ideal of Kingship," 25. Speaking of the Psalms, he wrote, "[T]he full range of these texts will not have been in use every year and in every period."
20. Of the 150 Psalms, 45 appear to contain multiple voice or be addressed to multiple audiences. Closer study may remove some psalms from the following list or add more to it. Psalms with multiple voices or multiple audiences include: 2, 4, 9, 12, 15, 20, 22, 24, 28, 30, 31, 32, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 55, 58, 60, 66, 67, 68, 75, 76, 78, 81, 82, 85, 89, 91, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 104, 106, 108, 110, 115, 118, 125, 132. Psalm 97 for instance, addresses the congregation in the first six or seven verses, then addresses the LORD. Psalm 27 switches in a similar manner after verse 7.
21. The count of Psalms cited in the New Testament varies, from 39 in John Calvin, "Tables and Indices to the Book of Psalms," in *Calvin's Commentaries*, ed. Allan McNabb (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), [http://www.biblestudyguide.org/comment/calvin/comm\\_vol12/htm/xxxvi.htm](http://www.biblestudyguide.org/comment/calvin/comm_vol12/htm/xxxvi.htm); to 63 from A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1902), <http://www.jesuswalk.com/psalms/psalms-NT-quotations.htm>; but in both cases at least a third of the psalms cited as quoted in the New Testament are tentatively identified as containing more than one voice or addressing more than one audience, 16/39 for Calvin, 21/63 for Kirkpatrick.

22. Kevin Halloran, “The Most Popular Psalms in the Bible,” *Leadership Resources* (blog), May 26, 2014, <https://www.leadershipresources.org/the-most-popular-psalms-in-the-bible/>. Halloran lists only one multi-voiced psalm, Psalm 46, which is in one voice until the penultimate verse. See also BIBLE Registry, “Idea #20: The Most Popular Psalms, Starting with Psalm 23,” *Bible: For All Things Bible Online* (blog), January 19, 2015, <http://get.bible/blog/post/idea-20-the-most-popular-psalms-starting-with-psalm-23>. Idea #20 includes Google’s top ten searches for psalms, a list that includes only one multi-voiced psalm, Psalm 91. Surveys of the most popular *single* verses from psalms, such as a list included at Halloran, also slight multi-voiced psalms. Halloran includes three multi-voiced psalms in his top 20: two verses from Psalm 46 (see above), a verse from Psalm 24, and a verse from Psalm 110.
23. Since much of the Temple festival psalms were sung or accompanied by musical instruments, it may be more accurate to identify a psalm as a libretto rather than a script, following Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 76, who writes “Ps. 132 may be looked upon as the libretto of a holy drama.”
24. Charles Thomson, trans., *The Holy Bible: containing the Old and New Covenant, commonly called the Old and New Testament* (Philadelphia: J. Aitken, 1808), <https://studybible.info/version/Thomson>.
25. Barker, “The First English Translation of the LXX.”
26. Perhaps Thomson did not see the Psalms in the context of temple-worship. He worked in scholarly isolation on his translation from 1789 until his work was published in 1809. Hermann Gunkel published his pivotal *The Psalms: a Form Critical Introduction* over a century later. The Ugaritic library that allowed scholars to see the Psalms in the context of the great enthronement and year-end festivals was not excavated until 1929.
27. See Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 121, and Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel’s Psalmoday*

(Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), 18; Also, John Eaton, *The Psalms* (London: Continuum, 2005), 119.

28. David E. Bokovoy, “Ancient Temple Imagery in the Sermons of Jacob,” in *Temple Insights*, eds. William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2014), 171–85. Bokovoy has shown that Psalm 95 was part of a festal drama at the time of the Nephite Jacob’s sermon at the temple, between 544 and 421 BC. It was still a relevant and familiar reference in Alma’s time (about 82 BC) as he preached to the unrighteous people of Ammonihah. See Alma 12:35–37. The persistence of this psalm may have been aided by Nephite diligence in observing the ceremonies of the Law of Moses.
29. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 76, includes Psalm 95 as a “complex liturgy” when he discusses Psalm 132. He writes “the congregation answers [the worthiness questions] by stating that it fulfills the demands and calls upon the gates to open.”
30. It is possible that the first “O Come” in verse 1 and the second “O Come” in verse 6 are poetic repetition by one group of singers rather than two. It is also possible we hear the voice of only a leader; the psalm itself does not provide such information, though certainly the psalm’s purposes included encouragement. But the setting we here suggest — the yearly (or thrice yearly) trips up the temple commanded of the faithful (and for those living outside of Jerusalem, it was indeed a climb up) provides clues. It is possible that these frequent trips helped create great familiarity with the song used during these treks. This suggestion of familiarity is reinforced by its use in the Book of Mormon, as noted by Bokovoy. We know that in the time of Christ, extended groups traveled together for several days to the Temple for Passover, as shown in Luke 2:41–45. Certainly, these groups must have converged as they approached the holy city. Perhaps this psalm served as an ancient “Come, Come, Ye Saints.”
31. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel’s Psalmody*, 3, argues that the voice is that of a prophet (rather than a priest). A prophet associated with the temple was “not only the spokesman of Yahweh; he was also the representative of the people in their approach to Him.” Eaton, *The Psalms*, 338, calls him a “prophetic voice.” Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 71, lists Psalm 95 among those coming from “‘loyal’ temple prophets.” On p. 58, he

discusses the distinction between priestly and prophet utterance. The whole of Chapter 12, “The Prophetic Psalms,” is informative.

32. This suggests they *have* come to the Temple to *hear* His voice.
33. Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967), 68. Johnson writes “Then the personality of the speaker (possibly a cultic prophet) gives way, as it were to that of the Godhead so that acting as an extension of the divine Personality, he proceeds to address his hearers a Yahweh Himself.” See also Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet and Israel’s Psalmoday*, 7, 10, 20.
34. Bradshaw, “Gospel KnoWhy OTL25A”
35. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 6.
36. *Ibid.*, 7.
37. Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah*, 13.
38. *Ibid.*, 14.
39. Eaton, *The Psalms*, 119. See also Johnson, *Cultic Prophet*, 23. Though Johnson did not speak specifically of Psalm 22, he notes “the eloquent symbolism of the rising sun which figured so prominently in the worship of the autumnal festival.”
40. This may be an example of Calabro’s (and Goffman’s) lamination, when the theatrical fourth wall is broken down and those observing the ritual are directly addressed.
41. Another potential example of lamination, as those observing the ritual are also those accompanying the king.
42. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 6
43. *Ibid.*, 178
44. The Interpreter Foundation, “David Larsen on ‘Psalm 24 and the Two Yahwehs at the Gate of the Temple,’” 31:58, November 27, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsZYxqniBPU>. Larsen sees evidence there may have been two Yahwehs, perhaps a “little Yahweh,” as in Third Enoch, who is seeking entrance to the Temple and a Yahweh inside the temple.



