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# COMPASSION AS THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

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Daniel C. Peterson

**Abstract:** *The Greek philosopher Aristotle, clearly one of the world's great geniuses, created the concept of the "unmoved mover," which moves "other things, but is, itself, unmoved by anything else." This label became the standard Jewish, Christian, and Muslim description of an impersonal God — a God without body, parts or passions — a concept that has, for nearly 20 centuries, dominated western theology, philosophy, and science. The problem for thinkers in these religious traditions is that the God depicted in the Bible and the Qur'an is plainly personal. A careful review of the Bible and modern scripture reveals a "compassionate, feeling" God. Numerous scriptures confirm that God, in fact, "feels more deeply than we can even begin to imagine."*

In a very famous story from the history of science, Galileo climbed to the top of the leaning bell tower at Pisa in order to refute Aristotle's teaching that bodies of different mass fall at different speeds. This story (which may or may not be authentic) illustrates the image of Aristotle with which many of us grew up — that of a dogmatic ancient fool whose influence stunted scientific progress for centuries. Yet, in most ways, this image could not be further from the truth.

A student of Plato, who was a disciple of Socrates, Aristotle ranks, without any question, among the greatest universal geniuses the world has ever known. (His own pupil, Alexander the Great, was also a high achiever, although of a somewhat different kind.) His writings on poetry and theater, music, logic, rhetoric, politics and government, metaphysics and ethics are still fundamental to the study of those fields. And, while his work in biology, zoology, physics and other sciences has long been superseded, it played a vital role in creating those disciplines.

One of Aristotle's most influential contributions to human thought is his concept of the "unmoved mover."

As the name suggests, the unmoved mover moves other things, but is, itself, unmoved by anything else. It affects other things but isn't affected by other things. Think of an inconceivably long chain of dominos standing in line. In order to start them collapsing, somebody or something needs to tip the first domino over. All the rest follow.

Aristotle's understanding is that the unmoved mover is God, the ultimate cause or "mover" of all the motion, which (in his terms) meant all the change, in the universe. In the twelfth book of his treatise on "Metaphysics," Aristotle describes the unmoved mover as being "simple" (that is, indivisible), unchangeable and perfectly beautiful. It endlessly contemplates the only thing in the universe worthy of its attention: itself.

Aristotle's prestige in the ancient and medieval periods was so enormous — and please recall that it was very far from undeserved — that Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers felt powerfully compelled to incorporate his view of God into their own.

For example, one of St. Thomas Aquinas's famous "five ways" of proving the existence of God (or, at least, of describing the divine nature) relies on Aristotle's concept of the unmoved mover.

This is hardly surprising. For roughly twenty centuries, Aristotle represented the best science and the most advanced thought available, and it would have been simply impossible for any serious thinker to ignore him. In fact, it was even difficult to contradict him: By the Middle Ages, as depicted in Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* and in C.S. Lewis' scholarly study *The Discarded Image*, the few precious writings remaining from "the Ancients" had taken on something of the aura of scripture. And no non-scriptural writer carried more authority than Aristotle.

A major problem for Muslim, Christian, and Jewish thinkers, however, was that the God depicted in the Bible and the Qur'an is plainly personal, reacting to human sin and human faithfulness, intervening at some points in human history but not at others, revealing messages to prophets that are tailored to their specific times and circumstances. Yet the unmoved mover seems essentially impersonal. How were these two seemingly distinct conceptions of the divine to be reconciled, even blended?

It can be argued that they never really were. Not successfully. The unmoved mover, endlessly contemplating itself because it's the only thing in the universe worthy of its notice, seems unlikely to pay any attention to the sufferings of less worthy beings such as, say, humans. And if it truly affects all other things but cannot be affected, there appears little point in praying to it. One might as well pray to a rock. Finally, for Christians, is it even remotely conceivable that Aristotle's God "so loved



the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16)?

Aristotle’s concept of God and that taught in the Abrahamic revelations are like oil and water — they don’t mix. As the early twentieth-century Anglo-American mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead once quipped with regard to this view of the divine (which he rejected), the God of the philosophers is, unfortunately, not available for religious use.

But the personal and emotional God of Christian theism most definitely is available for religious purposes. And this is essential to understand. Permit me to suggest why.

The English noun *compassion* comes from the Latin *compassio*, which is composed of the prefix *com-* (meaning “with,” or “together”) and the root *pati* (meaning “to suffer”; compare the noun *passion*). In its turn, Latin *compassio* is a fairly late ecclesiastical loan-translation of the Greek word *sympatheia*, which conjoins — did you see that *con-* prefix? “conjoins”? — the Greek *syn-* or *sym-* with the word *pathos* (suffering). Pretty obviously, this is the source of our English word *sympathy*.

All of these words — *compassio*, *compassion*, *sympatheia*, and *sympathy* — convey the sense of “suffering with” or “feeling with” someone else. And the same thing is precisely true with regard to their Germanic equivalents. In German, for example, *compassion* can be translated as *Mitleid* — literally “with-suffering.” In Dutch, the equivalent word is *medelijden*, which consists of *mede* (“with”) and *lijden* (“suffering”).

I won’t pursue these wearisome word games any further, much as I personally enjoy them, because I’ve established my point, which is that there is plainly a broad understanding of *sympathy* and *compassion* across many Indo-European languages as referring, in some way, to suffering or feeling with others, to sharing their emotional states. And it’s that kind of “fellow-feeling” on which I wish to concentrate.

One of the greatest sermons in the Book of Mormon is, without question, that recorded in Alma 5.

I believe it’s helpful, in reading through this sermon, to think of Alma the Younger’s own personal history. Remember his spectacular conversion story, which involved a dramatic appearance by an angel. That angelophany turned his life around and, as he saw it, literally saved him from damnation.

So when he speaks about captivity and about deliverance from bondage and from hell, about being awakened from a deep sleep, and about being saved from darkness and destruction and the chains of hell (in verses 5:5-10), it’s impossible to believe that he isn’t speaking from

his own autobiography, that he doesn't know precisely what it's like to be in such a condition, under such circumstances. Thus, too, his emphasis on "a mighty change in ... heart" in verses 5:12-14 seems to me clearly to reflect his own conversion, and his deep desire that others experience the transformation he himself had undergone.

"Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself?" he asks rhetorically in verse 5:45.

When he speaks about how fearsome and painful it would be to stand before God in the acute consciousness of one's guilt (in verses 5:18-25), Alma knows exactly whereof he speaks, having, as he later explains to his son, personally experienced something of that terror. (See Alma 36:12-15.)

I suspect, too, that his list of sins in verses 5:28-31 also has its personal dimension. He had grown up as one of the Nephite elite, a son of the chief priest, closely associated with the wayward sons of the king. He knew pride firsthand.

Much more could be said, of course, but I read this sermon as a very personal and heartfelt statement from Alma, who never forgot that he was a brand that had, not a moment too soon, been graciously plucked from the burning. He feared that others might incur terrible suffering because he had experienced something of that terror and that suffering himself.

We see the same personal element when Alma famously expresses his yearning to reach all humanity with the message of the gospel:

O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people! Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon all the face of the earth. (Alma 29:1-2)

Alma's expression of his desire seems plainly based upon his own personal conversion experience, in which an angel appeared to him who "spake as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake," and summoned him to repentance. "Doth not my voice shake the earth?" the angel asked, rhetorically. "He spake unto us, as it were the voice of thunder, and the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet" (see Mosiah 27:10-15; Alma 36:6-11).<sup>1</sup>

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1. Incidentally, the close interrelationship between Mosiah 27:10-15, Alma 29:1-2, and Alma 36:6-11 — *intertextuality* is the current academic buzzword for such things — is a striking illustration, in my judgment, of the rich complexity of

He wanted others to experience the conversion he had experienced because, having gone through that agonizingly painful time, he had found joy and light — and he wanted others to find them, as well:

And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!

Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy.

Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there. ...

Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. (Alma 36:20–22, 24)<sup>2</sup>

On a far grander level, of course, literal sympathy or “suffering with” (*Mitleid*) is at the core of the atonement of Christ, which is at the heart of the Gospel.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4–5)

For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

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the Book of Mormon that is difficult to reconcile with any notion that Joseph Smith was simply dictating it off the top of his head every day, without notes, and at a high rate of speed.

2. The obvious verbal relationship between 1 Nephi 1:8 and Alma 36:22 — almost exactly three hundred pages apart in the current standard English edition of the Book of Mormon — represents another notable instance of impressive intertextuality.

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit — and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink —

Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-19)

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. (Alma 7:11-12)

Famously the shortest verse in the King James Version of the Bible, John 11:35 — “Jesus wept” — records the reaction of the Savior to the death of his friend Lazarus and to the painful sorrow of his friends, Lazarus’s sisters Mary and Martha. In my judgment, too, it is quite arguably one of the most important of all biblical passages because it so plainly illustrates the emotional life of the Creator and Savior of the world.

Moreover, since Hebrews 1:3 tells us that Jesus is “the express image” of the Father’s “person”; and the Savior himself declares that “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9); and Paul says of Christ that “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9), it seems reasonable to assume that we can deduce the nature of the Father from the nature of his Son. “[N]o man knoweth ... who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him” (Luke 10:22).

One of the most remarkable revelations about the divine emotional life, the divine *sympatheia*, however, is to be found in Moses, in which the prophet Enoch

beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced.

And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.

And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?

And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations; and thy curtains are stretched out still. ...

How is it thou canst weep? (Moses 7:26-31)

God's power is so awesomely, majestically great that Enoch is astonished to see evidence of divine emotional vulnerability. And, significantly, the being who now responds to Enoch's question speaks not as the Son but as the Father:

The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;

And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood;

And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them.

Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name; Man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name, also.

Wherefore, I can stretch forth mine hands and hold all the creations which I have made; and mine eye can pierce them also, and among all the workmanship of mine hands there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren.

But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?

But behold, these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and behold, I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them.

And that which I have chosen hath pled before my face. Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me, and until that day they shall be in torment;

Wherefore, for this shall the heavens weep, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands. (Moses 7:32–40)

Echoing Enoch, how is it possible for God to weep? For centuries, classical Jewish, Christian, and Islamic theologians have agreed that it isn't. Such behavior would be unworthy of him. God's emotions seem, it's true, to be on display throughout the scriptures, but the passages describing them have typically been dismissed as metaphorical, as symbolic of something else.

Recent biblical scholarship, however, is reconsidering the emotions of God.<sup>3</sup> The sections of the book of Jeremiah that precede the Babylonian captivity, to choose from among many possible examples, are absolutely replete with images and divine statements that depict God as deeply caring — worried, even — about the punishment that he himself has to impose upon his people.

In Jeremiah 12:7–8, for instance, the Lord is represented as saying, "I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies."

These words remind us of the internal conflict within the soul of a father who loves his children, but who must still punish them and who must not intervene when consequences occur. The God speaking here is no distant, uninvolved, unemotional monarch. He loves Israel.

But even while biblical scholars increasingly recognize God's "passions" as genuinely scriptural, doing so is deeply problematic in the view of many traditional systematic theologians.

For how is it possible to have emotions without a body? Emotions are inseparably connected with such things as tears, rapid heartbeat, "feelings." Pure mind, if such a thing exists, would seem incapable of anything remotely recognizable as emotion. If, these theologians argue,

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3. For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see Daniel C. Peterson, "On the Motif of the Weeping God in Moses 7," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, eds. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 285–317, <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1122&index=12>.

God has emotions, it must follow that he has some sort of body. But in their view, he cannot have a body. Thus he can have no emotions. Which means not only that he can't be angry with us but neither can he love us in any humanlike sense of the word, or care for us, or feel our pain, or mourn our poor choices.

Like Enoch, theological commentators have been astonished at the sheer notion that God might weep. Unlike Enoch, though, who was an eyewitness, they flatly reject it. Classical theology has historically tended to depict God as a distant, dispassionate, and literally apathetic being unmoved by emotion. The unmoved mover doesn't weep. He (or, perhaps better, *it*) moves but is not moved; nothing can have any impact on him.

If emotional displays such as tears require a body, classical theism's solution is to deny all the emotions mentioned for God in the Bible, just as it denies or reinterprets the many passages that seem to describe him as having bodily form. (The embodied Jesus of John 11:35 can be permitted emotions precisely because he assumed flesh and human nature; it's far less acceptable to grant such "feelings" to his Heavenly Father or to God before the Incarnation.)

The question is whether Christians will in the final analysis opt for their traditional theology or for the Bible. The two are difficult if not impossible to reconcile.

The Pearl of Great Price's account of Enoch offers a spectacular instance of a suffering and weeping God, far clearer, even, than anything in the Bible. Fortunately, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are entirely comfortable with an embodied deity.

For those who accept the scriptures of the Restoration, Heavenly Father is not only a being with emotions, but also a God who, because he is perfect and perfectly embodied, feels more deeply than we can even begin to imagine. "God is love," says 1 John 4:8, simply — the very polar opposite of an "unmoved mover." He not only has and enjoys an emotional life but the most perfect emotional life possible. His love is richer and deeper than any love we can imagine. Therefore, he feels both pain and sorrow for his children, and boundless love and joy for them.

If we wish to be like our Father, we must seek to develop such love, such compassion, such sympathy, to the maximum extent of which we are capable.

"Be ye therefore perfect," commands the Savior in Matthew 5:48, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Latter-day Saints frequently, and quite correctly, cite this verse to advocate and explain the Restoration doctrine of human deification, or exaltation, as the goal of the plan of salvation. It should not be overlooked, however, that Matthew 5:48 comes as the culmination of a longer passage

(beginning at 5:43) about loving our enemies, blessing those who curse us, doing good to those who hate us, and praying for those who spitefully abuse and persecute us. About, among other things, compassion and sympathy.

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## REVISITING “SARIAH” AT ELEPHANTINE

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Neal Rappleye

**Abstract:** *Jeffrey R. Chadwick has previously called attention to the name ŠRYH (Seraiah/Sariah) as a Hebrew woman’s name in the Jewish community at Elephantine. Paul Y. Hoskisson, however, felt this evidence was not definitive because part of the text was missing and had to be restored. Now a more recently published ostrakon from Elephantine, which contains a sure attestation of the name ŠRYH as a woman’s name without the need of restoration, satisfies Hoskisson’s call for more definitive evidence and makes it more likely that the name is correctly restored on the papyrus first noticed by Chadwick. The appearance of the name Seraiah/Sariah as a woman’s name exclusively in the Book of Mormon and at Elephantine is made even more interesting since both communities have their roots in northern Israel, ca. the eighth–seventh centuries BCE.*

In 1993, Jeffrey R. Chadwick noted the appearance of the Hebrew name ŠRYH (שריה), typically rendered *Seraiah* in English, as a woman’s name on an Aramaic papyrus from Elephantine and dated to the fifth century BCE.<sup>1</sup> As also pointed out by Chadwick, Nahman Avigad has argued that the Hebrew name ŠRYH(W) should be rendered as *Saryah(u)*, rather than the usual *Serayah(u)* — which would make the English spelling *Sariah* instead of *Seraiah*.<sup>2</sup> Thus, according to Chadwick, the attestation

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1. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Notes and Communications: Sariah in the Elephantine Papyri,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 196–200; reprinted in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 6–10.

2. See Nahman Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae From the Time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 46–47. It is noteworthy that although Avigad continues to follow the traditional spelling of the name as *Serayah(u)* when transliterating the name, in his definitive work on

of ŚRYH as a Hebrew female name at Elephantine provides strong supporting evidence for the appearance of a Hebrew woman named *Sariah* in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi, headnote; 2:5; 5:1, 6; 8:14).<sup>3</sup>

Paul Y. Hoskisson, however, urged caution about this evidence since the papyrus in question (Cowley-22) has a lacuna requiring restoration of both the final *hē* (ה) in ŚRYH and the *bet-res* (בר) of the Aramaic word *brt* (ברת), “daughter,” which is the key indication that the individual in question is a woman.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Hoskisson cautioned, “restorations cannot provide absolute proof but rather at best a suggestion.”<sup>5</sup> He considered it a good sign that “other scholars accept the possible existence of this feminine name in relative temporal proximity to the beginnings of the Book of Mormon,” but Hoskisson ultimately felt “a clear-cut example of the name for a female would be more helpful.”<sup>6</sup>

Chadwick argued, however, that “the comparative context of the papyrus leaves little doubt that the reconstruction is accurate,” and it is really “the extant final *t*” of *brt* that “assures us that the person was

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Hebrew seals, Avigad indexed the name under *śr(r)*, meaning “ruler.” If this is the correct etymology of the name, then *Saryah(u)* is indeed the more correct spelling. See Nahman Avigad, rev. by Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, The Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 538.

3. In addition to his initial paper (see n1 above), see also Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “The Names Lehi and Sariah — Language and Meaning,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 32–34, 77; Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Lehi in the Samaria Papyri, and on an Ostrakon from the Shore of the Red Sea,” *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 14–21.

4. See A. Cowley, ed. and trans., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), 67, 71; Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 320, cf. pl. 11. The female name *Seraiah* is also mentioned on pp. 142, 144n121; 250n31, 333 of *Archives from Elephantine*. In “Notes and Communications,” Chadwick was up front about the need to restore some of the text but noted that, given the context and spacing on the papyrus, the restoration of *śry[h br]t* was virtually certain, as evidenced by the fact that both Cowley and Porten provided this exact same restoration, which no scholars have ever questioned.

5. Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Response to the Comments,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 38. Previous to this, Hoskisson had said “the name Sariah is not attested as the name of a female, (as far as I am aware), in an ancient Near Eastern source.” Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Lehi and Sariah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 30.

6. Hoskisson, “Response to the Comments,” 38, 77n2.

a daughter, not a son.”<sup>7</sup> In the most recently published translation and transcription of this papyrus, Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni would seem to agree. In their hand-drawing of the Cowley-22 papyrus (see Figure 1),<sup>8</sup> they represented the restoration of the final *hē* (ה) in *ŚRYH* and the *bet-res* (בר) of *brt* as being “nearly certain.”<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 1.** Left: Illustration of Cowley-22, by Jasmin G. Rappeye, based on the drawing by Ada Yardeni in *Textbook of Aramaic Documents* 3:227 and foldout 32. Right: Same image, with *śryh brt*, “Seraiah (Sariah) daughter of,” highlighted. The “hollow strokes” used to represent the restored portions indicate that the restorations are considered “nearly certain.”

Nonetheless, new evidence that completely satisfies Hoskisson’s call for a more “clear-cut” example has been found. Porten and Yardeni

7. Chadwick, “Notes and Communications,” 196. This is because “son” in Aramaic would simply be *br* (בר), without the *t* (ת).

8. Based on this illustration, which is from Porten and Yardeni (see Fig. 1 caption), it looks like even most of the *tav* (ת) in *brt* is missing, which may suggest to some that this restoration is less certain than Chadwick implies. However, the context makes it virtually certain that the text had either *br* (בר), “son” or *brt* (ברת), “daughter,” and the long partial stroke that is present makes just *br* impossible.

9. See Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986–1999), 3:226–28, foldout 32, which shows “hollow strokes” for the restored portions of *śry[h brt]* on line 4. In the introduction, they explain: “Whenever possible, fragmentary documents have been restored, and we have been careful to distinguish between nearly certain and highly probable restorations. The former are drawn with hollow strokes; the latter with single strokes and printed with different script in the transcription and translation” (3:vi, emphasis in the original). Their transcription of this portion of line 4 is *śryh [br]t*, and the translation is “Seraiah [daught]er,” all in the same script, further indicating that it is a “nearly certain” restoration.

document ŠRYH as a Hebrew feminine name not once, but twice among the Aramaic documents at Elephantine.<sup>10</sup> A list of names on an ostrakon found there, dated to the second half of the fifth century BCE, includes *šryh brt* [...] ([...] שריה ברת), “Seraiah daughter of [...].”<sup>11</sup> The name of Seraiah’s (or Sariah’s) parent is broken off, but both “Seraiah” (*šryh*) and “daughter” (*brt*) are attested in full,<sup>12</sup> thus providing an undeniable example of ŠRYH as a female name (see Figure 2).

This would seem to meet Hoskisson’s demands for more “clear cut” evidence. Furthermore, this clear attestation of ŠRYH as a female name at Elephantine provides reassuring evidence that Cowley-22, which comes from the same period, is indeed restored correctly as “Seraiah, daughter of Hosea.”

In light of Lehi’s ancestors coming from northern Israel (1 Nephi 5:14, 16), ca. 720 BCE,<sup>13</sup> it is also interesting to note that, according to Karel van der Toorn, the Jewish community at Elephantine ultimately has its roots in northern Israel, ca. 700 BCE.<sup>14</sup> After surveying the evidence from deity names in the Aramaic texts, van der Toorn concludes, “the entire picture of the religious life at Elephantine and Syene strongly suggest that the historical core of the communities came from Northern Israel.” He

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10. Bezalel Porten and Jerome A. Lund, *Aramaic Documents from Egypt: A Key-Word-in-Context Concordance* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 416 lists C3.15.4 (= Cowley 22) and D9.14.5 (= Elephantine Storeroom 2293). Illustrations, transcriptions, and English translations of these are available in Porten and Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, 3:226–228; 4:211. For reference, I’ve provided transcriptions and translations of the relevant excerpt of each of these texts in the appendix. Both of these attestations are mentioned briefly in the Book of Mormon Onomasticon entry for “Sariah,” but the significance of this second, certain attestation in answering Hoskisson’s previous criticism is not mentioned. Book of Mormon Onomasticon, s.v. “Sariah,” accessed February 4, 2019, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/SARIAH>.

11. Porten and Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents*, 4:211.

12. The final *tav* (ת) in *brt* is partially restored, but enough of the letter is there to make it quite clear.

13. See Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Lehi’s House at Jerusalem and His Land of Inheritance,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 87–93.

14. Karel van der Toorn, “Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine,” *Numen* 39, no. 1 (1992): 80–101. Jared Ludlow also states that the Jews at Elephantine seem “to have had strong ties to the former northern Israelite kingdom because of its unique worship practices and reliance on Aramaic as its mother tongue.” Jared W. Ludlow, “A Tale of Three Communities: Jerusalem, Elephantine, and Lehi-Nephi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 31.

further notes “the emigrants from Northern Israel would have entered Egypt by way of Judah” and suspects “some of them stayed in Judah for a significant length of time” before migrating to Egypt sometime in the seventh century BCE.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the founders of the Elephantine community were likely contemporaries of Lehi or his parents and were similarly Israelites of northern stock who initially settled in Judah.

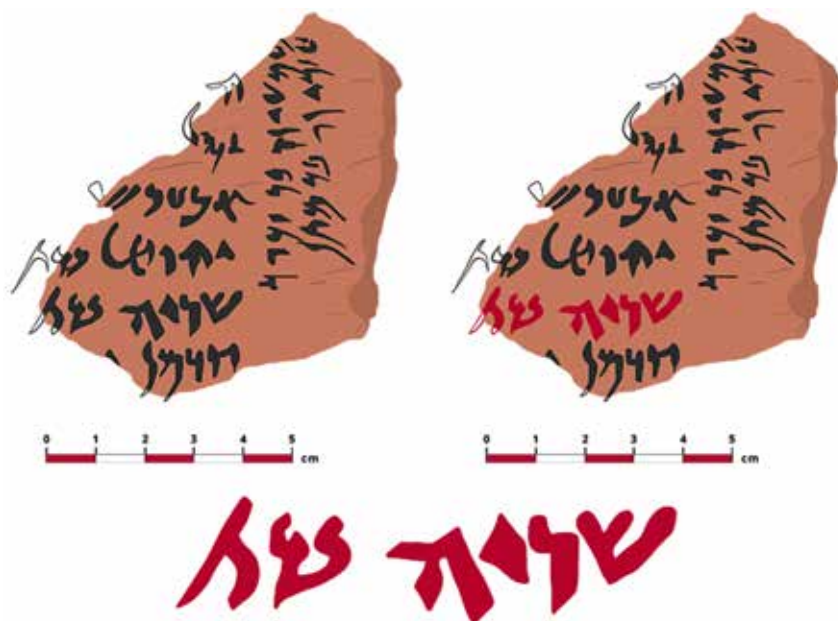
These details add to the significance of these two references to women named ŠRYH (Seraiah/Sariah) at Elephantine. In both the Hebrew Bible and the epigraphic evidence from Judah, ŠRYH(W) is only attested as a male’s name.<sup>16</sup> While this could simply be due to the limitations of

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15. Van der Toorn, “Anat-Yahu,” 96. Stephen Rosenberg similarly argues that the founders of the Elephantine community “originated in the former northern kingdom” based on the design and layout of their temple and dates their arrival to ca. 600 BCE and suggests they were acting in “defiance of the centralizing reforms of 622 BCE by Josiah, which obviously caused much dismay among the remaining peoples of the northern kingdom.” Stephen G. Rosenberg, “The Jewish Temple at Elephantine,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 67, no. 1 (2004): 12. Similar arguments have been made about Lehi. See Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, 449–522; Neal Rappleye, “The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi’s Family Dynamics: A Social Context for the Rebellions of Laman and Lemuel,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015): 87–99. On the other hand, Bezalel Porten downplays the elements that van der Toorn and Rosenberg see as indicative of northern origins and suggests they came from Judah, ca. 650 BCE, and were trying to escape Manasseh’s regime. Bezalel Porten, “Settlement of the Jews at Elephantine and the Arameans at Syene,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 451–470. Either way, all parties agree that the origins of the Jewish Elephantine community date to sometime between 700 and 600 BCE, placing their roots very close to the setting of the Book of Mormon’s opening chapters.

16. See 2 Samuel 8:17; 2 Kings 25:18, 23; 1 Chronicles 4:13–14; 4:35; 6:14; Ezra 2:2; 7:1; Nehemiah 10:2; 11:11; 12:1, 12; Jeremiah 36:26; 40:8; 51:59, 61; 52:24. For Hebrew epigraphy, see Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae*, 46–47, 103–104. See also Avigad and Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals*, 122, 134, 163, 189, 237. The frequent attestation of ŠRYH as a masculine name has been pointed out many times by Latter-day Saint commentators, with Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper noting “the name seems to have been common in the time of Jeremiah, a contemporary of Lehi and his wife Sariah.” John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, “Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 43. See also Hoskisson, “Lehi and Sariah,” 30; Chadwick, “Names Lehi and Sariah,” 34; John A. Tvedtnes, “Lehi and Sariah Comments,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 37.

our available data set,<sup>17</sup> it is also possible the attestation of ŚRYH as a woman's name both in the Book of Mormon and at Elephantine and *only* in these sources, reflects a specifically northern Israelite practice.



**Figure 2.** Top, left: Illustration of Elephantine Storeroom 2293, by Jasmin G. Rappleye, based on the drawing by Ada Yardeni in *Textbook of Aramaic Documents* 4:211. Top, right: Same image, with *šryh brt*, “Seraiah (Sariah) daughter of,” highlighted. Bottom: Detail of *šryh brt* from the ostracon.

In any case, with the certain reference to a woman named ŚRYH on an ostracon from Elephantine, there can no longer be any doubt that *Seraiah/Sariah* was a Hebrew woman's name in the mid-first millennium BCE.

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17. In particular, we should be aware that women are more predominant at Elephantine, and thus more frequently named in documents from that area. Therefore, it is generally more likely that names used for women would be attested in its corpus — which may be the reason ŚRYH is found as a woman's name there and not elsewhere. On women at Elephantine, see Annalisa Azzoni, “Women of Elephantine and Women in the Land of Israel,” in *In the Shadow of Bezalel: Aramaic, Biblical, and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Bezalel Porten*, ed. Alejandro F. Botta (Boston: Brill, 2013), 3–12.

## Appendix: “Sariah” in Aramaic Texts from Elephantine

The following transcriptions and translations are adapted from Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986–1999), 3:226–228; 4:211.

### Temple Funds Contributors List

**Text:** Cowley-22 (C3.15), col. 1, lines 1–4

**Date:** ca. 419/400 BC

### Transcription

1. III לפמנחתף שנת IIIII זגה שמהת חילא יהודיא זי יהב כסף ליהו  
אלהא לגבר לגבר כסף ש [II]
2. משל[מ]ת ברת גמר[י]ה בר מחסיה כסף ש II
3. זכור [בר אוש]ע בר זכור כסף ש II
4. שרי[ה] בר[ת] הושע בר חרמן כסף ש II

### Translation

1. On the 3rd of Phamenoth, year 5. This is (= these are) the names of the Jewish garrison who gave silver to YHW the God each person silver, [2] sh(ekels):
2. Meshull[em]eth daughter of Gemar[ia]h son of Maḥseiah: silver, 2 sh.
3. Zaccur [son of Ose]a son of Zaccur: silver, 2 sh.
4. Serai[ah daught]er of Hosea son of Ḥarman: silver, 2 sh.

### Storeroom Names List

**Text:** Elephantine Storeroom 2293 (D9.14), concave lines 1–5

**Date:** ca. 450–400 BC

### Transcription

1. ה[...]
2. יסל[ה] [...]
3. אבערש[...]
4. יהוטל בר[ת] [...]
5. שריה בר[ת] [...]

### Translation

1. H[...]
2. Isla[h ...]
3. Abioresh[...]
4. Jehotal daugh[ter of...]
5. Seraiah daughter of[ ...]





# THE RECORD OF MY FATHER

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Clifford P. Jones

**Abstract:** *In 1 Nephi 1:16–17, Nephi tells us he is abridging “the record of my father.” The specific words Nephi uses in his writings form several basic but important patterns and features used repeatedly by Nephi and also by other Book of Mormon writers. These patterns and features provide context that appears to indicate that Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record is the third-person account found in 1 Nephi 1:4 through 2:15 and that Nephi’s first-person account of his own ministry begins in 1 Nephi 2:16.*

This paper begins with a synopsis of the history of Nephi’s two sets of plates. It then reviews the literature that discusses Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record. Textual analysis is then presented to suggest that Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record begins in 1 Nephi 1:4 and continues (interspersed with Nephi’s editorial comments) through 1 Nephi 2:15, and is followed, beginning in 1 Nephi 2:16, by Nephi’s account of his own ministry. The paper then briefly suggests that these accounts highlight the ministries of Lehi and Nephi. It also suggests that the period covered by Lehi’s original record probably matches the time covered by the abridgment.

## Nephi’s Two Sets of Plates

It should be clear to any reader of the Book of Mormon that Nephi kept his record on two sets of plates. The first set, often called the large plates of Nephi, begins with Lehi’s record, followed by other records added by Nephi (see 1 Nephi 19:1–2). The second set, often called the small plates of Nephi, begins with Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record and Nephi’s account of his own ministry (see 1 Nephi 1:16–17).

## Nephi's Large-Plate Record

The Lord commanded Nephi to make his large plates shortly after the family arrived in the promised land (see 1 Nephi 18:23–19:2). The Book of Mormon contains two short summaries of the early large-plate records. In each summary, Nephi lists “the record of my father” (1 Nephi 19:1–2)<sup>1</sup> as the initial record on these plates.<sup>2</sup> After engraving Lehi’s record onto the large plates, Nephi added other information about the history of his people. Lehi continued to live and to prophesy after Nephi had engraved “the record of my father” onto the large plates (see, for example, 2 Nephi 1–4). Nephi’s record on the large plates includes many of Lehi’s prophecies (see 1 Nephi 10:15) and many of Nephi’s own prophecies (see 1 Nephi 19:1).

By the time the Lord commanded Nephi to create the small plates (see 2 Nephi 5:30), a total of 30 years had passed since the family left Jerusalem (see 2 Nephi 5:28). During the intervening years in the promised land, Lehi had died, Laman and Lemuel had tried to kill Nephi (see 2 Nephi 5:2), and Nephi and his followers had fled to the land of Nephi (see 2 Nephi 5:4–28). By then, the large-plate record was already a comprehensive record, beginning with Lehi’s record and continuing with Nephi’s account of many subsequent events (see 1 Nephi 9:2, 1 Nephi 19:1–2, and 2 Nephi 5:29). Nephi explains that, “the things which transpired before that I made these plates [the small plates] are of a truth more particularly made mention upon the first plates [the large plates]” (1 Nephi 19:2).

The large-plate record contains visions and prophecies (see, for example, 1 Nephi 9:2; 10:15; and 19:1), but it also contains more secular writings than the small-plate record. Nephi tells us that the large plates contain “a full account of the history of my people” (1 Nephi 9:2) including “the more part of the reign of the kings and the wars and contentions of my people” (1 Nephi 9:4) or “a greater account of the wars and contentions and destructions of my people” (1 Nephi 19:4). It may be reasonable to speculate that Lehi’s record, the initial record on the large plates, is similarly broad-based and served as a template for Nephi’s continuing large-plate record.

While the Nephite civilization remained, the Lord never rescinded the commandment to add to the large plates. Nephi continued to add to

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1. All Book of Mormon quotations are from Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

2. The inclusion of Lehi’s record as the first record on the large plates tends to confirm the fact that this record was closed at least by the time Nephi engraved the initial records onto the large plates — sometime before the end of Lehi’s ministry.

this record during his life and others continued the effort for centuries. Mormon added the final large-plate entry (see Mormon 2:17–18).

Joseph Smith never received the original large-plate record that included Lehi's record. Mormon abridged that voluminous record, and Joseph Smith translated Mormon's abridgment. However, the translation of the first part of that abridgment, which included Mormon's abridgment of Nephi's large-plate record, was lost by Martin Harris and is not available in our day. The books of Words of Mormon, Mosiah, Alma, Helaman, 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi, and the first part of Mormon contain the portion of Mormon's abridgment of the large-plate record found in the Book of Mormon.

### **Nephi's Small-Plate Record**

As mentioned above, the Lord didn't command Nephi to create the small plates until at least 30 years after Lehi's family left Jerusalem (see 2 Nephi 5:28). The small plates were made for a wise purpose known only to the Lord (see 1 Nephi 9:5). Nephi describes in three separate passages the information these plates should contain. In the first, he says they should contain an account "of the ministry of my people" (1 Nephi 9:3). Later, Nephi says that the small plates were to contain "the ministry and the prophecies — the more plain and precious parts of them —" (1 Nephi 19:3), and that he made them "that the more sacred things may be kept" (1 Nephi 19:5). Finally, Nephi tells us that the Lord said, "Make other plates [the small plates]; and thou shalt engraven many things upon them which are good in my sight for the profit of thy people" (2 Nephi 5:30).

Nephi engraved his abridgment of Lehi's record onto his small plates. He added an account of his own proceedings, reign, and ministry (see 1 Nephi 1:16–17). Later, Nephi's brother Jacob and Jacob's descendants added their records to the small plates (see Words of Mormon 1:3). Joseph Smith's translation of this special small-plate record is found, in its entirety, in the Book of Mormon. Nephi's small-plate record comprises the books of 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi. Jacob and his descendants added the books of Jacob, Enos, Jarom, and Omni.

### **Reviewing the Applicable Literature**

Only 16 verses into his small-plate record, Nephi mentions (twice) that it includes both an abridgment of his father's record and an account of his own life:

And now I Nephi do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams. And he also hath

written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account. But *I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days*. Behold, I make *an abridgment of the record of my father* upon plates which I have made with mine own hands. Wherefore, *after I have abridged the record of my father, then will I make an account of mine own life*. (1 Nephi 1:16–17, emphasis added)

To date, the discussion about the location and extent of Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record has focused on 1 Nephi 10:1, which says, "And now I Nephi proceed to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings and my reign<sup>3</sup> and ministry. Wherefore to proceed with mine account, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father and also of my brethren." Over the years, a number of students of the Book of Mormon have asserted that these words mark the transition point between Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record and Nephi's own account.<sup>4</sup>

This oft-repeated assertion appears to be based on an unstated assumption that, in 1 Nephi 10:1, the verb *to proceed* means *to begin*. While this is a reasonable assumption, this paper explores another reasonable possibility. The verb *to proceed* can mean either *to begin* or *to continue*, depending on the context.<sup>5</sup> The context of this passage may suggest that the verb *to proceed* is intended to mean *to continue*.

Noel B. Reynolds appears to recognize some incongruity between the common assertion that 1 Nephi 10:1 divides these two accounts and the context in which Nephi writes this passage.<sup>6</sup> To Reynolds, the words

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3. The word *reign* needn't refer to a monarch. It can refer to the period during which someone is pre-eminent or holds a religious or public service position. Oxford English Dictionary Online, "Reign," June 2007. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/151777?rskey=srefbW&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

4. See George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1961), 1:66, 69; Sidney B. Sperry, *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 94; Eldin Ricks, *Book of Mormon Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1951), 1:110–111; and Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millett, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 1:27, 62.

5. Oxford English Dictionary Online, "Proceed," June 2007. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/151777?rskey=srefbW&result=2&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

6. See Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982), 53–74, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/nephis-outline>.

at the end of the previous chapter, “and thus it is. Amen” (1 Nephi 9:6), followed by these words about Nephi’s reign and ministry, initially appeared to mark the end of one account and the beginning of another. He thought they suggested “an abridgment of Lehi’s record followed by an account of Nephi’s proceedings.”<sup>7</sup> But then Reynolds realized that this view clashes with surrounding context, which suggests a continuing story, not the beginning of a new record. He notes that, absent this reading of these words “we would never suspect two records. The story is *continuous*. ... And the very next verse *continues* the speech of Lehi that was interrupted to end chapter 9.”<sup>8</sup>

This realization led Reynolds to question the existence of any abridgment of Lehi’s record. He states, “Nephi is the narrator of the entire book [1 Nephi] from beginning to end. ... We know of Lehi’s teachings through Nephi’s report, not through a condensation of Lehi’s own record.”<sup>9</sup> Thus (incorrectly) concluding that 1 Nephi contains no abridgment of Lehi’s record, Reynolds then employs the words in 1 Nephi 9:6 and 10:1 as support for a very different thesis, “not that there are two distinct records in 1 Nephi, but rather that the book is divided [between chapters 9 and 10] into two parallel structures. [1 Nephi 9:6 and 10:1] serve primarily to call our attention to that structural division.”<sup>10</sup> So, to Reynolds, these passages support a “structural division” in 1 Nephi, but no true abridgment by Nephi of Lehi’s record.

S. Kent Brown also disagrees with the assertion that Nephi’s words in 1 Nephi 10:1 divide the abridgment of Lehi’s record from Nephi’s own account. In a 1991 article, Brown suggests this abridgment is not found in 1 Nephi, but his reasoning is very different from that of Reynolds.<sup>11</sup> Brown may conflate “the record of my father” (1 Nephi 19:1), which Nephi engraved on the large plates, with the “abridgment of the record of my father” (1 Nephi 1:17), which Nephi engraved on the small plates.

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7. N. Reynolds, “Nephi’s Outline,” 56.

8. Ibid., emphasis added.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. Note that Reynolds bases some of his analysis on his mistaken conclusion that the term “And thus it is. Amen” appears only twice in 1 Nephi. He sees significance in the fact that this term appears only at the end of each part of his linguistic structure. In reality, though, this term appears three times in 1 Nephi (9:6, 14:30, and 22:31) and the very similar term “And thus I spake unto my brethren. Amen” (1 Nephi 15:36) also appears once.

11. S. Kent Brown, “Nephi’s Use of Lehi’s Record,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon: Insights You May Have Missed Before* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1991), <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/content/nephis-use-lehis-record>.

Brown states that Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record was engraved onto Nephi's large plates, not his small plates.<sup>12</sup>

In 1998, Brown updated this research in a second article.<sup>13</sup> His second article omits any suggestion that the abridgment is found on the large plates but offers no new theory about its location. Brown clearly doesn't, however, agree with the suggestions noted earlier<sup>14</sup> that the abridgment comprises all of 1 Nephi chapters 1–9 or 1–10. Brown doesn't see how the text of the Book of Mormon supports these suggestions. He says, "A close inspection of these and later chapters, however, indicates that these suggestions must be modified considerably since (a) Nephi includes important material in his opening chapters about himself and (b) both he and Jacob quote and paraphrase their father's words in later chapters."<sup>15</sup> In other words, Brown doesn't believe that 1 Nephi 10:1 divides Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record from Nephi's own account, because (a) the text of 1 Nephi chapters 1–9 or 1–10 isn't limited to Lehi's story; it includes a substantial amount of Nephi's own story and (b) after these opening chapters, Lehi's words continue to play a significant role in Nephi's writings (and Jacob's writings).

Separately, Brown tries to correlate Nephi's small-plate content with his large-plate content. Appropriately, he sees 1 Nephi 19:1 as a summary of the initial large-plate content. To Brown, Nephi's term "the record of my father" (1 Nephi 19:1) "corresponds roughly to 1 Nephi [chapters] 1–10."<sup>16</sup> Brown doesn't further break down this perceived rough correspondence, and we should avoid mistaking it for a suggestion that he sees 1 Nephi chapters 1–10 as Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record. Brown has already explained that he believes the context belies that suggestion.

### Textual Analysis of the Meaning of 1 Nephi 10:1

A careful analysis of the text of the Book of Mormon suggests a different way to read 1 Nephi 10:1 — one that may resolve the incongruities pointed out by Reynolds and Brown. Maybe Nephi didn't write this passage as a transition point between his abridgment of Lehi's record and his own account. Perhaps Nephi had begun his account of

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12. Ibid., 4.

13. S. Kent Brown, "Recovering the Missing Record of Lehi," in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1998), 28–54.

14. See n4.

15. Brown, "Recovering the Missing Record," n10.

16. Brown, "Recovering the Missing Record," 29.

his proceedings, reign, and ministry much earlier in his record. Then, prior to this passage, Nephi paused this ongoing account to discuss an important side topic. Nephi's words in 1 Nephi 10:1 may simply indicate that he has ended his discussion of the side topic and is now proceeding (continuing) with the ongoing account of his life.

### **An Aside About Nephi's Two Sets of Plates**

In 1 Nephi chapter 8, Nephi's narrative describes how Lehi shared with his sons his vision of the tree of life and some further teachings. Then, at the beginning of 1 Nephi chapter 9, Nephi alludes to many more revelations that Lehi received and taught "which cannot be written upon these plates" (1 Nephi 9:1).<sup>17</sup> Having mentioned "these plates," Nephi then pauses his narrative for an aside (a lengthy editorial comment, perhaps similar to a sidebar in a modern publication) about "these plates." He begins his aside with these words: "And now as I have spoken concerning these plates, behold, they are not the plates upon which I make a full account of the history of my people" (1 Nephi 9:2). Then, through the rest of 1 Nephi chapter 9, Nephi helps his readers understand more about the purpose and content of his two sets of plates (see 1 Nephi 9:2–6). Nephi ends this aside with the word *amen* (1 Nephi 9:6).

### **A Literary Structure for Resuming a Narrative After an Aside**

Nephi's words after this aside (in 1 Nephi 10:1–2) appear to form an interesting literary structure designed to resume the narrative paused for the aside. Book of Mormon writers repeatedly use this structure to resume narratives after they have paused them for asides. This structure has three distinct parts. The first part provides a title, of sorts, to reidentify the narrative being resumed. In this case, Nephi is resuming an account of his life and ministry<sup>18</sup> that was paused for the aside, "And now I Nephi proceed [continue] to give *an account* upon these plates *of my proceedings and my reign and ministry*. Wherefore to proceed

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17. Nephi's reference to these revelations in the context of his other plates suggests that he has indeed recorded these revelations, but that the record is on his large plates, not his small plates. Nephi later expressly states that he has written many of his father's prophecies and teachings in his other book (see 1 Nephi 10:15).

18. Nephi's use of the indefinite article (an) rather than the definite article (the) is very appropriate here, because Nephi had previously recorded on his large plates another, presumably more broad-based, account of his proceedings, reign, and ministry (see, for example, 1 Nephi 19:2–4). On these small plates, he is making "an account" of his life and ministry, but not "the" only account.

[continue] with mine account, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father and also of my brethren” (1 Nephi 10:1, emphasis added).

The second part of this structure is a brief (and somewhat repetitive) recap that restates the event described in the narrative just before the aside began. This recap reminds readers of what had happened in the narrative just before it was paused. Here, Nephi writes, “For behold, it came to pass that after my father had made an end of speaking the words of his dream and also of exhorting them to all diligence” (1 Nephi 10:2). This passage initially appears redundant. It briefly restates information Nephi had written just prior to the aside:

And it came to pass that after my father had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many, he said unto us, because of these things which he saw in a vision, he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel. Yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord. And he did exhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent that they would hearken to his words, in that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them and not cast them off. Yea, my father did preach unto them. And after that he had preached unto them and also prophesied unto them of many things, he bade them to keep the commandments of the Lord. And he did cease speaking unto them. (1 Nephi 8:36–38)

This reiteration serves a purpose. At the conclusion of the aside, it reorients the reader back to the event from which the narrative will now proceed — preparing the reader for the third part of this structure, which is simply the continuation of the narrative from that point as if it had not been interrupted for the aside. Here, Nephi continues his narrative describing further revelations that Lehi received and taught his children — prophecies about those who remained in Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 10:2).

This resumptive structure provides context for Nephi’s words in 1 Nephi 10:1, clarifying that they are intended to continue an account interrupted for an aside. The context provided by this literary structure becomes even more clear with a review of its repeated use across the text of the Book of Mormon. We will now review three other places in the Book of Mormon where this same resumptive structure helps to reorient readers after other asides.



## **Mormon Resumes His Narrative After an Aside about the Lands of the Lamanites**

This same literary structure follows an aside written by Mormon in Alma chapter 22, where Mormon's narrative is about the mission of the sons of Mosiah to the Lamanites. In this narrative, Mormon mentions that "the king sent a proclamation throughout all the land" (Alma 22:27). Because he has mentioned "all the land," Mormon then pauses his narrative to provide his readers with a more complete description of the land (see Alma 22:27–34). After doing so, he transitions back to his narrative about these missionaries using the same three-part structure used earlier by Nephi.

First, Mormon reidentifies the narrative being resumed with something akin to a title, "And now I after having said this return again to *the account of Ammon, and Aaron, Omner, and Himni, and their brethren*" (Alma 22:35, emphasis added). He then gives a brief (and repetitive) recap of the event described in the narrative just before the aside, saying, "Behold, now it came to pass that the king of the Lamanites sent a proclamation among all his people" (Alma 23:1). And then he resumes the narrative by describing, for the first time, the content of the proclamation (see Alma 23:1–3).

## **Moroni Resumes His Narrative After Discussing Nephite History and Modern Witnesses**

Moroni uses this structure to resume his Jaredite narrative after a pause for a lengthy two-part aside found in Ether chapters 4 and 5. This aside comes after Moroni's narrative describes the Brother of Jared's visit with the Lord when the Lord touches the 16 stones to light the barges. Moroni tells us that after this visit, the Lord commands the Brother of Jared to "go down out of the mount from the presence of the Lord and write the things which he had seen" (Ether 4:1). Then, Moroni begins the first part of his aside, in which he explains the history of the Brother of Jared's words among the Nephites, including the fact that Moroni has engraved them onto plates but sealed them up to come forth in our future. This initial part of the aside includes a long direct quotation of the Lord's words to Moroni and ends with the word *amen* (see Ether 4:1–19). Then, Moroni immediately begins the second part of his aside, giving Joseph Smith specific instructions concerning the plates and three latter-day witnesses. This second part also ends with the word *amen* (see Ether 5:1–6). Then, Moroni's transition back to the Jaredite narrative uses the same three-part structure used previously by Nephi and Mormon.

First, Moroni explains that he is resuming the narrative he had interrupted with the two-part aside, reidentifying the narrative as follows, “And now I Moroni proceed [continue] to give *the record of Jared and his brother*” (Ether 6:1, emphasis added). He then gives a brief (and somewhat repetitive) recap of events described in the narrative just before the two-part aside, saying, “For it came to pass after that the Lord had prepared the stones which the brother of Jared had carried up into the mount” (Ether 6:2). And then, he actually continues the narrative with the words “the brother of Jared came down out of the mount; and he did put forth the stones into the vessels which were prepared, one in each end thereof. And behold, they did give light unto the vessels thereof” (Ether 6:2).

### **Moroni Resumes His Narrative After an Aside About Faith**

Moroni uses the same structure again to resume the same Jaredite narrative after his oft-quoted aside on faith in Ether chapter 12. This aside follows the description in his narrative of the great and marvelous prophecies of Ether, which the people didn’t believe, “Ether did prophesy great and marvelous things unto the people, which they did not believe because they saw them not” (Ether 12:5). Moroni then transitions to his aside, saying, “And now I Moroni would speak somewhat concerning these things” (Ether 12:6). His aside is a beautiful explanation of faith, of weakness, and of hope and charity. He ends his aside with the word *amen* (see Ether 12:6–41). Then he transitions back to the Jaredite narrative using the structure we’ve seen elsewhere.

First, he explains that he is resuming the narrative, which he reidentifies with the words, “And now I Moroni proceed [continue] to finish *my record concerning the destruction of the people of which I have been writing*” (Ether 13:1, emphasis added). Then, he gives a brief, repetitive recap of the event he had described in the narrative just before the aside, “For behold, they rejected all the words of Ether” (Ether 13:2). Then, he resumes the narrative, sharing the content of Ether’s prophecies (see Ether 13:2–12).

### **The Significance of This Literary Structure**

This resumptive structure doesn’t follow all Book of Mormon asides (see, for example, 3 Nephi 5:8–26 and 10:14–19). This structure does, however, appear often enough to tell us that when we see it, we have clearly found a place where the narrative was interrupted by an aside and is being continued.

This structure is particularly helpful in passages that use the verb *to proceed*, which, as explained earlier, has different meanings in different

contexts. This resumptive structure provides context that strongly suggests that, in these instances, the verb *to proceed* describes a continuation of a narrative that was paused for an aside (see 1 Nephi 10:1; Ether 6:1; and 13:1). Even without this unique structure, similar context can suggest a continuing or resuming narrative (see 3 Nephi 5:19; 26:12; and Ether 2:13). Note, however, that in a different context, the verb *to proceed* can describe the beginning of a new narrative (see, for example, Ether 1:1).

After Nephi pauses his ongoing account of his life to discuss his two sets of plates, he uses this resumptive structure to reorient his readers back to the point where he had paused his narrative, so he can continue again from that point. The words he uses within this resumptive structure include the phrases *proceed with* and *proceed to give*. In this clear context, the verb *to proceed* means *to continue*. Nephi is saying, in essence, “and now I Nephi [continue] to give an account upon these plates of my proceedings and my reign and ministry. Wherefore to [continue] with mine account, I must speak somewhat of the things of my father and also of my brethren” (1 Nephi 10:1). These words help us understand that Nephi is continuing an account that he began much earlier.

The textual evidence reviewed so far suggests that Nephi didn’t write 1 Nephi 10:1 as a transition point between his abridgment of Lehi’s record and his own account. Rather, it describes the resumption of an account of his life and ministry begun earlier.

### **Textual Analysis Identifying the Abridgment and Nephi’s Account**

We will now review Nephi’s words from the beginning of 1 Nephi in an effort to identify both Nephi’s abridgment of his father’s record and the transition point at which Nephi begins his account of his own life and ministry. An important key to this identification is the fact that Nephi writes some parts of the text in the first person and other parts in the third person. As we isolate the third-person text from the first-person text, it appears that the third-person text constitutes Nephi’s abridgment of Lehi’s record.

### **Nephi’s Initial Editorial Comment**

Nephi’s words in the first three verses of 1 Nephi are a colophon — an editorial comment identifying the author and his qualifications for

writing this record.<sup>19</sup> This colophon, like all Nephi's editorial comments, is written in the first person.

I Nephi having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father. And having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days, 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. Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. And I know that the record which I make to be true. And I make it with mine own hand, and I make it according to my knowledge. (1 Nephi 1:1–3)

Although these words mention that Nephi was born, was taught, saw afflictions, and was favored of the Lord, their primary purpose isn't really to tell his story. This isn't the beginning of Nephi's narrative. These words introduce us to Nephi as an author, to his qualifications to make this record, and to his reasons for making it. This colophon appears to identify Nephi as the seasoned veteran who authored the small-plate account, rather than as the young man in Lehi's household at the time the narrative begins. This introductory editorial comment is comparable to information we might find on the inside of the dust jacket of a modern hardback book.

Separating Nephi's editorial comments from his narrative helps us better understand the nature of his narrative. Like all editorial comments and asides Nephi adds later, this introductory colophon is written in the first person. In Nephi's editorial comments, he always speaks in the first person, often identifying himself by name and always using the pronouns *I* and *my*. Immediately after this introductory editorial comment, however, these first-person pronouns all but disappear from his writing until his next editorial comment. This is because the initial portion of the narrative, unlike his editorial comments, is written consistently in the third person.

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19. See Thomas W. Mackay, "Mormon as Editor: A Study in Colophons, Headers, and Source Indicators," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1379&index=7>. See also Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1988), 17; and John A. Tvedtnes, "Colophons in the Book of Mormon," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 13–17, <https://archive.bookofmormoncentral.org/node/150>.

## Narrative Written From Lehi's Perspective

Isolating Nephi's narrative from his comments also highlights that the initial narrative is written from a different perspective altogether from those comments. In the narrative, Nephi speaks in the third person and relates events of his father's life from his father's viewpoint. The narrative isn't about Nephi at all. The pronoun *my* is used only to repeatedly identify "my father Lehi." The narrative is filled with the pronouns *he*, *his*, and *him*, all of which describe his father.

This third-person narrative tells a story that doesn't belong to Nephi. It is written from Lehi's perspective and relates events he experienced when Nephi was not present. Each event is described as it happens to Lehi. For example, the account of Lehi's vision of the pillar of fire (see 1 Nephi 1:6) is described as it occurs. This isn't the account of how Nephi learned about this vision. We can assume that Lehi described this vision to Nephi and others, but this abbreviated account never tells us whether he did. It just describes the vision as it took place.

## Another Editorial Comment

So far, it would be hard to say whether Nephi is simply choosing to tell his father's story in the third person or whether he may be abridging his father's story from his father's own record. This third-person summary of events in Lehi's life continues until Nephi interjects another first-person editorial comment. Some of the language in this comment suggests that Nephi is in the process of abridging his father's record and that he will make an account of his own life afterwards.

And now I Nephi do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams. And he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account. But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father upon plates which I have made with mine own hands. Wherefore after I have abridged the record of my father, then will I make an account of mine own life. (1 Nephi 1:16–17)

The first line of this comment suggests that Nephi may be taking this account from "the things which my father hath written." An abridgment is "a digest or shortened version of a longer text, treatise, etc., esp. produced by omitting the less important passages of the original; an

abstract, an epitome.”<sup>20</sup> Nephi tells us in this comment that he is not making a full account of his father’s writings, suggesting that there are some aspects of his father’s writings that need not be recounted here.

The fact that Nephi is already in the process of writing his abridgment is suggested by the present tense of a verb. Nephi says, “I *make* an abridgment.” The word *make* subtly reflects an ongoing effort. This subtle suggestion is corroborated by the third-person narrative that surrounds this comment. The future tense of two other verbs in this comment similarly indicates that Nephi hasn’t yet begun his account of his own life, but that account will follow this abridgment of his father’s record. With respect to the account of his own life, he says, “I shall make” and “then will I make.” Based on these words, we should expect to find Nephi’s first-person account of his own life, from his own perspective, after he ends this third person account, which is less than a full account of his father’s record and which he describes as “an abridgment of the record of my father.”

After writing this second editorial comment, Nephi transitions back into his abridgment of his father’s record with the words, “Therefore I would that ye should know that” (1 Nephi 1:18). After these transitional words, he resumes his third-person narrative, telling how Lehi prophesied of the coming Messiah and was rejected by the people in Jerusalem.

### A Third Editorial Comment

Nephi then interjects his third first-person editorial comment: “But behold, I Nephi will shew unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord is over all them whom he hath chosen because of their faith to make them mighty, even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20). After this short comment, Nephi resumes his abridgment once more with the transitional words, “For behold, it came to pass that” (1 Nephi 2:1). We then learn more of Lehi’s story from Lehi’s point of view.

### A Direct Quote

Note that when Nephi’s abridged account contains a quote, the quoted words appear in their original form. For instance, the Lord tells Lehi, “Blessed art thou Lehi because of the things which thou hast done. And because thou hast been faithful and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold, they seek to take away thy life”

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20. See *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “Abridgment,” September 2009. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/587?redirectedFrom=abridgment#eid>.

(1 Nephi 2:1). So, in this instance, the Lord, in the first person, speaks to Lehi in the second person.

### Consistent Perspective

Except for direct quotations, however, the narrative continues in the third person. It also continues to relate events from Lehi's perspective, and not Nephi's. For example, after the Lord commands him to "take his family and depart into the wilderness" (1 Nephi 2:2), the account tells us, from Lehi's perspective, that "he did travel in the wilderness with his family" (1 Nephi 2:5). Of course, Nephi was there, but because the source of this account is Lehi's record, Nephi doesn't use the word *we*. Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record continues from Lehi's point of view as Lehi takes his family into the wilderness, endures the murmurings of Laman and Lemuel, speaks to them with power, and then dwells in a tent in the valley of Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 2:2–15). As before, the account is filled with the pronouns *he*, *him*, and *his*, all of which describe Lehi.

This initial third-person narrative, which continues through 1 Nephi 2:15, never mentions Nephi by name. It names Lehi four times, refers to him 14 times as "my father," and refers to him at least 75 times with the pronouns *he*, *him*, and *his*. Nephi's references to himself are limited to his editorial comments and transitional language. The narrative itself clearly tells Lehi's unique story from Lehi's personal point of view.<sup>21</sup>

### The Transition Point

Nephi's words in 1 Nephi 2:16 constitute the transition point between Nephi's abridgment of his father's record and Nephi's own account. At this point, Nephi begins to tell his own story. Now that his abridgment of Lehi's record has brought Lehi and his family out of Jerusalem and through the wilderness to dwell in the valley of Lemuel, Nephi is ready to fulfill his earlier promise to make an account "of my proceedings in my days" (1 Nephi 1:1 and 1:17). From this point forward, Nephi is the main character in his account and the narrative comes to us in the first person from Nephi's own perspective.<sup>22</sup> This account also begins

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21. The final event mentioned in the abridgment, that Lehi dwelt in a tent, can cover a long period. We review below the likelihood that Nephi began his ministry in the valley of Lemuel a while before Lehi actually concluded his record (while still dwelling in a tent in the valley of Lemuel).

22. The preface or introduction to 1 Nephi (prior to 1 Nephi 1:1) may also subtly suggest the division between Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record and Nephi's own account. The initial lines of this introduction present a third-person summary of

with a brief colophon that identifies Nephi, not as the seasoned author of the small-plate record but as the young man whose account is now beginning. Then the first event Nephi records at the inception of his own personal account is the visit from the Lord that appears to mark the start of his ministry:

I Nephi being exceeding young, nevertheless being large in stature, and also having great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore I cried unto the Lord. And behold, *he did visit me* and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father. (1 Nephi 2:16, emphasis added)

### Consistent Patterns and Features

The word usage patterns employed by Nephi — writing his abridgment of another person's record in the third person and writing his own record in the first person — are followed quite consistently throughout the Book of Mormon. Like Nephi, Mormon and Moroni consistently write their own editorial comments, asides about their own thoughts and actions, and personal accounts in the first person. Like Nephi, both Mormon and Moroni use the third person when they abridge the records of others. However, when any of them quotes something directly from another source (an existing record or a living person), the quote appears in its original form. These word usage patterns help us distinguish among abridged accounts, editorial comments, personal asides, personal accounts, and quoted materials throughout the Book of Mormon.

### Lehi's Continued Role in Nephi's Narrative

Lehi continues to play an important role in Nephi's account long after Nephi ends his abridgment of his father's record. However, after Nephi begins his own personal account, the story follows Nephi and not Lehi. It is told from Nephi's perspective, not Lehi's. There is a clear difference between the two accounts. In Nephi's own account, Lehi's revelations are described, not necessarily as they occur, but as Nephi becomes aware of them. For instance, the account of Lehi's dream in which the Lord commands him to send Nephi and his brothers back to Jerusalem for the

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Lehi's account. The balance of the introduction, also written in the third person (until its final first-person passage), shifts to an account about Nephi (and his brethren) with the words *Nephi taketh*. This shift occurs at the precise point where Nephi's own account begins.



plates of brass comes to us through Nephi's own account. This account doesn't relate Lehi's actual receipt of this dream. Rather, it tells how Lehi describes the dream previously received to Nephi: "And it came to pass that I Nephi returned from speaking with the Lord to the tent of my father. And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem" (1 Nephi 3:1–2).

Similarly, the account of Lehi's vision of the tree of life and Lehi's further prophecies made in the valley of Lemuel (see 1 Nephi chapters 8–10) come to us through Nephi. He doesn't describe how Lehi receives the vision or subsequent prophetic information, but rather how Nephi (and his brothers) learn about them. His account of this vision begins, "And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness, he spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream, or in other words, I have seen a vision" (1 Nephi 8:2). By the time Lehi speaks to his sons, the dream has already taken place. Nephi wasn't present when Lehi received the dream. Nephi tells us about the dream from his own experience — he learns about it as his father shares it.

Nephi's account does describe some of Lehi's actions right as they occur, but it appears that in each case, Nephi is present with Lehi as the event takes place. These events still come to us from Nephi's perspective, but his perspective is very similar to that of Lehi. For example, Nephi describes Lehi's review of the records on the brass plates as it occurs (see 1 Nephi 5:10–16). It appears that Nephi is with Lehi during this review. Nephi summarizes the experience as follows: "[T]hus far *I and my father* had . . . obtained the record which the Lord had commanded us and searched them and found that they were desirable" (1 Nephi 5:20–21, emphasis added).

Similarly, Nephi describes a prophecy received by Lehi as they search the brass plates. Nephi simply says that as Lehi studied the plates of brass, "he was filled with the Spirit and began to prophesy" (1 Nephi 5:17). Again, it appears likely that Nephi was there as Lehi spoke the words of the prophecy. Nephi uses the phrase "he said that" (1 Nephi 5:19) in his description.<sup>23</sup>

Nephi later mentions other prophecies that Lehi shared with his sons in the valley of Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 9:1–2, 10:15, and 19:1), and additional prophecies given by Lehi shortly before Lehi's death (see 2 Nephi chapters 1–4).

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23. As explained below, it appears that Lehi kept his own record through the time when he reviewed the records on the brass plates and prophesied about his seed (see 1 Nephi 6:1). Perhaps Nephi's account of these events also takes Lehi's own record into account.

Nephi's account describes his own revelatory experiences from his own perspective. This includes, of course, the Lord's visit to Nephi, described earlier. It also includes the next recorded revelation that Nephi receives while grieved about Laman and Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 2:18–24). It then goes on to include many other revelations received by Nephi.

The cumulative textual evidence from all these provisions lends support to the proposition that Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record begins in 1 Nephi 1:4 and ends in 1 Nephi 2:15 and that the balance of Nephi's small-plate record contains his account of his own ministry, supplemented by asides and by quotations from Lehi, Jacob, Isaiah, and other prophets.

### **Plausible Inferences Based on This Identification of the Abridgment**

This proposed identification of the text of Nephi's abridgment of Lehi's record and the point at which Nephi transitions to his own account provides an opportunity to consider Nephi's editorial intent for beginning his small-plate record with a relatively brief abridgment of his father's record before sharing his own account. It also allows us to explore the text for any further indications that Lehi may have ended his original contemporary account while the family lived in the valley of Lemuel and that Nephi may have begun his contemporary account at about the same time.

### **The Abridgment and Nephi's Account Focus on the Ministry**

As mentioned previously, Nephi eventually tells us that he made the small plates of Nephi, upon which he engraved this record, because he "received a commandment of the Lord" that this smaller record should be made "for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven of the ministry of my people" (1 Nephi 9:3). He later adds that this special record should contain, "the ministry and the prophecies — the more plain and precious parts of them" (1 Nephi 19:3).

It seems that to fulfill this commandment, Nephi chose to set the stage for the account of his own ministry by preceding it with an abridgment of his father's record, which describes the inception of Lehi's ministry, including "the more plain and precious parts of" several of Lehi's early prophecies. The abridgment appears to serve as the literary vehicle that introduces us to the unique, desolate world in which Nephi's own ministry begins. In addition, it highlights an important parallel between two ministries. Just as Lehi's ministry in Jerusalem begins after a vision in which he sees the Lord, Nephi's ministry begins with a visit

from the Lord. After this visit, Nephi immediately begins a ministry of service by teaching and praying for his brethren (see 1 Nephi 2:17–18) and humbly obeying the Lord’s commandments given through his father (see 1 Nephi 3:7). As Nephi continues the account of his own ministry, he is mindful of the Lord’s commandment and incorporates into his account other important teachings and prophecies of Lehi (and of Jacob) that are part of “the ministry of my people” (1 Nephi 9:3).

### **The Small Plate-Record May Suggest the Time Frame of Lehi’s Record**

It seems likely that Lehi’s record, which Nephi engraved onto the large plates, was initially written by Lehi on a perishable medium, such as parchment. It was likely transferred by Nephi onto the large plates for long-term preservation (see 1 Nephi 19:1–2 and Jacob 4:1–3). The Book of Mormon never specifically mentions Lehi’s initial, perishable record, but it seems reasonable to imply that Lehi made a contemporary account that Nephi eventually engraved onto the large plates. It also seems likely that Nephi made a similar contemporary account, which provided a basis for his writings on the large plates. Assuming then that these accounts existed, Nephi’s small-plate record appears to suggest a plausible timeline for the closing of Lehi’s contemporary account and for the inception of Nephi’s contemporary account.

### **Lehi’s Account Appears to End in the Valley of Lemuel**

While some students of the Book of Mormon may have assumed that Nephi’s term *the record of my father* describes a record covering virtually all of Lehi’s life, the text of Nephi’s abridgment (1 Nephi 1:4 to 2:15) doesn’t cover Lehi’s later years. It ends while he is living in the valley of Lemuel. Even so, Nephi doesn’t call his abridgment “an abridgment of *the first part of the record of my father*.” He calls it “an abridgment of the record of my father” (1 Nephi 1:17). Other Book of Mormon passages refer to “parts” of records (see 1 Nephi 6:1 and Ether 1:3), so when Nephi doesn’t do so here, it would appear that he is referring to his father’s entire record.

The word *abridgment* refers to a condensation of a written work.<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, the word *abridgment* indicates a summary of an entire record or set of records (see, for example, Words of Mormon 1:3, Moroni 1:1). Likewise, Nephi tells us (twice) that he

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24. See *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “Abridgment,” September 2009. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/587?redirectedFrom=abridgment#eid>.

abridged an entire record — “the record of my father” (1 Nephi 1:17). The plain meaning of Nephi’s words suggests that he ended the abridgment where Lehi’s large-plate record ends — in the valley of Lemuel. The few other Book of Mormon passages that mention Lehi’s large-plate record lend support to the proposition that the time covered by the abridgment matches that of the large-plate record.<sup>25</sup>

The abridgment narrative appears to cover a period beginning in “the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah” (1 Nephi 1:4). However, the narrative also mentions that Lehi had “dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days” (1 Nephi 1:4). This latter phrase may suggest that Lehi’s record covered some events from his earlier days, but Lehi’s record clearly begins no later than the first year of Zedekiah’s reign.

The abridgment narrative ends with a reference to Lehi dwelling in a tent in the valley of Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 2:15). This passage allows for the possibility that Lehi continued adding to his ongoing account for a while in that valley. Although Nephi’s own small-plate account, which follows the abridgment, begins before Nephi and his brothers travel to Jerusalem for the brass plates, other passages suggest that Lehi kept his contemporary account until sometime after his sons returned with the brass plates.

Nephi tells us that when he and his brothers returned with the brass plates, Lehi searched these plates (see 1 Nephi 5:10), where he discovered “a genealogy of his fathers” (see 1 Nephi 5:14, 16). Nephi tells us that this genealogy became part of Lehi’s record (see 1 Nephi 6:1), so it appears that Lehi didn’t close his contemporary account until after he found this genealogy.

Nephi’s other brief mention of this genealogy appears to suggest that Lehi did, in fact, end his account at about this time with the genealogy as his final entry. As mentioned earlier, each of Nephi’s two short summaries of the early large-plate records begins with Lehi’s record (see 1 Nephi 19:1–2). Only the second summary mentions the genealogy. In it, Nephi lists the genealogy right after Lehi’s record (see 1 Nephi 19:2). This separate listing of the genealogy appears to support the idea that Lehi ended his contemporary account after his sons returned with the brass plates and that he added the genealogy — perhaps as an addendum — at the end of that account.

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25. Nephi’s account doesn’t tell us why Lehi may have ended this record at this time. One might speculate that a physical disability, such as poor eyesight or sore or unsteady hands, made it difficult for Lehi to continue to keep his record, or perhaps that the scarcity of recordkeeping materials in the wilderness convinced them to keep only one consolidated record.

## Nephi Recorded the Events That Follow Lehi's Record

Of course, Lehi wouldn't have closed his contemporary account before a new recordkeeper was in place. Nephi tells us, "I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father" (1 Nephi 1:1). This teaching prepared him to "make a record in the language of my father" (1 Nephi 1:2). Nephi's first-person small-plate account indicates that he assumed a recordkeeping role (perhaps under Lehi's guidance) near the beginning of his ministry. His detailed account of the journey to obtain the brass plates (see 1 Nephi chapters 3 and 4) suggests that he may have first recorded its particulars shortly after they took place. Thus, it can be inferred that Nephi was keeping a contemporary account during or soon after this journey.

Other aspects of Nephi's two short summaries of the early large-plate records (see 1 Nephi 19:1–2) may further corroborate the time covered by Lehi's record by identifying events recorded onto the large plates by Nephi after he had added Lehi's record to those plates. Nothing in these summaries requires us to conclude that the abridged account omits any period included in Lehi's original record. While some of the language in these brief summaries is ambiguous, it can be read to suggest that Lehi's record, like the abridgment, ends while Lehi is in the valley of Lemuel.

In the first summary, Nephi tells us that the large plates contain "the record of my father and also our journeyings in the wilderness and the prophecies of my father. And also many of mine own prophecies" (1 Nephi 19:1). Then, after mentioning that he didn't know at the time that he would be making the small plates, he adds a second summary, stating that "the record of my father and the genealogy of his fathers and the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 19:2) are engraved upon the large plates.

Each summary begins with the term *the record of my father*. Nephi wrote these summaries having already completed his abridgment of this record, so by mentioning it, he alludes to the events already described in the abridgment. Therefore, it is plausible that each summary then mentions later events that Nephi added to the large plates after his father's record.

The second summary lists "the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 19:2). This term may recognize that Lehi's record had already covered a lesser part of their wilderness proceedings, so that those covered by this term were only "the more part" of their proceedings. The first summary mentions "our journeyings in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 19:1), a term that could include the journey to the valley of Lemuel, but it is possible the intended meaning of this term is similar to "the more part of all our proceedings in the wilderness." If so,

this term may refer only to journeyings subsequent to the journey to the valley of Lemuel already described in Lehi's record. These subsequent journeyings in the wilderness would include the two trips back to Jerusalem, the journey to the promised land, and, perhaps, the journey to the land of Nephi.

In addition to journeyings, the first summary mentions both Lehi's and Nephi's prophecies. Of course, Lehi's record had already covered not only their initial journey to the valley of Lemuel but also many of Lehi's prophecies. The fact that this summary then mentions further prophecies of Lehi suggests that Nephi later added more of Lehi's prophecies to the large-plate record. These likely included the prophecies Lehi made just before his death (see 2 Nephi chapters 1–4), long after Nephi's initial engravings on the large plates. More significantly, Nephi also added to the large plates many prophecies Lehi had made in the valley of Lemuel. Nephi specifically tells us, "I have written as many of them [Lehi's prophecies shared with his sons in the valley of Lemuel] as were expedient for me in mine other book [the large plates]" (1 Nephi 10:15).

Thus, it seems reasonable to infer that after Nephi engraved Lehi's record onto the large plates, he added his own account of continuing events, including the further journeyings in the wilderness, Lehi's further prophecies, and many of Nephi's own prophecies. All these continuing events are recounted by Nephi in his small-plate account after his abridgment of Lehi's record.

In review, it appears that Lehi kept the original, perishable record that Nephi transferred to the large plates as "the record of my father" until his sons brought the brass plates to the valley of Lemuel. It appears that Lehi closed this record at about that time, including with it the genealogy of his fathers. He then apparently relied on Nephi to chronicle (perhaps under Lehi's direction) "the more part of" their wilderness proceedings, apparently including journeys made by Lehi's sons and prophecies made by Lehi while Lehi lived in the valley of Lemuel. It may be reasonable to speculate that Lehi could have kept further records at some later time, but Nephi's small-plate account mentions Lehi's subsequent prophecies and teachings that were recorded by Nephi and never mentions any further records made by Lehi.

Lehi's record was the first record Nephi engraved onto his large plates. Nephi's abridgment and his summaries of the records that follow Lehi's record on the large plates appear to suggest that the abridgment covers the same time as the record Nephi calls "the record of my father."

## Conclusion

Nephi's term *the record of my father* appears to refer consistently to Lehi's record of events from no later than the first year of the reign of Zedekiah until Lehi was dwelling in a tent in the valley of Lemuel. The textual evidence reviewed herein demonstrates the possibility that Nephi's third-person abridgment of this record begins with 1 Nephi 1:4 and ends with 1 Nephi 2:15. This textual evidence suggests both Lehi's authorship (text written from his unique perspective) and Nephi's abridgment of this record (text written by Nephi in the third person and identified by Nephi as an abridgment). The abridgment sets the stage for Nephi's first-person narrative about his own ministry, which begins in 1 Nephi 2:16 with a description of a visit from the Lord. Nephi's account of his own ministry continues to the end of his record, but he interrupts it several times, including a pause in 1 Nephi chapter 9 for an aside about his two sets of plates.

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# THE FIRST EASTER

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**S. Kent Brown**

**Abstract:** *Scriptural accounts are rife with information about the import of the first Easter. Understanding the events of the week before the death and resurrection of Christ can help us appreciate the words of the witnesses as well as the importance of these events in our lives.*

All Easter celebrations, Orthodox or Western, reach back to the first Easter, beginning that Sunday morning when the Galilean women followers of Jesus went to the tomb and found it emptied of his body but with two angelic messengers present, one of whom announced the resurrection in what, we may presume, were well rehearsed words. That the women were Galileans is settled by the presence of Mary Magdalene and Joanna among them (Luke 8:2–3; 24:10). That Sunday was exactly a week after Jesus had entered Jerusalem after his long climb from Jericho (Mark 11:11). Although the Gospel accounts differ about the order of events, it appears that, once inside the temple, Jesus created havoc (Luke 19:45–46) before retreating back over the Mount of Olives to the safety of Bethany on the mount's eastern slope.

Jesus and his dozens of followers had arrived almost a week before Passover to purify themselves as required by Jewish law. After immersing themselves in ritual baths and receiving a sprinkling of water mixed with the ashes of a red heifer from a priest as they stepped onto the temple grounds, Jesus and his entourage spent several days together while he taught the throngs of people who had gathered from far and wide. Each night the moon grew fuller and fuller, expanding to a full moon on Passover itself.

As always, the mood in the city was light and happy; Passover was that kind of holiday. But beneath the positive exterior of temple authorities bubbled a boiling brew of anti-Jesus sentiment. From long before the moment that he and his friends streamed through the city

gate, these officials sought means to trap him and eliminate him. But how? Even though he was almost within their grasp, crowds of adoring admirers attended his every move. It was impossible to touch him. Then, like a puff of cooling air in their stifling room, Judas appeared. With the chief priests he made a deal to deliver Jesus to them (see Mark 14:10–11). The stage was now set with all its props. What remained was for the main actors to carry out their agreed roles. And indeed they did, with Judas leading a mixed band of soldiers and temple police to Gethsemane, where, since about midnight, Jesus had been suffering terribly, even “unto death,” as Mark wrote (Mark 14:34), and sweating “as it were great drops of blood” that fell onto “the ground,” as Luke reported (Luke 22:44).

Jesus’ suffering is partially captured in his movements in the garden. In Mark’s account, evidently the earliest of the Gospels, we find a series of verbs in the imperfect tense, a Greek tense that, among other things, describes customary and repeated action. For example, “She kept running” or “She was knitting a sweater.” In Mark’s case, the scene that he presents is Jesus going forward, falling onto the ground, and praying; then going forward, falling, and praying; then again going forward, falling, and praying (Mark 14:35). Jesus’ repeated actions remind us of an athlete who, in performing at a level that causes extreme pain, adjusts the body’s position to lessen the pain, even if the adjustment brings only a tiny bit of relief. In Gethsemane, it seems plain that Jesus kept moving and falling to the earth in an effort to find any kind of relief from the pain and anguish that had suddenly engulfed him.

