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*Death to Seducers! Examples of Latter-day Saint-led Extralegal
Justice in Historical Context*

Craig L. Foster281

A DEMOCRATIC SALVATION

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *Over the centuries, many religious thinkers — precisely because they are religious thinkers — have put a premium on intellectual attainment as a prerequisite for salvation. This has sometimes yielded an elitism or snobbishness that is utterly foreign to the teachings of the Savior. The Gospel as taught in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints values education and knowledge, certainly. But not unduly. Intellectuals, while heartily welcome among the Saints and, when faithful, much appreciated for their potential contributions to the Church, have no claim on any special status in the Kingdom simply because of their (real or pretended) intellectuality, whether here or in the hereafter.*

A recurring theme in the texts that I read with my Islamic philosophy class during the coronavirus-truncated Winter 2020 term at Brigham Young University — particularly, I think, in the *Faṣl al-Maqāl* (“The Decisive Treatise”) of Ibn Rushd and in Ibn Ṭufayl’s *Ḥayy ibn Yaqzān* (“Alive, Son of Awake”) — is the notion that the full theological and philosophical truth should be restricted only to the elite. It should, so these two twelfth-century Andalusian texts argue, be carefully and deliberately withheld from people disqualified by their (presumably inferior) natures from being able to deal with it. In some interpretations, Ibn Rushd may even have argued that only intellectuals of the most rarified class — and, really, only their intellects, not their emotions or individual personalities — would attain immortality or eternal life.

I’m afraid that intellectuals are *often* prone to elevate themselves among the *electi* and to look down from that lofty perch upon the mere *auditores*.¹ Ancient Gnosticism, for instance, which took its name from the Greek word γνῶστικός (*gnōstikós*, “having knowledge”), was all

1. I borrow the terms *elect* and *auditors* from ancient descriptions of the Iranian religious sect Manichaeism, which, for a while, was a serious rival to

about what and how much one *knew*. Consider this passage, from the Gospel of John:

So the people were in two minds about him — some of them wanted to arrest him, but so far no one laid hands on him.

Then the officers returned to the Pharisees and chief priests, who said to them, “Why haven’t you brought him?”

“No man ever spoke like that!” they replied.

“Has he pulled the wool over your eyes, too?” retorted the Pharisees. “Have any of the authorities or any of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, who know nothing about the Law, is damned anyway!” (John 7:43–49, J. B. Phillips translation)

What about the masses? Who cares?

Such dismissiveness is not confined to scriptural stories of long-gone peoples. Decades back, I sat in a seminar room in Denver where a presenter at an academic conference was setting forth her reading of James W. Fowler’s fairly well-known 1981 book *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. In that book, Fowler (1940–2015), an American theologian affiliated with Emory University, distinguished seven stages of spiritual growth. I remember the thought crossing my mind that the characteristics of the highest stage of Professor Fowler’s seven levels were curiously similar to the views and attitudes of, say, a professor of theology at a liberal Protestant divinity school.

There seems a powerful tendency among people who theorize about God — perhaps particularly in the absence of contradicting experience or revelation — to imagine Him in their own image. And this occurs even among those who try hard to avoid what they consider “crude” or “vulgar” or “primitive” anthropomorphism.²

Consider this passage, for example, from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, in which, according to that truly great early thinker, God spends His time (or, perhaps better, given Aristotle’s view of the nature of God, *Its* time) like a philosopher — indeed, and not coincidentally, like Aristotle himself. Famously, Aristotle’s deity is the Unmoved Mover, which does

ancient Christianity and then to classical Islam. But similar distinctions between two tiers of adherents have been common in many religious movements.

2. I’ve long wanted to catalogue the negative adjectives that commonly accompany the word *anthropomorphism* in theological and other scholarly writing. The concept of divine anthropomorphism is apparently so threatening to some writers that it seldom stands alone, without receiving a defensive kick.

not act but, rather, thinks high thoughts and contemplates the loftiest of subjects:

The nature of the divine thought involves certain problems; for while thought is held to be the most divine of things observed by us, the question how it must be situated in order to have that character involves difficulties. For if it thinks of nothing, what is there here of dignity? It is just like one who sleeps. And if it thinks ... [d]oes it matter ... or not, whether it thinks of the good or of any chance thing? Are there not some things about which it is incredible that it should think? Evidently, then, it thinks of that which is most divine and precious ... Therefore it must be of itself that the divine thought thinks (since it is the most excellent of things).³

In Aristotle's conception, God's sole activity is a philosopher's dream. God is "thought, thinking itself" (*noesis noeseos*), contemplating the only thing in the universe worthy of His attention, namely Himself.

According to some of the classical rabbis, God spends his time like, well, like a rabbi. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi (*aka* Judah the Prince, ca. AD 135–217), for example, held that God's day is divided into four portions of three hours each. During the second period of the divine day, God judges the world. During the next three hours, He sustains the world and everything in it, "from the horns of wild oxen to the eggs of lice." During the fourth and last period, He sports with Leviathan. But what of the first three hours of each day? Those are devoted to studying the Torah.⁴

According to the Babylonian Talmud, study of the Torah is equal in value to all of the *mitzvot* or commandment obligations to honor one's parents, perform deeds of loving kindness, and bring peace between one person and another.⁵ In fact, since it is one of the few commandments for which a person is allowed to move far away from his parents without their permission, it may be considered to be, in one sense, even greater than the honoring of father and mother.⁶

3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. W. D. Ross, 2 vols. (1924; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), see esp. book 12, part 9, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/metaphysics.12.xii.html>.

4. Avodah Zarah 3b in *The Babylonian Talmud*, trans., Isidore Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1948), <https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Talmud>. Compare Gittin 6b.