# AN APPROACH TO HISTORY

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Allen Wyatt

**Abstract:** *When researching and evaluating historical information, it is easy to come across things that may lead to a crisis of faith. Some of those crises may lead individuals to leave the Church and actively proselytize against it. It is much better when dealing with historical issues to approach them from a standpoint of charity, treating historical figures as we would like to be treated.*

You can view this essay, if you would like, as an extended “Editor’s Note,” prefatory to the article immediately following. I felt it appropriate to share some personal information with you about the topic of faith crises rooted in historical investigation and what I’ve come to view as a productive approach to those topics.

I am a convert to the Church, joining with my family shortly before my 12th birthday. That makes me a first-generation member, not knowing anything about the Church before the missionaries knocked on our door. I did not grow up in Utah, nor did I have the opportunity to learn the common, faith-promoting songs and lessons that permeate the atmosphere of Primary.

When I joined the Church, our family lived in southwestern Ohio. I remember taking a state history class in junior high school, not long after joining the Church. In that class there was a textbook chapter about the “Mormons” and the period they were in Kirtland, which was (of course) in the northern end of my state.

In presenting the course material, the teacher told us how Joseph Smith was a scoundrel, and he was tarred and feathered. Even though I had been in the Church only a short time, I knew enough of Joseph to know he wasn’t a scoundrel, but the idea that he was tarred and feathered was shocking, upsetting news to me.

How could this be? Perhaps, not having been through Primary, I had not learned of this incident before. Perhaps the school textbook was mistaken. Either way, I was crestfallen at my young age: how could a prophet of God be tarred and feathered? That happened only to bad people, right?

It was my first crisis of faith. It would not be my last. There would be many times through my life when I would be faced with information that didn't fit what I "knew must be." There would be many times when I heard historical information that would not neatly fit into what I thought I understood as a complete picture.

Such experiences are not unique to me; many people have them. Anyone who does any study at all is quite often faced with historical "facts"<sup>1</sup> that can throw us a bit: they can make us question what we know and can shake us as we try to fit them into what we believe. Such occurrences are, by definition, crises of faith. Some are small and inconsequential, while others can be large and devastating.

One for me that became large and devastating was when I was much older. Married and with young children at the time, I was troubled by the historical facts related to polygamy, so I wanted to study more about the topic. The book I chose to read in this endeavor was *Mormon Polygamy: A History*.<sup>2</sup> I devoured the book, and it nearly devoured me. I remember having the nagging question of "If this is all true (what I am reading), then how could Joseph be any kind of a prophet?"

I was in a full-blown crisis of faith. The question was so troubling to me that I found out where the author, Richard Van Wagoner, lived and knocked on his door.<sup>3</sup> I cannot remember if I contacted him beforehand or simply arrived on his doorstep unannounced. Either way, he was gracious enough to invite me into his front room and hear me out. I wasn't there to argue with him; I went simply to ask him the question

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1. I put "facts" in scare quotes here because many naïvely assume that historical information is set in stone and that the information can be viewed in only a singular way. Those who study history, though, quickly come to realize that nothing historical is set in stone, and "facts" are continually open to interpretation. The way in which the information is interpreted is more often than not deeply colored by what we believe to be true rather than by a raw recounting of events, places, and dates. This is problematically compounded when one understands that any author writing about history also brings his or her biases and understandings to bear upon how facts are selected, organized, and presented to the reader.

2. Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Mormon Polygamy: A History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1986).

3. At the time, the author lived in Lehi, Utah, if I am remembering correctly.

previously articulated: “If what you have written is true, then how could Joseph be any kind of a prophet?”

I was seeking to know how someone could maintain faith in the prophetic calling of a man in the light of what seemed to me, at the time, damning evidence. The answer I received from Van Wagoner was, paraphrasing, “I don’t know. Everyone has to figure that out for themselves.” I thanked him politely and left, still deeply troubled by the evidence I had uncovered through reading the book.

The problem was that I hadn’t uncovered anything. Only through further study (and, yes, through prayer and fasting), I realized what I had *really* uncovered was one author’s take on history and, specifically, polygamy. In retrospect, though Van Wagoner was a good historian, he had really done a disservice to readers like me; he had essentially thrown us into the deep end of the pool with no swimming instruction and no life preserver.

The metaphorical life preserver (for me, at least) would have been easy enough to provide. You see, when we look at history, we are looking at the lives of real people. These are people who lived, ate, breathed, and loved during the period of history under examination, and those people had to answer the same question I was asking, but it was much more personal for them. I wasn’t being asked to enter into plural marriage; I was being asked only to figure out if Joseph was a divinely called prophet. People in the 19th century — in what are called both the Nauvoo and Utah periods of Latter-day Saint history — needed to answer that question *and* also decide if such a determination extended to completely upending how they entered into marital relations.

Therein lies the life preserver: If those people could figure it out, so could I.<sup>4</sup> It was obvious I wasn’t going to get that life preserver from Van Wagoner. Perhaps he didn’t have it himself, or perhaps he didn’t want to share it if he did have it. Either way, I needed to look elsewhere.

That took a lot of work over several years. I had to read everything I could lay my hands on relative to the topic of plural marriage. I even searched out many firsthand sources for myself, spending many hours sifting through information in research libraries. I had to put myself as much as possible in the shoes and lives of the people whose actions I was judging. It was hard work — harder than anything I had ever done in all my years of schooling. But I was able over time to make it through that large, devastating crisis of faith.

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4. I understand that not everyone figured it out positively in that period; there were many at the time who left the Church over the issue. But there were many others who did figure it out and discovered ways to still maintain their faith.

Not everyone can do that, of course. In the years since resolving my faith crisis,<sup>5</sup> I've often wondered how my life would have differed had I, after leaving Van Wagoner's living room, determined that I had enough information. What if I had concluded that I didn't need to study anymore and, based on what I had read in that one book, I had jettisoned my faith?

I realize that many have done just that — jettisoned their faith based on an incomplete understanding of historical “facts” they didn't realize were incomplete at the time. I have personally known some people who have done that, and I've read the stories of dozens of others.