In quick sequence that morning came Jesus’ so-called “mock trial” before Jewish authorities and his two appearances before the Roman prefect Pilate, interspersed with his hearing in front of Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee but was in town for the Passover feast. Although Pilate declared Jesus to be innocent no fewer than three times, he caved in to the demands of the gathered allies of the priests that Jesus be executed by crucifixion — “Crucify him, crucify him” (Luke 23:21) — a type of death that Roman soldiers had perfected in all its cruelty.

It is notable that, according to Luke, Jesus kept up his litany of warnings to the people of Jerusalem on his way to the place of execution, anticipating the fall of the city 40 years later and addressing particularly the women who were watching his steps. He kept pleading, “weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children, ... [because] the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck” (Luke 23:28–29). The Roman siege of the city, which Jesus foresaw, would bring “great tribulation on the

Jews, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, such as was not before sent upon Israel, of God, since the beginning of their kingdom until this time” (Joseph Smith–Matthew 1:18).

Hung between two criminals, Jesus helped one of them to make peace with his eternal destiny, somewhat improved because of his contrition, securing a place at Jesus’ side “in paradise,” a scene that only Luke narrates (Luke 23:43). At last, after three hours of intense suffering, Jesus gave up his spirit, speaking in “a loud voice, [and] saying, Father, it is finished, thy will is done” (Joseph Smith Translation Matthew 27:54).

While Jesus’ body lay in the tomb, on Saturday, the day before his resurrection, he betook himself not to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath but to free the spirits of people held captive in the spirit prison, where the souls of all dead persons go after death. The New Testament is home to a number of references to Jesus’ activities that day because of their significance, but without much clarifying description except in 1 Peter 3:18–19. There we read of Jesus “being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (see also Luke 4:18; Ephesians 4:8–10; 1 Peter 4:6). In art, in paintings typically carrying the title *Anastasis*, Jesus is portrayed as assisting Adam and Eve to escape the bonds of that prison before anyone else. We might compare D&C 138:38–39, where, in the vision of Joseph F. Smith, Adam and Eve receive first mention, hinting that President Smith saw them before seeing others.

Matthew preserves the only account that comes close to an eyewitness report of the resurrection itself. Even that rehearsal is unsure because we don’t know if the guards posted at the tomb by Jewish authorities saw Jesus depart the chamber. They apparently saw “the angel of the Lord ... [whose] countenance was like lightning” and who “descended ... and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.” By that point, presumably, the guards were “as dead men” and did not see Jesus leave the tomb (Matthew 28:2, 4). But enough detail lies in the story to tell us that the guards talked, and people listened to their experience (Matthew 28:11–15). Yet the angel was the only on-site witness.

But witnesses of a different sort soon made themselves known to other believers. Early that Sunday, the now-resurrected Christ granted appearances to three individuals. The first was to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9). After reporting the empty tomb to the disciples Peter and John and hurrying back to it, Mary lingered near the tomb, where the risen Jesus appeared to her and empowered her to bear witness to his “brethren” about his ascent to the “Father” (John 20:1–18). From John’s narrative we

learn that she was not allowed to touch the risen Lord before she went to inform the other disciples (the Greek verb *haptomai* means more than a mere touch, instead signifying “to embrace” or “to cling to”). She simply saw him, recognized him, and heard him speak, which was enough.

Peter received the second appearance. We know almost nothing about Peter’s encounter with the Savior except that it occurred. Neither of the sources records where and what time of day. But surely this meeting was most important, because it established Peter as the chief guarantor of the resurrection, as its chief witness among the Eleven (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:3–5).

The risen Christ then went to his younger brother James. The Apostle Paul merely mentions that Jesus “was seen of James” (1 Corinthians 15:7). A fragmentary apocryphal text, excerpted by the early Christian author Jerome from the now-lost Gospel of the Hebrews, may fill in some of the details. From it we learn that James had begun to fast at the Last Supper, saying that he would not eat “until he should see [Jesus] risen from among them that sleep.” After his resurrection, we read, Jesus found James. In a scene touched by a tender familial loyalty and love, “the Lord ... took the bread, and blessed it and brake it and give it to James,” allowing his brother to break his long fast.

Other appearances occurred during that Sunday, creating witnesses in clumps. Early that morning, Jesus met the women who were rushing to tell others about the empty tomb. In an act of adoration, these women “came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him” (Matthew 28:8–10). During the afternoon, Jesus joined two believing travelers on their way to the town of Emmaus. When the travelers reached their destination, it became suddenly clear to them that they had enjoyed the company and instruction of the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:13–32).

In the evening, Jesus came to a gathering of disciples that included all the apostles except Thomas, the two travelers to Emmaus, and others of his close associates from Galilee. With them he partook of food and empowered them by giving them the gift of the Holy Ghost to begin their ministries (Luke 24:33–44; John 20:19–23). All this took place during an all-night teaching session wherein the risen Jesus “opened ... their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.” In the early morning light, “he led them out as far as to Bethany” before ascending “into heaven” (Luke 24:45, 50–51).

This is not the end of the story, of course. We learn that Jesus spent almost six weeks with the Eleven, and perhaps others, in Galilee and Jerusalem, teaching them in a series of training meetings about “the kingdom” (Matthew 28:16; Mark 16:7; John 21:1–19; Acts 1:1–4). According

to Paul, at an important gathering “he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once,” measurably adding to the number of witnesses of his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:6). Now the resurrected Savior had created a wave of witnesses who would wash across the landscape from Jerusalem to Rome and beyond, bathing those first listeners in the fragrant liquid of the gospel and carrying all believers like boats to a celestial place, a celestial home.

That first Easter is still commemorated to this day, and witnesses to the resurrected Lord still tell the joyous and joyful message of his conquering the grave. The message rings throughout the ages: he lives, he lives who once was dead! This Easter, in a distant echo of the first, believers can still be lifted and buoyed toward their celestial home, reassured in the hope of a Christ risen and appearing still.

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# THE CRUCIFIXION AS A MOCKERY, WITNESS, AND WARNING OF THE JUDGMENT

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George L. Mitton

*ABSTRACT: In its action, setting, and arrangement, the crucifixion may be viewed as a stark mockery of the final judgment scene. This article provides a brief review of the relevant scriptures, considered together with some related apocryphal and other early Christian writings of interest in regard to the crucifixion. These sources point to the interpretation that the gospel writers saw in the crucifixion a striking symbolism that can provide a strong reminder, witness, and warning of the coming judgment. The Lord is seen in the crucifixion as at once representing His humility in submitting Himself to be judged and, conversely, His authority and power to be the judge of all. The crucifixion signifies the concept of a reciprocal or two-way judgment, as emphasized in the Book of Mormon, where mankind first judges the Lord, and later are to be judged accordingly by Him in return.*

An important and neglected aspect of the crucifixion is its function as a vivid reminder and warning of the final judgment. A greater recognition of this relationship could be helpful at this time of growing secularization, allowing the Lord's suffering to reawaken a sense of reality in regard to the coming judgment. It could also be a constructive and vital influence in the maintenance of Christian morality. A most forceful and stirring witness and warning of the judgment can be seen in the crucifixion.

## Reminders of the Judgment in the Crucifixion

In the New Testament description of the crucifixion, Jesus is seen crucified together with two thieves or *malefactors*, "on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (John 19:18). More specifically, in each of the three synoptic gospels, the thieves are seen "*the one on his right hand,*

and the other on his left.”<sup>1</sup> It is very significant that the gospel writers expressed the arrangement in this manner, for the description is in the *language and imagery of the judgment* — the right/left concept found many places in the scriptures.<sup>2</sup> The crucifixion may be understood as an inexpressibly perverse and diabolical mockery of the final judgment scene. While hideously distorted and grotesque, it nevertheless portrays the judgment, reflecting the striking imagery where men are separated on the right or left hand of God.

The two thieves, to whom the Lord is pointing or designating, may be considered as representing a sinful and “crucified” or judged humanity, exemplifying the separation of persons at the judgment. Mankind may well relate to the thieves or malefactors, for “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The thieves represent persons of differing response to the outstretched Christ. One thief railed against the Lord’s authority in words reminiscent of Lucifer in the temptation:<sup>3</sup> “If thou be Christ, save thyself and us” (Luke 23:39). The penitent thief, presumably on the Lord’s right hand,<sup>4</sup> acknowledges both the innocence of Jesus and his own transgressions while recognizing Christ’s kingship and thus the right to preside at the judgment: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). The narratives of the crucifixion abound with overtones of judgment. Thus, the purple robe of royalty, the flimsy reed or scepter with the “reed in his right hand,”<sup>5</sup> the mock title of kingship placed over His head, the crown of thorns, and the bended knee as they “*mocked him*, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!”<sup>6</sup> It is His kingship that is being derided, with its right to judge.

In 1968 an ancient tomb dated from New Testament times was discovered in the area of Jerusalem, having the remains of a crucifixion. While extended on the cross, the person crucified nevertheless appears

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1. Mark 15:27. Parallels in Matthew 27:38 and Luke 23:33. Cf. Gospel of Philip 115:25 where the apostles refer to the Cross as “the right” and “the left” in R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 128.

2. As examples: Psalms 80:17, 110:1–6; Matthew 22:44, 25:31–34; 27:29; Acts 2:33–35, 7:55–56; Hebrews 1:3, 10:12, 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Mosiah 26:23–28; Alma 5:58; Moroni 9:26; D&C 29:12, 27; Moses 7:56–57.

3. Cf. Luke 4:3 on the Temptation.

4. In apocryphal sources, the penitent thief is distinctly on the right. Cf. M. R. James, *Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 104, 116, 163.

5. Matthew 27:29.

6. Ibid. Cf. Matthew 20:19, where Christ was delivered to the Gentiles to “mock” Him.



to have been in a *sitting posture*.<sup>7</sup> This, the first archaeological example of crucifixion, tends to verify the statements of some prominent early Christian writers that there was in crucifixions a protrusion or crude seat extended from the cross. As Richard Lloyd Anderson has noted,

Justin Martyr speaks of a protrusion on the cross at its center, which carried the weight of the crucified. (*Dialogue* 91:2.). On this rough "seat," the contemporary Irenaeus says, "the person rests who is fixed by the nails." (*Against Heresies* 2.23.4.). In other words, the nails did not basically support the body: the makeshift saddle at the crotch did. Tertullian called this feature a "projecting seat." (*Ad Nationes* 1:12.) ... These early scholars knew the normal ancient practices, which were designed to prolong death in punitive torture.<sup>8</sup>

The very painful sitting arrangement assured that the full weight of the body would not have been held by the nails above. It prevented the collapse of the body and would increase and extend the time of agony. It is a scene of even greater distress than that assumed in many later works of art that do not show a sitting position. Importantly, it strongly lends support to a belief that in the crucifixion may be seen a *mockery of the throne or judgment seat, with the Lord sitting in judgment*. This accords with an apocryphal description of the mockery, as in the Gospel of Peter, which says that "they put on him a purple robe, and made him sit upon the seat of judgement, saying: Give righteous judgement, thou King of Israel."<sup>9</sup>

In reviewing the scriptures pertaining to the crucifixion, I am much impressed that early Christians apparently saw in the setting of the crucifixion a remarkable symbolism that foreshadows Christ's judgment of mankind. I also cite some apocryphal and related ancient Christian sources that display close affinity and tend to confirm this point of view. What especially supports the interpretation that the gospels were deliberately written in terms alluding to the judgment scene is the usage leading up to the crucifixion narrative. In Matthew's gospel, the Lord first gives the parable of the sheep and the goats with its judgment setting where the Son of Man sits on His throne in the judgment of all nations as "the King" and "separate[s] them one from another, as a shepherd

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7. V. Tzaferis, "Jewish Tombs at and near Giv'at ha-Mivtar," *Israel Exploration Journal* 20, nos.1-2 (1970): 18-32.

8. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Ancient Practice of Crucifixion," *Ensign* 5, no. 7 (July 1975): 33.

9. Gospel of Peter 3:7-8, in James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 91.

divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left” (See Matthew 25:31–34, 41). Soon after this parable, the Lord is seen at the trial in which He was found guilty of death for blasphemy when He claimed He was the Christ and declared, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man *sitting on the right hand* of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”<sup>10</sup>

Matthew unfolds a remarkable contrast here, showing the Lord’s humility in submitting Himself for judgment, but also His subsequent power and authority to preside in judgment. The description of the crucifixion soon follows and also draws this contrast, even more impressively, simultaneously affording a strong reminder of *both* the Lord’s humility, and His power and authority to be exercised later at the judgment. After the mockery of the crucifixion, in a post-resurrection setting, the Lord declared: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18).

### The Crucifixion and the Two-Way Judgment

In the Book of Mormon, the crucifixion is closely related to the judgment and is explained as essential preparation for it, “that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day.”<sup>11</sup> The crucifixion was “done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.”<sup>12</sup>

The judgment is viewed as a reciprocal or two-way action between Christ and mankind, for “it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him.”<sup>13</sup> Jesus voluntarily submitted to the judgment of men in the crucifixion, not only to the judgment of His immediate generation, but to those in every age as they learn of Him. Nephi saw that “the Son of the everlasting God was *judged of the world*” and “*lifted up* upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world.”<sup>14</sup> All will need to respond to a basic question raised in the gospel: “What think ye of Christ?” (Matthew 22:42). Eventually, all men must judge Jesus and, according to their response to Him and His teachings, they will later be judged by Him, for “with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged:

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10. Matthew 26:64. Christ is “set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1).

11. 2 Nephi 9:22.

12. Mosiah 3:10; cf. Helaman 14:15–29.

13. 2 Nephi 9:5. The term “two-way judgment” was suggested to me by Hugh Nibley when I corresponded with him on the principle of reciprocity in the judgment. Hugh Nibley, letter to author, January 8, 1966.

14. 1 Nephi 11:32–33. Cf. Christ as “the measured” in Gospel of Philip 110:10–16.

and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”<sup>15</sup> His exemplary life and doctrine will afford everyone the opportunity to form a judgment of Him, while the contrasting and cruel manner of His death demands a response with the mind and the heart. Even today an unbelieving generation can “judge him to be a thing of naught,”<sup>16</sup> and may even “assent unto” His death<sup>17</sup> and “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame,”<sup>18</sup> thus sharing responsibility for His crucifixion. Indeed, all who have sinned must share that responsibility to some degree.

The two-way judgment receives its clearest expression in the Book of Mormon. It is found in a saying of the Lord to the Nephites after His resurrection:

... my Father sent me that I might be *lifted up* upon the cross; and after that I had been *lifted up* upon the cross, that I might *draw all men* unto me, that as I have been *lifted up* by men even so should men be *lifted up* by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil — And for this cause have I been *lifted up*; therefore ... I will *draw all men* unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.” (3 Nephi 27:14–15)

This passage should be compared with that in John’s gospel where the same terminology appears but without the explanation given in the Book of Mormon: “Now is the judgment of this world ... and I, if I be *lifted up* from the earth, will *draw all men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.”<sup>19</sup> It has generally been recognized that John’s use of the term *lifted up* here refers to the exaltation and glorification of Christ.<sup>20</sup> Indeed the term is used in the scriptures to denote exaltation.<sup>21</sup> However, in the Book of Mormon here *lifted up* clearly has a double meaning and is used as a technical term to refer at

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15. Matthew 7:2. Even the dead will learn and be judged of him; 1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6; D&C 138.

16. 1 Nephi 19:9; cf. Mark 9:12.

17. D&C 132:27.

18. Hebrews 6:6; cf. D&C 76:35.

19. John 12:31–33; cf. John 8:28.

20. The possible *double entente* in John is noted in C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 375–78. The term *lifted up* could suggest “either promotion or execution,” although the “passage ... remains enigmatic, and probably intentionally so.”

21. See, for example, Psalms 30:1, Acts 3:7, 3 Nephi 27:22.

once to contrasting concepts, both to His humility in submitting to the judgment of men, and to His subsequent exaltation and judgeship. He is *lifted up* or held up for evaluation and judgment, only to be *lifted up* and exalted to the judgment seat. Similarly, the term *draw all men* can convey two meanings, where men may be drawn to the Lord through love,<sup>22</sup> or forced to Him in the judgment.

In Latter-day Saint scriptures, the term *lifted up* is of great antiquity and appears in a context that mentions or alludes to both the crucifixion and the judgment. It is used thus by Enoch, the Brother of Jared, Nephi, and Zenock.<sup>23</sup> In an early source, it appears in a setting that draws a touching contrast between the Lord's humility and exaltation — the Lord shall “be treated with outrage, and He shall be *lifted up* upon a tree ... And I know how lowly He shall be upon earth, and how glorious in heaven.”<sup>24</sup> This is reminiscent of Peter's use of *cross* as *tree* in Acts 5 and Acts 10, where in each passage, with striking economy of expression, appear the ideas of rejection, humiliation, crucifixion, exaltation, and judgeship.

Implicit in the concept of a two-way judgment is the idea that a great reversal will occur among men, when “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”<sup>25</sup> This truth applied eminently to Christ, but it will also apply to all mankind. In the Old Testament, this reversal is a basic and recurring theme in Isaiah. There, when the Lord “shall judge among the nations ... the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted ... [the] proud and lofty... every one that is *lifted up*... shall be brought low.”<sup>26</sup> All nature is called upon to witness this reversal among men, for “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low” (Isaiah 40:4). In the Book of Mormon, there is an allusion to this figure in the description of the destructions or *judgments* accompanying the crucifixion, and these upheavals are seen as preliminary witnesses and warnings of the future judgment.<sup>27</sup>

Significantly, when the lord is *lifted up*, John sees both His rejection and exaltation prefigured in Old Testament prophecy. It is to Isaiah that

22. 2 Nephi 26:24.

23. Pearl of Great Price, Moses 7:55–56; Ether 4:1–10; 1 Nephi 11:33–36, 19:10.

24. Testament of Benjamin 9:3–5 (emphasis added), in R. H. Charles, ed. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 2: 358–59.

25. Matthew 23:12. Cf. Luke 1:52, 16:19–26; 1 Samuel 2:1–10; Psalms 147:6; Ezekiel 17:24.

26. Isaiah 2:4–12.

27. Helaman 14:20–29; 3 Nephi 8:5–25, 9:3–12, 10:9–14.

he calls attention following his reference to the Lord *lifted up*, citing both Isaiah's prophecy of Christ's rejection and his contrasting vision of the Lord in glory, "sitting upon a throne, high and *lifted up*."<sup>28</sup> Clearly it was the understanding of John that Isaiah saw the pre-existent Christ and comprehended the contrasts of His mission, an interpretation also given in the Book of Mormon.<sup>29</sup> It is most instructive to see how the remarkable term *lifted up* is used in opposite and contrasting ways and meanings in the scriptures. It is like the rites and ordinances that have rich meanings, at once representing or symbolizing more than one thing.<sup>30</sup>

Further, in John 3:14–15, Jesus is quoted as saying that "as Moses *lifted up* the serpent ... so must the Son of Man be *lifted up*: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." This was said in reference to Numbers 21 where those who were bitten by serpents were healed if they would but *look upon* the symbol *lifted up* by Moses. In the Book of Mormon, this type and symbol is explained as foreshadowing both the crucifixion of Christ and the judgment of men and thus illustrates the reciprocal concept.<sup>31</sup> Men judge Christ as they *look upon* Him, or "view his death, and suffer his cross."<sup>32</sup> Those who reject Him refuse to be healed.<sup>33</sup> Christ can heal the individual soul or "heal the nations"<sup>34</sup> when He is looked upon with faith, while healing is essentially an act of judgment whereby things are set in order by appropriate authority.

The crucifixion then is a crucial or pivotal thing, and may be seen as symbolic of the two-way judgment. A prominent feature of the post-resurrection narratives is their mention of the Lord's display of the tokens of the crucifixion, such as the marks in His hands.<sup>35</sup> In the judgment, men are to be reminded of the crucifixion, for "they shall *look upon* me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn."<sup>36</sup>

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28. Isaiah 6:1; cf. John 12:37–41.

29. 2 Nephi 9:1–5, 11:1–8.

30. See the discussion of *lifted up* in Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen, "By the Blood are Ye Sanctified": The Symbolic, Salvific, Interrelated, Additive, Retrospective, and Anticipatory Nature of the Ordinances of Spiritual Rebirth in John 3 and Moses 6," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 24 (2017): 123–316, esp. 128–31.

31. 2 Nephi 25:13–20; Alma 33:19–22; Helaman 8:13–16. Cf. Epistle of Barnabas 12:2–6 in "The Epistle of Barnabas," Early Christian Writings, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/barnabas-lake.html>.

32. Jacob 1:8.

33. John 12:40.

34. 2 Nephi 25:20.

35. John 20:25–28; Luke 24:38–40; 1 John 1:1; 3 Nephi 11:14.

36. Zechariah 12:10; cf. Revelation 1:17; D&C 45:49–53.

## Repentance, Judgment, and Figurative Crucifixion

If through the crucifixion Jesus submitted to the judgment of the world, it is also Jesus “by whom the world is crucified” (Galatians 6:14).<sup>37</sup> In every person there is a direct counterpart to the crucifixion, whether in repentance or in the coming judgment. This relationship is strongly reflected in rites and ordinances that at once symbolize the crucifixion and anticipate the judgment.<sup>38</sup> The concept may be seen in the rites and ceremonies in which the Latter-day Saints participate, and is most apparent in the scriptures regarding baptism. It was Jesus who made the analogy in alluding to His coming sacrifice: “Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.”<sup>39</sup> This passage calls to mind the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper as well as baptism. The Lord’s Supper provides a frequent reminder of the crucifixion and the broken body and blood of Jesus, while relating the recipient to these things through repentance. It also looks to the promise that in the time of judgment, the righteous will literally eat and drink as the Lord’s companions as did the disciples during His post-resurrection appearances.

As a fundamental initiatory rite, the symbolism behind baptism is common to such rites, since “the primary object of ‘initiation ceremonies’ is to effect rebirth by means [that] mimic death and resurrection.”<sup>40</sup> Baptism relates each initiate to crucifixion, death, judgment, and resurrection. The repentant are baptized “after the manner of his burial,”<sup>41</sup> the baptismal font being “instituted as a similitude of the grave.”<sup>42</sup> The Apostle Paul taught that the Christian is “baptized into his death ... buried with him by baptism into death,” and that “our old man is *crucified with him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed ... for the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:3–4, 6, 23).

In his early *Lectures on the Ordinances*, Cyril of Jerusalem (d. A.D. 386) has this insightful description of the imitative quality of the ordinances:

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37. Cf. “For Jesus came crucifying the world,” in Gospel of Philip 111:24.

38. On the judgment aspects see C. F. D. Moule, “The Judgment Theme in the Sacraments,” in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 464–81.

39. Mark 10:39.

40. E. O. James, “Initiatory Rituals,” in *Myth and Ritual: Essays on the Myth and Ritual of the Hebrews in Relation to the Cultural Pattern of the Ancient East*, ed. S. H. Hooke (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 147.

41. D&C 76:51.

42. D&C 128:13.

O strange and paradoxical thing! We did not die in reality, nor were we really buried, nor did we rise up after having been actually crucified. Rather, it was imitation (*mimesis*) by a token (*eikoni*), while the salvation part is the real thing. Christ was really crucified, really was buried, and really rose again, and all that for our benefit, so that by sharing his sufferings in imitation we might attain to a real salvation. O love of men overflowing! Christ really received the nails in his blameless hands and feet and suffered pain; while I, without any pain or struggle, by his sharing of suffering the pain, enjoy the fruits of salvation!<sup>43</sup>

Because death “represents, to biblical thinking, the ultimate verdict on sin, ... [b]aptism is voluntary death ... a pleading guilty, an acceptance of the sentence.”<sup>44</sup> Repentance, then, is an early and voluntary submission to the judgment of God. As it precedes the symbolic burial it is a counterpart to Christ’s crucifixion, or His voluntary submission to the judgment of the world. Those who repent must also endure “the crosses of the world,”<sup>45</sup> and each must, as Jesus said, “deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”<sup>46</sup>

If sins are great, repentance can indeed be painful, as Alma witnessed in the Book of Mormon: “So great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror ... there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as my pains,” yet through the process of repentance he came to be “filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!”<sup>47</sup> The theme is *judgment*, with the willingness to experience it while repentance is possible and the suffering of one’s “crucifixion” can be minimized, that one may be “*lifted up* at the last day.”<sup>48</sup>

But if the righteous are figuratively “crucified” through repentance, so are the unrepentant “crucified” in the judgment. The Lord has said that the suffering of “those who are found on my left hand” may be *likened* to the crucifixion in the following remarkable passage:

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43. As quoted by Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*. 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 515, 520. Cf. Romans 8:17.

44. Moule, “Judgment Theme in the Sacraments,” 465.

45. 2 Nephi 9:18.

46. Mark 8:34; cf. Luke 9:22–23.

47. Alma 36:14–21.

48. Alma 36:3.

Therefore I command you to repent — repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore — how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit — and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink —

Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (D&C 19:15–19)

Here we are reminded that there are many counterparts to the crucifixion. If the Lord was pierced, “the rebellious shall be pierced with much sorrow.”<sup>49</sup> If he was scourged, they shall be scourged.<sup>50</sup> If he is rejected of men, they shall be rejected in the judgment.<sup>51</sup> If he was made to tremble and shrink,<sup>52</sup> those “who live without God in the world” shall “tremble, and shrink beneath the glance of his all-searching eye.”<sup>53</sup> Those who are ashamed of the Lord, of them “also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh.”<sup>54</sup> If they failed to “see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart” when the Lord was *lifted up*,<sup>55</sup> in the judgment “there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.”<sup>56</sup> Conversely, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered ... the heart” the blessings of those who love the Lord in the judgment. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9) Many examples could be cited showing the reciprocal or contrasting use of such terminology.

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49. D&C 1:3; cf. Revelation 1:7.

50. Matthew 20:19; 1 Nephi 19:9, 13. Cf. Acts of John 95:6: “I will be wounded, And I will wound.” in Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 2:228.

51. John 12:48.

52. D&C 19:18.

53. Mosiah 27:31

54. Mark 8:38. Those “wicked on my left hand will I be ashamed to own before the Father” (D&C 29:27).

55. Isaiah 6:1,10. Cf. Matthew 13:14–15; John 12:40.

56. D&C 1:2.



The faithful find no need to fear the judgment. Rather, the reminders of His suffering engender their love: “Because thou didst receive a crown of thorns for our sakes, let us who have loved thee put on a crown that does not fade away... Because thou didst rise and come to life again, let us come to life again and live and stand before thee in righteous judgment!”<sup>57</sup> The righteous welcome the “pleasing bar” of God when they “may not shrink with awful fear” on that “glorious day when justice shall be administered” unto them.<sup>58</sup> The reminder of the Cross is not necessarily one of fear, but of a two-way responsibility. The judgment “will become a day of covenant for the elect and inquisition for the sinners.”<sup>59</sup>

### **The Arms of Mercy *and* Judgment**

Both the submission of God and the judgment of men are tersely expressed in the Gospel of Philip, where Christ appears as “the spread out” or stretched-out One who “came crucifying the world.”<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in the early Christian Sibyllines we read of the “tree ... on which God was stretched out” in the crucifixion, “when he stretches out his hands and measures all things, And wears the crown of thorns,” or when “He shall stretch out his hands and measure the whole world.”<sup>61</sup> This imagery is representative, for the stretching out or extension of the hands and arms is very often interpreted as a sign of the crucifixion in early Christian literature.<sup>62</sup> The figure appears in a post-resurrection prophecy of Jesus found at the close of the Gospel of John. Here, Peter is warned that “when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands,” John adding, “This spake he, signifying by what death” Peter “should glorify God.”<sup>63</sup> The “analogy points to crucifixion, and traditional history is

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57. Acts of Thomas, 158, in Hennecke, 2:526. Cf. Gospel of Bartholomew 4:62: “You who wore a crown of thorns, in order to prepare for us repentant sinners the precious heavenly crown,” in Hennecke, 1:501.

58. 2 Nephi 9:46; Cf. Jacob 6:13; Moroni 10:34.

59. 1 Enoch 60:6 in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:40.

60. Gospel of Philip 111:23–24. Compare Christ as the “Word stretched out” in Acts of Peter 38, in Hennecke, 2:320.

61. Christian Sibyllines 6:26, 1:372, 8:302, in Hennecke, 2:720, 711, 735. Conversely, consider Christ as “the measured” in Gospel of Philip 110:13.

62. “I extended my hands and approached my Lord, because the stretching out of my hands is his sign. And my extension is the common cross, that was *lifted up* on the way of the Righteous One.” Odes of Solomon 42:1–2 in Charlesworth 2:770, emphasis added.

63. John 21:18–19; cf. John 12:33.

without contradiction as to this being the death by which Peter sealed his testimony of the Christ.”<sup>64</sup>

The figure of the outstretched arms is rich with varied connotations representing God’s agency, dominion, power, protection, blessing, designation, or instruction.<sup>65</sup> It touches on many aspects of His relationship to mankind. Among mankind it shows supplication, or the sharing of God’s power, as when “Moses ... spread abroad his hands unto the Lord; and the thunders and hail ceased.”<sup>66</sup> However, the imagery of the extended arms and hands is used prominently to represent God’s judgment, or conversely, to show His mercy, forbearance, and redemption. Consequently, it may be seen as a symbol of the contrasting and two-way aspects of the crucifixion. Thus, it is declared that the Lord “will redeem you with a stretched out arm,”<sup>67</sup> while His mercy and forbearance is manifested in Isaiah 65:2 — “I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people.” The latter passage is cited in the Epistle of Barnabas as being a specific reference to the cross. In contrast, the same writing points to Exodus 17 where the idea of judgment and power is associated with this figure.<sup>68</sup> There, Moses prevailed in battle while “extending holy arms,” typifying the Christ.<sup>69</sup> Here “Israel prevailed” while “Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side” (Exodus 17:11–12).

Usage in the Book of Mormon strongly suggests the same concept. Emphasis there is given to God’s “arm of mercy,”<sup>70</sup> and in a context which treats both repentance and judgment, with a reminder of reciprocal relationships: “cleave unto God as he cleaveth unto you,” for “how merciful is our God unto us, for he remembereth the house of Israel ...

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64. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1916), 693. Cf. 2 Peter 1:14; Acts of Peter, 37, in Hennecke, 2:319.

65. See, e.g., Jeremiah 15:6; Ezekiel 20:33; Mosiah 1:14; 3 Nephi 12:1; Book of Abraham 2:7, 3:12.

66. Exodus 9:29, 33. Cf. 1 Kings 8:22; Psalms 88:9, 143:6; Mosiah 12:2; Alma 14:10. Conversely, the opposition will “stretch forth his hand against the Son ... and crucify him on a tree.” Ascension of Isaiah 9:14, in Hennecke, 2:657.

67. Exodus 6:6. This formula appears repeatedly: Deuteronomy 4:34, 5:15, 7:19, 9:29, 11:2–9; cf. Psalms 136:10–16.

68. Epistle of Barnabas 12:2–4.

69. Christian Sibyllines 8:251, in Hennecke, 2:733. Cf. Justin Martyr, “Chapter XC — The Stretched-Out Hands of Moses Signified Beforehand the Cross,” in *Dialogue with Trypho*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-dialoguetrypho.html>. Compare also Justin Martyr, Chapter CXI in *Dialogue with Trypho*.

70. 3 Nephi 9:14.

and he stretches forth his hands unto them all the day long. . . . And while his arm of mercy is extended . . . harden not your hearts” (Jacob 6:4–5). Those who reject the Lord’s offer of repentance are warned that they “shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works . . . having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended toward them.”<sup>71</sup> They will have made “a mock of the great plan of redemption.”<sup>72</sup> Christ’s “arm of mercy hath atoned for your sins.”<sup>73</sup> His mercy and crucifixion prepare the way for repentance and redemption.

### An Enduring Image and Witness

Rise up, rise up, O holy cross,  
And lift me, O cross,  
I shall mount upon you, O cross  
They shall hang me upon you as  
a witness to them.<sup>74</sup>

When Christ the judge and king came in meekness, and with an arm of mercy, those who rejected Him did not know and recognize the time of their *visitation*.<sup>75</sup> Men will yet be visited in judgment, and “he that will not take up his cross and follow me” shall “know mine arm and mine indignation, in the day of *visitation* and of wrath upon the nations.”<sup>76</sup>

In the crucifixion we see Jesus extended and suffering on the cross, showing His great humility and mercy while portraying the judgment scene. Viewed in this perspective, the crucifixion becomes a deeply impressive witness of the judgment, albeit a stark mockery of the same. His submission and love are evident as He allows Himself to be *lifted up* for judgment, praying to the Father to forgive His persecutors. His

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71. Mosiah 16:10–12; cf. Alma 19:36, 29:10. In anger the Lord “stretched forth his hand against” those who despised his word (Isaiah 5:24–25).

72. Jacob 6:8.

73. D&C 29:1.

74. From a hymn attributed to Jesus in “an ancient Christian prayer book” discovered in Egypt in 1965. See Sangka Knox, “Old Coptic MS. Unearthed Near Abu Simbel,” *New York Times*, December 24, 1965. This and texts related to it appear to reflect the *lifted up* concept and the witness or testimony purpose. See Tony Burke & Brent Landau, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 1:195–6 and context.

75. Cf. Luke 19:44. The *visitation* is in mercy or judgment according to the preparation of men, 1 Nephi 19:11. The term is used in either sense. The contrasts are drawn in Hebrews 2:3–11 and strikingly in the Decalogue, Exodus 20:5–6.

76. D&C 56:1–2.

restraint symbolizes man's probationary state and freedom of choice to accept or reject the Lord and His teachings. Conversely, the crucifixion is a standing reminder of man's future accountability and relationship to Christ as Lord and judge.

The image of the judgment scene can leave a marked and enduring impression on the mind, affording a most compelling reminder and warning of the judgment whenever the crucifixion is contemplated. The remembrance of the cross as a symbol can also serve like a *crossroads*, where throughout life we frequently must make decisions left or right — to the wrong or to the right. If it “behoved Christ to suffer”<sup>77</sup> and to provide a witness of such transcendent import, the world should know and feel that “the Lord in his condescension” has “visited men in ... much mercy.”<sup>78</sup> One can begin to feel the overwhelming contrasts to be experienced at the last day.

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77. Luke 24:46.

78. 2 Nephi 4:26.

# PROCEDURAL VIOLATIONS IN THE TRIAL OF THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

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Steven T. Densley, Jr.

**Abstract:** *The story in John 8 of the woman taken in adultery is sometimes used to argue that Jesus was lenient toward sin and that we should be too. However, when placed in its broader context, we can see the story is not one in which Christ shows indifference or contempt for the law, but rather utmost respect for it.*

The story of the woman taken in adultery is sometimes referenced as an example of the love and forgiveness of Jesus. As Raymond Brown has observed, “Some have used this to paint their portrait of the liberal Christ and have turned it in to a maudlin justification for indifference toward sins of the flesh.”<sup>1</sup> Of course, as Christ exemplifies perfect love and is the embodiment of mercy, it is tempting to use this story as an illustration of Christ’s love and mercy. However, those who use the story as an example of how we should not judge others, that we should be forgiving of one another, or that Christ is against capital punishment,<sup>2</sup> fail to take into account the context in which the story takes place.

For example, it is important to remember that Jesus Christ gave Moses the law. He, as Jehovah, commanded that adulterers should be put to death.<sup>3</sup> Capital punishment for adultery was part of the Hebrew canon of laws at the time of Christ.<sup>4</sup> It would be curious indeed if He who gave the law was now advocating that the law not be enforced. Some may be inclined to resolve this incongruity on the basis that Christ was God, He who would pay for all sins on the cross and later stand in judgment of mankind (John 5:22; 1 John 2:2). Christ, the only person who has ever been totally without sin (Hebrews 4:15), paid the price for our sins. He therefore had the divine right to condemn a sinner or to forgive a repentant offender. However, He did not actually forgive the woman (John 8:11). Furthermore, the Pharisees did not believe that Jesus could forgive sins (Luke 5:21), and

yet somehow they were “convicted by their own conscience” (John 8:9). So what message did the Pharisees actually understand?

It has been suggested that Christ was teaching that while “the letter of the law seemed to compel Jesus to condemn the woman, ... his response shows that sometimes the righteousness of God is better served by redemptive and restorative grace.”<sup>5</sup> Was this Christ’s message? That the law should no longer be enforced since we have *all* sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23)? There is nothing in the text to indicate that the reason the Pharisees left is that they suddenly became converted to the principle of redemptive and restorative grace. So what could have caused them to leave?

It should be noted at the outset that much of the scholarly writing addressing this incident has examined the question of whether the story was authentic and an original part of the Gospel or was fabricated and inserted at some later time.<sup>6</sup> Of course, even if the episode was not an original part of the Gospel of John, we need not necessarily conclude that the story was apocryphal.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, regardless of whether or not the story actually happened, the question of why it was written and how we should interpret it is an interesting and important one. What was the writer of the story trying to teach by showing Jesus Christ apparently defending the adulteress and allowing her to escape punishment — a punishment He Himself had pronounced? In light of all the evidence that follows, it seems most reasonable to conclude that this is not a story of tolerance for sin but one of respect for the law.

In his article “Law in the New Testament: The Story of the Woman Taken in Adultery,” J. Duncan M. Derrett attempts to answer some of the more difficult questions raised by the story.<sup>8</sup> For example, what did Jesus write in the dust? And what prompted the accusers to retreat so quickly? Derrett believes the accusers must have had impure motives in bringing the woman to Jesus. In collusion with the husband, Derrett believes, the men set the woman up to be caught in the act of adultery, which was contrary to the requirements of the law. He speculates that Jesus wrote words of the law on the floor of the temple, reminding the accusers that they must not serve as witnesses in a trial brought under questionable circumstances and that one should not even lend his support to such an affair. These legal injunctions pointed out by Jesus caused the accusers to drop their stones and leave. My analysis attempts to go beyond the work of Derrett by drawing the focus more acutely on the potential motives and intentions of the accusers and the procedural requirements by which they would have had to abide in order to justly put a guilty woman to death.

**And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down and taught them.** (John 8:2)

The writer of this pericope begins by making it clear that Jesus began teaching as the light of the sun began to fill the sky. At least one commentator<sup>9</sup> has noted how the symbolism evident in this passage is consistent with light imagery elsewhere in the Gospel of John (John 1:4–9; 3:2; 7:50; 8:12; 9:4; 11:10; 13:30; 21:3–4).<sup>10</sup> The gospel writer began his book by stating that Christ was “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). Now, as the light of dawn filled the temple, so did Christ’s great example illuminate the minds and hearts of those present. “I am the light of the world,” He declared that morning. “[H]e that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The writer of the gospel then makes note of the fact that, consistent with Rabbinic practice for teachers, Christ was seated in the temple.<sup>11</sup> That this encounter took place in the temple is notable, since this was the proper place for performance of the ritual ordeal known as the Sotah, or the ordeal of the bitter waters (Numbers 5:11–31). The significance of this will be discussed below.

**And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.** (John 8:3–4)

Adultery in the law referred specifically to sexual intercourse between a man and a married woman (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22–24). The Greek word used here, from which “woman” was translated, usually refers to a married woman.<sup>12</sup> According to Derrett, “[t]here is no reason to doubt but that she was a married woman, though the word *μοιχεία* will admit of other possibilities.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Derrett continues, Jewish law and Semitic customs make it clear that the witnesses would have to have seen the woman actually engaging in sexual intercourse.<sup>14</sup> It seems clear that the woman was guilty.<sup>15</sup> The penalty for false accusation was severe — those who falsely accused a person of a capital offense could themselves be put to death (Deuteronomy 19:15–19). It seems unlikely then that the accusers in the story would so openly declare the guilt of the accused unless there was a firm basis for the accusation.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the words of Jesus himself acknowledged the guilt of the woman when he later told her to “sin no more” (John 8:11).

Yet, while it does not seem likely that the witnesses falsely accused the woman, it does seem likely the woman was entrapped or set up to be caught in the act. The reason this seems likely is that it would be difficult to catch someone in the act of adultery. Since adultery was a capital crime, illicit lovers would have every incentive to avoid detection, and the law required two eyewitnesses to the event (Deuteronomy 17:6). Because the husband could not serve as a witness against his wife,<sup>17</sup> two or three others would have to actually see the man and woman engaging in intercourse.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that the suspicious husband may have planned an elaborate situation whereby his wife might be caught in the act of adultery. He may then have hired witnesses<sup>19</sup> to lie in wait until the couple engaged in sexual intercourse, at which point it could be said that the crime of adultery had been committed. This would mean the witnesses were not paragons of integrity simply trying to enforce the law. Such witnesses may have had material incentive to condemn the woman, casting doubt on their characters. In fact, their actions would have brought them under suspicion of breaking the law themselves, an idea discussed below.

A further indication that the accusers were corrupt is the conspicuous absence of the male offender. The law required that both culprits be executed (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). It may be that the husband or the witnesses were willing to accept a bribe<sup>20</sup> from the male. But the female, unable to offer a bribe, since her money would become her husband's upon her death anyway, had little power to buy her freedom. Finally, the husband had incentives to execute his guilty wife, while the same incentives to kill the male lover did not exist. This point will be discussed further since the questionable motives of the husband and the witnesses raises a key issue in interpreting this story.<sup>21</sup>

**Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? (John 8:5)**

The law of Moses stated in Leviticus 20:10, "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Deuteronomy 22:22 said, "If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel" (see also Ezekiel 16:40). During the time of Jesus, as Derrett and Brown have written, stoning was the way in which a woman guilty of adultery was punished.<sup>22</sup>

Some commentators have noted that alternatives to execution existed in the case of punishing a woman caught in the act of adultery. The



alternatives included divorce (Jeremiah 3:8; Deuteronomy 24:1–4)<sup>23</sup> and the husband stripping the woman naked and driving her from the home (Hosea 2:2–5; Jeremiah 13:22–26; Ezekiel 16:37–39 & 23:29; Nahum 3:5).<sup>24</sup> While some of the alternatives to capital punishment appear in the scriptures to be metaphorical, Gordis points out that “were . . . [alternatives to stoning] out of the question, the use of [such] metaphor[s] by the prophets in their pleas for Israel’s return to God would have been totally self-defeating.”<sup>25</sup> However, while it is possible these alternatives existed, no one disputes that execution was also an alternative that still existed in Jewish law during the time of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the accusers would have been acting in line with traditional Jewish law of the time by suggesting that it would be appropriate to put an adulteress to death by stoning.<sup>27</sup>

However, the fact the woman is said to have been caught “in the very act” seems suspicious. How did this happen? If the husband of the adulteress planned to capture the illicit lovers in the act, he must have suspected them of adultery in the first place. If he suspected adultery but decided to wait until he caught his wife in the act, it would further indict the husband and the witnesses, since the law made specific provisions for a husband who suspected his wife of adultery: the Sotah, or ordeal of the bitter waters.

This provision is found in Numbers 5:11–31. It allows a husband to accuse a woman of adultery without fear of punishment for false accusation. If the husband suspected adultery but had no witnesses, he could bring his wife and a jealousy offering of barley meal to the priest in order that she may undergo a sort of trial by ordeal. The priest began the ordeal by taking dust from the floor of the temple and mixing it in a vessel of holy water. Next, the priest uncovered the woman’s head and put the offering of meal in her hands. He then spoke an oath to the woman, saying:

If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband: The LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot.<sup>28</sup>

Afterward, the priest would write the words of the oath on parchment in water soluble ink. He would wash the parchment with the dirty water and let the water run back into the vessel for the woman to drink. The text says that if the woman is guilty, her belly will swell and her thigh

shall rot, and the woman shall be a curse among her people. If she is innocent, she will conceive a child.

The text concludes by saying that this is the law. When a husband suspects his wife of adultery, he must perform the requirements of this law in order to be guiltless from iniquity rather than set her up to be caught *in flagrante delicto*. Numbers 5:29–31 states:

This is the law of jealousies ... when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he ... shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.

So if a man does not submit his wife to the ordeal of the bitter waters when “the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him,” he will not be “guiltless from iniquity.” It seems, then, that the husband in our story may have brought iniquity upon himself by disregarding the law. Instead of following the law of jealousies as soon as he suspected his wife of adultery, he may have decided it would be preferable to find a way for his wife to be put to death.

There are numerous reasons why a husband would have a motive to defy the law of jealousies and seek his wife’s death instead of submitting her to the ordeal of the bitter waters. Presumably, once the ordeal was completed, the couple would return home and continue their lives, waiting for the results of the oath.<sup>29</sup> One would assume the results would take weeks if not months for signs to appear of the woman’s guilt or innocence. Once he found his wife could have no children, he could divorce his wife. Of course, a husband could divorce his wife anyway, without even putting her through the ordeal.<sup>30</sup> But if he were to divorce her without a clear cause,<sup>31</sup> he would lose the benefit of succeeding to her property as her heir,<sup>32</sup> and he would be required to repay the bride-price to his wife’s family.<sup>33</sup> So it would be wise to wait for the results of the ordeal before executing a divorce. Of course, if one had doubts about the ability of the ordeal to definitively determine the guilt of a wife, one would be tempted to find (or create) more clear evidence. Or if a husband did have confidence in the efficacy of the ordeal, he might have been reluctant to engage the trial of the bitter waters because he was guilty of adultery himself. According to rabbinical commentary, if a man had committed the crime himself, the ritual would not be effective in exposing the adultery of his wife.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, a jealous husband with the taint of sin upon himself would have reason to believe the ordeal of the bitter waters could not establish the guilt of his wife. Finally, a husband might be so overcome with jealousy that he would rather see his wife

killed immediately than wait several months for his suspicions to be confirmed, only then to divorce her. Therefore, a plausible motive existed for a suspicious husband to construct a way in which witnesses could catch his wife in sin.

**This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. (John 8:6a)**

Under Roman law, adultery was not a capital offense until the third century AD.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, Derrett claims the Sanhedrin was not allowed to try cases involving capital crimes.<sup>36</sup> So, if we assume, as many have, that the Jews were not allowed by the Romans to employ stoning for adultery, this surely would be a way to tempt Jesus into making a statement they could use to accuse him. If Jesus were to say that the woman should be stoned, as Mosaic law provided, the accusers could go to the Roman authorities accusing Jesus of speaking out against Roman authority and Roman law. In the alternative, if Jesus said the woman should not be executed, they could have accused Jesus of preaching doctrine contrary to the law of Moses. In spite of the fact that there may have been no due process available to enforce the death penalty, the Jews of the time were not above using capital punishment, though perhaps without Roman sanction. The Bible recounts examples of Jesus and Paul narrowly escaping the deadly wrath of lynch mobs (Luke 4:29; John 8:59 & 10:31; Acts 5:28), while Stephen was executed by stoning (Acts 7:58–59). In this context, therefore, the question of whether she should be stoned seems disingenuous. Indeed, it seems clear that the question was asked in order to “tempt” Jesus.<sup>37</sup>

**But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. (John 8:6b)**

Although no one really knows what Jesus scribbled in the dust, many have speculated about what Jesus might have written there.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, a short discussion of some of the possibilities is instructive.

Some have suggested that Jesus wrote the names of the wicked accusers on the floor of the temple, acting out the prophecy of Jeremiah 17:13: “all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.”<sup>39</sup> Ambrose speculated that Jesus wrote “earth, earth, write that these men have been disowned,” a saying also said to be inspired by Jeremiah, who wrote “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord” (Jeremiah 22:29), and “they that depart from

me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 17:13).<sup>40</sup>

Derrett speculates that since Jesus was probably sitting on a low stool and writing with his finger in the dirt, it is unlikely that He could have written more than 16 Hebrew characters.<sup>41</sup> Derrett further speculates that the writing was a text of law having to do with accusation and execution of offenders.<sup>42</sup> And since Christ’s oral comments relate to the function of witnesses, Derrett narrows the possibilities to one: “put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.”<sup>43</sup> Derrett points out that all the rabbis’ rules on disqualification of witnesses hinge upon this verse.<sup>44</sup> Jesus clearly recognized the impure motives of the accusers. Rather than fall into the trap of simply answering their question and giving them something with which to accuse him, Jesus removed himself from the situation by drawing in the dust. And by thus removing himself, the accusers became the accused. “[H]is refusal to be a party to what may be an unrighteous decision merges imperceptibly with a warning to the questioners that their own activities must be justifiable, and that it is not sufficient that they or some of them saw her in the act of adultery.”<sup>45</sup>

The act of Jesus’s writing in the dust brings a couple of images to mind. First, writing words of the law in the dust of the temple could serve to remind careful observers of the ritual of the bitter waters, in which the words of the law of jealousy were combined with dust of the temple floor in a mixture that could serve to set an accused adulteress free. However, this connection may have been lost on the minds of those present, since the process of taking dust from the temple floor was a particular one. The dust was taken from underneath a slab that lay to the right of the entrance to the sanctuary and not from any random location on the floor of the temple.<sup>46</sup>

Second, this act of Jesus’s reaching forth his finger, perhaps to write words of the law, brings to mind the finger of Jehovah writing the words of the ten commandments (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10).<sup>47</sup> This connection was also not likely made in the minds of the accusers, though it is a poignant reminder to the modern reader that it was Christ Himself who wrote the law.

**So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. (John 8:7)**

It is unlikely that a lynch mob could be halted in their tracks by a simple plea to be non-judgmental. However, the words of Jesus may actually have been a legal reference that implied that the accusers may

be subject to the very penalty they wished to impose upon the woman. The suggestion that the men themselves may be guilty of a capital offense would be enough to inspire the effect we read about in the narrative. This fact demands a legal interpretation of Christ's words.

The Law of Moses required that in the case of capital punishment, at least two witnesses to the offense were required, and that the witnesses should be those to initiate the execution by casting the first stones (Deuteronomy 17:6–7). As Derrett pointed out, the fact that stoning was even an issue means there must have been at least two witnesses to the act.<sup>48</sup>

As already noted, based on the law in Exodus 23:1, a witness could be disqualified on the basis of unrighteousness. According to Baylis, Deuteronomy is another place where strict requirements are placed on witnesses:

If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord ... if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother. ... [L]ife shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:16–19)

Where the verse reads, “If a malicious witness rises up against a man,” the word “malicious” is defined as “a witness that promotes violence and wrong.”<sup>49</sup> Another commentator has stated that the word “false” is used here to describe a perversion of justice; those who act falsely “are those who do violence to the Law, who use it for their own benefit.”<sup>50</sup> A statement found in the Talmud dating from the Second Temple period attributed to Shimon ben Shetah warned, “Examine the witnesses thoroughly, but be careful with your words, lest from them they learn to lie.”<sup>51</sup> The integrity of the witnesses was an essential element to the administration of justice. So just as the trial of a suspected adulteress (i.e., the ordeal of the bitter waters) demanded an untainted husband in order to be effective, so did the trial of an accused adulteress demand untainted witnesses in order to be legally effective.<sup>52</sup>

The Greek word *anamarthtoς*, used here in John 8:7 to describe being “without sin” (used nowhere else in the New Testament), occurs in 2 Maccabees 12:42 where, in context, it refers to being without the sin of idolatry.<sup>53</sup> This suggests that although the word could be used to communicate being without sin in general, it could also be used to mean being without sin in a specific sense as well. A variety of possibilities have been proposed for what the sins of the accusers might have been: failure to apply the ordeal of the bitter waters, conspiracy between the

woman's husband and the witnesses to plot for her execution, and failure to deliver both guilty parties for the trial. Furthermore, there may have been a transgression of the obligation to act to help prevent a brother's sin (See Leviticus 19:17; Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:15–16; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19).<sup>54</sup> (Or in this case the sin of a sister or a wife.) If the witnesses had lain in wait in order to catch the adulteress in the act, they would have hesitated to emerge from their hiding place until coitus had occurred. At this point, they would have been unable to help prevent the sin of the woman. So the accusers may have been guilty of a number of transgressions. But at the very least, it seems they would have been guilty of the sin of serving as “false” witnesses by promoting violence and wrong to the woman and doing violence to the law by using it for their own benefit.

**And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.**

(John 8:8)

Some early manuscripts, after the phrase “wrote on the ground,” included the words “the sins of every one of them.”<sup>55</sup> Metzger and Ehrman speculate that this phrase was added by an unknown copyist seeking to satisfy a natural curiosity concerning what it was that Jesus wrote upon the ground.<sup>56</sup> It is interesting to hypothesize that the accusers themselves might have been guilty of the crime of which they have accused the woman. While there is no textual support for this idea, adultery seems to have been a common occurrence. Jesus implies that the Jews of the time were an “adulterous generation” (Matthew 12:39; see also James 4:4). Also, not long after this time, the trial of the bitter waters was discontinued. The explanation given by Rabban Jochanan Ben Zacchai, who lived at the time of Jesus, was that the Sotah was abandoned because adultery was so openly prevalent.<sup>57</sup>

Derrett says that if he is correct in his theory about what Jesus wrote the first time, “there can be no doubt what it was Jesus wrote to round off his [judicial] ‘opinion.’”<sup>58</sup> He then cites Exodus 23:7a: “From a false matter keep far.” This is the verse upon which the rabbinical rule rests that one must not associate with a sinner as co-judge or co-witness.<sup>59</sup> It is unclear to what degree a witness had to have been free from sin. Of course, to an extent, this requirement would exclude everyone from being a competent witness. If Jesus was saying that only witnesses wholly without sin were eligible to testify and to perform the execution, it is curious that those present in the temple would feel inspired to drop the stones they held for use against the adulteress and then pick them up again to use against Jesus only a few minutes later (John 8:59). While the temple-goers do not seem to have felt an obligation to be completely

sinless, it seems they were at least convinced they had to be free from taint as regarding that which they were to testify.

Finally, the image of Christ writing words of the law again reminds us of the respect Christ had for the law since it was He who, as Jehovah, gave the law. And just as Jehovah wrote the words of the law twice, Christ wrote on the floor of the temple twice (Exodus 34:1–4, 28).<sup>60</sup>

**And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (John 8:9)**

Perhaps the accusers were reminded of the then popular story in the History of Susanna as they dropped their stones and left.<sup>61</sup> In this story, found in the Apocrypha, Susanna is a recently married woman who finds herself pursued sexually by two respected elders. The elders threatened that if she did not accept their advances, they would accuse her of adultery. Susanna refused to submit and was thus brought before the people to be accused and put to death on the false testimony of the two elders. A young man, called Daniel,<sup>62</sup> came to her defense and proved the elders had borne false witness. The two elders then suffered the same death they would have carried out on Susanna. Since this story was well known at the time,<sup>63</sup> it is quite possible the accusers were reminded of the story either by what Jesus had said to them or by what he wrote. This would be especially true if, as Derrett has suggested, Jesus wrote words from Exodus 23:7 on the ground, since this is the very verse Daniel cites in obtaining Susanna's acquittal.<sup>64</sup> The story of Susanna might also come to mind if, as some have suggested, the accusers themselves were guilty of adultery.<sup>65</sup>

The fact that the accusers did not argue the point Jesus made confirms that Jesus was not making a statement regarding the appropriateness of capital punishment. Clearly, capital punishment was not the issue but rather the competence of the accusers to carry out the punishment. The fact that Jesus did not press for the death penalty in this case has more to do with a respect for due process than with the attitude of Jesus toward forgiveness or even capital punishment. If He meant to teach that stoning should no longer be practiced He could have said so and explained why. Instead, He focused on the procedure by which an adulteress would justifiably be put to death and reminded the accusers that the proper procedure was not being followed according to the law. They could not argue with this point and so dropped their stones and left, one by one, as the significance of what He said and wrote in the dust began to sink in.

The group of men who came to accuse an adulteress and to accuse Jesus left, finding themselves accused by their own consciences.

**When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? (John 8:10)**

It is frustrating to all of us how our system of justice sometimes allows the guilty to go free. It appears the Jewish system of justice had the same problem. If the woman was guilty of adultery, why would Jesus let the woman go on a technicality? The example Jesus shows us is one not of ambivalence toward or defiance of the written law but one of utmost respect. The law required that those who served as witnesses and executioners should be competent in their duties. This point of law was so clear and so important that it was agreed upon by all those present — one who was guilty of a capital offense should be set free where no two people could competently stand against him or her.

**She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more. (John 8:11)**

It is significant to note that unlike other episodes with sinners (see e.g., Luke 7:36–50; Luke 23:34), Jesus did not offer the woman forgiveness. It would therefore be incorrect, as some have been, to cite this incident as an example of the divine forgiveness of God.<sup>66</sup> Although Christ will stand in final judgment, He chose not to pass judgment on the woman at this time. Instead, He admonished her to sin no more, mercifully allowing her time to prepare for that final judgment, which opportunity was not afforded her by the accusers. Of course, we may not know all the reasons He did not “condemn” the woman under the law. However, one reason seems clear at least: He did not condemn her because procedural requirements would not allow it. He was not a witness to the crime and so could not stand in condemnation, unlike a competent eyewitness.

**Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)**

Jesus stands as the light of the world in many ways. Often, His example is one of love and forgiveness. However, in the story of the woman taken in adultery, He shines in a different way. While we cannot be certain of exactly why the accusers left, the words and actions of Christ clearly provided the impetus to their departure. We do not know what He wrote on the ground, and we do not know what the men were thinking when



He said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” However, we do know that, while He did not condemn the woman, He did not tell her that her sins were forgiven. As we try to make sense of these events, when viewed in the context of Jewish law, it is clearly not a story of repentance and forgiveness. It seems rather to be a story of commitment to order and procedure.

It is sometimes easy in the modern world to forget the importance of the procedural rules and safeguards of our own criminal justice system. As we in society pass judgment on the accused, we may find ourselves pointing an accusatory finger not only at those who are guilty, but also at those who defend the guilty. In this story, Christ can be seen as a light to those who have a commitment to due process of law, order, and those safeguards that make us more civilized. When viewed in this vein, this story serves not only as a statement that the wicked are unfit to serve in God’s system of justice, but also as a statement that the process of justice matters. To follow the example set in this story, we should be willing to follow the law both when it means the guilty will be punished and when it requires that the guilty are set free.<sup>67</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i–xii)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 338.

- 2 This is suggested by Henry McKeating, "Sanctions Against Adultery in Ancient Israelite Society, With Some Reflections on Methodology in the Study of Old Testament Ethics," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 11 (March 1979): 58.
- 3 Compare Exodus 3:14 with John 8:58 where the term "I am" used in Greek is the same word the Septuagint uses in Exodus which is the way Jehovah identifies Himself. See *The Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1988) 1343n58b. See also, John 1:1.
- 4 J. Blinzler, "Die Strafe für Ehebruch in Bibel und Halacha zur Auslegung von Joh. viii 5," *New Testament Studies* 4 (1957–58), 32–47, quoted in Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 333.
- 5 Kevin G. Smith, "Adultery, Divorce, and Eldership," *Conspectus: The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary*, 16, no. 09 (September 2013): 65.
- 6 See e.g., Scott J. Kaczorowski, "The Pericope of the Woman Caught in Adultery: An Inspired Text Inserted into an Inspired Text?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 61/2 (2018): 321–337; Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 91–96. Metzger and Ehrman note: "The earliest Greek manuscript known to contain the passage is Codex Bezae, of the fifth century, which is joined by several Old Latin manuscripts (*aur, c, e, f, f2, j, r1*)." Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th Ed. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), 319–20. They also recognize the anomalies raised by the pericope. It was absent from a large number of diverse manuscripts, no Greek Church Father for 1,000 years after Christ referred to the passage as being part of the fourth Gospel, the style and vocabulary differ from the rest of the Gospel of John, etc. Metzger has observed that the story shows strong signs of historical veracity. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 220. Yet, Metzger and Ehrman also find that "the case against its being of Johannine authorship appears to be conclusive." Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 320. This suggests the possibility of an authentic story that was not authored by John.

In contrast, Heil argued that there is strong linguistic and literary evidence that supports the conclusion that the story was original

to Gospel of John. John Paul Heil, “The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress (John 7:53–8:11) Reconsidered,” *Biblica* 72 (1991): 182–91. Wallace responds to Heil by arguing that Heil’s literary arguments usually work against themselves\*\* and that the external evidence that the pericope was a latter interpolation into the Gospel of John is overwhelming. Daniel B. Wallace, “Reconsidering ‘The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress Reconsidered’” *New Testament Studies*, 39 (1993): 290–96.

- 7 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 Wayment’s translation] 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.” Thomas A. Wayment, trans., *The New Testament: A Translation for Latter-day Saints: A Study Bible* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2019), 181.

Some evidence exists that may lead us to conclude that while the story may not have originally been in the Gospel of John, it may nevertheless be authentic. For example, Knust noted that “the *pericope adulterae*, or some version of it, was perceived to be ‘gospel’ — in the sense of ‘a good story about Jesus’ — by the late second century, whether or not it was known from a written Gospel. By the fourth century, the *pericope adulterae* appears as a regular proof-text among Latin-speaking Christians.” Jennifer Wright Knust, “Early Christian Re-Writing and the History of the *Pericope Adulterae*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14:4 (2006): 489. Knust added, “The story remained less known in Greek Christian traditions, though it appears in a commentary of Didymus the Blind, is depicted on a few fifth- and sixth-century Egyptian pyxides, and is discussed in the writings of one anonymous sixth-century Greek chronicler.” Knust, “Early Christian Re-Writing,” 490. While perhaps not original to the Gospel of John, there is some evidence that it may have been included in the Gospel of the Hebrews. “According to Eusebius, Papias, a second-century bishop of Hierapolis, knew a story involving a woman of sins before the

Lord, a story that Eusebius (and maybe Papias?) also found in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. Eusebius writes that “[Papias] has put forth also another story concerning a woman falsely accused of many sins before the Lord, which is contained in the Gospel according to the Hebrews.” Knust, “Early Christian Re-Writing,” 495. Of course, the *pericope adulterae* in John involves a single sin, and there is no indication in the text that she had been falsely accused. So this may be referring to a different story, or perhaps Eusebius or Papias remembered it incorrectly.

Interestingly, Didymus the Blind described a story “in certain gospels” of a woman “condemned by the Jews for a sin” who was taken before the Savior to be stoned. Christ is quoted as saying, “He who has not sinned, let that one take a stone and cast it.” Knust, “Early Christian Re-Writing,” 499–500. This sounds very much like the story in John. Scholars are unsure of what is meant by the phrase “in certain gospels” and debate whether Didymus meant various copies of John, or that he found it in various gospels perhaps including John and the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. Knust, “Early Christian Re-Writing,” fn. 47. In any event, there is reason to believe that the story was circulating among the believers fairly early and certainly before it appeared in the Codex Bezae.

J. Duncan M. Derrett suggests that one reason the story may not have been included in some of the early texts was that it may have been offensive to some who would rather not give the impression that Christ was lenient toward sin. See J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Law in the New Testament: The Story of the Woman Taken in Adultery,” *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963), 1–2.

- 8 Derrett, “Law in the New Testament,” 1–26.
- 9 Charles P. Baylis, “The Woman Caught in Adultery: A Test of Jesus as the Greater Prophet,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989): 176–77.
- 10 Perhaps this is evidence of the authenticity of the story and of its correct placement in the Gospel of John.
- 11 Some have challenged the authenticity of the story because nowhere else in John does the writer specifically point out that Jesus sat down to teach. However, instead of discrediting the story, the fact that sitting was the usual rabbinic custom makes the episode appear more authentic. For further discussion of this

- point, see Zane Hodges, "The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7:53–8:11): Exposition," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (1980), 43.
- 12 James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 1181.
  - 13 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 4. Some, however, have speculated that she was not married but betrothed. The reason for this speculation is that Deuteronomy 22:23 specifies stoning as the punishment for a woman betrothed who has intercourse with a man inside the city boundaries. However, the unchaste actions of a betrothed woman are nowhere called "adultery." The Hebrew word for adultery, *na'aph*, referred to a woman who had broken wedlock (Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 75). And while stoning is specifically mentioned in Deuteronomy as the punishment for a betrothed woman, and the method of death for a married woman is not specified, this does not mean a married woman could not also have been put to death by stoning. Strangulation was at one point adopted as the punishment for adultery, but this took place after the time of Jesus (see Blinzler, "Strafe für Ehebruch in Bibel," 32–47, quoted in Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 333). It therefore seems clear that the woman here was married.
  - 14 *Ibid.*, 4–5.
  - 15 "Morris notes that the word 'caught' properly denoted 'caught in the act of stealing,' but came to be used of other offenses. It left no room for doubt [that the adulterous woman was caught in the act]." Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 887, quoted in Baylis, "Woman Caught in Adultery," 177n20. See also Randolph O. Yeager, *The Renaissance New Testament*, (Bretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1981), 6:153.
  - 16 Of course, the story of Susanna and the Elders, discussed below, in which Jewish elders falsely accuse a young woman of sexual impropriety, provides a counter example.
  - 17 Z. Frankel, *Der gerichtliche Beweis nach mosaisch-talmudischem Rechte. Ein Beitrag zur Kenntniss des mosaischtalmudischen Criminal- und Civil-rechts* (Berlin, 1846), 121, 285, cited in Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 4n5.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, 116, cited in Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 4n7.

- 19 Hiring witnesses in this way is referred to in Ket. 46a.
- 20 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 7. Derrett points out that the possibility of an adulterer bribing a husband occurs in Proverbs 6:32–35: "He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts."
- 21 See the discussion of the "law of jealousies" below.
- 22 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 11; Blinzler, "Strafe für Ehebruch in Bibel," 32–47, quoted in Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 333. But see McKeating, "Sanctions Against Adultery," 58. Although McKeating does not dispute that stoning existed in the law as an option, he does not believe the Jews during the time of Jesus intended to carry out the death penalty against the woman taken in adultery. McKeating makes the point that "there is no recorded instance, in the whole of Jewish narrative literature of the biblical period, of anyone actually being put to death for adultery." However, that there is no such recorded instance may only point to the difficulty of complying with the strictness of the law: it is nearly impossible to find two competent witnesses.
- 23 See also, Raymond Westbrook, "Adultery in Ancient Near Eastern Law," *Revue Biblique* 97:4 (1990): 558; Arnold A. Anderson, "Law in Old Israel: Laws Concerning Adultery," in *Law and Religion*, ed. Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 1988), 16.
- 24 The purpose of this seemed to be that it showed the husband was no longer responsible for the care of his wife. See Anthony Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), 111. This punishment for adultery, apparently used in conjunction with divorce, was common in ancient near eastern countries. R. Gordis, "Hosea's Marriage and Message: A New Approach," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 25 (1954): 20n30a, quoted in McKeating, "Sanctions Against Adultery," 61; Westbrook, "Adultery in Ancient Law," 559–62.
- 25 Robert Gordis, "On Adultery in Biblical and Babylonian Law — A Note," *Judaism* 33 (1984): 211.
- 26 Westbrook states: "The 'death penalty' imposed by the codes, biblical and cuneiform, is therefore nothing more than the limit imposed in principle on the husband's right to revenge by the courts. It could in particular circumstances be set lower."

Westbrook, "Adultery in Ancient Near Eastern Law," 565. That capital punishment existed in the legal codes is not disputed. Whether the Jews were able to carry out the punishment is disputed as noted below (see *infra* note 36).

- 27 Of course, if death were not the correct punishment for an adulteress, that the accusers were threatening to use such a method adds credence to the idea that the accusers were not acting according to correct procedure.
- 28 It is unclear exactly what is meant by this curse. However, the Hebrew words for thigh (*yarek*) and belly (*bitnek*) might more clearly be translated as "reproductive organs" and "womb." See Alice Bach, "Good to the Last Drop: Viewing the Sotah (Numbers 5:11–31) as the Glass Half Empty and Wondering How to View it Half Full," in *The New Literary criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines, 26–54. The translation of these words suggests that, while an innocent woman would conceive, one guilty of adultery would lose the ability to procreate; a fitting punishment for one who has allowed her place of procreation to be violated.

The medical condition being described in these verses has been identified as a prolapsed uterus. "In this condition, which may occur after multiple pregnancies, the pelvic floor (weakened by the pregnancies) collapses, and the uterus literally falls down. It may lodge in the vagina, or it may actually fall out of the body through the vagina. If it does so, it becomes edematous and swells up like a balloon. Conception becomes impossible, and the woman's procreative life has effectively ended." Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Strange Case of the Suspected Sotah (Numbers V 11–31)," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984): 20–21.

- 29 See Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Trial Before God of an Accused Adulteress," *Bible Review* 2:3 (1986): 49.
- 30 Basically, a man could divorce his wife for any reason or no reason at all. However, a purely arbitrary divorce might have been condemned by public opinion. Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), 152.
- 31 Cause for divorce could be immodest conduct in which case the man may keep the dowry and need pay no compensation.

- Raymond Westbrook, "Biblical Law" in *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law*, ed. N.S. Hecht et. al. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996) 14.
- 32 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 6.
- 33 Daniela Piattelli and Bernard S. Jackson, "Jewish Law During the Second Temple Period," in *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law*, ed. N.S. Hecht, B.S. Jackson, S.M. Passamanek, D. Piatelli, A.M. Rabello (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996), 48.
- 34 John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989) 3:329.
- 35 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 11n1.
- 36 Ibid., 10. However, there is dispute over this point. The Gospel of John (18:31) and the Jerusalem Talmud both say that during this time, the Jewish court was not able to use the death penalty. However, the Babylonian Talmud says capital cases were not taken away until AD 70. Piattelli and Jackson, "Jewish Law," 38. Also, Matthew 26:66 and Mark 14:64 both seem to presuppose the ability of the court to carry out a capital sentence. However, the fact that the Sanhedrin judged him to be "guilty of death" (Mark 14:64 and Matthew 26:66) may be understood as an exception within the context of the accusation that Christ said he would destroy the temple (Mark 14:58 and Matthew 26:61). Sherwin-White explains that "as the evidence stands, the only exception to the general rule that the municipal authorities of the Empire were refused capital jurisdiction is that the Sanhedrin possessed certain powers of this sort in connexion with the maintenance of public order the Temple area. Anything else should either belong to the jurisdiction of the procurator or require his sanction." A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, (Oxford, UK: University Press, 1963), 42.
- 37 But see Brad H. Young, "'Save the Adulteress!' Ancient Jewish *Responsa* in the Gospels?" *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 59–70 (arguing that the story describes an ancient Jewish *responsum* in which the Pharisees, who opposed the death penalty, came to Jesus looking for an interpretation of the law that would allow them to save the adulteress from capital punishment). Young's analysis assumes innocent intent on the part of the Pharisees (no mention



is made of the scribes) and fails to account for the evidence indicating the impure motives of the accusers. Also, that they may have opposed the death penalty is irrelevant if their true intention was to trap Jesus. Furthermore, Young's interpretation depends heavily upon verse 6a as an interpolation. While it is possible the statement was added to the pericope at a later date, this does not mean the statement is not a valid interpretation of what the intent of the accusers actually was. And as Hodges has pointed out, the phrase "this they said, tempting him" (touto δε elegov peirazouteξ αυtov) is a phrase found nowhere else in the New Testament. However, a nearly identical phrase is found in John 6:6, "this they said to prove him." (touto δε elegev peirazw αυtov). This fact is strong evidence for the authenticity of both the phrase and the narrative. Hodges, "The Woman Taken in Adultery," 44.

- 38 However, as Young points out, "If what Jesus wrote in the dirt was so integral to the resolution of the conflict, the exact words would have been recorded in the narrative." Young, "Save the Adulteress!" 69.
- 39 Jennifer Knust and Tommy Wasserman, "Earth Accuses Earth: Tracing What Jesus Wrote on the Ground," *Harvard Theological Review* 103:4 (2010): 416.
- 40 Ibid., 408.
- 41 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 18.
- 42 Ibid., 18–19.
- 43 Ibid., 19 quoting Exodus 23:1b.
- 44 Ibid., 19n6.
- 45 Ibid., 21. Of course, Christ may also have simply been doodling on the ground. See Knust and Wasserman, "Earth Accuses Earth," 411, citing Paul Foster, "Educating Jesus: The Search for a Plausible Context," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 4 (2006) 7–33, at 20–21; Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 334.
- 46 Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Trial Before God," 49.
- 47 This connection is made by Hodges "The Woman Taken in Adultery," 46 and Baylis, "Woman Caught in Adultery," 180.
- 48 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 4.

- 49 Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1980, quoted in Baylis, "Woman Caught in Adultery," 181.
- 50 *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 4:478–87, quoted in Baylis, "Woman Caught in Adultery," 181n35.
- 51 *M. Avot* 1:9. [https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei\\_Avot.1?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Pirkei_Avot.1?lang=bi).
- 52 This connection is suggested by Lightfoot, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 329.
- 53 Hodges, "The Woman Taken in Adultery," 47n15.
- 54 Derrett pointed out that, like Jesus, various sects of the time believed an effort should be made to reform the sinner before the offender was condemned on the evidence of two witnesses. See, Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 7n1.
- 55 Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 222. These manuscripts included U, II, 73, 331, 364, 700, 782, 1592, and armms.
- 56 Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 320.
- 57 Lightfoot, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 327.
- 58 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 23.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 23n3.
- 60 Hodges points out that "the 'finger' of God is only *explicitly* referred to in connection with the *first* writing (Exodus 31:18). And so also here, the Lord's finger is referred to only in the first instance (8:6)!" Hodges, "The Woman Taken in Adultery," 51n14.
- 61 The connection between these two stories dates to as early as the fifth century when the Catholic church began to use them for the Saturday Mass after the third Sunday in Lent. Knust and Wasserman, "Earth Accuses Earth," 412.
- 62 It is unclear whether this is the Daniel of the Old Testament, however, the History of Susanna was at one time included in the book of Daniel. Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 24n5.
- 63 Derrett, "Law in the New Testament," 26.
- 64 This was pointed out by Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 334 citing Susanna 53.
- 65 Lightfoot, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 329.

- 66 See e.g., J. Denny Weaver, "Forgiveness and (non) violence: the atonement connections," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 83.2 (April 2009): 319–39.
- 67 For a discussion of this principle, which includes a reference to the story of the woman taken in adultery, see Thomas L. Shaffer, "Should a Christian Lawyer Serve the Guilty?" *Georgia Law Review* 23, no.2 (1989): 1021–34.



**JOSEPH SMITH:  
THE WORLD'S GREATEST GUESSER  
(A BAYESIAN STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF  
POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CORRESPONDENCES  
BETWEEN THE BOOK OF MORMON  
AND *THE MAYA*)**

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**Bruce E. Dale and Brian M. Dale**

**Abstract:** *Dr. Michael Coe is a prominent Mesoamerican scholar and author of a synthesis and review of ancient Mesoamerican Indian cultures entitled The Maya.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Coe is also a prominent skeptic of the Book of Mormon. However, there is in his book strong evidence that favors the Book of Mormon, which Dr. Coe has not taken into account. This article analyzes that evidence, using Bayesian statistics. We apply a strongly skeptical prior assumption that the Book of Mormon “has little to do with early Indian cultures,” as Dr. Coe claims. We then compare 131 separate positive correspondences or points of evidence between the Book of Mormon and Dr. Coe’s book. We also analyze negative points of evidence between the Book of Mormon and The Maya, between the Book of Mormon and a 1973 Dialogue article written by Dr. Coe, and between the Book of Mormon and a series of Mormon Stories podcast interviews given by Dr. Coe to Dr. John Dehlin. After using the Bayesian methodology to analyze both positive and negative correspondences, we reach an enormously stronger and very positive conclusion. There is overwhelming evidence that the Book of Mormon has physical, political, geographical, religious, military, technological, and cultural roots in ancient Mesoamerica. As a control, we have also analyzed two other books dealing with ancient American Indians: View of the Hebrews and Manuscript Found. We compare both books with The Maya using the same statistical methodology and demonstrate that this*

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1. Michael D. Coe and Stephen Houston, *The Maya*, 9th ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2015).