5. Shabbat 127a in *The Babylonian Talmud*.

6. Megillah 16b in *The Babylonian Talmud*.

Notably, the rabbis — descendants, in an important sense, of the Pharisees of the time of Jesus — value their occupation of studying the law more highly than the activities of their historic priestly rivals, represented in the New Testament by the Sadducees.

In the rabbis' judgment, for example, Torah study is of more value than the offering of the daily temple sacrifice.⁷ Indeed, according to one tractate in the Babylonian Talmud, the Lord told King David that "A single day in which you sit and engage in Torah is preferable to Me than the thousand burnt-offerings that your son Solomon will offer before Me on the altar."⁸ "Even a gentile who engages in the study of Torah is like a high priest," declares one Talmudic tractate.⁹ In fact, even an illegitimate child of incest or adultery, if learned in the Torah, is of more worth than a Torah-ignorant high priest.¹⁰

Given such a high valuation of Torah study, Tevye, the milkman protagonist of *Fiddler on the Roof* who lives in the small rabbi-led Jewish *shtetl* of Anatevka in Tsarist Russia, makes perfect sense. He daydreams about what life would be if he were a wealthy man, singing

If I were rich, I'd have the time that I lack
To sit in the synagogue and pray,
And maybe have a seat by the Eastern wall.
And I'd discuss the learned books with the holy men,
seven hours every day.
That would be the sweetest thing of all.¹¹

Taken to its extreme, the view that intellectual study of the scriptures is equal or superior to living the commandments or engaging in the rituals of worship is a dramatically undemocratic and elitist point of view. It is also one that is quite foreign to most Christian sensibilities and, in fairness, to mainstream Islam and probably to most Jews. The Sermon on the Mount has absolutely nothing to say about intellectual attainments or cultural sophistication.

Classical philosophers, extremely devout rabbis, and modern academics are certainly not alone in fashioning God in their own image. If God is fashioned after such lofty individuals, then we are, indeed, left with the same questions: What about the masses? Who cares?

7. Eruvin 63b in *The Babylonian Talmud*.

8. Shabbat 30a in *The Babylonian Talmud*.

9. Avodah Zarah 3a in *The Babylonian Talmud*.

10. Horayot 13a in *The Babylonian Talmud*.

11. Sheldon Harnick and Jerry Bock, "If I Were a Rich Man" from *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964).

God cares! He has given us a Gospel that is sufficiently profound for the deepest thinkers but simple enough for children and the unlearned.

For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ... For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Corinthians 1:19-20, 25-29, NIV)

It should not be controversial to note the obvious — that Jesus, the twelve disciples, and certainly Joseph Smith had more in common with the masses than the academic aristocracy.

Many, many years back, among the men who sometimes worked for our family’s southern California construction company, was a convert to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He wasn’t a well-educated man. His grammar was poor, and I have sometimes joked, in recalling him to my wife and kids, that he had no idea at all where to locate 2 Nephi in the Old Testament. But even as a rather young boy, I noticed that he was the first to arrive at service projects and the last to leave, and that he was at every single such project in which I ever participated and probably a great many besides. If there was a widow’s house to be fixed, he was there. Sometimes I was, too, but I had little to offer. I realized then that, while he was far from sophisticated or urbane and while I aspired in those days to be at least somewhat more sophisticated and urbane than I then was, he was worth at least two of me. I was convinced then and am confident now that he will occupy a wonderful place in the Celestial Kingdom.

Years later, but still a long time ago, I was driving my youngest son and one of his friends to a preschool class. They were in the back seat, chattering away. I was scarcely listening.

Suddenly, one of them observed that their preschool teacher was “really, really hard.” The other agreed, and then added “But I’ve heard that kindergarten is even *worse*.”

I think that I laughed aloud. They had no idea what was coming their way in the future: American history, algebra, biology, trigonometry, calculus, physics. Homework. Term papers. Class presentations. Heck, *Mr. Clark* was still ahead of them.¹²

I hadn’t been thinking about religion or doctrine at all, but the thought came to me, unbidden, that my overhearing their naïve but confident declarations must be rather like the way our Father listens to us as we talk about doctrine. The image came to my mind of the Father, seated in heaven, contemplating the world below Him. Suddenly, He calls to the angels who surround the throne: “Come over here! Quickly!” And He gestures for them to look down with Him. “The High Priests are speculating again. Aren’t they cute!”

It occurred to me that the distance between a small child and even the wisest and most intelligent adult (don’t worry, I’m not assigning myself to that class) is far less than the distance between the wisest, most intelligent and learned of us and God.

“For now,” wrote the learned apostle and prophet Paul, who had seen so much, “we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). As Johann Wolfgang von Goethe puts it in the Prologue to his *Faust* (Part One):

Das Alter macht nicht kindisch, wie man spricht,

Es findet uns nur noch als wahre Kinder.

Old age doesn’t make us childish, as is said.

It simply finds us still true children.¹³

And if God cares about ordinary people, so should we. Not least because we are, all of us, among those ranks.

A beloved passage from C. S. Lewis occurs in a sermon, entitled “The Weight of Glory,” that he delivered in the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, on 8 June 1941:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you

12. See Dan Peterson, “The passing of a truly remarkable Latter-day Saint,” *Patheos* (blog), December 27, 2017, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/danpeterson/2017/12/passing-truly-remarkable-latter-day-saint.html>.

13. The English translation is mine.

saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit — immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.¹⁴

So, does God care about intellectual prowess? I am sure that He does, in much the same way that He cares about skill and craftsmanship and administrative ability when they are devoted to doing good and building His kingdom.

A motto prominently associated with Brigham Young University, where I have spent by far the largest portion of my life, declares that “The Glory of God is Intelligence.” This is scriptural, and true. And I hope that it urges both faculty and students on to the accumulation of knowledge and insight. But we misunderstand it profoundly if we imagine that it is only or even primarily about academic achievement or cleverness. We need to read the passage in its context:

The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one. (D&C 93:36–37)

Plainly, the “intelligence” spoken of here is not ethically neutral fact or technique. It has a moral and spiritual dimension. It is oriented toward God, and away from darkness. It might more aptly be compared to wisdom than to the kind of knowledge that one can get simply by learning formulas or dates or atomic numbers.