Perhaps the penultimate example of such a person is Jeremy Runnells, the author of what, after several years of expansion and permutation, is now known as the *CES Letter*.<sup>6</sup> In it, Jeremy details what he views as damning evidence against the Church — evidence predominantly rooted in what Jeremy discovered in the early months of 2012. Within the course of just over half a year, Jeremy went from what he characterized as being a true believer to a nonbeliever.<sup>7</sup>

In the *CES Letter*, Jeremy throws together well over a hundred historical facts<sup>8</sup> he believes devastate any truth claims the Church may make. He asks over and over again a variation of the same question I formulated after reading *Mormon Polygamy*: “How could Joseph be a prophet if \_\_\_\_\_ is true?” (You can fill in the blank with any

5. My choice of words here is deliberate: I believe I am the one who resolved my faith crisis because the crisis was mine. Those who look for others to resolve their crises are looking in the wrong place. My crisis was due to how I interpreted information and processed information that didn't comport with what I thought I understood. It was up to me to change how I interpreted it and, if necessary, change my understanding of history. Others could not do that for me — not my wife, not my bishop, not any scholar, and not the institutional Church.

6. The document Runnells originally created was titled *Letter to a CES Director*. It has, since 2013, been enlarged, edited, and released several times. See Jeremy T. Runnells, *CES Letter: My Search for Answers to My Mormon Doubts* (Las Vegas, NV: CES Letter Foundation, 2017), <https://cesletter.org>.

7. Jeremy states that “in February 2012 [he] experienced an awakening to the LDS Church's truth crisis, which subsequently led to a faith transition that summer.” Jeremy's faith crisis and self-described transition out of the faith of his forebears lasted between six and nine months. (See Jeremy Runnells, “About the Author,” *CES Letter* website, <https://cesletter.org/#about>.)

8. Runnells characterizes his catalog of issues as *historical*. After reading a 2012 Reuters news story about people leaving the Church over historical issues, he said he “didn't understand what was going on or why people would leave ‘over history.’” This led Runnells to do his own reading about historical issues and led to his faith crisis. Runnells, *CES Letter*, p. 6.

historical tidbit you want to pull from the *CES Letter*; there is a plethora of them from which you can choose.)

I can tell you from personal experience that fully coming to grips with polygamy took a few years. Had I thrown in the towel in the months after reading *Mormon Polygamy*, I would have followed the same faith trajectory as Jeremy — I would have metaphorically drowned because nobody had taught me how to swim in the deep waters of history, and nobody had thrown me a life preserver. It is impossible for anyone to come to grips with the nuances of historical inquiry in an afternoon, a couple of weeks, or a few months.

Let me be very clear here: I am not minimizing Jeremy's faith crisis. How could I? I've been there myself. I do find fault, however, with how he has grown his personal faith crisis into a successful proselytizing ministry<sup>9</sup> that seeks to push other people into the deep end of the pool where they, too, can flail about without a life preserver and metaphorically drown. That, to me, is both a travesty and a tragedy.

It is impossible for me to remove doubt or the crises of faith that believing individuals inevitably face when looking at the historical records. What I can do, however, is share what I believe to be a more productive and positive method of approaching historical issues. In the years since my faith crisis rooted in historical issues, I've continued to study history and have tackled many issues that have surfaced through that study. As a result of the study, I've come up with what I'll call "Wyatt's Maxims for Historical Study." I recount them here only as an example of how I, personally, have come to terms with historical issues.

- Historical records are incomplete; there are always holes. We see through a glass, darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12).
- Any conclusions drawn from historical records are tentative at best and downright wrong at worst.
- Any reporting of imperfect historical records is always filtered through the imperfect lens of an imperfect reporter. This applies to all articles and books I may read about history.
- God works through imperfect people.

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9. Runnells now heads the CES Letter Foundation, "a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission it is to liberate and empower doubting LDS individuals and mixed-faith marriages," "Donate," *CES Letter* website, <https://cesletter.org/#donate>. The Charity Navigator profile for the CES Letter Foundation categorizes it as a Christian, religion-related, spiritual development, charitable organization. "CES Letter Foundation," Charity Navigator, <https://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.profile&ein=474179614>.

- Prophets are categorically imperfect people.
- Relationships — even relationships with God — are inherently messy. How those relationships are reflected in historical records are even messier.
- The ways in which those in earlier times experienced their relationships with God don't dictate how I must experience my relationship with God.
- The ways in which those in earlier times expressed their relationships with God doesn't necessarily correspond with how I might express my relationship with God.
- Historical records cannot confirm or preclude the certitude of divine interaction.
- Historical records are poor substitutes for direct revelation.
- Revelation from God to others is both inconsistent and changing. How such revelation is communicated is by definition secondhand at best.
- Charity should always be granted to others, living or dead.

The older I get and the more I study, the longer this list of maxims tends to grow. (Others may have similar lists, some shorter and some longer.) The crux of the way in which I approach historical issues is that last maxim, the one involving charity. I always try to remember that the past is a foreign country,<sup>10</sup> and I need to exercise charity in evaluating historical issues — there is nothing so cut and dried as we might prefer. In reading through the *CES Letter* several times (and through scores of other publications critical of Church history), I seldom see that requisite charity exhibited.

When looking at history, we have (at best) incomplete recountings of people trying to do the best they could in the circumstances in which they found themselves. We would do well to put ourselves into their shoes as best we can and extend to them the same charity we are wont to claim for ourselves as we go through our lives.

Toward a greater understanding of how to evaluate Church history and, coincidentally, to better understand those who would negatively point out our history to us, I chose to publish an essay I first heard presented in 2004. It struck

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10. "The Past is a foreign country: They do things differently there." L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), p. 17. People in the past (even in the relatively recent past) didn't look, think, or act like we do. We do them a hugely uncharitable disservice if we do not understand this.

me then and still strikes me as a profound approach to dealing with troubling historical issues we may run across; it is worth reading and rereading.

With that in mind, I invite you to enjoy “I Don’t Have a Testimony of the History of the Church” by the late Davis Bitton. This essay was first presented at a FAIR Conference,<sup>11</sup> but it subsequently was published in the *FARMS Review*<sup>12</sup> and in *Meridian Magazine*.<sup>13</sup> It is important enough and relevant enough to be brought forward, once again, in the pages of *Interpreter*. It immediately follows.

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11. Davis Bitton, “I Don’t Have a Testimony of the History of the Church,” *FairMormon* website, <https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2004/>.

12. Davis Bitton, “I Don’t Have a Testimony of the History of the Church,” *FARMS Review* 16, no.2 (2004), pp. 337–54, [https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/review/16/2/S00017-5\\_176ad2f5804e17Bitton.pdf](https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/review/16/2/S00017-5_176ad2f5804e17Bitton.pdf).