*methodology leads to rational conclusions about whether or not such books describe peoples and places similar to those described in The Maya.*

The ancient American setting of the Book of Mormon is a subject of debate and discussion. Among the prominent skeptics of the Book of Mormon is Dr. Michael D. Coe, the Charles J. McCurdy Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Yale University.<sup>2</sup> In an article published in *Dialogue* in 1973, Dr. Coe summarized his opinion regarding an ancient American setting for the Book of Mormon in these words: “The picture of this hemisphere between 2,000 BC and AD 421 presented in the book has little to do with early Indian cultures as we know them, in spite of much wishful thinking.”<sup>3</sup>

Beyond this article, Dr. Coe does not seem to have written anything else about the Book of Mormon. An extensive review of his published papers and books using Google Scholar found only this 1973 *Dialogue* article that deals with the Book of Mormon. However, in a series of three podcast interviews with John Dehlin in 2011, Dr. Coe strongly reinforced his essentially negative view of the historicity of the Book of Mormon.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Coe gave three more podcast interviews to Dr. Dehlin in 2018 in which he repeated many of his earlier criticisms of the Book of Mormon and provided some new ones.<sup>5</sup> According to Dr. Coe, “99% of everything that the Book of Mormon has as details is false.”<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Coe is obviously not a partisan advocate for the Book of Mormon. In fact, he cannot be. He doesn’t know enough about the Book of Mormon to offer a valid scholarly opinion one way or the other. He read the Book of Mormon only once, more than 45 years ago.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Coe’s synthesis and review of Mesoamerican archaeology thus provides an excellent test of the Book of Mormon. Dr. Coe’s book *The Maya* makes a number of factual statements about the physical, political,

2. “Michael Coe,” Yale University (website), Department of Anthropology, accessed October 22, 2017, <http://anthropology.yale.edu/people/michael-coe>.

3. Michael Coe, “Mormons and Archaeology: An Outside View,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 2 (Summer 1973): 42.

4. John Dehlin, “268–70: Dr. Michael Coe — An Outsider’s View of Book of Mormon Archaeology,” August 12, 2011, in *Mormon Stories*, podcast, <https://www.mormonstories.org/podcast/michael-coe-an-outsiders-view-of-book-of-mormon-archaeology/>.

5. John Dehlin, “905–07: Mesoamerican Archaeologist Dr. Michael Coe — LiDAR, Response to John Sorenson, and the Book of Mormon,” April 9, 2018, in *Mormon Stories*, podcast, <https://www.mormonstories.org/podcast/dr-michael-coe/>.

6. Dehlin, “Dr. Michael Coe — An Outsider’s View of Book of Mormon Archaeology,” episode 270, 27:32.

7. Dr. Michael Coe, email message to author, December 1, 2017.

geographical, religious, and cultural aspects of ancient Mesoamerica. Given his very negative view of the Book of Mormon, it is impossible to claim that the facts Dr. Coe selected might intentionally favor the Book of Mormon.

There are strong reasons for suspecting ancient Mesoamerica as the physical location of Book of Mormon events in the New World.<sup>8</sup> If so, Dr. Coe's book should correspond with at least some of the statements asserted as fact in the Book of Mormon, taking into account that the objective of the Book of Mormon is to testify of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon is not primarily about the history, wars, geography, culture, etc., of Book of Mormon peoples, although it nonetheless manages to tell us a great deal about these topics. Likewise, we do not expect a book about Italian cuisine to tell us much about Italian architecture or the politics of the Roman Empire, although it may incidentally contain a good bit of such information in context.

If the Book of Mormon is not what it claims to be, then it is a work of fiction. It is simply false, as Dr. Coe obviously believes it to be. There are no other rational options. If the Book of Mormon is a piece of fiction, then some person or persons in the early 1800s made it up. If the Book of Mormon is fiction, then its author was guessing every time he wrote as fact something about the ancient inhabitants of the Americas. This means we can compare reasonably these "guesses" in the Book of Mormon with the facts presented by Dr. Coe in *The Maya*.

Thus we take the statements of fact in *The Maya* as essentially true, and we compare the "guesses" in the Book of Mormon with these statements of fact. To repeat, for purposes of our Bayesian statistical analysis, we accept the universe of facts summarized by Dr. Coe in *The Maya* as essentially true. We then rate the value of each "guess" in the Book of Mormon (or statement of fact) as evidence using three criteria:

1. Is it specific? Is it clear that the guess in the Book of Mormon is directly comparable to a statement of fact in *The Maya*?
2. Is it specific and detailed? Are there important details in each guess in the Book of Mormon that correspond to at least some of the details given in *The Maya*?
3. Is it specific, detailed, and unusual? Is the statement of fact in the Book of Mormon (or "guess") unusual in the sense that someone writing the book in the early 1800s would probably not have the background or knowledge to include

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8. John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book* (Salt Lake City: Desert Book, 2013).

this statement of fact in his work of “fiction,” that is, the Book of Mormon?

We assign a number to the quality or strength of the evidence for (or against) the hypothesis as follows: The numbers 2, 10, and 50 are the strength of the evidence for the hypothesis, that is, the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction. The numbers 0.5, 0.1, and 0.02 are the corresponding strength of the evidence against the hypothesis; that is, these are points of evidence that support the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Illustrative examples are given below following a brief introduction to statistics in general and Bayesian statistics in particular.

### Insights from Basic Statistics

Statistics describes the probability (likelihood) of events occurring within a given population. A population is a set of related items or events of interest for some test we wish to perform. In this case, the population we wish to test is the factual statements in the Book of Mormon and corresponding factual statements in the book *The Maya*. We wish to determine whether or not the Book of Mormon agrees or disagrees in a statistically significant way with what is known about ancient Mesoamerica as summarized in Dr. Coe’s book *The Maya*.

One of the simplest illustrations of probability is given by rolling dice. The statistical population of interest here is the possible values (1 through 6) on the six sides of the die. Since a die has six possible values, then there is a one in six chance (16.6666% of the time) that the value 1 will turn up when the die is cast, and the same probability exists for each of the other values 2 through 6. If two dice are thrown, then each die is independent of the other, and there is still only a one in six chance that any given value will turn up for that die when it is rolled.

Here is a key point for statistical analysis: *probabilities of individual, statistically independent events must be multiplied together to calculate the probability of all the individual events occurring simultaneously.*

The probability of each individual die coming up with a 1 is 16.666 ... %, but the probability of rolling “snake eyes,” or two dice coming up with a 1 on the same roll (simultaneously), is not 16.6%. It is 16.6% (0.166) *times* 16.6% (0.166), which is about 0.02756, or approximately 2.76% of the time. So, roughly three times out of a hundred times, snake eyes will result when two dice are rolled simultaneously. Further, if we roll three dice at the same time, what will be the probability of rolling three 1s? By the formula, it is  $0.166 \times 0.166 \times 0.166$ , which is about 0.00457, or about five times in a thousand rolls of the dice.



How about three different events, each with different individual probabilities, all occurring together? Let's say the first event has a probability of 1 in a hundred (0.01), the probability of the second event is one in a thousand (0.001), and the third is one in ten (0.1). What is the probability of all three of these events occurring simultaneously if they are part of the same population? It is  $0.01 \times 0.001 \times 0.1 = 0.000001$  or 1 in a million. The probability that all these events will *not occur together* is 1.0 minus the probability that they all will occur together. In this example, it is 1.0 minus 0.000001 or 0.999999, or 99.9999%, or 999,999 to 1.

In the real world, we usually don't experience the mathematically well-defined probabilities that rolling dice offers. Instead, we usually deal with "odds" or "likelihoods," many of which are somewhat subjective. By *subjective*, we mean the person performing the test must decide for him or herself what constitutes strong evidence, what evidence is positive, and what evidence is supportive but not particularly strong. These are the three relative strengths of evidence summarized above: (1) specific (Bayesian "supportive"), (2) specific and detailed, (Bayesian "positive") and (3) specific, detailed, and unusual (Bayesian "strong").

### **Bayesian Statistics: A Rational, Scientific Approach to Weighing Evidence**

Bayesian statistics provides one approach to the situation in which mathematically well-defined probabilities do not exist.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Dr. Coe's book refers to the use of Bayesian statistics to weight and thereby includes or excludes specific pieces of archaeological data.<sup>10</sup> In the Bayesian approach, the strength of each piece of evidence is the likelihood ratio, which is the probability of the evidence assuming that the hypothesis is true divided by the probability of the evidence assuming that the hypothesis is false.

The Bayesian approach is a powerful and general tool for evaluating hypotheses and then rationally updating one's prior beliefs in the face of the new evidence. The Bayesian approach has been applied to diverse topics

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9. For a good introductory article to Bayesian statistics, see Wikipedia, s.v. "Bayes Theorem," last edited October 26, 2018, 10:20, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayes%27\\_theorem#Bayes.E2.80.99\\_rul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayes%27_theorem#Bayes.E2.80.99_rul).

10. Coe and Houston, *The Maya*, 7.

ranging from astronomy<sup>11</sup> to zoology.<sup>12</sup> Of particular interest here, Bayesian methods have been applied to analyze historical document collections,<sup>13</sup> to historical and biblical archaeology,<sup>14</sup> and to the detection of fraud and deception.<sup>15</sup>

We can assign a likelihood ratio or “Bayes factor” to each statement of fact given in the Book of Mormon and compare these statements with corresponding statements of fact in *The Maya*. This likelihood ratio is the strength of each individual statement of fact as a piece of evidence. It is calculated as the probability that the statement is true if whoever wrote the Book of Mormon was guessing divided by the probability that the statement is true if instead the Book of Mormon is fact-based and essentially historical. The likelihood ratio expressed in this way therefore represents the strength of the evidence in support of the hypothesis, that is, against the factual nature of the Book of Mormon.

*Note: only statements of fact which are dealt with by both books can be rationally admitted to the analysis; on statements of fact where one or the other book is silent, we cannot factually assume either agreement or disagreement. There is no rational scientific basis for doing so.*

At first glance this method may appear similar to the discredited method of parallels; however, the Bayesian approach overcomes the weaknesses of the method of parallels. First, the Bayes factor specifically accounts for the possibility that the evidence may have occurred under the other hypotheses. This is accomplished in the denominator of the Bayes factor. Second, by using a numerical Bayes factor, the person performing the analysis explicitly estimates the strength of

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11. Thomas J. Loredó and Don Q. Lamb, “Bayesian analysis of neutrinos observed from supernova SN 1987A,” Cornell University Library (website), July 14, 2001, <https://arxiv.org/abs/astro-ph/0107260>.

12. Héctor E. Ramírez-Chaves, et al., “Resolving the evolution of the mammalian middle ear using Bayesian inference,” *Frontiers in Zoology* 13, no. 1 (2016): 1, <https://frontiersinzoology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12983-016-0171-z>.

13. Daniel David Walker, “Bayesian Test Analytics for Document Collections,” *All Theses and Dissertations* 3530 (2012), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/3530>.

14. Thomas Levy, et al., “High-precision radiocarbon dating and historical biblical archaeology in southern Jordan,” *Proceedings of the National Academy Sciences of the United States of America* 105, no. 43 (Oct 28, 2008): 16460–65, <https://europepmc.org/articles/pmc2575442>.

15. Mykhailo Granik and Volodymyr Mesyura, “Fake news detection using naive Bayes classifier” (paper, IEEE First Ukraine Conference on Electrical and Computer Engineering, Kiev, Ukraine, May–June 2017), <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/8100379/>.

any given piece of evidence. Ultimately, the Bayes method resembles similarity-based techniques for detecting deception in online reviews.<sup>16</sup>

Once we have chosen the likelihood of guessing correctly about each individual fact, we then multiply the likelihoods of guessing right about each of these specific facts. The number obtained by multiplying all the individual likelihoods together is the strength of the total body of evidence that whoever wrote the Book of Mormon was guessing about these fact claims.

*Thus the overall Bayes factor or likelihood ratio is the weighted strength of the evidence, and it tells us how much we should change our prior beliefs based on the new evidence.* We start with some prior odds, representing our beliefs about the hypothesis before seeing the evidence. In order to be rational and intellectually honest, once we have seen the new evidence, we must update our beliefs accordingly to obtain our posterior odds, or the odds that the hypothesis is true after accounting for the strength of the new evidence, both pro and con, and our previous beliefs expressed as the prior odds.

The Bayesian approach to data analysis is frequently used in medical tests.<sup>17</sup> For example, if a disease is somewhat rare, then a randomly selected individual might have “skeptical prior odds” of 1:1000 against them having the disease. If the test has a likelihood ratio of 100 (a good medical test for screening), then our posterior odds following a positive test for the disease would be  $1:1000 \times 100 = 1:10$  against the person actually having the disease. In other words, the individual piece of evidence given by the test changed our minds substantially (from 1:1000 against to 1:10 against); but because we were initially quite skeptical (1:1000) that the person had that particular rare disease, we still think it is more likely they do not have the disease (1:10). A rational doctor would then call for a more definitive test to give additional information, and we would continue to update our opinion as we received new information.

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16. Niall J. Conroy, Victoria L. Rubin and Yimin Chen, “Automatic deception detection: Methods for finding fake news,” *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 52, no. 1 (February 24, 2016), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pr2.2015.145052010082>.

17. John K. Kruschke, “Lessons from Bayesian disease diagnosis: Don’t over-interpret the Bayes factor, VERSION 2,” *Doing Bayesian Data Analysis* (blog), December 27, 2015, [http://doingbayesiandataanalysis.blogspot.com/2015/12/lessons-from-bayesian-disease-diagnosis\\_27.html](http://doingbayesiandataanalysis.blogspot.com/2015/12/lessons-from-bayesian-disease-diagnosis_27.html).

## Bayesian Analysis of the Facts Given in the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*

For the subject of this article — the factual nature of the Book of Mormon — we choose to start with extremely large “skeptical prior odds” against the book. We allow only a 1:1,000,000,000 (one in a billion) prior odds that the Book of Mormon is a historical document. Thus we start with odds of 1,000,000,000:1 (a billion to one) that the statements of fact in the Book of Mormon are just guesses made by whoever wrote the book.

This means that even before we look at the new evidence, we are very confident that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction. We would require cumulative supporting evidence with a likelihood of 0.000000001 (one in a billion) in order to change our beliefs to the point where we would consider “even odds” (1:1) that the book is fact-based. We would require evidence even stronger than that to consider it likely or be confident that the Book of Mormon is not a work of fiction, that is, that it is an accurate historical record, based substantially on facts.

It is a common error (deliberate or otherwise) to consider only a few pieces of evidence when examining the truth or falsity of a given hypothesis. In the extreme, this practice is called *cherry-picking*. In cherry-picking, evidence against one’s existing hypothesis is deliberately excluded from consideration. This practice is, of course, dishonest. It is another common error to consider some pieces of relevant evidence as having infinite weight or having zero weight compared to other pieces of evidence. This practice is irrational and unscientific.

These practices of cherry-picking or overweighting/underweighting evidence cannot be allowed in scientific enquiry. They are neither rational nor honest. We must consider all relevant evidence if we hope to make honest, rational decisions. Also, no piece of evidence has infinite weight. There are always limitations on the strength of any individual piece of evidence. Assuming a piece of evidence has infinite weight is equivalent to saying the question is already decided and is therefore beyond the scope of further rational, honest enquiry.

The value of Bayesian statistics is that it provides a disciplined, formal way of bringing available evidence to bear on a given question. The evidence is weighted according to its probative value and the cumulative strength of the evidence for and against the hypothesis being tested. The hypothesis (the question of interest to us) in this analysis is the factual nature of the Book of Mormon. The question of interest is: “Is the Book of Mormon a work of fiction, or is it a factual, historical document according to the cumulative, relevant evidence summarized in *The Maya*?”

To perform our analysis, we assign one of three likelihood ratios to testable facts or “correspondences” between the Book of Mormon and Dr. Coe’s book. The facts, taken from Dr. Coe’s book, are compared with statements of fact in the Book of Mormon. Recall that the hypothesis we are testing is that the Book of Mormon is false, and we assume a billion to one prior odds in favor of the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon is indeed false.

Pieces of evidence in favor of the hypothesis, that is, that the Book of Mormon is false, are weighted by their “likelihood ratio,” which is a positive value greater than one (either 50, 10 or 2). This likelihood ratio is multiplied by the skeptical prior of a billion to one to increase the weight of the evidence against the Book of Mormon.

Points of evidence in favor of the essentially factual nature of the Book of Mormon (called the *converse hypothesis*) are weighted by their likelihood ratio, a positive decimal fraction (0.5, 0.1 or 0.02). These fractions are multiplied by the skeptical prior of a billion to one to decrease the weight of the evidence against the Book of Mormon, in other words, to provide evidence for the factual nature of the Book of Mormon.

To illustrate, here are three examples, one for each likelihood ratio, in favor of the converse hypothesis; that is, in favor of the essentially factual nature of the Book of Mormon.

*Specific correspondences: 0.5 (Bayesian supportive evidence for the converse hypothesis).* The author of the Book of Mormon might have learned this fact by study or experience, but it is not obvious: for example, the fact that people eat food. We aren’t impressed by the fact that someone ate dinner, but if we know they ate a specific kind of food on a specific day as a religious observance, that has value as evidence. One example is the practice of repopulating old or abandoned cities described in Dr. Coe’s book and also in the Book of Mormon. Such evidence acts against the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon is fiction, but it is not particularly strong evidence. Instead, such evidence is considered to be merely “supportive.”<sup>18</sup>

*Specific and detailed correspondences: 0.10 (Bayesian positive evidence for the converse hypothesis).* Facts assigned a likelihood of 0.1 are details in the Book of Mormon that agree with details in *The Maya*. The author of the Book of Mormon might have been able to reason out such details, given time, study, or expert knowledge, but we think it would have been very difficult for the writer to have guessed correctly. Thus these correspondences are quite specific and also provide some important details.

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18. Robert E. Kass and Adrian E. Raftery, “Bayes Factors,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 90, no. 430 (1995): 777, doi:10.2307/2291091.

One example is the existence of highlands and lowlands within the relevant geography. Dr. Coe's book repeatedly emphasizes the highland and lowland populations of Native American peoples in Mesoamerica. The Book of Mormon also repeatedly uses the words "go up" and "go down" when traveling. From its very beginning, the Book of Mormon likewise employs going "up" and going "down" when traveling to and from Jerusalem. Jerusalem sits at a higher elevation than most of the surrounding geography. Thus we assume that the phrases "go up" or "go down" mean to ascend or descend in elevation while traveling. Such evidence is considered to be Bayesian "positive."<sup>19</sup>

*Specific, detailed and unusual correspondences: 0.02 (Bayesian strong evidence for the converse hypothesis).* We believe that facts with a 2% likelihood (one in 50 chance) are essentially impossible to guess correctly, given any amount of knowledge or study reasonably available to the writer of the Book of Mormon. But in order to rigorously test the Book of Mormon's claims as a fact-based record, we assume that the writer had a one in 50 chance of guessing these correspondences correctly. A one in 50 or 2% chance (0.02) is the maximum weight we will allow for evidence supporting the Book of Mormon's claims to being fact-based, even if we think the odds are more like one in a million or less. Such evidence is considered to be Bayesian "strong" evidence.<sup>20</sup>

One example of Bayesian "strong" evidence is the remarkably detailed description of a volcanic eruption and associated earthquakes given in 3 Nephi 8. Mesoamerica is earthquake and volcano country, but upstate New York, where the Book of Mormon came forth, is not. If the Book of Mormon is fictional, how could the writer of the Book of Mormon correctly describe a volcanic eruption and earthquakes from the viewpoint of the person experiencing the event? We rate the evidentiary value of that correspondence as 0.02. We assume a piece of evidence is "unusual" if it gives facts that very probably were not known to the writer, someone living in upstate New York in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when virtually nothing of ancient Mesoamerica was known.

We can also conceive of correspondences that are specific and unusual but not given in sufficient detail to assign them a weight of 0.02. One such specific and unusual correspondence is the existence of an arcane sacred or prestige language as mentioned in Coe's book and in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 3:19 and Mosiah 1:2). However, insufficient details about this language are given to regard the correspondence as

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19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

specific, detailed, and unusual, for a weight of 0.02. Instead it is assigned a weight of 0.10, for specific and unusual only.

The uncertainty one feels toward any particular correspondence can also be reflected in the assigned likelihood ratio. For example, if a correspondence seems specific and somewhat detailed but is believed to lack enough detail to warrant the higher evidentiary weight, it can be assigned a likelihood ratio of 0.5 rather than 0.1.

We assume the writer's religious knowledge came from the Bible; his cultural/social knowledge came from his (and his family's) own cultural/social experiences as relatively poor, less-educated working farmers typical of their time; his political knowledge from American and British political institutions existing in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and his knowledge of Native Americans from his own knowledge of Native Americans of his time and place (northeastern North America). Facts that could not have been obtained from those sources in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century could only have been guesses by the writer of the "fictional" Book of Mormon.

The author's general knowledge of the ancient Mayan Indians and their area was exactly zero — which was the case for everyone in the world in 1830. As Dr. Coe says in one of his podcast interviews, "until [Stephens and Catherwood] went to the Maya area no one knew anything about it."<sup>21</sup> Stephens and Catherwood visited the Mayan area twice between 1839 and 1842. Their book, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, was published in 1841, eleven years after the Book of Mormon was published.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, it was impossible for the work of Stephens and Catherwood to have directly influenced the Book of Mormon. In contrast, Reverend Ethan Smith's book, *View of the Hebrews*, has some very limited information on Indians in Mexico, primarily the Aztecs and Toltecs, and might have influenced the writer of the Book of Mormon. We account for this fact in our analysis as described in Appendix A.

If the Book of Mormon is of early 19<sup>th</sup> century origin, then, according to Dr. Coe, the author of that "fictional" work could not have known anything about the Mayan area. Thus, if we are rational and honest, we will not attribute to any hypothetical 19<sup>th</sup> century author of the Book of Mormon the same degree of knowledge and sophistication

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21. Dehlin, "Dr. Michael Coe — An Outsider's View of Book of Mormon Archaeology," episode 905, 31:52.

22. Wikipedia, s.v. "Frederick Catherwood," last edited October 9, 2018, 04:47, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick\\_Catherwood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Catherwood).

about cultural, social, physical, geographical, and other characteristics of the ancient Maya that only a few comparatively well-educated people have now in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The purpose of this article is to rigorously test facts given in the Book of Mormon versus facts given by Dr. Coe in *The Maya* and in other venues. It is fortunate that our analysis will be naturally conservative, underweighting the evidence in favor of the Book of Mormon. Even if we are trying hard to be rational and honest, we have a natural tendency to overestimate Joseph Smith's likely knowledge of ancient Mesoamerica (or that possessed by anyone else of his time). Present-day educated individuals are likely to know much more about ancient Mesoamerica than did the (supposed) 19<sup>th</sup> century author(s) of the Book of Mormon.

To illustrate, we examine the three separate statements of fact in the Book of Mormon given above. The Book of Mormon claims to be a real historical record. Either these statements are just guesses, or indeed the Book of Mormon is an accurate historical book. There are no other choices open to us. Each of these statements supports the Book of Mormon's claim to be a fact-based record. What is the overall likelihood of getting all three of these guesses right: (1) the practice of repopulating old or abandoned cities (0.5), (2) an accurate description of Mesoamerican geography as composed primarily of highlands and lowlands (0.1), and (3) an accurate, quite detailed description of a simultaneous volcano/earthquake (0.02)? The product of these three likelihoods is  $0.5 \times 0.1 \times 0.02 = 0.001$  or *likelihood of one in a thousand*.

But that is not nearly enough. Our "skeptical prior" is a billion to one that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction. And a billion to one (1,000,000,000) times one in a thousand (0.001) is still a million to one. So even after considering this evidence we are still quite confident that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction, but we are less confident than we were prior to examining the evidence, due to our rational, intellectually honest assessment of these new pieces of evidence.

However, many more facts are mentioned in Dr. Coe's book *The Maya* that we can test against corresponding statements of fact in the Book of Mormon. Specifically, we have found 131 such correspondences. We divide these correspondences into six separate categories:

- Political (33 correspondences)
- Cultural/social (31 correspondences)
- Religion (19 correspondences)
- Military/warfare (12 correspondences)
- Physical/geographical (13 correspondences)



- Technological/miscellaneous (23 correspondences)

We have assigned one of three different likelihood ratios to each correspondence. The specific Bayes factor or likelihood assigned to each correspondence is based on our assessment as to whether the correspondence is (1) specific or “supportive” according to Bayesian nomenclature (0.5); (2) specific and detailed, or Bayesian “positive” (0.10); or (3) specific, detailed, and unusual, or Bayesian “strong” (0.02), as described above and given in the literature.<sup>23</sup>

Appendix A summarizes the reasons why we have assigned a specific likelihood ratio (0.5, 0.1 and 0.02) to each of the 131 supportive correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. For each correspondence, we first state Dr. Coe’s standard of fact as given in *The Maya*. Since the Book of Mormon is available to everyone to study and evaluate without cost,<sup>24</sup> but Dr. Coe’s book is not, we provide direct quotations or summaries for each of the correspondences from Dr. Coe’s book. Following the quotations from Dr. Coe’s book, the specific book(s), chapter(s) and verse(s) from the Book of Mormon where the correspondence appears are cited. Finally, we provide a few sentences up to a few paragraphs that justify our choice of the assigned likelihood ratio.

Since the truth (or falsity) of the Book of Mormon is a supremely important question, we trust readers will exert themselves and make their own comparisons between Coe’s book and the Book of Mormon. We hope they will honestly weigh each piece of evidence for themselves and decide what likelihood ratio, if any, to assign to that piece of evidence.

This is essentially what is demanded of jurors in trial situations. Jurors are to weigh honestly and carefully all the evidence, without prejudging the outcome, and then render a true verdict according to the evidence. But jurors (and honest readers of the Book of Mormon) must not prejudge the case before hearing all the evidence, must not take their duties lightly, and must not arbitrarily reject evidence for or against either side.

## Results of the Analysis

We have compiled six different categories of evidence in Appendix A, as noted above. For example, the sixth category includes technological and miscellaneous correspondences. We found 23 specific technological and miscellaneous correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. Of these, three have a likelihood of 0.5, eight have a likelihood

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23. Kass & Raftery, “Bayes Factors,” 777.

24. “The Book of Mormon,” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, accessed September 28, 2018, <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bofm?lang=eng>.

of 0.1, and twelve have a likelihood of 0.02 ( $3 + 8 + 12 = 23$ ). Thus the overall likelihood of these 23 positive correspondences, taken as a whole for statistical analysis, is  $(0.5)^3 \times (0.1)^8 \times (0.02)^{12} = 5.12 \times 10^{-30}$ .

The overall likelihood of the positive correspondences in each of the six categories has been computed in this way. They are, respectively:  $4.99 \times 10^{-33}$ ,  $3.21 \times 10^{-35}$ ,  $1.28 \times 10^{-24}$ ,  $2.0 \times 10^{-13}$ ,  $1.28 \times 10^{-18}$  and  $5.12 \times 10^{-30}$ . We then compute the overall likelihood of all six categories taken together by multiplying these six numerical values together. The result is  $2.69 \times 10^{-151}$ .

We can confirm this calculation by noting that of these 131 correspondences, 23 have a likelihood of 0.5; 57 have a likelihood of 0.1; and 51 have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood can also be computed and confirmed as  $0.5^{23} \times 0.1^{57} \times 0.02^{51} = 2.69 \times 10^{-151}$ . *This product represents the likelihood (probability) that the positive correspondences between the Book of Mormon and The Maya under the six categories of comparison are the result of a very, very long series of consistent lucky guesses by the author of the Book of Mormon.*

Recall that according to Bayesian methods, our skeptical prior odds were a billion to one against the Book of Mormon being a historical document. Thus we started our analysis by assuming that the statements of fact in the Book of Mormon were just guesses. We must multiply one billion times  $2.69 \times 10^{-151}$  to determine the degree to which the evidence provided by the 131 positive correspondences *changes* our opinion. The result of this calculation is  $2.69 \times 10^{-142}$ .

We have not yet considered the negative correspondences and their impact on our opinions, but will weigh these negative correspondences after briefly discussing sensitivity analysis.

## Sensitivity Analysis

In statistics it is good scientific practice to do a “sensitivity analysis” by which the effects of changed assumptions or changed data on the results are determined. For example, if we assign the weakest likelihood ratio (Bayesian “supportive” or 0.5) to each of the 131 correspondences, the overall strength of the evidence is then  $0.5^{131}$  equals  $3.7 \times 10^{-40}$ . We then multiply this number by one billion ( $10^9$ ) and find that the likelihood that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction is less than one in a thousand billion, billion, billion, billion.

As another example of sensitivity analysis, we can choose to admit only half the 131 correspondences to evidence at the same evidentiary weights as given in Appendix A. If we do so, the cumulative likelihood

of these correspondences is still about  $1.0 \times 10^{-65}$ . When multiplied by the skeptical prior of one billion, we find the likelihood that the Book of Mormon is the result of guesswork is still less than about one in a hundred billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion.

A third sensitivity analysis is as follows. Of the 131 total correspondences, 23 have a likelihood of 0.5; 57 have a likelihood of 0.1; and 51 have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the ratio of the correspondences with respect to their relative strengths is roughly 1:2:2 (specific: specific and detailed: specific and detailed and unusual).

Thus the question is: "At this ratio of 1:2:2, how many total correspondences are required to shift our skeptical prior of a billion to one against the Book of Mormon to a billion to one in favor of the Book of Mormon?" The answer is about 17 total correspondences — only 17 out of 131 correspondences (13% or about one out of every eight) must be accepted at their assigned evidentiary strengths to shift the strong skeptical prior to a strong positive posterior.

*Under all three sensitivity analyses, our strong skeptical prior hypothesis of a billion to one against the fact-based nature of the Book of Mormon still gives way to a much, much stronger posterior hypothesis in favor of the Book of Mormon. We conclude that the Book of Mormon is historical, and is based in fact, with odds of many, many billions to one that this statement is true.*

## **Data in Support of the Hypothesis that the Book of Mormon is a Work of Fiction**

We started with a very strong skeptical prior hypothesis of a billion to one against the historicity of the Book of Mormon. However, to this point, we have considered only data in support of the historicity of the Book of Mormon, that is, in support of the converse hypothesis. What about data in support of the opposite hypothesis, that is, that the Book of Mormon is fictional? As before, the evidence considered here will be statements in *The Maya* which disagree with corresponding statements in The Book of Mormon.

Again, it is only rational and honest to compare statements of fact which are dealt with by *both books*. On statements of fact where one or the other books is silent, we cannot assume either agreement or disagreement. There is no rational scientific basis for doing so because there is no evidence to support our choices.

Surprisingly few pieces of evidence cited in *The Maya* support the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction. We were able

to find six such points of disagreement between *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon, namely the existence of (1) horses, (2) elephants, (3) iron, (4) steel, (5) copper and (6) refined gold and silver. (We combine refined gold and refined silver instead of considering them individually because gold and silver are usually found together, and thus to refine gold is also to refine silver.)

These points of disagreement are summarized in Appendix B. As with Appendix A, we give citations and page numbers from *The Maya* to support these negative correspondences and citations from the Book of Mormon where the points of disagreement are found. Finally, we provide a brief analysis of each correspondence. We evaluate these six points as having a cumulative strength as evidence of  $1.25 \times 10^8$ .

However, given our own inherent bias on the topic, we choose to overcompensate and deliberately err on the side of skepticism by weighting all six points as strong evidence, with a Bayes factor of 50 for each point of disagreement. We do not think each of these points is actually Bayesian “strong” evidence, but we allow this sensitivity test to severely examine the Book of Mormon’s claims.

Weighting each piece as strong evidence, the strength of the total body of evidence from *The Maya* supporting the skeptical hypothesis is thus  $50^6 = 1.56 \times 10^{10}$ . Therefore, the total body of evidence taken from *The Maya*, including the skeptical prior of a billion to one, is  $2.69 \times 10^{-142} \times 1.56 \times 10^{10} = 4.2 \times 10^{-132}$ .

If one is rational and carefully weighs the evidence, the authors believe that the initial strongly skeptical prior hypothesis of a billion to one that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction must change. It must give way to an enormously stronger posterior hypothesis, namely that the Book of Mormon is indeed fact-based: it has very strong political, cultural, social, military, physical, geographical, technological, and religious roots in ancient Mesoamerica as that world of ancient Mesoamerica is described by Dr. Coe in *The Maya*.

### **The Anti-Book of Mormon Hat Trick: Expanding the Body of Evidence**

Now, suppose we are not content with this reversal of our skeptical prior and wish to try to maintain it unfairly while still appearing to be rational. One way to do so is to expand our body of evidence unfairly by including not only scholarly works like *The Maya* but also including purely skeptical, “cherry-picked” evidence gathered from nonscholarly sources.

For example, in his 1973 *Dialogue* article and in the 2011 and 2018 podcast interviews, Dr. Coe mentions twelve more specific facts to support the hypothesis that the Book of Mormon is false. These include brass, chariots, sheep, goats, swine, wheat, barley, cattle, silk, asses, a hybrid Egyptian/Hebrew writing system, and the lack of Semitic DNA in the New World. Analyzing these twelve additional correspondences taken from the podcasts and from *Dialogue*, we estimate their cumulative weight as  $3.13 \times 10^{15}$  (see Appendix B, last part).

We do not accept Dr. Coe's (or more accurately, John Dehlin's) objection to "coins" or "week," which were also raised as possible negative points of evidence in the podcasts. The revealed text of the Book of Mormon does not include the word *coins* in the Nephite monetary system described in Alma 11. While the word *week* does occur in the Book of Mormon, the book does not say that a Nephite week consisted of seven days. Thus these two data points are not admitted to evidence; they are not facts actually asserted by the Book of Mormon.

To enable a very severe but nonetheless fact-based test of the historicity of the Book of Mormon, we grant to all 18 pieces of evidence cited by Dr. Coe a weight of 50 ("strong" evidence) against the historicity of the Book of Mormon. To be clear, we do not think these 18 pieces of evidence actually merit this weight nor that such biased and nonscholarly sources should be admitted to scholarly analysis. According to our evidence-weighting scheme, at most these 18 facts qualify as specific and detailed, for a weight of 10 each. But they are not particularly unusual. Evidence for their existence might not as yet have been found by archaeology, or evidence might be available but still scarce.

Nonetheless, for the sake of the most rigorous possible fact-based test of the Book of Mormon, we admit all 18 of them at the maximum evidentiary strength considered in this article. Thus we multiply  $2.69 \times 10^{-142}$  times  $50^{18}$  to recalculate the odds of the hypothesis by accounting for the 18 data points provided by Dr. Coe and others. *We find that the likelihood that the Book of Mormon is fictional is about  $1.03 \times 10^{-111}$* , less than one in a thousand, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion, billion.

Just how small a number is this? No easily grasped comparisons are possible. The mass of the smallest known particle, the neutrino, is about  $10^{-36}$  kg, while the mass of the observable universe is about  $10^{52}$  kg. Thus the ratio of the mass of the neutrino to the mass of the entire universe is approximately  $10^{-88}$ . This ratio, the mass of the neutrino to the mass of

the universe, is still one hundred thousand, billion, billion times greater than the odds that the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction.

## Two Control Studies

As controls, we also analyzed two other books concerned with ancient American Indians written about the same time as the Book of Mormon. One book is *View of the Hebrews* by Reverend Ethan Smith, published in 1823.<sup>25</sup> The other book is Reverend Solomon Spalding's unpublished work titled *Manuscript Found*.<sup>26</sup> We compared both books with *The Maya* using Bayesian statistics, again with a strongly skeptical prior assumption of a billion to one that these books have little to do with ancient Indian cultures. These comparisons are summarized in Appendix C for *Manuscript Found* and Appendix D for *View of the Hebrews*.

In the case of *Manuscript Found*, our posterior conclusion is much stronger than our prior assumption that this book has little to do with ancient Indian cultures. In other words, weighing the additional evidence, we are even more convinced than we were before the analysis that this book has very little in common with the ancient Indian cultures as described in Dr. Coe's book. Since *Manuscript Found* is written as if it were a true account, we conclude that it is not true; it is fiction. (In fact, *Manuscript Found* is excruciatingly bad fiction.)

In the case of *View of the Hebrews*, weighing both the positive and negative points of evidence (correspondences) between this book and Coe's book *The Maya*, we find that the positive evidences are essentially counterbalanced by the negative evidences. Thus the posterior conclusion is the same as skeptical prior assumption. *View of the Hebrews* has little in common with the ancient Mesoamerican Indian cultures described in *The Maya*. This book is not written as fiction, but the universe of facts it cites do not agree well with the universe of facts cited in *The Maya*. This level of factual agreement could likely have been obtained by "guessing."

*View of the Hebrews* was published in 1823, well before the Book of Mormon. Thus an important outcome of analyzing *View of the Hebrews* was to document what Joseph Smith might have known about

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25. Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews: Exhibiting the Destruction of Jerusalem; the Certain Restoration of Judah and Israel; and An Address of the Prophet Isaiah Relative to Their Restoration* (Poultney, VT: Smith & Shute, 1823), <https://archive.org/details/viewhebrewsexhi00smitgoog>.

26. Solomon Spalding, *Manuscript Found* (unpublished manuscript, 1812), [https://archive.org/stream/themanuscriptsto00spauoft/themanuscriptsto00spauoft\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/themanuscriptsto00spauoft/themanuscriptsto00spauoft_djvu.txt).

the ancient Mesoamerican Indians. To make our analysis as rigorous as possible, we did not allow any fact claim in *View of the Hebrews* that corresponds to a specific fact stated in both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon to be classified as “unusual” in our comparison of *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon (see Appendix D). We did this because Joseph Smith might have known about that fact from reading *View of the Hebrews*. Therefore, that particular fact could at most be specific and detailed (Bayesian positive) but not “unusual” (Bayesian strong).

Since *View of the Hebrews* also contains many fact claims that run contrary to facts in *The Maya*, this begs a question: “Why did Joseph Smith not include those erroneous fact claims from *View of the Hebrews* in his ‘guesses’ that supposedly form the basis for the Book of Mormon?”

Therefore, those individuals who believe Joseph Smith was strongly influenced by either *View of the Hebrews* or, more improbably yet, by *Manuscript Found*, have some serious explaining to do. They must explain why Joseph Smith took only the correct fact claims from *View of the Hebrews* and why he avoided including incorrect fact claims from *Manuscript Found* (see, for example, negative correspondences 4, 6, and 9 in Appendix C) or also incorrect fact claims from *View of the Hebrews* (see, for example, negative correspondences 1, 2, and 4 in Appendix D).

Dr. Coe seems to share the opinion that Joseph Smith was influenced by then-popular ideas such as those found in *View of the Hebrews* and *Manuscript Found*. He views the Book of Mormon as “an amalgamation of the rumors and myths, and understandings about Native Americans” existing at the time.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Coe states that the Book of Mormon was “in the air” when it was published.

Well, if so, how did Joseph Smith avoid breathing in so much bad air? Wrong guesses about ancient Indian cultures abound in *Manuscript Found* and *View of the Hebrews*. How did Joseph Smith manage to avoid making those wrong guesses? And how did Joseph Smith manage to “guess” so much that was overwhelmingly correct?

To name just a few of his correct “guesses,” how did Joseph Smith guess correctly that separate historical records were kept of the reigns of the kings, that large-scale public works were built, that the fundamental unit of political organization was the independent city-state, that the word “seating” meant accession to political power, that an ancient Mesoamerican culture declined steeply and then disappeared a few

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27. Dehlin, “Dr. Michael Coe — An Outsider’s View of Book of Mormon Archaeology,” episode 905, 37:00.

hundred years BC, that settled marketplaces existed, that large migrations took place toward the north, and so on for 124 more such examples?

Surely, Joseph Smith must be the greatest guesser of all time, succeeding with odds of many billions of billions of billions to one against him.

We prefer a more rational, more intellectually honest conclusion: The Book of Mormon is a real historical record. It is authentic.

## Summary

Dr. J. B. S. Haldane, the great British biologist, once said that prejudice is an opinion arrived at without considering the evidence. Book of Mormon scholarly critics ignore a very large body of evidence. They fail to read the Book of Mormon carefully and objectively. In other words, they approach the Book of Mormon with deep preexisting prejudices.

Unfortunately, we know of no exceptions to this rule, including Dr. Coe, who read the Book of Mormon just once, about 45 years ago.<sup>28</sup> He missed a few things during that one and only reading.

While Dr. Coe is undoubtedly a great Mayanist, his knowledge of the Book of Mormon is appallingly deficient. He has not paid the price that any scholar must pay in order to offer a credible opinion on a given topic. He doesn't know his material. He doesn't know the Book of Mormon more than superficially.

There are at least 131 correspondences between Dr. Coe's book and the Book of Mormon. In this article, we have cited 151 separate pages of *The Maya*. Thus, well over half of the pages of Coe's book contain facts that correspond to facts referred to in the Book of Mormon. Those who carefully read both Dr. Coe's book and the Book of Mormon can scarcely avoid noticing the many correspondences between the two books.

Thus Dr. Coe's opinion "The picture of this hemisphere between 2,000 BC and AD 421 presented in the [B]ook [of Mormon] has little to do with early Indian cultures" is simply not supported by the evidence provided in his own book. Using Dr. Coe's own book, we find that early Mesoamerica has a very great deal indeed to do with the Book of Mormon. The cumulative weight of these correspondences, analyzed using Bayesian statistics, provides overwhelming support for the historicity of the Book of Mormon as an authentic, factual record set in ancient Mesoamerica.

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28. Coe, "Mormons and Archaeology: An Outside View," 40-48.



*Bioproducts and Biorefining. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, a Fellow of the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineers, and also a Fellow of the American Academy of Inventors. Bruce has published more than 300 archival journal papers, has been cited almost 32,000 times, and has received 63 patents. Professionally, he is interested in understanding how long-term human prosperity and a healthy environment can be based on sustainable agroenergy systems. Bruce joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at age 16 as a result of his first encounter with the Book of Mormon, that “book of books.” He has read the Book of Mormon hundreds of times since then and continues to rejoice in the truths it teaches and the many powerful ways by which these truths are taught. He and his wife, the former Regina Ruesch, are the parents of five children and 20 grandchildren. Gina and Bruce are now serving as missionaries of the Church in the Utah Salt Lake City Headquarters Mission. They are delighted to have their oldest child, Dr. Brian M. Dale, as Bruce’s coauthor on this article.*

**Brian Dale**, PhD MBA, is a biomedical engineer working for Siemens Healthineers, where he teaches programming, physics, and imaging courses for MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging). Brian has published more than 100 scientific papers, book chapters, and conference abstracts, and he has 10 patents. In Brian’s research activities he is frequently involved in using Bayesian methods and other standard statistical methods to analyze medical imaging data for accuracy and image quality. With his wife he raises five children and a variety of chickens and ducks on their small farm.

## Appendix A

### Positive Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*

A few comments must be made on the timing of events with regard to the evidence summarized below. Most of the events in the Book of Mormon took place from roughly 600 BC through AD 400, that is, mostly the Late Preclassic period through the first century or two of the Early Classic. The Book of Ether takes place very much earlier.

Dr. Coe’s book strongly focuses on the Classic (Early, Late and Terminal Classic), so it is fair to ask if the cultural, social, political, etc., information summarized in *The Maya* is relevant to the Book of Mormon. In other words, is it even valid, because of the differing time periods, to make many of the comparisons we have made?

We believe the answer is yes, for three important reasons:

1. This extended quote from p. 61 of *The Maya* is critically important here: “*The more we know about that period [the Late Preclassic], which lasted from about 400 or 300 BC to AD 250, the more complex and developed it seems. From the point of view of social and cultural evolution, the Late Preclassic really is a kind of ‘proto-Classic’ in which all of the traits usually ascribed to the Classic Maya are present, with the exception of vaulted stone architecture and a high elaboration of calendar and script on stone monuments.*” Thus the Late Preclassic period, which corresponds to most of the Book of Mormon events, is certainly relevant to the Classic in terms of “social and cultural” features.
2. Dr. Coe, in his *Dialogue* article and later in the podcast interviews, claims that based on his knowledge, the Book of Mormon is false. If Dr. Coe can make such an assertion based on his knowledge, then it is certainly reasonable and intellectually rigorous to use the knowledge summarized in Dr. Coe’s book to examine the opposing hypothesis, namely that the Book of Mormon is true.
3. Correlations/congruencies/similarities that occur after the Book of Mormon period are certainly not invalid for that reason alone — far from it. We use an alphabet developed by the Phoenicians about 3,000 years ago. The major world religions that influence our culture so much today were founded millennia ago. Our code of laws comes from English common law, about a thousand years old, which was in turn based on still earlier Roman civil law and Roman Catholic canon law. Our numbering system, including the all-important zero, uses Arabic numerals, which were actually derived from Hindu mathematicians working about 1,500 years ago. Our division of the day into hours and minutes comes to us from ancient Babylon and Egypt. The foundations of the modern scientific method go back to the work of the Greek scientist Thales of Miletus, who was active about 2,500 years ago. Even our modern three-course meal structure goes back to the *Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldun, written 600 years ago.

Thus, older cultures and societies definitely leave important marks on subsequent societies. It is perfectly consistent with history that the

Book of Mormon peoples in Preclassic times might have left significant marks on the Maya Classic period, which is the primary focus of Dr. Coe's book.

## 1. Political Correspondences

### 1.1 Fundamental level of political organization is the independent city-state

*Coe's standard:* "Sylvanus Morley had thought that there was once a single great political entity, which he called the 'Old Empire,' but once the full significance of Emblem Glyphs had been recognized, it was clear that there had never been any such thing. In its stead, Mayanists proposed a more Balkanized model, in which each 'city state' was essentially independent of all the others; the political power of even large entities like Tikal would have been confined to a relatively small area, the distance from the capital to the polity's borders seldom exceeding a day's march" (p. 274).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Throughout the Book of Mormon itself there is never a reference to "Nephite nation" or to a "Lamanite nation." Interestingly, the word *nation* is used in reference to the Jaredites (Ether 1:43), a very different people culturally than the Lehits. The Book of Mormon uses this phrase: "nations, kindreds, tongues and people." The Nephites and Lamanites were clearly kindreds. In contrast, the word *nation* is used frequently in terms of the "nations of the Gentiles." The noncanonical *Guide to the Scriptures* has eight references to "Nephite nation," showing how deeply engrained this idea of nationhood is in modern readers. But the Book of Mormon never puts those two words together for Nephite/Lamanite societies. The nation-state is not a political structure found anywhere in the Book of Mormon. Instead, the Book of Mormon peoples were organized politically in city-states. Often one city-state would dominate a group of other city-states. This dominance is the subject of the next correspondence

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed. There is not a single reference in the text of the Book of Mormon to "Nephite nation" or "Lamanite nation." It is also unusual. Joseph Smith was growing up in the new nation of America, with a great deal of pride and self-identity as an independent nation. How did he avoid identifying the Lamanite or Nephite peoples as "nations"? But he did avoid it. What a lucky "guess" — over and over again during the course of the Book of Mormon history. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.2 "Capital" or leading city-state dominates a cluster of other communities

*Coe's standard:* "Clusters of villages and communities were organized under a single polity, dominated by a large 'capital' village, which could have contained more than 1,000 people. (p. 51)." "Quirigua lies only 30 miles

(48 km) north of Copan; ... that seems, on the basis of its inscriptions, to have periodically been one of the latter's suzerainties" (p. 137). "Bonampak, politically important during the Early Classic, but by the Late Classic an otherwise insignificant center clearly under the cultural and political thumb of Yaxchilan" (p. 149). "These are Tamarindito, Arroyo de Piedras, Punta de Chimino, Aguatega, and Dos Pilas; the latter city seems to have dominated the rest" (p. 150). "We now know that not all Maya polities were equal: the kings of some lesser states were said to be 'possessed' by the rulers of more powerful ones (the phrase *y-ajaw*, 'his king,' specifies this relationship" (p. 275).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:12; Alma 61:8; Helaman 1:27. Zarahemla is clearly the Nephite capital city in the Book of Mormon, with 140 mentions in the book. It is to Zarahemla that the other cities of the Nephites look to for leadership and supplies in their wars against the Lamanites. When the Lamanite chieftain Coriantumr invades the Nephite confederation, he makes straight for Zarahemla, "the capital city," in the heart of the Nephite lands, and bypasses all the lesser cities. Later the city/land of Bountiful seems to become the Nephite capital city-state.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This political model was clearly part of Book of Mormon political arrangements, so it is specific and detailed in both books. It is also unusual. There is no corresponding political arrangement in Joseph Smith's time which he might have used as a model. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.3 Some subordinate city-states shift their allegiance to a different "capital" city

*Coe's standard:* "Dos Pilas; the latter city ... [began] putting together a large-scale state as early as the seventh century AD, when a noble lineage arrived from Tikal and established a royal dynasty. The family was clearly adroit in its political maneuvers, switching from an allegiance to their cousins at Tikal to one with Calakmul, its arch-enemy" (p. 150).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 23:31 and Alma 43:4-5. The Amalekites and later the Zoramites, both of whom are Nephites by birth but have dissented from the Nephites and built their own cities, go over to the Lamanites as a body.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The analysis is specific and detailed. In both cases, whole city-states changed their political allegiance to that of a former enemy. This does not seem unusual to a modern reader and probably would not have seemed unusual even to a country boy in the relatively innocent early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.4 Complex state institutions

*Coe's standard:* "In art, in religion, in state complexity, and perhaps even in the calendar and astronomy, Olmec models were transferred to the Maya"

(p. 61). "Civilization ... has certainly been achieved by the time that state institutions ... have appeared" (p. 63). "By Classic times, full royal courts came into view" (p. 93). "closer to the heart of the city itself, where the dwellings of aristocrats and bureaucrats" (p. 126).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 24:1-2; Alma 2:6-7, 14-16; Alma 27:21-22; Alma 30:9; Alma 51:2-7; Alma 60:7, 11, 21, 24. Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* clearly show societies that have large, complex state institutions. For example, the Nephites had (1) some form of elections, (2) armies supported by the state, (3) chief judges and lower judges, and (4) kings (at least part of the time). The Lamanites appear to have had kings at all times. Dr. Coe (p. 63) notes that state institutions were developed among the Maya by the Late Preclassic, consistent with Book of Mormon timing for the references provided.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the British and American civil governments had large, complex state institutions, but the Native American societies certainly did not. This comparison is specific, has quite a bit of detail, and probably would have been unusual to Joseph Smith. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.5 Many cities exist

*Coe's standard:* To name just a few of the cities mentioned in *The Maya* we have Uxmal, Chichen Itza, Coba, Tulum, Acanceh, Ek' Balam, Mayapan, Piedras Negras, Ceibal, Palenque, Naranjo, El Mirador, Bonampak, Uaxactun, Kaminaljuyu, Takalik Abaj, Tikal (p. 9). "the great Usumacinta ... draining the northern highlands, ... twisting to the northwest past many a ruined Maya city" (p. 16-17). "More advanced cultural traits, ... the construction of cities" (p. 26).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 51:20; Alma 59:5; 3 Nephi 9:3-10. Many named cities are mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

*Analysis of correspondence:* By 1830 America had many cities, but there were no cities on the frontier where Joseph Smith translated and published the Book of Mormon. The Native Americans with whom Joseph was familiar did not build cities, although he might possibly have learned about some Native American cities by reading *View of the Hebrews*, so we do not count it as unusual. Nonetheless, the correspondence is specific and quite detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.6 City of Laman (Lamanai) "occupied from earliest times"

*Coe's standard:* "Far up the New River ... is the important site of Lamanai, ... occupied from earliest times right into the post-Conquest period" (p. 85).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 9:10. The strong tendency is for consonants to be preserved in pronouncing words and names. For example, Beirut (Lebanon) is one of the oldest cities in the world, settled 5,000 years ago. The name derives from Canaanite-Phoenician *be'erot* and

has been known as “Biruta,” “Berytus” and now “Beirut,” while always retaining those three consonants “BRT” in the correct order, and with no intervening consonants.<sup>29</sup>

In the case of the city Lamanai (Laman), all three consonants, and only these three consonants, namely LMN, are found in the correct order and are the same consonants as given for the city of Laman mentioned in the Book of Mormon. This seems to be a “bullseye” for the Book of Mormon. How did Joseph Smith correctly “guess” the correct consonants, and only the correct consonants in the correct order for the name of an important city “occupied from earliest times?”

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, detailed and statistically unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.7 Parts of the land were very densely settled

*Coe’s standard:* “A few cities, such as Chunchucmil in Yucatan, are amazingly dense” (p. 124). “At Tikal, within a little over 6 sq. miles ... there are c. 3,000 structures” (p. 126). Recent work not reported in *The Maya* confirms that some Mayan cities were very densely populated.<sup>30</sup>

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mormon 1:7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Native Americans with whom Joseph Smith had direct contact did not have cities, let alone cities so densely settled. He may have learned about Native American cities from *View of the Hebrews*, but that book gives no information about how densely settled those cities were. So this correspondence is specific and detailed, but we do not count it as unusual, since Joseph Smith might have gotten the idea from *View of the Hebrews*. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.8 Large-scale public works

*Coe’s standard:* “Civilization ... has certainly been achieved by the time that state institutions, large-scale public works ... have appeared” (p. 63). Dr. Coe notes that city walls (certainly a public work) were built “when, in places, local conditions became hostile” (pp. 126, 194, 216).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 7:10; Mosiah 11:8-13; Alma 14:27-28; Alma 48:8; Helaman 1:22; 3 Nephi 6:7-8; Ether 10:5-6. The Book of Mormon speaks in some detail about the large-scale public works that its societies, particularly its more decadent societies, achieved.

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29. Wikipedia, s.v. “Beirut,” last modified November 10, 2018, 02:58, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beirut>.

30. Jacey Fortin, “Lasers Reveal a Maya Civilization So Dense It Blew Experts’ Minds,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/03/world/americas/mayan-city-discovery-laser.html>.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This correspondence is both specific and detailed. It would also seem unusual. The Native Americans of Joseph Smith's time and place did not build public works or temples. Why would Joseph Smith have written a book that clearly claimed that "the Indians" did so? However, since *View of the Hebrews* references temples and walled towns (not in any detail), and Joseph Smith might have gotten the idea from that book, we will only count this correspondence as specific and detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.9 Some rulers live in luxury

*Coe's standard:* "The excavation of two tombs from this period has thrown much light on the luxury to which these rulers were accustomed" (p. 74).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Mosiah 11:3-15.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Joseph probably knew that the British royal court lived in luxury, but the chiefs of the Indian tribes did not. Why would Joseph have assumed that the ancestors of the Indians had kings who lived in luxury? The Book of Mormon contrasts the reign of King Benjamin, who deliberately did not live in luxury, with decadent rulers who did. So Joseph was correct that some decadent rulers did live in luxury, but there are few details, and this is not particularly unusual. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 1.10 Elaborate thrones

*Coe's standard:* "Its superstructure's chambers contain a stone throne in the form of a snarling jaguar, painted red, with eyes and spots of jade and fangs of shell; atop the throne rested a Toltec circular back-shield in turquoise mosaic" (p. 206).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Mosiah 11:9; Ether 10:6.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Again, Joseph might have known about the elaborate throne of the British royal family, so it was perhaps not unusual, but what Native Americans was Joseph familiar with that had thrones, let alone elaborate thrones? How did he "guess" this one correctly? To be conservative, however, we will classify this as a specific and detailed correspondence, but perhaps not an unusual one. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.11 Royalty exists, with attendant palaces, courts and nobles

*Coe's standard:* "We now know a great deal about ... Maya societies as the seats of royal courts" (p. 7). "By Classic times, full royal courts came into view" (p. 93). See also pp. 7, 93, 95, 126, and 209.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 24:1-2; Alma 22:2; Alma 51:7-8, 21.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* refer repeatedly to these institutions of royalty. So the correspondence is both specific and detailed. However, it may be a stretch to call it unusual. While there were no Indian kings, Joseph certainly knew about British royalty, and

might have been influenced thereby to put it into the Book of Mormon. So to be conservative, we will not classify this one as unusual, although it is specific and detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.12 Royal or elite marriages for political purposes

*Coe's standard:* "Where such stratagems typically played out was in royal or noble marriages" (p. 97). "An elite class consisting of central Mexican foreigners, and the local nobility with whom they had marriage ties" (p. 103).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 17:24; Alma 47:35.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific but not particularly detailed in the case of the Book of Mormon. Joseph might also have been aware of the political marriages in the royal houses of England and Europe. So we rate this one as specific but not detailed or unusual. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 1.13 Feasting for political purposes

*Coe's standard:* "In courts, feasts and gifts helped to bind alliances and keep underlings happy, with effects across the kingdom" (p. 97).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 18:9; Alma 20:9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Neither book offers a lot of distinguishing detail, although the references are specific. The practice seems unusual in Joseph's frontier setting in democratic America. Why would Joseph Smith attribute this practice (unusual for him) to the ancestors of the Indians? This correspondence is therefore ranked as specific and unusual but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.14 Gifts to the king for political advantage

*Coe's standard:* *The Maya* refers clearly to this practice: "In courts, feasts and gifts helped to bind alliances and keep underlings happy, with effects across the kingdom" (p. 97).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 2:12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon reference to political gifts is less specific but strongly suggestive. Again, the practice seems unusual in Joseph's frontier setting in democratic America. Why would Joseph Smith attribute this practice (unusual for him) to the ancestors of the Indians? This correspondence is therefore ranked as only somewhat specific and unusual. The overall likelihood is downgraded from specific and unusual to only specific. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 1.15 Political factions organize around a member of the elite

*Coe's standard:* "courts did not operate by individual actions alone. They worked instead through factions pivoting around a high ranking courtier or member of the royal family" (p. 97).



*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 1:2-9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* In America in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the party system had already been born, and the party often pivoted around a key political figure like Thomas Jefferson or John Adams, so this idea was not unusual to Joseph. However, it is both specific and quite detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### **1.16 Foreigners move in and take over government, often as family dynasties**

*Coe's standard:* “[The Founder of Copan] was another stranger coming in from the west, perhaps from Teotihuacan” (p. 118). “[At Dos Pilas] ... a noble lineage arrived from Tikal and established a royal dynasty” (p. 150). “Uxmal ... was the seat of the Xiu family, but this was a late lineage of Mexican origin that could not possibly have built the site” (p. 180).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:19; Alma 47:35; Helaman 1:16.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Again, both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* specifically refer to this practice and in considerable detail. However, Joseph Smith might have been aware of the change in family dynasties in England about a century earlier when the House of Hanover succeeded the House of Stuart as kings of Great Britain, and used this as his model (however unlikely). So the correspondence is specific and detailed, but perhaps not unusual. To be conservative, we assign this a likelihood = 0.1.

### **1.17 City administrative area with bureaucrats and aristocrats**

*Coe's standard:* At Tikal “closer to the heart of the city itself, [were] the dwellings of aristocrats and bureaucrats” (p. 126), “the palaces were the administrative centers of the city” (p. 128). At Aguateca the archaeologist was able “to identify specialized areas, such as a house which was probably that of the chief scribe of the city” (p. 151). “The House of the Governor was built, probably to serve as his administrative headquarters” (p. 182).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 60:19, 22; Helaman 9:1-7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both books are quite specific on this point, but the Book of Mormon does not provide a lot of detail. However, Joseph Smith never saw a state or national capital city with its administrative center and nearby houses for officials until well after the the Book of Mormon was published. So this is unusual and specific. Likelihood = 0.1.

### **1.18 Records kept specifically of the reigns of the kings**

*Coe's standard:* “the ‘stela cult’ — the inscribed glorification of royal lineages and their achievements” (p. 177). “The text is completely historical, recounting the king’s descent from Pakal the Great” (p. 264n169). “The figures that appear in Classic reliefs are not gods and priests, but dynastic autocrats and their spouses, children, and subordinates” (p. 273).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 9:4; Jacob 3:13; Jarom 1:14.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Like *The Maya*, the Book of Mormon is very specific and detailed about separate records being kept of the reigns of the kings. We know of no reason or existing historical model that would have led Joseph Smith to have correctly “guessed” that the doings of the kings were kept separately from the rest of the history of a people. This is a specific, detailed and unusual correspondence. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.19 Native leaders incorporated in power structure after subjugation

*Coe’s standard:* “Mesoamerican ‘empires’ such as Teotihuacan’s were probably not organized along Roman lines; ... rather, they were ‘hegemonic,’ in the sense that conquered bureaucracies were largely in place” (p. 100). “it seems obvious that many of the native princes were incorporated into the new power structure” (p. 206). “Or perhaps Calakmul found it easier ... to rule through local authorities” (p. 276).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 19:26–27; Mosiah 24:1–2.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon and *The Maya* are both specific and detailed about this practice. As Dr. Coe suggests, the only model Joseph Smith might conceivably have heard about for control of subjugated peoples was the Roman one, which was the opposite of the system used among the Maya, and also the opposite of the system used in the Book of Mormon. How did Joseph Smith “guess” that one correctly? Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.20 Tribute required of subjects

*Coe’s standard:* “the ruler took in tax or tribute” (p. 93). “Scenes with food, drink, and tribute” (p. 97). “displays of captives or tribute” (p. 124). “On what did the population live? One answer is tribute” (p. 216).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 7:15, 22; Mosiah 19:15, 22, 26, 28; Mosiah 22:7, 10. Also Alma 23:38–39; Alma 7:22; Alma 24:9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Once again, the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* are both specific and detailed about the practice of tribute. However, it is possible that Joseph had heard about this practice either through the Bible or other sources. So we will classify this correspondence as specific and detailed, but not unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.21 Limited number of important patrilineages

*Coe’s standard:* “There were 24 ‘principal’ lineages in Utatlan” (p. 225). “There were approximately 250 patrilineages in Yucatan at the time of the Conquest, and we know from Landa how important they were” (p. 234).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Jacob: 1:13; Alma 47:35; 4 Nephi 1:36–38; Mormon 1:8–9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* are very specific and detailed about how important it was to belong to a leading patrilineage. While Joseph Smith might have picked up this idea from reading the Bible (that is, the tribes of Israel) we think this is very unlikely. So we regard this correspondence as specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.22 King and “king elect”

*Coe's standard:* “The K'iche' state was headed by a king, a king-elect, and two ‘captains’” (p. 226). “royal youths ... or the ‘great youth,’ ... perhaps the heir-designate” (p. 278).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 1:10; Mosiah 6:3.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon also refers to the practice of an heir-designate, so this is a specific correspondence, but it is not particularly detailed. Also, Joseph may have been aware of the practice of having heirs to the throne of Great Britain. To be conservative, we will assign this correspondence a likelihood of 0.5, although it may perhaps merit a greater evidentiary strength.

### 1.23 There are captains serving kings

*Coe's standard:* “The K'iche' state was headed by a king, a king-elect and two ‘captains’” (p. 226).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 22:3.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Gideon clearly serves in the capacity of a captain to King Limhi, so the idea is specific or highly suggestive. It also seems unusual. Where would Joseph Smith have come up with this idea? Because of lack of detail, we will assign this correspondence a likelihood of 0.5, although it probably merits a greater strength.

### 1.24 Political power is exercised by family dynasties

*Coe's standard:* “[Spearthrower Owl installed his own son] ... as the tenth ruler of Tikal” (p. 109). “King of the great city of Palenque [was] the second son of the renowned Palenque [ruler Pakal the Great]” (p. 161). “There were 24 ‘principal’ lineages in Utatlan, closely identified with the buildings ... in which the lords carried out their affairs” (p. 225). “The ancient Maya realm was ... a class society with political power ... in the hands of an hereditary elite” (p. 234). “the names of the cities themselves or of the dynasties that ruled over them” (p. 271). “dynastic record of all Palenque rulers” (p. 274).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* From the beginning of the Book of Mormon, the key political question was which of sons of Lehi had the right to exercise political power over the rest of Lehi's descendants; in other words, who would be the leader of an hereditary elite? See Mosiah 1:9; Mosiah 11:1;

Mosiah 19:16, 26; Mosiah 28:10; Alma 17:6; Alma 20:8; Alma 24:3-4; Alma 50:40; Helaman 1:4-5; Helaman 2:2; Ether 6:24.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both books very clearly attest to the central importance of family dynasties. The Lamanite political model was clearly that of hereditary kings. Even among the supposedly more democratic Nephites, following the political reforms of King Mosiah, the office of chief judge (an elected position) often descended from father to son, for example, Alma to his son Alma, Pahoran to his son Pahoran, etc. Obviously, there was a *de facto* hereditary elite even during a time of popular elections.

Likewise, *The Maya* provides many examples of continuing conflict over the question of which lineage would exercise political leadership. So this correspondence is specific and quite detailed. However, it is not unusual. Joseph might have been aware of the various family dynasties in Europe and Great Britain, and their unending conflicts. This correspondence is thus assigned a likelihood of 0.1.

### **1.25 Kings rule over subordinate provincial or territorial rulers, some of noble blood (subkings)**

*Coe's standard:* "The wily K'uk'ulkan II populated his city with provincial rulers and their families" (p. 216). "At the head of each statelet in Yucatan was the ... the territorial ruler who had inherited his post in the male line" (p. 236). "The kings of some lesser states were said to be 'possessed' by the rulers of more powerful ones" (p. 275).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 24:2-3; Alma 17:21; Alma 20:4, 8.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This pattern is clearly evident among the Lamanite kings in the Book of Mormon and also as detailed by Dr. Coe in *The Maya*. So the correspondence is specific and quite detailed in both books. We know of no political model in his time on which Joseph Smith might have relied to correctly "guess" this correspondence. The kings of Great Britain did not have provincial rulers of royal blood. Thus this correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual. However, because of its overlap with correspondence 1.2, we assign only a likelihood = 0.5 to this correspondence. This choice is due to the specific additional information that sometimes these provincial rulers were of royal blood.

### **1.26 "Seating" means accession to political power**

*Coe's standard:* "Epigraphers conclude that pectoral reverse records the 'seating' or accession to power, of the ruler in question" (p. 91). "Important glyphs now known to relate to dynastic affairs include ... inauguration or 'seating' in office" (p. 274).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 8:12; Helaman 7:4; 3 Nephi 6:19.

*Analysis of correspondence:* On three separate occasions, the Book of Mormon uses exactly this word *seating* or *seat* to describe the holding of or accession to political power. So the correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual. It seems very unlikely that Joseph Smith would have correctly “guessed” this particular word. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 1.27 Separation of civil and religious authority

*Coe's standard:* “a hereditary Chief Priest resided in that city, ... but in no source do we find his authority or that of the priests superseding civil power” (p. 243).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 4:16–18.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Under the leadership of Alma the Younger, the role of the head of state and the head of the church were separated, while they had previously been combined. It appears that this was the pattern afterwards among the Nephites, but we do not know what the pattern was among the Lamanites. So this correspondence is specific, but not detailed. Also, this pattern of “separation of church and state” as practiced in America would not have been unusual to Joseph Smith. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 1.28 Those of noble birth aspire to power

*Coe's standard:* “Several courtiers were so mighty as to be magnates, perhaps descended from collateral royal lines. They needed to be co-opted and watched, lest their pretensions got out of hand” (p. 93).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma: 51:5, 8.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Alma describes a continuing conflict in the Nephite confederation between those who desired a freely chosen government and those who were of “high birth” and sought to be kings. So the correspondence is specific, but not very detailed in either book and probably not unusual to Joseph, since seeking after power seems to be part of human nature. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 1.29 Royal courts imitate their enemies

*Coe's standard:* “Courts were often imitative. Through a curious form of standardization, they emulated each other, even those of enemies” (p. 95).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 47:23.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon likewise refers to a specific custom of Lamanite royalty which had been taken from their Nephite enemies. Dr. Coe himself regards this imitative feature as “curious”; so we will agree to that point. It is indeed unusual. However, there is not a lot of detail in either *The Maya* or the Book of Mormon about these imitative practices, so we will classify this correspondence as specific and unusual, but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 1.30 Royal courts function as “great households”

*Coe’s standard:* “A final observation is that courts functioned as ‘great households’” (p. 97).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma Chap. 19 (the whole chapter)

*Analysis of correspondence:* Alma Chapter 19 describes a somewhat unusual scene in which many of King Lamoni’s subjects gather to Lamoni’s “house” (not his palace) in quite a familiar, quasi-democratic way and are apparently able to bring their swords along with them. This would certainly not be the case in the court of Great Britain. So the practice is definitely unusual, but there is not a lot of detail, and Dr. Coe is not very specific about what he means by “great households.”

However, there is enough specificity in the concept of royal courts as households and the idea that King Lamoni had a house, rather than a palace, to warrant identifying this as a correspondence. While this may not be a detailed correspondence or a particularly specific one, it is very unusual. Therefore, we assign this correspondence a likelihood of 0.5.

### 1.31 Candidates for high office had to possess hidden knowledge

*Coe’s standard:* “Any candidate for high office had to pass an occult catechism known as the ‘Language of Zuywa.’” (p. 236).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Enos 1:1; Mosiah 1:2.

*Analysis of correspondence:* King Benjamin “caused that [his sons] should be taught in the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding.” Later, his son Mosiah became the ruler of the people. Likewise, Enos (a prince of sorts) was also taught in the “language” of his father. One is led to ask: “Was the regular course of education not sufficient for these young men; was their common language not enough to qualify them to lead?” Apparently not. This correspondence has some detail, and while it is specific enough to get our attention, and is definitely unusual, we do not think it merits a likelihood of 0.02; instead it is assigned a likelihood of 0.1.

### 1.32 Abrupt breaks in dynasties

*Coe’s standard:* “Thus, we can expect a good deal of local cultural continuity even in those regions taken over by the great city; but in the case of the lowland Maya, we shall also see outright interference in dynastic matters, with profound implications for the course of Maya history. (p. 100). “there are signs of ... profound breaks in the dynasty” (p. 116).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:1-19; Alma 24:1-2.

*Analysis of correspondence:* *The Maya* also describes numerous other instances in which one Maya kingdom invaded another and abruptly changed the ruling dynasty. The same thing also occurs in the Book of Mormon,

when King Mosiah replaces (peacefully) the ruler(s) of Zarahemla; and later in Alma 24 when the rebellious Lamanites depose their hereditary king. So this correspondence is specific and detailed in both books, but it probably does not qualify as unusual. Joseph might well have known about the many European wars, with multiple rulers bent on deposing each other. Likelihood = 0.1.

### **1.33 Subservient peoples are said to “possess” the land while ruled by a dominant power**

*Coe's standard:* “The kings of some lesser states were said to be ‘possessed’ by the rulers of more powerful ones” (p. 275).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 19:15.

*Analysis of correspondence:* It is interesting that this specific word *possess* is the one used by the Maya to describe subservient rulership. Likewise the Lehighites (for example, 2 Nephi 1:9) and the Jaredites (for example, Ether 2:8) were instructed that theirs was a “promised land” and that they would “possess” it as long as they kept their covenants with their heavenly king. That same word *possess* was the relationship the Israelites were to have with their lands of promise, under God's rule (for example, Deuteronomy 11:8, 2 Nephi 24:2). The wording here is highly specific, and unusual, but may not be detailed enough in the case of the Maya to warrant a likelihood of 0.02, but it does warrant a likelihood of 0.1. How would Joseph Smith have guessed how appropriate that particular word was to describe this relationship between a more powerful king and his subservient kings among the Maya?

### ***Calculation of overall likelihood for political correspondences***

There are 33 separate political correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. Of these, nine have a likelihood of 0.5, 16 have a likelihood of 0.1 and eight have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood of these 33 positive correspondences is  $0.5^9 \times 0.1^{16} \times 0.02^8 = 4.99 \times 10^{-33}$ .

## **2. Cultural and Social Correspondences**

### **2.1 Possible ancient origin of Mesoamerican cultures**

*Coe's standard:* “Given the similarities among the diverse cultures of Mesoamerica, ... its peoples must share a common origin, so far back in time that it may never be brought to light by archaeology” (p. 14).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See the Book of Ether.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon specifically refers to a much earlier migration, the “Jaredites,” from the Old World to the New World thousands of years before the Lehighite migration. However, the Book of Mormon does not say, as Coe strongly implies above, that the earlier

culture was the common origin of subsequent cultures. Those details are lacking in the Book of Mormon. The pattern is, however, unusual. It is one thing for Joseph Smith to have “guessed” the existence of the Lehi colony, but to correctly guess another much, much earlier culture/migration is quite unusual. We rate this specific and unusual for a likelihood of 0.1.

## 2.2 Active interchange of ideas and things among the elite

*Coe’s standard:* “there must have been an active interchange of ideas and things among the Mesoamerican elite over many centuries” (p. 14).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:12-15; Mosiah 7:9,13; Alma 47:23, 35-36; Helaman 4:3-4, 8; Helaman 11: 24-25; Alma 63:14; 3 Nephi 1:28.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Coe is very specific and detailed in his statement. The Book of Mormon is likewise detailed and specific about the many exchanges of people (especially elite peoples) and ideas over centuries among the Book of Mormon peoples. Even a well-educated person, which Joseph Smith was certainly not, would have a hard time thinking of a historical model for this behavior, let alone blending it so seamlessly and unobtrusively into the larger Book of Mormon history. Therefore it is specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.3 Foreign brides for elites

*Coe’s standard:* “More than a negligible percentage of Tikal’s population came from elsewhere, including the introduction of foreign brides for elites” (p. 109).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 17:24 and Alma 47:35.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Ammon was a Nephite prince whom the king of the Lamanites sought as a husband for one of his daughters; and Ammonihah was a Nephite by birth who became king of the Lamanites after marrying the queen, so the correspondence is specific and detailed. There were indeed foreign brides for elites. However, Joseph might have been aware of the intermarriages among the royal houses of Europe, where elites also had foreign brides, so it is not unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.4 Slavery practiced

*Coe’s standard:* “[Yucatan was famed for] production of honey, salt and slaves” (p. 19). “Slaves comprised both sentenced criminals and vassal war captives” (p. 225). “Human sacrifice was perpetrated on prisoners, slaves, and children” (pp. 243-44).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 7:15; Alma 27:8; 3 Nephi 3:7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* King Benjamin specifically states that he had *not* allowed his people to make slaves of one another, strongly implying that slavery was the usual practice. (Mosiah 2:13). The Lamanites offered to become slaves until they had recompensed the wrongs they had done to



the Nephites. The Gadiantons offered a partnership with the Nephites as an alternative to slavery. So the practice of slavery is specific and detailed in both books. Alas, slavery has never been unusual, and it was certainly known to Joseph Smith. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.5 Different languages found in pockets

*Coe's standard:* "Languages other than Mayan were found in isolated pockets, indicating either intrusions of peoples from foreign lands or remnant populations engulfed by the expansion of the Mayan tongues" (p. 31).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:19; Mosiah 9:6-7; Mosiah 23:30-35; Alma 27:22.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon contains examples of both kinds of linguistic "pockets," both by intrusion and engulfment. So the correspondence is specific and detailed. It perhaps is not unusual, however. Joseph Smith might have reflected on the intrusion of English into the French peoples of Canada, or on the immigration of so many Germans during the Revolutionary War ... and then woven this idea seamlessly into the Book of Mormon. Unlikely in the extreme, but possible. To be (probably overly) conservative we rate this one as specific and detailed, but not unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.6 In their creation stories, a great flood caused by human wickedness

*Coe's standard.* "men made from flesh. ... [Humankind] turned to wickedness and ... were in their turn annihilated ... as ... a great flood swept the earth" (p. 41). "the last Creation before our own ended with a great flood" (p. 249).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 5:11, Alma 10:22.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Lehite colony had the five books of Moses, and thus the flood story. Among the Maya and the Lehighites, the great flood was specifically due to the wickedness of men. So the correspondence was specific and detailed. However, because Joseph Smith may have read *View of the Hebrews* (however unlikely that may be), we are not allowing this correspondence to be unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.7 Possible settlement of the Americas by seafarers

*Coe's standard:* "The presence or absence of the Bering Strait is thus not necessarily relevant to the problem [of the settlement of the Americas]: the very first Americans may well have taken a maritime route" (p. 41). "From the setting sun we came ... from beyond the sea" (p. 224).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 18:8, 23; Omni 1:16; Ether 6:12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Coe is specific on this point, but not particularly detailed, at least as regards his interpretation of the *Annals of the Kaqchikels*. In contrast, the Annals themselves seem to be very specific and detailed on

this point. According to the Kaqchikels, their ancestors came from the west, beyond the sea. The Book of Mormon is specific that both the Jaredite and Lehiite migrations were by sea, and the Lehiites came from the west. We are not told how the Mulekites arrived. In Joseph's day, most educated persons believed in a Bering Strait migration of the ancestors of the American Indians, perhaps by the land bridge. So for Joseph to say that the Book of Mormon peoples came by sea was unusual. However, in deference to Coe's different interpretation of the *Annals* from a plain reading of that quotation, we rate this one as specific and unusual, but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.8 Steep decline and disappearance of an ancient culture a few hundred years BC

*Coe's standard:* "There is some consensus among archaeologists that the Olmecs of southern Mexico had elaborated many of these traits beginning over 3,000 years ago, and that much of complex culture in Mesoamerica has an Olmec origin" (p. 14). "The Olmec civilization went into a steep decline ca 400 BC" (p. 61).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:21; Book of Ether, especially chapters 13-15.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This correspondence is detailed and specific. It also is unusual. What information or possible model did Joseph Smith have to "guess" a steep cultural decline among a very ancient American Indian culture at the same time the evidence summarized in *The Maya* says the decline occurred? In a word, how did he "guess" this one? Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.9 Strong class distinctions based on noble birth, wealth and specialized learning

*Coe's standard:* "The esoteric knowledge of the Maya ... served to separate and elevate people in the know from those denied that privilege" (p. 96). "Now, while among some other peoples such kin groups are theoretically equal, among the Maya this was not so, ... for there were strongly demarcated classes" (p. 235). "At the top were the nobles, ... who had private lands and held the more important political offices, as well as filling the roles of high-ranking warriors, wealthy farmers and merchants, and clergy. The commoners were the free workers of the population, ... but in all likelihood even these persons were graded into rich and poor. There is some indication of a class of serfs, who worked the private lands of the nobles" (p. 235).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 32:2; Alma 51:21; 3 Nephi 6:11-12; 4 Nephi 1:26.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, and both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* agree in the details upon which class distinctions were based, namely birth, wealth, and learning. While distinctions based on wealth and learning probably would not have seemed

unusual to Joseph Smith (coming from the working poor class), distinctions based on noble birth might have seemed unusual. To be conservative, we will not count this as unusual, only specific and detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.10 Sacrifice of children and others to Maya gods

*Coe's standard:* "When the [Temple of the Feathered Serpent] was dedicated ca AD 200, at least 200 individuals were sacrificed in its honor" (p. 100). "The honored deceased was buried ... and [was] accompanied not only by rich offerings of pottery and other artifacts, but also by up to three persons sacrificed for the occasion (generally children or adolescents)" (p. 104). "Human sacrifice was perpetrated on ... children (bastards or orphans bought for the occasion), ... fit offerings for the Maya gods" (p. 243-44).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mormon 4:14-15, 21.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The practice is detailed and specific in both books. However, we do not count it as unusual. The practice of sacrificing children and infants is described in the Bible, and Joseph might have learned about it there. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.11 Multiple correspondences with Egyptian culture and concepts

*Coe's standard:* "The function of Maya pyramids as funerary monuments thus harks back to Preclassic times" (p. 76). "The Temple of the Inscriptions was a funerary monument with exactly the same primary function as the Egyptian pyramids" (p. 157). Not mentioned by Coe are several additional ties with Egypt. First, there is the fact that both the Egyptians and the Maya regarded the five days at the end of the year as unlucky.<sup>31</sup> "A much-dreaded interval of 5 unlucky days added at the end" (p. 64). Second, the Hero Twins in the Maya story "resurrected their father Hun Hunahpu, the Maize God" (p. 71), just as Horus, the son of Osiris, resurrected his father in ancient Egyptian religion.<sup>32</sup> Third and 4th include hieroglyphic writing, and grave goods. We wonder why Coe, who certainly knows of these additional correspondences between the Maya and the Egyptians, did not mention them. So we did it for him.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 1:2; Alma 10:3; Mormon 9:32.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence here is the tie with Egypt on multiple levels. The Book of Mormon claims to be written "in the characters called among us, the reformed Egyptian." Nephi starts out his record telling us that he made it "in the language of the Egyptians." Furthermore, Lehi was a descendant of Manasseh, who was born in Egypt of an Egyptian mother. The correspondences are detailed and specific as far as the Egyptian ties are

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31. "History of the Egyptian Calendar," Infoplease, accessed September 28, 2018, <https://www.infoplease.com/calendar-holidays/calendars/history-egyptian-calendar>.