I close with the near-death experience that Hugh Nibley had as a young man in southern California in 1936, complete with the famous postmortem tunnel (decades before Raymond Moody wrote about it in his bestselling book *Life After Life*). Decades later, Nibley recalled that:

Not only was I in all possession of my faculties, but they were tremendous. I was light as a feather and ready to go, you see, and above all I was interested in problems. I had missed out

14. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, rev. ed. (1949; repr., New York: HarperOne, 1980), 45-46.

on a lot of math and stuff like that ... Well, five minutes and I can make up for that ...

So that gives me a great relief. So that's why I don't take this very seriously down here [on Earth]. We just are sort of dabbling around, playing around, being tested for our moral qualities — and, above all, the two things we can be good at, and no two other things can we do: we can forgive and we can repent.¹⁵

That is the intelligence that God seems to value. And it is available to all. Even to the elite.

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15. Boyd J. Petersen, *Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life* (Sandy, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2002), 115-16.

BAD GRAMMAR IN THE BOOK OF MORMON FOUND IN EARLY ENGLISH BIBLES

Stanford Carmack

Abstract: *This study describes ten types of grammatical usage found in early modern Bibles with correlates in the original text of the Book of Mormon. In some cases Joseph Smith's own language could have produced the matching grammar, but in other cases his own linguistic preferences were unlikely to have produced the patterns or usage found in the original text. Comparative linguistic research indicates that this grammatical correspondence shouldn't be a surprise, since plenty of Book of Mormon syntax matches structures and patterns found in Early Modern English.*

It can be difficult to know what to call the Book of Mormon's grammatical usage that was considered substandard by prescriptive norms of the early 19th century. I've decided to refer to its questionable usage using the short phrase at the beginning of the title: BAD GRAMMAR. This comports with the understanding of many nonspecialists and most Book of Mormon scholars, as exemplified in these excerpts from a recent essay:

The language of *The Book of Mormon* does not evince an appreciation for the aesthetic qualities of the King James Bible — the grammar and diction are quite awkward in comparison — yet the narratology is surprisingly sophisticated, * * * the book's language was so obviously imperfect — it was difficult to find the miracle in poor grammar and monotonous phrasing. * * * the work has more literary interest than is often assumed, despite its sometimes awkward grammar and diction.¹

1. Grant Hardy, "The Book of Mormon and the Bible," in *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon*, edited by Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 110, 113, 125. These remarks are close to those made by B. H. Roberts in the early 1900s, who mentioned "errors in grammar and diction" and "awkwardness" — see Roberts, "The Translation of the Book of

This paper looks at ten different kinds of grammatical usage that occur in both the Book of Mormon and early English biblical texts. Most of the time the usage isn't found in the 1611 King James Bible. When it was part of the original King James text, it was edited out over the following decades, either completely or mostly. The ten topics addressed in this study cover usage often thought of as poor grammar — either from an early 19th-century perspective or from a biblical imitation perspective. The topics are these: “things that/which is,” plural *was*, object *they*, plural *hath*, subject *you*, third person singular verb forms in {-s}, irregular past participles, double negation, subjunctive ~ indicative variation after *if*, and object *who*.

The purpose of this paper isn't to give the views of specialists on grammatical usage, nor is it to determine whether a particular Book of Mormon archaism is a close or perfect match with popularity rates and diachronic shifts during the early modern era. Rather, its primary purpose is to show that early biblical grammatical usage thought to be bad grammar by Joseph Smith's time is well represented in the Book of Mormon. Text-critical studies strongly suggest that the matching is present in the original text because it has so many linguistic features of the 16th and 17th centuries (along with features of other centuries, but far fewer of them). The original text's lexis and syntax indicate that implicit knowledge of a wide variety of earlier modes of expression informed the English-language translation of the Book of Mormon. Almost all the bad grammar is part of its mostly early modern syntax.

Extensive comparative study shows that the Book of Mormon contains archaic, nonbiblical usage to such a degree as to reasonably rule out Joseph Smith as its author. In the case of lexis, Royal Skousen laid out in 2018 about 80 potential cases of nonbiblical, obsolete lexical usage in the Book of Mormon (see NOL §§1, 3, 4, 7).² Even though many of these don't hold

Mormon,” *Improvement Era* 9, no. 6 (1906): 428; and Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints* 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907), 295.

Reading Hardy's remarks on Book of Mormon grammar, which noticeably lack important context, we might think we were still back in 1907, in the dark ages of Book of Mormon grammatical study — in an era without large digital corpora and without the benefit of any text-critical work. Readers in 2020 are entitled to a qualifying remark related to the complex topic of grammatical usage in the original Book of Mormon text, something as simple as “(although text-critical studies show that a lot of the bad grammar defies easy explanations).”

2. NOL stands for the critical text volume *The Nature of the Original Language* (see the appendix). For the reference to 80 potential cases of lexical archaism, see Royal Skousen, “The Language of the Original Text of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 57, no. 3 (2018): 92.

up as instances of standalone archaism, the cases that remain represent a level of nonbiblical archaism that far exceeds any known pseudobiblical baseline. In the case of syntax, the Book of Mormon contains various large-scale archaic patterns and many individual archaic structures that are nonbiblical and nonpseudobiblical.

The primary sources consulted include Early English Books Online (EEBO), early English Bibles (from EEBO), the earliest text of the Book of Mormon (edited by Skousen), parts 3.1 to 3.4 of the critical text, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Google Books, 25 pseudobiblical texts, and Joseph Smith's early writings (see the appendix for further information on these sources).