13. Bitton, “I Don’t Have a Testimony of the History of the Church,” *Meridian Magazine* (blog), August 1, 2013, [https://ldsmag.com/article-1-1\\_3057/](https://ldsmag.com/article-1-1_3057/).



# I DON'T HAVE A TESTIMONY OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

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**Davis Bitton**

***Abstract:** In this masterful presentation, accomplished historian Davis Bitton addresses the role of history and belief. Testimonies, he asserts, are born of belief and spiritual witnesses, not from historical events. It is quite possible to know all about Church history and still remain a believing member.*

[Editor's Note: This essay was presented at the 2004 FAIR Conference.<sup>1</sup> In preparation for publication it has been lightly copy edited and some citations and annotations added.]

I don't have a testimony of the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is why I can be a historian and also a believing Latter-day Saint. I will expand on this idea, but first let me address some related questions.

## **Do All Well-informed Historians Become Anti-Mormons?**

The critics would have you believe that they are disinterested pursuers of the truth. There they were, minding their own business, going about their conscientious study of Church history and — shock and dismay! — they came across *this*, whatever *this* is, that blew them away. As hurtful as it is for them, they can no longer believe in the Church and, out of love for you, they now want to help you see the light of day.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Davis Bitton, "I Don't Have a Testimony of the History of the Church," FairMormon website, <https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2004/>.

2. This characterization closely parallels the experience of Jeremy Runnels and the mission statement of the CES Letter Foundation. See Jeremy Runnels, "About the Author," CES Letter website, <https://cesletter.org/#about>.

Let's get one thing clear: There is nothing in Church history that leads inevitably to the conclusion that the Church is false. There is nothing that requires the conclusion that Joseph Smith was a fraud. How can I say this with such confidence? For the simple reason that the historians who know most about our Church history have been and are faithful, committed members of the Church. Or, to restate the situation more precisely, there are faithful Latter-day Saint historians who know as much about this subject as any anti-Mormon or as anyone who writes on the subject from an outside perspective. With few exceptions, they know much, much more. They have not been blown away. They have not gnashed their teeth and abandoned their faith. To repeat, they have found nothing that forces the extreme conclusion our enemies like to promote.

We need to reject the simple-minded, inaccurate picture that divides people into two classes. On one hand, according to our enemies, are the sincere seekers of truth, full of goodness and charity. On the other hand, in their view, stand the ignorant members. Even faithful Latter-day Saint scholars must be ignorant. Otherwise they are dishonest, playing their part in the conspiracy to deceive their people. This is the anti-Mormon view of the situation.

Can we see how ridiculous this picture is? It is a travesty on both sides. Many Latter-day Saints may not know their history in depth. But some of them know a good deal. As for Latter-day Saint scholars, as a group they compare favorably with any similar group of historians. It will not do to charge them with being dishonest. I happen to know most of them and have no hesitation in rejecting a smear of their character.

On the other hand, your typical anti-Mormon is no disinterested pursuer of the truth. If you are confronted with a "problem," some kind of "non-faith-promoting" take on Church history, chances are good that your willing helper can lay no claim to doing any significant research in Mormon history. Oblivious to the primary sources, unread in the journal literature, the critic has picked up his nugget from previous anti-Mormon writers and offers it to you as though it is a fresh discovery. Most of the time it is anything but new. It is a stock item in a litany of anti-Mormon claims that serve their purpose.

Why does the charge accomplish anything? Because they don't tell you how stale it is and of course will not let you know where answers have already been provided. To you it is new or may be new. Falling into the trap, you think you have been deceived by the Church, and here is something seriously damaging to the restored gospel. Like peddlers

of snake oil from time immemorial, the critic is willing to take full advantage of the situation.

How many historians who are deeply familiar with the sources on Church origins still find it possible to remain in the fold? We might start with names like Richard Bushman, James B. Allen, Glen L. Leonard, Richard L. Anderson, Larry Porter, Milton Backman, Dean C. Jessee, and Ronald W. Walker, all of whom are thoroughly familiar with the issues and sources. Joining their ranks are historians like Ronald Esplin, Grant Underwood, Richard Bennett, Steven Harper and Mark Ashurst-McGee. Many others also fit the description. I offer only a sampling of faithful, knowledgeable historians.

I do not claim that all historians are believing members of the Church. That would be patently absurd. From the beginning, disbelieving historians have written accounts of the events. There have also been historians like Hubert Howe Bancroft, who simply put the truth question on the shelf. No one denies such approaches are possible. But there is also a long tradition of important work by Latter-day Saint scholars. In other words, those who know most about Church history do not simply and inevitably join the ranks of disbelievers and Mormon-haters. It is quite possible, apparently, to know a great deal about Church history and still be a practicing, believing Latter-day Saint.

Why do I spend time insisting on this simple, obvious fact? Because our opponents want to leave the opposite impression. And because for many Latter-day Saints it is sufficient to know that faithful historians who are thoroughly familiar with the issues do not accept the interpretations and conclusions of the would-be destroyers of faith. I have not entered the argument over any of the specific issues. My point is simpler than that. It is simply this: *Competent historians who have devoted many years of study to the issues have not felt compelled to abandon their faith in the restored gospel.*

### **Expectation**

May I reminisce just a little? The year was 1979. Leonard Arrington and I had just published a one-volume history of the Church entitled *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*. The story behind the story is that this work was intended primarily for the non-Latter-day Saint audience. To reach that audience we had to have a national publisher. But Alfred Knopf or any other publisher of the same stature would not, we realized, allow us to publish a propaganda tract for the Church. To communicate with a general reading audience, we had to use

terminology that would be understood, meaning that we had to avoid in-house terms and expressions that may be appropriate for our manuals and other books written for Church members.

To pass muster with our publisher, we could not write history that would be too triumphalist or celebratory. We knew we were walking a narrow line. Some Church members may not have liked our book. On the other hand, we were quite surprised, but of course pleased, to find that our book even led to some conversions — or, more exactly, provoked the interest and the openness that allowed a conversion to occur. I will never forget how jubilant we felt one day when we received the report from our publisher that *The Mormon Experience* had been ordered by 600 different libraries.

During that euphoric time, Leonard and I attended autograph parties, we were interviewed, and we gave quite a few talks. In one interview we were asked to describe the relationship between faith and history. Here is Leonard Arrington's answer:

I have never felt any conflict between maintaining my faith and writing historical truth. If one sticks to historical truth, that shouldn't damage his faith in any way. The Lord doesn't require us to believe anything that's untrue. My long interest in Mormon history (I've been working in it for 33 years) has only served to build my testimony of the gospel and I find the same thing happening to other Latter-day Saint historians as well.<sup>3</sup>

My own answer went like this:

What's potentially damaging or challenging to faith depends entirely, I think, on one's expectations, and not necessarily history. Any kind of experience can be shattering to faith if the expectation is such that one is not prepared for the experience. ... A person can be converted to the Church in a distant part of the globe and have great pictures of Salt Lake City, the temple looming large in the center of the city. Here we have our home teaching in nice little blocks and we all go to church on Sunday, they believe. It won't take very many hours or days before the reality of experiencing Salt Lake City can be devastating to a person with those expectations. The problem is not the religion; the problem is the incongruity between the expectation and the reality.