32. Wikipedia, s.v. "Osiris myth," last edited December 9, 2018, 06:57, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris\\_myth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris_myth).

concerned, and very unusual. Why would Joseph Smith have “guessed” that the ancestors of the Indians had these ties with Egypt? This correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual, but since Dr. Coe mentioned only one of several possible ties with Egypt, we will downgrade the correspondence from 0.02 (specific, detailed and unusual) to merely specific, or likelihood = 0.5.

## 2.12 Mobile populations, founding new cities

*Coe’s standard:* “Many dynasties were founded in the Early Classic period. Several ... appear to have hived off from the southern Lowlands” (p. 108). “What is clear is that, far more than once thought, people moved about in the Early Classic periods” (p. 109).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:12-15; Alma 8:7; Alma 27:22; Alma 47:35.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* are full of examples in which large and small groups set out on their own to found new cities. In the Book of Mormon we have Nephi’s people separating from the other Lehiters after their arrival in the New World; Mosiah and his people leaving the main body of Lehiters and joining the people of Zarahemla; Zeniff and his people going up to reclaim the land of their first inheritance; the people of Ammon moving to avoid destruction; the flight of the people who followed Alma the Elder, and so on. The correspondence is specific and detailed, but probably not unusual. Joseph Smith and his family were themselves part of a highly mobile American frontier population, busy founding new communities. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.13 Menial workers, extreme inequality, ignorance and oppression

*Coe’s standard:* “The royal cooks and cleaners or other menials ... did not merit mention” (p. 129). “Among some other peoples such kin groups are theoretically equal, among the Maya this was not so. ... The commoners were the free workers, ... but in all likelihood even these persons were graded into rich and poor. ... And at the bottom were the slaves who were mostly plebeians taken in war. ... Slavery was hereditary” (p. 235). (See the entirety of p. 235.)

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 17:26-33; Alma 32:4-5; Alma 35:9; 3 Nephi 6:10-12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon details the same sources of inequality as does *The Maya*: those owing to education, social status and wealth. So the correspondence is specific and detailed. Again, alas, this correspondence would certainly not have been unusual to Joseph and his family ... as relatively poor “commoners [and] free workers,” using Coe’s words. Since this correspondence has some overlap with 2.9, we reduce its probative weight from 0.1 to 0.5. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 2.14 Marketplaces exist

*Coe's standard:* "a variety of men, women and even children involved in the buying and selling of commodities including shelled maize, maize *tamales*, atole (maize gruel), salt and even vases" (p. 145). "These are unique scenes of daily life within a bustling marketplace. ... Such markets have been found at a number of other Classic Maya cities" (p. 146). "There was a great market at Chichen Itza" (p. 233).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 7:10.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon is specific about the existence of markets, but not detailed, except that there was a "chief" market in Zarahemla, which was also the leading city of the Nephite civilization at that time, strongly implying that there were other, less prominent markets in Zarahemla or elsewhere. *The Maya* is highly detailed, however. This is undoubtedly unusual. What North American tribes did Joseph Smith know of that had settled, stationary marketplaces? So how did he "guess" that one correctly? Specific and unusual for a likelihood of 0.1.

## 2.15 People driven from their homes wander searching for a new home

*Coe's standard:* "The Itza ... were driven from this town ... and wandered east across the land, ... where they settled as squatters in the desolate city [of Chichen Itza]" (p. 216) "Those Itza who were driven from Chichen Itza [wandered back] to the Lake Peten Itza" (p. 219).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* The Lehites were driven from their Jerusalem home and wandered for years before they found a home in the New World. Alma the Elder and his people were driven from their homes by King Noah and wandered in the wilderness until they found a home. The Anti-Nephi-Lehis were likewise driven from their homes and had to seek a new home in a strange land.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This correspondence is specific and detailed in both books. It also seems unusual. Where would Joseph Smith have gotten this idea of a wandering people seeking for a new home? Most people do not read the *Aeneid* until college, if they ever read it at all. What other literary work might Joseph have gotten this idea from? Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.16 Wasteful architectural extravagance

*Coe's standard:* "intensification of inter-elite competition, manifesting itself in different ways: not only in 'wasteful architectural extravagance'" (p. 175).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 11:8-11.

*Analysis of correspondence:* In both books, the correspondence is specific and detailed as to ornamentation and costly excess for the thrones, palaces, etc., of the elite. Joseph Smith was an unsophisticated young man who had

lived his life as a member of the working poor. How would he know about such extravagance? How would he know how to describe such ornate things without going overboard? Where would he have seen such things? This is certainly unusual. So the correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.17 Large northward migrations specifically mentioned

*Coe's standard:* "They could have been the Yukateko on their trek north to Yucatan from the Maya homeland" (p. 47). "Old thrones toppled in the south as a new political order took shape in the north; southern cities fell into the dust as northern ones flourished" (p. 174). "The early Colonial chronicles in Yukateko speak of a 'Great Descent' and 'Lesser Descent,' implying two mighty streams of refugees heading north from the abandoned cities" (p. 177). The Yukateko trek took place many centuries before the Late Classic migration northward, so this kind of thing happened in widely different periods.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 63:4-9; Helaman 3:3-12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon speaks repeatedly of the "land northward" as the place where the Nephites could flee or go into to settle. The land northward was where the Nephites made their last stand and were finally destroyed. These northward flights also took place over centuries. This is really a "bull's eye" for the Book of Mormon: a specific, detailed and unusual correspondence. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.18 Constant migrations

*Coe's standard:* "At some point ... there was a single Mayan language, Proto-Mayan, perhaps located in the western Guatemalan highlands. According to one linguistic scenario, Wastekan and Yukatekan split off from this parent body, with Wastek migrating up the Gulf Coast to northern Veracruz and Tamaulipas in Mexico, and Yukatekan occupying the Yucatan Peninsula. ... The parent body then split into two groups, a Western and an Eastern Division. In the Western group, the ancestral Ch'olan-Tzeltalan moved down into the Central Area, where they split into Ch'olan and Tzeltalan. The subsequent history of the Tzeltalans is fairly well known: in Highland Chiapas, many thousands of their descendants, the Tsotsil and Tzeltal, maintain unchanged the old Maya patterns of life. ... Other Western language groups include Q'anjob'al, Tojol-ab'al, Mocho', and Chuj, which stayed close to the probable homeland ... The Eastern Division includes the Mamean group of languages. Mam itself spilled down to the Pacific coastal plain at an unknown time" (p. 28).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See: Words of Mormon 1:13; Mosiah 10:10; Alma 2:16, 32; Alma 54:16-20.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific. Book of Mormon peoples indeed moved around a lot, just as *The Maya* describes. But apart from the large northward migrations already described in 2.17 above, other details are lacking. Also, this is certainly not unusual. Joseph Smith and his family were part of a mass westward migration of Americans that had been going on for a very long time. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 2.19 Cities and lands named after founder

*Coe's standard:* "an individual called Ek' Balam, ... after whom the place was anciently named" (p. 194).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 23:31; Alma 8:7; Alma 17:19; 3 Nephi 9:9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific in both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*, but Coe does not mention many examples of this practice, so it is not detailed to the same degree it is in the Book of Mormon. Also, in frontier America it was common practice to name small towns and villages after the founder or founding family. So this practice would not have been unusual. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 2.20 Maya say their ancestors came from the west, beyond the sea

*Coe's standard:* "From the setting sun we came, from Tula, from beyond the sea" (p. 224).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* 1 Nephi 18:8, 23. This is clearly the claim of the Book of Mormon: the Lehite colony came from the west from beyond the sea.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Coe discounts this statement as self-serving political propaganda by those claiming descent from those hailing from "the legendary home in the west." Perhaps, but why would it have any political power if the claim itself did not somehow matter to the populace? And since Dr. Coe thinks the Book of Mormon is fiction (or legend), then the Book of Mormon is accurate and detailed in also making that claim, even if fictional. Given similar statements in *View of the Hebrews*, we do not count this as unusual, but it is both specific and detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.21 Their sacred writing has poetic parallelisms, repetitions

*Coe's standard:* "'The raised wooden standard shall come! ... Our lord comes, Itza! Our elder brother comes, oh men of Tantun! Receive your guests, the bearded men, the men of the east, the bearers of the sign of God, lord!'" (Thus said the prophet Chilam Balam, p. 227). From one of the books of Chilam Balam as follows:

"Eat, eat, thou hast bread;  
 Drink, drink, thou hast water;  
 On that day, dust possesses the earth;

On that day, a blight is on the face of the earth,  
 On that day, a cloud rises;  
 On that day, a mountain rises;  
 On that day, a strong man seizes the land;  
 On that day, things fall to ruin,  
 On that day, the tender leaf is destroyed,  
 On that day, the dying eyes are closed,  
 On that day, three signs are on the tree,  
 On that day, three generations hang there,  
 On that day, the battle flag is raised,  
 And they are scattered afar in the forests,  
 On that day, the battle flag is raised,  
 And they are scattered afar in the forests.” (p. 229).

In the podcasts, referring specifically to chiasmus and poetic parallelisms, Coe says that “something like that” exists in Maya literature, even as little of that literature as we have. And Coe praises Professor Allen Christenson’s translation of the *Popol Vuh* as “wonderful.”<sup>33</sup> Christenson’s translation is explicitly rendered in poetic parallelisms and chiasms.<sup>34</sup>

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* The reader is referred to Professor Donald Parry’s reformatted version of the Book of Mormon in parallelisms and repetitions.<sup>35</sup>

*Analysis of the correspondence:* It is simply without doubt that the Book of Mormon is written in poetic parallelisms and repetitions. We have Coe’s own citations from Chilam Balam, his praise of Christenson’s translation of the *Popol Vuh*, etc., to confirm that this correspondence is specific, and detailed. As to “unusual,” Coe says in the podcasts that the fact that the Book of Mormon has chiasms and poetic parallelisms “means nothing,” that this type of language is found around the world.<sup>36</sup>

Coe thinks that the Book of Mormon has such language because Joseph Smith knew the Old Testament “very, very well.” We disagree completely. The

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33. Dehlin, “Dr. Michael Coe — An Outsider’s View of Book of Mormon Archaeology,” episode 270, 27:30.

34. Allen J. Christenson, trans., *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya: The Great Classic of Central American Spirituality, Translated from the Original Maya Text* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 2003), <http://www.mesoweb.com/publications/Christenson/PopolVuh.pdf>.

35. Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelism in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2007), [https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/bookchapters/Poetic\\_Parallelisms\\_in\\_the\\_Book\\_of\\_Mormon\\_The\\_Complete\\_Text\\_/Poetic%20Parallelisms%20in%20the%20Book%20of%20Mormon.pdf](https://publications.mi.byu.edu/publications/bookchapters/Poetic_Parallelisms_in_the_Book_of_Mormon_The_Complete_Text_/Poetic%20Parallelisms%20in%20the%20Book%20of%20Mormon.pdf).

36. Dehlin, “Dr. Michael Coe — An Outsider’s View of Book of Mormon Archaeology,” episode 270, 28:10.



Hebrew chiasms and poetic parallelisms in the Old Testament were largely erased by the scholars who translated the King James Bible into English.

Even if Joseph Smith knew about this kind of language, it is entirely another thing to be able to write (or more challenging yet, dictate) more than 300 separate chiasms into the Book of Mormon in such a way that they integrate seamlessly with the message of the book. Moreover, none of Joseph Smith's own written sermons or other writings use these poetic parallelisms. If Dr. Coe is correct, why did Joseph Smith write these poetic parallelisms into the Book of Mormon and then completely stop writing like this? We find this objection inconsistent and uniformed.

We invite Dr. Coe or anyone else to dictate a chiasm like Alma Chapter 36. They can't do it. This is unusual in the extreme. We would like to give it a much higher weight (one in a billion?) but our own weighting scheme forbids that. Instead, we give it a likelihood of 0.02.

## 2.22 Corn first among grains

*Coe's standard:* "This crop [maize] is so fundamental today that its cultivation and consumption define what it means to be Maya" (p. 242).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 7:22; Mosiah 9: 9, 14.

*Analysis of correspondence:* In the Book of Mormon, corn is the first grain mentioned; and not just once but all three times corn is mentioned in the Book of Mormon, it is the first or the only grain mentioned, not wheat. So this correspondence is specific and detailed. But we do not count it as unusual, because *View of the Hebrews* also mentions the primacy of corn among the Indians. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.23 Multiple wives/concubines especially among the rich

*Coe's standard:* "From the ceramics at a site such as El Perú we get an idea of the palace staff described in Chapter 4: the courtiers and attendants, royal ladies or concubines" (p. 129). "Monogamy was the general custom, but important men who could afford it took more wives" (p. 234).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Jacob 1:15; Jacob 2:27; Mosiah 11:4; Ether 10:5.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The practice is specific in both books, and is generally limited to rich men taking more wives. So the practice is also detailed to that extent. Joseph would have been aware of the practice of multiple wives among the Biblical patriarchs, and also with David and Solomon. Among some Indian tribes, important men also took multiple wives. So it is not unusual. Specific and detailed, likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.24 Important to trace one's genealogy to a prominent ancestor

*Coe's standard:* "to be able to trace one's genealogy in both lines to an ancient ancestry was an important matter, for there were strongly demarcated classes" (p. 235).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 25:13; Alma 10:1-3; 3 Nephi 5:20; Ether 1:6-33; Ether 6:22-25; Mormon 1:5; Mormon 8:13.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Coe describes this practice clearly and in some detail. The Book of Mormon also describes it clearly and in great detail. Why would this idea occur to Joseph Smith in democratic frontier America in the early 1800s? America had recently thrown off the rule of a class-based society, the British. So the correspondence also seems unusual. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.25 Genealogies kept very carefully by the priests

*Coe's standard:* "According to the early sources, the Maya books contained histories, prophecies, maps, tribute accounts, songs, 'sciences,' and genealogies" (p. 239). "Far more is known of later Maya priests. ... [They] kept the all-important genealogies" (p. 243).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 3:3, 12; 1 Nephi 5:14; 1 Nephi 6:1; Jarom 1:1; Omni 1:1, 18; Alma 37:3.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This practice of the priests (religious leaders) carefully keeping genealogies is specific and detailed in both *The Maya* and in the Book of Mormon. It is also unusual. We know of no contemporary practice or model in Joseph's Smith's world that put such emphasis on priests keeping a careful, written, long-term record of one's ancestors, a record handed down over centuries. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.26 Homosexuality probably practiced

*Coe's standard:* "The latter include ... amorous activities that are probably of a homosexual nature" (p. 258).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 30:18.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon's reference to homosexual practices is veiled, but clear enough. How else does a man commit "whoredoms"? There are no details in either book, and the practice is not unusual. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 2.27 Arcane sacred or prestige language

*Coe's standard:* "Ch'olti'an became a literary language of high prestige among scribes ... [and like other prestige languages in other civilizations] continued to be the preferred written languages long after the spoken ones had died out or transformed into something else" (pp. 30-31). "Ch'olti' ... may well have served as a *lingua franca* among elites and surely evolved, as

did Medieval Latin and Coptic, into an arcane sacred language used by few” (p. 270).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 1:2 and 3:19; Mosiah 1:2, 4; Mormon 9:34.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon emphasizes “the language of the fathers,” a written language connected to the language of the Egyptians. It is the language in which the plates were written and was known to very few. It was obviously not the common language. The reference is specific for both books, detailed and unusual. Joseph Smith had not even mastered English at the time the Book of Mormon came forth and certainly knew nothing of Coptic or Medieval Latin, which he might have used as a model for this correspondence. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 2.28 Practice of repopulating old or abandoned cities

*Coe’s standard:* “the Itza ... moved into the peninsula ... in the thirteenth century, and gave their name to the formerly Toltec site of Chichen” (p. 202).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 9:8; Helaman 11:20; 4 Nephi 1:7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The practice is specific in both books, although Coe offers only one example for detail while the Book of Mormon offers several examples. It is doubtful that Joseph Smith knew of any examples around him that could serve as a model for this practice. America was being built up by founding new cities and towns, not repopulating old or abandoned ones. So the correspondence is specific and unusual. Because Coe cites only one example, we will not claim it to be detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 2.29 World divided into four quarters or quadrants

*Coe’s standard:* “Another pervasive idea was the division of the world into sectors [four of them]. ... In the Classic period, eagles were thought to perch in each of the four directions” (p. 246). “The four walls of spectacular ... royal tombs ... display distinct hills. ... Placed in the middle, the deceased became the center of the universe” (p. 247). “a map of world directions, adorned with gods and sacrifices appropriate to each quarter, ... celebrations ... presided over by a set of four young gods, a nod to the four directions” (p. 249). “The Zinacanteco world is conceived of as a large quincunx, with four corners and a ‘navel of the earth’ in the middle” (p. 292).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 22:25; 3 Nephi 16:5; Ether 13:11.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon are specific and detailed about the idea that the world is divided into four quarters. If Joseph Smith was making this up, why not into halves, or thirds or eighths? Coe (p. 247) notes that this idea is widespread and very ancient among humankind, which is probably why we ourselves talk in this way

about the four quarters of the earth, without giving it much thought. Specific and detailed, but for this reason, not unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 2.30 Maya fascinated by ancient Olmec culture

*Coe's standard:* "there are also good reasons to believe that it was the Olmecs who devised the elaborate Long Count calendar. ... Many other civilizations, including the Maya, ultimately drew on Olmec achievements" (p. 54). "In art, in religion, in state complexity, and perhaps even in the calendar and astronomy, Olmec models were transferred to the Maya" (p. 61). "The Maya looked to the west [toward Olmec lands] ... as the enduring locus of civilization" (p. 63).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Because of the 24 gold plates found by the people of Limhi among the ruins of an ancient civilization, The Book of Mormon also looks to an ancient, destroyed civilization as a source of knowledge, but apparently exclusively as a source of depraved knowledge of "secret combinations" rather than of useful accomplishments. For example, see Mosiah 8:9; Alma 37:29, 32; Ether 8:9 and 9:26. It is interesting that both the Jaredites and the Maya were ultimately destroyed because of "endemic, internecine warfare" (Coe's words; see above).

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is certainly specific, but the details do not match, perhaps because of the very different orientations of the two books. The Book of Mormon tells us that the Nephites were destroyed because of their embrace of the secret combinations also found in the book of Ether, so the Book of Mormon probably would not be inclined to tell us if anything useful and good came from the Jaredite records. It is also unusual. Why would Joseph Smith "guess" that the ancient Indians looked toward an even more ancient civilization for guidance, either for good or bad? This correspondence is specific and unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 2.31 Lineage histories dominate the written records

*Coe's standard:* "It was not just the 'stela cult' — the inscribed glorification of royal lineages and their achievements — that disappeared with the Collapse" (p. 177), "Native lineages seem to have deliberately falsified their own histories for political reasons" (p. 199). "[A postclassic site] ... consists of plazas surrounded by lineage temples" (p. 225n145).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* The Book of Mormon is a lineage history. It begins with the story of Lehi and his family, and was later edited and compiled by Mormon ("a pure descendant of Lehi," 3 Nephi 5:20) and his son Moroni. The Book of Ether is likewise a lineage history. Ether was a direct descendant, through many centuries, of Jared.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed in both books. It is also unusual. How could Joseph Smith have learned about lineage histories, and woven this correspondence into the fabric of the

Book of Mormon in such an unobtrusive and comprehensive way? How did he “guess” this one correctly? Likelihood = 0.02.

### ***Calculation of overall likelihood for Social and Cultural Correspondences***

There are 31 separate social and cultural correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. Of these, five have a likelihood of 0.5, 16 have a likelihood of 0.1, and ten have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood of these 31 positive correspondences is  $0.5^5 \times 0.1^{16} \times 0.02^{10} = 3.21 \times 10^{-35}$ .

## **3. Religious Correspondences**

### **3.1 Central role of temples (ritual centers) in society**

*Coe's standard:* “Kaminaljuyu ... consisted of several hundred temple mounds” (p. 55). “The lowland Maya almost always built their temples over older ones” (p. 59). “On top of this ... pyramid had once been a pole-and-thatch building” (p. 82n33). “Even more advanced temples have been uncovered at Tikal” (p. 83).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 5:16; Mosiah 9:8; Mosiah 11:8-10; Helaman 1:21; Helaman 13:4; 3 Nephi 11:1.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Temples, ritual centers, were obviously central to Maya life. So were they also among the Nephites. One of the very first things that Nephi's small group does after splitting off is to build a temple “after the manner of the temple of Solomon” (2 Nephi 5:16). King Benjamin gathers his people around the temple. After the great destruction, the Nephites gather around the temple in the Land of Bountiful, and the risen Lord appears. While this correspondence is specific and detailed, we do not count it as unusual, because Joseph Smith might — perhaps, possibly, conceivably — have gotten the idea from *View of the Hebrews*. Likelihood = 0.1.

### **3.2 Strong Christian elements in Maya religion**

*Coe's standard:* “Many Colonial-period Maya identified the risen Christ with the Maize God” (p. 71). “The raised wooden standard shall come! ... Our lord comes, Itza! Our elder brother comes. ... Receive your guests, the bearded men, the men of the east, the bearers of the sign of God, lord!” (p. 227). “There was ... a great deal of ... blending between Spanish and Maya religious institutions and beliefs, since in many respects they were so similar” (p. 289).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* From the title page to the last chapter, the Book of Mormon is, as it claims to be, another witness that Jesus is the Christ.

*Analysis of correspondence:* In both books, the correspondence is specific, detailed and very unusual. Why would Joseph Smith have “guessed” that the ancient Mesoamericans had strong elements of Christianity in their religious practices? *View of the Hebrews* claims to find ancient Hebrew elements among American Indian tribes, but not Christian elements. So this is specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 3.3 Change in popular cults; decline of a great city in the highlands in the Late Preclassic

*Coe’s standard:* “While the pre-eminence of Kaminaljuyu during the Late Preclassic period is plain to see, its star began to sink by the second and third centuries AD, and most of it was left in ruin at the close of the Late Preclassic” (p. 80), “It is strange that figurines are absent from most known Chicanel sites, indicating that there was a change in popular cults [during the Late Preclassic 300 BC to AD 250]” (p. 81).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman Chapters 10 and 11, 3 Nephi (all), and 4 Nephi 1:20, 35–40. This is the time period with which the Book of Mormon deals most intensively, and it includes many separate events of religious awakening, increased faith and great prosperity, which are then followed by apostasy and idolatry. Thus there are indeed many changes in “popular cults,” including the final one starting in about AD 200. Fourth Nephi outlines the fall and disintegration of Nephite society, which begins about this time.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific in both books, but much more detailed in the Book of Mormon than in *The Maya*. The timing is also unusual. In the long centuries of Maya civilization (roughly 1800 BC to 900 AD) the Book of Mormon correctly “guesses” the period that Coe recognizes as a dramatic one when “a change in popular cults” occurred. We count this one as specific and unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 3.4 Close association of temples with sacred mountains/hills (pyramids)

*Coe’s standard:* “Rising up the corners of the temple’s substructure are monstrous faces representing *witz* or mountains” (p. 136). “Long thought to be faces of the Maya rain god Chahk, they are actually iconographic mountains (*witz*), the descendants of the corner masks placed on Classic-period monuments like Copan’s Temple 11” (p. 180).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* 2 Nephi 12:2–3.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and quite detailed in both books. The temples are associated with sacred mountains, for example the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Although perhaps Joseph Smith might have gotten the idea from careful reading of the Bible, nothing in conventional Christianity of his day would have prepared him to see the

association between temples and holy sacred mountains, a concept shared by the Nephites and by the Maya. This is specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 3.5 Seers and seer stones exist

*Coe's standard:* "Two of the houses were certainly devoted to village rituals; Structure 12 in particular had ... a collection of crystals like those used by modern Maya diviners" (p. 107). "Two types of religious specialists practice here and in other traditional Yukateko settlements. One is ... seemingly imbued with far greater spiritual and perhaps real power: this is the *hmeen*, 'he who does or understands things.' ... These specialists still play an important role in divination and prophecy, using their crystals to scry the future" (p. 296). "The rite begins after the *hmeen* has consulted his *zaztun* or crystal" (p. 297).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 8:13-17; Mosiah 28:13-16; Ether 3:23-24, 28.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed in both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. However, we do not count it as unusual, although it will certainly appear unusual to the modern mind. Joseph Smith had his own seer stone before the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and might have used that as his model for including seer stones and seers in the book. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 3.6 Temple and other religious rituals involve bloodletting

*Coe's standard:* "In the great courtyards less private activities took place, including dances, ritual bloodletting from the penis and tongue on calendrically important days" (p. 129). "These were inscribed within a very brief period ... and celebrate ... temple dedication rituals such as bloodletting" (p. 184). "Before and during rituals, ... self-mutilation was carried out by jabbing needles and stingray spines through ears, cheeks, lips, tongue, and the penis, the blood being spattered on paper or used to anoint the idols" (p. 243).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Jarom 1:5, 11; Alma 25:15-16; Mosiah 13:27-28.

*Analysis of the correspondence:* Up until AD 33 or so, the Nephites practiced the Law of Moses, with its temple rituals involving bloodletting. Presumably they also followed the Abrahamic practice of circumcision. While the practices described in *The Maya* and the Law of Moses correspond in that they involve bloodletting from both human and animals for religious rituals, the details overlap only somewhat. Also they would probably not be unusual to a Bible-reading individual. Specific, but not detailed nor unusual. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 3.7 Belief in resurrection

*Coe's standard:* "Following their ultimate victory, they resurrected their father Hun Hunahpu, the Maize God" (p. 71). "Modern rendering of a wall painting of the resurrected Maize God surrounded by female figures" (p. 88n36). "Significantly, ... the ruler is portrayed not as K'awiil, but as the youthful Maize God, ... a representation celebrating resurrection and apotheosis" (p. 195). "Both ... had a hero god who died and was resurrected — for the Spaniards, this was Jesus Christ, and for the Maya, the Maize God" (p. 289).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 9:12; Alma 41:2; Alma 33:22 among many others. There are 57 references to the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon.

*Analysis of the correspondence:* Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* refer specifically and in detail to a belief in bodily resurrection. The doctrine of a literal bodily resurrection had been in retreat in Christianity for centuries — so there was no intellectual reason for Joseph to put it forward as a prominent part of the Book of Mormon. Also, as far as we know, the North American Indians did not believe in resurrection. *View of the Hebrews* says nothing about such a belief among the Indians. How did Joseph Smith correctly "guess" that the belief might be held by distant ancestors of some of the Mesoamerican Indians? Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 3.8 Baptismal rite among the Maya

*Coe's standard:* "As soon as possible, the anxious parents [of a newborn child] went to consult with a priest so as to learn the destiny of their offspring, and the name which he or she was to bear until baptism. The Spanish Fathers were quite astounded that the Maya had a baptismal rite, which took place at an auspicious time" (p. 233).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 21:35; Moroni 6:1-4 and many others. It is interesting that a new name was received at the time of baptism in the Book of Mormon and among the Maya (see above).

*Analysis of the correspondence:* The practice of baptism is specific and detailed in both the Book of Mormon and in *The Maya*. It is also unusual. If the Spanish Fathers were "astounded" at the baptismal rite of the Maya, we should be also. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 3.9 Ritual walking in straight roads symbolizes acceptable behavior

*Coe's standard:* "At the site of Edzna, ... occupants had constructed a massive hydraulic system, consisting of 13.75 miles (22 km) of canals ... (resembling aquatic versions of Maya ritual roads)" (p. 90). "Coba is ... a whole group linked to a central complex by long, perfectly straight masonry causeways usually called ... *sakbe* ("white road"). ... Some have claimed that the Maya



*sakbe* were arteries of commerce, but a purely ceremonial function is far more plausible” (p. 163). “A causeway, or sakbih, 11.25 miles (18 km) long runs southeast from Uxmal through the small site of Nohpat to Kabah, so presumably the three centers were connected at least ceremonially” (p. 182). “Processional routes, the ‘white roads’ or sakbih described earlier, carved straight paths across broken landscapes. To walk along them was to move in acceptable, ritually decorous ways” (p. 242).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 4:32; 2 Nephi 9:41; Alma 7:9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is quite specific in both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*, and it is certainly unusual. What religious practice did Joseph Smith know of that resembled this ritual behavior in the least? But details are not provided in the Book of Mormon, so the practice is specific and unusual, but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 3.10 Humans obligated to abide by covenants, God usually involved

*Coe’s standard:* “Ultimately, humans were obligated to abide by covenants. A covenant, as defined by the ethnographer John Monaghan, is a binding contract that explains how one should behave. Gods were usually involved, as in the case of maize production” (p. 242).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 5:6–8; Mosiah 6:1–2; Mosiah 21:31–32.

*Analysis of correspondence:* *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon share a common understanding of covenants as a binding contract or agreement between God and man. This is specific and detailed. It is also unusual. What existing model or pattern did Joseph Smith rely on to correctly “guess” that covenants between God and man existed among ancient Mesoamerican Indians? In the conventional Christianity of Smith’s day, the importance of covenants was very much downplayed if not absent altogether. So the practice is specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 3.11 Hereditary priests and Chief Priests

*Coe’s standard:* “Far more is known of later Maya priests. In contrast to their Aztec counterparts, they were not celibate. Sons acquired their fathers’ offices, although some were second sons of lords” (p. 243). “During the prosperity of Mayapan, a hereditary Chief Priest resided in that city” (p. 243).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 29:42; Alma 45:22–23; Alma 46:6.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* teach clearly of hereditary priests and chief priests. This correspondence is detailed and specific. It is also unusual. Joseph Smith’s experience of frontier priests would have been of the Protestant variety, who were not celibate, but who instead were “trained for the ministry” and did not inherit their offices; or of the Catholic variety, who were celibate and therefore could not pass on

their priestly office to a son. How did Joseph Smith correctly “guess” that among some of the distant ancestors of the Indians, priests were not celibate and that priestly office could descend from father to son? Likelihood = 0.02.

### 3.12 Existence of opposites is an essential part of creation

*Coe’s standard:* “A relevant Maya term from these ceramics is *tz’ak*, the idea of ordering. A key part of creation was the establishment of opposites. These are presented in alternative spellings for the *tz’ak* glyph. ... The exquisite Tablet of the 96 Glyphs ... lays out a long series of such opposed pairs. It begins with sun and night, followed by possibly life and death, then Venus and moon, wind and water” (p. 251).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 2:11-15.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The words *create* or *creation* are used six times in these five verses in the Book of Mormon, all strictly in the context of opposed pairs. The correspondence is specific and detailed. It is also unusual. What document or religious teaching could Joseph Smith have possibly used that would have led him to correctly “guess” this belief shared by the Maya and the Book of Mormon patriarch Lehi? Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 3.13 Pantheistic religion and idols

*Coe’s standard:* “along with the latter three temples, each of these was consecrated to a single god among the triad of divinities from whom the Palenque dynasty claimed descent” (p. 157). “Flanking the tableau are two strange deities with rodent heads” (p. 160). “On one side, the god K’awiil (left) faces God L, the deity of tobacco” (p. 166n100). “The face of the Jaguar God of the Underworld is surmounted by the heads of other deities, including a Bat God” (p. 166n101).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 7:6; Alma 17:15; Alma 31:1; Helaman 6:31; Mormon 4:14, 21.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The references to idol gods are specific and detailed in both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. However, this correspondence is not unusual. The Bible also clearly refers to this practice, and Joseph would have known of it. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 3.14 Sorcery, magic and witchcraft practiced

*Coe’s standard:* “According to one story, by means of sorcery Hunac Ceel drove Chak Xib Chak to abduct the bride of the ruler of Izamal” (p. 218). “or refer to diseases controlled by kings in an elevated, almost dynastic form of sorcery” (p. 256). “Witchcraft is an omnipresent danger; the witch takes the form of an animal alter-ego” (p. 297). “Defeated by the evil magic of his adversary Tezcatlipoca, the king was forced to leave Tula with his followers” (p. 201).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 1:32; Mormon 1:19; Mormon 2:10.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Maya and the Book of Mormon both refer specifically, negatively and in some detail to the practice of magic, sorcery and witchcraft among the peoples described in the two books. A belief in the practice of evil magic, however, would probably not be unusual to Joseph Smith. It was part of the world view during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in backwoods America. Specific and detailed, likelihood = 0.1.

### **3.15 Ritual for the renewal of the community, including transfer of sacred objects**

*Coe's standard:* "The entire religious drama is directed toward renewal of the universe and of the community, and ends with the transfer of the sacred objects of office to a new set of cargo-holders" (p. 295).

*Book of Mormon standard:* See Mosiah Chapters 1-6.

*Analysis of the correspondence:* King Benjamin's gathering of his people to the temple, complete with community-wide covenant making at the time of the transfer of his kingly office to his son, along with the transfer of sacred objects, is very nearly a perfect fit with Coe's standard described above. This is specific, detailed and unusual. What possible model or contemporary practice could Joseph Smith have drawn upon to describe King Benjamin's gathering of his people so perfectly? Likelihood = 0.02.

### **3.16 Blurring/combining priestly and political roles**

*Coe's standard:* "In other respects, the distinction between priestly and political roles may have been blurred in the Classic period" (p. 243).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 2:1; see also the Foreword to the Book of Alma.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific. Priestly leadership and political leadership were sometimes combined/blurred in both books, but not always, as described in correspondence 1.27 above. Also, there is not enough detail provided in either book to rank this as unusual, so the evidence is weighted as specific only. Likelihood = 0.5.

### **3.17 Divination: consulting oracles for secular guidance and assistance**

*Coe's standard:* "Specialists took charge of these prayers or acts of divination ... to discern messages from the gods and to understand the imbalances leading to disease, drought, and other problems" (p. 243). "Later Maya priests [administered] ... 'their methods of divination ... events and the cures for diseases'" (p. 243). "An important function of all highland shamans is divination. Along with the mechanism of the 260-day count is the casting of certain red seeds or maize kernels, a practice deeply rooted in

the pre-Spanish past. ... Shamans conduct rituals for both individuals and the whole community” (p. 292).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 3:11; Alma 16:5–6; Helaman 11:12–17.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific in that God is consulted through his representatives regarding drought and other problems affecting both individuals and the community. Casting of lots (or seeds) is mentioned. This practice is also mentioned in the Bible (for example, Saul and the witch of Endor), so we will not count it as unusual. It is specific and at least somewhat detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 3.18 Calendars kept by holy men/priests

*Coe’s standard:* “The 260 day calendar ... still survives in unchanged form among some indigenous peoples in southern Mexico and the Maya highlands, under the care of calendar priests” (p. 64). “For some reason, the calendar priests active in Highland Guatemala today are almost undetectable in earlier times. ... But similar figures must have existed.” “Later Maya priests’ ... list of duties [included] ... ‘computation of the years, months and days’” (p. 243).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 8:1–5. A “just man” who “did many miracles” was responsible for the reckoning of time among the people.

*Analysis of correspondence:* In the Book of Mormon the reference is specific but not very detailed. It does seem unusual. In the (highly) unlikely event that Joseph knew of the origin of the Gregorian calendar (instituted by Pope Gregory XIII), he might also have known of the Julian calendar (instituted by Julius Caesar). How would he have chosen correctly between a calendar instituted by priests or by civil authorities? So we count this one specific and unusual but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 3.19 Virtuous persons “confess”

*Coe’s standard:* “Humans existed within a larger set of expectations. The virtuous person was *toj*, ‘right’ and ‘straight,’ at times a literal term that Colonial Mayan languages tied to cleaning, confession, and prophecy” (p. 242).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 26:29; Alma 17:4; Helaman 5:17.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon clearly tie confession with becoming a virtuous person, becoming clean. Confession also exists within a larger set of expectations (for example, baptism in the Book of Mormon). So the correspondence is specific and detailed. The correspondence also seems unusual. While confession is a prominent part of the Roman Catholic faith, it was not prominent in any Protestant tradition in frontier America in the early 1800s. It was various forms of Protestantism

that Joseph Smith was familiar with. How did he “guess” correctly to include confession as an important duty among repentant, virtuous persons? How did he know that some of the ancient Mesoamericans would view confession in much the same light? Likelihood = 0.02.

### ***Calculation of overall religious correspondences***

There are 19 separate religious correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. Of these, two have a likelihood of 0.5, eight have a likelihood of 0.1, and nine have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood of these 19 positive correspondences is  $0.5^2 \times 0.1^8 \times 0.02^9 = 1.28 \times 10^{-24}$ .

## **4. Military Correspondences**

### **4.1 Extreme cruelty to enemy captives**

*Coe's standard:* “the opposite of refinement in an unmistakable dehumanization of reviled enemies, a delight in their pain and dishonor” (p. 96). “The Leiden Plaque, which once dangled from a ruler’s belt, has engraved on one face a richly ornamented Maya lord ... trampling underfoot a sorry-looking captive, a theme repeated on so many Maya stelae of later times” (pp. 98–99). “miserable prisoners have been stripped, and are having the nails torn from their fingers or their hands lacerated. An important captive sprawls on the steps, perhaps tortured to exhaustion, and a severed head lies nearby on a bed of leaves. A naked figure seated on the platform summit pleads for his life to the central figure, Yajaw Kan Muwaan” (p. 150).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Moroni 9:8–10.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific in both books, and the details are similar in the sense of torture to death and extreme, even inhumane, cruelty. Some Indian tribes may have done similar things, but not all tribes did it at all times to all captives, and some tribes adopted white children. The Revolutionary War was not marked with this kind of behavior on either side. So we think it is specific, detailed but only somewhat unusual. To be conservative, we assign this one a likelihood = 0.1.

### **4.2 Defensive earthworks with deep ditches, breastworks and palisades**

*Coe's standard:* “Becan ... was completely surrounded by massive defensive earthworks sometime between the second and fourth centuries AD. These consist of a ditch and inner rampart, 38 ft (11.6 m) high, and would have been formidable, according to David Webster, if the rampart had been surmounted by a palisade” (p. 122). “Warfare had in fact become a real problem to all the major Petexbatun sites, and a system of defensive walls ... topped by wooden palisades was constructed around and within them” (p. 151).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 49:4, 18-22; Alma 50:1-5; Alma 53:4.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, it matches perfectly in the details, and it is highly unusual. What military example had Joseph Smith ever heard of or seen that was anything like this defensive arrangement? According to David Webster, the Conquistador Hernan Cortes marveled when he saw the Maya towns defended in *exactly* this fashion (details below). We would like to give this correspondence a weighting of a million to one against the likelihood that Joseph Smith guessed it, but our data weighting approach does not permit a likelihood of 0.000001; instead it is likelihood = 0.02.

For those who are interested, here are some additional details from Dr. Webster's work that show how exactly Joseph "guessed" this correspondence, and how amazed Cortes was:

Conquistador Hernan Cortes described fortified cities in the Maya lowlands, as quoted by Dr. David Webster of Pennsylvania State University. Here is Cortes's description of the defenses he encountered among the Lowland Maya: "There is only one level entrance, the whole town being surrounded by a deep (dry) moat behind which is a wooden palisade as high as man's breast. Behind this palisade lies a wall of very heavy boards, some twelve feet tall, with embrasures through which to shoot their arrows; the lookout posts rise another eight feet above the wall, which likewise has large towers with many stones to hurl down on the enemy. ... Indeed, it was so well planned with regard to the manner of weapons they use, they could not be better defended"<sup>37</sup>

Dr. Webster also wrote another relevant, interesting study. Here are some of Dr. Webster's findings from his study regarding the dry moat or defensive ditch that surrounded the city of Becan, in the Yucatan Peninsula of southeastern Mexico: "The ditch and parapet derive their main defensive strength from sheer size. What I call the 'critical depth' of the fortifications (the vertical distance from the top of the embankment to the bottom of the ditch would have averaged something over 11 meters (about 36 feet). ... The steep angles of the inner ditch and wall and parapet slope could not have been climbed without the aid of ladders; an enemy force caught in the bottom of the ditch would have been at the mercy of the defenders, whose most effective weapon under the circumstances would have been large rocks. ... To throw 'uphill' from the outside is almost impossible. Defenders

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37. David Webster, "The Not So Peaceful People: A Review of Maya War," *Journal of World Prehistory* 14, no. 1 (March 2000): 80.

...could have rained long-distance missiles on approaching enemies using spear throwers and slings.”<sup>38</sup>

Thus the Maya at the time of the Spanish Conquest used the same kind of city defense that Moroni had used about 1600 years earlier, namely (1) a single entrance to the city, (2) very deep ditches around the city, (3) banks of earth built above the ditches, (4) strong works of timbers built on top of these banks of earth above ditches, and (5) even taller towers built on the timbers. From these works of timbers and from the towers, the defenders could rain down arrows and especially rocks (a cheap but effective weapon), on their attackers. And the attackers couldn't effectively get at the defenders — so they were slaughtered.

So Joseph Smith was either a military genius himself, or he guessed it. Yes, he guessed it in all this detail. A 24-year-old farm kid from upstate New York invented this superb defensive military arrangement, totally unlike anything in the warfare of his time, and which greatly impressed an experienced soldier like Hernan Cortes.

#### 4.3 Walled cities, especially during wartime

*Coe's standard:* “When city walls are found, as at Dos Pilas, Ek' Balam, and Uxmal, they seem to date to the final years of the Classic period, when, in places, local conditions became hostile” (p. 126). “The triple defensive wall that surrounds the site indicates that conditions in this remote part of the Maya lowlands were dangerously unsettled in the Terminal Classic” (p. 194). “Mayapan ... is a residential metropolis covering about 2.5 sq. miles (6.5 sq. km) and completely surrounded by a defensive wall” (p. 216).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 9:8; Helaman 1:21; Helaman 13:4.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, and is detailed in the sense that the walls seem to appear mostly in time of war. However, Coe does not see much evidence for the presence of walls until the late Classic, and since *View of the Hebrews* also refers to walled towns, we rate this one as merely specific. Likelihood = 0.5.

#### 4.4 Thick clothing used as armor

*Coe's standard:* “Left arms were protected by quilted padding” (p. 201). “[This is how] Maya warfare was waged. The *holkanob*, or “braves,” were the foot soldiers; they wore cuirasses of quilted cotton or tapir hide” (p. 236).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 43:19.

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38. David Webster, *Defensive Earthworks at Becan, Campeche, Mexico: Implications for Maya Warfare* (New Orleans: Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, 1976), 95–96.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is both specific and detailed. In both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon, thick clothing was used as armor. It is also unusual. We know of no contemporary model or example that Joseph Smith could have relied upon to correctly “guess” this correspondence. Even today we doubt that one person in a hundred would know that ancient Mesoamerican warriors wore heavy cotton clothing as armor. The likelihood is therefore = 0.02.

#### 4.5 Fighting with “darts”

*Coe’s standard:* “Taneko found 217 projectile points ... [that] had been used on darts propelled by atlatls, — mute testimony to a final battle sealing the city’s death” (p. 175). “the Toltec warrior, ... carrying a feather-decorated atlatl in one hand and a bunch of darts in the other” (p. 201) “... carried ... darts-with-spearthrower. ... [The infantry] rained darts, arrows, and stones flung from slings” (p. 236).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Jarom 1:8.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon and *The Maya* specifically contrast fighting with bows and arrows or spears as being different from fighting with “darts.” What experience or knowledge did Joseph Smith have of fighting with darts? How many educated people, even today, would know about fighting with a “dart-thrower” or *atlatl*? So this correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

#### 4.6 Endemic, internecine warfare destroyed the societies

*Coe’s standard:* “there might have been fierce internecine warfare or perhaps even a popular revolt” (p. 116). “But most Maya archaeologists now agree that three factors were paramount in the downfall: endemic internecine warfare” (p. 175). “The Maya were obsessed with war. The *Annals of the Kaqchikels* and the *Popol Vuh* speak of little but intertribal conflict among the highlanders, while the 16 states of Yucatan were constantly battling with each other over boundaries and lineage honor” (p. 236).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See, among others, Omni 1:10; Alma 62:39; Mormon 8:8.

*Analysis of correspondence:* With a few blessed exceptions, the Book of Mormon describes continuing war and conflict both between and among the Nephites and Lamanites, a conflict that ultimately results in the destruction of both groups. When the Book of Mormon brings down the curtain, the Lamanites are at war with each other, and “no one knoweth the end of the war.” This is in fact “endemic, internecine warfare,” the very words used by Coe. There was no contemporary example or model that Joseph Smith could use to “guess” a 1,000-year-long conflict that finally destroyed all the parties involved, so the correspondence is also specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.



#### 4.7 Warfare with ambushes and traps

*Coe's standard:* "Nor did the Maya fight in the accepted fashion. Attacking the Spaniards at night, plotting ambushes and traps, they were jungle guerrillas" (p. 227).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See the whole of chapters 43 and 52 of Alma.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and features some detail in both books, especially in the Book of Mormon (in keeping with the fact that the principal editor of the Book of Mormon was the commander of the armies of his people during nearly his entire adult life). But it is not unusual. The Indians of North America were also masters of ambush, and Joseph would have known this. There is also probably not enough detail in *The Maya* to upgrade the correspondence to specific and detailed. Specific only. Likelihood = 0.5.

#### 4.8 Raids to take captives/slaves

*Coe's standard:* "Hostilities typically began with an unannounced guerrilla raid into the enemy camp to take captives. ... Lesser captives ended up as slaves" (p. 236).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 16:3-4; Alma 60:17; Helaman 11:33.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed in both books. However, it is not unusual. Indians also raided the whites and each other to take captives/slaves. Joseph Smith would likely have known of this practice. Likelihood = 0.1.

#### 4.9 Warriors dressing to inspire fear

*Coe's standard:* "Teotihuacan fighting men were armed with *atlatl*-propelled darts and rectangular shields, and bore round, decorated, pyrite mosaic mirrors on their backs; with their eyes sometimes partly hidden by white shell 'goggles,' and their feather headdresses, they must have been terrifying figures to their opponents" (pp. 99-100).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 4:7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific. In both books warriors sometimes dressed to inspire fear in their opponents. But the details do not line up very well, and this is probably not unusual. Indian warriors, for example, used war paint in part to inspire fear. So this correspondence is rated specific only. Likelihood = 0.5.

#### 4.10 Stones and slings used as weapons for fighting

*Coe's standard:* "On either side of the war, leaders and the idols carried into combat under the care of priests [who] flanked the infantry, from which rained darts, arrows, and stones flung from slings" (p. 236).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 17:36.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is certainly specific and detailed enough. Stones slung from slings were used to kill opponents. It also seems unusual. While Joseph Smith could have gotten the idea from the Bible, why would he correctly “guess” that some of the ancestors of the Indians fought with stones and slings? The Indians of northeastern North America, of whom he did know something, did not fight with stones and slings. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

#### 4.11 Cannibalism practiced on captives

*Coe’s standard:* “In general, only captive lords were considered fit for sacrifice, or for consumption in cannibalistic rites” (p. 225).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Moroni 9:10.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The practice is detailed enough and certainly specific in both books. However, it probably does not qualify as unusual. Joseph Smith may have heard of the ritual cannibalism practiced by the Iroquois. Likelihood = 0.1.

#### 4.12 Deliberate destruction of the records/monuments

*Coe’s standard:* “By c. 1150 BC, San Lorenzo was destroyed by an unknown hand, and its monuments mutilated and smashed” (pp. 52–54). “There are signs of widespread, purposeful mutilation of public monuments” (p. 116). “Other cities in the Central Area eventually fell victim to the same cycle of violence, characterized by the systematic mutilation and smashing of stone monuments — the eyes and mouths of rulers are often pecked out, as if to cancel their power” (p. 175).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Enos 1:13–14; Alma 14:8; Mormon 2:17.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is certainly specific, but the details as practiced among the Maya seem to be directed toward stone objects, while in the Book of Mormon the intended destruction was directed toward the scriptures, both the metal plates and the combustible scriptures, as in Alma 14:8. The practice seems unusual. What accessible written source or contemporary practice would Joseph Smith have known about in which the monuments of enemies were deliberately destroyed? We do not think this merits a likelihood of 0.02, but it does merit evidentiary strength greater than merely specific. Likelihood = 0.1.

#### *Calculation of overall likelihood of military correspondences*

There are twelve distinct, separate military correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. Of these, three have a likelihood of 0.5, five a likelihood of 0.1, and four a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood of these twelve positive correspondences is  $0.5^3 \times 0.1^5 \times 0.02^4 = 2.0 \times 10^{-13}$ .

## 5. Physical and Geographical Correspondences

### 5.1 Highlands and lowlands exist within the relevant geography

*Coe's standard:* "While there are profound differences between the subsistence base of the lowlands and that of the highlands (p. 13), ... there are really two natural settings in the land of the Maya: highlands and lowlands" (p. 14).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:13; Mosiah 9:3; Mosiah 28:1; Alma 27:5.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Dr. Coe's book repeatedly emphasizes the importance of highland and lowland populations of Native American peoples in Mesoamerica. The Book of Mormon also repeatedly uses the words "go up" and "go down" in reference to moving geographically in the book. From its very beginning, the Book of Mormon likewise employs going "up" and going "down" to movements to and from Jerusalem, which sits at a higher elevation than most of the surrounding geography. Thus we have strong reason to believe that that phrase means to ascend or descend in elevation. The correspondence is specific and quite detailed in both books, but it is not particularly unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 5.2. Accurate description of a volcanic eruption

*Coe's standard:* "The Maya highlands by definition lie above 1,000 ft. (305 m) and are dominated by a great backbone of both extinct and active volcanoes" (p. 14). "They and their relatives, the Tz'utujil, live in villages along the shores of the volcano-girt Lake Atitlan" (p. 28). "On an ill-fated day around AD 595, the nearby Loma Caldera volcano erupted, spewing out steam, ash, and eventually volcanic bombs that rained down on the [village of Ceren]" (p. 107).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 8:5-23.

*Analysis of the correspondence:* The account in 3 Nephi is an obvious eyewitness account of a volcanic eruption, with associated earthquakes, terrible storms and lightning, and thick, choking, nearly unbreathable air. This account is highly detailed as well as unusual. Joseph Smith and his contemporaries knew nothing of what it was like to experience a volcanic eruption, nor did they have any published accounts to draw upon. *View of the Hebrews* mentions volcanoes in Mesoamerica, but says nothing at all about what an eruption is like. This correspondence is therefore specific, detailed and highly unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 5.3 Periods of terrible drought separated by decades or centuries with resulting famines

*Coe's standard:* "Nor are these rains reliable; in bad years there may be severe droughts" (p. 17). "It is small wonder that the early Colonial chronicles

“speak much of famines in Yucatan before the arrival of the Spaniards” (p. 19). “Cave deposits show ... a similar pattern of droughts that lasted for decades. One episode struck between AD 200 and 300, another from AD 820 to 870, then two more at AD 1020 to 1100 and AD 1530 to 1580. Shorter, severe droughts occurred at AD 420, 930, and 1800. ... The most dramatic discovery is the drought from AD 820 to 870. ... This period saw the collapse of Maya civilization in the southern Maya lowlands” (p. 32).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 9:22; Helaman 11:5-7; Ether 9:30, 35.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed in both books. It is also probably unusual. Joseph Smith lived in well-watered country at latitudes that don’t usually experience droughts. Smith could have learned about famines from the Bible, but he would not have known, as attested in both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon, that such terrible droughts can last many years, even decades, and that different periods of drought can be and are separated by centuries. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

#### 5.4 Venomous, aggressive snakes present

*Coe’s standard:* “Also lurking in *milpa* and jungle, and to be avoided at all costs, were vipers such as the dreaded *barba amarilla*, or ‘yellow jaw’ (*Bothrops asper*), among the most aggressive snakes in the world” (p. 19).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mormon 8:24; Ether 9:31.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed. Poisonous snakes certainly existed. (No problem: the Book of Mormon doesn’t claim to take place in Ireland.) While there are not many venomous snakes in New York, there are a few such species. The unusual part of this correspondence is that there was at least one very aggressive venomous snake. Most snakes, even poisonous ones, will flee from humans. They just aren’t aggressive. But not so the snakes described in Ether 9:31 or the *barba amarilla* described by Dr. Coe. So the correspondence is specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

#### 5.5 Easy to get lost, very thick wilderness, cities hidden in the wilderness

*Coe’s standard:* “lost and starving among the swampy *bajos* and thorny forests of northern Guatemala” (p. 139). “The forests of southern Campeche and Quintana Roo form the wildest part of the Maya region” (p. 161). “Safe in the fastness of an almost impenetrable wilderness, their island stronghold was bypassed by history” (p. 219).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 7:4-5; Mosiah 8:8; Mosiah 21:25; Mosiah 22:16; Mosiah 23:20, 30, 36.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* are specific and detailed on this point. In fact, the Book of Mormon refers to wilderness a total of 212 times. There was very thick wilderness immediately adjacent to settled areas in which it was possible to get completely lost, even if ancestors had been in the region for centuries. The Book of Mormon and *The Maya* also speak of what amount to lost cities. The city of Helam was literally bumped into by a Lamanite army as they pursued the people of Limhi. That same army had to be shown the way that led to the land/city of Nephi — they did not know how to get there on their own. How would Joseph Smith have known to put in this unusual, but correct detail? What did he or anyone in his community (from whom he might have learned it) know of lost cities and almost impenetrable wilderness? The American wilderness in which Joseph lived was sometimes thick but by no means impenetrable. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 5.6 Powerful, ancient central city and culture in the highlands

*Coe's standard:* "A Late Preclassic rival to Izapa in size and number of temple mounds and in the splendor of its carved monuments was Kaminaljuyu during the Verbena and Arenal phases, dating from c. 100 BC to AD 150. This ... was once a major ceremonial site on the western outskirts of Guatemala City. Many of the approximately 200 mounds once to be found there were probably constructed at this time; Kaminaljuyu's rulers must have possessed formidable economic and political power over much of the Maya highlands at this time" (p. 73).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 7:1-4; Mosiah 9:6, 8; Alma 47:20.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The time period 100 BC to AD 150 fits very well with the time of the dominance and power of the city of Lehi-Nephi, or city of Nephi (land of Nephi) in the highlands. This was the principal city of the Lamanites in the time periods just before and just after Christ. So the correspondence is specific and detailed. The exactness of the time, location and dominance of the city taken as a whole are unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 5.7 Earthquakes present and important

*Coe's standard:* "As the lake dried up, ... perhaps due to exploitation of the land, or even to tectonic movements (the region is highly earthquake-prone), the city [Kaminaljuyu] dwindled" (p. 74). "The Aztecs ... thought that the universe had passed through four such ages, and that we were now in the fifth, which would be destroyed by earthquakes" (p. 249). "The Zinacanteco world ... rests on the shoulders of the *Vaxak-Men*, the four-corner gods; when one of these shifts his burden, there is an earthquake" (pp. 292-93).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 5:27, 31-32; 3 Nephi 8:6, 9-18.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon and *The Maya* are specific and quite detailed about the "shaking of the earth." Earthquakes

play a significant role in both books. Since Joseph may have heard about earthquakes, even if he had probably not experienced one, we would not count this correspondence as unusual except for one thing: on two separate occasions the Book of Mormon refers to a particular prison in the land of Nephi as being shaken violently, one time even to the point of collapsing. We believe the evidence in the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* support the general area of Kaminaljuyu as the land of Nephi, and Dr. Coe specifically calls out this region as “highly earthquake-prone.” What a lucky “guess” on Joseph Smith’s part. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 5.8 Deforestation of large areas

*Coe’s standard:* “The botanists conclude, with one caveat, that the Tikal Maya had largely demolished the tall monsoon forest by the 740s” (p. 176).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 3:5-7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* In both books, the inhabitants of the land had rendered it without timber. This correspondence is therefore specific and detailed, but it is not unusual. Joseph Smith and everyone around him were also busy deforesting the land. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 5.9 Areas set aside for forest regrowth and/or timber shipped in from a distance

*Coe’s standard:* “In AD 810, sapodilla was again the species of choice, but beam widths were far smaller than they had once been. Apparently Tikal’s rulers had set aside protected groves of their favorite tree or managed to import it from some distance” (p. 176).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 3:9-11.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed. In both books, areas were set aside for forest regrowth, and timber was also shipped in for building cities such as Tikal. The correspondence is also unusual. There was no contemporary model for Joseph Smith to follow whereby forests were purposely replanted. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 5.10 Precious stones exist (but they are not diamonds, rubies, and pearls)

*Coe’s standard:* “The volcanic highlands ... yielded obsidian — natural volcanic glass. ... Obsidian was to ancient Mesoamerica what steel is to modern civilization. It was turned into knives, lance and dart points, ... and a host of other tools” (p. 23). “Jade was surely the compelling reason for this intrusion of the Olmec [into the Copan valley]. The Classic Maya obtained their green and often dull-colored jade from alluvial deposits [in Copan], ... but this was not the distinctive blue-green jade so prized by the Olmec. The mystery of where the Olmec obtained this material has at long last been solved by the discovery in 2001 of several sources in the Sierra de las Minas,

far above the Motagua. ... Control of both the Motagua and Copan valleys would have given the Olmec a virtual monopoly of a material that was as important to this primordial civilization as gold was to be for the Spanish *conquistadores*" (p. 60). " ... They went from modestly dressed chieftains to true kings endowed with fine clothing and jade or turquoise regalia." (p. 83). "It is natural that the Maya lavished upon jade, the most precious substance known to them, their full artistry" (p. 171). "Not only jade, but also calcite was worked by the lowland Maya lapidaries; but it must have been a rare substance, for objects made from it are found infrequently" (p. 171). "But other items also moved along these trade networks; the excavators encountered obsidian from the mines in central Mexico, turquoise which had probably originated in the American Southwest (a luxury item prized by the Toltecs and their cultural heirs the Aztecs), and gold from lower Central America" (p. 215).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 17:14.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Bruce Dale, the son of a mining engineer, grew up in mining towns in Nevada and Arizona, and was an avid rock hound in his youth. For him, this is a particularly powerful correspondence. Both the Maya and the Book of Mormon people had precious stones, which represented great riches to them (Alma 17:14). So this correspondence is specific.

It is also unusual in the details *not* given in the Book of Mormon. If Joseph Smith "guessed" the Book of Mormon, he would very probably have guessed "precious stones" to be the only precious stones he knew of, namely diamonds, rubies, and perhaps pearls. But Mesoamerica has no rubies at all, nor does it have any significant diamond resources. (Mexico has a few small, inferior diamonds, but no diamond mines.) Joseph Smith would not have "guessed" the precious stones to be jade, obsidian, turquoise or calcite. Nor would the names of those stones have meant anything to all but a very small fraction of those who read the Book of Mormon. (*Cureloms* and *cumoms*, anyone?) But Joseph Smith made neither mistake. He (or rather the Book of Mormon authors) simply called them, quite accurately, "precious stones." We rate this likelihood = 0.02.

### 5.11 Submerged cities

*Coe's standard:* "Lake Amatitlan, a place known for elaborate, aquatic deposits of Early Classic incense burners" (p. 103).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 8:14; 3 Nephi 9:4, 6, 8; 4 Nephi 1:9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Since incense burners are made to burn incense, and don't work well under water, the conclusion is pretty clear. These incense burners were submerged when the waters of the lake rose to engulf

them. (Both Lake Amatitlan and Lake Atitlan cover sunken cities.) So the correspondence is specific and detailed in both books.

How about unusual? However unlikely, Joseph Smith may have known of the story of Atlantis, but why would he “guess” that story would apply to some of the ancestors of the Indians? And Atlantis was engulfed by the ocean, not by freshwater lakes. We think this correspondence is more than specific and detailed, but somewhat less than unusual. To be conservative we assign likelihood = 0.1.

### 5.12 Perishable writing materials

*Coe’s standard:* “None of these bark-paper books hav[e] survived except in the most fragmentary form in tombs” (p. 141). “There must have been many thousands of Classic Maya books written on bark-paper, but not a single one has come down to us” (pp. 171, 173).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Jacob 4:1-2; Alma 14:8; Helaman 3:15.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific and detailed. Both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon speak of many books. These books were kept on materials that either decay or can be burned. The only thing that lasts is words written on metal plates. The correspondence is not unusual. The paper books and documents in Joseph Smith’s day would also burn or decay. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 5.13 Refined gold present

*Coe’s standard:* “there were no sources of gold and silver in the Maya lowlands” (p. 22). “the richest array of offerings, ... including ... a gold frog (possibly an import from Panama, and one of the earliest-attested metal objects yet discovered for the Maya)” (p. 194-95). “dredged from the muck at the bottom of the Cenote, ... the gold disks already mentioned ... The local lords brought treasures of gold from places as far afield as Panama to offer to the Cenote” (p. 212). “But other items also moved along these trade networks; the excavators encountered ... gold from lower Central America” (p. 215).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Jacob 1:16; Ether 10:23; Alma 11.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Coe resists the idea that the lowland Maya had much refined gold before about AD 800, well after the Book of Mormon times. But the Book of Mormon does not claim to be set among the lowland Maya, so this is irrelevant. There clearly was refined gold present in both books, even if the lowland Maya had to import their gold from Central America. So the correspondence is specific, but it is not detailed nor unusual. Joseph Smith may well have heard of the treasures of gold plundered by the Spaniards. Likelihood = 0.5.



### ***Calculation of physical and geographical correspondences***

There are 13 distinct physical and geographical correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. Of these, one has a likelihood of 0.5, four have a likelihood of 0.1 and eight have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood of these 13 positive correspondences, taken together, is  $0.5^1 \times 0.1^4 \times 0.02^8 = 1.28 \times 10^{-18}$ .

## **6. Technological and Miscellaneous Correspondences**

### **6.1 Millions of inhabitants in the area**

*Coe's standard:* "One view perceives as many as eight to ten million people in the lowlands c. AD 800; David Webster of Pennsylvania State University would go as low as two to three million" (p. 22). "But what happened to the bulk of the population who once occupied the Central Area, apparently in the millions?" (p. 177). "What this might mean is that we may have to double our previous population estimates for the Central Area, which already run into the many millions" (p. 176).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mormon 6:11-15; Ether 15:2.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* affirm that the populations were large, specifically in the neighborhood of 10 million people. In 1830, the U. S. census gave a population of about 13 million. Thus Joseph Smith correctly "guessed" that his fictional group of Indians was nearly as large as the entire population of the United States at the time the Book of Mormon was published. Certainly this is unusual. What Indian population had Joseph Smith ever seen that was anywhere near this large? Likelihood = 0.02.

### **6.2 Calendar kept by day, month and year**

*Coe's standard:* "The Maya Long Count, which will be explained in greater detail in Chapters 3 and 9, is an absolute, day-to-day calendar which has run like some great clock from a point in the mythical past (p. 25). "The Maya New Year started with 1 Pop, the next day being 2 Pop, etc. The final day of the month, however, carried not the coefficient 20, but a sign indicating the 'seating' of the month to follow" (p. 64). "Maya learning as well as ritual was in their [the Maya priests'] hands. Among them were 'computation of the years, months, and days, the festivals and ceremonies'" (p. 243).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 10:6; Alma 49:1; 3 Nephi 1:1; 3 Nephi 2:7-8; 3 Nephi 8:5.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific and detailed. Both the Book of Mormon peoples and the peoples described in *The Maya* kept calendars by day, month and year. The keeping of calendars is also unusual. The Indian peoples of eastern North America did not keep calendars at all, and were aware only of

the passing of the seasons. How did Joseph Smith “guess” that any Indians kept an absolute calendar by day, month and year? Likelihood = 0.02.

### 6.3 Multiple calendars kept

*Coe’s standard:* “Meshing with the 260-day count is a ‘Vague Year’ or *Ha’b* of 365 days, so called because the actual length of the solar year is about a quarter-day more. ... Although the Maya were perfectly aware that the *Ha’b* was shorter than the tropical year, they did not change the calendar accordingly. ... From this it follows that a particular day in the 260-day count, such as 1 K’an, also had a position in the *Ha’b*, for instance 2 Pop. A day designated as 1 K’an 2 Pop could not return until 52 *Ha’b* (18,980 days) had passed. This is the Calendar Round” (pp. 64–65).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 1:1; 3 Nephi 2:7–8.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed. Not only were multiple calendars kept, both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon describe exactly *how* they were kept. If the keeping of one calendar is unusual, then keeping several different calendars is even more unusual. We would like to give this a higher weighting than 0.02 (1 in a million?), but cannot by the constraints we have imposed on ourselves. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 6.4 Bee keeping, domesticated bees, honey

*Coe’s standard:* “And it might be that the province [Yucatan] relied less upon plant husbandry than upon its famed production of honey, salt, and slaves” (p. 19). “As he still does today, the Maya farmer raised the native stingless bees, which are kept in small, hollow logs closed with mud plaster at either end and stacked up in A-frames, but wild honey was also much appreciated” (p. 231). “A few depictions of vessels marked with the term *kab*, ‘honey,’ ... Valuable Yucatan exports were honey, cotton mantles and slaves” (p. 232).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Ether 2:3.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Jaredites specifically brought with them honeybees, so they had domesticated the bee. The correspondence is specific, but it is not detailed nor unusual. Bees were domesticated many thousands of years ago. Coe makes much of the fact that Maya domestic bees are stingless, versus the Old World bees of genus *Apis*. But the Book of Mormon does not say that the Jaredites did not switch over to keeping native stingless bees when they arrived in the New World (we two authors would surely have done so!), so Coe’s point seems irrelevant to the issue. Both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon specifically note domesticated bees, and this correspondence is also unusual. What Indian tribes did Joseph Smith know of that practiced beekeeping? There were none. How did he “guess” this one correctly? Likelihood = 0.1.

## 6.5 Art including carving, painting, dancing, metalwork, music

*Coe's standard:* “more advanced cultural traits ... and the painting of murals” (p. 26). “In one tomb, over 300 objects of the most beautiful workmanship were placed with the body” (p. 76). “They went from modestly dressed chieftains to true kings endowed [in] ... jade or turquoise regalia” (p. 83). “[This] extraordinarily well-preserved fresco ... is in fact the earliest Maya painting known, dating to c. 100 BC or slightly earlier. In its beauty and sophistication it equals the famous Late Classic murals of Bonampak” (p. 87). “The finest Maya wood carving known, this seated figure from Tabasco, Mexico, represents a courtier” (p. 95n40), ... including some marvelously fine jades and the gold disks already mentioned. [Metals] had now appeared in the Maya area, although they were probably cast and worked elsewhere and imported. The many copper bells and other objects from the well were of Mexican workmanship. The local lords brought treasures of gold from places as far afield as Panama to offer to the Cenote” (p. 212). “Santa Rita also yielded an extraordinary set of ear ornaments in gold and turquoise” (p. 219). “Plazas were the location for most dances. The stelae that now fill some of them petrify kings in perpetual dance, as we can tell by their pose, dress, and explanatory glyphs” (p. 256).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Jarom 1:8; Helaman 6:13; Helaman 12:2; Mosiah 11:8-10, Mosiah 20:1-5:4 Nephi 1:41.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and in many cases detailed. Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* speak of art expressed in a variety of materials, including wood and metals, people adorning themselves with precious things, and dance. The correspondence is unusual. What Indian tribes known to Joseph Smith did art work in wood and metal and had fine jewelry? However, to be conservative, since Dr. Coe reports no evidence for metal work in the Book of Mormon timeframe, we will discount this correspondence from specific, detailed and unusual to merely specific and detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 6.6 Knowledge of the movement of the stars, planets and moon

*Coe's standard:* “Ancient Maya used lines of sight ... to plot the rising and setting positions of the sun, the moon, and, above all, the planet Venus. ... Maya astronomers had a remarkably accurate knowledge of the apparent motion of Venus” (p. 193). “Venus is the only one of the planets for which we can be absolutely sure the Maya made extensive calculations” (p. 262). “Some have questioned whether the movements of planets other than Venus were observed by the Maya, but it is hard to believe that one of the Dresden tables, listing multiples of 78, can be anything other than a table for Mars” (pp. 262-63).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:21; Alma 30:44; Helaman 12:13-15; Helaman 14:5-6; 3 Nephi 1:21.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Alma asserts that planets (not just one planet) “move in their regular form,” agreeing with Coe’s statement that the Maya knew the movements of Venus and Mars. For the Book of Mormon people to know that “a new star did appear,” they would have to know when and where the old stars would appear. So the correspondence is specific and detailed. It is also unusual. What Indian tribe of the American Northeast had any such detailed astronomical knowledge as that reported in *The Maya*? Likelihood = 0.02.

## 6.7 Writing is present, but its genealogy is complicated and poorly understood

*Coe’s standard:* “All the Mesoamerican Indians shared a number of traits which were more or less peculiar to them and absent or rare elsewhere in the New World: hieroglyphic writing” (p. 13). “The relation between Maya and Isthmian writing remains obscure. The earliest Maya writing ... comes from c. 300 BC, prior to Isthmian writing. ... The genealogy of Mesoamerican writing is therefore more complicated than formerly thought” (p. 68).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 6:1–3; Mosiah 24:6; 3 Nephi 26:6; Mormon 9:32–34.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed. The Mesoamerican Indians (not just the Maya) had a rare or absent trait: they had writing. And so did the Book of Mormon peoples. Furthermore, the genealogy of their writing is complex. It is not clear how Mesoamerican writing arose, and the sacred written language of the Book of Mormon authors was known to them alone (Mormon 9:34). The correspondence is also unusual. None of the Indian tribes known to Joseph Smith had writing. Thus it was an extremely lucky (or foolhardy) “guess” on his part to have claimed in his “fictional” book that some American Indians did have writing. But he did claim it, and he was right. This correspondence also deserves a much smaller likelihood than a 1 in 50 chance, more like 1 in a million. But to be conservative, we assign a likelihood = 0.02.

## 6.8 Engraved writing on stone

*Coe’s standard:* Coe’s book is full of examples of writing on stone. Here are just a few: “A magnificent stela was found ... in southeastern Veracruz; two Bak’tun 8 dates corresponding respectively to AD 143 and 156 are inscribed on it. These are accompanied by a text of about 400 signs ... (the famous ‘Tuxtla Statuette,’ also found in southern Veracruz, is inscribed in the same script and dates to AD 162)” (p. 68). “It was not just the ‘stela cult’ — the inscribed glorification of royal lineages and their achievements” (p. 177).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Omni 1:20.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon and *The Maya* both refer specifically to engraved writing on large stones. This is an unusual

correspondence. Writing by itself was unusual, to write on stone was doubly so. What example or model did Joseph Smith have to correctly “guess” this correspondence? However, the Book of Mormon gives only one example of writing on stone, so it is not detailed. Specific and unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 6.9 Many books present, some were kept in repositories

*Coe's standard:* “Maya priests 2,000 miles away were still chanting rituals from hieroglyphic books” (p. 219). “Even more heartbreaking is the loss of thousands of books” (p. 237). “A few probable coffers exist for books, including the recent find of a lidded limestone box from Hun Nal Ye cave in Guatemala” (p. 239).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 3:15; Mormon 6:6. The entire Book of Mormon is a collection of shorter books or excerpts from other books.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is both specific and detailed. Many books, not just a few, were kept. And in at least some instances, the books were kept together in repositories, essentially in libraries (the “coffers” cited above). The practice is also unusual. What American Indian tribes that Joseph Smith knew of kept even one book, let alone libraries? How did he correctly “guess” this fact about the Maya and the Book of Mormon peoples? Likelihood = 0.02.

### 6.10 Trading in a variety of goods

*Coe's standard:* “All the Mesoamerican Indians shared a number of traits which were more or less peculiar to them and absent or rare elsewhere in the New World: ... highly specialized markets” (p. 13). “Trading networks brought vast quantities of these objects [*manos* and *metates*] down from ... Guatemala. ... The volcanic highlands yielded ... obsidian. ... Access to salt sources or to salt trade networks was critical to the growth and security of Maya states. ... The Maya elite had other special needs, above all jade, quetzal feathers, and marine shells” (pp. 22–23). “Its [Lamani’s] location and rich remains attest to its entrepreneurial importance in ancient Maya trade” (p. 85). “[control over] ... the movement of goods, which now passed into the hands of trading entrepreneurs or local petty lords” (p. 213).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 24:7; Helaman 3:10, 14; Helaman 6:8; 3 Nephi 6:11; Ether 10:22.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific. Both the Book of Mormon peoples and the Mesoamerican Indians traded, a trait that was absent or rare elsewhere in the New World, and therefore unusual by definition. However, while trading in a variety of goods is strongly implied by the wording in the Book of Mormon, only trading in wood is specifically mentioned. So this correspondence is certainly specific and unusual, but

it is not detailed enough to count as specific, detailed and unusual. To be conservative, we assign a likelihood of 0.1.

### 6.11 Many merchants

*Coe's standard:* "These somewhat Mexicanized merchant-warriors controlled the great Gulf Coast entrepot of Xicallanco where Mexican and Maya traders met" (p. 178). "God M, who was the patron of merchants, is shown here" (p. 218n138). "Merchants had a privileged status" (p. 225). "At the top [of the class structure] were nobles, ... wealthy farmers and merchants" (p. 235).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 6:11-12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Because this correspondence overlaps somewhat with correspondence 6.10, we will only count it as specific. However, the whole interlocking system of trading, merchants and wealth accumulation through trade is unusual in itself, and perhaps this correspondence deserves a higher weight. Nonetheless, to be conservative, likelihood = 0.5.