The nine early English biblical texts examined for this study are the following:

- Tyndale's 1530 translation of the Pentateuch
- Tyndale's 1534 translation of the New Testament
(a revision of his 1526 translation)
- 1535 Coverdale Bible
- 1539 Great Bible (1540 edition)
- 1560 Geneva Bible (1561 edition)
- 1568 Bishops' Bible
- 1582 Rheims New Testament
- 1609–1610 Douay Old Testament (including the Apocrypha)³
- 1611 King James Bible

Though the language of these scriptural texts is old, it's useful to bear in mind that it came from literate translators, many of whom knew more than one of the classical source languages: Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin.

Writing for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, David Daniell had this to say of the man responsible for much of the language of these early Bibles:

Tyndale's gift to the English language is unmeasurable. He translated into a register just above common speech, allied in its clarity to proverbs. It is a language which still speaks directly to the heart. His aims were always accuracy and clarity. King James's revisers adopted his style, and his words, for much of the Authorized Version. At a time when European scholars and professionals communicated in Latin, Tyndale insisted on being understood by ordinary people. He preferred a simple Saxon syntax of subject-verb-object. His vocabulary is predominantly Saxon, and often monosyllabic. An Oxford scholar, he was always rhetorically alert. He gave the Bible-reading nation an English plain style. It is a basis

3. The Douay-Rheims Bible was a Catholic translation, based on the Latin Vulgate.

for the great Elizabethan writers, and there is truth in the remark ‘without Tyndale, no Shakespeare’. It is not fanciful to see a chief agent of the energizing of the language in the sixteenth century in the constant reading of the Bible in English, of which Tyndale was the great maker.⁴

Before addressing the grammatical topics individually, I present here a summary of what is currently known about these in relation to pseudobiblical usage and early Joseph Smith usage (plural *hath* has been expanded to the more general case of the {-th} plural):

GRAMMATICAL TOPIC	PSEUDO-BIBLICAL USAGE	JOSEPH'S EARLY WRITINGS
“Things that/which is”	none	none
Plural <i>was</i>	none	yes
Object <i>they</i>	none	limited
Plural {-th}	limited	limited
Subject <i>you</i>	yes	yes
3sg verb forms in {-s}	yes	yes
Irregular past participles	yes	none
Double negation	limited	none
Mood variation after <i>if</i>	limited	none
Object <i>who</i>	none	yes

These observations are subject to change, and details of the comparative studies may appear in later publications. None of them, however, are crucial for determining Book of Mormon authorship.

That said, the most relevant ones in relation to Joseph’s potential authorship appear to be “things which is,” object *they*, plural {-th}, and double negation. There is little evidence for this kind of usage in pseudobiblical texts or in his early writings or from the greater textual record that might lead one to conclude that he would have been responsible for producing so many varied examples of these in his 1829 dictation. In the case of object *they* and double negation, additional details strengthen this determination: *they which* predominates in object *they* contexts, and “<personal pronoun> which” was not Joseph’s native relative pronoun usage; “nor no manner of X” occurs four times, which was very rare double negation by the 1820s. In addition, sometimes Joseph was unlikely to generate a subset of usage, as in the case of irregular past participles. In this domain, he certainly could have generated some of it,

4. David Daniell. “Tyndale, William,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Article published May 19, 2011, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-27947>.

but he was unlikely to produce *arriven* five or six times and “had (been) spake” 13 times.

“Things that is” and “things which is”

During the early modern period, it wasn’t rare for authors to employ the singular verb form *is* when the noun influencing the agreement was plural *things*. This peculiarity of present-tense verb agreement occurred almost all the time in contexts involving relative clauses. Consequently, it isn’t surprising that this grammatical usage is found in early English Bibles. (In the case of the syntax “things <relative pronoun> is,” the grammatical subject is the relative pronoun, but the agreement controller is the antecedent *things*.)⁵

For this study, 196 examples of “things that is” and “things which is” were noted in the EEBO Phase 1 database (25,368 texts; EEBO₁).⁶ These 196 instances were found in 166 texts. Just under three-fourths of these 196 examples employ *that* as the relative pronoun (145 of them), reflecting the general preference of the early modern period for the relative pronoun *that* over *which* (yet some writers clearly preferred *which*). Tallying the number of texts with instances, we find that their

5. The simpler syntax “things is,” where *things* is the agreement controller, is rarely found in the textual record. For example, in looking at about 150 instances of the string “these things is” in the EEBO₁ database, I found only two cases where *things* was actually the grammatical subject. In both cases there was an immediately following singular complement: “these things is a mystery” (1665, EEBO A35520); “these things is sin and evil” (1676, EEBO A44786; in this example the closest conjunct is singular). Such a syntactic arrangement slightly encouraged, but did not compel, the use of *is*. We can see this reflected in the textual record, since there are close to 25 instances of “these things are <singular noun phrase>” in EEBO₁, such as “these things are a vexation” (1619, A11067) and “these things are a mystery” (1691, A41425). This 1691 example and the 1665 example constitute what linguists call a minimal pair; they plainly show the grammatical option to employ either *is* or *are* in this construction.

6. This number is subject to revision based on any errors or misinterpretations I might have made, including EEBO transcription errors that I didn’t catch. For instance, an EEBO transcription error in one of John Donne’s sermons currently gives an incorrect reading of “the things that is gone out of my lips,” with plural *things*. This is a mistranscription of Donne’s accurate quote of Psalm 89:34, which has singular *thing*. I didn’t verify most of the 196 instances of “things <relative pronoun> is” by consulting page images. Nonetheless, I did exclude many potential instances that were not clear examples of the syntax, including the construction “one of the things <relative pronoun> is,” since singular *one* could be the agreement controller, as in this instance: “this is one of the many things which is not likely to be bettered by legislative interference” (1797). Such expressions are not clear cases of the plural-singular syntax.

normalized frequency is nearly five times higher in the 16th century, suggesting that this syntax was more popular in the first half of the early modern period than in the second half.⁷

Here is one example showing immediate agreement variation (in the quotations below the spelling has almost always been adjusted, and less often the punctuation):

1661, Francis Howgill, *The glory of the true church* [EEBO A44790]
 all that come to the beginning again, to union with God, must die
 to all these THINGS which **is** got and entered into the hearts of men
 since the transgression, and while these THINGS **are** loved,
 they alienate the mind from the living God, [page 146]

The difference in the syntax almost certainly led to the agreement difference: “all these THINGS *which is* got” versus “these THINGS **are** loved,” the latter without any relative pronoun. (There is also a plural personal expression “all that come” at the beginning of this excerpt.)