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3. "An Interview with Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton," *Sunstone* 4 (July August 1979): 41.

History is similar. One moves into the land of history, so to speak, and finds shattering incongruities which can be devastating to faith. But the problem is with the expectation, not with the history. One of the jobs of the historians and of educators in the Church, who teach people growing up in the Church and people coming into the Church, is to try to see to it that expectations are realistic. The Lord does not expect us to believe lies. We believe in being honest and true, as well as chaste and benevolent. My experience, like that of Leonard, has not been one of having my faith destroyed. I think my faith has changed and deepened and become richer and more consistent with the complexities of human experience.

We are examples of people who know a fair amount about Latter-day Saint history and still have strong testimonies of the gospel.<sup>4</sup>

We must have realistic expectations. That is true at many points in life — in choosing a profession, in entering a marriage, in joining an athletic team, in moving to a new location.

Think not when you gather to Zion,  
 Your troubles and trials are through,  
 That nothing but comfort and pleasure  
 Are waiting in Zion for you.  
 No, no, 'tis designed as a furnace,  
 All substance, all textures to try,  
 To burn all the “wood, hay, and stubble,”  
 The gold from the dross purify.<sup>5</sup>

When Eliza R. Snow penned those words, they were good advice for the emigrants leaving Europe to join the Saints in the West. Similar counsel is sometimes needed by students of our Latter-day Saint history. “Think not when ye study Church history,” we might sing, “that everyone was always smiling, that the women were always dressed in freshly laundered, starched pinafores, that the men spoke softly, grammatically, and always politely, or that the children were well mannered angels.” Think not! In other words, get real!

I suppose this is a message to those Church members who have such tender eyes and ears that the real history of real people comes as shock

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4. Ibid.

5. Eliza R. Snow, “Think Not When You Gather to Zion,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1948), 21.

and awe. “Oh, no,” they whine. “This can’t be true.” Or, quick to judge, they attack the historian, accusing him or her of lacking spirituality or coveting the praise of the world. My message in many such cases is, “Please! Don’t speak until you know what you are talking about.” Or if that sentence is too long, try this: “Grow up.”

Let me tell you about a thought experiment. It goes approximately like this: I approach an episode of Church history or skim it over so that I know the approximate contours. I then ask myself three questions. First, what is the minimum I must find here if it is to be consistent with the truth of the restoration? Very often the answer is blank, because that large issue is simply unaffected.

Second, what, from the point of view of a believing Latter-day Saint, is the worst thing I could find? Here I let my mind run free. I pull all the stops. For example, in my imagination, Joseph Smith could have planned out ahead of time just what he wanted his family to think. So he goes into the woods. He waits a certain interval of time. Then, pretending and acting, he rushes home and acts like he has seen a vision. As a second example, there were meetings in the Kirtland Temple just prior to its dedication. In my imagination, someone came in with a plentiful supply of hard liquor. Everyone there had a drink and then another and then another. Soon they were feeling no pain. Some started singing in nonsense syllables. Others, unable to walk a straight line, said things like “I can top that. What I see is angels swooping around the room.” And so on. In other words, I am seeing the whole scene as a ridiculous drunken spree. You get the idea: it is a version of the worst-case-scenario approach.

I am now prepared for my third question: What do I actually find when I consider the evidence? I can say that never do the events match the worst-case scenario — or even come close. My imagination had prepared me to face the music, if you will, and to discover behavior that was not all perfectly pious. But every time I go through this exercise, I end up with the same conclusion. Yes, there were different personalities, mistakes were made, and so on. But there is nothing here so disabling that I must collapse in a swoon with the certain knowledge that Mormonism is rotten, bad, false, lacking in authenticity.

### **Of What Do You Have a Testimony?**

A number of years ago, I was asked to speak to a combined priesthood group in the Federal Heights Ward. At the conclusion of my remarks, someone asked the following question: “What effect has your extensive study of Church history had on your testimony?” I wasn’t really prepared for the

question. The first words out of my mouth were: “*I never had a testimony of Church history. My testimony is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.*”

Let me anticipate a question that is bound to occur to some. Are there not some historical events that are essential to the Restoration? How, in other words, can I be indifferent to the following claims?

- Joseph Smith had a vision in the Sacred Grove.
- Metal plates were found, kept in his possession for a period of time, shown to witnesses, and translated.
- Heavenly beings restored keys and priesthood authority.
- Many spiritual manifestations occurred at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

The list could be lengthened, but let us stop with those. These are “historical” events, if you will; events that occurred in historical time. But not a single one of them is subject to proof or disproof by historians. If I have a testimony of these events, it is not because of my advanced historical training or many years of delving in the primary documents of Church history.

My friend and colleague at the University of Utah who taught Utah history for many years was David E. Miller. He taught a course in Utah history that was popular among all kinds of students. After summarizing the First Vision, he said, “Now you can’t prove things like this by historical evidence. You also can’t disprove them.” Bearing no testimony but also using no ridicule, Professor Miller quoted what Joseph Smith said and then moved on to follow the history of the people who accepted the Prophet’s leadership.

Short of being present during these transcendent manifestations — and, let us say, recording them with a camcorder — all we can do is quote what people said about them. If any of us have a testimony of their historicity, it is not because of the kind of evidence that would stand up in a courtroom. It is because we believe other witnesses. It is because we have our own spiritual confirmation. I am not required to let historians determine for me what I will believe.

When I say I don’t have a testimony of Church history, I mean that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not subject to scrutiny by the feeble tools of the historian. The creation, the fall, the redemption, the “merciful plan of the great Creator” — all these are simply not subject to proof or disproof by looking over old documents.

On the other hand, the people who believed and accepted those doctrines are proper subjects for historical inquiry. In their achievements and failures, their high points and low, their trials and triumphs, in all

the “crooked timber” of their humanity,<sup>6</sup> these are imperfect people on the Lord’s errand. They stumble and fall, they pick themselves up, they complain and lose their tempers, they become discouraged, they sometimes abandon ship. No one ever said the history of the Church was the history of perfect people. In fact, the Church, as I understand it, is for “the perfecting of the saints” (Ephesians 4:12).