### 6.12 Roads and causeways built

*Coe's standard:* Coe makes many references to roads and causeways in different areas of Mesoamerica. Here are just a few. "There are two groups of monumental construction, connected by a massive causeway, and in fact a whole network of causeways radiates out from El Mirador across the surrounding swampy landscape" (p. 85). "Archaeologist Rodrigo Liendo Stuardo has even found evidence of road systems running along the base of those hills, connecting the far reaches of the Palenque kingdom" (p. 151). "A causeway ... runs southeast from Uxmal through the small site of Nohpat to Kabah" (p. 182).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 3 Nephi 6:8; 3 Nephi 8:13.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon speak of many roads, not just a few; and the practice of road-building is widespread in both societies. So this correspondence is specific and detailed, and also definitely unusual. The Indians that Joseph Smith knew of did not build roads. However, *View of the Hebrews* very briefly mentions road building among the Indians. However unlikely, Joseph might have read about it there. To be conservative, this is rated as specific and detailed only. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 6.13 Houses with attached gardens

*Coe's standard:* "Also important were the house gardens, still ubiquitous in Maya villages and hamlets" (p. 22). "A few cities, such as Chunchucmil in Yucatan, are amazingly dense, with house lots demarcated by walls; others had extensive space for gardens" (p. 124).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 7:10.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific but not detailed in the case of the Book of Mormon. Strongly implied, but not stated, is a garden attached to Nephi's house. So we cannot call it detailed. Native Americans taught the Pilgrims what plants grew well in the New World, so gardening/domestic agriculture among the ancestors of the Indians cannot be called unusual. Specific only, likelihood = 0.5.

#### **6.14 Foreigners/new rulers introduce/impose a new language/writing system on indigenous peoples**

*Coe's standard:* "During the Terminal Classic, [Ceibal] seems to have come under the sway of foreigners, as seen in the strong influence of non-Maya forms of art and writing. ... There are more 'foreign'-looking stelae at Ceibal which belong to this period, with non-Maya calendrical glyphs and iconography; on one, a figure wears the bird-mask of the central Mexican wind god, Ehecatl, with a Mexican speech scroll curling from the beak. ... This, however, does not answer the question of the patently Mexican hieroglyphs on other Ceibal monuments" (p. 178).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Omni 1:17–18; Mosiah 24:4–6.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon refer specifically and in considerable detail to foreigners who introduce a new language/writing system. This is certainly unusual. What models or examples did Joseph Smith have available to him that would have led him to "guess" correctly that foreigners would impose a new language and writing system on indigenous peoples? The European settlers in North America were not trying to impose a new language on the Native Americans, they were trying to take get rid of the Indians and take their lands. Likelihood = 0.02.

#### **6.15 Writing system changed significantly over time**

*Coe's standard:* "The earliest Maya writing, exceedingly difficult to decode, is quite different from its later versions" (p. 266).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Mormon 9:32–33.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon and *The Maya* both refer specifically to a change in writing systems, but very few details are provided. The practice seems highly unusual. What change in written English did Joseph Smith know about? What could he use as a precedent or model? There was nothing. He might perhaps have known about significant changes in spoken English from the time, say, of Shakespeare, but not in the way of writing English. Specific and unusual. Likelihood = 0.1.

#### **6.16 Buildings of cement**

*Coe's standard:* "The Maya of the lowlands had discovered ... if limestone fragments were burnt, and the resulting powder mixed with water, a white plaster of great durability was created. Finally, they quickly realized the

structural value of a concrete-like fill made from limestone rubble and marl” (p. 81). Overall, there are 61 references to “stucco” in Coe’s book; stucco is a fine cement.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 3:7, 9, 11.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific, detailed and unusual. Both wood and cement are mentioned as building materials in the Book of Mormon and in *The Maya*. While some Indians of northeastern North America did use wood to build their dwellings (for example, the Iroquois longhouses), they did not use cement, as did both the Maya and the Aztecs. How did Joseph Smith “guess” that one? Likelihood = 0.02.

By the way, cement results from burning limestone and mixing the resulting powder with water. Cement is used to bind all kinds of aggregates (stone, clay, etc.) to produce concrete. There is no justification for being picky about the details of hydraulic vs. nonhydraulic cements. Even experts disagree on what constitutes “true” cement.<sup>39</sup>

## 6.17 Great skill in the working of cement (stucco)

*Coe’s standard:* “Holmul and Xultun, celebrated in recent years for their ... monumental stuccos ... and Ek’ Balam, an extraordinary site in Yucatan with ... some of the most astonishing stucco reliefs ever found” (p. 7). “Many of these were faced with elaborate stucco friezes and stairways flanked by massive stucco masks” (p. 81). “This young man is shown in a magnificent, polychrome stucco relief on a pilaster of Temple XIX” (p. 160).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Helaman 3:7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Not only were the Maya able to build with cement/stucco, they were “exceedingly expert” in working it, as explicitly described in both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* (“astonishing,” “elaborate,” “magnificent” are the words used by Coe). This is certainly specific and detailed. It also is clearly unusual. The dominant view of the white settlers regarding the Indians in the early 1800s was that they were savages. How did the author of the Book of Mormon correctly “guess” that these “savages” could work so expertly in cement? Likelihood = 0.02.

## 6.18 Excellent workmanship practiced

*Coe’s standard:* “the finest Maya wood carving known, this seated figure from Tabasco, Mexico” (p. 95n40). “Finally, the Late Classic Maya were ... the only American Indians interested in rendering the uniqueness of individual characters through portraiture. The Maya artists excelled in low-relief carving. ... Pottery objects of Late Classic manufacture run the gamut

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39. David S. Hyman, “Cements at Teotihuacan: A Criticism of Margain’s Appraisal,” *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 313–14, <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/aa.1973.75.1.02a00290>.



from crude ... pots and pans of everyday life to real works of art. Among the latter are the fantastic supports for incense burners” (p. 164). (See all of pp. 164-73.) “The excellence of the workmanship lavished upon it suggests that the Toltec intruders were better off in Yucatan” (p. 207).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 5:15-16; Jarom 1:8; Ether 10:7, 27. The archaic meaning of “curious” is “made or prepared skillfully, done with painstaking accuracy or attention to detail.”<sup>40</sup>

*Analysis of correspondence:* In the Book of Mormon, as in *The Maya*, many great workmen practiced excellent workmanship in a variety of materials (including materials other than cement/stucco). So the correspondence is specific and detailed. It is also highly unusual. As mentioned above, whoever wrote the Book of Mormon lived in early 19<sup>th</sup> century America, where the Indians were generally deemed to be “savages.” How did that person correctly “guess” that the ancestors of these “savages” were great workmen in many different materials? Likelihood = 0.02.

## 6.19 Trade goods traveled by sea

*Coe’s standard:* “The great majority of goods traveled by sea, since roads were but poor trails and cargoes heavy. This kind of commerce was cornered by the Chontal Maya, or Putun, such good seafarers that Eric Thompson called them ‘the Phoenicians of Middle America’” (p. 232).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 63:5-10; Helaman 3:10, 14.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, there was a lot of trade by sea, and some detail is provided. Joseph Smith may have known something of the trade between the Iroquois and other northeastern tribes carried on by canoe. However, the trade by the Indians of Joseph’s time was via freshwater lakes and rivers and not ocean shipping, as described in both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. So the correspondence lacks a bit to be considered specific, detailed, and unusual, but it is considerably more than just specific. We count this likelihood = 0.1 for specific and somewhat detailed and unusual.

## 6.20 Books stored underground in lidded stone boxes

*Coe’s standard:* “A few probable coffers exist for books, including the recent find of a lidded limestone box from Hun Nal Ye cave in Guatemala” (p. 239).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See p. xi (Introduction and Witnesses).

*Analysis of correspondence:* This correspondence could hardly be more specific and detailed. The Book of Mormon was buried below ground in a lidded stone box. The Maya also (probably) stored some of their books in lidded stone boxes, the one mentioned in a cave. The correspondence is also

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40. Dictionary.com, s.v. “curious,” last accessed September 28, 2018, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/curious>.

unusual. None of the Indians of Joseph Smith's time wrote books, let alone stored them in stone boxes. Likelihood = 0.02. The Maya were not the only Mesoamerican Indians who stored sacred objects in stone boxes. So did the Aztecs.<sup>41</sup>

### 6.21 Towers built, some very tall, possibly watchtowers

*Coe's standard:* "It has been suggested that the tower was used as an observatory, but it commands a wide view and could also have served as a watchtower" (p. 151). "decoration of perfectly ordinary small 'palaces' with high towers imitating the fronts of temple-pyramids; these towers, however, are solid, the steps being impossibly narrow and steep, and the 'doorway' at the summit leading to nothing" (p. 161).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 2:7; Mosiah 11:12; Alma 48:1; Helaman 7:10-11; Moroni 9:7.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon specifically mentions tall towers being built as watchtowers. The correspondence is therefore specific and detailed. We would also count it as unusual. What Indians of Joseph Smith's time and place built tall towers? However, *View of the Hebrews* also contains a very brief, undetailed mention of towers. So we count this correspondence as merely specific and detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 6.22 Multiple formal entrances to villages

*Coe's standard:* "The supernatural world is ever-present in Chan Kom [a traditional Maya village] and in the outlying fields and forest. At the four entrances to the settlement are four pairs of crosses and four *balam* ('jaguar') spirits" (p. 296).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Mosiah 22:6; Alma 8:18.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific. There were multiple formal entrances to the villages/towns of the Maya people and also among the Book of Mormon peoples. However, no distinctive details are given in the Book of Mormon, nor does the practice seem unusual. Even small towns on the American frontier had more than one entrance. Specific only, likelihood = 0.5.

### 6.23 Fine fabrics and textiles, elaborate clothing

*Coe's standard:* "Besides jade, the corpse was ornamented with ... rich textiles which have long since rotted away" (p. 106). "Sadly, nothing remains of all the perishable products which must have traveled the same routes — textiles" (p. 113). "The royal corpse had been virtually swaddled, wrapped in layers of lime, palm, and fine cotton textiles" (p. 144). "Every temple, every palace room was surely festooned with curtains and wall hangings" (p. 171).

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41. Robert Draper, "Unburying the Aztec," *National Geographic* (November 2010), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2010/11/greatest-aztec/>.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 28:13; Mosiah 10:5; Alma 4:6; Helaman 6:13; Helaman 13:28.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is both specific and detailed. Both the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* describe people who had available to them very fine, rich and elaborate textiles and clothing. The correspondence also seems unusual. The Indians of Joseph Smith's time and place wore clothing made primarily of animal skins and did not have access to the cotton worn by Indians in warmer climates. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### ***Calculation of technological and miscellaneous correspondences***

There are 23 specific technological/miscellaneous correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya*. Of these, three have a likelihood of 0.5, eight have a likelihood of 0.1 and twelve have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood of these 23 positive correspondences, taken together, is  $0.5^3 \times 0.1^8 \times 0.02^{12} = 5.12 \times 10^{-30}$ .

### ***Calculation of overall likelihood for all 131 correspondences in six categories***

The overall likelihood of these 131 correspondences occurring together is calculated by multiplying the likelihoods of each of the six categories, namely  $4.99 \times 10^{-33} \times 3.21 \times 10^{-35} \times 1.28 \times 10^{-24} \times 2.0 \times 10^{-13} \times 1.28 \times 10^{-18} \times 5.12 \times 10^{-30} = 2.69 \times 10^{-151}$ .

We can confirm this calculation by noting that of these 131 correspondences, 23 have a likelihood of 0.5; 57 have a likelihood of 0.1; and 51 have a likelihood of 0.02. Thus the overall likelihood can also be computed as  $0.5^{23} \times 0.1^{57} \times 0.02^{51} = 2.69 \times 10^{-151}$ .

## **Appendix B**

### **Negative Correspondences between the Book of Mormon and *The Maya***

#### **Points of disagreement between *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon**

##### **1. Horses existed during Book of Mormon (Lehite and Jaredite) times**

*Coe's standard:* "It was then a broad, grass-covered plain, frequented by 'big game' — extinct species like horses, mastodons, camelids, the elephant-like gomphotheres" (p. 44). According to Dr. Coe, the horse was extinct in the Americas by Book of Mormon times.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Alma 18:9-10, 12; Enos 1:21; and 3 Nephi 4:4, among others.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is specific and detailed. The Book of Mormon clearly states that there were horses among the Book of Mormon peoples and that the horses existed in both Lehi and Jaredite times. Dr. Coe insists that they did not exist. Likelihood = 50.0.

## 2. Elephants existed during Book of Mormon (Jaredite) times

*Coe's standard:* "It was then a broad, grass-covered plain, frequented by 'big game' — extinct species like horses, mastodons, camelids, the elephant-like gomphother" (p. 44). "These great elephants were killed by darts hurled from spear-throwers" (p. 44).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Ether 9:19.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The only mention of elephants was in Jaredite times, many centuries before the Lehis arrived. The elephants may indeed have been killed off before the Nephites arrived. So this is specific and detailed without rising to unusual. Likelihood = 10.0.

## 3. Iron existed during Book of Mormon (Lehi and Jaredite) times

*Coe's standard:* "But the European invaders brought with them more than their civil and religious order: they imposed a new economic order as well. Iron and steel tools replaced chipped or ground stone ones, and the Maya took readily to the Spaniards' axes, machetes, and billhooks, which in the lowlands enabled them to cope with the forest as they never had before" (p. 290). Dr. Coe states that there is no evidence of iron or steel in Book of Mormon times.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* 2 Nephi 5:15; Jarom 1:8; Mosiah 11:3, 8; Ether 10:23.

*Analysis of correspondence:* There are several mentions of iron and steel among both Lehi and Jaredite peoples. So this is specific and detailed. However, there is no description of how widely used these metals were, so their use could yet be undiscovered. Nonetheless, to enable a rigorous test of the Book of Mormon, we grant this correspondence the maximum possible evidentiary weight. Likelihood = 50.0.

## 4. Steel existed during Book of Mormon (Lehi and Jaredite) times

*Coe's standard:* See 3 above.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* 2 Nephi 5:15; Jarom 1:8; Ether 7:9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* See #3 above. Granted maximum possible weight. Likelihood = 50.0.

## 5. Copper existed during Book of Mormon (Lehite and Jaredite) times

*Coe's standard:* "The many copper bells and other objects from the well were of Mexican workmanship" (p. 212). "But exactly how large trees were felled prior to the adoption of copper axes in the Postclassic ... is unclear" (p. 230).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Mosiah 8:10; 11:3, 8,10; Ether 10:23.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Coe says there is no evidence of copper in the Yucatan prior to the Late Classic, while the Book of Mormon states clearly that there was copper among the Book of Mormon peoples during at least part of their history. The Book of Mormon does not claim to take place exclusively in the Yucatan area, and there clearly were copper and full metallurgy in northern South America. Long-distance trade in copper also clearly took place. So the lack of correspondence seems specific and detailed, but not unusual. We give this correspondence a weight of 10.0.

## 6. Refined gold and silver existed during Book of Mormon times

*Coe's standard:* "a gold frog (possibly an import from Panama, and one of the earliest-attested metal objects yet discovered for the Maya)" (pp. 194-95). "Detail from a gold disk from the Sacred Cenote, Chichen Itza" (p. 205n126). "Many of the objects dredged from the muck at the bottom of the Cenote are of Toltec manufacture, including some marvelously fine jades and the gold disks already mentioned. ... The local lords brought treasures of gold from places as far afield as Panama" (p. 212).

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Mosiah 11:3, 8-9; Mosiah 22:12; Ether 10:12, 23.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The mention of gold and silver in Mosiah 11 and 22 probably took place in highland Guatemala and not the Yucatan. There is certainly gold and silver in highland Guatemala. We don't know where the Book of Ether took place, but much gold and silver existed in Mexico, so the available gold and silver could have been distributed by trade to the Maya in Yucatan. Because it is "one vast shelf" of limestone, the Yucatan has no metals or metal ores. Since this correspondence is specific and detailed without being unusual, we give this a weight of 10.0.

We do not count refined gold and silver separately. In nature, gold is nearly always accompanied by silver, and thus to refine gold by removing the silver is to refine the silver also.

**Cumulative strength of these six negative correspondences is  $50^3 \times 10^3 = 1.25 \times 10^8$ .**

## **Points of disagreement between the Book of Mormon and Dr. Coe in his *Dialogue* article and in his podcasts**

### **1. Brass existed during Book of Mormon (Lehite and Jaredite) times**

*Coe's standard:* Coe makes no mention of brass in his book but states in the podcasts that there is no evidence for it in Mesoamerica.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 2 Nephi 5:15; Mosiah 8:10; Mosiah 11:3, 8, 10.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon states clearly that brass existed among the Book of Mormon peoples, while Dr. Coe says there is no evidence for it in Mesoamerica. We grant a likelihood of 50 in support of the hypothesis.

### **2. Chariots existed during Book of Mormon (Lehite) times**

*Coe's standard:* There is no evidence of wheeled vehicles in Mesoamerica, although wheeled toys have been found, and potter's wheels still exist.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See Alma 18:9-10, 12; Alma 20:6; 3 Nephi 3:22.

*Analysis of correspondence:* We wonder, given the roads that the Maya and other Mesoamerican Indians undoubtedly constructed and the wheels they also made, why on earth they continued to carry their goods on their backs. We also do not wish to go into the details of what a "chariot" might be. Other scholars have already dealt with that issue and can grant to this negative correspondence whatever weight they choose. We simply grant to this correspondence the maximum weight of 50.0.

### **3. Sheep existed during Book of Mormon (Jaredite) times**

*Coe's standard:* In the podcasts Dr. Coe states that there is no evidence of sheep in Mesoamerica.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Ether 9:18. The only unambiguous reference to sheep in the Book of Mormon is many centuries BC. The other references to sheep seem to be of a "religious" nature rather than specific reference to animal husbandry. There are 70 mentions of the word "flocks" in the Book of Mormon, but we do not know what animals these flocks consisted of.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is not particularly strong evidence, even giving the most generous possible interpretation. There is no mention of sheep during Nephite times, nor evidence that keeping of sheep was widespread. As evidence, this correspondence cannot be weighted more than 2.0.

#### 4. Goats existed during Book of Mormon (Jaredite and Lehite) times

*Coe's standard:* In the podcasts, Dr. Coe says there is no evidence of goats or wild goats.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* 1 Nephi 18:25; Enos 1:21; Ether 9:18.

*Analysis of correspondence:* As before, we wonder what animals the Book of Mormon might mean when it refers to “goats” and “wild goats.” For example, mountain goats are not closely related to the domestic goat or to the wild goat (these are of the genus *Capra*). The domestic goat is descended from the wild goat. However, *goat* is the word given in the text of the Book of Mormon, and goats appear to have been important to both the Lehites and the Jaredites. So we give this negative correspondence the maximum possible weight. Likelihood = 50.0.

#### 5. Swine existed during Book of Mormon (Jaredite) times

*Coe's standard:* Coe claims that the domestic pig was unknown among the Maya until the Spanish conquest. However, he also concedes that modern Maya keep the peccary (New World pig) as pets and a source of food, although he says they do not domesticate well.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Ether 9:18.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The only mention of swine is in Jaredite times. Given the historical remoteness of that era, it may not be unusual that better evidence of the domestic pig has not been found. Also, given the existence of the peccary throughout Mexico, Central and South America, it can be plausibly argued that it is the peccary that is referred to in Jaredite times as swine. Specific only. Likelihood = 2.0.

#### 6. Wheat existed during Book of Mormon times

*Coe's standard:* Coe states that wheat has not been found in Mesoamerica.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Mosiah 9:9.

*Analysis of correspondence:* There is no claim in the Book of Mormon that those peoples domesticated wheat nor that it was their primary grain. In fact, the Lehte colony specifically mentions bringing “seeds” with them, so it is likely that Old World wheat was among those seeds. Also, the Book of Mormon seems to indicate corn as the primary grain (see Appendix A, Correspondence 2.22). Wheat may not have been widely grown, and therefore the evidence for wheat more difficult to detect centuries later. So at most this correspondence must be regarded as specific, but it does not rise to detailed or unusual. Likelihood = 2.0.

#### 7. Barley existed during Book of Mormon times

*Coe's standard:* Coe states that barley has not been found in the Americas.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Mosiah 7:22; Mosiah 9:9; Alma 11:7, 15.

*Analysis of correspondence:* As we argued in #6 above for wheat, the Book of Mormon does not claim that those peoples domesticated barley, nor that it was their primary grain. In fact, the Lehite colony specifically mentions bringing “seeds” with them, so it is possible that Old World barley was among those seeds. As noted, the Book of Mormon seems to indicate corn as the primary grain (see Appendix A, Correspondence 2.22), so barley might not have been a principal crop and therefore not widespread like corn.

By the way, barley (and other grains) were the basis of the Nephite monetary system described in Alma 11. In Han China, officials could be paid in grain or coin — an interesting “hit” for the Book of Mormon. So at most this correspondence must be regarded as specific, but it does not rise to detailed or unusual. Likelihood = 2.0.

## 8. Cattle (oxen and cows) existed during Book of Mormon times

*Coe’s standard:* Coe claims that cattle (*Bos taurus*) did not exist in the Americas until the Spanish brought them. Their bones have never been found.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Enos 1:21; 3 Nephi 4:4; Ether 9:18.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Here we really do need to worry about what the word *cattle* means. *Cattle* is an Anglo-French word, related to our word modern English word *chattel*, meaning simply private or personal property. It has evolved to include “domestic quadrupeds,” more narrowly animals of the bovine variety. But the Book of Mormon may use it in the earlier sense of “quadrupeds,” animals used for tillage, labor, or food for humans. Thus in its primary sense, the word may include a variety of domesticated beasts.<sup>42</sup>

“All manner of cattle,” the phrase used in Ether 9:18, is likely earlier English usage. However, to once again be rigorous in our test of the Book of Mormon, we will assume that the cattle referred in the book are indeed *Bos taurus* (including both oxen and cows), which Dr. Coe says did not exist, and we will grant this negative correspondence a likelihood of 50.0.

## 9. Silk existed during Book of Mormon times

*Coe’s standard:* There is no evidence of silkworm culture. The Spaniards were very impressed by the fineness of the fabrics the Maya produced. The Spaniards had no fabrics so fine. The tropical environment has a strong tendency to destroy fabrics.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Alma 1:29; Alma 4:6; Ether 9:17; Ether 10:24.

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42. Modern English dictionaries explain the origin and evolution of the meanings of the word *cattle*. See also Webster’s Dictionary 1828: Online Edition, s.v. “cattle”, last accessed September 28, 2018, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/cattle>.



*Analysis of correspondence:* Both the Lehighites and Jaredites had a fabric they called silk, and the Maya in particular were able to produce very fine fabrics. Given the tropical climate and the resulting decay of organic materials, we believe this negative correspondence is specific, but not detailed or unusual. Likelihood = 2.0.

## 10. Asses (donkeys) existed during Book of Mormon times

*Coe's standard:* Dr. Coe says there is no evidence of asses (donkeys) in the New World.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* 1 Nephi 18:25; Ether 9:19.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon states that there were asses in both Jaredite and Lehighite times and that they were useful for man. Since donkeys are hardy animals and can subsist on marginal feed, their utility would argue for them being somewhat widespread. So we will grant to this negative correspondence a likelihood = 50.0.

## 11. Hybrid Egyptian/Hebrew language/writing system

*Coe's standard:* Dr. Coe says there is no such hybrid system in the New World, and that the Maya language/writing system is of local invention, not an import from the Old World. However, he also notes that there exist two scripts from ancient America that cannot currently be read because a bilingual ("Rosetta Stone") is lacking.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* See 1 Nephi 1:2 and 3:19; Mosiah 1:2, 4; Mormon 9:34.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The Book of Mormon emphasizes "the language of the fathers," an arcane, sacred written language connected to the language of the Egyptians. It is the language in which the plates were written and was known to only a few. It was obviously not the common language. In fact, Moroni (see Moroni 9:34) says that "none other people knoweth our language." Given the existence of Mesoamerican scripts that cannot be read, and the fact that the sacred language of the Nephites was a closely guarded language, this negative correspondence cannot be regarded as either detailed or unusual. At most it is specific. Likelihood = 2.0.

## 12. Lack of Middle Eastern DNA in the New World

*Coe's standard:* Dr. Coe states that he has never seen any evidence that would convince him of the presence of Middle Eastern DNA in the New World.

*Book of Mormon correspondence:* Dr. Ugo Perego has written extensively on this DNA issue.<sup>43</sup> There are many reasons why the genetic endowment brought by the Lehighite, Jaredite and Mulekite colonies may not be detectable

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43. Wikipedia, s.v. "Ugo A. Perego," last edited September 12, 2018, 13:22, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugo\\_A.\\_Perego](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ugo_A._Perego).

today among Native Americans, not the least of which is the massive die-off of Native Americans, owing to European diseases post-contact. A critical scientific problem is the lack of an appropriate Book of Mormon “control” group against which Native American DNA can be tested. In other words, how will we know “Lehite” DNA if we actually find it?

*Analysis of correspondence:* It is tempting to simply dismiss this negative correspondence as having no evidentiary value either for or against the historicity of the Book of Mormon. At most it is specific: “No middle Eastern DNA markers have been found in Native Americans.” But that is not detailed or unusual, given the scientific issues noted above. Likelihood = 2.0.

Cumulative strength of these 12 negative correspondences is  $50^5 \times 10^7 = 3.13 \times 10^{15}$ .

## **A few ridiculous objections to the Book of Mormon and a rejoinder to Dr. Coe**

Near the end of Podcast #907, Dr. Dehlin invited Dr. Coe to unburden himself about anything that Coe thought should be in the Book of Mormon, but is not. Dr. Coe mentions four things: the absence of (1) books, (2) chocolate, (3) turkeys, and (4) jaguars. Since Dr. Coe does not hesitate to use the word *ridiculous* to characterize arguments for the Book of Mormon he finds extremely unconvincing, we do not hesitate to use the same word to characterize these particular objections. They are, in fact, ridiculous.

First of all, the Book of Mormon clearly refers to multiple books being present (see Appendix A, Correspondence 6.9). If Dr. Coe had read the Book of Mormon more than once and more recently than 45 years ago, he might have noticed that fact. As for chocolate, turkeys, and jaguars, the Book of Mormon does not claim to be a text on elite foods, poultry, or exotic wild animals. The Book of Mormon, from beginning to end, is meant to testify of Christ and bring all humankind to him.

Chapter 6 of 1 Nephi (verses 3–6) describes the intent and scope of the Book of Mormon. This is the intent by which the Book of Mormon should be judged (and not by the standards of academic curiosity). Verse 6 reads, “Wherefore, I shall give commandment unto my seed that they shall not occupy these plates with things which are not of worth unto the children of men.”

Knowledge of turkeys, jaguars, and consumption of chocolate among the ancient Mesoamericans is of no real worth. Knowing about Jesus Christ, about eternal life, about the resurrection, and the mercy that has been made available to us through Christ are topics of supernal worth.

If we are to take seriously Dr. Coe's objections to the lack of equal time given to subjects as chocolate, jaguars, and turkeys in the Book of Mormon, we have an objection for him about his own book. Bruce and Brian Dale are both engineers, which means we love applied mathematics. Dr. Coe does not mention the extensive use of the "golden section" or *phi* ratio in Maya architecture, although it is clearly present.<sup>44</sup> Why did Dr. Coe not mention this "golden section" in his book *The Maya*? Shall we disbelieve the rest of his book because of this omission?

No, that would be ridiculous. All books must limit their scope and have a focus. Every author/editor must decide what to include and what to leave out. Dr. Coe did so decide in *The Maya*. So did the editors and authors of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

## Appendix C

### Statistical Analysis of Correspondences between *Manuscript Found* and *The Maya*

The Oberlin College Archives provide this useful introduction to the Spaulding Manuscript (aka *Manuscript Found*).<sup>45</sup>

#### The Spaulding Manuscript in the Oberlin College Library

This library possesses a manuscript which apparently is in the handwriting of Solomon Spaulding, since it seems to agree with fragments of account books which I have seen, and, its genuineness is certified by a number of people who apparently examined it about the year 1839. It is not, however, the manuscript that was said by witnesses to resemble the Book of Mormon, since that manuscript was always spoken of as having been written in the style of the sacred scriptures, whereas this is a plain narrative containing accounts of the wars between the Kentucks and the Sciotos — Indian tribes ascribed to this country.

The manuscript which we have was apparently obtained from Spaulding's effects at West Amity, Pennsylvania, at some time after the publication of the Book of Mormon, and seems to have been found as a result of a search to find whatever remained of Spaulding's writings in order to throw light on the question of whether he was the author of

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44. Xensen, "Maya Architecture and the Golden Mean," *Buried Mirror: Latest Reflections*, May 20, 2007, <http://www.buriedmirror.com/latest/culture/architecture/maya-architecture-and-the-golden-mean/>.

45. A.S. Root, "The Spaulding Manuscript in the Oberlin College Library," May 12, 1927, <http://www2.oberlin.edu/archive/oresources/smanuscript/index.html>.

the Book of Mormon, or not. The manuscript which we have was copied under our supervision and a typewritten copy furnished to the Shepherd Book Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, and also to the Reorganized Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints, then located at Lamoni, Iowa. It was printed and sold by both branches of the Mormon Church, who gave it the title “The Manuscript Found” — a title which does not appear in any way on the manuscript, which simply had pencilled upon the papers in which it was wrapped, “Manuscript story, Conneaut Creek.”

It seems to have been taken from West Amity, Pennsylvania, to Painesville, Ohio, and there to have come into the possession of a Mr. Hulbert, owner of the “Painesville Telegraph,” in whose office had been printed the first book against Mormonism, in 1836. Apparently the manuscript, after being examined and found not to be a manuscript connected with the Book of Mormon, was laid aside and passed with the files of the office of the “Painesville Telegraph” when it came into the possession of Mr. Rice, a man who owned and edited at one time various anti-slavery papers in northern Ohio. When this Mr. Rice became an elderly man he removed to Honolulu to live with his daughter, a graduate of this institution, Mrs. Doctor Whitney. When President Fairchild visited Honolulu in 1885 he asked this old Mr. Rice if he did not have some anti-slavery literature which he could give to the Oberlin College Library for its anti-slavery collection. This set Mr. Rice to looking over his old papers, and among them this manuscript of Spaulding’s was found. It was given to President Fairchild and added to the Oberlin College Library.

It seems pretty clearly not to have been the manuscript from which the Book of Mormon was written, as it deals with scenes taking place in America among Indians, possibly of the Mound Builders period. Spaulding is known to have been interested in the Indians, particularly of that period, because of certain mounds which were in his home lot in Conneaut. The manuscript is thought by some to have a certain very general resemblance to the outline of the Book of Mormon, but is not at all written in phraseology resembling the phraseology of the Bible, which is the characteristic of the Book of Mormon. The theory of those who believe in Spaulding’s having written a manuscript which furnished the basis of the Book of Mormon, is that he wrote another manuscript in biblical phraseology, which he read to many of his Conneaut friends and thereby came to be known among the young people of the town as “And-it-came-to-pass” Spaulding. The theory of those who accept this explanation is that he subsequently took this manuscript written

in biblical phraseology to Pittsburg, where it fell into the hands of a Mr. Patterson, in whose office Sidney Rigdon worked, and that through Sidney Rigdon it came into the possession of Joseph Smith and was made the basis of the Book of Mormon. In regard to that question, our manuscript does not seem to throw very much light.

(From a letter written by Professor A. S. Root, May 12, 1927.)

## **Positive Correspondences between *Manuscript Found* and *The Maya***

### **1. Governed by kings**

*Coe's standard:* Among many such references: "Among the highland Maya there were real kings" (p. 236). "The K'iche' state was headed by a king, a king-elect and two 'captains'" (p. 226). "It is not unreasonable to see one of its [Calakmul's] kings, Yuknoom the Great, as their Charlemagne" (p. 276).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* References to kings are found all through this document; see for example pp. 17, 19, 32 and 43, among others.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, but by no means detailed or unusual. Likelihood = 0.5.

### **2. Dogs present and were eaten**

*Coe's standard:* "One such strain [of dog was] ... fattened on corn, and either eaten or sacrificed" (p. 231).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* pp. 24-26 refer to the sacrifice and eating of dogs.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, but also by no means detailed or unusual. Many Native American tribes also ate dogs. Likelihood = 0.5.

### **3. Dogs were sacrificed as a religious act**

*Coe's standard:* "Wild turkeys, deer, dogs ... were considered fit offerings for the Maya gods" (p. 244).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* See p. 25-26 describing a holocaust offering of black dogs, while white dogs were eaten.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, and seems unusual for the early 1800s, but it is not detailed in the case of *The Maya*. Likelihood = 0.1.

### **4. Ancestors emigrated from the west**

*Coe's standard:* "It was from the setting sun we came, from Tula, from beyond the sea" (p. 224).

*“Manuscript Found” Correspondence:* “Their tradition tells them they emigrated from the westward [from across the sea]” (p. 32).

*Analysis of correspondence:* We have previously (Correspondence 2.20 in Appendix A) given this correspondence a likelihood of 0.1, and so we use that value here also. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 5. Many cities present

*Coe’s standard:* To name just a few of the cities mentioned in *The Maya* we have Uxmal, Chichen Itza, Coba, Tulum, Acanceh, Ek’ Balam, Mayapan, Piedras Negras, Ceibal, Palenque, Naranjo, El Mirador, Bonampak, Uaxactun, Kaminaljuyu, Takalik Abaj, Tikal (p. 9), “the great Usumacinta, ... draining the northern highlands, ... twisting to the northwest past many a ruined Maya city” (pp. 16-17). “more advanced cultural traits, ... the construction of cities” (p. 26).

*“Manuscript Found” Correspondence:* See references to cities on pp. 33, 35, and 46, among others.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Same as Correspondence 1.5 in Appendix A. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 6. Wore beautiful feathers

*Coe’s standard:* “Hundreds of resplendent quetzal feathers fan out behind his back.” [peaking of a mural]. (p. 189nxvi).

*“Manuscript Found” Correspondence:* See pp. 56, 57, 96.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This correspondence is specific, but does not correspond in details, nor is it unusual. The Indians of Joseph’s time certainly wore feathers. *Manuscript Found* refers only to blue feathers, while *The Maya* refers to the wearing of multicolored quetzal feathers. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 7. Raised corn, beans and squashes

*Coe’s standard:* “In these maize fields ... secondary crops like beans and squashes ... are inter-planted” (p. 16).

*“Manuscript Found” Correspondence:* See p. 37.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The reference is specific but not detailed or unusual. These crops were staples of the Indian diet. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 8. Had domestic turkeys

*Coe’s standard:* “Both wild and domestic turkeys were known” (p. 231).

*“Manuscript Found” Correspondence:* p. 38.

*Likelihood analysis:* Wild turkeys and domestic turkeys were known in eastern North America from very early times. This is specific, but not at all unusual, nor are any significant details given. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 9. Used cotton

*Coe's standard:* "Cotton was widely grown" (p. 231).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* p. 38.

*Likelihood analysis:* Specific but no unusual details provided in either book, nor is either reference at all detailed. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 10. Wealthy people had decorated pottery

*Coe's standard:* "an elite class ... imported pottery ... to stock their tombs" (p. 103). "restored Thin Orange ware vessel in the form of a seated man" (p. 105n47).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* p. 39.

*Likelihood analysis:* Specific, but there are no details of the decorations in *Manuscript Found*. It would not have been a daring leap to surmise that wealthy people had luxury goods. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 11. Handed down both sacred and secular texts

*Coe's standard:* "The traditional annals of the peoples of Yucatan ... transcribed into Spanish letters ... apparently reach back as far as the beginning of the Postclassic era. ... The 'Books of Chilam Balam,' which derive their name from a Maya savant [are] said to have predicted the arrival of the Spaniards from the east" (p. 199).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* p. 52.

*Likelihood analysis:* Again, specific in both books, but there is little distinguishing detail in *Manuscript Found*. Also, this idea was not unusual. Western society had been handing down sacred and secular texts for many centuries. Likelihood = 0.5.

## 12. Took hostages of high rank

*Coe's standard:* "Sons were sent ... to Calakmul ... to serve as hostages securing their fathers' good behavior" (p. 95).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* p. 62.

*Likelihood analysis:* This is the same practice of royal sons being used as hostages. So it is specific and has corresponding detail in both books. But it is not unusual. Hostage taking was a well-known practice. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 13. Had taxes

*Coe's standard:* "The ruler took in tax" (p. 93).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* See p. 66.

*Likelihood analysis:* Well, this one ought to get a probability of 0.99999 or more, as it is highly specific but has no distinguishing details, and it is so far from unusual as to be commonplace. But to be conservative in the analysis

(that is, give *Manuscript Found* its greatest chance), we will not discard this evidence. Likelihood = 0.5.

#### 14. Hereditary chief priests

*Coe's standard:* "During the prosperity of Mayapan, a hereditary Chief Priest resided in that city" (p. 243).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* p. 66.

*Likelihood analysis:* This correspondence is similar to Correspondence 3.11 in Appendix A, to which we have assigned a likelihood = 0.1.

#### 15. Used slings and stones

*Coe's standard:* "the infantry, from which rained ... stones slung from slings" (p. 236).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* p. 72.

*Likelihood analysis:* This correspondence is similar to Correspondence 4.10 in Appendix A, to which we have assigned a likelihood of 0.02.

#### 16. Land supported millions of people

*Coe's standard:* "One view perceives as many as eight to ten million people in the lowlands. ... [Others] would go as low as two to three million" (p. 22). "bulk of the population ... [was] apparently in the millions" (p. 177).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* See p. 79.

*Likelihood analysis:* This correspondence is specific, and somewhat detailed. It is also highly unusual. As we did for Correspondence 6.1 in Appendix A, we assign a likelihood = 0.02.

#### 17. Cities fortified with deep trenches and wooden barriers

*Coe's standard:* "Becan ... was completely surrounded by massive defensive earthworks ... [consisting of] a ditch and inner rampart, 38 ft high, and would have been formidable ... if the rampart had been surmounted by a palisade" (p. 122). "A system of defensive walls ... topped by wooden palisades was constructed around, and within them [the Maya cities]" (p. 151).

*"Manuscript Found" Correspondence:* See p. 80.

*Likelihood analysis:* This correspondence is specific and detailed, but perhaps not entirely unusual. At least for wooden forts and palisades, these were well known in early frontier America. The correspondence does not have nearly the same level of detail as given in the Book of Mormon and summarized in correspondence 4.2. So it is specific and unusual, for a likelihood of 0.1.

#### 18. Prophets used a stone to see the future and discover hidden things

*Coe's standard:* "Two of the [Maya] houses were certainly devoted to village rituals. [One house had] a collection of crystals like those used by modern Maya diviners" (p. 107). "[One Maya community religious leader] ... is



seemingly imbued with far greater spiritual power: this is the *hmeen*, “he who does or understands things” — that is, the shaman. ... These specialists still play an important role in divination and prophecy, using their crystals to scry the future. ... These shamans also engage in divination, either by using their magic crystal” (pp. 296–97, emphasis added).

“*Manuscript Found*” Correspondence: See p. 107 for a quite detailed account of the use of such crystals.

*Likelihood analysis:* This correspondence is obviously specific and detailed. But however odd and unusual it may seem to us, it would definitely not have been unusual in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the use of such stones was an integral part of folk magic. Joseph Smith himself had a seer stone, as we have summarized in Correspondence 3.5 in Appendix A. So this correspondence has a likelihood of 0.1.

## 19. Instruments blown at the start of battle

*Coe’s standard:* “More formal battle opened with the dreadful din of drums, whistles, shell trumpets and war cries” (p. 236).

“*Manuscript Found*” Correspondence: See p. 126.

*Likelihood analysis:* This correspondence is specific, but it is not particularly detailed, nor is it unusual. Horns and trumpets were part of European warfare, and the *shofar* trumpets announced Joshua’s battle against Jericho. Likelihood = 0.5.

## Summary of the Positive Correspondences

There are 19 positive correspondences between *The Maya* and *Manuscript Found*. Ten of these have a likelihood of 0.5, seven likelihood of 0.1, and two a likelihood of 0.02. The product of these is therefore  $0.5^{10} \times 0.1^7 \times 0.02^2 = 3.91 \times 10^{-14}$ .

These are evidences that support the hypothesis that *Manuscript Found* is an authentic record set in ancient Mesoamerica. The product of these evidences is multiplied by the initial skeptical prior of one billion to one that *Manuscript Found* is *not* an authentic record set in ancient Mesoamerica. The result is  $3.91 \times 10^{-5}$ .

Taken by itself, this result would change our skeptical prior of a billion to one against the hypothesis to a positive posterior of more than a thousand to one that *Manuscript Found* is an authentic record of ancient Mesoamerica. However, we have not yet applied the evidence against the hypothesis, that is, the negative correspondences between *The Maya* and *Manuscript Found*. We do this now.

## Negative Correspondences between *Manuscript Found* and *The Maya*

### 1. *Manuscript Found* claims that the manuscript was found in an “earthen box.”

*Coe’s standard:* “A few probable coffers exist for books, including the recent find of a lidded limestone box” (p. 239).

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* The manuscript was found in an “earthen box.” See p. 12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is similar to Correspondence 6.20 in Appendix A, comparing the Book of Mormon to *The Maya*. We have assigned a likelihood of 0.02 to this fact as a positive correspondence. Thus lack of correspondence, or negative correspondence, in this case must be the reciprocal of the positive correspondence or likelihood  $1.0/0.02 = 50.0$ .

### 2. *Manuscript Found* claims that the manuscript was written on parchment.

*Coe’s standard:* “These [codices, books] are written on long strips of bark paper” (p. 239).

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* Parchment, see p. 12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* If the Reverend Solomon Spaulding, the author of *Manuscript Found*, had guessed correctly that the Maya wrote on bark paper, then that would be specific, detailed and unusual. But that is not the case, so the likelihood is = 50.0.

Hereafter we will just refer to Reverend Spaulding (also spelled “Spalding”) as “the author.”

### 3. *Manuscript Found* claims that the manuscript was written in Latin.

*Coe’s standard:* “At least 15,000 examples of Maya writing have survived” (p. 237). Authors’ note: there is no suggestion by Dr. Coe that the Maya ever wrote in Latin.

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* Latin, see p. 12.

*Analysis of correspondence:* If the author of *Manuscript Found* had guessed correctly that the Maya wrote in Latin, then that would be specific, detailed and unusual. But that is not the case, so the likelihood is = 50.0.

### 4. *Manuscript Found* claims that the men wore shoes, long stockings and waistcoats.

*Coe’s standard:* No carvings or murals of the Maya show them dressed as New England gentlemen. They were dressed otherwise. See, for example, pp. 188–92.

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* See p. 39.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Once again, if the author of *Manuscript Found* had guessed correctly that the Maya dressed as New England gentlemen, then that would be specific, detailed, and (very) unusual. But he did not guess correctly, so the likelihood is = 50.0.

### **5. *Manuscript Found* claims that the natives raised wheat.**

*Coe's standard:* There is no mention of wheat among the crops raised by the Maya.

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 37.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is a specific guess, but little detail is given. It is probably unusual. Wheat is one of the staple grains for humankind and has been for centuries. It would have been unusual if the author had correctly predicted that the natives did not grow wheat. Likelihood = 10.0.

### **6. *Manuscript Found* claims that the natives had horses and plowed with them.**

*Coe's standard:* According to Dr. Coe, there is no evidence that the Maya ever had horses, let alone that they plowed with them. The Maya apparently did not plow at all and did not use draft animals.

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 37.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Had this guess been correct, it would certainly have been specific, detailed and unusual. The Plains Indians had horses, and the author may have known about those horses, but the Indians did not plow with horses. Likelihood = 50.0.

### **7. *Manuscript Found* claims that the natives manufactured iron.**

*Coe's standard:* "But the European invaders brought with them more than their civil and religious order: they imposed a new economic order as well. Iron and steel tools replaced chipped or ground stone ones, and the Maya took readily to the Spaniards' axes, machetes, and billhooks, which in the lowlands enabled them to cope with the forest as they never had before" (p. 290). Dr. Coe states that there is no evidence for iron or steel in Book of Mormon times.

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 38.

*Analysis of correspondence:* As far as we know, none of the Native Americans of the early 1800s manufactured iron or lead. So if the author had guessed this correctly, it would have been specific, detailed and unusual. But he did not. Likelihood = 50.0.

### **8. *Manuscript Found* claims that the houses and public buildings exhibited no elegance or grandeur.**

*Coe's standard:* Since the Maya society was class-based (even exhibiting "castes," p. 225), their houses would have differed sharply in the degree of

elegance or grandeur. But their public buildings exhibited a great deal of elegance and grandeur. “Their upper facades and roof-combs were beautifully ornamented with figures in stucco and stone. Yaxchilan is famous for its many stone lintels, carved in relief with scenes of conquest and ceremonial life” (p. 146). “In the rear of [the miniature temple] stands a magnificent low relief tablet carved with long hieroglyphic texts” (p. 152). See photographs and drawings of the Temple of Inscriptions (pp. 158–59). “Palace at Xpuhil: ... The three towers are completely solid and served no other function than decoration” (p. 163n97).

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* See p. 39.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Had the author of *Manuscript Found* guessed correctly about lack of elegance in public and private buildings, that would have been specific, detailed, and unusual, since most societies (and rulers) that could afford to have always gone in for a lot of elegance and grandeur. But he guessed incorrectly. Likelihood = 50.0.

### **9. *Manuscript Found* claims that the houses were one story high, framed and covered with clapboards or shingles.**

*Coe’s standard:* This is completely unlike actual Maya dwellings.

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* See p. 39.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Had New England-style frame houses with clapboards and shingles ever been found among the Maya, that would have been specific, detailed, and extremely unusual. But once again, the author of *Manuscript Found* guessed wrong. So consequently the likelihood = 50.0.

### **10. *Manuscript Found* claims that the “whole catalog of ornamental trumpery is neglected.”**

*Coe’s standard:* In contrast, the Maya really went in for the “whole catalog of ornamental trumpery.” They were devoted to ornamentation in dress and architecture. The grandeur of Maya architecture has already been discussed in Correspondence #8 above. There are many examples of ornamentation in dress. “Santa Rita also yielded an extraordinary set of ear ornaments in gold and turquoise” (p. 219), ... “a splendid pair of ground obsidian [earspools]” (pp. 276–77). Also see the various representations of elaborate Maya dress in the figures between pp. 185–92.

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* See p. 40.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Once again, had the author of *Manuscript Found* guessed correctly about lack of personal ornamentation and fancy dress, that would have been specific, detailed, and unusual, since rich people have usually gone in for expensive and fancy dress. But he guessed incorrectly. Likelihood = 50.0.

**11. *Manuscript Found* claims that the characters (in their writing system) represent words.**

*Coe's standard:* "The Maya were writing in a mixed, logophonetic system in which phonetic and semantic elements were combined, ... but they also had a fairly complete syllabary" (p. 269).

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 42. "Characters represent words."

*Analysis of correspondence:* The author of *Manuscript Found* incorrectly guessed that the writing system was not at least partly phonetic and syllabic. Had he correctly guessed that a mixed logophonetic system was used instead, that would have been specific, detailed, and probably unusual. Likelihood = 50.0.

**12. *Manuscript Found* states how writing was to be read on a page.**

*Coe's standard:* "Maya writing was to be read in double columns from left to right, and top to bottom" (p. 265).

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 42. The natives "wrote from top to bottom, one character below the preceding one, right to left in columns."

*Analysis of correspondence:* The writer of *Manuscript Found* guessed wrong in this specific, detailed, and unusual point. Had he guessed correctly, we would have assigned this correspondence a likelihood of 0.02. Since he did not guess correctly, the evidence is counted against the hypothesis for a likelihood of 50.0.

**13. *Manuscript Found* claims that the natives worshipped one supreme omnipotent being.**

*Coe's standard:* Among the Maya there were many, many gods.

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 46.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is specific and detailed, but perhaps not unusual. The author of *Manuscript Found* was writing in early 19<sup>th</sup> century America, where the idea of monotheism was deeply embedded. Since the writer guessed wrong for one of the three criteria, the likelihood would be  $1/0.1 = 10.0$ .

**14. *Manuscript Found* claims that the natives used shovels and wheelbarrows.**

*Coe's standard:* There is no mention of these earth-moving implements among the Maya or other Mesoamerican Indians, nor is there mention of wheeled tools like a wheelbarrow.

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 59.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Had the author of *Manuscript Found* guessed correctly about the existence of these implements and the wheel in ancient America, that would certainly have been specific, detailed, and unusual. But he did not. So the likelihood = 50.0.

### **15. *Manuscript Found* claims that the natives coined money and limited its supply.**

*Coe's standard:* There is no mention of coins in *The Maya*, and Dr. Coe specifically emphasizes this point in the podcasts with Dr. Dehlin: no coins among the Maya or other Mesoamerican Indians.

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 66.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Since no Native Americans were known to use coins, a correct guess on the part of the author of *Manuscript Found* would probably have been specific, detailed, and unusual. But he did not guess correctly. Likelihood = 50.0.

### **16. *Manuscript Found* claims that there were no wars between neighboring empires for almost 500 years.**

*Coe's standard:* "The Maya were obsessed with war" (p. 236). Coe's book is full of descriptions of war and conquest among the Maya. A bigger difference between the claims of *Manuscript Found* and the actual situation is hard to imagine.

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 70.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Human history is one long catalog of violence and men reigning with blood and horror on the earth. The Maya certainly did their part to fill out this dismal catalog of human cruelty. Had the author of *Manuscript Found* been correct in this amazing claim, it would certainly have been specific, detailed, and unusual. Alas, he was wrong. Likelihood = 50.0.

### **17. *Manuscript Found* claims that adulterers were punished by throwing rotten eggs at them.**

*Coe's standard:* "Adultery was punished by death" (p. 234).

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 77.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The practice of throwing rotten eggs at performers dates to medieval times in England; only later did the practice migrate to America. If it were practiced among ancient American Indians as a punishment for adultery, that would certainly be specific, detailed, and unusual. But that is not what was done. Likelihood = 50.0.

**18. *Manuscript Found* claims that there was a “happy equality” among people and “great similarity” in their manner of living.**

*Coe's standard:* This was very far from being the case among the Maya, where there was great inequality. See pp. 93, 95, 225 among others.

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* See p. 77.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Such periods of equality among people have been very rare. Had the author of *Manuscript Found* been correct in this guess, it would have been specific, detailed, and very unusual. But it was not so. Likelihood = 50.0.

**19. *Manuscript Found* claims that “governments were not infested with a thirst for conquest.”**

*Coe's standard:* Dr. Coe shows over and over again that the Maya kingdoms were always busy making or preparing for war. “The Maya were obsessed with war” (p. 236). War and conquest were their way of life for centuries.

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* See p. 78.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Once again, the author of *Manuscript Found* simply guessed wrongly. The correspondence is detailed and specific. Since early America lived in the shadow of the British Empire, built on conquest, and centuries of conquest in Europe, this would have been highly unusual, if true. But it was not. Likelihood = 50.0.

**20. *Manuscript Found* claims that political institutions among the natives guarded life and property against oppressing injustice and tyranny.**

*Coe's standard:* There is no mention and no evidence of such nice American liberties in *The Maya*. As mentioned, it was a strictly hierarchal society with castes and definite ruling classes (pp. 93, 95, 231). For example, slavery, the epitome of oppression and tyranny, was widely practiced in ancient Mesoamerica. (See pp. 19 and 225.) “Other valuable Yucatan exports were honey, cotton mantles and slaves” (p. 232).

*Negative correspondence from “Manuscript Found”:* See p. 78.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Human beings have, much more often than not, oppressed, exploited, robbed and enslaved each other. So a society in which political institutions guarded against such practices would have been quite rare. No such society is recorded by Dr. Coe in *The Maya*. If true, this correspondence would have been specific, detailed, and unusual. But it was not so. Likelihood = 50.0.

## 21. *Manuscript Found* claims that there were no political intermarriages among neighboring kingdoms.

*Coe's standard:* (Speaking of political intrigues among rivals), "when Bird Jaguar IV, ruler of Yaxchilan, Guatemala, married Lady Mut Bahlam of Hixwitz, there must have been rejoicing for some and gnashing of teeth for others" (p. 97).

*Negative correspondence from "Manuscript Found":* See p. 81.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is a specific and sufficiently detailed correspondence. Also, if the author of *Manuscript Found* had guessed correctly, it would have been unusual. Political marriages were well known in Europe and Great Britain. So if the claim were supported by evidence from *The Maya*, it would have earned likelihood of 0.02. But the claim was not supported. Likelihood = 50.0.

## Summary of the Negative Correspondences

There are 21 negative correspondences between *The Maya* and *Manuscript Found*. Reverend Spaulding was a bold and uninhibited guesser. However, he guessed incorrectly much more often than he guessed correctly. Nineteen of these negative correspondences have a likelihood of 50 and two have a likelihood of 10. The product of these is therefore  $50^{19} \times 10^2 = 1.91 \times 10^{34}$ .

This number must then be multiplied by  $3.91 \times 10^{-5}$ , which is product of the skeptical prior of a billion to one against the hypothesis and the product of all the likelihoods of the positive correspondences.

**The final result is  $7.47 \times 10^{29}$ , or roughly a thousand billion, billion, billion against the hypothesis that *Manuscript Found* describes the same population of facts as *The Maya*.**

Thus the end result of weighing both the positive and negative correspondences is that we arrive at a much, much stronger posterior conclusion against *Manuscript Found*. This book is undoubtedly a work of fiction. If Joseph Smith had relied on *Manuscript Found* for the factual details of the Book of Mormon, as some have suggested, he would have included many grossly wrong details about ancient Mesoamerican Indians.

But Joseph Smith did not. Reverend Spaulding guessed his details, and got some right. He got many, many more wrong. For Joseph Smith, however, his correct "guesses" are much, much more numerous and more detailed and powerful than are his incorrect "guesses." Joseph Smith was truly the world's greatest guesser.



## Appendix D

### Statistical Analysis of Correspondences between *View of the Hebrews* and *The Maya*

*View of the Hebrews* was published in 1823 by the Reverend Ethan Smith, a Congregationalist minister. It is not deliberate fiction but it does advocate a particular opinion, namely that the American Indians are descended from the lost Ten Tribes. The information cited in the book is nearly always second-, third- and even fourth-hand, with very little in the way of written, documented sources, as modern scholarship might require.

Also, *View of the Hebrews* makes an important caveat about its own claims, namely, “It is not pretended that all the savages (i.e., the American Indians) are in the practice of all these traditions. They are not. But it is contended that the whole of these things have been found among their different tribes in our continent, within a hundred years” (p. 107).

Since *View of the Hebrews* was published before the Book of Mormon, an important outcome for our article to consider this book was to document in some detail what Joseph Smith might have known about the ancient Mesoamericans. Every specific fact claim in *View of the Hebrews* that corresponded to a point of evidence mentioned in *The Maya* was not classified as “unusual” in our comparison of *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon. We did this because Joseph might have known about that fact from reading *View of the Hebrews*, and therefore it would be specific and detailed without being unusual.

Since *View of the Hebrews* also contains many claims that run contrary to facts in *The Maya*, this begs the question “Why did Joseph Smith not also include those erroneous fact claims from *View of the Hebrews* in the Book of Mormon?” Because we are attempting to be very rigorous in our analysis of the Book of Mormon, we do not account for the additional lack of probability involved with Joseph Smith choosing only correct fact claims from *View of the Hebrews* and not the incorrect ones.

The effect of ruling out these positive correspondences between *The Maya* and *View of the Hebrews* was to reduce the Bayesian significance of these particular correspondences and thus reduce their evidentiary weight in favor of the Book of Mormon by a factor of 5<sup>9</sup>, or about two million. There were nine such correspondences, including temples, a great flood, ancestors coming from the west, roads, watchtowers, walled towns, many cities, volcanoes, and covenants.

## Positive Correspondences between *View of the Hebrews* and *The Maya*

### 1. Temples among the Indians

*Coe's standard:* See pp. 26, 55, 59, 82, 89, among others. Temples were centrally important ritual centers among the Maya.

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* pp. 31, 41, 50, 77 and 107 mentions temples but associate American Indian temples with the Hebrew Holy of Holies and observing the Law of Moses

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, but the details do not correspond between the two books; simply having a temple is probably not unusual. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 2. Knowledge of an ancient flood among the Indians

*Coe's standard:* See pp. 41 and 249. "[Wicked humankind was] annihilated, as black rains fell and a great flood swept the earth."

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* pp. 31, 47 and 107. No details are provided about the flood in this book.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific, but the details do not match up. If the details did match up, then the correspondence would qualify as specific, detailed, and unusual, but it does not. It is only specific. In the Book of Mormon and *The Maya* the flood is sent to destroy the wicked, a key detail. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 3. Possible migration of ancestors of the Indians through the Bering Strait

*Coe's standard:* "One theory holds [that this hemisphere was populated by Siberian peoples crossing Beringia]. ... The presence or absence of the Bering Strait is thus not necessarily relevant. ... The very first Americans may well have taken a maritime route" (p. 41).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* pp. 32, 47, 63, 65, 84, 86. The potential value of this correspondence is diluted by the fact that the time of the migration of the Lost Tribes to this continent through the Bering Strait as proposed in the book does not accord with the land bridge disappearing about 10,000 years ago.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific, but not detailed or unusual to a Bible-reading society. Likelihood = 0.5.

### 4. Indians say their ancestors came from the west

*Coe's standard:* "From the setting sun we came, from Tula, from beyond the sea" (p. 224).

*“View of the Hebrews” correspondence:* See pp. 62, 65. This book does not say that the ancestors came from beyond the sea, but the Book of Mormon does. So *View of the Hebrews* lacks this detail that is found in both *The Maya* and the Book of Mormon.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific and perhaps unusual, but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

## 5. Cotton and corn cultivated

*Coe’s standard:* There are many references to corn throughout Coe’s book. This particular quote is important. “[Corn] is so fundamental today that its cultivation and consumption define what it means to be Maya” (p. 242).

*“View of the Hebrews” correspondence:* p. 74. The Toltecs cultivated cotton and corn. And of course the North American Indians also had corn, as mentioned by Reverend Smith.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific but not detailed nor unusual. Likelihood = 0.5. In contrast, the Book of Mormon puts corn first among the grains, which it was not for the Europeans, but certainly was for the Native Americans, as reflected in the quote from Dr. Coe’s book.

## 6. Roads were laid out

*Coe’s standard:* “El Mirador, some 8 miles northwest of Nakbe, and connected to it by a causeway which crosses the intervening bajos” (p. 85). “[At Tikal], ... building complexes interconnected by causeways [called] “white roads.” (p. 126) “road systems running along the base of those hills, connecting the far reaches of the Palenque kingdom” (p. 151). See also pp. 163 and 182.

*“View of the Hebrews” correspondence:* p. 74. Toltecs laid out roads.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is specific and unusual for its time. Most people in the early 1800s would probably not have thought the Indians to be road builders. Likelihood = 0.1. Therefore, in the Book of Mormon we will not classify the presence of roads as unusual, since *View of the Hebrews* refers to roads (but only once and without any detail).

## 7. Watchtowers, forts and monuments

*Coe’s standard:* “The tower ... commands a wide view and could also have served as a watchtower” (p. 151). Dr. Coe does not use the word *fort* to describe the Maya defensive structures. Forts are generally thought of as outposts in hostile terrain, and that is not the sense in which the Maya “fortified” their cities.

*“View of the Hebrews” correspondence:* p. 77. The Indians had forts, watchtowers and monuments. No details are given in this book on the watchtowers or the monuments, but we limit the Book of Mormon correspondence for watchtowers to 0.1, since *View of the Hebrews* mentions it, again only once and with no details.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Likelihood = 0.1. Specific and unusual.

## 8. Walled towns with ditches surrounding them

*Coe's standard:* "when city walls are found, as at Dos Pilas, Ek' Balan and Uxmal" (p. 126). "the triple defensive wall that surrounds [Ek' Balam]" (p. 194). "Mayapan ... completely surrounded by a defensive wall" (p. 216).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See pp. 77 and 78. Some details provided about the size and extent of the walls.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This seems specific, detailed, and unusual. Most Americans of the early 1800s probably did not think of the Indians living within cities surrounded by massive walls. Likelihood = 0.02. Since walled towns are mentioned in this book, we do not claim that the Book of Mormon references to walled towns are unusual.

## 9. Had ornamental objects of copper

*Coe's standard:* "The many copper bells and other objects from (the Sacred Cenote) were of Mexican workmanship" (p. 212).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* "Pieces of copper have been found, ... [one] in the form of a cup." (p. 78). "[A mound in Ohio contained] ornaments of copper, ... medals of copper" (p. 79). "Many ornaments of silver and copper were found" (p. 80).

*Analysis of correspondence:* Most Americans of the early 1800s probably did not think of the Indians as making copper ornaments and other objects. So this is specific, detailed and probably unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

## 10. Many cities built

*Coe's standard:* To name just a few of the cities mentioned in The Maya we have Uxmal, Chichen Itza, Coba, Tulum, Acanceh, Ek' Balam, Mayapan, Piedras Negras, Ceibal, Palenque, Naranjo, El Mirador, Bonampak, Uaxactun, Kaminaljuyu, Takalik Abaj, Tikal (p. 9) "the great Usumacinta ... draining the northern highlands, ... twisting to the northwest past many a ruined Maya city" (pp. 16–17). "more advanced cultural traits, ... the construction of cities" (p. 26).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 80. Mound builder culture was said to have built 5,000 cities in the eastern U.S. Reverend Smith also refers to Mesoamerican Indian cities.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific and detailed as the locations of several of these Native American cities were given. It would have probably been unusual in 1823 for Americans to think of the Native Americans as having built thousands of cities. Specific, detailed and unusual. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 11. Volcanoes noted in Central and South America

*Coe's standard:* "The Maya highlands are dominated ... by a great backbone of both extinct and active volcanoes" (p. 14). "the nearby Loma Caldera volcano [destroyed the village of Ceren" (p. 107).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 86. Presence of volcanoes noted in South America. No details are given about what an eruption and associated earthquakes are like from the point of view of the person experiencing them.

*Analysis of correspondence:* This reference to volcanoes is specific, but not detailed. The existence of volcanoes in Central and South America was probably not widely known in the early American 1800s. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 12. Covenants between God and man

*Coe's standard:* "Ultimately, humans were obligated to abide by covenants. A covenant ... is a binding contract that explains how one should behave. Gods were usually involved, as in the case of maize production."

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 106. No details are given of these covenants in this book, for example, of the covenant of baptism described in the Book of Mormon.

*Analysis of correspondence:* The correspondence is specific but not detailed in Reverend Smith's book. It would have been unusual for Americans to think of "savages" entering into covenants with God. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 13. Offering of first ripe fruits

*Coe's standard:* "The nature gods must be asked for favors, and duly repaid through ... the first fruits of the harvest" (p. 297).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 106. "the general Indian tradition of offering their first ripe fruits."

*Analysis of correspondence:* This is specific, but neither book gives details. Again, Indian "savages," following a Hebrew tradition, would probably have been regarded as unusual by the white population in the early 1800s. Specific, unusual, but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### 14. "Mexicans" (Mesoamerican Indians) were very skilled in carving wood and stone.

*Coe's standard:* Coe's book is full of examples of stone carving. "No fewer than 63 stelae were carved and erected in Early and Late Classic times" (p. 132). "The finest May wood carving known, this seated figure from Tabasco, Mexico" (pp. 94-95).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* p. 75. "The Mexicans have preserved a particular relish for painting, and for the art of carving in wood or stone." "We are astonished at what they are able to execute with a bad knife on the hardest wood."

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific, detailed, and unusual to Americans in the early 1800s. Likelihood = 0.02.

### 15. Resemblance of American pyramids to Egyptian pyramids

*Coe's standard:* "Thus it seems that the Temple of the Inscriptions was a funerary monument with exactly the same primary function as the Egyptian pyramids" (p. 157).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 82. This citation does not connect the funerary aspect of at least some of the Maya temples and the Egyptian ones.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Specific and unusual for the early 1800s, but not detailed. Likelihood = 0.1.

### Summary of the Positive Correspondences

There are 15 positive correspondences between *The Maya* and *View of the Hebrews*. Four of these have a likelihood of 0.5, seven a likelihood of 0.1, and four a likelihood of 0.02. The product of these is therefore  $0.5^4 \times 0.1^7 \times 0.02^4 = 1.00 \times 10^{-15}$ .

These are evidence that supports the hypothesis that *View of the Hebrews* is an authentic record set in ancient Mesoamerica. However, we have not yet applied the evidence against the hypothesis, that is, the negative correspondences between *The Maya* and *View of the Hebrews*. To do so, we must consider and weigh these negative correspondences.

### Negative Correspondences between *View of the Hebrews* and *The Maya*

These are correspondences or pieces of evidence in favor of the prior hypothesis, that is, in favor of the hypothesis that the world of the ancient American Indians as given in *The Maya* has nothing to do with the world of the ancient American Indians as given in *View of the Hebrews*. Thus the evidence is weighted as 2 (Bayesian "supportive"), 10 (Bayesian "positive"), and 50 (Bayesian "strong").

#### 1. The ancestors of the American Indians observed the Law of Moses

*Coe's standard:* Apart from the offering of first fruits, which was accounted for in the summary of Positive Correspondences above, we do not see anything in the summary of religious practices among the Maya that can reasonably be construed as belonging to the Law of Moses.

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* p. 107: succession of high priests, induction by purification and anointing, yearly atonement, three annual feasts, bones of sacrifice may not be broken, places of refuge, etc.

*Analysis of correspondence:* If the Maya or their neighbors had practiced the Law of Moses, that would indeed have been specific, detailed, and unusual, for a likelihood of 0.02. In fact, there is no evidence that they did so; thus the likelihood = 50.0.

## **2. Language of the native Americans appears to have been Hebrew**

*Coe's standard:* If the language spoken among the Maya was Hebrew, that fact has certainly escaped the notice of many hundreds of scholars over decades.

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* pp. 36, 107.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Once again, had this claim of *View of the Hebrews* been confirmed by *The Maya*, it would have been specific, detailed, and unusual. But it has not been confirmed. Again, likelihood = 50.0.

## **3. Indians sometimes practiced circumcision as a religious act**

*Coe's standard:* See these references among others' emphasis on self-sacrifice by blood drawn from ... penis" (p. 13). "One of the four Hunahpus perforates his penis before an offering" (pp. 88-89).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* p. 40. The American Indians at some times have practiced circumcision.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Penis perforation was practiced by royal or noble adults among the Maya as an offering to their gods. Among the Hebrews, circumcision was practiced on infants of all social ranks as the sign of a covenant. The two practices are not the same. Were they the same, or if they strongly resembled each other, that would qualify as specific, detailed, and unusual. But they were not, so likelihood = 50.0.

## **4. They have acknowledged one, and only one God**

*Coe's standard:* The Maya were almost unbelievably pantheistic. See pp. 157, 160, 166, 168, 234.

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* pp. 64, 65.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Polytheism and pantheism are widespread in human history, and so is monotheism, so this cannot be unusual. But it would be specific and detailed if it were observed among both the Maya and the North American Indians. However, that is not so. Likelihood = 10.0.

## **5. The Indians have a tribe corresponding to the tribe of Levi**

*Coe's standard:* The Levites were a landless tribe, with priestly duties, supported by tithes from the other tribes. There is no mention in Coe's book of such a Maya tribe or people.

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See pp. 77 and 78. Some details provided.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Once again, this would have been specific, detailed and unusual, had it been observed among the Maya. But it has not been observed. Likelihood = 50.0.

## 6. Indians had a theocracy

*Coe's standard:* "A hereditary Chief Priest [resided in Mayapan], but in no source do we find his authority or that of the priests superseding civil authority" (p. 243).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 60. No details at all are given about the supposed Indian theocracy.

*Analysis of correspondence:* There is no mention in *The Maya* of rule by priests. This prediction is specific, but not unusual among a Bible-reading people who might be aware of the Old Testament pattern of rule by religious authorities during part of Israelite history. It is also not detailed in the case of Reverend Smith's book. Likelihood = 2.0.

## 7. Indians used a lunar calendar and had no name for a year

*Coe's standard:* The Maya kept their calendars by day, month, and year. They kept multiple calendars. "The Maya Long Count ... is an absolute, day-to-day calendar which has run like some great clock from a point in the mythical past" (p. 25). "How the 260 day calendar even came into being is an enigma. ... Meshing with the 260-day count is a 'Vague Year' or *Ha'b* of 365 days. ... Within the *Ha'b*, there were 18 named 'months' of 20 days each" (p. 64).

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 61. "They count time after the manner of the Hebrews. They divide the year into spring, summer, autumn and winter. They number their year from any one of those four periods, for they have no name for a year ... and count the year by lunar months."

*Analysis of correspondence:* This calendaring system is specific, detailed, and unusual (to Americans in the early 1800s) for both books, but the calendaring systems are not in agreement. Likelihood = 50.0.

## 8. Indians had no historical records

*Coe's standard:* *The Maya* is full of all kinds of historical records that were kept by the Maya. For just a few examples, see pp. 177, 226 and 274.

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 77. "total absence of all historical records."

*Analysis of correspondence:* If Reverend Smith's book had noted the extent of historical records present among North American tribes that was present among the Maya, it would have been a specific, detailed, and unusual correspondence. But it was not so. Thus the likelihood = 50.0.



## 9. Indians called on the name of Jehovah

*Coe's standard:* The Maya gods have many different names. None of them is Jehovah or anything like that name.

*"View of the Hebrews" correspondence:* See p. 107.

*Analysis of correspondence:* Had the Maya used this name as one of the names of their gods, it would certainly have been specific, detailed, and unusual. But there is no evidence that they did use this name. Thus the likelihood = 50.0.

### **Summary of the Negative Correspondences**

There are nine negative correspondences between *The Maya* and *View of the Hebrews*. Seven of these have a likelihood of 50, one has a likelihood of 10, and one has a likelihood of 2. The product of these is therefore  $50^7 \times 10^1 \times 2^1 = 1.56 \times 10^{13}$ .

There is evidence against the hypothesis that *View of the Hebrews* is an authentic record set in ancient Mesoamerica. We multiply this number by the product of the positive correspondences, which is  $1.00 \times 10^{-15}$ , to obtain 0.0156. This value is then multiplied by the skeptical prior of a billion to one to obtain about 15.6 million to one, or 15,600,000 to one, posterior odds.

Thus following the analysis, we have no reason to change our previous skeptical prior. We do not have any reason to believe that *View of the Hebrews* accurately reflects the world of ancient Mesoamerica as set forth in *The Maya*.



# JOSEPH KNEW FIRST: MOSES, THE EGYPTIAN SON

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Nathan J. Arp

**Abstract:** *After about 1500 years of slumber, ancient Egyptian was brought back to life in the early 19th century, when scholars deciphered hieroglyphs. This revolutionary success opened the door to a reevaluation of history from the viewpoint of ancient Egypt. In the wake of this new knowledge, the first scholar posited the idea in 1849 that the name of Moses stemmed from the Egyptian word for child. Subsequently, this idea was refined, and currently the majority of scholars believe Moses's name comes from the Egyptian verb "to beget," which is also the root for the Egyptian word for child, or in the case of a male child, a "son." Before this discovery and certainly before a scholarly consensus formed on the Egyptian etymology of the name of Moses, Joseph Smith restored a prophecy from the patriarch Joseph that played upon the name of Moses and its yet to be discovered Egyptian meaning of "son." This article explores the implications of this overt Egyptian pun and its role as a key thematic element in the restored narratives in the Book of Moses.*

In 1849, shortly after the decryption of hieroglyphs, Richard Lepsius published the first known theory that the name of Moses, the famed Hebrew deliverer, might have originated from the Egyptian word for child.<sup>1</sup> This theory is now the prevailing theory for the etymology of the name *Moses*. Even before the academic community posited this idea, however, a pun on this Egyptian etymology for Moses appeared in Joseph Smith's restored translation of Genesis 50. In 1832, Smith dictated a prophecy about Moses from the patriarch Joseph that

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1. Richard Lepsius, *Die Chronologie Der Aegypter* (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849), 325-26n5, [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_SHuGScJy2zsC/page/n353](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_SHuGScJy2zsC/page/n353). Here, Lepsius notes that the name *Moses* corresponded to the word for *child*.

contained a wordplay on Moses's name and its Egyptian etymology. Smith also restored an extra-biblical account of Moses's life that further plays on this hypothesized Egyptian etymology for Moses's name. Taken together, these plays on Moses's Egyptian name, which predate the academic community's discovery of this possibility, provide circumstantial evidence of the authenticity of the texts Joseph restored.

This paper reviews the account of Moses's naming in Exodus chapter 2 from a literary perspective informed by the Egyptian etymology of child or son for the name *Moses*, before discussing Smith's restored Moses-related texts in the context of the rediscovery of Moses's Egyptian etiology. Finally, this paper presents a discussion of this etiology as a key element to the restored dialogue between God and Moses and Moses's confrontation with Satan, which presents Moses as a type of Christ by virtue of his being a son of God.

### Naming Moses

The Bible seems intended by its mostly anonymous authors to reward a close reading with a complex array of literary devices, which evinces the artistry of its narrative.<sup>2</sup> The Bible's palette of poetics includes puns upon the names of its *personae dramatis*. These puns are not merely ornamental but are designed to contribute to the substance of the dramatic tapestry that is the Bible's conglomerate narrative. As with more than 100 other names in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>3</sup> Moses's narrative begins with a pun meant to explain his name. His name and the event of his naming orient the march of the narrative of the Hebrew exodus.

The great honors bestowed upon the children of Israel through the miracles wrought through Joseph come to an end when a new pharaoh, one who does not know Joseph, takes the throne. According to Exodus, this new pharaoh is afraid of the increasing Israelite population and ultimately decides to put to death the male infants born to Hebrew families. An anonymous Levite couple have an unnamed son they hide first at home and then in the river within the reeds. In a strikingly ironic twist, this baby is found, identified as a Hebrew child, and saved by the

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2. The overall literary approach used in this paper is indebted to Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Name Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Israel: Bar Ilan University, 1991); Herbert Marks, "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 1 (Spring, 1995); and Matthew L. Bowen, "What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?" *Insights* 25, no. 2 (2005).

3. Andrew F. Key, "The Giving of Proper Names," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83, no. 1 (March 1964): 55-59.

daughter of the same pharaoh who decreed this baby's demise. The older unnamed sister of this infant suggests to the unnamed Egyptian princess that she could find a Hebrew midwife for the child. The baby is nursed and returned to the daughter of Pharaoh. Finally, a name, the first one in this particular part of the narrative, is given to the child:

And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water. (Exodus 2:10)

The conspicuous absence of any other names in this part of the narrative signals that the name of Moses is significant. According to James Hoffmeier, "There is widespread agreement that at the root of the name of the great Hebrew leader is the Egyptian word *msi*, which was a very common element in theophoric names throughout the New Kingdom (e.g., Amenmose, Thutmose, Ahmose, Ptahmose, Ramose, Ramesses)" and derives from the Egyptian verb *to give birth*.<sup>4</sup>

Matthew Bowen also makes reference to this derivation, noting that the Hebrew and Egyptian etymologies come together in the idea of pulling from water — whether that be amniotic water or baptismal water. He indicates that Moses is

a name which incidentally connotes "begotten [of deity]" or "[the deity is] born" (< Egyptian *ms[i]* "beget") and "drawer" or "puller" (Hebrews *Mōšeh*, is pointed as a pseudo-active participle of *\*mšh/mšy*, Exodus 2:10), but also baptism and being "born again."<sup>5</sup>

Although the name of Moses is "almost certainly Egyptian"<sup>6</sup> the Biblical narrators provide a conspicuous Hebrew pun between the name of Moses,

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4. James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: the Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 140.

5. Matthew L. Bowen, "Most Desirable Above All Things: Onomastic Play on Mary and Mormon in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015): 40-41, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/most-desirable-above-all-things-onomastic-play-on-mary-and-mormon-in-the-book-of-mormon/>.

6. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 150. Not everyone agrees that Moses's name is of Egyptian origin, for example, Yoshiyuki Muchiki argued against an Egyptian origin to the name *Moses* in *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 216-17.