The syntax “things <relative pronoun> **is**” wasn’t found in any 17th-century Bibles, but three distinct examples were found in 16th-century Bibles:

1539, Great Bible (1540 edition) [A10405]
 The robberies of the ungodly shall be their own destruction,
 for they will not do the THINGS that **is** right.
 [Proverbs 21:7; page image 483]

The 1568 Bishops’ Bible has singular *thing* in this verse.

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]
 Let our strength be the law of unrighteousness:
 for the THINGS that **is** feeble is reprov’d as unprofitable.
 [Wisdom of Solomon 2:11; page image 801]

The 1568 Bishops’ Bible has singular *thing* in this verse.

1568, Bishops’ Bible [A10708]
 and if thou wilt take out the THINGS that **is** precious from the vial,
 thou shalt be even as mine own mouth: [1 Jeremiah 15:29; page cxi]

The 1539 Great Bible also has “things that **is**” in this verse.

The original Book of Mormon text has 18 instances of this syntactic construction (counting both contiguous and noncontiguous examples),

7. Among the 196 instances, 67 sixteenth-century documents have examples and 99 seventeenth-century documents have examples. The WordCruncher EEBO₁ database I used has 3,037 sixteenth-century documents and 22,189 seventeenth-century documents (counting from 1501 to 1600 and 1601 to 1700). A simple calculation of $67 \div 99 \times 22189 \div 3037$ gives a figure of 4.94, representing how much greater the 16th-century popularity of “things <relative pronoun> **is**” might have been compared to 17th-century popularity.

which may be a record for a single book. All but one of these involve the relative pronoun *which*. There are also 42 instances of “things . . . which are” (none of “things . . . that are”). These numbers mean that the Book of Mormon employs *is* in this construction 30 percent of the time. Here is the one case of “things that is”:

Alma 30:44

Yea, and all things denote there is a God;
yea, even the earth and all THINGS that **is** upon the face of it,

This passage provides a close syntactic contrast of “all things denote” and “all things that is,” similar to the 1661 Howgill example shown above.

Here are three more examples of this grammar from the 16th and 17th centuries:

1530, Hugh Latimer, quoted in Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* (1583) [A67927]

For the world loveth all that are of the world,
and hateth all THINGS that **is** contrary to it.

This excerpt has contrastive personal “all that are” and nonpersonal “all things that is.”

about 1540, Alexander Seton, quoted in Knox’s *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (1644 edition) [A47584]

For all THINGS that **is** contrary to the verity (which is Christ and his law) is of necessity a lie.

This might be a 17th-century modification of Seton’s original language, which reads variously in other editions: “all thing that is” and “all things which are.”

1682, William Penn [1644–1718] *Some sober and weighty reasons against prosecuting Protestant dissenters for difference of opinion in matters of religion* [A54221]

for it is to do the same THINGS that **is** condemned in others:

Rarely do we encounter relatively heavy use of this syntax in a single text. The EEBO₁ text found to have the most examples was the encyclopedic work, *De proprietatibus rerum* (“On the properties of things”: 1582, A05237; about 615,000 words). It has eight instances of “things that is” (none of “things which is”), along with 17 instances of “things <relative pronoun> are” and 82 instances of “things <relative pronoun> be.” (In these searches, I excluded cases with intervening punctuation.) An example of this is “he apprehendeth all things that **is** without himself.” If we count the *be* usage as plural, then this text’s singular to plural ratio is far from that of the Book of Mormon: 8:99 versus 18:42. If we don’t count the *be* usage, then the ratios are close. Also of note is that in the 17th century the Quaker Edward Burrough (1633–1663) employed at least eight examples of “things

<relative pronoun> is” in his writings (in several texts). An example of this is “to suffer all things that **is** put upon us” (1660, A30561).⁸

Plural *was*

A closely related construction is the so-called plural *was*, with or without a relative pronoun subject. Tense was a factor in influencing usage rates of singular forms of the verb *be* with plural noun phrases. For example, “things is” usage (without a relative pronoun) was rare in Early Modern English, but “things was” usage was much more common. Plural *was* usage was more frequent than plural *is* precisely because of tense.⁹ This tendency persisted into the late modern period.

As an example of this, Tyndale employed plural *was* with *things* twice in his 1534 New Testament translation (besides seven examples of “things were”), and the Bishops’ Bible provides another instance from the Apocrypha (besides 21 examples of “things were”):

1534, William Tyndale (translator) [about 1494–1536]
The New Testament [A68940]

and was also very God and that all THINGS **was** created and made by it [prologue to the four evangelists; page image 22]

And they told what THINGS **was** done in the way, and how they knew him in breaking of bread. [Luke 24:35; page image 275]

Other translations have *were* in Luke 24:35, or language without a form of the verb *be*.