What was the religion they had subscribed to? If the Latter-day Saints in 1840 or 1870 or 1950 or 2004 were instructed by their leaders to lie, cheat, and steal, to be thoroughly bad people, let’s hear about it. Such a case cannot be made by any fair-minded investigator, but I don’t doubt for a minute that those capable of making disgraceful, defamatory “documentaries” like *The God Makers*<sup>7</sup> would like people to believe the worst of the Mormons. The makers, promoters, and distributors of such scandalous misrepresentation are possessed of a spirit — but it is not the spirit of fairness, not the spirit of charity, not the spirit of truth.

Consider the inexhaustible resource of material unscrupulous anti-Mormons can draw upon from 17 decades of Church history. With people joining the Church from different backgrounds and with the human differences that inevitably manifest themselves, there will be examples of just about everything. You want a member of the Church who was not always in perfect control of his life and who made mistakes? That’s too easy. As J. Golden Kimball might have said, “Hell, we can come up with embezzlers, grave robbers, cross-dressers, plagiarists, forgers, and if you need someone who can recite the Protocols of Zion while hanging from his knees on a flying trapeze, we can probably oblige you.”

Dipping into the huge reservoir of human beings, plucking examples that suit their purpose, anti-Mormons delight audiences already disposed to viewing Church members as eccentric, unenlightened people. Their job is to make Mormons and their religion appear ridiculous and evil. As someone said about the shameful Michael Moore documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*, “Any skilled filmmaker ... could fashion a movie making any American look like a pinhead. That’s easy to do. Just get a bunch of video, some people who hate the guy, some

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6. See Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (London: Murray, 1990).

7. Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, *The God Makers: A Shocking Exposé of What the Mormon Church Really Believes* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997).

factoids that may or may not be true, heat it up with sardonic rhetoric and serve. Presto, *Fahrenheit 9/11*.”<sup>8</sup>

Your dedicated anti-Mormon has a repertoire of horror stories. If we think of our critic as an escapee from the reportorial staff of the *National Enquirer*, we may be on the right track. First, we cannot be at all sure that the allegation is true. Think flying saucers landing on the Church Office Building but seen only by one highly favored witness. Even if the negative incident can be substantiated, our critic studiously avoids addressing the question of how *representative* it is. The Lafferty brothers on death row in the Utah State Penitentiary — there, according to some, are typical Church members. The critic may make the argument less ridiculous by saying, “Yes, they are extreme, but” — and here we need the low, chilling music used in terror movies — “they show what Mormonism *can* lead to!”<sup>9</sup>

Does it occur to critics who revel in such hate speech when directed against members of the Church, and the readers who chortle with delight as they read it, that their own group might not emerge spotless if studied through the worst possible examples?

*I do not have a testimony of the history of the Church.* In making this declaration, I have no need to deny that our Church history is peopled with many inspiring individuals. What they preached and taught can be studied. In the course of enhancing my historical understanding I often find reinforcement for my faith. But I uncouple the two — testimony and history. I leave ample room for human perversity. I am not wed to any single, simple version of the past. I leave room for new information and new interpretations. My testimony is not dependent on scholars. My testimony in the eternal gospel does not hang in the balance.

One thing such a distinction does for me is to disencumber me from a crippling sense of the kind of history I must write. I can tell it as it is. More precisely, since none of us believe in completely “objective” reporting, I can give my best effort at presenting what I find. I don’t have to be running scared all the time, fearful that I may say something or quote something that will shake up poor little Sister Blavatsky or new convert Brother Jones. I won’t take delight in affronting them, but I should be

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8. Bill O’Reilly, “‘Fahrenheit’ more like cartoon than movie,” *The Post Star*, Jun 28, 2004, [https://poststar.com/opinion/commentary/fahrenheit-more-like-cartoon-than-movie/article\\_40f217da-98fa-547f-ad94-0cd1b6fbd0bc.html](https://poststar.com/opinion/commentary/fahrenheit-more-like-cartoon-than-movie/article_40f217da-98fa-547f-ad94-0cd1b6fbd0bc.html).

9. This assertion is not novel, but it is the entire premise put forward by Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of a Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

able to study my subject and give my best effort in understanding the personalities and the events.

So I study the colonization of the Little Colorado in 1876. What a terrible assignment that was! The leader of the colonists was Lot Smith, a veteran of the Utah War. Tough and strong in his leadership, Lot Smith did not please everyone. He was no namby-pamby. But my history reports what I discover, trying to be fair to all. For, you see, *I don't have a testimony of Church history.*

I study marriage among Church members in the second half of the 19th century. Was there more polygamy than I had been led to believe? So be it. I report what the best evidence supports. Were there more than a few examples of unhappy plural wives and more divorces than we realized? So be it. I report what I find. I don't lean all the way in the other direction, mind you, but I report what I find. For, you see, *I don't have a testimony of Church history.*

Did many of Joseph Smith's neighbors sign affidavits describing him in unfavorable terms? Well, so be it. I report that fact. In order properly to evaluate these, I consider the agenda of the man who gathered them, compiled them, and often wrote them for the signature of people. I certainly weigh into the balance the testimony of others who describe Joseph in very different terms. We are trying to get at the truth here, or as close to it as we can. But *I don't have a testimony of Church history.*

### **What Kind of History Do We Need?**

For practically all the questions that seem to trouble people or that are used in an effort to dislodge members from their faith, satisfactory answers are available. The sincere truth-seeker is not forced to accept the sensational allegations of enemies as the final word. Obviously The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a number of informed, articulate defenders. I commend the members of the FAIR organization as well as others who have entered the fray.<sup>10</sup>

In many instances, the answers they provide are decisive, leaving the critic with no leg to stand on. There is always work to do — new questions

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10. It is interesting that a trained, published, career historian like Davis Bitton would find something to compliment in the efforts of organizations such as FAIR (now FairMormon), yet Jeremy Runnells specifically rejects such efforts in the CES Letter. "It is my hope that [the CES director will] have better answers than many of those given by unofficial apologists such as FairMormon and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute (formerly FARMS)." Jeremy T. Runnells, *CES Letter* (Las Vegas, NV: CES Letter Foundation, 2017), 6.

and some that require answers more profound than the initial defenders have come up with. But obviously we are not tongue-tied and helpless. The hope of the detractors, of course, is that they will reach people who are unaware of what the defenders have already made available. Sadly, when much of the population is made up of nonreaders, a well-placed fiery dart of the adversary might be fatal.