*Moshe* in Hebrew, and the rare<sup>7</sup> Hebrew verb *marshah*, to draw out. Moshe Garsiel explains that even names like Moses, which “are not Hebrew names,” are still “dealt with as if they were” by the Biblical narrators.<sup>8</sup> According to Garsiel, these etymological explanations for Biblical names, which he calls “Midrashic name derivations,”<sup>9</sup> “function as literary devices and are designed to enrich the literary unit.”<sup>10</sup> They are not meant to be linguistically accurate; in fact, in the hands of the imaginative Biblical narrators, these plays on etymology could include “a deliberate deviation from the linguistic rules and norms of the time.”<sup>11</sup> Herbert Marks argues that in the case of Moses, the play on Moses’s name “was a complex literary invention” that featured a “double etymology.”<sup>12</sup> A double etymology in two different languages<sup>13</sup> allowed the creative narrator to uniquely emphasize Moses’s “double identity”, “one public, one disguised.”<sup>14</sup>

Although for some scholars the existence of two puns on Moses’s name presents an opportunity to apply methodologies of “Higher Criticism”<sup>15</sup> in order to identify different layers of source material that make up this account, this paper applies a literary approach to suggest what the extant material could mean as a whole. Instead of suggesting that the Hebrew pun is a later addition by a narrator who did not recognize the older Egyptian pun already present,<sup>16</sup> this paper proposes

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7. This verb appears only three times in the Bible. George V. Wigram, *The Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 768.

8. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 18.

9. Ibid., 19-22. Garsiel provides a brief explanation of the term *Midrashic name derivations*.

10. Ibid, 18.

11. Ibid, 18-19.

12. Marks, “Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology,” 30.

13. This bilingual pun in the naming of Moses would not be the only such example in the Bible. Gary A. Rendsburg, “Bilingual Wordplay in the Bible,” *Vetus Testamentum XXXVIII*, no. 3 (1988): 354-57.

14. Marks, “Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology,” 30.

15. Richard Elliott Friedman, a contemporary proponent of Higher Criticism, defined this hypothesis as the idea that “there were four separate, internally consistent documents” that made up the first five books originally attributed to Moses. “This came to be known as the Documentary Hypothesis ... also called ‘Higher Criticism.’” See *Who Wrote the Bible* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1987), 60.

16. I don’t argue against the value of this type of research; I just don’t apply it in this paper. Yair Zakovitch presents a convincing argument for favoring an earlier Egyptian naming of Moses in his “Explicit and Implicit Name-Derivations,” *Harvard Archeological Review* 4 (1980): 172-73. [https://kb.osu.edu/bitstream/handle/1811/58614/HAR\\_v4\\_167.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://kb.osu.edu/bitstream/handle/1811/58614/HAR_v4_167.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

the possibility that a creative Biblical narrator could have intended to insert both puns. This intention would explain the lack of any other names in the Moses birth story as a signal to the reader to look more closely at the name of Moses in order to aid the discovery of the more subtle Egyptian wordplay<sup>17</sup> on the name *Moses*, which can be obscured by the more obvious Hebrew pun.

The conspicuous Hebrew etymology provides an explanation for why the pharaoh's daughter called the child Moses (*Moshe*), because she drew (*mashah*) him out of the water. This pun involves a sound correlation between the name *Moses* and the verb *to draw out*. In this scenario, scholars note that *Moshe* would be the active participle of the verb *mashah*, "he who draws out," instead of the expected passive participle *mashu*, "one drawn out."<sup>18</sup> According to Marks, this Hebrew wordplay sets up the central theme for Moses's life, an uneasy negotiation between Moses's passive role as someone being drawn out by God, and his active role of drawing out Israel from Egypt as a deliverer. As Moses draws water for the daughters of Jethro in Midian and marries one of them, he draws Israel out of the sea of reeds<sup>19</sup> and sadly draws water out of a rock incorrectly and is unable to enter the promised land. For Marks, "the question posed by Moses's name is the central question of the exodus itself."<sup>20</sup>

Literarily speaking, Moses's name plays an additional key role when read as an Egyptian word play. In the birth story in Exodus 2:1–10, the Biblical narrators play off Moses's name's Egyptian origin through the "persistent" use of the word *child*, which repeats 10 times in as many verses.<sup>21</sup> The repetition of this word plays on the name *Moses*, which

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17. Like the creative Biblical narrators, the Egyptian scribes also recorded wordplays. Antonio Loprieno provides some examples of Egyptian wordplay in Egyptian literature in his "Puns and Word Play in Ancient Egyptian" in *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, ed. Scott B. Noegel (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2000), 3–20.

18. Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2003), 297; Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 140–42; Marks, "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology," 32.

19. Marks discusses the synonymous relationship between the multiple Hebrew verbs that could mean to draw out and the themes they represent more fully in his "Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology," 31–33.

20. *Ibid.*, 32.

21. *Ibid.*, 31. There are nine occurrences of the English word "child" or "children" in Exodus 2:1–10 and two instances of the English word "son." All the occurrences of the word *child* come from the Hebrew word *yeled*, but there is an additional occurrence of a synonym translated as babe from the Hebrew *nayar*.

“corresponds to the Egyptian word *mose*, meaning ‘son’ or ‘child’.”<sup>22</sup> With a small change of emphasis and punctuation, something existent only in modern documents anyway, the Egyptian play becomes more pronounced:

And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because *I* drew him out of the water. (Exodus 2:10)

With the introduction of a period in a different place, this verse emphasizes the Egyptian pun between the word *son* and the name *Moses*. It focuses the reader on the daughter of the pharaoh’s explaining not why she called the child Moses, but why she could call him her son. She had the right to call Moses her son because she drew him out of the water.

Like the Hebrew play on Moses’s name, Moses’s Egyptian name foreshadows the roles Moses will play in his life and to the deliverance of his people from the clutches of Pharaoh. As the reader continuously encounters the name *Moses*, the very repetition of his name repeats the question to the reader, “Who is Moses?” The dual etymologies surrounding his name dramatize the inner duel Moses himself must have experienced as the adopted Egyptian child whom God calls to deliver the children of Israel. Part of this deliverance includes yet another twist on Moses’s name as God commands Moses to threaten Pharaoh’s son:

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my *son*, even my *firstborn*: And I say unto thee, Let my *son* go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy *son*, even thy *firstborn*. (Exodus 4:22–23)

Moses’s Egyptian name, meaning *child* or *son* and rooted to the verb *to beget*, plays off of the words *son* and *firstborn* in his threat. It seems like a simple exchange of son for son, delivered by a once Egyptian son turned *son* of God. God’s threat is not idle, and as the decision of last resort, the death of the Egyptians’ firstborns finally convinces Pharaoh to allow the children of Israel to leave. Moses’s name is not an auxiliary ornament of rhetoric, but a guiding component to the story of the Exodus. Moses’s struggle to identify who he is echoes in the reaction to the exodus by the children of Israel, who choose on various occasions to act as the children of Egypt instead of as the children of God.

The literary play on the name *Moses* adds depth and complexity to the narrative formed by Moses’s actions. It helps the close reader to appreciate the art of Biblical narrative more fully. In his review on the

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22. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 142.



scholarship of the motifs comprising the birth story of Moses more than 50 years ago, Brevard Childs noted the interdependence between the infanticide episode in Exodus chapter 1 and Moses's birth story in chapter 2.<sup>23</sup> According to Childs, the scholar Hugo Gressmann had even posited the existence of an earlier prophecy, no longer in the Bible, about a Hebrew deliverer, which would better explain why Pharaoh sought to kill the male Hebrew children and the need to expose the infant Moses to the elements on the Nile.<sup>24</sup> Although this specific prophecy is not extant in the current Hebrew Bible, it is an event borne out in other traditions and consistent with the character of Joseph in the Bible. In addition to the preservation of Josephine prophecies of Moses found in the *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* and the *Targum Pseudo-Johnathan: Genesis*<sup>25</sup>, what Latter-day Saints call restored scripture also supports the occurrence of this prophecy.

In 1832, Joseph Smith restored by revelation a prophecy about Moses he claimed the Bible originally contained. According to Smith, the Joseph sold into Egypt prophesied about the bondage his descendants would endure and the deliverer the Lord would provide. The restoration of this prophecy not only supports Gressmann's intuition but additionally strengthens the connection noted by scholars between the Egyptian leader Joseph and Moses.<sup>26</sup> Just on a linguistic level, Hoffmeier points out the unique and authentic Egyptian background linking Joseph and Moses.<sup>27</sup>

Although common for modern scholars to confidently state that Moses's name stems from the Egyptian verb *to beget* and is thus related to the Egyptian word for *child*, it has only been since the mid-19th century that this idea was first posited and much later until it became the preferred hypothesis. This hypothesis is a relatively modern rediscovery because of the demise of hieroglyphic knowledge more than 1500 years ago and its more recent deciphering in the 19th century. This chronological context makes it all the more remarkable that Joseph's prophecy of Moses the deliverer restored by Joseph Smith would include a pun on Moses's name and the word *son* more than a decade before the academic world first posited this possibility.

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23. Brevard Childs, "The Birth of Moses," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 2, (June 1965): 109-22.

24. *Ibid.*, 109-10, 117.

25. John A. Tvedtness, "Joseph's Prophecy of Moses and Aaron," *Insights* 21, no. 1 (2001), <https://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1277&index=3>.

26. Childs, "The Birth of Moses," 117-20 and 122.

27. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 83-95 and 138-40.

## Joseph Prophesies of Moses

As the knowledge of ancient Egyptian diminished, presumably so did the awareness of the Egyptian wordplay on the name *Moses* in the Bible. The knowledge of hieroglyphs likely went on the decline well before the last hieroglyph is believed to have been written in AD 450.<sup>28</sup> Only after Jean-Francois Champollion successfully began decrypting ancient Egyptian in 1823 after an absence of more than a millennium, could Richard Lepsius suggest that the name *Moses* could be Egyptian stemming from the word for *child* and related to the verb *to beget* two decades later. Richard Lepsius, one of the founders of Egyptology,<sup>29</sup> is credited<sup>30</sup> as one of the first scholars to point out this possibility, which he did in 1849 in his *Die Chronologie Der Aegypter*.<sup>31</sup> His suggestion was followed by Georg Ebers' independent discovery published in *Durch Gosen Zum Sinai* in 1881.<sup>32</sup> Although Lepsius and Ebers published this theory in the mid-1800s, it wasn't until the mid-1900s with the work of J. Gwyn Griffiths that more scholars began to accept it.<sup>33</sup> Before Lepsius, there were other scholars who suspected that the origin of Moses's name was Egyptian,<sup>34</sup> but these earlier academics did not connect it with the Egyptian verb *to beget* or the related Egyptian word for *child*.

In 1830 Joseph Smith embarked on a project he framed as a translation of the Bible with the intent to restore by revelation parts of the Bible that had been lost or changed from the original. One of these restored

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28. Andrew Robinson, *Cracking the Egyptian Code: The Revolutionary Life of Jean-Francois Champollion* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012), 15.

29. Ibid. 243.

30. T.K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland, *Encyclopaedia Biblica: A Critical Dictionary of the Literary Political and Religious History the Archaeology Geography and Natural History of the Bible*, Volume III L to P (New York: Macmillan, 1902), 3205-6. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebraisches und Aramaisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, (Leiden, Brill, 2004), 1:607. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, 7th ed. (1906; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 602.

31. Richard Lepsius, *Die Chronologie Der Aegypter*, 325-26n5.

32. Georg Ebers, *Durch Hosen Zum Sinai* (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann, 1881), 539-40, <https://archive.org/details/durchgosenzumsi03ebergoog/page/n575>.

33. J. Gwyn Griffiths, "The Egyptian Derivation of the Name of Moses," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12 (1953): 225-31. For a discussion on the relevance of Griffiths work on the evolution of this idea, please refer to Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 140-42.

34. Jaroslav Cerny, "Greek Etymology of the Name of Moses," in *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, 41 (1942): 349-54.

sections of the Bible was a prophecy the Lord gave Joseph who was sold into Egypt, regarding Moses. Almost certainly unaware of the possible Egyptian etymology for the name of Moses, Joseph Smith dictated the following text in July 1832<sup>35</sup> that contains a pun on the name of *Moses* and its Egyptian meaning of *son*:

For a seer will I raise up to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt; and he shall be called Moses And by this name he shall know that he is of thy house [Joseph's house]; for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter, and shall be called her son.  
(Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:29)

According to this prophecy, the name of Moses was the key Moses would employ to unlock his own identity and recognize his connection to his ancestor Joseph and by extension to the rest of the children of Israel, the Hebrews. This prophecy also follows the same Egyptian pun between the name *Moses* and its Egyptian meaning of *son* in Exodus 2:10; "And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name *Moses*."

The connection between being called *son*, the Egyptian word for *Moses*, and knowing that he was of Joseph's house<sup>36</sup> could stem from a statement Joseph made describing his standing with Pharaoh: "[God] hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house" (Genesis 45:8). This statement potentially suggests that Moses, by being raised as the son of an Egyptian princess, became a son to Pharaoh, who in turn was a son to Joseph. Later, when a new Egyptian king began to reign, the scriptural account points out that he "knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). This phrase may not have meant only that this new king did not acknowledge Joseph's authority<sup>37</sup> but also that this king came

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35. *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*, ed. Kent P. Jackson, Robert J. Matthews, and Scott H. Faulring (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 71, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/old-testament-revision-2/71>.

36. Alternatively, the connection to Joseph's house could also imply that Moses was a direct descendent of Joseph through the tribe of Manasseh or Ephraim. In some versions of the Hebrew Bible, there is an inserted "n" in Judges 18:30 that changes Moses to Manasseh in reference to the pedigree of Moses's son Goshen. If this were true, it would imply that Moses would also be from the tribe of Manasseh and not Levi. This is at variance with the account in the Bible that clearly casts Moses as a Levite; therefore, this possibility is not argued in this paper.

37. Ackerman points out that this phrase likely means Pharaoh did not acknowledge Joseph's authority, not that Pharaoh did not actually know Joseph. "The Literary Context of the Moses Birth Story" *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 79.

from a different family line — one not affiliated with Joseph in the same way as Joseph specified in Genesis 45:8. Additionally, the two stories of Joseph and Moses not only share similar themes but also, according to Hoffmeier, share authentic Egyptian elements that corroborate their shared setting in Egypt.<sup>38</sup> It is fitting that Joseph, who knew Egyptian,<sup>39</sup> would prophesy of Moses and include an Egyptian pun.

An awareness of this prophecy can explain the context for Moses's name and shed more light on the context to his birth. For Childs, Pharaoh's dictum to kill all the male Hebrew children did not make sense; masters typically do not want fewer slaves, but more. Additionally, if population control was the concern, Childs pointed out that killing the females would have been more efficient.<sup>40</sup> These difficulties with the narrative can be resolved if the existence of a prophecy concerning a male Hebrew child predicted to deliver the children of Israel was known to Pharaoh. Presumably, not all the details would have been known to Pharaoh; otherwise he would likely have impeded his own daughter from taking in a Hebrew child.

Also, as part of the Bible translation project initiated in 1830, Joseph Smith restored additional stories regarding Moses. Of particular relevance, Smith restored a dialogue between Moses and God and a confrontation between Moses and Satan that continuously employ Moses's sonship as a key literary device. This emphasis on Moses as a "son" seems to be an additional play on the etymology of the name of Moses. This restored wordplay within the dialogues Christianizes Moses by assigning him a role as a type of Christ. According to Northrop Frye's definition of a literary type, Moses would be a type of adumbration, or what will happen to Christ, what Christ will do, or what Christ is. In response, Christ would be the antitype, or the realized form of what happened to Moses, what Moses did, or what Moses was.<sup>41</sup>

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38. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 83-95 and 138-40.

39. There is strong evidence of Joseph's ability to speak Egyptian in the Biblical account of Joseph's dealings with his brothers. A noteworthy example is provided in Genesis 42, where Joseph speaks to his brothers through an interpreter (Genesis 42:23).

40. Brevard Childs, *Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 10-11.

41. Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 79.

### Moses as a Type of Christ

Moses's sonship becomes a key theme in restoration scripture. Specifically, the restored narrative contained in the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price focuses on Moses as a son of God and a type of Christ through the repetitive use of the words *son* and *begotten*, which are also related to the etiology of the Egyptian name *Moses*. For instance, note God's heavy use of these terms:

And I have a work for thee, Moses, *my son*; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only *Begotten*; and mine Only *Begotten* is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all. (Moses 1:6)

The connection between Moses, God's son, and Christ, God's only begotten, can become a signal to the witting reader that Moses's Egyptian name is a central theme in this narrative. Moses is not the only prophet the Lord called his son, but the frequency with which the Lord refers to Moses as his son is uniquely pronounced.<sup>42</sup>

Moses and Satan's dialogue further emphasizes Moses's divine sonship. "Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man, worship me" (Moses 1:12). Moses, who has just learned his true patronage, corrects Satan, "I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten" (Moses 1:13). Moses not only refuses to worship Satan but also calls for Satan to leave. "Get thee hence, Satan, deceive me not; for God said unto me: Thou art after the similitude of mine Only Begotten" (Moses 1:16). This episode with Satan ends with Moses's confirming his relationship as a son of God and expelling Satan in the name of the Only Begotten.

This confrontation is a type of the later confrontation between Satan and Christ. Both confrontations are possibly prefaced by a spiritual outpouring followed by a trial. It is significant that the Joseph Smith Translation amends the account in Matthew to emphasize the fact that Christ went to the wilderness to be with God (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1). It is scripturally consistent, then, to suggest that Christ could have been with God before Satan appeared, as was the case with Moses.

Similar to the account of Moses, Satan attempts to cast doubt upon Christ's sonship and true patronage by employing the taunting preface "If thou be the Son of God..." to his temptations for Jesus (Matthew 4:3, 6; Luke 4:3). Ultimately, like his attempt with Moses, Satan's objective is to trick

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42. The Lord refers to Moses as "my son" three times in five verses (Moses 1:3-7). See Moses 6:27 and Abraham 3:12 for other prophets God called his son.

Jesus into worshipping him. Satan's futile efforts are refuted with the same command, "Get thee hence, Satan" (compare Matthew 4:10 and Moses 1:16).

The idea that Moses was a type of Christ is not unique to this particular event. Both the Book of Mormon and the New Testament allude to other events that tie Moses and Christ as type and antitype. For example, when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness to save the afflicted Israelites, he was a type for when Christ would be lifted up on the cross to save the world (see John 3:14–16, Alma 3:18–22, and Helaman 8:11–15). The law of Moses was also viewed by the New Testament and Book of Mormon authors as a type of Christ (see Galatians 3:24; Hebrews 10:1; Mosiah 13:30–31; and Alma 25:15, 34:14).

What the restored account of Moses does most powerfully is establish what Moses was, not just what he did, as a type of Christ. He was a son/child of God; a man whose very name tied him to the quintessential son/child of God, Christ the Only Begotten. The Egyptian etymology for the name Moses, although almost certainly unknown to the secularly uneducated Joseph Smith, appears nonetheless as a key element in scripture that he restored.

The appearance of a blatant pun on the Egyptian etymology of the name *Moses* in the prophecy that Smith restored and its probable role as a key thematic element in the restored narratives in the Book of Moses support the authenticity of these texts, especially when one considers these elements as "firsts" in the modern era. Before the first known scholars published the idea that Moses's name might be Egyptian and certainly before a general scholarly consensus was reached, the texts Joseph Smith restored contained evidence to support Moses's Egyptian heritage. Indeed, Joseph the patriarch, who prophesied of Moses, and Joseph Smith Jr., who restored these texts, knew first!

*[Author's Note: This paper was inspired by a presentation from Dr. Royal Skousen and a class taught by Dr. John Gee. I am grateful to my friend Katherine for her insightful editing of my first draft, to the Rozeskis for expanding my personal library, and to the Jefferson County Public Library Interlibrary Loan system for providing access to materials otherwise unavailable.]*

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# THE MĀORI LATTER-DAY SAINT HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: ADDITIONS AND AMENDMENTS

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Louis Midgley

**Abstract:** *Selwyn Kātene has again assembled twelve essays written by the descendants of famous Māori Latter-day Saints. This volume flows from a revival of interest in the ground and content of the faith of early Māori Saints that began in the late 1990s. In various ways the essays in this volume add to and amend what has previously been known about what began unexpectedly on Christmas Day in 1882, when the first group of Māori joined the Church of Jesus Christ. Not only did the Māori have Seers who opened the way, some of those elite Māori men, who had been initiated into Māori esoteric knowledge of divine things, also found that their temple endowment fit rather snugly with their previous initiation ceremonies. Unlike other Christian missionaries, Latter-day Saint missionaries did not see the Māori as primitive heathens, and Māori saw in the restored gospel crucial elements of their own deeper understanding of divine things. Latter-day Saint missionaries were seeking to liberate Māori from the soul-destroying vices brought to them or enhanced by British colonization, while relishing the most noble elements in the Māori world.*

Review of Selwyn Kātene, ed., *By Their Fruits You Will Know Them: Early Maori Leaders in the Mormon Church*, vol. 2 (Wellington, New Zealand: Steele Roberts Publishers, 2017). 295 pp. N.Z. \$39.99 (hardback).

**L**ike *Turning the Hearts*,<sup>1</sup> which was the first volume in this series, *By Their Fruits* consists of twelve essays written by the descendants of early Māori Latter-day Saints who set out what can now be known

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1. Selwyn Kātene, ed., *Turning the Hearts of the Children: Early Mormon Leaders in the Mormon Church* (Wellington, NZ: Steele Roberts, 2014). See Louis Midgley, "Remembering and Honoring Māori Latter-day Saints," *Interpreter*:

about each on their own journey of faith. There is a fine “Foreword” to this anthology by Whatarangi Winiata, a distinguished Anglican<sup>2</sup> scholar. He begins by acknowledging that

In 1881 the prophet Paora Potangaroa told a gathering at Te Ore Ore marae in the Wairarapa that a new and great power would come from the direction of the rising sun. Later that year, the first Mormon missionaries arrived from the United States of America in the east; within two years, hundreds of Maori in the region were converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Within ten years, one in twelve Maori, or roughly 3000, belonged to the Mormon Church. Five years later approximately 4000 Maori had committed themselves to the Book of Mormon. (p. 7.)

He then explains that, beginning in 1882, Latter-day Saint missionaries

moved humbly through [Māori] communities, conversing in te reo Maori with little concern for land or colonization but with an intense interest in whakapapa [genealogy], a concept fundamental to all Maori. *Rather than judging Maori as faithless heathens*, which happened in some quarters, this new church welcomed them as whanaunga (relatives) with whakapapa to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. (p. 7, emphasis added)

These insightful remarks set the stage for the accounts of the following Māori Saints, three of whom are women, whose identity is shown by an asterisk (\*):

Henare Potae, 1828–1895 (pp. 21–37).

Rangikaweā Hoani Puriri, 1840–1942 (pp. 38–58).

Pere Wihongi, 1848–1928 (pp. 59–74).

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*A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 21 (2016): 275–90, especially at 277–79, for comments on the essays assembled in the first volume in this series.

2. It seems that most of the Māori who initially became Latter-day Saints were previously Anglicans. Hence, if one consults the useful index to *By Their Fruits* (pp. 284–95), one will find for “Anglicans, see Church of England” (p. 285), followed by pages 7, 9, 12–13, 15, 22, 27, 29, 33–34, 62, 66, 68, 125, 127, 130–131, 138, 151–152, 154, 170, 187, 210, 265, 275; and for the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which was the initial Anglican evangelical missionary endeavor in New Zealand (and elsewhere), pages 12, 22, 25–26, 61, 65, and 279. See also Wikipedia, s.v. “Anglicanism,” last modified March 26, 2019, 21:19, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglicanism>.



Pepene Eketone, 1848–1928 (pp. 75–97).

\*Haana Cootes Wineera, 1858–1933 (pp. 98–122).

\*Alice Matawai Mataira, 1861–1946 (pp. 123–42).

Henare Hamon, 1873–1961 (pp. 143–67).

Hemi Whautere Witehira, 1881–1965 (pp. 168–85).

\*Mereana Hall Bean, 1888–1957 (pp. 186–202).

Pere Ihimaera Smiler, 1888/89–1972 (pp. 203–20).

Whakahe Tui Matenga, 1903–1976 (pp. 221–38).

Sydney Hutana Crawford, 1909–1991 (pp. 239–56).

Selwyn Kātene again provides an “Introduction” (pp. 11–20), and a “Conclusion” (pp. 257–69). In his “Conclusion” (pp. 261–68), he calls attention to six additional important early Māori Latter-day Saints:

(1) Roma Hoera Ruruku, whose daughter, Wetekia Ruruku Elkington, was a *matakite* (seer) who also played a part in bringing together the South Island Ngati Koata *iwi* (tribe) and the Ngati Toa *iwi* that had earlier migrated to Porirua, which is just north of Wellington, from Kawhia, which is much farther north on the west coast of the North Island (pp. 261–62).

(2) Manihera Te Rangiakaiwaho, who in 1883 responded to what he heard and saw from Elders Alma Greenwood and Ira Hinckley. He found that the missionaries and their message matched the prophetic proclamation of the Paora Potangaroa in 1881. In August 1883 he became a faithful branch president (pp. 262–63).

(3) Piripi Te Maari became a Latter-day Saint on 2 June 1887, and was one of those, with Te Whatahoro, who helped translate the Book of Mormon into Māori (pp. 263–65). Piripi benefitted considerably from the efforts of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS),<sup>3</sup> since he had been trained in a school operated by William Williams (1800–1878).<sup>4</sup>

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3. The Christian Missionary Society (CMS) — the missionary endeavor of the evangelical faction of the Anglican Church — made efforts to civilize the indigenous heathen before trying to convert them to their version of Christianity. Methodists had their own Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, and both Anglicans and Methodists established mission stations in New Zealand, but avoided direct competition for converts.

4. William’s brother, Henry Williams, was the leader of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) mission in New Zealand that followed Samuel Marsden’s first

(4) Eriata Nopera, who was among those who in 1881 had gathered at the Te Ore Ore *marae*, and who therefore witnessed Paora Potangaroa dictate his prophecy concerning the coming of a new and true version of the Christian faith. In 1920, Nopera and his wife were among those who went to Laie, Oahu, Hawaii, for their temple endowments, when that temple was dedicated. He was also among a small group of Māori who also traveled to Salt Lake City, where they were greeted by President Heber J. Grant. He was the second Māori to be ordained a high priest (pp. 265–66).

(5) Maihi Parone Kawiti (1807–1889), who was born in 1807 at Waiomio, which is just south of Kawa Kawa in the Northland, and who was a son of the paramount chief of the Ngati Hine *hapu* (subtribe). He became a Latter-day Saint on 18 October 1888, when he was 81, and passed away on 21 May 1889 from typhoid (pp. 266–68).

(6) Kātene also quotes at length a story told by Elder Robert L. Simpson in 1975 about Hirini Taiwhanga Heremaia (p. 286), who was a lively and colorful Māori Latter-day Saint in 1950 when I was serving as a missionary in the Bay of Islands.

### **Māori *Matakite* and Faithful Māori**

*By Their Fruits* has an Appendix (pp. 270–74) which begins with Hirini Whaanga's famous account of how he and his people had been prepared in 1830 by Arama Toiroa, a famous Māori *matakite* (seer), for the Latter-day Saint missionaries and their message (pp. 270–71). My own preference is to see Arama Toiroa as the most important of the Māori *matakite* whose declarations led Māori to become faithful Saints. However, Paora Potangaroa (d. 1882) is also seen as the key Māori “prophet” who opened the door for both Latter-day Saint missionaries and their message.

In March of 1881, at a huge *hui* (conference) at Te Ore Ore *marae*, which is just outside of Masterton in the Wairarapa, Paora Potangaroa responded to the question of which Christian denomination the Ngati Kahunganu *iwi* (tribe) should join. They were faced with several sectarian alternatives, which then included the Anglican, Methodist, and Roman Catholic versions of Christian faith. After a period of

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attempts to teach Christianity to the Māori in 1814. Henry Williams, with his brother, eventually made the moves that led to the baptism of many Māori by teaching them to read the Bible in the *te reo* (Māori language).

prayer, he dictated to a scribe *He Kawenata* (the Covenant).<sup>5</sup> In 1883, after Potangaroa had passed away in 1882, Latter-day Saint missionaries visited the Wairarapa. They and their message were seen by many Māori as the authorized messengers bringing them the authentic Christian faith as set out in the Covenant.<sup>6</sup>

### Critics — and a Response

Māori *matakite* (seers) opened the door for our missionaries, but their message has been explained away, minimized, or ignored by authors, some of whom have never been Latter-day Saints, and also by some who still are but for various reasons decline to believe that such things actually happen. These critics tend to focus on Paora Potangaroa's Covenant. They point out that the followers of Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana (1873–1939), a famous political activist and faith healer, who launched his own church on 15 July 1925, claim that Ratana and his church were identified in Potangaroa's prophecy. In 1928, Ratana sought to retrieve the copy of the famous Covenant that had been dictated to a scribe and then placed in a cement monument located in the carved house at the *marae* in Te Ore Ore. It had been destroyed by humidity.<sup>7</sup> Without the document, Ratana's followers had only stories about its contents.

In 1944, a photograph of the Covenant was recovered. The story of its recovery involves Eriata Nopera (pp. 265–66). As a young boy he was present at the *hui* (gathering) at the Te Ore Ore *marae* when Potangaroa dictated the Covenant to a scribe. Nopera and Matthew Cowley were at a meeting of Latter-day Saints in Masterton in 1944 when a previously unknown photograph of the presumably lost document was given to Nopera, who presented it to Elder Cowley, who published an account of its recovery and crucial contents. Marjorie Newton has told this story reasonably well.<sup>8</sup> However, she has also stressed that “the followers of the

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5. Henceforth I will use the English word *Covenant* (as a proper noun) instead of the Māori word *Kawenata*.

6. See Matthew Cowley, “Maori Chief Predicts Coming of L.D.S. Missionaries,” *Improvement Era* 53, no. 9 (September 1950): 696–98, 754–56; and also Stewart Meha, “A Prophetic Utterance of Paora Potanagaroa,” *Te Karere* 43/10 (1948): 298–99. (Note: *Te Karere* is Māori for “the messenger.” This was a monthly publication, beginning in 1907 and ending in 1960, of the New Zealand Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.)

7. Some preserved relics are now located at the Ratana Pa — the headquarters of the Ratana church — which is a community located near Whanganui.

8. Marjorie Newton, *Tiki and Temple: The Mormon Mission in New Zealand, 1854–1958* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012), 42.

Māori prophet Ratana believe that Te Potangaroa's prophecy foretold the coming of the Ratana church in the 1920s.<sup>9</sup>

To support her argument, Newton cites but does not quote a biographical sketch of Paora Potangaroa. The crucial language reads as follows:

Various interpretations were made: it was believed to herald the arrival of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as interpreted by the Mormons; and it was believed that missionaries would come from the east and set in place a new church. In 1928, when the religious leader T. W. Ratana visited Te Ore Ore at the request of the people, he removed the stone set up by Paora inside Nga Tau e Waru [the *wharehau* — carved house], repositioning it outside. *The move silenced the medium.*<sup>10</sup> The coming of the Ratana faith is now widely believed to be the fulfillment of Paora's prophecy.<sup>11</sup>

Please notice that there is no mention in this account that Latter-day Saint missionaries and their messages were seen in 1883 by those who were directly familiar with Potangaroa's prophecy as the authorized messengers sent by God with the correct version of Christian faith. There is no mention that Potangaroa's Covenant had been dictated to a scribe and placed in a concrete monument, and that the crucial document was destroyed by humidity. Nor is there mention of the recovery of a photograph of the Covenant.

The fact is that in 1883, Latter-day Saint missionaries, who were not even aware that there were *matakite*, nor that there was a Paora Potangaroa, discovered that Māori in the Wairarapa saw them and their message as having been predicted by Potangaroa. It was the followers of Wiremu Ratana, in the 1920s, who claimed that he fulfilled Potangaroa's Covenant. This was, however, more than four decades after that famous prophecy was dictated in 1881.

However, there is more. In *Mormon and Maori*, Marjorie Newton indicates that "in New Zealand, where, Mormons believe, indigenous prophets foretold the coming of a new religion, several such prophecies are celebrated by Mormons."<sup>12</sup> She then adds:

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9. Ibid., 43.

10. I have no idea what this remark means. Is the silenced "medium" Potangaroa?

11. Angela Ballara and Keith Cairns, "Te Potangaroa, Paora," *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (1990); see also *Te Ara — the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, s.v. "Te Potangaroa, Paora," accessed February 21, 2019, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t57/te-potangaroa-paora>. Angela Ballara is a highly respected Māori scholar.

12. Marjorie Newton, *Mormon and Maori* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), 2.

Some Maori religions, such as Ringatu and Ratana, have likewise been seen as the fulfillment of these prophecies. Particularly is this true of the prophecy most frequently quoted by Mormons, that of Paora Potangaroa, made at Te Ore Ore, near Masterton in the Wairarapa Valley, in 1881, one version of which reads: “There is a religious denomination coming for us; perhaps it will come from the sea, perhaps it will emerge here.”<sup>13</sup>

When Wiremu Ratana went to Te Ore Ore in 1928 to retrieve the document, he discovered that humidity had destroyed it. He then moved the monument in which it had been placed outside of the building and took with him some relics that had survived. Marjorie Newton seems to indicate that there are competing “translations” of the Covenant that cast doubt about the Māori Latter-day Saint understanding of the Covenant.<sup>14</sup> Matthew Cowley possessed the photograph of the previously lost Covenant dictated by Potangaroa and written down by Ranginui Kingi on 16 March 1881.<sup>15</sup> So what we have is competing interpretations of the famous Covenant, but not different translations.

In *Mormon and Maori*, Newton cites Bronwyn Elsmore’s opinions found in her *Mana from Heaven* on Potangaroa’s prophecy.<sup>16</sup> Elsmore quotes what she calls a “translation” of Potangaroa’s Covenant made by James Rimene (1931–2017), who was a prominent Te Ore Ore *kaumātua* (elder).<sup>17</sup> Elsmore also mentions conversations she had with Rimene and also with both Rimene and Margaret Haeata, his wife, both of whom were

13. Ibid.

14. Marjorie Newton cites Bronwyn Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven: A Century of Maori Prophets in New Zealand*, ed. Peter Dowling, rev. ed. (1985; repr., Auckland, NZ: Reed Books, 1999). Bronwyn Elsmore has a PhD from Victoria University of Wellington and was a senior lecturer at Massey University, Palmerston North, for sixteen years. However, her real passion is writing fiction and plays. See “Elsmore, Bronwyn,” New Zealand Book Council, accessed February 21, 2019, <https://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writer/elsmore-bronwyn/>.

15. A photographer in Masterton had heard about the Covenant and was given permission to photograph it, and that photo later came into the possession of a Māori Saint who gave it to Nopera at a conference held in 1944 in Masterton. It was then Nopera’s *koha* (gift) to Elder Cowley.

16. Newton, *Mormon and Maori*, 2; Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven*, 246–55.

17. James Rimene was a *kaumātua* closely associated with the famous *marae* at Te Ore Ore. In 2007, during the Queen’s Birthday, James Rimene was given the New Zealand Order of Merit Award for his work with at-risk Māori youth. See the *Wairarapa Mailer*, issue ten, June 2008. Rimini passed away on December 1, 2017. See Beckie Wilson, “Revered *kaumātua* James Rimene dies,” *Wairarapa Times-Age*, December 5, 2017, <https://times-age.co.nz/revered-kaumatua-james-rimene-dies/>.

devout followers of Ratana.<sup>18</sup> Drawing from Elsmore, Newton claims that “Mormon accounts usually give a slightly different ‘translation’ of the Potangaroa’s famous Covenant.”<sup>19</sup> But a translation of what? The only copy of the Covenant is the photograph that Eriata Nopera gave to Matthew Cowley in 1944. What text was James Rimene “translating?” This seems to me to be a matter of different and competing interpretations.

Elsmore’s informants on Potangaroa’s Covenant were James and Margaret Haeata Rimene.<sup>20</sup> In 1985 they provided her with the Ratana understanding<sup>21</sup> fashioned more than four decades after Potangaroa dictated his “Covenant.” Clearly, Ratana’s followers see in Potangaroa’s Covenant a prophecy of him and his church. Then Marjorie Newton focused on a phrase from Elsmore’s comments on Potangaroa’s Covenant when she wrote *Mormon and Maori*, in which she brushes aside these prophecies as merely Māori/Mormon wishful thinking.<sup>22</sup> Beginning in 1950, I sought to understand the faith of Māori Latter-day Saints, as well as that of Anglican and Ratana Māori. They were all then disarmingly honest; they sometimes described themselves merely as Beer Drinkers. Nearly seven decades later my own affection for the ways of Māori Saints has not abated. The truly remarkable stories of how God prepared some

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18. Elsmore, in her chapter “The Prophet Paora Potangaroa” (*Mana from Heaven*, 246–55), both cites and quotes “‘The Prophecies of Paora Potangaroa,’ translation by Jim Rimene, unpublished TS,” ten times (see p. 255n4, n10 [twice], n11, n13, n14, n20, n24, n25, n26), as well as an interview with Jim Rimene on January 12, 1985 (see p. 255n10) and with Jim and Margaret Haeata Rimene on February 13, 1985 (see p. 255n10, 17, 18). Neither the “translations” nor the interviews are currently available for public inspection.

19. Newton, *Mormon and Maori*, 2.

20. Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven*, 255n10. See the description of Margaret Haeata, now James Rimene’s wife, who had a vision in 1946 in which she learned how to fashion a replica of a flag that Potangaroa once flew. “It is flown only on exceptional occasions,” and “witnesses who have seen it flying say that they have seen it fluttering even if there is no breath of wind.”

21. James Rimene was aware of how Māori familiar with Potangaroa’s prophecy were immediately attracted to the Latter-day Saint missionaries and message. For a solid indication of this see #6 of “3.1 Statement of Evidence of James Rimene,” Rangitane Tu Mai Ra Trust, <https://tumaira.iwi.nz/file/3-1-statement-of-evidence-of-james-rimene/>.

22. For a partial assessment of Newton’s *Mormon and Maori* (and her PhD thesis), see Midgley, “Marjorie Newton’s Account of the Faith of Māori Saints: A Critical Appraisal,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Scholarship and Faith* 30 (2018): 179–206.

of them for the Church of Jesus Christ must be told as honestly and fully as possible.

### The Io Cult and Initiation in a *Whare Wānanga*

In her introduction to her remarks about Potangaroa,<sup>23</sup> Elsmore also explains the rise of “the King movement” among the Māori,<sup>24</sup> which was an effort to unite all the Māori tribes under a monarchy. She links this movement to the idea that there were

meetings of tohunga of a number of tribes being held for the purpose of reconciling various accounts of ancient mythology into an acceptable common version. As a result of this, knowledge of a traditional cosmology headed by a supreme god called Io was spread. This supreme figure, described by terms such as Io-matua, Io-roa, and many more, was believed to be the eternal, omnipotent, uncreated, originator of all.<sup>25</sup>

Elsmore then points out that “this teaching was open to much debate, with some scholars maintaining that the belief was not part of the old tradition, but was post-European, being a result of Christian teachings; and others answering that the doctrine was not generally known because of the custom of the Māori to restrict the highest esoteric spiritual knowledge to selected initiates of the whare wananga.”<sup>26</sup> She does not directly indicate where she might stand on this crucial issue. Instead, she merely indicates that in the 1860s “the doctrine of Io had the effect

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23. Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven*, 141-67. This is the crucial introduction to the major portion of her book. Her first period is “I. 1830-50: ‘The Early Reactions’” (1-79); then “II. The 1850s ‘The Decade of the Healers’” (79-139); then “III. 1860-1900: ‘The Prophetic Period’” (141-316); then “IV. 1900-1920: ‘The Maori Christian Churches’” (319-48), which ends with her account of “The Ratana Church” (337-46), which are followed by two brief chapters in “V. Conclusion” (349-58).

24. For Elsmore’s explanation of the King Movement, see “The King Movement and the Tariao Response,” in *Mana from Heaven*, 233-43.

25. Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven*, 150. See *Maori Dictionary*, s.v. “Io,” accessed February 21, 2019, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=Io>. Io “may be a response to Christianity,” but the fact that Io “occurs in a number of traditions from the Polynesian Islands, including Hawai’i, the Society Islands and the Cook Islands,” and that this high God being known also in Eastern Polynesia, “suggests a more ancient tradition.” Io very often has what seems to me to be attributes associated with the name. Hence *Io te Mātua* means “Io the father (or parent),” which is the primary of more than half a dozen attributes of Io known in New Zealand. This is also true in the Cook Islands.

26. Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven*, 150.

of reestablishing the validity and value of the traditional beliefs of the Māori, since Christian missionaries had insisted that their traditional beliefs, as she puts it, “were without truth or substance.”<sup>27</sup>

In addition, especially the Anglican clergy, despite the fact that they had made the Bible and their version of its teachings available to the Māori, were no longer trusted. With “the ground so well prepared,” Elsmore argues, some Māori found the message of Latter-day Saint missionaries attractive. And hence the “initial campaign” of the Latter-day Saint missionaries “between 1880 and 1900 ensured that the Mormon alternative was established for some years at least.”<sup>28</sup> Her final assessment is that what Latter-day Saint missionaries brought to the Māori “was essentially another foreign message which also did not answer the needs of the Maori.”<sup>29</sup> She does not explain what those needs might have been, other than having their own way of protesting against the *Pakeha* incursion into Aotearoa/New Zealand. Hence the last half of her book is an account of various political/religious movements whose rhetoric was often cast in biblical metaphors as they sought to deal with the theft of land often backed by the Crown, which was often supported by the Anglican clergy.

### **Additional Details in *By Their Fruits***

I have previously mentioned my own fondness for the prophecy made in 1830 by Arama Toiroa, which differs in detail from that of Paora Potangaroa. It also led to many Māori who then lived far to the north of where Potangaroa’s Covenant was set down in writing to join the Church (see pp. 270–71 for details). In an appendix to *By Their Fruits*, entitled “The Smith whanau and the LDS (Mormon) Church” (pp. 270–74), there is a description of how the Whaanga/Smith extended family were drawn to the Church of Jesus Christ. Hyran Smith, who is unfortunately not identified, describes Hirini and Mere Whaanga’s epic journey to Utah in 1894, where they were endowed in the Salt Lake Temple. They took with them some of their *whānau* (extended family), including Walter Smith, Mere’s nephew, who “would later become the foremost LDS church musician in New Zealand” (p. 272). What then follows is an interesting account of the Smith *whānau*.

The twelve biographies that constitute the body of *By Their Fruits* are told from currently available sources; they are also often told with

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27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 151.

29. Ibid.



much gritty detail and sometimes by those who are not Latter-day Saints. This is “warts and all” history, and there is no indication of an effort to tidy things up. There is, however, a serious effort to situate these individual Māori Saints in the historical context. They are not, however, told from a “Mormon studies perspective,” which is very often modeled on a secular “religious studies” ideology. Instead, they are told from within the categories of the Māori world and also the faith of Māori Saints. This is made evident, for example, by many references to the role played by Māori *matakite* (seers) in the first conversions of Māori. There are numerous references to Arama Toiroa (see pp. 12, 39, 222, 270–71) and to Paora Potangaroa (see pp. 6–7, 12, 19, 169, 182, 222–23, 263, 265). Among others, it was these two Māori seers who had authentic divine, special revelations, first in 1830 and then in 1881, that opened the door for Latter-day Saint missionaries and their message.<sup>30</sup>

### Light Shining Out of Darkness

Given the very limited resources, both human and otherwise, then available to the Church of Jesus Christ, the Latter-day Saint missionary endeavor among the Māori depended upon those first often dedicated and stalwart Anglican, Methodist, and Roman Catholic missionaries who had earnestly sought to bring their versions of Christian faith to the Māori 68 years before the first Māori became Latter-day Saints. In addition, those first CMS missionaries to reach New Zealand simply could not avoid “judging the Maori as faithless heathens,” given the dogmatic theology in which they had been indoctrinated, and not merely “in some quarters,” as Whatarangi Winiata has it (see p. 7).<sup>31</sup>

However, this must be contrasted with Latter-day Saint missionaries who did not see the Māori as savages in need of being civilized. In addition, those same Latter-day Saint missionaries saw nothing incongruous when they suddenly discovered that Māori had genuine seers. Instead, they rejoiced to discover that, to gloss the words that begin the famous poem by William Cowper (1731–1800), entitled “Light Shining out of Darkness,” that God had moved in an unexpected and even mysterious way to perform

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30. There were still other Māori *matakite* whose proclamations helped other Māori become Latter-day Saints. For some of these, see Robert Joseph, “Intercultural Exchange, Matakite Maori and the Mormon Church,” in *Mana Maori and Christianity*, ed. Hugh Morrison, et al. (Wellington, NZ: Huia, 2012), 43–72.

31. See Midgley, “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith: Some Preliminary Remarks,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 8 (2014): 49–50.

his wonders among some Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand.<sup>32</sup> I have argued that what we see with those Māori *matakite* opening the door for our missionaries is a providential momentary merging of two authentic prophetic traditions.<sup>33</sup> This seems to me to have been made evident in several essays in *By Their Fruits*, and especially in Wallace Wihongi's essay on his own beloved ancestor (see pp. 59–74).

### Initiation in *Whare Wānanga* and Māori Latter-day Saints

I first met Dr. Cleve Barlow at the huge Pioneers in the Pacific Conference that was held at BYU-Hawaii on 7–11 October 1997. In 1999–2000 I had long conversations with him. He was then one of the last three Māori to have actually been initiated in a *whare wānanga* (house of learning). He felt free to discuss details of his intense *wānanga* training with me because we had both been endowed in a Latter-day Saint temple.<sup>34</sup> He insisted that the version of the *whare wānanga* initiation published many years ago under the title *Lore of the Whare Wananga*, by S. Percy Smith, from manuscripts provided by Hemi Te Whatahoro Jury,<sup>35</sup> was garbled, perhaps intentionally.

Cleve Barlow's initiation took place in the Hokianga region of the Northland when he was young. He told me that the Māori Anglican Priest who instructed him in that *wānanga* saw nothing in his Anglican faith that resembled the instructions he provided in that *wānanga*. I wonder if some elite Māori men could have been trained in a *wānanga*, and become or been Anglicans or Methodists soon after those first Christian missionaries arrived in the Bay of Islands, without those missionaries being aware of those esoteric teachings, since those initiated took an oath not to reveal what they had learned in a *wānanga*. In addition, could some of those now Anglican and Methodist Māori who had been initiated in a *wānanga* also continue living in their own Māori world?

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32. John Newton and William Cowper, "Light Shining Out of Darkness," in *Olney Hymns in Three Books*, 5th ed. (London: J. Buckland and J. Johnson, 1788), 3: 255. "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform" is the first line.

33. See Midgley, "Maori Latter-day Saint Faith," 48–49.

34. Very similar *tapu* restrictions apply to both and for similar reasons. Dr. Barlow agonized over whether he should publish the written account he had made of the instructions he had received in that *wānanga*.

35. Te Whatahoro's manuscript, or parts of it, was published in 1913 in two volumes in the *Memoirs of the Polynesian Society* under the title *The Lore of the Whare-Wananga or Teachings of the Maori College on Religion, Cosmogony, and History*. In 2011 these two volumes were republished by Cambridge University Press. The first volume is the crucial text.

There are hints that this is the case. According to Bronwyn Elsmore, Aperahama Taoni, who “was taught at the Wesleyan mission at Hokianga ... apparently experienced an instance of religious inspiration or revelation in September 1834” that involved “the Messiah, the Son of God.”<sup>36</sup> This claim both confused and troubled the Wesleyan clergy. However, for many years he was “a firm supporter of the Wesleyan Church.” He was, she also claims, “an initiate of the *whare wananga*.” In 1856, Taonui, according to Elsmore, even “agreed to record his sacred knowledge” for John White, a government interpreter, on condition that it not be shown to the Māori. He later opened a *whare wānanga* among the Ngati Whatua, the traditional enemies of his own *iwi*.<sup>37</sup>

Some of those early Māori Saints who were endowed in either the Salt Lake Temple, or later in the temple in Laie, had been initiated in a *whare wānanga*. And much later, Cleve Barlow, after having been trained in a *wānanga*, joined the Church of Jesus Christ and became a faithful Latter-day Saint. He found in both the Church of Jesus Christ, and especially in the Latter-day Saint temple endowment, much that matched, as well as deepened, his own understanding of Māori *tikanga* (the correct or proper way of being Māori), as well as his own striving to be a genuine Latter-day Saint. There are reasons to believe that this was also true with many of those first Latter-day Saint Māori men who had also been initiated in a *whare wānanga* and who later saw a congruence between their own Māori world and their temple endowment. *By Their Fruits* contains several appropriately cautious references to the esoteric instruction that certain elite Māori underwent in *whare wānanga* (see pp. 15, 42, 61, 168, 170, 174, 257, 259).

The deepest Māori and Latter-day Saint understandings of both divine and human things are remarkably consonant, while sectarian Christian dogma clashes especially with the esoteric lore at the heart of the Māori world. I simply cannot explain how the essentially *tapu* (sacred) initiation that elite Māori men underwent turned out to be consonant with their own subsequent Latter-day Saint temple endowment. However, it seems clear that those first endowed Māori were thereby made powerful disciples of Jesus Christ and also very able teachers and preachers when they returned to New Zealand. It would be a mistake to overlook the role played by elite Māori who had been initiated in a *whare wānanga* in efforts to understand the grounds and contents of the faith of early Māori Saints. This initiation seems to me to have yielded a more

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36. Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven*, 32.

37. *Ibid.*, 35.

nuanced and clear understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ for Māori Latter-day Saints.<sup>38</sup> This was certainly true of Hirini and Mere Whaanga, and it can be seen in Hirini Whaanga's impact on the faith of Wihongi *whānau* (see pp. 65–66).

The problem was getting those Māori who were attracted to the faith brought to them by Latter-day Saint missionaries to jettison their dependence on vices brought to them by English colonizers. Those who had been initiated in a *whare wānanga* clearly saw the teaching of Latter-day Saint missionaries in the light of their own Māori understanding of divine things. This often grounded their longing for the necessary moral and spiritual discipline needed to eventually return to the highest heaven. All of this is an important part of the Māori Latter-day Saint historical narrative. Now, of course, greater challenges threaten the Māori world. Meeting these challenges can, I believe, be aided by remembering the first staunch Māori Latter-day Saint disciples of Jesus Christ.

However, this contrasts with the kind of Christian faith taught to the Māori by Anglicans, Methodists, or Roman Catholics, which did not seem to either Māori or their Christian teachers to have anything in common with the older, authentic Māori understanding of divine things. Nor did the Māori tend to see elements of their own esoteric lore in versions of Christian faith to which they were first introduced by Anglican missionaries beginning in 1814 by Samuel Marsden.

### **The Impact of the Bible on the Māori**

Those first Anglican missionaries eventually made portions of the Bible available to the Māori, who could then read of divine revelations, visions and dreams, theophany, and so forth. Their Christian teachers restricted these to the Bible, and were alarmed when some Māori who had become Christian began to receive their own manifestations from God. Those first Anglican and Methodist missionaries insisted on *sola scriptura* (Bible alone) and hence were also radical cessionists — that is, all real, divine, special revelations had ceased with the death of the Apostles. Māori saw this as strange, while what little those CMS missionaries understood of the Māori understanding of human and divine things seemed to them to be primitive, crude superstition.

Some Māori then began to see those who had brought them Christianity as less than fully committed to what they found when they began to read the Bible in Māori, which those dedicated CMS

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38. I have previously drawn attention to the *whare wānanga*. See Midgley, "Māori Latter-day Saint Faith," 55–65.

missionaries had made possible. Though I have criticized Bronwyn Elsmore's chapter on Paora Potangaroa<sup>39</sup> and find her comments on the faith of Latter-day Saints deeply flawed,<sup>40</sup> she properly stresses the crucial role of CMS missionaries in making possible both remarkable Māori literacy and also making the Bible available in *te reo*.

The English struggled with written Māori. For example, very simple place names like *Kerikeri* might be written as *Kitty Kitty*, *Keddi Keddi*, or even *Kiddee Kiddee*. Teaching Māori to read their own language forced those first CMS missionaries to find a way of fixing the orthography of written Māori before they could begin to publish portions of the Bible in *te reo*.

To do this properly, Thomas Kendall (1778–1832), a CMS missionary, traveled to England with Hongi Hika (1772–1828), the famous Nga Puhi paramount chief, to consult with Samuel Lee (1773–1852), a linguist who was a professor of Arabic at Cambridge University. Lee sorted the Māori orthography, which has subsequently remained the same, except for the conventions on long vowels. Soon portions of the Bible were available in Māori. William Williams (1800–1887), also a CMS missionary, quickly became fluent in *te reo*. He was able to fashion a grammar and, in 1844, published *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*.<sup>41</sup> Those endeavors made it possible for Māori to read the Bible in their own language. And soon, most Māori were Christians. For the Latter-day Saint missionary endeavors that began in the late 1880s, this was necessary and, I believe, providential.

I began my own missionary endeavors in August 1950 in the Whangarei area, and especially in the wonderful Bay of Islands, where the Bible reading/Bible translation began. I did not realize that the Williams Memorial Church on Marsden Road in Paihia was the fourth building on that plot of land. However, the wooden Christ Church in Russell is the oldest functioning church in New Zealand. In 1950, the Māori Saints in Paihia met in the famous Waitangi Treaty House, since Peter Heperi, the branch president, was then in charge of the Treaty grounds. That entire complex has now become a major tourist attraction. I had a look at Russell, which was in 1950 a quaint, quiet little town. But it was once known as Kororareka, when it was the “hell hole of the Pacific,” with grog shops, prostitution, gambling, and violence. All of these vices, and more, were soon, unfortunately, to be introduced to the Māori.

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39. Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven*, 246-55.

40. *Ibid.*, 150-52.

41. Seven editions of *A Dictionary of the Maori Language* have been issued. My own copy of the 1975 edition was a gift from dear Māori friends. There is now a 1985 softbound printing.

Just north of Russell is Maiki Hill, with its famous flagstaff. This was where Hone Heke began the first Māori war with the Crown by cutting down the flagstaff to show his opposition to the British claim that Waitangi Treaty, which had been sort of signed on 6 February 1840, led the British to think it made the Māori subjects of the British monarchy. The first time he did this was on 11 March 1844. I also had a look at most of the places where that war, which ended on 11 January 1845, was fought. I heard the stories of those dreadful battles, and also had a look at where most of them took place. Māori who were Christians fought on both sides.<sup>42</sup> I still find that fact deeply troubling. However, I now like knowing that the flagstaff was finally replaced in January 1858 by Maihi Paraone Kawiti, whose father, Te Ruki Kawiti, had fought with Hone Heka. The motivation was a desire for peace (see p. 266). I like knowing that it was a Latter-day Saint who was responsible for that gracious symbolic act.

Elsmore calls attention to how many of those she calls Māori “prophets” appropriated the language of the Bible in fashioning what they taught in opposition to the Crown. They were, she argues, borrowing metaphors from the Bible to express their disappointment with the behavior of Christian missionaries.<sup>43</sup> She opines about Māori “prophets” in two books. In *Mana from Heaven* she uses only the English word *prophet*, which she uses to describe Māori who launched protest movements or founded Māori churches. However, she does give attention to the Māori word *matakite* (seer) in *Like Them that Dream*.<sup>44</sup> One needs to keep in mind that in the Book of Mormon, seers are greater than

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42. For details see Wikipedia, s.v. “Flagstaff War,” last updated March 29, 2019, 23:37, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flagstaff\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flagstaff_War).

43. See Elsmore’s *Mana from Heaven* and also her earlier *Like Them that Dream: Maori and the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Wellington, NZ: Moana Press, 1985; Auckland, NZ: Libro International, 2011).

44. In the “Glossary” of *Like Them that Dream*, Elsmore has “Matakite — second sight, prophecy” (p. 201). However, H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, 7th ed. (Wellington, NZ, 1975), has *matakite* mean “Seer, one who foresees an event,” and then also to “Practice divination” (p. 188). An alternative word is *matatuhi*, meaning “Seer, augur” (p. 191). In addition, in Māori lore, seers use two *whatu kura* (seer stones), since *whatu* means “stone” (p. 492). And *whare kura* had a place in the initiation in a *whare wānanga* (p. 157). During the initiation in a *whare wānanga*, small pebbles were “swallowed by the pupil (tauira) during his initiation by the tohunga” (p. 492). In addition, two seer stones have names: *Hukatai*, which is “a stone used in the ceremonies of the *whare wananga*” (p. 68); and *Rehutai*, which means *mist*, while *Hukatai*, means *spray*, suggesting that *matakite* might have once been used by *tohunga* for navigating.

prophets.<sup>45</sup> Prophets speak for God, while seers, among other things, actually encounter divine beings. I am confident that something like this explains why, in *Mana from Heaven*, Elsmore mentions only one “prophet” — Paora Potangaroa — who opened the door for Latter-day Saint missionaries, while ignoring Arama Toiroa and several others.

### The Larger Context

Samuel Marsden, the harsh Anglican chaplain of the Parramatta penal colony in Australia, made his first of many visits to New Zealand in 1814. He preached the first sermon to the Māori on Christmas Day. However, bringing Christian faith to the Māori proved difficult. It was in 1825, eleven years later, when the first Māori was baptized. There are several reasons. At first, instead of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Māori, CMS missionaries struggled to survive. They made a living by trading muskets to the Māori for provisions with which to sustain themselves. Henry Williams arrived in Paihia on Marsden’s fourth visit. Since muskets and Māori did not mix at all well, he ended the musket trade. But the Nga Puhi *iwi* had secured weapons that led to brutal raids in what is known as the Musket War, in which Māori sought to settle old accounts, and hence also fought and killed each other in large numbers with muskets.

Despite all of this and more, those first CMS missionaries eventually had remarkable success, primarily because those CMS missionaries made the Bible available in *te reo* and also trained the Māori to read it in their own language. Elsmore describes this in both *Like Then That Dream* and *Mana from Heaven*. This also, she argues, eventually led Māori who were deeply troubled by the English incursion in New Zealand to fashion their own versions of faith, often based on the Old Testament rather than the Christian faith brought to them by Anglican and Methodist missionaries. The leaders of these movements also sought to use biblical imagery in radical protest movements. There were several short-lived Māori movements laced with elements drawn from the Bible, some even to justify guerilla warfare against the Crown, as well as those Māori who sided with the Crown. The primary issue driving these movements seems to have been the promiscuous appropriation of Māori land.

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45. Mosiah 8:15. And, for context, Mosiah 8:3-17; 28:6. In addition, Joseph Smith recovered two interpreters (seer stones) that he used when he began dictating the Book of Mormon to scribes, and then shifted to his own seer stone, when he had to surrender the interpreters to the heavenly messenger after the loss of the first portion of the Book of Mormon that he had dictated to his scribe.

However, the Māori who were attracted to the Church of Jesus Christ were, as both of the books edited by Selwyn Kātene demonstrate, essentially peace makers — that is, eager to find ways to live peacefully with the Pākehā.

### Disillusionment with Anglican Christianity

According to Peter Lineham, “The Mormon mission to the Māori flourished from 1882 in a direct reaction to the lowered reputation of other churches among the Maori.”<sup>46</sup> Most of the Māori who became Latter-day Saints seem to have been disillusioned Anglicans. This is illustrated in the remarkable account of Henare Potea by Gina Colvin and Hana Espie Tukukino (pp. 21–37). Potea was a devout Anglican who resisted radical Māori factions for much of his adult life. Then, in 1884, when he encountered Latter-day Saint missionaries, he became a faithful Latter-day Saint to the end of his life.

Colvin provides a fine account of the Anglican career of Potea (pp. 24–33). She also describes the earlier rapid social transformation that began when the “Napuhi’s rampage across the North Island saw the decimation of many Ngati Porou hapu at the hands of Hongi Hika and Pomare” (p. 24). This was, of course, the sour fruit of CMS missionaries in the Bay of Islands, who traded muskets for provisions, which made it possible for the Nga Puhi *iwi* from the Northland to make war on other *iwi* in the North Island. Colvin ably sets out these grisly details (pp. 23–25).

This grim history is introduced (see pp. 21–22) by a stunning account by Hana Espie Tukukino, “the great-great-granddaughter of Henare Potae,” who was once headed for the delights of Tolaga Bay when she “heard the unmistakable voice of her deceased grandmother speaking to her: “Hoki ki te kainga [go back to the home], there is something there for you” (p. 21). She disappointed her kids by not going directly to the beach, but “to the old family homestead — to what was left of her grandmother Tepora Kautuku Jury’s home” (pp. 21–22).

Rummaging around, she eventually found “a Maori version of the Book of Mormon translated by Hoani Te Whatahoro Jury, Henare Potae and Piripi Te Maari,” and other copies of Latter-day Saint scriptures (p. 22). She had connected with her noble ancestor and also with his truly remarkable *whānau*.

Henare Potae was a scholar who could read and write both Māori and English; he also had “expertise in translating and editing texts”

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46. Peter J. Lineham, “Missions and Missionaries,” *Te Ara — Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, accessed February 11, 2019, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/missions-and-missionaries>. I strongly urge readers to consult this essay. Lineham is the premier New Zealand church historian.



(p. 23). He began as a devout Anglican. “But in 1884 Henare disaffiliated from Anglicanism and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (p. 22). Unfortunately, little is known about him “beyond his contribution to the Maori translation of the Book of Mormon” (p. 22),<sup>47</sup> which task is not insignificant. It is possible and perhaps likely, according to the authors of this essay, that he had experienced “some kind of witness or charismatic event that caused this radical conversion to a church that was fairly unpopular on the East Coast” of the North Island of New Zealand (p. 22). He also “dared to go against every cultural and social expectation of a person of his standing and join the fledgling and audacious Mormons to the end of his days” (p. 23).

This fine essay ends with a truly beautiful *korero* (speech) from Hana Espie Tukukino, addressed to Henry Potae, her beloved ancestor (p. 33). This is the Māori world at its very best.

### A Small Beginning

William Bromley (1839–1911),<sup>48</sup> who first served a brief mission in England in 1871,<sup>49</sup> was called early in November 1880 to preside over the Australasian Mission<sup>50</sup> of The Church of Jesus Christ. Then, on 11 December, he was instructed by John Taylor to strive to teach the

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47. The essay by Gina Colvin and Hana Espie Tukukino on Henare Potae should be compared and contrasted with Steven Oliver’s biographical sketch, where one bland sentence indicates that he “was a member of the Church of England, but in 1884 he was baptized into the Mormon faith with his son Wiremu and his cousin Hone Te Whaia.” See Steven Oliver, “Potae, Henare,” *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, (1990); *Te Ara — the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, s.v. “Potae, Henare,” accessed February 27, 2019, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1p25/potae-henare>.

48. Bromley’s journals are a real treasure. See Fred Bromley Hodson, ed., *None Shall Excel Thee: The Life and Journal of William Michael Bromley* (Yorba Linda, CA: Shumway Family History Services, 1990).

49. Hodson, *None Shall Excel Thee*, 33–70. This is the second chapter of this collection of Bromley’s missionary journals. The next eight chapters contain Bromley’s very detailed daily accounts of his endeavors in New Zealand. On December 10, 1880, Bromley started from his home to preside over the Australasian Mission, which included both New Zealand and Australia.

50. The first “official” Latter-day Saint missionary endeavors in Australia began in 1851. The official name was Australasian Mission. Since *australis* is Latin for “south,” it yielded the name for both Australia and the region that includes both New Zealand and Australia. Hence *Australasia* was the name for that mission until the Brethren formed separate missions on 1 January 1897 for New Zealand and Australia. In addition, beginning in 1854, there were brief visits by Latter-day Saint missionaries in Australia to New Zealand.

Māori, after which he was set apart by Franklin D. Richards.<sup>51</sup> He arrived in Auckland, New Zealand, on 4 December 1880 with two new missionaries. There were two missionaries on the South Island, both of whom were about to return home, and there were no missionaries in Australia.<sup>52</sup> (Bromley never visited or assigned missionaries to Australia.)

Though Bromley brought with him a letter from the president's office, signed by John Taylor and Joseph F. Smith, and addressed to "the Saints in New Zealand," indicating that he had been called to preside over them," on Thursday 20 January 1881, at a meeting of the priesthood of the Auckland Branch, he "presented his credentials and was received by the unanimous vote of the meeting as President of the New Zealand Mission, and upon being requested, appointed Auckland as the headquarters of the mission."<sup>53</sup> This was also approved. This seems to have been necessary because he was there essentially without purse or scrip, which meant that those often-quarreling Saints<sup>54</sup> had agreed to provide him with lodging, food, clothing, travel, expenses, and so forth, which they did.<sup>55</sup>

Bromley's own ardent first efforts to teach Māori the restored gospel were fruitless, and those of his few missionaries were bizarre, clumsy failures. Then Bromley, after rebaptizing William John McDonnel,<sup>56</sup> who was the graver at the Dry Dock in Auckland, also called him to be a missionary to the Māori<sup>57</sup> and blessed him to learn the Māori language.<sup>58</sup> This he did.<sup>59</sup> McDonnel then met, taught, and on 18 November 1881 baptized Ngataki,<sup>60</sup> the first Māori to become a Latter-day Saint in New Zealand.<sup>61</sup>

51. See Hodson, *None Shall Excel Thee*, 93. Also see Newton, *Tiki and Temple*, 27.

52. When Bromley arrived in Auckland, New Zealand, there were two missionaries on the South Island, both of whom were soon on their way home. One was George Batt, the acting Australasian Mission President (1880-1881).

53. Hodson, *None Shall Excel Thee*, 97.

54. Bromley often complains about the quarreling members of the Auckland Branch.

55. Having lived in Auckland twice, I am amazed at how far Bromley had to walk to visit fellow Saints and how far the Saints had to walk to and from, often in the rain, to meet together.

56. William John McDonnel, and his wife, had immigrated from Great Britain to New Zealand, where they became Latter-day Saints.

57. Hodson, *None Shall Excel Thee*, 123.

58. *Ibid.*

59. See Midgley, "Māori Latter-day Saint Faith," 51-53.

60. Hodson, *None Shall Excel Thee*, 310-11.

61. *Ibid.*, 293-96.

### The First Māori Latter-day Saint Branch

However, the real breakthrough took place later when Bromley accepted an invitation to visit Thomas Cox, who had moved from Auckland to Cambridge, which is 14 miles south of Hamilton, where he hoped to make a living as a bootmaker. The Cox family had previously been members of the quarreling Auckland Branch. Bromley and Cox were surprised when William McDonnell, as a result of didactic dreams, turned up before breakfast on the morning of Christmas Eve.<sup>62</sup> McDonnell and Cox reconciled,<sup>63</sup> and then the three soon set out to pass out copies of a tract in the Māori language which McDonnell had managed to have fashioned and printed. Later in the day those three met Hare Teimana, who either had a dream or, as I believe, had a visit from the Apostle Peter, who then in a vision showed those three Latter-day Saints to Teimana and explained that they were authorized to act for him.<sup>64</sup> Teimana also explained that his daughter was seriously ill. They gave her a blessing, and the next morning she had mostly recovered.<sup>65</sup>

Then, after instructions by McDonnell, who could do this in *te reo*,<sup>66</sup> in the evening of Christmas Day, Teimana, his wife, and Hare Te Katere (Harry Carter) were baptized in the Waikato River, with other Māori observing.<sup>67</sup> On 26 December, William McDonnell left early in the morning for Auckland, but on 29 December Bromley sent a telegraph message to McDonnell asking him to come back to Cambridge to administer the sacrament for the new Māori Saints on Sunday, 31 December, and to explain the gospel to a group of Māori.<sup>68</sup> On 1 January 1883, six more Māori were baptized.<sup>69</sup> Bromley also makes it clear that those Māori were camped near the Māori Land Court, with which they had important business.<sup>70</sup> They had to secure a legal title to specific plots of land, since the Māori had no idea of private property prior to being “civilized” by the British. They had to do this or risk not owning the land upon which they depended.

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62. Ibid., 147, 311.

63. Ibid., 293.

64. Ibid., 293-96. Bromley's very detailed account covers his entries beginning on 23 December 1882 and ending on 2 January 1883.

65. Ibid., 296-97.

66. Ibid., 113, 118.

67. Ibid., 294.

68. Ibid., 296.

69. Ibid., 297.

70. Ibid., 298.

Bromley's journal contains a separate "summary" of his own endeavors to teach the restored gospel to the Māori which he inserted in his journal immediately after his Tuesday 6 March 1883 entry. His journal entry for 23 December 1882 reads as follows:

President Bromley visited Cambridge, and on the same date, Elder McDonnel was so impressed that he could not resist the influence which prompted him to follow. He had been warned in dreams, in relation to the matter, among other things it was shown to him that the Maories were waiting to receive the truth. He accordingly left Auckland at 4.15 P.M. and upon arriving in Hamilton completed the journey on foot to Cambridge, fourteen miles, and arrived at daybreak the next morning. After partaking of breakfast which was hospitably supplied by brother [Thomas] Cox, President Bromley, Elders McDonnel [and] Cox visited the Maories [*sic*] in the vicinity, but at first met with little encouragement, and as the party were returning from the journey, Elder McDonnel was led to visit a party of natives not before seen. He found them anxious to hear and they received the word, one of the party relating a dream wherein he had been forewarned in relation to the truths presented, and on the following day, 25 Dec 1882 two males, and one female, all adults were baptised, Elder McDonnel officiating, confirmation by Prest Bromley & Elder Cox. January 1 1883 six other adults, natives, were baptised, and much enquiry is manifest. Elder Wm Jno McDonnel interpreted, and was blest in enjoying the spirit of his calling, prompt to act when called upon.<sup>71</sup>

By 25 February 1883, there were, according to Bromley, 27 Māori ready to be organized into the first Māori Latter-day Saint Branch, in Waotu, which is about 18 miles south of Cambridge. With William McDonnel back at work in Auckland, Thomas Cox could not have been teaching them the restored gospel, nor could he have conducted the negotiations to determine who of the Māori men was willing to be ordained to the priesthood and assume the difficult task of leading this branch.

Anaru Eketone's essay (pp. 75–97) is a richly detailed account of Pepene Eketone, who was baptized in Cambridge on 9 January 1883 by

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71. *Ibid.*, 311. This is not, of course, a contemporary account. But for my immediate purposes it is a sort of "final summary" of those first Māori to become Latter-day Saints.

Thomas Cox. He became an important member of the Waotu Branch. I had entirely forgotten that in 1985, R. Lanier Britsch had called attention to Eketone's baptism and his immediate crucial assistance to the Church of Jesus Christ.<sup>72</sup> Now Anaru Eketone has fleshed out the brief account provided by Britsch by showing that before his becoming a Latter-day Saint, Pepene "was raised a Methodist by his native missionary parents, but became an early member of the Mormon Church and later the Ratana church, traveling with its leader as a kaumatua and advisor on two world tours" (p. 75).

Anaru Eketone provides a very detailed account of the ancestors of Pepene, and also the strong attachment to the Wesleyan movement by the Eketone whānau (pp. 75–77). Anaru indicates that Pepene "must have been a student of considerable ability." When he was 16 he attended the elite Auckland Grammar school, where he won prizes within six months (p. 77). Then, when Pepene was 18, he was a star student at the Wesleyan Three Kings school (p. 78), where he was being readied for the Methodist ministry (p. 79). In 1882, and married, he was in Cambridge translating for Māori camped there to conduct business with the Native Land Courts (p. 79).

"Pepene became an important part of the growth of the Mormon Church and was often used as a translator," according to Anaru (p. 79). Without William McDonnel to translate for the Māori, Thomas Cox had to rely entirely upon Pepene Eketone to translate, because those other Māori could not understand English.

On February 18 Thomas Cox gathered together a group of twelve Maori men to discuss giving some of them the Aaronic priesthood, but he was limited in that he could only speak in English. Pepene translated for Cox and was one of the twelve men asked if they were willing to be ordained. After some discussion over a week it was decided that Hare Te Katera should receive the ordination first, all the younger men feeling that it was something that should be left to the oldest in the group. (p. 79)

And on 25 February 1883, Thomas Cox organized the 74 Māori members of The Church of Jesus Christ into the Waotu Branch (p. 79).

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72. See R. Lanier (Lanny) Britsch, "Pakeha then Maori," in *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 265–67. Britsch provides a fine account of what followed the events of the first baptisms of Māori camped at Cambridge to do business at the Native Land Court. I had forgotten that he had pointed out that some of the new Māori who were baptized had "talent and stature among their people, and on 9 January 1883, Cox baptized Pepene Eketone, who was very gifted."

However, when his business failed, Cox and his family went back to Auckland in mid-1883. “Without help and leadership,” according to Marjorie Newton, “the initial enthusiasm of the Waikato Maori waned, and the mission to the Maori in the Waikato was temporarily abandoned by the end of July 1883, though success began to occur elsewhere and soon resumed in the Waikato.”<sup>73</sup> Anaru Eketone demonstrates that Newton was wrong about this. He does this in part by providing an accurate account of the what began on Christmas Day in 1882 (p. 79), and what soon followed.

“All of what we know about Pepene’s subsequent involvement in the Mormon Church,” according to Anaru Eketone, “came from the journals of William Gardner, who spent over three years ministering in the Waikato area in the mid-1880s, and from Francis Kirkham, who was there in the late 1890s” (p. 81). Anaru Eketone is, of course, aware that “William Gardner visited Cambridge in December 1884 to find out what had become of the Waotu Branch but claimed that most of the early converts had turned their backs on the Church” (p. 80).<sup>74</sup>

However, Anaru Eketone, by drawing on the journals of both William Gardner and Francis Kirkham, has been able to demonstrate that there were Māori Latter-day Saints scattered around the Waikato, some with ties to that first branch. He points out that Cambridge, in 1882, “was a frontier town,” where Māori camped while waiting to have their claims heard by the Native Land Court; hence “it is unlikely that many of the early converts actually lived in Cambridge permanently” (p. 80),<sup>75</sup> and he is able to trace some of those early Saints who were visited first by William Gardner and later Francis Kirkham. And Papene Eketone was still a faithful Latter-day Saint in 1898 (p. 81).<sup>76</sup> Also, his “translation

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73. Newton, *Tiki and Temple*, 35.

74. See Kātene, *By Their Fruits You Will Know Them*, 93n37. Anaru Eketone cites William Gardner’s papers 1884-1916, for 17 December 1884.

75. Anaru Eketone quotes William Bromley’s vivid description of “over a thousand Maori camped” in fields waiting to try to settle their claims to land (p. 80). Waotu is twenty miles over rough country to the southeast of Cambridge. Why was Waotu the name of this first branch? I assume the answer is that at least some or even many of those who first joined the Church in Cambridge were from Waotu and planned to return once they had completed their business with the Native Land Court. This would explain why, when William Gardner first tried to locate those first Saints, it seemed to him that most of them had gone missing. But later he located some of them scattered around the Waikato. And much later Francis Kirkham was visiting those same Māori Saints.

76. On reading the New Zealand missionary journals of Francis Kirkham, I recognized the exact places and some of the Māori he mentions. But I did not see

skills were put to use when he translated a four-page Mormon tract by William Bromley entitled ‘Ko nga korero hari mo te haringa nui: Glad tidings of great joy’ in 1883” (p. 80).

“We are not sure at what stage Pepene left the Mormon Church,” Anaru Eketone indicates, “but we do know that he became an important member of the Ratana movement in the 1920s” (p. 88). Pepene’s vast experience in those Native Land Courts and his subsequent struggles for justice from the Crown seem to have molded him for the Ratana movement, which has always had a deep interest in the political struggle for social justice. Pepene’s important role in the Ratana movement, both as advisor and companion, is set out in detail in this essay. Pepene had a very “deep commitment to justice,” and he was “a man of generosity and dignity” (p. 92).

Why the shift in his faith? “Pepene’s involvement in Methodism and Mormonism concentrated on faith and good works in this life as preparation for the next; Ratana focused more on the here and now” (p. 89).

### “Let it be done”

Witi Ihimaera (aka Witi Tame Ihimaera-Smiler) is a truly gifted writer; he has published novels, collections of essays and short stories, much very astute social commentary, and autobiographical essays. He also has considerable musical talent in fashioning opera and as a librettist.<sup>77</sup> From 1973 to 1989 he was a diplomat in the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also a very productive author.<sup>78</sup> Then for two decades he taught Māori literature at Auckland University. He is the single most important Māori writer. I am delighted that he has written a celebration of his Latter-day Saint grandfather and his descendants.<sup>79</sup>

The first of his novels that I read was *The Matriarch*.<sup>80</sup> I was enthralled by the rich detail about the Māori world on the East Coast of the North Island, including their struggles with the steady *Pākehā* incursion into

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the importance of his friendship with Pepene Eketone.