1568, Bishops’ Bible [A10708]

and so at Ecbatana, a tower in the region of Media,
there was found a place where these THINGS **was** laid up for memory.
[1 Esdras 6:23; page image 1073]

8. As mentioned, this characteristic verb agreement of the early modern period became less frequent toward the end of the period (the late 17th century). It would be a time-consuming task to thoroughly verify its demise in the Eighteenth Century Collections Online database, since it isn’t amenable to precise syntactic searches. But if we limit our search to strings like “any things which is,” “many things which is,” and “some things which is,” then we can obtain some manageable results. Excluding language with intervening punctuation and other false positives, in the first case we encounter one actual instance dated 1701; in the second case we encounter a single early Scottish example dated 1705; and in the third case we encounter a single early Scottish example dated 1706. These results suggest that “things which is,” where *things* acted as the agreement controller, fell out of mainstream use in the early 1700s.

9. See, for example, the mention of local asymmetries in present-tense and past-tense verb agreement in Terttu Nevalainen, “Vernacular universals? The case of plural *was* in Early Modern English,” in *Types of Variation: Diachronic, dialectal and typological interfaces*, edited by Terttu Nevalainen, Juhani Klemola, and Mikko Laitinen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), 358.

The Coverdale Bible and the Great Bible have “there was found such a writing”; the Geneva Bible has “a place where such things were laid up for memory”; the King James text reads “there was found a roll wherein these things were recorded.”

The Book of Mormon also has one instance of “things was” (along with 15 examples of “things were”):

Mosiah 28:14

Now these THINGS **was** prepared from the beginning

The Coverdale Bible has the following instance of plural *was*, which is probably due to the Greek text having a clause-initial singular verb:

1535, Coverdale Bible [A10349]

Jesus also and his disciples **was** called unto the marriage.
[John 2:2; page xli]

Tyndale 1534 has “And Jesus was called also and his disciples unto the marriage.” The Greek verb is ἐκλήθη = ‘was called,’ the aorist passive indicative of *kaleō*.

These are not the only cases of plural *was* immediately following noun phrases in the early Bibles. For instance, the Bishops’ Bible has “the waters **was** risen” at Ezekiel 47:5 (cf. KJB “the waters **were** risen”; ESV “the water **had** risen”) and “the heavens **was** open” at Matthew 3:16 (cf. KJB “the heavens **were** opened”).

The Great Bible and the Geneva Bible also have examples of plural *was* that occur right after the relative pronoun *that*:¹⁰

1539, Great Bible (1540 edition) [A10405]

because they had understand the WORDS **that was** declared unto them.
[2 Esdras 8:12 (Nehemiah 8:12 in later Bibles); page cxcvij]

The Bishops’ Bible has “because they had understand the words that were declared unto them.” The Geneva Bible has “the words that they had taught them.”

10. I was surprised to find no examples of “things <relative pronoun> was” in the 16th-century Bibles (these texts have 171 examples of “things <relative pronoun> were,” without intervening punctuation). From what is known of early modern tendencies, it seemed reasonable to hypothesize that the 16th-century Bibles would have more examples of “things <relative pronoun> was” than of “things was.” Indeed, EEBO₁ has more than 100 examples of “things <relative pronoun> was.” As in the case of “things <relative pronoun> is,” the 16th-century occurrence rate of this past-tense verb agreement was markedly higher than the 17th-century rate. The original Book of Mormon text has three examples of “things which was,” along with 12 instances of “things which were” (none with the relative pronoun *that*).

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night, by the way of the gate, which is between two WALLS that **was** by the king's garden: [2 Kings 25:4; page 153]

The syntax and punctuation make *gate* the agreement controller of *is*, and *walls* the agreement controller of *was*. In the King James Bible, the syntax and punctuation make *gate* the only agreement controller: "by the way of the GATE, between two walls, which **is** by the king's garden."

The Book of Mormon has many instances of this kind of language; there are no fewer than 53 cases of plural *was* after the relative pronoun *which* (there are also three cases of plural "that was"). Seven times the agreement controller is *words*, as in the Great Bible's "the words that was declared." Here is one example of this:

Helaman 8:13

and also the WORDS which **was** spoken by this man Moses,

Object *they*

Besides employing an apparent instance of plural *was* (John 2:2, shown above), the translator and clergyman Miles Coverdale (1488–1569) also employed *they* in object position after the preposition *for*. Here is how he expressed this phraseology in his translation of Acts:

1535, Coverdale Bible [A10349]

As **for** all **they** of Athens and strangers and guests, they gave themselves to nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some news. [Acts 17:21; page lx]

This object *they* syntax is not found in Tyndale 1534, and the King James Bible has a parenthetical here with different phraseology: "(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)"

The usual way to express such language was "as for (all) **those** of" followed by "as for (all) **them** of." In this case, *those* is favored over *them* a little more than three to one in EEBO₁.

A similar example is the following:

before 1553, Nicholas Udall [1505–1556] *What creature is in health, either young or old* [Ralph Roister Doister] (1566) [A14193]

And as **for** all **they** *that* would do you wrong,

The structural difference is that this example has a following relative clause, while the Coverdale example has a following prepositional phrase. (The relative pronoun and the preposition are in italics above.)

These were the syntactic structures — both involving post-modification — that made the use of object *they* more likely for these authors.¹¹

The Book of Mormon has three examples of object *they* after the preposition *for*, each with a following relative clause. Thus these are structurally the same as the Udall case. Here is one such instance:

3 Nephi 19:23

And now Father, I pray unto thee for them,
and also **for** all **they** *which* shall believe on their words,

The other two instances read “for they which are at Jerusalem”
(1 Nephi 19:13, 20).

The Book of Mormon has a total of 36 instances of object *they* usage, which might be a record-setting amount for a single text. Twenty-three of these involve the two-word phrase *they which*, usage which was far down on a list of Joseph Smith’s native syntactic preference.

Plural *hath*

William Tyndale’s translation contains a conjoined case of plural *hath*:

1534, William Tyndale (translator), The New Testament [A68940]

When his branches **are** yet tender and **hath** brought forth leaves
[Mark 13:28]

The plural noun phrase his branches is the most likely subject of *hath*, while clearly it is the subject of *are*. If the grammatical subject of *hath* were the fig tree, then we would expect an *it* after the conjunction — that is, “and it hath brought forth leaves.” The King James Bible reads consistently in the singular: “When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves.”