When I was in graduate school, one of our seminars included a unit on the Counter-Reformation, or the Catholic Reformation, of the 16th century. For more than 30 years of university teaching, I introduced undergraduate and graduate students to the subject. I am confident my students will agree that our approach was fair, for we tried to understand this complex subject from within, allowing those who participated in it to speak for themselves. I used this same perspective in the study of a variety of subjects. Would that those who teach and study the history of the Church would do the same.

As an undergraduate, I had read a reasonably good chapter in a standard textbook, where the Counter-Reformation was pretty much depicted as a belated response to the Protestant challenge. Some of its manifestations — the rise of the Jesuits, the Council of Trent, even the lamentable massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve in France — could easily be interpreted as further evidence of the corruption of Roman Catholicism. The old Protestant historiography did this.

The popes were often presented as the “bad guys” of Christian history. Names like Alexander VI, Julius II, Leo X were well-known symbols of the immorality, corruption, and worldliness of the Renaissance papacy. In connection with my graduate seminar, I read Leopold von Ranke's three-volume history of the popes.<sup>11</sup> On one level, it was an instructive example of the use of newly available sources such as the *relazioni* of the Venetian ambassadors. “Hmm,” I thought, “maybe things are not as simple as I had thought.”

I also read several volumes in Ludwig von Pastor's *History of the Popes*,<sup>12</sup> a huge work in 18 volumes, the product of a lifetime of research and writing. Pastor's *History of the Popes* was a real eye-opener. I will not make the mistake of describing this work by a Catholic historian as “objective.” What Pastor does is to use internal church documents to

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11. Leopold von Ranke, *The History of the Popes, Their Church and State and Especially of Their Conflicts with Protestantism in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. E. Foster (London: Bohn, 1853-56).

12. Ludwig von Pastor, *History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages* (London: Hodges, 1891-1953).

describe in detail the successive challenges confronted by the popes, the letters and reports they had to go on, the urging of different advisors, sometimes the false starts and backtracking of papal policy.

Studied in this way, some popes were good, some were bad, most were somewhere in-between. Most were doing the best they could under the circumstances. The closer one gets to their minds, through careful scrutiny of the documents available to them and the letters and speeches that came from them, the less one is inclined to defame them. Studied in this way, the popes simply cannot be credibly portrayed in the cartoon-like terms of their adversaries. I don't recommend Pastor as the last word, but his great history is still instructive and must be known by anyone presuming to treat the subject.

### Conclusion

Some of you have already anticipated my conclusion. This is the kind of history — or at least one kind of history — we need in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Speaking from a background of reading many diaries and minutes of meetings as well as letters and reports on which decisions were based, I can confidently say that such history, in addition to being closer to the reality of actual experience, enhances appreciation for the dedicated, sincere men and women who made decisions and moved the work along. You don't have to agree with them. You don't have to consider them inspired or vested with God's authority. That is a separate question. But in the face of such history you simply cannot portray them as evil or as simpletons.

Since all history is affected to one degree or another by the faith position of the historian, I rejoice when any topic is treated by someone who is both a believer and a good historian. Ideally, the result will be so conscientious, so willing to face the facts and consider the complexity of the events, that the resulting article or book will command attention. Let me say that I also welcome non-Mormon historians and will praise their works when they deserve it.

Consider a current example: The Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1857 has been a cause *célèbre* ever since. Anti-Mormons loved to describe the event in excruciating detail, conveying the impression that *this* was Mormonism, pure and simple. Instead of the smiling, clean-cut young people with name tags, the *real Mormonism*, lurking behind the facade, is the massacre and other events like it. So the anti-Mormons would have you believe. That is the subtext of the repeated tellings of the event by critics of the Church. The anti-Mormon writer is not satisfied

with describing the event. The horrifying group murder is used as a foundation for larger conclusions — the perfidy of Brigham Young, the intrinsic cruelty of the Mormon religion, the depravity of its doctrines, or, as with Jon Krakauer's recent book,<sup>13</sup> the narrowness, self-righteousness, and violence of all religion.

How should the faithful Latter-day Saint respond? I think it is perfectly permissible for a Latter-day Saint to say, "I don't know anything about that. What I do know is that it is not part of my religion. I have never heard it defended or advocated. I do not have a testimony of the Mountain Meadows Massacre."

But we are talking about what historians can do. The best response to bad history, it has been said, is good history. More than a half century ago, Juanita Brooks wrote one such work of good history.<sup>14</sup> During the past two or three years, new attackers have entered the fray, recounting the events in all their horror but now laying the responsibility squarely on Brigham Young. Individuals of means subsidize works of this kind and, not surprisingly, there is an audience out there ready to read and publicize. In response, reviews have been written, some of them gleefully reveling in anything that discomfits their Latter-day Saint neighbors, some of them savoring the violent and sensational while betraying no in-depth understanding of Church history, some of them with penetrating criticisms exposing core legal and methodological flaws in the recent books.

In addition to book reviews in the scholarly journals, three historians have undertaken an exhaustive study. Richard Turley, Ronald Walker, and Glen Leonard are in the final stages of preparing a book<sup>15</sup> that promises to be thorough, using more sources than anyone else uses. It will be comparative. It will place the event in its wartime context. It will examine alleged provocation. Where mistakes were made, as they obviously were, they will not be swept under the rug. Henceforth it will be the book that anyone who presumes to write on the subject simply must come to grips with. Bad or superficial history will be shown for what it is by superior history.

Is this not a model? One can think of a series of controversial and problematical episodes in our Church history. With newly available

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13. Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of a Violent Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

14. Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre*, 2nd ed. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962).

15. Richard Turley, Ronald Walker, and Glen Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

sources, with fresh questions, they are ripe for reexamination. This is not an exciting, original idea that no one else has ever thought of. Some articles and books have already done what needs to be done. But there is much yet to do.

Not that conscientious, scholarly history will satisfy the anti-Mormons. They have another agenda. Our worthy opponents will not cease to mine Mormon history for anything negative they can use. If many Latter-day Saints simply ignore these attacks, I am not surprised. After all, they have careers to pursue, families to raise, callings in the Church to perform. Without becoming hugely upset over incidents in our Church history, they have work enough to do ere the sun goes down.<sup>16</sup> But we also have historians both professional and amateur. They also have a work to do.

I don't mind calling on our apologists, including those present here today, to write good history. You need not embark on a huge multivolume project. It can be a study of one incident or one problem, eventuating in an article or a two-page response. But if it is a historical question, let our treatment be good history. Simply treat a given topic in a way that satisfies any honest reader and in a way that meets the accepted standards of scholarship.