77. See “Ihimaera, Witi,” New Zealand Book Council, last updated September 2017, <https://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writer/ihimaera-witi/>; and “Witi Ihimaera,” Penguin Books New Zealand, last accessed February 21, 2019, <https://www.penguin.co.nz/authors/witi-ihimaera>.

78. Witi Ihimarea began working in the post office in Wellington. Then in 1972 he published his first novel. The New Zealand Prime Minister, Norman Kirk, read the novel and shifted Witi to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

79. Because they provided assistance, Witi Ihimaera has graciously included two other family members, Alice Brown Haenga and Tiopira Rauna, as authors.

80. Witi Ihimaera, *The Matriarch* (Auckland, NZ: Seeker and Warburg, 1996). This was one of many reprints of this complex bit of fiction first published in 1986.

their world. This is all woven together in this complex and intriguing novel. There is a subtle account of a string of Māori protest movements that resisted, even at times violently, the British colonizers messing with their world. When I first read this novel, it was for me, among other things, a very beautifully crafted “history,” but without quibbles and footnotes, and with very penetrating and troubling insights<sup>81</sup> than what one very often finds in stuffy academic historiography.

Latter-day Saints are mentioned once or twice in this novel. Then there is a rather detailed description of the mode of instruction given in a *whare wānanga* — what Witi Ihimaera described as “the university of the Maori, one of the most exclusive universities in the world, erected by priests and selected members of the rangatira and ariki. No commoners took part in the raising of the building and the students were selected from among the high-born.”<sup>82</sup> What follows the instruction of elite Māori was roughly what I later heard from Cleve Barlow about his training from an Anglican priest in the Hokianga.

When I reached Chapter 15 in *The Matriarch* I was convinced that its author was a Latter-day Saint, or had been, or somehow knew a great deal about the faith of Māori Latter-day Saints. I have been beguiled by Witi Ihimaera’s writings from the moment I read *The Matriarch*. Perhaps his most famous novel is a rather slim story presumably written for children entitled *The Whale Rider*,<sup>83</sup> which was made popular by the film adaption by the same name.<sup>84</sup> This novel was written in New York when he was living “in an apartment overlooking the Hudson River,” he explains in the American edition, “when my daughters ... arrived on vacation from New Zealand.” One of his daughters wondered, “Why are the boys always heroes?” At the same time a whale turned up in

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81. *The Matriarch*, for me, is in part a complex and exacting account of some of what Bronwyn Elmsore addressed in 1989 in *Mana from Heaven*, but without footnotes and also without the garbled commentary on *whare wānanga* (p. 150), which she traces to 1856 (p. 35) rather than the usual 1861 — a significant point. She then engages the “doctrine of Io,” the Māori high God, which she traces back to 1858 (p. 150). This leads immediately to her garbled account of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New Zealand (pp. 150-52).

82. Ihimaera, *The Matriarch*, 342.

83. Witi Ihimaera, *The Whale Rider*, rev. ed. (Auckland, NZ: Reed Books, 1987; Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2003).

84. For details concerning this wonderful film, see Wikipedia, s.v. “Whale Rider,” last updated April 8, 2019, 03:17, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whale\\_Rider](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whale_Rider).



the Hudson River. Ihimaera, in three weeks, had written this so-called “children’s novel.”<sup>85</sup>

My wife’s copy of *The Whale Rider* indicates that this novel was finished on 14 August 1986. She purchased her copy at Whitcoulls on Queen Street in Auckland early in 1987. I believe this to be the initial New Zealand publication. It is filled with Māori words and expressions, yet there is no glossary and no translation. My wife noticed the Māori incantation *hui e, haumi e, taiki e* at the end of about every other chapter, and she insisted that I provide a translation. She thought that language might be a key to understanding the novel, or at least might help her grasp the meaning of the lush metaphors and curious plot in the book.

The American edition of *The Whale Rider* includes a glossary,<sup>86</sup> in which *hui e, haumi e, taiki e* is said to be a “ritual incantation: join everything together, bind it together, let it be done.” This “incantation” ends 10 of the 21 chapters.<sup>87</sup> In the American edition, each repetition of this ritual language is followed by the English “let it be done.”

Nearing the crisis in this tale, “the chief, Koro Appirana,” explains to those faced with the death of the mighty whale: “Once, our world was one where the Gods talked to our ancestors and man talked with the Gods. Sometimes the Gods gave our ancestors special powers.”<sup>88</sup> Koro then adds the following:

But then ... man assumed a cloak of arrogance and set himself up above the Gods. He even tried to defeat Death, but failed. As he grew in his arrogance, he started to drive a wedge through the original oneness of the world. In the passing of Time he divided the world into that half he could believe in and that half he could not believe in. The real and the unreal. The natural and supernatural. The present and the past. The scientific and the fantastic. He put a barrier between both worlds, and everything on his side was called rational and everything on the other side was called irrational. Belief in our *Maori* Gods ... has often been considered irrational.<sup>89</sup>

Then, at a decisive moment, Koro thunders, “If we have forgotten the communion then we have ceased to be Maori!”<sup>90</sup>

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85. Ihimaera, author’s note to *The Whale Rider*.

86. Ibid., 151-52.

87. Ibid., 7, 23, 45, 59, 76, 92, 98, 107, 142, 150.

88. Ibid., 116.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid., 117.

Now for my own little sermon. As I have indicated, I am pleased that Witi Ihimaera has fashioned a moving, carefully worded account of the faith of Pere Smiler, and also of his impact on his posterity, including himself. In addition, the language I have quoted from *The Whale Rider* seems to capture rather well the end product of European post-enlightenment skepticism about divine things that has infected the Māori world, and has also ended up contributing to the plight of especially urban Māori, who are vulnerable to the vices brought to them by British colonizers. In our post-enlightenment world, where there is a deep skepticism about divine things, faith in God is challenged precisely because humans have “assumed a cloak of arrogance.”

In addition, those first, often-dedicated, passionate Christian missionaries brought with them both a dogmatic theology that challenges much of the *tikanga* of the Māori world and a worldview in which they saw the Māori as unenlightened, pagan savages who had to be “civilized.” Part of what that included was, among other things, that they did not understand the real value of their land. And when they were converted to the sectarian version of the Christian God, who once revealed himself to humans, they found that God no longer can actually do that sort of thing, since genuine divine, special revelations ceased with the death of those first Apostles. The language I quoted from *The Whale Rider*, at least from my perspective, also signals that if we apply it to the current situation, there is a need to find wisdom in the very best elements of the Māori past.

### A General Assessment

In the late 1990s there was a renewed interest in old Māori arcane lore among Māori Latter-day Saints. The informal *wānanga* held by Heriwini Jones were for several years an important source for convert baptism and reactivation; followed by other similar and related public presentations by Cleve Barlow and others,<sup>91</sup> as well as the remarkable collection of photographs taken by Latter-day Saint missionaries and assembled by Rangi Parker, which provides a visual record of Māori Saints.<sup>92</sup> This seems to me to have prepared the way for Selwyn Kātene’s fine series of books on remarkable early Māori Latter-day Saints.

This second volume of essays assembled by Kātene helps to flesh out and correct details in the truly singular Māori Latter-day Saint historical

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91. See Midgley, “Māori Latter-day Saint Faith,” 62; and Midgley, “Remembering and Honoring,” 289n43.

92. See Midgley, “Remembering and Honoring,” 283-84.

narrative. Like the previous volume in this series, *By Their Fruits* helps to remedy omissions and defects in earlier sectarian and secular accounts of the faith of Māori Latter-day Saints. These two volumes should also help current Latter-day Saints, both Māori and *Pākehā*, to better understand why and how the Church of Jesus Christ, beginning in the 1880s, rapidly became essentially a Māori community of Saints, at least for the next eight decades.

In addition, knowing more about the faith journey of specific individual Māori who became Latter-day Saints should help contemporary Māori remember and thereby also emulate those early Saints in their own endeavor to become genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. This, I believe, is a crucial role of this series of volumes. Accounts of the discipleship of early Māori Saints will also, I believe, help build and sustain the Kingdom of God by reinforcing the shield that the restored gospel has provided Māori Saints from the continuing ravages of colonization that challenge indigenous peoples everywhere.

Those who currently identify as Māori and are faithful Latter-day Saints have been liberated from the usual temptations that every human being faces during their mortal probation, and also from the additional evils thrust upon indigenous peoples everywhere by European colonization.

This fine collection of essays provides evidence of the sanctifying work of the *Wairua Tapu* (Holy Spirit) in the lives of some memorable *Hunga Tapu* (Saints), who also often found very good reasons and proper ways to resist the very corrosive acids of secular modernity. The Māori Latter-day Saint historical narrative should not be constricted by secular religious studies explanations and categories. I am therefore pleased that Māori, who are not in thrall to such explanations, are now striving to recover available sources and thereby add to and also amend portions of the truly remarkable Māori Latter-day Saint historical narrative.

Despite the death we all face, those determined to be genuinely Saints by seeking sanctification can now thereby enjoy the hope for a truly glorious life after life with their loved ones in the highest heaven, without the disappointments and debilities we all face as we endure our mortal probation.

Louis Midgley (PhD, Brown University) is an emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University, where he taught the history of political philosophy, which includes efforts of Christian churchmen and theologians to identify, explain, understand and cope with the evils in this world. Dr. Midgley has therefore had an abiding interest in both

*dogmatic and systematic theology, and the alternatives to both. His doctoral dissertation was on the religious socialist political ideology of Paul Tillich, a once famous German American Protestant theologian, most famous for his systematic theology which is a radical elaboration of classical theism. Dr. Midgley's encounter with the writings of Leo Strauss, an influential Jewish philosopher/intellectual historian drew his attention to the radical challenge posed by what is often called modernity to both the wisdom of Jerusalem, which is grounded on divine revelation, and also the contrasting, competing wisdom of Athens, which was fashioned by unaided human reason. Dr. Midgley has an interest in the ways in which communities of faith have responded to the challenges posed by modernity to faith in God grounded on divine special revelation.*

**D&C 21, GEORGE ALBERT SMITH,  
AND HUGH B. BROWN:  
A FRESH LOOK AT THREE INCIDENTS IN  
CHURCH HISTORY**

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**Duane Boyce**

***Abstract.** When discussions arise about the relationship between Church members and the prophets who lead them, certain episodes in Church history often appear. These include the Lord's words about "all patience and faith" in Doctrine and Covenants 21:4–5, as well as incidents involving George Albert Smith and Hugh B. Brown. On the surface, such episodes might seem to raise doubts about the reliability of the presiding Brethren in representing the Lord or to minimize the importance of Church orthodoxy itself. A closer look shows such interpretations to be a mistake, however. When we clarify the record, we see that these episodes do not support the conclusions that are sometimes drawn from them. Examining these incidents also permits making a point about so-called "blind obedience."*

There are a number of dots to connect in trying to reach a thoughtful perspective on the relationship between members of the Church and the prophets who have been called to lead them. It is only natural that members do this in different ways and therefore reach disparate conclusions on the matter.

One way to try to reduce this disparity, at least to some degree, is to make sure we are thoughtful about the dots themselves. Some items of evidence might be so widely understood in a particular way or to have been part of the conversation for so long that we haven't actually examined them in a while. When that is the case, it can pay to step back and take a fresh look.

Three incidents in Church history seem ripe for such reinspection. One of these is the Lord's 1830 instruction that we are to follow prophets "in

all patience and faith” (D&C 21:4–5). A second is George Albert Smith’s famous disavowal of the claim that “when our leaders speak, the thinking has been done” in 1945. And a third is Hugh B. Brown’s remarks about “heterodox” thoughts to a BYU audience in 1969.

It is not unusual for these episodes to arise in discussions about the relationship between the presiding authorities of the Church and the members they lead. The episodes regarding D&C 21 and George Albert Smith come up (at least in conversations I am involved in) because both the Lord and a prophet are thought to urge caution about the trustworthiness of the presiding councils in representing the Lord. And the episode with Hugh B. Brown comes up because he is thought to minimize the actual importance of Church orthodoxy and to believe that thinking *per se* is what really matters. Since these incidents have taken on such importance over the years (decades even), it seems worthwhile, as I said, to pause, reexamine them, and see if they actually have such meanings. To this end I will revisit each of the episodes, taking them up in historical order.<sup>1</sup>

### “In All Patience and Faith” — The Lord in D&C 21:4–5

On April 6, 1830, at the organization of the Church, the Lord said this regarding Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants Section 21: “Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me (v. 4); for his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith” (v. 5).<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, this statement is understood to refer to all prophets, not just Joseph, and in interpreting it, the *prima facie* reading would be that the Lord is telling us that following prophets is not easy: doing what the Lord wants, as revealed through his prophets, often requires faith, sacrifice, and perseverance.

But the passage is not always read this way. Sometimes readers focus on the phrase “in all patience and faith” in verse 5 and conclude from it that prophets must make errors, both many and large, since otherwise there would be no need for exercising “all patience and faith” in following them. For the sake of convenience, let’s call this the “prophets’ errors”

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1. Again, I am responding to my experience of how these incidents are understood and used. My remarks might not apply to all the ways different individuals use them.

2. The wording in the current edition of the D&C is identical to the original. See *The Joseph Smith Papers*, Revelation Book 1, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/2#full-transcript>.

interpretation of this passage: the verses are about prophets' human weaknesses, which is why they talk about patience and faith in following these leaders. Both Patrick Mason and Terryl Givens, among others, adopt this reading of the passage, and both have given it a prominent place in their discussions about following prophets.<sup>3</sup>

### Why the Passage is Easy to Misread

If we focus on verse 5, it is easy to see why one might reach the “prophets’ errors” interpretation of this passage. The problem arises when we notice that verse 4 actually provides the context for verse 5. There the Lord tells us that we are to give heed to the prophet’s words specifically “*as he receiveth them.*” This makes clear that the Lord is talking in this passage about prophets’ revelations — not about their human weaknesses or about just any words they happen to say.

Recognizing this explicit context radically affects our understanding of verse 5. It makes clear that in talking about patience and faith, the Lord (just as the *prima facie* reading has it) is talking about what is required to follow his *revelations*. It has nothing to do with human errors.

Nor, in saying that we are to receive prophets’ words “as if from mine own mouth,” is the Lord merely saying that prophets possess divine authorization — i.e., that they are officially authorized to represent him despite the serious errors they make. To the contrary, verse 4 tells us specifically what we are to receive “as if from mine own mouth”: the Lord’s *revelations* to his prophets. To think the Lord is making a point about delegation to mortals — that he is authorizing them to represent him despite their errors and that he is telling us to be patient with them because of their errors — is a clear misapplication of these verses.<sup>4</sup>

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3. See Terryl L. Givens, “Letter to a Doubter,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 4 (2013), <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/letter-to-a-doubter/>; Terryl L. Givens and Fiona Givens, “On Delegation and Discipleship: The Ring of Pharaoh,” in *The Crucible of Doubt: Reflections on the Quest for Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014); Marc Bohn, “Terryl Givens on What It Means to Sustain,” *Times and Seasons*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.timesandseasons.org/harchive/2016/02/terryl-givens-on-what-it-means-to-sustain/>; and “In All Patience and Faith,” in Patrick Q. Mason, *Planted: Belief and Belonging in an Age of Doubt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015).

4. Dividing the scriptures into verses offers many advantages. One of the disadvantages is that it requires us to look more carefully for context: a new verse is very often *not* the start of a new thought. That is the case here. Modern editions of the D&C make obvious that verse 4 is the context for verse 5, but for some readers it might be even clearer without versification, as it appeared when first recorded. See

This means that, however well-intentioned, the “prophets’ errors” interpretation of this passage is mistaken. But it also has a further consequence: applying it to these verses generates what seems very much like an absurdity. After all, if we read both verses, this interpretation requires us to imagine (1) receiving from a prophet a statement that is based on revelation from the Lord, (2) receiving it as if we were hearing it directly from the Lord’s own mouth, and (3) *at the same time thinking the statement is wrong and to be summoning patience to obey it*. In other words, we are required to imagine both that the message came from the Lord and that the message could well be wrong. Although unwitting, this is the position we are logically committed to if we think these verses are telling us to be patient because of mistakes. Since the passage is about revelation to prophets and about our receiving such revelation as if from the Lord’s own mouth, if the passage is about mistakes, it would seem to be about mistakes that stem from *him*.

The central problem with the “prophets’ errors” interpretation of this passage, then, is that it fails to be informed by verse 4. This oversight leads to a misinterpretation of the phrases “in all patience and faith” and “as if from mine own mouth.” And these misinterpretations, in their turn, logically commit us to a view of the Lord that, as I said, seems very much like an absurdity.

### Arguments that Might Seem to Get Around the Problem

Two views about revelation might seem to avoid this problem with D&C 21, so it is worth having a look to see if this is the case.

#### The “Infrequency” of Revelation

The first claim is that prophets receive revelation only occasionally. This is a view relied on to an important extent by Patrick Mason and, in a different context, by Roger Terry.<sup>5</sup> The claim is relevant because, if sound,

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again *The Joseph Smith Papers*, Revelation Book 1, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-book-1/2#full-transcript>. I am indebted to Allen Wyatt for this point.

5. Mason says that the Lord’s intervention is only occasional, both in individual lives and in the Church, and that for the most part the Lord teaches correct principles and requires mortals then to govern themselves — again, both in individual lives and in the Church. See Mason, *Planted*, 108. Roger Terry advances the idea of infrequent revelation at greater length, relying in large part on a quotation by B.H. Roberts that revelation occurs “occasionally.” See Terry, “Why the True Church Cannot Be Perfect,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 46/1 (Spring 2013), 94–107, <https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/>



it would follow that “all patience and faith” is required in following prophets because they will obviously be prone to making human errors (including grave ones) if they aren’t receiving revelation.

There are three matters to notice about this claim of infrequent revelation, however.

The first and most important is this: it contradicts what prophets, seers, and revelators themselves say about their experience. These leaders report that revelation attends them and that it is actually experienced not “occasionally” but daily. Such is the public report of Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, James E. Faust, and Dallin H. Oaks.<sup>6</sup> President Russell M. Nelson spoke of communication from the Lord coming to him with “great intensity”<sup>7</sup> and also declared that “when we convene as a council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, our meeting rooms become rooms of revelation. The Spirit is palpably present.”<sup>8</sup> As I have discussed at some length elsewhere, there are multiple additional statements indicating the same thing, and it leaves a gaping evidentiary hole to assert that revelation is infrequent without

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articles/Dialogue\_V46N01\_427c.pdf. Givens refers to the same quotation by B.H. Roberts, and thus might feel similarly. See *Crucible of Doubt*, 77. Although he quotes only the part stating that the Brethren do not receive revelation in everything — a veritable truism that is very different from saying they receive it in few things — he still calls the statement “sobering.” Since truisms are not typically sobering, it seems possible that Givens is thinking of the whole statement by Elder Roberts, rather than just the part he quotes. I show the flaws in relying on Elder Roberts’ statement in “A Lengthening Shadow: Is Quality of Thought Deteriorating in LDS Scholarly Discourse Regarding Prophets and Revelation?” Part One, *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 26 (2017): 15–17, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/a-lengthening-shadow-is-quality-of-thought-deteriorating-in-lds-scholarly-discourse-regarding-prophets-and-revelation-part-one/>.

6. See Harold B. Lee, “Admonitions for the Priesthood of God,” *Ensign* 3, no. 1 (January 1973), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/1973/01/admonitions-for-the-priesthood-of-god>; Spencer W. Kimball, “Revelation: The Word of the Lord to His Prophets,” *Ensign* 3, no. 5 (May 1977), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/1977/05/revelation-the-word-of-the-lord-to-his-prophets>; James E. Faust, “Come Out of the Darkness into the Light,” CES Fireside for Young Adults, September 8, 2002, <https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/2002-09-05-come-out-of-the-darkness-into-the-light>; Dallin H. Oaks, “Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign* 27, no. 3 (March 1997), <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1997/03/teaching-and-learning-by-the-spirit>.

7. See “President Nelson: Brilliant Mind, Gentle Heart,” KSL News Documentary, April 1, 2018, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKiYPK\\_rEPk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VKiYPK_rEPk).

8. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* (May 2018), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/2018/05/sunday-morning-session/revelation-for-the-church-revelation-for-our-lives>.

addressing contrary claims by those specifically charged with receiving that revelation.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, these authors do not do this. Much less do they demonstrate how their claim of revelatory infrequency can actually accommodate these contrary reports.

The second matter to notice is that arguing for the infrequency of revelation — even if one could do so successfully — would still do nothing to salvage an appeal to *this* passage. The Lord’s instruction in D&C 21:4–5 specifically refers to instances of prophets’ genuine revelations from God, which means it says nothing about potential errors that can occur in the *absence* of revelation — the passage is simply not about that. Thus, although Mason displays this passage prominently, it is actually irrelevant to what he attempts to say about prophetic errors.

The third matter to notice is that D&C 21:4–5 is largely irrelevant *in general* if revelation occurs infrequently. After all, since this passage is about cases in which the Lord reveals his will, and since, according to this claim, he doesn’t reveal his will very often, it follows that this passage doesn’t actually apply very often. Thus, although the Lord gave this instruction on the day the Church was first organized and although it concerns both revelation and following prophets — *and* although it continues to be cited by prophetic leaders<sup>10</sup> — if the “infrequent” view of revelation is correct, it is actually of little importance. The Lord might have spoken about revelation on this particular occasion, but he hasn’t actually delivered much of it, and this means that what he said about it actually has little practical significance. That is the consequence of this view.

## The “Uncertainty” of Revelation

Another possible claim to make about revelation is that it is less reliable than we might think. This is an approach Terryl Givens takes in his popular book.<sup>11</sup> (Permit me to note here that some thought I was unfair to Givens in an earlier paper where I briefly identified the central problem in his appeal to D&C 21 — i.e., the apparent absurdity mentioned above — in an article he

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9. See Boyce, “A Lengthening Shadow” Part One: 7–13.

10. For example: Russell M. Nelson, “Sustaining the Prophets,” *Ensign* (November 2014), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/2014/11/sunday-morning-session/sustaining-the-prophets>; M. Russell Ballard, “Precious Gifts from God,” *Ensign* (May 2018), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/2018/05/saturday-morning-session/precious-gifts-from-god>; Quentin L Cook, “Give Heed unto the Prophets’ Words,” *Ensign* (May 2008), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/2008/05/give-heed-unto-the-prophets-words>.

11. Givens, “On Delegation and Discipleship.”

had written.<sup>12</sup> Some complained that I failed to take up the larger argument that appears in his book — an argument that seems to complete and rescue what he says in his shorter article. This complaint is meritless, however. Since Givens' article was written as a stand-alone piece, I addressed it as a stand-alone piece in Part One of my paper. I then addressed his book at length in Part Three of the same paper, where I showed that the book's more detailed treatment does not salvage his article's argument.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to the objection, Givens' full thinking was given full consideration.)

Givens quotes the Anglican scholar Austin Farrer to the effect that revelation is always fuzzy — that it is incapable of really capturing the divine “blueprint.” This inherent unreliability is the reason Givens focuses on prophets' divine authorization rather than on their status as revelators: they are the Lord's authorized servants, but, because revelation is an uncertain process, they are still able to make serious mistakes.

If this is right, it might be thought that we can get around the problems with D&C 21 by saying something like this: *Yes, D&C 21 refers to revelation. However, since revelation is inherently uncertain, prophets will make errors even when they receive such direction. This passage is thus about revelation **and** about human mistakes. Because of the unreliability of spiritual communication, we need patience and faith in following prophets **even when** they are speaking based on revelations they have received.*

The problem with this approach, however, is that it fails to notice the actual import of the phrase “as if from mine own mouth.” After all, if the Lord thought he could not communicate clearly with his prophets (if *he* thought the revelatory process was so uncertain), and if he thought prophets could not then communicate the clear revelation to the people, it seems unlikely that he would tell us to heed what prophets say as if we were hearing it from *his own mouth*. His instruction to receive prophets' revealed words in this way *presupposes* that he communicates clearly with them (and they, subsequently, with us).

The same presupposition by the Lord is evident elsewhere in scripture. For example, he explicitly directed Oliver Cowdery to be obedient to the revelations he gave to Joseph Smith (D&C 28:6) — a direction he could not give if he thought he couldn't communicate clearly with the Prophet

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12. Boyce, “A Lengthening Shadow” Part One: 5–7, regarding Givens' “Letter to a Doubter.”

13. Boyce, “A Lengthening Shadow” Part Three: 102–10, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/a-lengthening-shadow-is-quality-of-thought-deteriorating-in-lds-scholarly-discourse-regarding-prophets-and-revelation-part-three/>.

(and that Joseph couldn't then communicate clearly with Oliver). And of course the same presupposition is evident when the Lord declares that "whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). It could not be "the same" if the Lord were unable to communicate clearly with his servants and if they were then unable to communicate clearly with others. Indeed, the presupposition of clarity appears elsewhere in the same section, when the Lord says that those who will not "give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off" (D&C 1:14). Such individuals could hardly be punished if those prophets and apostles were not accurately learning the will of the Lord and then delivering that will accurately to them. And this is true every time the Lord declares punishment for those who disobey: such declarations by the Lord presuppose that he communicates clearly with his prophets — those who disseminate his commandments — and that they in turn communicate clearly with others. In all these ways the Lord presupposes precisely what this view of revelation denies: that he can communicate unambiguously with his prophets.

The central problem with this view of revelation, then, is that it appears to contradict the Lord's view of revelation.

This is not the only difficulty, however. There is also a large amount of evidence indicating that revelation to prophets is amply clear, much of which I have discussed elsewhere in responding to these claims — from the First Vision, to Russell M. Nelson's detailed vision showing him how to perform a surgical procedure, to the 250,000 words in the Book of Mormon itself — with numerous additional instances in between.<sup>14</sup> And of course we could add other examples to these, including the Prophet's significant report that there was "no error" in the revelations he taught — a reality that would not be possible if revelation itself were inherently as uncertain as this view supposes.<sup>15</sup>

It is well-known, of course, that the Prophet revised his language, both in his revelations and in the Book of Mormon. But these are not indications of *error*. The revisions are minor and do not call into question the Prophet's understanding of what he received. They are simply improvements in *expressing* the understanding he had received. One instance of the general pattern is the Prophet's remark, after referring to Malachi 4:5–6, that he could have rendered a plainer translation,

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14. Boyce, "A Lengthening Shadow," Part Three: 106–10.

15. "Joseph Smith's Feelings about His Prophetic Mission," in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, <https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-45>.

but that it was nevertheless “sufficiently plain to suit my purposes” (D&C 128:17–18). Just so, while one can make the theoretical argument that no revelatory experience is perfect in its verbal or written expression, it does not follow that revelations are not completely acceptable to *the Lord* — i.e., that they are not sufficiently plain to suit his purposes. Every indication is that they are.

What all this would seem to show is that without additional argument, a claim about the uncertainty of revelation is wholly unpersuasive. One can certainly appeal to the views of a learned Anglican scholar to argue for this perspective on revelation, but it is hard to see why that authority, in speaking about prophets, would outweigh the declarations of authorities who actually are prophets.

Yet considering the one and neglecting the other is the actual purport of this approach. As a result, it would seem that the argument from lack of revelatory clarity does not resolve the contradiction involved in a faulty reading of D&C 21. A tangled conclusion about that passage is not removed by adding an inadequate and unpersuasive conception of revelation to it.

### **D&C 21: General Summary**

In the end, it is difficult to see how the Lord’s words in D&C 21:4–5 can be used to indicate that prophets require patience and faith because of their human errors. In the first place, the passage is specifically about prophets’ revelations, not about human weaknesses or about just any words prophets happen to say. In the second place, the options we have considered that might try to get around this problem (denying the frequency of revelation and asserting the unreliability of revelation) fail to make any dent in the difficulties — each for its own reasons. One can appreciate authors’ good intentions and still recognize where their arguments fail.

It does not follow from any of this, of course, that *other* arguments can’t be attempted to indicate prophets’ serious errors and to suggest that they must be followed with caution. All we have seen is that D&C 21 itself seems dramatically unsuited for such efforts; it actually seems to backfire on them.

If we want a scriptural passage that teaches that prophets are unreliable and cannot be followed with confidence, it seems we will have to look elsewhere to find it.

## **“The Thinking Has Been Done” — President George Albert Smith**

In one month in 1945 the message (for what was called “ward teaching” at the time) emphasized the importance of following the prophet. It included the line: “When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done.” It is well-known that George Albert Smith, who was President of the Church at the time, explicitly disavowed this statement in a letter to a prominent non-member who asked him about it.<sup>16</sup>

This historical event has taken on importance because of what some, in my experience, have concluded from it: namely, that President Smith saw the Brethren’s reliability in representing the Lord as somewhat tenuous. The logic in appealing to this episode seems to be, at least implicitly, if the prophet is saying that members must do their own thinking, it is likely because the Brethren themselves aren’t fully trustworthy in reflecting the Lord’s will.

### **The Basis of President Smith’s Disavowal**

This view of the incident might seem plausible if we know only of President Smith’s disavowal. It is not plausible, however, when we read his whole statement and actually hear his reason for the disavowal. He said, for example:

Even to imply that members of the Church are not to do their own thinking is grossly to misrepresent the true ideal of the Church, which is that every individual must obtain for himself a testimony of the truth of the Gospel, must, through the redemption of Jesus Christ, work out his own salvation, and is personally responsible to His Maker for his individual acts. The Lord Himself does not attempt coercion in His desire and effort to give peace and salvation to His children. He gives the principles of life and true progress, but leaves every person free to choose or to reject His teachings. This plan the Authorities of the Church try to follow.<sup>17</sup>

There are three significant matters to note in these remarks. The first is that President Smith equates members doing their own “thinking” with

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16. A rehearsal of the relevant details, including the ward teaching message and President Smith’s letter correcting it, can be found at: <https://www.fairmormon.org/archive/publications/when-the-prophet-speaks-is-the-thinking-done>.

17. *Ibid.*

(1) gaining a spiritual testimony and (2) being personally responsible for their individual acts, including working out their own salvation.

Second, he specifically contrasts members' gaining their own testimonies and being personally responsible for their acts, with *coercion*. He observes that the Lord does not exercise force over his children — but permits them to choose whether or not to follow him on their own — and says that Church leaders try to follow the same pattern.

Third, by analogizing to the Lord, the purport of President Smith's message is that the thinking is not "done" even when *the Lord* speaks. President Smith emphasizes that we do not face coercion under any circumstances, even with regard to the Lord's personal teachings. He "gives the principles of life and true progress," but even in this case the thinking is not done: independence and personal responsibility still require us to gain our own spiritual testimonies of these principles and to choose on our own to follow them. That, he says, is the Lord's way regarding his *own* teachings.

Emphasizing personal responsibility and the absence of coercion, President Smith adds in his letter, "The Prophet Joseph Smith once said: 'I want liberty of thinking and believing as I please.' This liberty he and his successors in the leadership of the Church have granted to every other member thereof." And:

Again, as recorded in the History of the Church (Volume 5, page 498 [499]) Joseph Smith said further: "If I esteem mankind to be in error, shall I bear them down? No. I will lift them up, and in their own way too, if I cannot persuade them my way is better; and *I will not seek to compel any man to believe as I do, only by the force of reasoning*, for truth will cut its own way." (emphasis in original)

President Smith concludes: "I cite these few quotations, from many that might be given, merely to confirm your good and true opinion that the Church gives to every man his free agency, and admonishes him always to use the reason and good judgment with which God has blessed him."<sup>18</sup>

Now, in light of all this, remember where we started. It was with the assumption that President Smith's emphasis on the need for members to do their own thinking likely indicates some doubt on his part about the Brethren's reliability in representing the Lord. After all, why would members need to do their own thinking if they didn't really need to — if the Brethren themselves were reliable?

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18. Ibid.

But now we see there is no reason to make this assumption. In the first place, President Smith explicitly *gives* us his reason for insisting that members do their own thinking — and it is not that he questions the reliability of the Brethren. It is simply that members have agency and thus have the personal responsibility to gain testimonies for themselves and to choose for themselves whether or not to follow: there is no coercion.

In the second place, the fact that President Smith analogizes to the Lord makes it evident, by itself, that reliability is not his concern. After all, he is obviously not concerned about *the Lord's* reliability — and yet he speaks of members exercising their agency and gaining their own testimonies even here. Clearly, this is not because President Smith thinks the Lord's teachings might not be true. It is because members must exercise agency and personal responsibility, and gain testimonies for themselves, *even though* they are true.

So attributing to President Smith a possible concern about the Brethren's reliability is a mistake. We don't have to attribute anything to him or intuit his meaning because he actually tells us his concern — and it is a concern that has everything to do with members' agency, personal responsibility, and testimony, and nothing to do with a lack of confidence in the Brethren themselves.

### **Additional Considerations**

Three other matters help us round out our thinking about President Smith's remarks.

#### **President Smith's Views on Following the Brethren**

Although it is clear that President Smith is not making a point about a lack of confidence in the Brethren in this episode, it is worth noticing what he might have thought in general about this topic. It is relevant, therefore, that he said on one occasion:

There is only one pathway of safety for me in this day and that is to follow those whom the Lord has appointed to lead. I may have my own ideas and opinions, I may set up my own judgment with reference to things, but I know that when my judgment conflicts with the teachings of those that the Lord has given to us to point the way, I should change my course.<sup>19</sup>

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19. George Albert Smith, in "Sustaining Those Whom the Lord Sustains," in *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith*, <https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-george-albert-smith/chapter-6>.



He also said:

I stand here to plead with you, my brethren and sisters, not to permit words of criticism or of unkindness to pass your lips about those whom the Lord has called to lead us. Do not be found in the companionship of those who would belittle them or weaken their influence among the children of men. If you do, I can say to you that you will find yourselves in the power of the adversary. You will be influenced by him to go as far as possible from the pathway of truth, and if you do not repent you may find when it is too late that you have lost the “pearl of great price.” Because of your selfishness and your blindness you will have been led away, and your loved ones ... will be sorrowing on the other side of the veil because of your weakness and your folly.<sup>20</sup>

Not only, then, does President Smith do nothing in this particular episode to suggest lack of confidence in the Brethren, but it is obvious what he thinks about someone who would inculcate such an attitude toward them.

### **A Sliding Scale in the Lord’s Direction of His Kingdom**

This doesn’t mean that George Albert Smith thought members of the First Presidency (for example) were flawless or that they made no errors. He said that they are still “men with human frailties” and “they will make mistakes.”<sup>21</sup>

This range in President Smith’s remarks on Church authorities — along with other evidence — suggests, as I have discussed elsewhere,<sup>22</sup> that something like a sliding scale operates in the Lord’s direction of his kingdom: he doesn’t provide equal direction on all matters that face the Brethren but instead provides revelation commensurate with the importance of an issue to him at a given time. This means there are different *degrees* of revelation, ranging across the entire spectrum of matters the Brethren must deal with in administering and growing the Lord’s kingdom. Thus, on many incidental or secondary matters that are less central to his plan, it would seem that the Lord leaves decisions

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20. George Albert Smith, in “Sustaining.”

21. Ibid.

22. Boyce, “A Lengthening Shadow,” Part One: 13–15 and Duane Boyce, “Sustaining the Brethren,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 14 (2015): xxvii–xxviii, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/sustaining-the-brethren/>.

largely to the collective judgment of Church leaders — and this can obviously lead to less-than-perfect decisions. On matters of much greater importance to his plan, on the other hand, the Lord would seem to lead the Brethren's decisions through clear and direct revelation to them. And of course there are many degrees in between. The interaction between human judgment and the Spirit stretches across the entire spectrum of issues (with the Spirit exercising increasing influence as the issues grow in importance), and this is why George Albert Smith could speak of errors while also expressing supreme confidence in the Brethren's direction. The attitude seems to be: whatever the mistakes, they are inconsequential; what matters are the issues important to the Lord at a given time and the Brethren's trustworthiness on those.

### **President Smith's Personal Spirituality**

It is also useful to think about President Smith himself. When he was a boy, George Albert received a blessing from the venerable Zebedee Coltrin prophesying that he would become “a mighty Apostle” and “a mighty prophet.” He also declared that none in George Albert's family would “have more power with God than thou shalt have, for none shall excel thee.” This was an interesting prophecy in light of George Albert's father later serving in the First Presidency himself. All of these prophecies were fulfilled, as we know, and that makes it interesting to note what else Elder Coltrin prophesied regarding him. He said that “the angels of the Lord shall administer to you,” “thou shalt be wrapped in the visions of the heavens,” “thou shalt be clothed with salvation as with a garment,” “thou art destined to become a mighty man before the Lord,” and “thou shalt become a mighty man of faith before the Lord, even like unto that of the brother of Jared.”<sup>23</sup>

Given Elder Coltrin's other prophecies, it is plausible that these blessings were fulfilled as well, and this is at least relevant in imagining what President Smith thought about the presiding Brethren's reliability in representing the Lord. His confidence, so it would seem, would not be low, but high.

### **George Albert Smith: General Summary**

The basis of President Smith's rejection of the ward teaching message was the importance of members' agency, personal responsibility, and individual testimonies. Nowhere in his remarks does he suggest that

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23. Robert and Susan McIntosh, eds., *The Teachings of George Albert Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), xix.

members' thinking is not done because those in the prophetic councils are unreliable in representing the Lord. He does not even raise the topic of their reliability, much less disavow it. He simply emphasizes that members must gain testimonies for themselves and then choose for themselves whether or not to follow — just as they must with the Savior's personal teachings. We also have compelling reasons to believe that President Smith's personal confidence in Church leadership was actually high, not low, and this, too, undermines the idea that he was expressing caution about the Brethren's reliability. This confidence is clear both from what he said and from what we can conclude about his own nearness to the Lord.

It does not follow from any of this, of course, that one *can't* doubt the trustworthiness of the Brethren in following the Lord. Of course one can. One might construct any number of arguments to try to reach that conclusion. All that follows from what we have seen here is that President Smith's disavowal of the ward teaching message cannot be among them. It is not the evidence, in my experience, it is often thought to be.

### **“Heterodox Thoughts” — President Hugh B. Brown**

In speaking at BYU on one occasion, President Hugh B. Brown began by expressing dismay that “freedom of the mind is suppressed over much of the world.” He said that “we must preserve it in the Church and in America” and that protecting such freedom of thought is necessary to preserve “the liberties vouchsafed in the Constitution of the United States.” President Brown then says:

Preserve, then, the freedom of your mind in education and in religion, and be unafraid to express your thoughts and to insist upon your right to examine every proposition. We are not so much concerned with whether your thoughts are orthodox or heterodox as we are that you shall have thoughts. One may memorize much without learning anything. In this age of speed there seems to be little time for meditation.<sup>24</sup>

What seems to catch people's attention is the specific declaration that “we are not so much concerned with whether your thoughts are

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24. Hugh B. Brown, “An Eternal Quest — Freedom of the Mind,” *BYU Devotional Address*, May 13, 1969, [https://aims.byu.edu/sites/aims/files/foundation\\_documents/An\\_Eternal\\_Quest--Freedom\\_of\\_the\\_Mind--Hugh\\_B\\_Brown.pdf](https://aims.byu.edu/sites/aims/files/foundation_documents/An_Eternal_Quest--Freedom_of_the_Mind--Hugh_B_Brown.pdf).

orthodox or heterodox as we are that you shall have thoughts.”<sup>25</sup> At least in my experience, when this remark is raised the supposition seems to be that if a member of the First Presidency, no less, doesn’t care very much about “orthodox” thoughts, then orthodox thoughts can’t really be very important. It is thinking *per se* that matters.

On the surface this can seem like a reasonable interpretation of President Brown’s words. Beneath the surface, however, it proves highly implausible. This is evident from President Brown’s own talk. After all, what follows these early remarks is a celebration of the gospel, concluded by a fervent testimony of its truths and encouragement of these BYU students (1) to value “a conviction of the truth” and (2) to “take every opportunity to bear witness to that truth.” Speaking of “the truth” and encouraging his listeners to bear witness of “the truth” are not the expressions of one who sees no difference between orthodox and heterodox thoughts. Nor are they the sentiments of one who thinks orthodox and heterodox thoughts are equally valid, or who at least thinks the difference between them is unimportant. Indeed, far from expressing a tenuous attitude toward gospel orthodoxy, President Brown’s address is actually a fervid manifestation of it. And this makes the interpretation (mentioned above) of his early remark about heterodox thoughts highly implausible: that sentence cannot really be intended to discount what the rest of the talk transparently displays.

The same kind of orthodoxy is completely evident elsewhere in President Brown’s public addresses, of course. A good example is his final talk in general conference, which includes this testimony:

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25. President Brown makes reference to “orthodoxy,” but he does not define it. A suitable point of reference, however, is this official Newsroom statement: “With divine inspiration, the First Presidency (the prophet and his two counselors) and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the second-highest governing body of the Church) counsel together to establish doctrine that is consistently proclaimed in official Church publications. This doctrine resides in the four ‘standard works’ of scripture...official declarations and proclamations, and the Articles of Faith.” (*Approaching Mormon Doctrine*, May 4, 2007, <https://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/approaching-mormon-doctrine>.)

Incidentally, President Brown did not actually include this sentence about “orthodoxy” (or the two sentences that follow it) in reading his talk. They appear in the published version, however. See Gary Bergera, “Guest Post: President Hugh B. Brown’s Most Famous Statement,” *Keepapitchinin* (blog), <http://www.keepapitchinin.org/2012/02/07/guest-post-president-hugh-b-browns-most-famous-statement/>.

My brethren and sisters, I want to bear witness to you as to the divinity of this work. From the center of my heart to the ends of my fingers and toes, I know that this is the work of God. I know that the gospel has been restored. I know that the men who are leading the Church are inspired and directed by him who appointed them.<sup>26</sup>

These words could comfortably be considered a *testimony* of orthodoxy. And they are typical of President Brown's sermons.

When we read President Brown broadly, then, it is apparent that his sentence about "heterodox thoughts" is not intended to discount the official teachings of the Church. That interpretation is belied by President Brown's public addresses generally, as well as by the very talk in which it appears.

But that leaves us with a question: what does President Brown mean in his single sentence about orthodox and heterodox thoughts — when he *seems* to minimize orthodoxy?

### Robotic Orthodoxy

The strongest interpretation, I think, is that he is echoing a point Wilford Woodruff (among others) expressed. President Woodruff observed that "it is necessary that all the members of the Church should exercise their powers of reason and reflection" and that "[i]ntelligent obedience on the part of His Saints is desired by our Father in Heaven." President Woodruff clarifies his point by stressing that God "has given us our agency to think and act for ourselves, on our own volition, to obtain a testimony for ourselves from Him."<sup>27</sup>

"Intelligent obedience" is the obedience of those who have paid the price to gain their own testimony of the truth. And this, it would appear, is President Brown's worry. He is speaking to a very orthodox audience: they are students who have passed a bishop's worthiness interview to attend BYU, who are regularly taking religion classes, and who are attending a religious devotional at that very moment. He thus has little reason to emphasize orthodoxy to this audience, and he doesn't. Their orthodoxy can be assumed. What seems to worry President Brown instead is the *way* they might be orthodox. He seems concerned about the prospect of spiritual laziness — about the kind of obedience that is robotic and hollow rather than earnest and spiritually serious.

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26. Hugh B. Brown, "A Missionary and His Message," *Ensign* 2, no. 7 (July 1972), <https://www.lds.org/general-conference/1972/04/a-missionary-and-his-message>.

27. Wilford Woodruff, in "Following the Living Prophet," in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff*, <https://www.lds.org/manual/teachings-wilford-woodruff/chapter-19>. Emphasis added.

He seems to be saying what Boyd K. Packer later taught: that members must become “*independent* witnesses” of gospel principles and truths. Rather than following leaders thoughtlessly, members are to tap the same source of intelligence those leaders are tapping.<sup>28</sup> President Packer observes that as we grow and learn we will sometimes be wrong in our conclusions (i.e., we will have “heterodox” thoughts, in President Brown’s terms), but “there is not much danger in that.” Instead, “that is an inevitable part of learning the gospel. . . . Such ideas are corrected as one grows in light and knowledge.”<sup>29</sup> If we are sincere and if we are spiritually invested, he taught, we will end up in the right place in our feelings and conclusions because we are engaging the same divine source prophets themselves are engaging. “Then,” President Packer says, “our obedience is not blind obedience. Then our agency is protected, and . . . we will do things because we know they are right and are the truth. *We will know this from our own inquiry, not simply because someone else knows it.*”<sup>30</sup>

It seems clear that President Brown is making the same point. He is speaking to an orthodox audience and he is including a warning specifically to them: orthodoxy is hollow if it is not the result of earnest seeking; the gospel is not for the unserious and lazy. Appreciating this explains why he would implore his audience to value a *conviction* of “the truth” and why he would immediately follow his famous sentence with: “One may memorize much without learning anything. In this age of speed there seems to be little time for meditation.”

President Brown, then, seems far from minimizing orthodoxy per se; he is instead simply telling his very orthodox audience that their orthodoxy is not close to sufficient. He is warning against an acceptance that is routinized and empty.

### Faux Orthodoxy

Although this type of orthodoxy seems to be President Brown’s major concern, he also seems to have a worry about *faux* orthodoxy. Only declarations of the First Presidency are authoritative and actually define the official teachings of the Church (i.e., “orthodoxy”), but there is a large literature on gospel topics as well as classroom declarations by

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28. Boyd K. Packer, *Mine Errand from the Lord: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Boyd K. Packer* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 341. Emphasis mine.

29. Boyd K. Packer, “From Such Turn Away,” *Ensign* 15, no. 5 (May 1985), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/1985/05/from-such-turn-away>.

30. Packer, *Mine Errand*, 341. Emphasis added.

instructors that might seem to define orthodoxy — but don't. Authors (including General Authorities) and instructors make statements based on their own best thinking about many topics — from various doctrines and practices to political issues — but much of it goes beyond what is official. To the extent they do so, their teachings are not orthodox. President Brown seems to be warning against mindlessly accepting such non-authoritative sources when he encourages his audience, including on religion, to “insist upon your right to examine every proposition.” That makes perfect sense in a world where the scriptures, and official statements of the First Presidency, are (and were in 1969) far outnumbered by non-authoritative sources on gospel topics.

So the concerns President Brown seems to have in mind regarding his BYU audience and their orthodoxy are (1) the risk of spiritual laziness and (2) the risk of counterfeit orthodoxy. What matters most for our present purposes, however, is what he does *not* have in mind. And what seems clear is that he does not have in mind a concern about the merits of orthodoxy itself.

This is not dispositive of the entire issue regarding the reliability of the prophets' teachings, of course, since one can construct many reasons for discounting the official teachings of the Church. People do this all the time. All it means is that President Brown's remarks cannot be included in those reasons. The evidence indicates that he was doing something else entirely.

## Conclusion

The relationship between members of the Church and the prophets who are called to lead them is a broad topic, with multiple dimensions, and I have attempted to identify and address some of them elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> My purpose here has been much narrower: namely, to consider just three incidents in Church history to see if they indicate what people (at least in my experience) sometimes think they indicate.

What we have seen is that (1) D&C 21:4–5 is not a passage about being patient with prophets' human errors; (2) in insisting that members think for themselves, George Albert Smith was not motivated by a lack of confidence in the Brethren's ability to accurately represent the Lord's will; and (3) Hugh B. Brown did not argue for the unimportance of Church orthodoxy. To the degree these episodes are used to make these points, they would appear to be misunderstood.

This obviously does not mean that one can't try to make the same points about prophets' errors, Church orthodoxy, and so forth in

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31. See Boyce, “Sustaining the Brethren.”

other ways. There are many arguments that might be attempted and many incidents that one might try to include. All that follows from the investigation here is that these particular incidents cannot be among them. Those who are interested in pursuing such arguments will need to look elsewhere for support.

### Thoughts on Blind Obedience

Before ending, it is worth making another point that has emerged from our look at these historical incidents. Sometimes members are accused of following the presiding Brethren of the Church “blindly.” The idea seems to be that members follow in a robotic way — that their obedience is spiritually lazy and therefore empty.

Now the first thing to notice about this accusation is that the leaders we have seen decry the very same thing. George Albert Smith disavowed the ward teaching message specifically because it seemed to imply the acceptance of such an attitude. His whole point was that members must take personal responsibility, exercise their agency, and gain their own testimonies of what others — including the Lord — teach. We don’t even follow *him* blindly.

We saw the same thread in discussing Hugh B. Brown’s remarks. It is captured in Wilford Woodruff’s statement that “it is necessary that all the members of the Church should exercise their powers of reason and reflection” and that “*intelligent obedience* on the part of His Saints is desired by our Father in Heaven.” The Lord “has given us our agency,” he said, “to think and act for ourselves, on our own volition, to obtain a testimony for ourselves from Him.”<sup>32</sup> On another occasion he said, “It is our privilege so to live as to have the Spirit of God to bear record of the truth of any revelation that comes from God through the mouth of His prophet who leads His people.”<sup>33</sup>

It was on this basis that Boyd K. Packer explicitly rejected blind obedience. As we saw earlier, he taught that we are to tap the same source of intelligence that leaders themselves are tapping. Then we will do things because we know they are right “from our own inquiry, not simply because someone else knows it.”<sup>34</sup> When we follow this path and have our own independent testimonies, we are able to follow not because we are blind, but precisely “because we can *see*.”<sup>35</sup> Harold B. Lee

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32. Woodruff, in “Following the Living Prophet.” Emphasis mine.

33. Woodruff, in “Following the Living Prophet.”

34. Packer, *Mine Errand*, 341.

35. Boyd K. Packer, “Agency and Control,” *Ensign* 13, no. 5 (May 1983), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/1983/05/agency-and-control>. Emphasis mine.



once spoke of Elder Marion G. Romney facing an official statement by Church leaders that ran counter to the direction of his political party. Though loyal to these spiritual leaders, he felt that loyalty alone wasn't enough, and that he had to know for himself that they were right — so he spent a whole night on his knees to receive this witness of the Spirit.<sup>36</sup> George Q. Cannon emphasized the same principle. He said that “the people can go to God themselves, if they have doubts upon any point,” adding that “He will remove their doubts and answer their questions.”<sup>37</sup>

So the first thing to notice about blind obedience is that prophets themselves do not want it.<sup>38</sup> Are there members of the Church who do practice blind obedience? Of course there are some, but those who do so misunderstand the teachings of the gospel and Church leaders.

But a second thing to notice is that the idea of “blind obedience” is easy to mischaracterize in the first place. Receiving a spiritual testimony that something is right does not entail that one *understands* everything about it. All it means is that one knows it is right. When Lehi left Jerusalem he didn't know where his journey would lead or how long it would last. When Nephi entered Jerusalem to retrieve the plates of brass he didn't know how retrieving them was going to be possible. When Abraham was told he would have a son he didn't know how that could happen at his advanced age. When the Lord told his disciples to prepare a multitude to receive a meal — despite having only a few loaves and fishes — they didn't know how he could possibly accomplish that feat.

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36. In Clyde J. Williams, ed., *Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 83.

37. In Jerreld L. Newquist, ed., *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Zion's Book Store, 1957), 345–46.

38. Leaders are not asking for blind obedience even when they emphasize the reliability of prophets and the importance of following them. After all, we saw a statement by George Albert Smith earlier in which he stressed the importance of following prophets, and yet he is the one who insisted that their statements do not end members' “thinking.” This should make it obvious that testimonies about prophets are not meant to suggest that they should be followed robotically. Rather, such testimonies simply provide a basis for members' own pondering and praying about the matter — a basis for seeking their own confirmation of the Spirit, independently. This is identical to the way prophets (and others) treat the Book of Mormon. When they testify that the Book of Mormon is true they are not remotely suggesting that others should simply accept their word and embrace the book because of it. Instead, testimony bearing is specifically intended to give hearers a reason to seek the Spirit and find out for themselves. So it is with any gospel topic, including, as in President Smith's case, that of testifying about the importance of following prophets.

When the Lord instructed Nephi to create the small plates — and later instructed Mormon to include them in his abridgement — he didn't tell either of them why they were doing so. And so forth.

In none of these cases were the individuals following “blindly,” however, *even though they understood hardly anything*. Because they knew that their instruction itself was divine, they didn't *need* to understand anything else. And this, of course, is actually the Lord's pattern. As we see in the scriptural incidents above, he routinely gives instructions without explanations.<sup>39</sup> He tells us what is right, but he usually does not tell us *why* it is right.

It is important, then, to avoid the mistake of thinking that members are following blindly just because they don't understand the whys, hows, whens, and wheres for everything they sustain and embrace. By that standard Lehi, Nephi, Abraham, the Lord's disciples, Mormon — and a host of others — could all be indicted for being shallow and “blind” in their obedience. As I said, that is a mistake. Members, like prophets, can hardly be indicted for doing what the Lord himself requires them to do: to follow because of what they know spiritually, even though they don't know much else.

What matters for members today is simply what mattered for these prophets in their day: a testimony that the messages they have received are divine and the will to embrace and pursue them on this basis alone. This is not blind obedience. It is obedience born of spiritual knowledge. It is obedience exactly on the terms the Lord himself requires of us.

*[Author's Note: I express appreciation to Kimberly White and Nathan Mayhew for their very helpful contributions to this paper.]*

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39. I treat this briefly in “A Lengthening Shadow,” Part One, 24, and more fully in “Sustaining the Brethren,” xxi–xxiv.

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# THE LIVES OF ABRAHAM: SEEING ABRAHAM THROUGH THE EYES OF SECOND-TEMPLE JEWS

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Taylor Halverson

***Abstract:** During the Second-Temple Period, Jews remembered and reimagined the story of Abraham to address their own immediate historical and cultural concerns. By exploring these reimaginings, we learn more about the faith and interests of later Jews who looked to their forefather for inspiration and guidance on how to live in a world of change, opportunity, and challenge. Second Temple Jewish writers included in this article are Artapanus, the author of Jubilees; Pseudo-Eupolemus, the author of Genesis Apocryphon; Philo, and Josephus. Abraham was resurrected in these texts, but with the body and soul of the later author, Josephus; these authors live on in the guise of Abraham.*

Abraham is one of the prime characters in the book of Genesis. His faith, piety, righteousness, and hospitality are well known. But he was of course a multifaceted character, as attested by episodes of duplicity, military fortitude, and familial concessions. Centuries later, the character of Abraham gained new life during the Hellenistic/Roman age<sup>1</sup> as the Jewish and Greek worlds came into greater contact with each other.

## Methodology

This paper highlights samples of the diversity of Jewish thought and cultural experience throughout the Hellenistic/Roman age by following several “lives of Abraham” over the course of three hundred years, while I explore the manifestations of the figure of Abraham in various texts,

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1. In this paper I use this term to refer to the period c. 200 BC – AD 100.

geographical locales, and at various times.<sup>2</sup> Each group infused new life into Abraham as they manipulated his character to suit their own purposes, thus telling us more about the creators of this new life than truly representing the historical Abraham. This methodological approach is inspired by the book *Lives of Indian Images* by Richard Davis.<sup>3</sup> In his work he argues that cultural contours of Indian history and experience could be accessed by examining the lives of cult images across time and space. What is the rationale for using a methodology originally applied to immutable cult images and statues of India to investigate the complex world of Judaism in the Hellenistic/Roman period through the figure of Abraham? Like sacred images set in stone that are not easily defaced or changed without a necessary change that affects the significance of that image, the figure of Abraham was laid down near immutably in the biblical text. Thus the stories of Abraham in the Bible share many of the features and characteristics of sacred images. It was fashioned by an original sculptor and endued with meaning by the originators or the receivers of the image. However, the original is not to be tampered with, amended, diminished, or changed, even though new images based on the original can be produced, and they in turn can be endued with meaning, thus reinvigorating the original cycle. The original image is not easily defaced or changed without seriously undermining its significance or authority. Hence the best option for adapting the original image is to create new images or to reinterpret the meaning of the original image, in either case on the basis of present circumstances.

By analogy, the Abraham stories as found in Genesis 12-25 play the role of an original image, imbued with significance that in its canonical form was not to be defaced, mutilated, amended, or diminished. However, it could legitimately inspire new manifestations of itself, or even similar renditions, that play upon details not readily apparent in the original. Additionally, creating a new image similar to that of the original could empower the new creator with normative power not unlike what the first originators held. Since we cannot exhaustively

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2. This paper is not meant to be exhaustive but rather selective and representative. I seek to offer a taste, not an entire meal. I review only the memories of Abraham as found in Artapanus, *Jubilees*, Pseudo-Eupolemus, *Genesis Apocryphon*, Philo, and Josephus. Other memories of Abraham that could expand beyond the discussion in this paper include the New Testament, Jewish Midrash and the Talmud, *Testament of Abraham*, and *Apocalypse of Abraham*. For a thorough collection of ancient stories about Abraham, see John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

3. Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton University Press, 1997).

search out all known Abraham manifestations in the Hellenistic/Roman age, this study is confined to a handful of Jewish Abraham stories related to his migrations out of Mesopotamia into Canaan, then into Egypt, and finally in his return to Canaan.

### **The Biblical Account of Abraham's Migrations**

In total, only thirty biblical verses discuss Abraham's life in Mesopotamia and the experiences of his migration to Canaan, Egypt, and then back to Canaan. Let us briefly review the scenes from those thirty verses.

The canonical story begins in Genesis 11:26, where Terah becomes a father to Abraham. Next, Abraham's brothers Haran and Nahor are named; Haran dies in Ur of the Chaldees, and the two remaining brothers then marry. Abraham marries Sarah, and Nahor marries Milcah, the daughter of Haran. The narrative then explains that Terah takes Abraham, Lot, and Sarah out of Ur to go to the land of Canaan. On the way they settle in Haran, where Terah dies.

Next, God commands Abraham to go unto Canaan. Obedient to the command, Abraham comes to Shechem, and then to Bethel, bringing Lot, Sarah, their possessions and the persons "they had acquired in Haran" (Genesis 12:5). Later they move toward the Negev and then go down into Egypt because of a famine. In order to save his life, Abraham requests that Sarah claim she is his sister. When they enter Egypt the officials praise her to the Pharaoh, who takes Sarah into his house. God deals well with Abraham, blessing him with material blessings of all kinds. But the Pharaoh and his household are afflicted with plagues. Pharaoh calls for Abraham, to demand an explanation and upon discovering that Sarah is Abraham's wife, he sends them out of the land of Egypt with the words "Now behold your wife, take, go!" (Genesis 12:20). With that, Abraham leaves Egypt and returns to the land of Canaan, taking his wife and all that he possesses.

This terse Genesis narrative is the immutable image that inspired many new lives of Abraham during the Hellenistic/Roman period. We will shortly see that some authors were consistent with the original image, while others crafted an image with lengthy expositions of new details and features that more fully define Abraham in ways not apparent in the original text (image). Let us now explore the images of Abraham as set down in his "biographies" of the Hellenistic/Roman age.

## Artapanus

One of the earliest “biographies” of Abraham is found in the fragmentary writings of a Jewish author named Artapanus, as preserved in the writings of Christian fathers Eusebius and Clement.<sup>4</sup> Dates for the writing have proposed between 250 BC and 50 BC,<sup>5</sup> though some scholars suggest a tenable date of 200 BC.<sup>6</sup> The brief section referring to Abraham’s time in Egypt amounts to only a few lines. However, the rest of the extant fragments, which deal with Joseph and Moses, lead us to believe that Artapanus lived in Egypt and was part of the cultural milieu of Greek society in Egypt because the fragments bear resemblance to other Greek literary genres popular during that time. Thus we have an Egyptian Jew who unabashedly combines Greek literary forms and Jewish scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

Artapanus claims that Abraham “came to Egypt with all his household to the Egyptian king Pharethothes, and taught him astrology, that he remained there twenty years and then departed again for the regions of Syria.”<sup>8</sup> In this short fragment, key additional details beyond the original biblical story give us an interval for Abraham’s Egyptian sojourn as well as testimony that Abraham brought culture in the form of astrology to Egypt. Perhaps Artapanus was responding to the cultural campaign, instigated by some Greek and Egyptian intellectuals,<sup>9</sup> that the Jews were culturally and historically inferior to the aforementioned

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4. James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research with a Supplement* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981).

5. Eusebius indicates that he found the writings in the work of Alexander Polyhistor, who compiled and preserved Jewish writings sometime during the first century BC. Thus we know that the writings of Artapanus must be earlier than the time of Alexander Polyhistor.

6. J. J. Collins, “Artapanus,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:890–91. Collins cites three reasons, though not conclusive, to date Artapanus c.200 BC: (1) veiled reference to worship of Dionysus, (2) mention of the disease elephantiasis, (3) and mention that farmers participated in the Egyptian army. Each of these features has historical reference points in Egypt c. 200 BC. This of course would most likely place Artapanus in Egypt as well.

7. Albert-Marie Denis, *Introduction aux Pseudepigraphes Grecs d’Ancien Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

8. Collins, “Artapanus,” 2:897.

9. Manetho is an example of one, though his account is reported to us secondhand, and thus suspicion will always remain as to how reliably it preserves Manetho’s attitudes. See Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 1:62–86.



groups. Suggesting that Abraham brought culture to the ancient Egyptians is tantamount to saying that in reality the Jews were an older and more venerable culture because it was their ancestors who taught the Egyptians. It was also a way of undercutting Greek superiority, because some writers claimed that the Greeks originated in the land of Egypt, thus making them inferior to native Egyptians, who were inferior to the Jews.<sup>10</sup> Artapanus likely was writing for a Jewish audience acquainted with and appreciative of Greek literary forms and aware of the battle for cultural and antiquital superiority. For Artapanus, Abraham serves a mediating role between Greek culture and Jewish tradition as well as an aggressive role in the fight for cultural superiority. None of these features are found in the original image and life of Abraham preserved in the biblical account.

### Jubilees

Not many decades after Artapanus, and likely in the homeland of the Jews, an anonymous author penned the text of *Jubilees*. Some people have called the text *The Little Genesis*,<sup>11</sup> because it is essentially a rewrite of Genesis.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the text claims that it contains the words of the Lord revealed unto Moses during the forty days he was on Mount Sinai, following the pattern of other apocalyptic writings in which a prophet is brought into the presence of an angel (or God) and shown a revelation. Thus others have called this book *Apocalypse of Moses*.<sup>13</sup> However, both names are misleading in that the book itself is structured on a strict Jubilee calendar system, that of seven-year periods corresponding to a week, and eras of 7 x 7 years corresponding to a Jubilee.<sup>14</sup> Additionally,

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10. See Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 20-43 (specifically pp. 26-27). In this text, Hecataeus of Abdera claims that when a pestilence arose in Egypt, the Egyptians thought to expel the foreigners. "At once, therefore, the aliens were driven from the country, and the most outstanding and active among them banded together and, as some say were cast ashore in Greece and certain regions; their leaders were notable men, chief among them being Danaus and Cadmus."

11. For example, the title page of R.H. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees or the Little Genesis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005). However, Charles was simply following the title style found in many Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Hebrew versions of the text.

12. It is written in a strong biblical style, following the sequence of events from Genesis 1 to Exodus 12.

13. O.S. Wintermute, *The Book of Jubilees in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:41.

14. Charles, *The Book of Jubilees*.

the oldest texts carry a different title.<sup>15</sup> This text probably originated shortly after the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids, perhaps c. 160–152 BC, in Hasidim/proto-Essene circles.<sup>16</sup>

*Jubilees* describes Abraham as a precocious young lad in Chaldea who at age fourteen is taught writing, one of the tokens of culture.<sup>17</sup> During this tender age, Abraham becomes aware of apostasy throughout the land, as manifested by the people seeking after images and becoming polluted. He rejects the idolatry of his father and instead prays to God the Creator to save him from “pollution and scorn.”<sup>18</sup> The migration stories of Abraham in the Bible preserve none of this additional information. Perhaps the author of *Jubilees* used the figure of Abraham to promote rejection of things Greek, such as idol worship and pollutions. If the author of *Jubilees* was of the Hasidim<sup>19</sup>/proto-Essene movement in Palestine c. 160–152 BC, then rejection of idol worship and pollution would simply echo ideals espoused in the Maccabean revolt,<sup>20</sup> in light of the decree to sacrifice pigs on Jewish altars as well as the Greek establishment of a pagan altar in the Jerusalem temple (“the Abomination of Desolations”)<sup>21</sup> alongside the Jewish altar as signs of idol worship and pollution.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, that *Jubilees* depicts Abraham praying to avoid

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15. The text itself offers the following title: “*This is The Account of the Division of Days of the Law and the Testimony for Annual Observance according to their Weeks (of years) and their Jubilees throughout all the Years of the World.*” Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 2:52.

16. James C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 207–85. See also Wintermute’s introduction to *Jubilees*, 44.

17. A well-known literary motif of that period was to mention the precocious intellectual nature of a lad who later became prominent. See the examples of Epicurus in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 10:14; Samuel the prophet in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray and Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 5:348; Josephus in *The Life*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 1.8–9; and Moses in Philo, *Life of Moses*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 1:21.

18. *Jubilees* 11:14–17.

19. We remember that the Hasidic Jews of the time both supported the revolt (1 Macc. 2:42ff) as well as felt the fury of Greek attacks (see 1 Macc. 2:29–41).

20. See Matthias’s speech in 1 Maccabees 2:19–22 in the context of being compelled to make unlawful sacrifice.

21. See Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc. 1:54; 2 Macc. 8:17.

22. The word *pollution* is used in various contexts in ancient Palestine. For example, Josephus recounts Pharaoh Amenophis’s troubling apparitions following

“scorn” may suggest some of the intra-Jewish cultural and religious conflicts aflame during the Hasmonean period.<sup>23</sup>

Another instance of creative license employed by *Jubilees* through the figure of Abraham is a midrashic exposition of Genesis 15:11, where Abraham drives away the carnivorous birds that attack his sacrifice.<sup>24</sup> In *Jubilees*, Abraham’s successful deterring of ravenous birds all occurs in a context prior to his first migration. In the story, crows sent by the evil angel Mastema have plagued the land of Chaldees since the early years of Terah. They eat the seeds as soon as the people sow. However, young Abraham’s successful defense of the seed against the encroaching crows earns him great reputation among the people. Perhaps *Jubilees* uses these stories of Abraham for two reasons. First, *Jubilees* may have been influenced by the culture war between Greek and Jewish superiority (particularly fierce in the writings out of Alexandria) which contributed to the pro-Jewish stance that the Jews were the originators of culture, or at least their ancestors had culture before the Greeks did. However, *Jubilees* does not dress Abraham in Greek cultural values, such as being an astronomer, scientist, or philosopher.<sup>25</sup> Another possible way

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the destruction of the sacred temple of Isis. Pharaoh’s scribe advised him that “if he purged Egypt of its contaminated [polluted] population, he might cease to be alarmed.” See Josephus, *Against Apion*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 281. Josephus’s use of the term *pollutions* probably refers to plagues, as it was a common motif in the ancient literature of the cultural wars between Greeks and Jews that the Egyptians expelled all the leprous and plague-afflicted individuals from Egypt, among whom the race of the Jews was found. A closer contextual example occurs in the book of Acts 15:20: “But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.” Though at least 200 years removed from *Jubilees* and written by a Jewish Christian, this passage nonetheless expresses the idea that “pollution” and idol worship were conceptually connected.

23. So we see that the Hasidim zealously fought alongside the sons of Matthias to strike “down sinners in their anger and renegades in their wrath; the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety” (1 Macc. 2:44). This verse makes it clear that not all the Jews supported the revolt. Hence, we can expect that political, cultural and religious divisions remained even after the successful triumphs of the Hasmoneans established Jewish independence, during which time the *Book of Jubilees* was most likely penned. That no high priest was appointed for nearly a decade after the Hasmoneans came to power likely indicates that they had not gained sufficient support among all the Jews in Palestine to take such a political step.

24. This takes place in *Jubilees* 11:18–22.

25. Compare this against the way that Artapanus, Pseudo-Eupolemus, and Josephus all portray Abraham as a scientist, philosopher, or astrologer/astronomer.

to understand this story is that Abraham is the prototype of a faithful Jew (most likely a *Hasid*) who guards the seed (*Torah*, religious heritage, Jewish homeland) from foreign domination or intrusion.

The next part of the story describes how Abraham teaches culture to the Chaldeans. This indeed does put Abraham on a high plane because he is the founder of the most basic form of culture known to civilized nations — agriculture.<sup>26</sup> Again, this may be *Jubilees*'s way of responding to the culture war between the Greeks and the Jews but doing so in non-Greek ways, for the author of *Jubilees* was most likely zealous for the *Torah*, according to the way the Hasidim are described in 1 Maccabees 2.

As the account in *Jubilees* continues, Abraham calls his father to repent of idol worship. However, Terah apparently cannot heed the righteous counsel without incurring the wrath of the populace upon his head, for he had been appointed as a minister to the idols.<sup>27</sup> Terah commands Abraham to remain silent on the issue. It is not until his brothers become angry over Abraham's stance against idol worship that he follows Terah's command.

Though silent, Abraham still believes firmly in his message. In the year that Abraham turns sixty, he arises in the night and sets fire to the house of idols. His brother Haran attempts to salvage the idols from the inferno, but he is consumed in the flames. What is strange about this passage is that there is no explanation for Abraham's actions. True, the motivation to do away with idol worship has already been established in preceding lines, where he calls his family to repentance, but the account is bereft of any ameliorating explanation as to why Abraham, the exemplar of piety and culture, would undertake such a disastrous scheme, which resulted in the death of his brother.

After a good deal of detailed background, almost none of which is found in the biblical account, *Jubilees* finally reaches the point of migration. Terah and the rest of the family (minus Haran) move on toward Lebanon and Canaan. En route they sojourn in the city of Haran for fourteen years. During this sojourn, Abraham contemplates the night sky and comes to realize that all the heavenly creations are the

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Clearly, different Jews had different tolerance thresholds for adopting Greek cultural values.

26. The ironic feature is that the biblical image of Abraham portrays him living a Bedouin lifestyle, the opposite image of the culture bearer we see in *Jubilees* and other ancient texts.

27. Some of the ancient Jewish traditions portray Terah as a maker and vender of idols (see *Apocalypse of Abraham*, chap. 2).

work of the Lord. This pivotal moment marks Abraham's full conversion to the doctrine of monotheism: there is no god but God. In this moment of soul-changing recognition of the truth, Abraham prays to God for direction and guidance. God reveals to Abraham that his posterity will be blessed and that he will be given a blessed land of promise.

What is remarkable about the way that *Jubilees* makes use of Abraham and Abrahamic stories is that unlike other Jewish authors who had predilections for Greek culture or who had no problems with syncretism<sup>28</sup> and who even affirmed the goodness and legitimacy of astrology/astronomy, *Jubilees* indicates that Abraham forsook it all. Furthermore, in the next chapter of *Jubilees*, when Abraham reaches Egypt, no mention whatsoever is made about Abraham's teaching astrology, astronomy, science, culture, or philosophy to the Egyptians. In fact, the text of *Jubilees* is sparser in its report of what occurred in Egypt than is the Genesis account. *Jubilees* does not even mention that Abraham and Sarah claim to be siblings. Simply put, Pharaoh just takes Sarah from Abraham without context or pretext.

*Jubilees* has for several reasons used the Abraham stories in this way. First, *Jubilees* affirms that Abraham was fully immersed in the manifestations of a laudable culture; Abraham was an astronomer, thus answering the contention of any Greek writer that the Jews had no ancient or praiseworthy ancestors. However, *Jubilees* also undercut this Greek form of legitimacy. Instead of affirming that Abraham was the astronomer *par excellence*, as other Jewish writers claimed, *Jubilees* uses astronomy as a springboard for Abraham to gain true revelation that there is no God besides God. In other words, Abraham ultimately rejects his culture (at least what the Greek-cultured individuals accepted as a normative culture) in order to have true knowledge of God, and worship and commune with God. This is a clever tactic by *Jubilees* to make use of Greek conventions long enough to establish Jewish cultural superiority. but then undercut Greek legitimacy by having Abraham reject a manifestly Greek value of being an astronomer or astrologer.

Another story that *Jubilees* creates and inserts into the migrations of Abraham is an account of God opening the mouth and ears of Abraham in the language of Hebrew — the language of creation and of Adam before the fall. From this marvelous epiphany, Abraham is then able to copy his father's books and study from them. All this evokes several themes important during the Hasmonean period to a Hasidic Jew who was zealous for the law. First, Hebrew is the sacred language — the language of God.

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28. Cf. Artapanus, Josephus, and Pseudo-Eupolemus.

Whoever wishes to study God's holy word must do so in Hebrew. It should not be surprising that the *Book of Jubilees* was written in Hebrew. Second, those zealous for the law came to know the law by copying the sacred books and then studying from them.<sup>29</sup> Again, we see that the *Book of Jubilees* has made use of the figure of Abraham to create normative values in an era of Judaism that already had a normative, yet immutable canon.

The last topic for discussion concerning *Jubilees's* use of Abraham is the account of Abraham in Egypt. I have already mentioned several things that *Jubilees* left out of the story in comparison to the biblical account. Now let us examine what *Jubilees* added to the story. After *Jubilees* describes Pharaoh taking Sarah, a passing comment appears: "And Tanis of Egypt was built then, seven years after Hebron" (*Jubilees* 13:12). Reading this statement in context is somewhat baffling; not that the grammar is difficult to understand, rather the statement serves no immediate or obvious purpose in the pericope of the story. So why does *Jubilees* make this passing comment? It is another way of asserting Jewish antiquity within the parameters of sacred time. Hebron is one of the ancestral cities of the Jews; it had been home to Abraham for some time in his sojourns throughout the land of Canaan. Additionally, *Jubilees* states that Hebron was built seven years before Tanis; and seven is the number of completion and perfection that holds a status of sacred authority over many other numbers. All these features indicate that Hebron was more ancient and sacred than Tanis, as defined within the parameters of sacred time. What may interest us here is that some traditions equate Tanis with a city the Hebrews built for the Egyptians under slave labor. Asserting that Tanis was built just seven years after Hebron leaves no time for the Israelites to have been in Egypt long enough to build a venerable Egyptian city through forced labor. Perhaps *Jubilees* rewrote the past, essentially effacing the evidence (at least based on the biblical account) that the Jews were once slaves to the Egyptians.

### Pseudo-Eupolemus

There has been much debate as to who actually composed the fragmentary texts now listed under the heading *Pseudo-Eupolemus*.<sup>30</sup> However, R. Doran makes a convincing argument (contra Walters,

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29. These same themes and ideas can also be applied to the Essenes, who most likely comprised most of the individuals living in Qumran, who received their start in the Hasidim of the Hasmonean era.

30. These fragments are preserved in Eusebius's *Preparatio Evangelica* 9.17.2–9 and 9.18.2.

Wacholder, and Denis) in his introduction to Pseudo-Eupolemus that the first fragment of Pseudo-Eupolemus should in reality be attributed to Eupolemus himself.<sup>31</sup> This being the case, then Eupolemus was a Jewish writer during the Hasmonean age from a priestly family that no doubt was acquainted with Greek and Greek culture. In fact, there is reason to believe that Eupolemus the writer is to be identified with Eupolemus the ambassador for Judas Maccabeus to the Roman court, as mentioned in 1 Maccabees 8:17-32 and 2 Maccabees 4:11.<sup>32</sup> If these arguments are valid, we can date the writings of Pseudo-Eupolemus to c. 158 BC. Taking these preceding comments as a framework from which to understand this work, I will now focus my attention how Pseudo-Eupolemus uses the figure of Abraham.<sup>33</sup>

Pseudo-Eupolemus's writings are marked with cultural syncretisms. Abraham is portrayed as one who "excelled all in nobility and wisdom; he sought and obtained the knowledge of astrology and the Chaldean craft, and pleased God because he eagerly sought to be reverent."<sup>34</sup> Whereas *Jubilees* uses astrology as a means for Abraham to come to know the true God and then subsequently reject astrology, Pseudo-Eupolemus claims that the Abraham figure is one who pleases God by seeking reverence in the midst of scholarly and cultural pursuits. There is no contradiction in blending values from various cultures. Rather, Abraham is the model for how a Jew can properly partake of other cultures and yet remain within God's good graces. In fact, it is possible to read this line as suggesting that Abraham pleased God because he sought the knowledge of the Chaldean sciences. If the author of Pseudo-Eupolemus is truly Eupolemus, a Jewish priest serving as ambassador to the Romans for the Hasmonean government, it is quite telling that the Maccabean revolt and its supporters were not uncompromising in rejecting Greek culture. Rather, this text suggests in the guise of Abraham that it is possible to adopt foreign cultures while also affirming Jewish heritage.

Pseudo-Eupolemus also uses Abraham as a culture bearer not unlike the manifestations in Artapanus and perhaps responding to the

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31. R. Doran, "Pseudo-Eupolemus" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:873-78. For the contrary perspective see Denis, *Introduction aux Pseudepigraphes Grecs D'Ancien Testament*, 261-62.