Instead of employing *have* after the conjunction *and*, Tyndale used a less-common option of the early modern period. A conjoined predicate made the use of the {-th} plural more likely during that time. That is what we see in this next Book of Mormon example:

11. In general, a preposition governing an object *they* in EEBO₁ is uncommon. Hundreds of instances of “for (all) they” with post-modification occur in EEBO₁, but in almost all of these *for* is a conjunction, not a preposition. Many potential cases have not been individually examined. Though the number of instances of object *they* that occur after *for* is unknown, it seems to have decreased in popularity through the early modern period. At this point, at least seven have been noted — the two mentioned in the body of this paper, two very early ones, and these three: “as for they of Lincolnshire” (1572, A03482); “And for all they that assist a man in murdering his wife” (1574, A02895); “the time is near for all they that trust in him” (1661, A28238). Five of the seven are from the 16th century. Besides examples involving the preposition *for*, a few additional examples have been noted with other prepositions.

Alma 26:36

Yea, blessed is the name of my God,
 who hath been mindful of this PEOPLE,
which are a branch of the tree of Israel
 and **hath** been lost from its body in a strange land.

The grammatical subject is *which* (in italics above) and the agreement controller is *people* (in small caps above). Even though the relative pronoun *which* doesn't tell us by its form whether it is plural or singular, we know it's plural because of the immediately following verb *are*. The subject of *hath* is understood to be the same plural *which*.

By way of comparison, here is what we read in Tyndale's Mark 13:28 translation and Joseph Smith's 1829 dictation of the Book of Mormon:

- branches **are** . . . and **hath** . . .
- people which **are** . . . and **hath** . . .

The earliest text of the Book of Mormon has at least 180 verb forms that take {-th} inflection when the grammatical subjects are not third person singular. Among these are close to 70 instances of plural *hath*, in various syntactic contexts.

These next examples of plural *hath* are not conjoined cases. In these, *hath* immediately follows the plural noun phrase. The first is from a margin note in Revelation 15 and the second is from a biblical preface:

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

For in all kings' courts, the POPES **hath** had his ambassadors
 to hinder the kingdom of Christ. [Revelation 15:14, note o; page 109]

The *his* of "his ambassadors" appears to refer to the devil.

1568, Bishops' Bible [A10708]

It is not unknown, but that many THINGS **hath** been more diligently
 discussed, and more clearly understood by the wits of these
 latter days, as well concerning the Gospels as other scriptures,
 than in old time THEY **were**. [preface; page image 44]

Here we read "things hath," but also "they were," referring back to *things*.

Other verbs with plural agreement controllers carry {-th} inflection in early Bibles, as in the following examples with the plural relative pronoun *that*:

1539, Great Bible (1540 edition) [A10405]

O how beautiful are the FEET of the AMBASSADORS that **bringeth**
 the message from the mountain and **proclaimeth** peace:
 [Isaiah 52:7; page image 523]

Then I looked, and behold, in process of time the FEATHERS that
followeth were set up upon the right side, that they might rule also:
 [4 Esdras 11:20; in *later Bibles*, 2 Esdras 11:20; page lvij]

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and is of the BEASTS that **cheweth** the cud, that shall ye eat. [Deuteronomy 14:16; page 85]

Under him was the foundation of the double height laid, and the high WALLS that **compasseth** the temple. [Ecclesiasticus 50:2; page 403]

1568, Bishops' Bible [A10708]

All the GRIEFS that **lieth** hid in your hearts. [Psalm 62:8, note a; page image 693]

even so shall the MULTITUDE of all NATIONS that **fighteth** against mount Sion. [Isaiah 29:8; page lxxxiiij]

The Geneva Bible and the King James Bible have the base form of the verb in Isaiah 29:8, *fight*. Even if the agreement controller is *multitude* instead of *nations*, *fighteth* might still be plural, since *multitude* was sometimes construed as plural, as in Matthew 9:25 in the Geneva Bible and 1 Samuel 14:16 in the Bishops' Bible.

Or shall the cold flowing WATERS that **cometh** from another place be forsaken? [Jeremiah 18:14; page image 875]

The King James Bible has the base form of the verb here, *come*.

Subject *you*

Subject *you* is included as an example of bad grammar, since almost all the usage was edited out of the King James Bible and many think that instances of subject *you* in the Book of Mormon are errors, cases of Joseph failing to measure up to a biblical standard.

In the textual record, *you* overtook *ye* in subject position during the decade of the 1560s. The earlier pronominal variation mostly proceeded in the absence of judgments about correctness; it happened before attempts to codify English usage became prevalent.

Chart 1 gives an idea of the change in usage over time. It was generated from hundreds of thousands of instances of subject *you* and subject *ye* taken from the EEBO₁ database. The search strings “if you,” “then you,” “that you”; “if ye,” “then ye,” “that ye” were used as a simple way to reliably isolate nominative forms.¹²

Shakespeare, writing at the turn of the century, employed *ye* only one percent of the time in these same contexts (11 out of 1,055 instances in the Riverside Edition available in WordCruncher). The low-level

12. Several spelling variants were included in searches: *if ~ yf*, *then ~ thenne*, *that ~ yt*; and *you ~ youe*, *ye ~ yee*.

maintenance of subject *ye* seen at the right of Chart 1 can be ascribed in large part to biblical quoting and influence.

Charles Barber wrote that “the first examples of nominative *you* go back to the fourteenth century, but in the standard literary language its encroachment was not rapid until the 1540s.”¹³ Chart 1 shows that the last part of this statement is quite accurate.