Some of our apologists are already doing this. They have defined a historical problem with precision, examined all the evidence, subjected it to the necessary critical analysis, and presented their findings. Those with the requisite training, skills, and time will continue to do this, making a contribution and perhaps even producing some major works of history. The evil-doers fume and fret, falling back on their tiresome tactic of labeling the work as *apologetic*.<sup>17</sup> But if they are not brain-dead, what they are really thinking is, "Hey, these guys are good. This is good history."

### How Important Is History?

I have been speaking as a historian. What about converts in Mongolia and Ghana? Do they know, or should they know, the Church's 19th century history in any depth? What about those nonreaders being produced by the government schools in this country? Will they know the details of Latter-day Saint history? What about the young missionaries preaching

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16. "I Have Work Enough to Do," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 224.

17. The CES Letter consistently characterizes historical explanations that Runnells doesn't agree with as being from apologists (many, many instances), "unofficial apologists" and even "gaslighting revisionist apologists." Runnells, *CES Letter*, 11, 30, 52, 72, 127.

the gospel throughout the world? Are they shining bright because they have read history books for ten hours a day during their teenage years? How much do they know? How much should they know?

Someone makes decisions as to what to include in the missionary instruction lessons. As I read through that material, I see no emphasis on history. Seminary and institute students throughout the world take courses. In some of them, they get a certain amount of Church history, especially as background to the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. In their Gospel Doctrine Sunday School classes, Latter-day Saints throughout the world study sequentially the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants. Only in the Doctrine and Covenants course is some historical background sometimes included, and even there the emphasis is on the spiritual and doctrinal content. Finally, at present and for the past few years, priesthood and Relief Society classes devote a year of study to one of the presidents of the Church. Some historical background is provided, but once again the emphasis is on the doctrinal teachings. The message that comes across to me loud and clear from lesson manuals and missionary lessons is simple: *Our testimony is not in the history of the Church.*

So our eager anti-Mormon comes to us with his version of Church history. He has probably picked up his example from other anti-Mormons. He is pretty sure his Latter-day Saint neighbor will not know about it. His eyes are bright with anticipation. “Gotcha! What do you say to that! In view of that, how can you possibly be a Mormon?” If he doesn’t say these things, he implies them.<sup>18</sup>

Here is where the faithful Latter-day Saint should take the wind out of the sails of his critic. Instead of collapsing or emitting a wail of distress, you smile. You shrug your shoulders. You say things like this. “Hmm. I wonder if that’s true.” “I haven’t heard what might be said on the other side.” “You know what? That probably interests you a lot more than it does me.” “That isn’t part of my religion. I have never heard it taught in any of the classes and have not read it in any of our manuals.” *“I don’t have a testimony of the history of the Church.”*

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18. The CES Letter goes one step further — it promises a manual to “help guide individuals and families through this critically important and dangerous — but liberating — time” after leaving the Church. “Having the advantage of both personal experience as well as the experiences of thousands of others who likewise have gone through the same process, Jeremy is in the unique position to not only help but to guide and coach individuals” as they exit the Church. Runnells, *CES Letter*, 133.

Some of us might deplore the fading of Church history from the curriculum. In the meantime, of course, you can still read on your own, individually or in study groups. To my knowledge, no one is forbidding such study.

Admittedly, knowledge of Church history is not essential to our eternal salvation. But I do think it is natural and very satisfying to learn as much as we can about it. We study history, any history, as part of our human quest for self-understanding. As I read about the Latter-day Saints and their activities, in the past as well as the present, I can be inspired, amused, bewildered, surprised, proud — and sometimes a little ashamed. More often than not, I am amazed at the perseverance, the tenacity, the determination to stay the course through good times and bad. Without even trying, I instinctively identify with the Saints. Imperfect as they were and are, the Latter-day Saints are my people. But my testimony is not in them, and I hope theirs is not in me

Brigham Young once made a statement about Joseph Smith that our enemies smack their lips over. Missing its point completely, how they love to misuse it! Here is what Brother Brigham said:

I recollect a conversation I had with a priest who was an old friend of ours, before I was personally acquainted with the Prophet Joseph. I clipped every argument he advanced, until at last he came out and began to rail against “Joe Smith,” saying, “that he was a mean man, a liar, moneydigger, gambler, and a whore-master;” and he charged him with everything bad, that he could find language to utter. I said, hold on, brother Gillmore, here is the doctrine, here is the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the revelations that have come through Joseph Smith the Prophet. I have never seen him, and do not know his private character. The doctrine he teaches is all I know about the matter, bring anything against that if you can. As to anything else I do not care. If he acts like a devil, he has brought forth a doctrine that will save us, if we will abide it. He may get drunk every day of his life, sleep with his neighbor’s wife every night, run horses and gamble, I do not care anything about that, for I never embrace any man in my faith. But the doctrine he has produced will save you and me,

and the whole world; and if you can find fault with that, find it. He said, "I have done."<sup>19</sup>

What do you think Brother Brigham meant? Was he giving carte blanche to Church members, saying that it didn't matter how they behaved? Was he here giving his true feelings about Joseph Smith and actually describing him? Give me a break! If President Young's meaning isn't obvious, let me translate it. The truth of the gospel and the divinity of Joseph Smith's calling as prophet of the restoration do not depend on his behavior as a human being and do not require perfection in his life.

Did Brigham really think that Joseph was a moral reprobate? That is the way some brilliant anti-Mormons use this quotation. Ridiculous! Listen to this:

Who can justly say aught against Joseph Smith? I was as well acquainted with him, as any man. I do not believe that his father and mother knew him any better than I did. I do not think that a man lives on the earth that knew him any better than I did; and I am bold to say that, Jesus Christ excepted, no better man ever lived or does live upon this earth. I am his witness.<sup>20</sup>

But — and this is an important truth — President Young did not want his testimony to center on Joseph Smith as a person.

Let's consider a statement by President George Q. Cannon:

Do not, brethren, put your trust in man though he be a Bishop, an Apostle or a President; if you do, they will fail you at some time or place; they will do wrong or seem to, and your support be gone; but if we lean on God, He never will fail us. When men and women depend on God alone and trust in Him alone, their faith will not be shaken if the highest in the Church should step aside. . . . Perhaps it is His own design that faults and weaknesses should appear in high places in order that His Saints may learn to trust in Him and not in any man or woman.<sup>21</sup>

I do not have a testimony of Church history. In this declaration, I join Nephi, who said: "O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust

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19. Brigham Young, "The Gospel Like a Net Cast Into the Sea, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses*, ed. G.D. Watt (London: Latter-Day Saint's Book Depot, 1857), 4:77-78.

20. Young, "A Knowledge of God, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses*, 9:332.

21. George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, rev. ed. (1957; repr., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 249.

in thee forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34).

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