32. F. Fallon, "Eupolemus" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 861-63.

33. It is worth noting that all the fragments attributed to the so called Pseudo-Eupolemus deal with Abraham.

34. Doran, "Pseudo-Eupolemus," 880.

same social pressures that worked upon both Artapanus and *Jubilees*. Pseudo-Eupolemus claims that God commanded Abraham to dwell among the Phoenicians, a detail quite absent from the biblical account and most other Jewish witnesses that use the figure of Abraham. While there, Abraham pleases the Phoenician king just as he pleases God, “by teaching the Phoenicians the cycles of the sun and moon, *and everything else as well*.”<sup>35</sup> These comments truly elevate the status and prestige of the Jewish ancestral father by claiming that the Phoenicians learned everything from Abraham. Moreover, the argument can be made that God sent Abraham to the Phoenicians for that very purpose — to instruct the Phoenicians. This was a way to legitimize Jewish belief in their cultural superiority because it was commonly accepted in the Hellenistic/Roman period that the Phoenicians invented the alphabet and that the Greeks borrowed from the Phoenicians. An alphabet is of course the basis for a writing system, and a writing system is the basis for all scholarly and intellectual activity, which from a Greek perspective is one of the greatest manifestations of a nation’s cultural foundation. In essence, then, all of the best of Greek culture would ultimately derive from Abraham, who, according to Pseudo-Eupolemus, was simply seeking to please God. The author of *Jubilees* most likely would have strongly objected to this portrayal of Abraham — the portrayal that one could please God by diligently seeking the knowledge and sciences of the gentiles (“the Chaldean craft,” as it is called in Pseudo-Eupolemus).

Next, the account of Pseudo-Eupolemus of Abraham going to Egypt essentially follows the biblical migration story. Pseudo-Eupolemus does not back down from the biblical account of Abraham claiming Sarah as a sister.<sup>36</sup> The author of the text says in the most matter-of-fact terms, “The king of the Egyptians married Abraham’s wife, since Abraham had said that she was his sister.”<sup>37</sup> When the plagues come upon Pharaoh’s house, Pseudo-Eupolemus has no qualms about recording that Egyptian diviners discover the problem, and based on their disclosure, Pharaoh returns Sarah to Abraham. Other Jews would rewrite this type of story as the foreign diviners being inept.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps Pseudo-Eupolemus’s

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35. Ibid., emphasis added.

36. Other authors avoid mention of it altogether (*Jubilees*) or put the responsibility upon God (*Genesis Apocryphon* via a dream to Abraham).

37. Doran, “Pseudo-Eupolemus,” 881.

38. See *Genesis Apocryphon*. The plot line of this type of narrative (found in Esther, Judith, Ahiqar, Tobit, Daniel, and the Joseph novella) is as follows: a Jew of low status living in a foreign land; a problem in the court of the king, which foreign diviners are unable to solve; a king calling up the Jew who successfully



own experiences with foreign courts convinced him that honorable individuals everywhere could learn truth in a variety of ways. So in the end, Pseudo-Eupolemus is willing to make certain surface cultural concessions, because all roads lead back to Jewish origins with Abraham.

Even though Pseudo-Eupolemus makes a concession in the foreign court that other Jewish writers would not compromise, Pseudo-Eupolemus immediately describes Abraham's scholarly interactions with the Egyptian priests in the holy city of Heliopolis. Lest he not include in his survey of ancient civilizations known for their antiquity and their culture, Pseudo-Eupolemus appropriates Egyptian antiquity through Abraham by claiming that he taught the Egyptians "astrology and other sciences."<sup>39</sup> Again we see that Eupolemus has no qualms about affirming the legitimacy of astrology and its compatibility with Jewish culture. In summary, Pseudo-Eupolemus uses the Abraham figure to promote the marriage of learning and Jewish piety, while also affirming the antiquity and cultural originality of the Jewish nation.

### Genesis Apocryphon

*Genesis Apocryphon* is very Jewish in its use of Abraham; it is saturated with biblical language. There are no hints or traits of Greek culture or ideas. We should not be surprised at this, since this text comes from the Qumran community. So intent were the Essenes to preserve and transmit a pure Jewish way of life that they fled from the main population centers of Palestine where Greek culture (or corrupt Jewish culture) held power.<sup>40</sup> The text bears some resemblance to the *Book of Jubilees*<sup>41</sup> and

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solves the problem; the Jew then being raised from his lowly position and granted great honors in the court of the foreign king.

39. Doran, "Pseudo-Eupolemus," 881.

40. It is clear in 1 & 2 Maccabees that intra-Jewish power struggles abounded before, during, and after the Maccabean revolt. Once the Hasmoneans came to power and took upon themselves the high priestly roles, it appears that many Jews (particularly those from the Hasidim movement) who saw this as an act of great wickedness left the immediate area of Palestine and formed a counter community near the Dead Sea, where they could practice the purity of Jewish faith without the corrupting influence of Greek culture or unlawful applications of Jewish power.

41. Some have argued that this is an Essene document, since it comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls cache. And if it is Essene, then it is perhaps related to the Hasidim movement discussed in 1 & 2 Maccabees that produced the *Book of Jubilees*. The *Genesis Apocryphon* and *Jubilees* have many striking similarities, and for this reason many have suggested that the authors shared a similar tradition.

was most likely written between 50 BC and AD 50.<sup>42</sup> It does not share the sacred time structure of *Jubilees*, but it does borrow conventions of dating, such as transmitting the idea that Abraham was in Egypt for five years before Sarah was taken from him.

Like *Jubilees*, *Genesis Apocryphon* creates an image of Abraham redolent of biblical rather than Greek influence. I suggest that the author of *Genesis Apocryphon* crafted this type of Abrahamic image as a counter movement to growing Greek-Jewish syncretism in the land of Palestine.<sup>43</sup> However, the author of *Genesis Apocryphon* was just as willing to modify and embellish his account, just as the other authors were doing. However, he was not willing to do so in a syncretistic fashion. I will now consider several examples of how *Genesis Apocryphon* embellished the image of Abraham through biblical ideals.

In column XIX, we find that Abraham and Sarah have come to Egypt due to a famine in the land of Canaan. En route, Abraham had a dream warning him that the Egyptians would seek Sarah. They devised a plan to claim that the couple were siblings so that their lives would be spared. In contrast to some authors who skip entirely over the wife-sister deceit (cf. *Jubilees* 13:10–15), the *Genesis Apocryphon* confronts the issue, yet enhances the image of Abraham with a two-edge sword.<sup>44</sup> First, Abraham dreams and can interpret dreams. From a biblical perspective, this is a highly laudable trait. Second, dreams come from God, and so Abraham's resolve to claim that Sarah and he are siblings can be attributed to God instead of to duplicity on the part of Abraham.

Another example of the way in which the author of *Genesis Apocryphon* embellishes the Abraham account with biblical themes is the story of Pharaoh's servants coming to Abraham for Sarah.<sup>45</sup> In the story, Abraham is portrayed as the hospitable and gracious host. This perspective is simply an enhancement of the image of Abraham depicted in Genesis 18. What is interesting about this story is that Abraham is

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42. Joseph Fitzmyer, S. J., *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 14–17.

43. Cf. Artapanus and Pseudo-Eupolemus, who use the Abraham figure in a syncretistic light. The latter was most likely a contemporary with the original group of Hasidim who fled Palestine for the Dead Sea region.

44. For a compelling study of the "Wife-Sister" motif in the Pearl of Great Price, *Jubilees*, and the *Genesis Apocryphon*, see Thomas W. MacKay "Abraham in Egypt: A Collection of Evidence for the Case of the Missing Wife," *BYU Studies* 10, no. 4 (1970): 429–51.

45. *Genesis Apocryphon* XIX.23–27 in Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I*, 53.

depicted as interacting with foreigners not in philosophical dialectic, but rather in a fashion of Jewish heritage, reading to them the words of the *Book of Enoch*. Instead of learning philosophical truths, the father of the Jews teaches the foreigners the truths of God from ancient sacred writings of Jewish prophets.

The servants of Pharaoh return to report on Sarah's unequalled beauty, including words of praise reminiscent of the erotic love poetry of the Song of Solomon.<sup>46</sup> As soon as Sarah is taken into the Pharaoh's harem, Abraham turns to the Lord in mighty prayer, requesting that Pharaoh not be able to defile his wife. God answers his prayers, and Pharaoh and his household are afflicted with an evil spirit for two years. Pharaoh sends for all of the Egyptian wise men, but they too become afflicted. And so Pharaoh sends his servant to Abraham with the request that Abraham lay hands upon him to heal him from the dread disease. But Pharaoh's servant is instead met by Lot, Abraham's nephew and adopted son. Much like the biblical story of Elisha and the Syrian captain Naaman,<sup>47</sup> Abraham is portrayed as a great prophet of God who will speak to foreigners through an intermediary. This suggests that Abraham is a man of high stature and prominence, for he has his servants (in this case Lot) be his delegate. Abraham agreed to Pharaoh's request with the condition that Pharaoh return Sarah. Accomplishing what the great wise men of Egypt could not, Abraham heals the Pharaoh by laying hands upon his head and praying to God that the plague be removed.

*Genesis Apocryphon* does some of the same things with Abraham that other Jewish literature at this time were doing — namely claiming that Abraham was a noble and virtuous progenitor of the Jewish nation who is to be lauded and imitated in his life style. However, *Genesis Apocryphon* takes an approach different from that of the other Jewish authors, who were willing to let Greek language or ideas manifestly

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46. "How splendid and beautiful the form of her face ... and how soft the hair of her head; how lovely are her eyes and how pleasant is her nose and all the radiance of her face; how lovely is her breast and how beautiful is all her whiteness! Her arms, how beautiful! And her hands, how perfect! And how attractive all the appearance of her hands! How lovely are her palms, and how long and dainty all the fingers of her hands. Her feet, how beautiful! How perfect are her legs! There are no virgins or brides who enter a bridal chamber more beautiful than she. Indeed, her beauty surpasses that of all women; her beauty is high above all of them. Yet with all this beauty there is much wisdom in her; and whatever she has is lovely." *Genesis Apocryphon* XX.2–8 in Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I*, 55.

47. Cf. 2 Kings 5.

enter their texts. *Genesis Apocryphon* found a way to accomplish the same cultural goal through Abraham (that the Jewish nation is ancient and honorable) but did so in purely biblically saturated language. As *Genesis Apocryphon* explains, Abraham becomes the savior and healer of a foreign king, who solves the crisis in the foreign court just as other faithful Jews did in the stories of Judith, Tobit, Ahiqar, Daniel, Esther, and the Joseph novella.

## Philo

Extensive writings of Philo have been preserved over the centuries. Two of them (“On Abraham,” “On the Migration of Abraham”)<sup>48</sup> well express Philo’s unique way of crafting the Abraham image in light of his life’s experiences and personal philosophy. Philo was born a Jew into the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria c. 20 BC and lived to the middle of the first century AD. Alexandria was the seat of learning, philosophy, and culture in the Greek and Roman worlds for many years, and so when Philo came upon the scene, he had full access to the best of Greek learning, an opportunity partly derived from the status of his prominent and wealthy family as well as his geographic locale. He of course was also a devout Jew. To the extent that we wish to truly understand Philo, we must know both his Greek culture and his Jewish culture.<sup>49</sup> Allegorical interpretation is the mainstay of Philo’s approach to scripture, and thus Abraham becomes a pawn in the hands of Philo for his allegorical devices.<sup>50</sup> Let us first consider the image of Abraham crafted by Philo in “On the Migration of Abraham”; then we will turn our attention to “On Abraham”

*On the Migration of Abraham.* Philo uses Abraham’s physical migration from Mesopotamia to the Promised Land as the vehicle by which he can explicate his allegorizing philosophy. After quoting God’s command that Abraham migrate (Genesis 12:1), Philo explains this methodology:

God, wishing to purify the soul of man, first of all gives it an impulse towards complete salvation, namely, a change of abode, so as to quit the three regions of the body, the outward sense and speech according to

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48. The translations of these passages will be taken from *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993).

49. E. R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1962), 1-10.

50. Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 17-28.

utterance; for his country is the emblem of the body, and his kindred are the symbol of the outward sense, and his father's house of speech.<sup>51</sup>

Thus Abraham is representative of the soul that flees from the world, that it might be purified and saved in God. In fact, this representation of Abraham is used simply as a starting point for Philo to engage in extensive scriptural commentary on the way the Bible teaches humanity to let the soul become free from the flesh and bondage of this world.<sup>52</sup>

*On Abraham.* In this treatise Philo continues his allegorizing methods, repeating some of the same ideas about Abraham found in his earlier treatise while greatly expanding the allegorical understanding of other key events in the life of Abraham.<sup>53</sup> Let us consider a few examples. Philo asserts that Abraham is a symbol of that virtue which derives from instruction (*Torah*). So for Philo, Abraham is a symbol used to teach and express the Greek value of virtue in the context of Jewish piety and heritage. Philo later suggests that Abraham “set out on an expedition to a foreign country in his soul even before he started with his body, his regard for mortal things being overpowered by his love for heavenly things.”<sup>54</sup> This may be a play on what we find in *Apocalypse of Abraham*,<sup>55</sup> where Abraham becomes converted to the truth that idols are false gods. His soul had taken the inward journey from his home country of “idol worship” to a foreign yet Promised Land, a journey toward knowing the true God. In *Apocalypse of Abraham*, only after Abraham took this inward journey of the soul did God command him to take the physical journey to the Promised Land.

Philo disgraces the Chaldeans through talk of their impious philosophy and useless astrology. Thus the suggestion that Abraham rejected the Chaldeans, the philosophy of the Chaldeans, and the notion that creation itself was a god, an underlying assumption of astrology.<sup>56</sup> This correlates well with what we find in *Jubilees* 12:16ff. Both *Jubilees* and Philo discuss the

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51. See Philo, “On the Migration of Abraham,” in *The Works of Philo*, 253.

52. Ibid. Philo parts from discussing Abraham and doesn't return again to discuss the migration of Abraham until after a lengthy digression of some one hundred and twenty paragraphs.

53. Ibid. Philo again explains his interpretive methodology at the beginning of this treatise. He lets the order of the biblical stories influence the sequential order by which he allegorizes the stories in his recounting of the Bible.

54. Philo, “On Abraham,” in *The Works of Philo*, 417.

55. R. Rubinkiewicz, *Apocalypse of Abraham in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

56. Philo, “On Abraham,” in *The Works of Philo*, 419. In other words, if the heavenly bodies and their arrangements define life and guide life, then they become

concept that creation is not God but only points to God. *Jubilees* explains that Abraham came to realize that looking to the stars was not the way to find God. This realization compels Abraham to know God through prayer. He explains why it was essential that Abraham leave Chaldea and reject the false philosophy of astrology. As soon as Abraham “left” the land of the Chaldees (rejected their doctrines), God appeared to him. In other words, God is not visible to those who adhere to false doctrines.

Philo eventually brings his migrating Abraham to Egypt.<sup>57</sup> As in other Jewish writers, the story follows the normal plot lines, along with the creative embellishments of the individual author who shares the story. Here are the features that Philo does *not* include in his account of the Abraham in Egypt story: claims by Abraham that he and Sarah were siblings; Pharaoh’s returning Sarah to Abraham and the increased prestige and wealth of Abraham. On the other hand, Philo adds several features to the story: He claims that Pharaoh gave no heed to the laws of decency, morality, or modesty, because he wanted to defile Sarah, thus deceiving everyone by saying that he wanted to marry her. And so God sent plagues upon both Pharaoh and his household, because they consented to let Pharaoh do this evil and unlawful thing to Sarah. Perhaps this was a quiet way for Philo to give political advice to gentile leaders of his day to not persecute the Jews.<sup>58</sup> When no resource of succor remained, Sarah took protection in God through mighty prayer.<sup>59</sup> Where was Abraham? Philo describes Abraham as being impotent in the face of more powerful political leaders. Perhaps this depiction indicates how Jews felt from time to time in Alexandria when they endured pogroms.<sup>60</sup>

Philo summarizes the events of Abraham in Egypt with the following moral: God, by protecting this marriage, ensured the offspring of “the most God-loving of all nations — and one which appears to me to have received the offices of priesthood and prophecy on behalf of the whole human race.”<sup>61</sup>

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God, rather than a pointing to God, who is the creator of all things. Philo believes that the created order is to point to God, not to take the place of God or act as God.

57. Ibid.

58. For an extensive discussion of Philo’s political ideals and advice, see E. R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938).

59. Contrast this with *Genesis Apocryphon*, which claims that it was Abraham’s mighty prayer of faith that saved Sarah, and nothing is mentioned of her piety.

60. Philo himself appears to have led an embassy to Emperor Gaius (ruled AD 37-41) to help resolve the social disputes between Jews, Greeks and Egyptians in Alexandria. See Philo, “On the Embassy to Gaius,” in *The Works of Philo*.

61. Philo, “On Abraham,” in *The Works of Philo*, 419.

What is significant about this last phrase is that Philo, who had so fully partaken of the Greek culture available to him in the Greek Hellenistic city of Alexandria, where priesthood and prophecy were known among cultures other than the Jews — and indeed, some of the great philosophers were esteemed as priests and prophets, Philo nevertheless claims that the Jewish nation held the prerogative and was the pinnacle of priesthood and prophecy for the Jewish nation. In other words, he claims for his own heritage what the Greeks could have argued for their own. Even though he was a full partaker of Greek culture, he was firmly committed to Judaism, even to the point of placing the Jews above and before all other groups. In this regard, Philo has simply followed the pattern of other Jewish writers who raise Abraham to prominence in his world.

### Josephus

Josephus's massive writings have been preserved for us over many centuries via Christians who saw in Josephus an authentic, living witness to the reality of Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup> Josephus was a descendent of Maccabean rulers, through whom he had both royal and priestly lineage.<sup>63</sup> He was a precocious lad, a knowledgeable student of the Torah;<sup>64</sup> his intellectual curiosity drove him to explore the various Judaisms available during his time, from which he chose the religious stance of Pharisaism.<sup>65</sup> At the young age of thirty he became the Jewish military general over the Jews in the Galilee region, fighting against the Romans.<sup>66</sup> Yet at a propitious moment he surrendered (defected?)<sup>67</sup> to the Romans, and prophesied to Vespasian that he would become the emperor<sup>68</sup>; and when that came true, he was accorded great imperial favors. One of these favors allowed Josephus to spend most of his remaining life engaged in scholarly pursuits, such as rewriting the Hebrew Bible for a culture of Greeks,<sup>69</sup> as well as jumping into the fray of scholarly debate over issues both new and old, but particularly the debate over the supposed antiquity of the

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62. Josephus's "authentic" testimony is of course in question for various reasons that space prevents dealing with here.

63. Josephus, *The Life*, 1.1.

64. *Ibid.*, 1.2.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*, 1.7ff.

67. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 3.8.1-8.

68. *Ibid.*, 3.8.9.

69. Written that Greeks might find it "worthy of attention." Josephus, preface to *Jewish Antiquities*.

Jews. From this scholarly/cultural dialectic he produced a book called *The Antiquities of the Jews*, published c. AD 90.

What is significant but not surprising is that Josephus does not portray Abraham exactly as the Bible suggests. Rather, Josephus crafts an image of Abraham who serves as an emissary for the values and ideals that Josephus deems of greatest importance to him and would most likely be pleasing to his audience. One of the first descriptions Josephus offers of Abraham upon arriving in the Promised Land is that he “was a man of ready intelligence [great sagacity].”<sup>70</sup> Josephus may derive some of his information concerning Abraham from the image portrayed in the writings of Pseudo-Eupolemus, who also claims that Abraham “excelled all in nobility and wisdom.”<sup>71</sup> After documenting Abraham’s great sagacity, Josephus goes on to say that Abraham had great capacity

[to persuade] his hearers, and not [be] mistaken in his inferences. Hence he began to have more lofty conceptions of virtue than the rest of mankind, and determined to reform and change the ideas universally current concerning God. He was thus the first boldly to declare that God, the creator of the universe, is one, and that, if any other being contributed aught to man’s welfare, each did so by His command and not in virtue of its own inherent power. This he inferred from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of sun and moon, and from all the celestial phenomena; for, he argued, were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity.<sup>72</sup>

Several key features of Josephus’s image of Abraham bear investigation. I will begin near the end of the quote and work backwards. Josephus affirms that Abraham was versed in the science of astrology, and it was this knowledge that led him to worship the one true God, and the reason why he was ejected from the land of Chaldees. Perhaps Josephus held before himself the image of Abraham crafted by Pseudo-Eupolemus or *Jubilees* when he set out to use Abraham for his own purposes, for both of these authors claim that Abraham was led to God through astrology. Josephus also claims that Abraham was a man of great virtue beyond that of all other people. Furthermore, Abraham uses this high notion of virtue to persuade all others to change their opinions

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70. Ibid., 1.7.1.

71. Doran, “Pseudo-Eupolemus,” 880.

72. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.7.1.



about God (I will point out momentarily that this statement serves as one of the reasons why Abraham was in Egypt). Abraham is for Josephus a missionary-type, forwarding the knowledge of the one true God. He is a persuasive speaker to be emulated by all; and his powerful opinions should be adopted, since he is not likely to err. The biblical account has only the most miniscule indication that Abraham ever engaged in persuasion, particularly for the purpose of missionary work to convert others to the true worship of the One God.<sup>73</sup> If we more closely examine the way that Josephus describes other Jewish prophets, we begin to realize that Josephus's Abraham is an image of Josephus himself. For example, in describing Moses's interaction with the Israelites at Elim in the parched desert, Josephus says that Moses avoided annihilation by using a persuasive argument as to why they should not kill him.<sup>74</sup> This is entirely absent from the biblical account (Exodus 15:27-16:3); however, it is closely related to Josephus's personal experience as a general in the Galilee, where he had to use a powerful argument to persuade the Jews not to kill him.<sup>75</sup>

These accounts clearly show Josephus's predilection for the art of persuasion. For Josephus, a leader's duty is to persuade a group to accept higher notions of virtue. Hence Josephus uses biblical heroes to express his values, and Abraham becomes one of those tools for promoting what he values.

It is in Abraham's migration to and sojourn in Egypt that we see much of Josephus's reshaping of the Abraham image to be in line with Greek life.

Some time later, Canaan being in the grip of a famine, Abraham, hearing of the prosperity of the Egyptians, was of a mind to visit them, alike to profit by their abundance and to hear what their priests said about the gods; intending, if he found their doctrine more excellent than his own, to conform to it, or else to convert them to a better mind should his own beliefs prove superior.<sup>76</sup>

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73. The only words of the Abraham accounts in the Bible that I can find that would lead one to see Abraham as a missionary figure is Genesis 12:5, which reads in the KJV, "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, *and the souls that they had gotten in Haran*; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

74. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 3.1.3-5.

75. Ibid., *The Life*, 6.27-29.

76. Ibid., *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.8.1.

Abraham is here portrayed as one who seeks great knowledge and intelligence, much like the ideal Platonic philosopher-king<sup>77</sup> we see in the *Letter of Aristeas*.<sup>78</sup> He seeks to know the truth and is not dogmatic or ignorantly zealous in religious fanaticism, which may lead to mobocracy.<sup>79</sup> He is willing to hear and learn the truth. If it is better truth than what he has, he accepts it; if not, he will teach the truths that God has already granted him. Describing Abraham's search for better notions about God through philosophical discourse probably says more about Josephus's cultural paradigm than the historical reality that Abraham was conversant in Greek forms of dialogic, by which truth is attained by seeking the "best" argument. All these characteristics accorded to Abraham were those valued by Josephus and his Greek-cultured audience.

According to Josephus, after Pharaoh discovers that the woman he has taken is indeed Abraham's wife, she is returned to Abraham with the explanation that Pharaoh had sought Sarah, thinking she was Abraham's sister, because Pharaoh "had wished to contract a marriage alliance [with Abraham by marrying her]."<sup>80</sup> Pharaoh then offers to Abraham "abundant riches, and Abraham consorted with the most learned of the Egyptians, whence his virtue and reputation became still more conspicuous."<sup>81</sup> Such a statement answers Josephus's critical interlocutors who claimed that no respectable individuals have come from the Jewish nations.<sup>82</sup> Herein, according to Josephus, the Jewish nation has a virtuous ancestor who taught science and wisdom to the most ancient of nations, the Egyptians. Again, we see that Josephus's image of Abraham is used to answer the Greek intellectual critics:

Seeing that the Egyptians were addicted to a variety of different customs and disparaged one another's practices and were consequently at enmity with one another, Abraham conferred with each party and, exposing the arguments which they adduced in favour of their particular views, demonstrated that they were idle and contained nothing true. Thus gaining their

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77. L. H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 547.

78. R. J. H. Shutt, *Letter of Aristeas in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:12-34.

79. Feldman, *Studies*, 553.

80. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.8.1.

81. Ibid.

82. Apion was one of the foremost critics to whom Josephus responded, composing a lengthy work of rebuttal called *Contra Apion*. For Apion's views on the Jews, see Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 389-416.

admiration at these meetings as a man of extreme sagacity, gifted not only with high intelligence but with power to convince his hearers on any subject which he undertook to teach.<sup>83</sup>

In this passage Josephus crafts Abraham in a way reminiscent of what we find in the *Letter of Aristeas* in terms of being capable of philosophizing on any subject with great wisdom and sagacity. Thus Abraham becomes, in Greek terms, a worthy and honorable individual. Not only this, but Abraham is a powerful and persuasive thinker, skills desired by Josephus<sup>84</sup> and praised by his Greek audience.

Next we see that Josephus continues to fashion an image of Abraham that compares to those images we saw in Artapanus and Pseudo-Eupolemus<sup>85</sup> — Abraham is the bearer of culture to an ancient civilization. In this case, Abraham brings math and science to the Egyptians as he sojourns with them under the politeness of the king.

He introduced them to arithmetic and transmitted to them the laws of astronomy. For before the coming of Abraham the Egyptians were ignorant of these sciences, which thus travelled from the Chaldeans into Egypt, whence they passed to the Greeks.<sup>86</sup>

Josephus makes it clear that the Egyptians did not have this knowledge (culture/science) before Abraham came into the land. Furthermore, his critical Greek interlocutors lose the debate over cultural superiority, because the Jews not only have in Abraham a most venerable ancestor, the Greeks also derived their learning from the Egyptians through Abraham. Thus we see that Josephus forged a new life of Abraham through his personal experiences with Greek-Jewish cultural interaction.

## Conclusions

From my survey of Jewish literature during the Hellenistic/Roman period, it becomes clear that Abraham was alive and well. He was the device by which his authors express their own lives. Indeed, Abraham was resurrected in these texts but with the body and soul of a new author — authors who live on in the guise of Abraham. Though Abraham's original life, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible, was the genesis for these creative adaptations, exploring the new biographies helps us see the complex and

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83. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.8.2.

84. Josephus needed all his powers of persuasion when dealing with the Jewish mobocracy who desired to kill him. Josephus, *The Life*, vv. 6.27-29.

85. This explicit culture-bearer figure is absent in *Genesis Apocryphon*.

86. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 1.8.2.

multifaceted Jewish world of the Hellenistic/Roman era. There is no doubt that an extended study of other Abraham “biographies” created through the centuries would richly inform us of the world and values of those who also employ Abraham’s image for ever new and changing circumstances.

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**“YES, IT’S TRUE, BUT I DON’T THINK THEY  
LIKE TO HEAR IT QUITE THAT WAY”:  
WHAT SPENCER W. KIMBALL  
TOLD ELAINE CANNON**

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**Duane Boyce**

**Abstract:** *Elaine Cannon, who was general president of the Young Women some four decades ago, had an interesting conversation with President Spencer W. Kimball in 1978. According to Sister Cannon’s firsthand account, President Kimball revealed important insight into how he thought about himself as the prophet as well as how he thought leaders should talk to the general membership about that topic. Sister Cannon’s report is thus a valuable part of the historical record regarding both Spencer W. Kimball and prophets generally.*

Elaine Cannon was the general president of the Young Women from 1978 to 1984.<sup>1</sup> The Church’s attitude toward abortion and its opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment were unpopular in many circles at the time. One personal manifestation of this for Sister Cannon occurred in 1977. An international women’s conference was held that

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1. Sister Cannon’s public record shows her to have been a person of great sensitivity, depth, and talent — and, above all, a person of deep devotion to the Lord and his kingdom. But, if anything, her impressive character is even more evident in her personal letters, diaries, and notes, all of which display a spiritual energy and a goodness of heart that are quite breathtaking. A huge number of artifacts of Sister Cannon’s life — both personal and ecclesiastical — are housed in the Elaine A. Cannon Collection in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections Department of the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University, call number MSS 8195. This collection is restricted, but members of the public can access it with permission from the Special Collections department and the Cannon family. A memoir of Sister Cannon, written by her daughter, gives an important look into her character and life. See Holly C. Metcalf, *Love’s Banner: Memories of the Life of Elaine Cannon* (Kenmore, WA: Lamb and Lion, 2011).

year, and Sister Cannon (prior to becoming YW general president) attended the conference with the general presidents of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary. When the conference voted on the Equal Rights Amendment, these sisters were faced with a loud crowd hissing and booing them when they voted against it.<sup>2</sup>

### Back Story: “The Debate is Over”

After this experience and against this cultural backdrop Sister Cannon spoke at a women’s fireside in 1978.<sup>3</sup> She articulated an inspired defense of the family and of motherhood and expressed her devotion to the Brethren and to President Spencer W. Kimball specifically, who was president of the Church at the time. Along the way she said, “He is our leader, in all the world of would-be leaders, who can guide us back to the presence of God.” Then, “Personal opinions may vary. Eternal principles never do. When the prophet speaks, sisters, the debate is over.... I urge us all to provide powerful unity for those things we *can* agree upon — family, chastity, accountability to the Lord, sharing the gospel.”<sup>4</sup>

The biography of Sister Cannon, written by her daughter, includes an account of this experience.<sup>5</sup> It reports that President Kimball spoke to Sister Cannon in the aftermath of this talk about her “the debate is over” remark and asked her not to repeat that way of speaking. According to Sister Cannon, he wanted to make sure members felt free to decide for themselves about prophets’ statements, and he worried that her remark could be misunderstood to imply something different — i.e., that members did not have agency and were coerced into following their leaders.

### More to the Story

There is an important addition to this story, however, and it appears in Sister Cannon’s firsthand account of her meeting with President Kimball. This report was not included in the biography of Sister Cannon; it is buried under all the other voluminous artifacts, letters, and documents used in

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2. For this description, see the letter from Sister Cannon to her family (“Darlings”), dated November 30, 1977, and found in the Elaine A. Cannon Collection, Box 5.

3. Elaine Cannon, “If We Want to Go Up, We Have to Get On,” *Ensign* 8, no. 11 (November 1978), <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1978/11/if-we-want-to-go-up-we-have-to-get-on>. The transcript for this talk (quite evidently typed by Sister Cannon herself) is found in Box 7 of the Elaine A. Cannon Collection.

4. Cannon, “If We Want to Go Up,” emphasis added.

5. See Metcalf, *Love’s Banner*, 204–6.

writing about her life. This firsthand report is significant, however. In it, Sister Cannon tells us that President Kimball asked to meet with her the morning following her talk and asked if she had said something to the effect that “when I [the prophet] speak, the people must obey.”

I answered, “President Kimball, what I said is that when the prophet speaks, the debate is over.” His next comment took me by surprise. “I don’t think the people like to hear that.” I replied, “But it’s true, isn’t it?” He paused for a moment and answered, “Yes, it’s true, but I don’t think they like to hear it quite that way.”<sup>6</sup>

We learn from this brief episode that President Kimball was confident in his reliability as a spokesman for the Lord — in his knowledge of the Lord’s will and in his ability to represent it accurately and with authority. In talking with Sister Cannon, President Kimball did not try to disavow or distance himself from this thought; he merely wanted to correct her way of saying it. Speaking so directly risked coming across as confrontational — as claiming that members do not have agency to decide on their own how to respond to prophets’ teachings. That was how President Kimball himself heard the statement, after all. As we saw, he thought she had said something like, “when I [the prophet] speak, the people must obey.”<sup>7</sup>

### George Albert Smith

This concern about appearing to coerce members is reminiscent of George Albert Smith’s worry in an earlier episode. As I discussed in a previous paper,<sup>8</sup> President Smith objected to the statement that “when

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6. “Spencer W. Kimball: A Tribute,” *This People*, Dec 1985/Jan 1986, vol. 6, no. 8, p. 24, contained in the Elaine A. Cannon Collection, Box 4, Folder 20. *This People* magazine is not currently accessible in digital form. Selected hard-copy issues are available in the Harold B. Lee Library of BYU-Provo; this particular issue is also available in the library’s unrestricted Americana Collection.

7. President Kimball had the same worry about appearing to infringe on members’ agency in regard to Ezra Taft Benson’s BYU address “Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet.” Not only did he worry about the political dimension of the talk and the misperception it might create, but he also “wanted to discourage an unthinking follow-the-leader mentality.” In a public statement, he and his counselors stressed that Church leaders “exercise no constraint on the freedom of individuals to make their own choices in these matters.” On this incident, see Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 160–61.

8. Duane Boyce, “D&C 21, George Albert Smith, and Hugh B. Brown: A Fresh Look at Three Incidents in Church History,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, 32 (2019), 229–52.

our leaders speak, the thinking has been done.” In elucidating his reasons for disavowing this statement, President Smith emphasized the agency and personal responsibility of members to gain their own testimonies of what is taught. He disavowed the statement that “the thinking has been done” because it implied that Church leaders don’t follow this principle — that they try to coerce members instead. This was identical to President Kimball’s worry about Elaine Cannon’s statement.

There is an additional similarity between President Kimball’s response and President Smith’s, however. As discussed in the earlier paper regarding President Smith, he nowhere suggests that members must do their own thinking because prophets are *unreliable* in representing the Lord. That was not his reason; indeed, he did not even hint at such a motivation. And we also saw reasons to believe that, in any event, President Smith’s confidence in the Brethren would be high, not low.

We see the same indication in President Kimball’s case, but even more strongly. He did not correct Sister Cannon because she overstated his role and reliability as a prophet. Although he had clear opportunity to do this if he had wanted to, he didn’t. Instead he did the exact opposite and affirmed her statement. President Kimball corrected Sister Cannon only because of the *way* she expressed confidence in him. Her expression could be taken to mean that members are coerced into following what he said when they aren’t. “What he was teaching me,” Sister Cannon said, “was that there was a gentler way of getting the point across.”<sup>9</sup>

### N. Eldon Tanner

An example of perhaps “a gentler way of getting the point across” is seen in the actions of President N. Eldon Tanner, President Kimball’s first counselor at the time. President Tanner later published a First Presidency message in the *Ensign* endorsing and praising Sister Cannon’s statement — indeed, he titled his article “The Debate is Over.” However, President Tanner made two points in his message that Sister Cannon had not made in hers. First, he assured members that prophets’ messages have the concurrence of the other prophets, seers, and revelators (indeed, of all the general authorities), and second, that members can receive their own assurance from the Lord that the Brethren’s decisions are approved by him. Both assurances remove any misunderstanding about “coercion.” President Tanner said:

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9. “Spencer W. Kimball: A Tribute,” *This People*, 24.



[Members of the Church] know that the messages of the prophet have come from the Lord and have the concurrence of all the General Authorities, who are men of vision and integrity, and who themselves try to keep in tune with deity. They [the members] are not, as some would suggest, following blindly and acting without their own agency to speak and think for themselves. Through prayer to our Heavenly Father each of us can have the assurance that the course we choose has his divine approval.<sup>10</sup>

So we learn two things from this episode with President Kimball: (1) he was confident in his ability as prophet to know the Lord’s will and to represent him accurately and (2) he felt it was important, nevertheless, for leaders to exercise care in how they spoke about this. Since members are free to decide for themselves what to do with prophets’ teachings, it is important to avoid language that might suggest they do not have such freedom.<sup>11</sup>

### **A Thread in President Kimball’s Ministry**

President Kimball’s affirmation to Sister Cannon is not surprising, of course. When we look back on his ministry, we see multiple declarations from him that prophets receive the Lord’s will.

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10. N. Eldon Tanner, “The Debate is Over,” *Ensign* 9, no. 8 (August 1979), <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1979/08/the-debate-is-over>. President Ezra Taft Benson and Elders Gordon B. Hinckley, Bruce R. McConkie, and James E. Faust also highly praised Sister Cannon’s talk. Like President Tanner, none of them shared any hesitation about her remarks. See Metcalf, *Love’s Banner*, 206.

11. Neither President Kimball nor Sister Cannon is available for follow-up questioning about Sister Cannon’s report, of course, but far from unique, that is the norm in handling historical sources, and the report seems reliable for several reasons. First, it is an account written by Sister Cannon firsthand; it is not an off-the-cuff remark or a second-hand report by someone who overheard it. Second, it is an account Sister Cannon wrote specifically for the public record — a report she intended to be read by others. Third, the account appeared during her lifetime — shortly after President Kimball’s passing and long before her own. Fourth, the account is consistent with President Kimball’s multiple remarks about prophetic revelation. (See the section of this paper entitled “A Thread in President Kimball’s Ministry.”) And fifth, the report is consistent with President Kimball’s concern about appearing to constrict members’ agency — a concern he expressed regarding Ezra Taft Benson’s “Fourteen Fundamentals” address, for example (see n 7). Both public in its intent and consistent with features of President Kimball’s ministry, Sister Cannon’s report is a valuable part of the historical record regarding Spencer W. Kimball.

During the presidency of David O. McKay, for instance, Elder Kimball said of him:

He is a prophet. He does not just occupy a prophet's chair; he does not just have a title of prophet, he is a real prophet and he is responsible for ... more revelations in his fifteen years of leadership than are in all the Doctrine and Covenants .... I could take time to tell you of these revelations — temples that have been appointed, people who have been called, apostles who have been chosen, great new movements that have been established, great new eras, great new challenges .... They came by revelation. I want you to know he is a prophet. Don't you question it. I do not know who will be his successor, but whoever it is will be a great prophet, and you need not ever worry.<sup>12</sup>

In an early address as president of the Church he referred to some who had spoken publicly about seeing the Lord and said, "Brethren and sisters, I want to add to these testimonies of these prophets my testimony that I know that He lives. And I know that we may see him, and that we may be with him."<sup>13</sup> He said in another early talk as president:

I know that the Lord has contact with his prophets, and that He reveals the truth today to His servants as He did in the days of Adam and Abraham and Moses and Peter and Joseph and the numerous others throughout time. God's messages of light and truth are as surely given to man today as in any other dispensation.<sup>14</sup>

A short while later President Kimball devoted a whole talk to prophetic revelation. He said:

There are those who would assume that with the printing and binding of these sacred records, that would be the "end of the prophets." But again we testify to the world that revelation continues and that the vaults and files of the Church contain these revelations which come month to month and day to day .... I know

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12. Edward L. Kimball, ed., *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 447.

13. Spencer W. Kimball, "The Cause is Just and Worthy," *Ensign* 4, no. 5 (April 1974), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/1974/05/the-cause-is-just-and-worthy?lang=eng>.

14. Spencer W. Kimball, "A Program for Man," *Ensign* 6, no. 11 (October 1976), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/1976/11/a-program-for-man?lang=eng>.

the Lord lives and I know that he is revealing his mind and will to us daily, so that we can be inspired as to the direction to go.<sup>15</sup>

And:

Since that momentous day in 1820, additional scripture has continued to come, including the numerous and vital revelations flowing in a never-ending stream from God to his prophets on the earth.<sup>16</sup>

He added:

I say, in the deepest of humility, but also by the power and force of a burning testimony in my soul, that from the prophet of the Restoration to the prophet of our own year, the communication line is unbroken, the authority is continuous, and light, brilliant and penetrating, continues to shine. The sound of the voice of the Lord is a continuous melody and a thunderous appeal. For nearly a century and a half there has been no interruption.<sup>17</sup>

In a 1980 First Presidency message he said simply:

I have learned that where there is a prayerful heart, a hungering after righteousness, a forsaking of sins, and obedience to the commandments of God, the Lord pours out more and more light until there is finally power to pierce the heavenly veil and to know more than man knows.<sup>18</sup>

These statements by President Kimball constitute an important thread in his ministry as president. They are also consistent with the message he gave Sister Cannon: namely, that although it is important to make the point without creating misunderstanding, it is true that he knew the Lord's will and could represent it accurately.

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15. Spencer W. Kimball, "Revelation: The Word of the Lord to His Prophets," *Ensign* 7, no. 5 (April 1977), <https://www.lds.org/study/ensign/1977/05/revelation-the-word-of-the-lord-to-his-prophets?lang=eng>.

16. Kimball, "Revelation."

17. Kimball, "Revelation." He used the same language seventeen years earlier, during the presidency of David O. McKay, in an article entitled "To His Servants the Prophets." See Edward L. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 431.

18. Spencer W. Kimball, "Give the Lord Your Loyalty," *Ensign* 10, no. 3 (March 1980), <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1980/03/give-the-lord-your-loyalty>.

## Conclusion

President Spencer W. Kimball corrected Sister Cannon for her public statement that “when the prophet speaks, the debate is over.” He worried that her expression risked suggesting that members do not have agency — that they are not free to decide on their own how to respond to prophets’ teachings. He didn’t want his status as prophet to suggest that members can’t question, explore, and find out for themselves. Of course they can — and should.

At the same time, however, President Kimball affirmed Sister Cannon’s actual meaning. “Yes, it’s true,” he said. While he wished for a better way of making the point, he affirmed that the point itself was accurate: he knew the Lord’s will and was reliable in speaking for him.

The relationship between prophets and the members they lead is a broad, multidimensional topic, of course. I have not tried to address that here.<sup>19</sup> All I have done is draw attention to a little-known incident that must be considered in any effort to think about prophets and their representation of the Lord. Many voices are heard on this matter, and (to say the least of it) President Kimball’s should be one of them.

*[Author’s Note: I express appreciation to Kimberly White for her expert editorial assistance in writing this paper. I also express appreciation to the family of Elaine Cannon for graciously granting permission to access the Elaine A. Cannon Collection in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University.]*

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19. I have said more about this topic elsewhere. See particularly “Sustaining the Brethren,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 14 (2015), vii–xxxii, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/sustaining-the-brethren/>, but also: “A Lengthening Shadow: Is Quality of Thought Deteriorating in LDS Scholarly Discourse Regarding Prophets and Revelation?” Part One, *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 26 (2017), 4–28, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/a-lengthening-shadow-is-quality-of-thought-deteriorating-in-lds-scholarly-discourse-regarding-prophets-and-revelation-part-one/>; Part Three of the same article, 102–10, <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/a-lengthening-shadow-is-quality-of-thought-deteriorating-in-lds-scholarly-discourse-regarding-prophets-and-revelation-part-three/>; and “D&C 21, George Albert Smith, and Hugh B. Brown: A Fresh Look at Three Incidents in Church History,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, 32 (2019), 229–52.

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# PROSPERING IN THE LAND: A COMPARISON OF COVENANT PROMISES IN LEVITICUS AND FIRST NEPHI 2

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Kerry Muhlestein

**Abstract:** *A careful examination of the Abrahamic covenant, as contained in Leviticus 26, and the covenant established with the Lehites during their exodus to the New World, found in 1 Nephi 2, shows deliberate similarities. These similarities are important to understand, as the role of covenant is central in both ancient Israelite practice and current Latter-day Saint theology.*

For some time, I have been researching the language and textual cues associated with the Abrahamic Covenant as used in the Old Testament. It is clear that covenant consciousness was an important part of the identity Israel assumed and God assigned to them throughout the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt the covenant was a constant presence in Israelite thought, that it evolved over time, and that it was used differently in differing specific circumstances.<sup>2</sup> Even knowing all this, as

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1. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J.A. Baker, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), argues that the covenant is the central theme of the entire Old Testament. See also Michael A. Goodman, "The Abrahamic Covenant: A Foundational Theme for the Old Testament," in *Religious Educator* 4, no. 3 (2003): 43–53.

2. For some examples of this, see Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament. Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000); Keith H. Essex, "The Abrahamic Covenant," in *the Master's Seminary Journal* 10, no. 2 (1999): 191–212; and John Eaton, *Mysterious Messengers: a Course on Hebrew Prophecy from Amos Onwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 23.

I wrote a verse-by-verse commentary on portions of the Old Testament,<sup>3</sup> I was surprised at how pervasive and powerful I found the theme to be. As I explored the meaning of each verse for the chapters covered in the Old Testament Gospel Doctrine manual and several other chapters, I ended up writing about the Abrahamic Covenant more than 1300 times. Clearly this is an important topic to the Lord and His people! As a result, I have begun a large study of how the theme is used in the Old Testament and how that should impact Latter-day Saints.

In the meantime, because that covenant is so important to Latter-day Saints,<sup>4</sup> I have also begun to investigate how that theme is developed in other books of scripture. It is a major component in the Book of Mormon,<sup>5</sup> the title page of which states that covenant is an important theme of the book.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Professor Victor L. Ludlow notes that a form of the word *covenant* is employed at least 154 times in the Book of Mormon text.<sup>7</sup>

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3. Kerry Muhlestein, *Scripture Study Made Simple: The Old Testament, the Complete Text and Verse by Verse Commentary* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2017).

4. See Truman G. Madsen, "Choseness: Implications and Extensions in Mormonism and Judaism," in *Covenant and Choseness in Judaism and Mormonism*, eds. Raphael Jospe and Truman G. Madsen (London: Associated University Press, 2001), 131, 133–35; and David Rolph Seely, "The Restoration as Covenant Renewal," in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 2005), 311.

5. See Douglas E. Brinley, "The Promised Land and Its Covenant Peoples," in Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr., eds., *The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1992), 39–46, for a discussion of how the covenant in the Book of Mormon ties its peoples to the antediluvian patriarchs.

6. See also Victor L. Ludlow, "Covenant Teachings in the Book of Mormon," in *The Disciple as Scholar. Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), 67, who notes the importance of the covenant on the title page. See also Raymond C. Treat, "The Importance of Covenant in the Restoration of the House of Israel," *The Zarahemla Record* 50 (August 1990): 3–4, who notes that the theme of covenant is found in the opening and closing verses of the Book of Mormon, highlighting its importance as a theme.

7. Victor L. Ludlow, "Jesus' Covenant Teachings in Third Nephi," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, eds. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 177–85, initially identified 113 instances. He later updated that number to 154. See Victor L. Ludlow, "The Father's Covenant People Sermon: 3 Nephi 20:10–23:5," in *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*, eds. Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2012), fn. 5 & 6.



While the role of covenant in the Book of Mormon as a whole will also become a larger study in the future, it is worth noting a striking similarity between the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant during Israel's Exodus and its (re)establishment with Lehi's family during their exodus.

The Abrahamic Covenant is most fully outlined for Israel when it was reestablished with them during their journey from Egypt. This is presented in Leviticus 26.<sup>8</sup> Here, the Lord outlines the Covenant in the following way:

1. Israel's obligation is to keep the statutes and commandments of the Lord (Leviticus 26:3).
2. If Israel keeps these commandments, the Lord will provide a land and rain in that land, which will yield bounteous production of both trees and crops planted in the ground (Leviticus 26:4).
3. They will have peace and protection from enemies in the land (Leviticus 26:6).
4. They will conquer their enemies (Leviticus 26:7–8).
5. They will be fruitful and multiply (Leviticus 26:9).
6. They will have plenty to eat (Leviticus 26:10).
7. God will establish His house among them and His presence will be with them, and they will be His people (Leviticus 26:11–12).
8. It is God who has delivered them and given them freedom (Leviticus 26:13).

Leviticus 26 represents the end of what scholars refer to as the "Holiness Code," which is comprised of chapters 17–26 and which outlines a series of laws regarding rituals, sexual conduct, family relations, priestly conduct, regulations of religious festivals and the tabernacle, blasphemy, and redemption.<sup>9</sup> The statutes and commandments that Israel

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8. The covenant is also summarized in Deuteronomy 28. According to the Biblical text, the Deuteronomic summary of the covenant would post-date that of Leviticus. There is scholarly debate about this, largely focused on the way the Leviticus Holiness Code, which Leviticus 26 is a part of, assumes the existence of some laws present in Deuteronomy. See Henry T. C. Sun, "Holiness Code," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, eds. David Noel Freedman, Gary A. Herion, David F. Graf, and John David Pleins (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:256. Of course, if the laws in Deuteronomy were a review of laws and covenants given a generation earlier, as the text portrays, then these laws would have been known by the time the Holiness Code was created, whenever that was. The dating of both texts is complicated and difficult, as Sun outlines.

9. See Sun, "Holiness Code," 254–57. It is worth noting the lack of complete agreement upon the inclusion of chapter 17 in the Holiness Code, and there is also

is told to keep as part of the covenant most directly apply to the laws found in this section of scripture.

As is typical of covenant pericopes in the Old Testament, the promise of blessings for keeping the covenant was immediately followed by a presentation of the cursings that would follow if Israel did not remain faithful.<sup>10</sup> These are outlined thus:

1. If Israel does not keep the commandments, judgments, and statutes of God, they will have broken the Covenant (Leviticus 26:14–15, 18, 21, 23–24).
2. Sickness will then come from the land instead of crops (Leviticus 26:16).
3. Their enemies will have power over them (Leviticus 26:16–17).
4. No efforts will bring forth the produce of the land (Leviticus 26:19–20).
5. Beasts will kill them (Leviticus 26:22).
6. Their enemies will have power over them (Leviticus 26:25).

As can be seen, aspects of covenantal cursing are repeated in this list, e.g., no crops and no protection. They continue to be repeated through verse 38, after which God tells Israel that if their punishments eventually lead them to repent, they can still be forgiven, at which point the blessings of the Covenant will be restored (Leviticus 26:39–45). This last idea seems to represent a summation of the availability of the covenant outlined in such detail throughout the chapter.

There is a striking similarity between this Leviticus 26 covenant explication and the much more succinct version recorded by Nephi as he and his family left Jerusalem. As they departed, Nephi sought to learn God's will concerning them. In answer, he received a promise that can be outlined thus:

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debate on whether or not the Holiness Code is dependent upon an earlier corpus of laws. As noted above, there is also debate about when this corpus was created, ranging from a pre-Deuteronomic composition to a post-exilic one. The comparison of Leviticus 26 with the Book of Mormon strongly suggests that Leviticus 26 and any of its precedents pre-date the Nephite exodus. Sun presents both sides but presents most strongly the case that there is not an originally independent corpus beneath this material.

10. See Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 23–27, a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2286–87. Milgrom notes that the cursings section is longer than the blessings section, which is typical of covenants and treaties in the ancient Near East.

1. Nephi and his seed need to keep the commandments (1 Nephi 2:20).
2. Nephi and his seed will then prosper (1 Nephi 2:20).
3. Nephi and his seed will have a promised land (1 Nephi 2:20).
4. If Nephi's brothers rebel against God, they will be cut off from God's presence (implying that Nephi and his seed will enjoy God's presence) (1 Nephi 2:21).
5. Nephi will rule over his brothers if they become enemies to God and Nephi (1 Nephi 2:22).
6. Nephi's enemy brothers will have no power over him or his seed (1 Nephi 2:23).

In language that mirrors the Leviticus emphasis on how breaking the covenant would lead to punishment that would force Israel to return to God, Nephi is then told that if his people do not keep the commandments (rebel against God), that God will use their enemy brethren to bring them back to Him.<sup>11</sup>

There is an important addendum to this promise. When Lehi's family arrived at Bountiful, Nephi used language that echoes the promises made when the covenant was established with him as he left Jerusalem. At both the beginning and the end of this iteration, Nephi makes it clear that he is referring to an earlier instance when God had spoken to him about these promises. Towards the end of this discourse, Nephi adds that God had insisted that they would know they had been delivered and led to the promised land by Him (1 Nephi 17:13–14). Perhaps Nephi was expanding upon the promise he had received in 1 Nephi 2 (the covenant outlined above), suggesting that he had only recorded an abbreviated version of the full promise given him, but at the very least, Nephi was providing an expansion on that promise that God had made at some point early in the Nephite Exodus. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the Nephites understood that recognizing God's delivering power was part of the covenant.

It is not uncommon for scriptural authors to quote, paraphrase, or allude to earlier scriptural authors. We often refer to this as

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11. See John L. Fowles, "The Decline of the Nephites: Rejection of the Covenant and Word of God," in *The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi 8, According to Thy Word*, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1992), 81–92, for a discussion on how rejection of the Covenant eventually led to the destruction of the Nephites.

intertextuality.<sup>12</sup> What I am proposing here is similar to but importantly different from such a practice. If we were to propose that Nephi was drawing on Leviticus, we would need to demonstrate things such as the availability and applicability of the Leviticus text to Nephi.<sup>13</sup> Yet, what I am proposing here is that the same being who established the covenant with Israel, namely Jehovah, (re)established that same covenant with Lehi and Nephi. Thus, the issue is not whether Nephi was aware of and employed the language of Leviticus (which is an interesting topic on its own), but rather that the Lord established the same covenant and thus used similar language and ideas.<sup>14</sup> It would follow that, based on Lehi and Nephi's being familiar with the written Law of Moses (1 Nephi 5:11), they would recognize the language and therefore its significance. Studying that is another topic. Here, we address only the similarity in language and concept of the covenant that God (re)established with Israel and then again with the Lehtes. It seems clear that this is the same covenant.

The following chart of verses helps make the comparison clearer:

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12. See, for example, Nicholas J. Frederick, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament Gospels," in *Prophets and Prophecies of the Old Testament*, eds. Aaron P. Schade, Brian M. Hauglid, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book, 2017), 123–160. Also Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

13. See Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29–33.

14. Of course, there will be those who posit that the language is similar because Joseph Smith is the creator and author of the Book of Mormon text and was familiar with Leviticus. On this kind of reasoning, see Benjamin McGuire "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part One," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 5 (2013), 1–59; <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-one/>; and McGuire "Finding Parallels: Some Cautions and Criticisms, Part Two," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 5 (2013), 61–104; <https://www.mormoninterpreter.com/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-two/>. Whether or not one would acknowledge the parallel covenant being the work of God or of Joseph Smith depends upon your initial assumptions, something that I am not discussing here, though I have elsewhere regarding the Book of Abraham. See Kerry Muhlestein, "Assessing the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Introduction to the Historiography of their Acquisitions, Translations, and Interpretations," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 22 (2016), 18–19. For the current paper, the initial assumption is that Joseph Smith was the inspired translator not the author of the Book of Mormon and that the language Nephi purports came from God did so.

Leviticus Verses	1 Nephi Verses
If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; (Leviticus 26:3)	And inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments (1 Nephi 2:20)
Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full. (Leviticus 26:4–5) For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. (Leviticus 26:9–10)	ye shall prosper. (1 Nephi 2:20)
and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land. (Leviticus 26:5–6)	and shall be led to a land of promise; yea, even a land which I have prepared for you; yea, a land which is choice above all other lands. (1 Nephi 2:20)
and ye shall lie down, and none shall make <i>you</i> afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. (Leviticus 26:6–8)	And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher over thy brethren. For behold, in that day that they shall rebel against me, I will curse them even with a sore curse, and they shall have no power over thy seed. (1 Nephi 2:22–23)
And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. (Leviticus 26:11–12)	And inasmuch as thy brethren shall rebel against thee, they shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord [implying that when there is no rebellion there is an absence of God abhorring them and thus they all have the presence of God]. (1 Nephi 2:21)

Leviticus Verses	1 Nephi Verses
<p>I <i>am</i> the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright. (Leviticus 26:13)</p>	<p>wherefore, inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall be led towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by me that ye are led. Yea, and the Lord said also that: After ye have arrived in the promised land, ye shall know that I, the Lord, am God; and that I, the Lord, did deliver you from destruction; yea, that I did bring you out of the land of Jerusalem. (1 Nephi 17:13–14)</p>
<p>But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. (Leviticus 26:14–17)</p>	<p>And if it so be that they [Nephi's seed] rebel against me, they [Laman's seed] shall be a scourge unto thy seed. (1 Nephi 2:24)</p>
<p>if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. (Leviticus 26:41–42)</p>	<p>They shall be a scourge unto thy seed, to stir them up in the ways of remembrance. (1 Nephi 2:24)</p>

Many have noticed the presence of the Abrahamic Covenant in the Book of Mormon before, even from the earliest days of the Church.<sup>15</sup> Some have focused on the way the Book of Mormon makes the covenant more universally available and is part of fulfilling how the world is blessed

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15. See William W. Phelps, “The Book of Mormon,” in *The Evening and Morning Star* 1 (January 1833): 57–59.

by Abraham.<sup>16</sup> Others have analyzed how the Savior taught the Nephites about the Abrahamic Covenant (most notably Victor Ludlow).<sup>17</sup>

Still others have emphasized the Book of Mormon's role in fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant<sup>18</sup> or even the various ways the covenant is presented in the Book of Mormon<sup>19</sup> and how covenant renewal in the Book of Mormon is similar to Old Testament patterns.<sup>20</sup> Yet it seems that all studies of covenant in the Book of Mormon will be better founded if we recognize that when the covenant was first established with the Nephites, it closely mirrored its establishment among the Israelites. This covenant parallel, established so early in the Lehiite journey, likely influenced Nephi's recognition of the parallels between his family's exodus and that of ancient Israel's.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the Book of Mormon's thematization of the covenant is surely affected by the precise parallel inception of that covenant. Thus, I believe that when we recognize the clear consciousness of a mirrored covenant identity that informed

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16. Noel B. Reynolds, "Understanding the Abrahamic Covenant Through the Book of Mormon" (working paper, BYU Scholars Archive, 2017), <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1817>.

17. Ludlow, "The Father's Covenant People Sermon," 147–174. Also Mark A. Shields, "3 Things You Didn't Know About Your Connection to the Abrahamic Covenant," *LDS Living*, <http://www.ldsiving.com/3-Things-You-Need-to-Know-about-the-Abrahamic-Covenant/s/82074>.

18. Joseph Fielding McConkie, "The Doctrine of a Covenant People," in *3 Nephi 9–30, This is My Gospel*, Book of Mormon Symposium Series, eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1993), 8:357–377; and Reynolds, "Understanding the Abrahamic Covenant Through the Book of Mormon."

19. Stephen D. Ricks, "Abrahamic covenant," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2003), 25–26.

20. Blake T. Ostler, "The Covenant Tradition in the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, eds. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 230–40; also Stephen D. Ricks, "Deuteronomy: A Covenant of Love," *Ensign* 20 (April 1990): 55–59.

21. On that parallel, see S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *BYU Studies* 30 (Summer 1991): 111–26; George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in N. Lambers, ed., *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scriptures* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1981), 245–62; Terrence L. Szink, "Nephi and the Exodus," in John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 38–51; and D. Kelly Ogden, "Answering the Lord's Call," in Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture: 1 Nephi to Alma* 29 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 27–31.

Nephi, Jacob, their followers, and their descendants, we will be better able to understand how they used and adapted covenant consciousness in their specific circumstances over time and how they used prophetic utterances about the covenant as they grappled with the role of the covenant in those circumstances.

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# “AND THEY SHALL BE HAD AGAIN”: ONOMASTIC ALLUSIONS TO JOSEPH IN MOSES 1:41 IN VIEW OF THE SO-CALLED CANON FORMULA

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Matthew L. Bowen

**ABSTRACT:** *Moses 1:41 echoes or plays on the etymological meaning of the name Joseph — “may he [Yahweh] add,” as the Lord foretells to Moses the raising up of a future figure through whom the Lord’s words, after having been “taken” (away) from the book that Moses would write, “shall be had again among the children of men.” Moses 1:41 anticipates and employs language reminiscent of the so-called biblical canon formulas, possible additions to biblical texts meant to ensure the texts’ stability by warning against “adding” or “diminishing” (i.e., “taking away”) from them (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:22 [MT 5:18]; 12:32 [MT 13:1]; cf. Revelation 22:18–19). This article presupposes that the vision of Moses presents restored text that was at some point recorded in Hebrew.*

Without question, Joseph Smith’s translation and reception of additional scripture violated contemporary notions of scriptural canon.<sup>1</sup> To this day, a common protest registered against Joseph is that he “added to the Bible.”<sup>2</sup> Not infrequently, some Christian fundamentalists

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1. The English term “canon” (not to be confused with “cannon”), as describing a fixed body or collection of texts, derives from Greek *kanōn* (κανών), “a straight rod,” which came to connote “a means to determine the quality of somet[hing]”; i.e., a “rule, standard”; “set of directions or formulation for an activity” thus, “assignment, formulation” and later, “rule of faith.” See Walter Bauer, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Fredrick William Danker (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 507-8.

2. See, e.g., Howard W. Hunter, “No Man Shall Add to or Take Away,” *Ensign* (May 1981): 64; Monte S. Nyman, “Other Ancient American Records Yet to Come

still assert that Joseph did so in violation of the closing verses of Revelation, the closing book of the present-day canonical Christian Bible:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, **If any man shall add** [*epithē*]<sup>3</sup> **unto these things, God shall add unto him** [*epithēsei*] **the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away** [*aphelē*] **from the words of the book** of this prophecy, **God shall take away** [*aphelēi*] his part [*meros*, share] out of the tree of life [= *tou xylou tēs zōēs* versus *tou biblou tēs zōēs* = Textus Receptus: book of life], and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18–19)

Ironically, Erasmus's Textus Receptus (1516)<sup>4</sup> and its later editions, from which the KJV version of these verses is translated, represents a re-*addition* of text that had been *taken away* from or had otherwise gone missing from Erasmus's *Vorlage* for the Book of Revelation. In other words, the textual history and textual variants in Revelation 22:16–21, including the canon formula in vv. 18–19, bear witness to the unavoidable instability of a text that the canon formula — perhaps itself a later editorial addition — was intended to stabilize.

As has long been recognized,<sup>5</sup> this canon formula warning has the single small book or document (Greek *biblion*) in view, rather than all the “books” *biblia* of the Bible (< Greek *biblia*, “books”), a collection that would

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Forth,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 1 (2001): 52–61, 79–80.

3. Here I am matching the translated KJV text to the relevant Greek terms from the Greek Nestle-Aland 28<sup>th</sup> edition text, rather than Erasmus's Textus Receptus, a later edition from which the KJV translation derives. The Nestle-Aland text represents a better text and a superior set of readings in any case.

4. Michael W. Holmes (*The New Interpreters Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Textus Receptus” [Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2009]) writes: “The term ‘Textus Receptus’ (‘received text’) designates the Greek text found in virtually all printed editions of the Greek NT from its initial publication by Erasmus [1516] through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. ... Erasmus had only a small number of medieval manuscripts with which to work — in some instances, only one, and in a few [e.g., the final verses of Revelation] none, in which case he back-translated from Latin to Greek, creating a Greek text found in no known manuscript. His text, generally representative of the Byzantine [or ‘Majority’] textual tradition, nonetheless differs from it in over 1,800 places.” See further Thomas A. Wayment, “The Endings of Mark and Revelation,” in *The King James Bible and the Restoration*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 75–94.

5. See, e.g., David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary: Revelation 17–22* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 52C:1230–32.

not exist as a single entity for centuries after the composition of the Book of Revelation (cf. Doctrine and Covenants 20:35).<sup>6</sup> Rather, Revelation 22:18–19 constitutes an example of the literary-textual phenomenon sometimes described (and oversimplified) as a “canon formula.”<sup>7</sup> Regarding the biblical use of such “canon formulas,” Bernard Levinson writes:

The formula actually has a long pre-history in the ancient Near East, where it originally sought to prevent royal inscriptions, including law collections and treaties (cf. 1 Macc. 8:30), from being altered. In other contexts, it affirmed the adequacy of wisdom instruction. Only subsequently was it taken over by Deuteronomy’s Israelite authors and applied to the Mosaic Torah. The formula makes it clear that its intent is to preclude both literary and doctrinal innovation by safeguarding the textual status quo.<sup>8</sup>

The “canon formula” of Revelation 22:18–19 exhibits textual dependency on and adapts earlier instances of the biblical canon formula, including those attested in Deuteronomy: “Ye shall not add [*lō’ tōsipû*] unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought [*wēlō’ tigrē’û*] from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2); “These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more [*lō’ yāsāp*]” (Deuteronomy 5:22 [MT 18]); “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add [*lō’-tōsēp*] thereto, nor diminish [*wēlō’ tigrā’*] from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32 [MT 13:1]); “Add thou not [*al-tōsēp*] unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6). The first three examples, all from Deuteronomy, suggest a concern — whether original or added later in the textual tradition — with the stability of the textual tradition of the Book of Deuteronomy: adding and taking away from its text. In

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6. D&C 20:35: “And we know that these things are true and according to the revelations of John, **neither adding to, nor diminishing from the prophecy of his book**, the holy scriptures, or the revelations of God which shall come hereafter by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost, the voice of God, or the ministering of angels.”

7. In this case, the form of the “canon formula,” because of its position in the book, constitutes a colophon. The content has been interpreted as “canon.” See the warning in epilogue in the Laws of Hammurabi, LH xlix 18-44 and the attached curses that follow (Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 136-40).

8. Bernard M. Levinson, “You Must Not Add Anything to What I Command You: Paradoxes of Canon and Authorship in Ancient Israel,” *Numen* 50 (2003): 6-7.

this short note, I will attempt to show how the Lord's words to Moses as preserved in Moses 1:41 play on the meaning of the name Joseph ("May [Yahweh] add"),<sup>9</sup> using that "add"/"take away" language of the biblical canon formula in a way that also harmonizes with the double etiology given for the name Joseph in Genesis 30:23–24.

### "He Hath Taken Away"/"May He [Yahweh] Add"

Significantly, the concepts of "adding" and "taking away" (or diminishing, gathering in) are at the heart of the meaning of the name Joseph in the biblical tradition attributed to Moses.<sup>10</sup> The Genesis narrative offers a chiasmic, double etiology for the name Joseph (*yōsēp*), the first half in terms of the Hebrew verb *ʾāsap* ("gather up," "to take away"), and the second in terms of the verb and somewhat homonymous antonym *yāsap* ("add," "increase," "do again, more"<sup>11</sup>):

A And she conceived, and bare a **son**;

B and said, God **hath taken away** [*ʾāsap*] my reproach:

C And she called his name **Joseph** [*yōsēp*];

B' and said, **The Lord shall add** [*yōsēp*] to me

A' another **son**. (Genesis 30:23–24)

The verb *ʾāsap* primarily denotes "gathering in" or "assembling."<sup>12</sup> The *ʾāsap*-etiology, however, emphasizes the association between Joseph and the verb's secondary meaning, "taking away."<sup>13</sup> The *yāsap*-etiology much more nearly conforms to the actual or "scientific" etymology of the name Joseph, "May he [Yahweh] add." The causative stem of *yāsap* from which the name Joseph is formed also has the more developed sense "to do something again," "to do something more," or "continue

9. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der Gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1928), 212; Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 230–33.

10. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, IL: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 173. He states: "These homiletic interpretations express two separate emotions — the immense relief experienced by the hitherto barren Rachel when she bears her first child, and her hope of another child to come."

11. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2001), 418. Hereafter cited as HALOT.

12. See also, e.g., Genesis 42:17–18; 49:33–50:1; Exodus 3:16; 4:29. HALOT, 74.

13. See, e.g., Isaiah 4:1. HALOT, 74.

to do something."<sup>14</sup> In addition to the etiological wordplay in Genesis 30:24, the biographical wordplay on Joseph in Genesis 37 follows this pattern. As we shall see, the wordplay in Moses 1:41 is similar.

### "And They Shall Be Had Again Among the Children of Men"

As recorded in the Vision of Moses preserved in Moses 1, the Lord described to Moses a future in which the Lord's "words" would be "taken" — i.e., "taken away" — from "the book which [Moses would] write," including Moses's encounter with Satan after seeing Christ (see v. 23), presumably during the course of textual transmission:

A And in a day when **the children of men shall esteem** my words as naught

B and **take many of them from the book** which thou shalt write,

C behold, I will raise up another like unto thee;

B' **and they shall be had again**

A' **among the children of men** — among as many as shall believe (Moses 1:41).

The Lord employs chiasmic language that undeniably resembles and anticipates the aforementioned examples of the "canon formula." In the A and A' elements, the chiasm is bracketed by the "children of men" (Hebrew *bēnê 'ādām*) who "esteem [the Lord's] words as naught," but whose believing descendants<sup>15</sup> will have those same words.

The central C element is the "raise[d] up" figure like Moses. It should not pass without notice that in Moses's Deuteronomy 18:15–19 prophecy, the "rais[ing] up" of "a Prophet like unto me" comes in response to ancient Israel's demand at Sinai, "**Let me not hear again** [*lō' 'ōsīp*] the voice of the Lord my God" (v. 16) — a demand for indirect guidance through prophetic intermediation rather than direct revelation.

This "raised-up" figure is enveloped in elements B and B' by the unauthorized "tak[ing]" of the Lord's words "from" Moses's "book" — the idea in the verbs *gāra'* and *'āsap* and the Lord's promise that "they shall be had again," the idea conveyed in the verb *yāsap*. It is thus interesting to consider this text and its structure in light of the presence of several aforementioned "canon formulas" in Deuteronomy, a work that contains a great deal of material traditionally attributed to Moses. Two of those "canon formulas" employ the verb *gāra'* ("diminish," "restrain," "withdraw," "remove") — a synonym of *'āsap* in the sense of

14. See HALOT, 418.

15. Those believing descendants would include "them that believe" mentioned in Moses 1:42.

“take away,” “gather up” — and all three employ the verb *yāsap* (“add”).<sup>16</sup> The enveloping verbs hint at the identity of the raised-up figure.

The phrase “and they shall ... again” seemingly reflects (or at least resembles) the idiomatic Hebrew verb *yāsap* in its causative stem (*yôsîp*), whence the name Joseph (*yôsēp*) derives. We can thus detect the distinct use of the “add”/“take away” language of the “canon formula” as a wordplay on Joseph, the name of the one of whom the Lord said, “I will raise up another like unto thee [Moses].” The prophecy of Joseph in Egypt as preserved in 2 Nephi 3 — a form of which is, like the vision of Moses, preserved in the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis — confirms this identification: “**But a seer will I raise up** out of the fruit of thy loins; and **unto him will I give power to bring forth my word** unto the seed of thy loins — **and not to the bringing forth my word only**, saith the Lord, but **to the convincing them of my word**, which shall have already gone forth among them” (2 Nephi 3:11). The raised-up, Moses-like seer would bear the name Joseph: “**And his name shall be called after me** [Joseph]; **and it shall be after the name of his father**. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation” (2 Nephi 3:15; JST Genesis 50:33).

As noted above, the “canon formulas” present in the Deuteronomic text possibly suggest the instability of a textual tradition that originated with Moses. The restored text of the vision of Moses (Moses 1; JST Genesis 1) represents a *re*-“addition” of words previously “take[n] ... from” or “diminish[ed] from” that textual tradition. Moses 1:41 anticipates not only unauthorized and uninspired additions to and subtractions from Moses’s “book,” but also the “canon formula” commands intended to stabilize the textual tradition in the future, any one of which (if indeed not original) represents an addition to the text. Thus, in the context of a figure specifically “raised up” so that Moses’s words that had been “taken” away “shall be had again,” we detect a clever, idiomatic wordplay on the meaning of the name Joseph (“may he [Yahweh] add,” “may he do [something] again”) in Moses 1:41 that evokes the language of the “take away”/“add” double etiology of Genesis 30:23–24.

We do well then, in the light of the foregoing, to consider the proposed wordplay on Joseph in terms of divine words that have been “take[n] (away)” and “shall be had again” (i.e., added) and the language of Isaiah 11:11 and 29:14 as exegetically juxtaposed and mutually interpreted by Nephi in 2 Nephi 25:17–18, 21:

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16. See HALOT, 203–204.

And the Lord will set his hand again [Hebrew *yôšîp*, add his hand] the second time [quoting Isaiah 11:11] to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he will proceed [*yôšîp*, add] to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men [quoting Isaiah 29:14]. **Wherefore, he shall bring forth his words unto them**, which words shall judge them at the last day, for they shall be given them for the purpose of convincing them of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them; and unto the convincing of them that **they need not look forward any more** [cf. Hebrew *lô' yôšîpû* ('ôd)] for a Messiah to come... (2 Nephi 25:17-18; see also 2 Nephi 29:1)

Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto **Joseph** [*yôšēp*] [in Egypt], that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand. (2 Nephi 25:21)<sup>17</sup>

The issue of the biblical canon formulas and the divine *addition* and *re-addition* of scripture has important bearing on much of Nephi's writings in 2 Nephi 26–30.

## Conclusion

The Lord's words in Moses 1:41 echo or play on the etymological meaning of the name Joseph — "may he [Yahweh] add" as he foretells a figure through whom the Lord's words, even after having been "taken" (away) from Moses's "book," "shall be had again [or, added] among the children of men." Moses 1:41 thus anticipates and makes use of the language of the so-called canon formulas, possible additions to biblical texts meant to ensure their stability by warning against "adding" or "diminishing" (i.e., "taking away") from them.

*[Author's note: I would like to thank Suzy Bowen, Allen Wyatt, and Victor Worth.]*

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17. Matthew L. Bowen, "He Shall Add: Wordplay on the Name Joseph and an Early Instance of Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon," *Insights* 30, no. 2 (2010): 2-4; Bowen, "Onomastic Wordplay on *Joseph* and *Benjamin* and *Gezera Shawa* in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 18 (2016): 255-73.

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## A NOURISHING AND ACCESSIBLE READ

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Morgan Deane

Review of Michaela Stephens, *To Defend Them By Stratagem: Fortify Yourself with Book of Mormon War Tactics* (Gilbert, AZ: Lion's Whelp Publications, 2018). 246 pp. \$12.99 (paperback).

**Abstract:** *Sometimes it is easy to overlook, disregard, or discount the “war chapters” in the Book of Mormon. Michaela Stephens’ new book about these chapters deserves wider attention, as it is an excellent study resource that provides valuable devotional and academic insights while remaining accessible to lay readers.*

The burgeoning study of warfare in the Book of Mormon remains relatively unexplored. A few authors like John Bytheway have authored relevant books, and the war stories occasionally make it into talks. Micheala Stephens’ new book, *To Defend Them by Stratagem*, offers a shining example of a devotional discussion of warfare in the Book of Mormon with insightful analysis and plain language accessible to readers.

Stephens sprinkles perceptive points and “aha moments” early and throughout the book. In assessing King Noah’s behaviors, she notes how he became unable to distinguish between real and fake threats, and his attempts to stop them invited Lamanite reaction. She makes the case that Noah’s response to Alma’s new church was probably a violent sweep of friends and relatives of the believers, and perhaps even of Lamanite lands.

Thus, we can see how King Noah lost the ability to discern what was really threatening and what was harmless, and real dangers began to blind-side him. Imagine his fear when confronted with Gideon, sword in hand, and then seeing the army of the Lamanites invading — threats coming from all directions. And then his people turn on him after running

away from the Lamanites. He never saw any of that coming because he was so fixated on Alma (17)

The book covers the war chapters in particular but provides insights from King Benjamin to the Jaredites. The chapters vary in length, but they stood out for being pithy and easily digestible. This doesn't take away from the astute ideas Stephens provides. For example, she compared the wrathful oaths of Gideon in Mosiah 19 to the revenging oath of the Nephites in Mormon 3. This made me reconsider some of my own research. In other places, such as her educated guesses about Captain Moroni's backstory (Chapter 10, 35–39), her insights inspired me to further research.

While the book is academically insightful, its best features are devotional. The book's chapters are divided in such a way that families would be easily able to add this to their home studies curriculum. Stephens makes a good case that the 19 war chapters receive 90 minutes every four years to study 52 pages — and that was before the introduction of the two-hour block! The author's analysis isn't overly long or complex, and quotes could be included in Sunday school without anybody noticing. The author lists and quotes key scriptures in her analysis, which warmly invites further study from readers.

Stephens promises, "In this book, you will learn about tactics that Satan uses against us. You will learn about tactics you can use to defend yourself. You also will learn strategies that will allow you to go on the offensive." The book admirably achieves this goal to create a very enjoyable read that is nourishing and accessible for both the mind and the soul.

**Morgan Deane** has a BA from Southern Virginia University and an MA in History from Norwich University specializing in military history. His publications include *Offensive Warfare in The Book of Mormon* and *a Defense of the Bush Doctrine and Bleached Bones and Wicked Serpents: Ancient Warfare in the Book of Mormon*. He teaches history at Brigham Young University-Idaho and has been accepted into the War Studies Program at Kings College London, where he will study the early insurgency of Mao Zedong.