The variation that was an integral part of the process of replacing subject *ye* with subject *you* in English is why we can find instances of these forms used very close together in 16th-century Bibles. Here are three examples of this:

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

And I will bring a morsel of bread, that **you** may comfort your hearts,
afterward **ye** shall go your ways: [Genesis 18:5; page image 21]

1568, Bishops' Bible [A10708]

on this manner, see that **you** speak unto Esau when **ye** meet him.
[Genesis 32:18; page xxij]

1582, Rheims New Testament [A16049]

And do **ye** all things without murmurings and staggerings:
that **you** may be without blame, [Philippians 2:14; page 528]

The Book of Mormon has at least 15 instances of subject *you*, and most of the time these occur near instances of subject *ye*, as in these two cases:

Mosiah 5:15

that Christ the Lord God Omnipotent may seal *you* his,
that **you** may be brought to heaven,
that **ye** may have everlasting salvation and eternal life

The first *you* (in italics) is an object and the second *you* (in bold) is a subject.

Alma 7:6

Yea, I trust that **ye** have not set your hearts
upon riches and the vain things of the world.
Yea, I trust that **you** do not worship idols,
but that **ye** do worship the true and the living God
and that **ye** look forward for the remission of your sins

Here we see a nearby minimal pair: “I trust that *ye/you*.” The EEBO₁ database has 34 instances of “trust that *ye*” and 54 instances of “trust that *you*” (using several spelling variants).

The late 16th-century Bibles have the majority of the scriptural examples of nearby subject *you* ~ subject *ye* variation. But the earlier Bibles do have

13. Charles Barber, *Early Modern English*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 149.

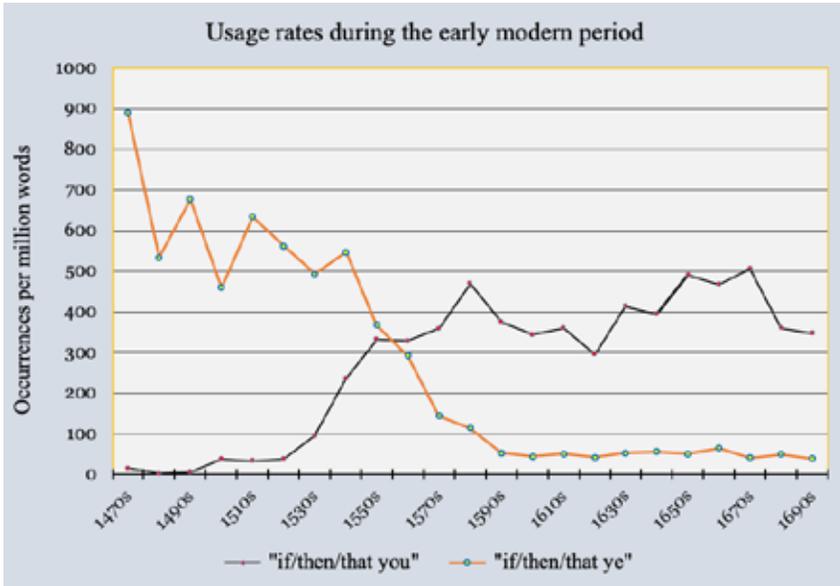


Chart 1. Comparison of nominative *you* and *ye*.

instances of subject *you*. Here are two examples of subject *you* from two biblical texts of the 1530s, the first with nearby object *you* and subject *you*:

1534, William Tyndale (translator), The New Testament [A68940]

that is to say, whosoever receiveth *you*, there abide
as long as **you** are in the city or town, [addendum; page image 860]

The first *you* is an object (in italics) and the second *you* is a subject (in bold). This excerpt is found in an addendum at the end of the book.

1539, Great Bible (1540 edition) [A10405]

how happeneth it then, that **you** come unto me now in
time of your tribulation? [Judges 11:7; page ciiij]

The Geneva Bible also has *you*, but the King James Bible has *ye*. (The EBO₁ copy of the Bishops' Bible is missing a page for this passage.)

It cannot be that **you** and we together should build the house unto
our God: [1 Esdras 4:3; in later Bibles, Ezra 4:3; page image 385]

The Geneva Bible has different syntax here, but the Bishops' Bible has subject *you*, and the King James Bible has subject *you* with quite different wording.

The King James Bible originally had hundreds of examples of subject *you* (about 300, according to one source).¹⁴ Consequently, there are quite

14. "I find in the whole Bible about 3830 nominative *ye*'s and 300 nominative *you*'s, or over 7 per cent. of *you*'s. The ratio of *you*'s to *ye*'s is in the Old Testament

a few examples of nearby variation between subject *you* and subject *ye* in the 1611 text, such as the following:

1611, King James Bible

Why are **ye** so fearful? How is it that **you** have no faith? [Mark 4:40]

Third person singular verb forms in {-s}

The use of third person singular {-s} forms is included as an example of bad grammar, since this variation has been edited out of the King James Bible and people tend to think that the scriptural {-s} forms of the Book of Mormon are errors, cases of Joseph failing to measure up to a biblical standard.

Third person singular (3sg) verb forms ending in {-s} (the northern form, historically) eventually took over from 3sg {-th} forms (the southern form, historically).¹⁵ Nearby variation in the written record began to be prevalent in the late 16th century. The 1568 Bishops' Bible has an example with the verb *make* (shown immediately below), and even the King James Bible originally had a few examples, such as the one below with the verb *take*:

1568, Bishops' Bible [A10708]

What imagine ye against the Lord? he **makes** an utter destruction:
ye shall not be troubled twice. [Nahum 1:9; page image 1037]

Two verses earlier, the 3sg verb form *knoweth* is used, so there is nearby variation. The King James Bible has a future tense here: "he will make an utter end."

1611, King James Bible

every man that **takes** it up, will shake his hand. [Ecclesiasticus 22:2]

Instead of 3sg *takes*, the Bishops' Bible employs 3sg *toucheth*.

Here is an example of nearby {-s} ~ {-th} variation, which was eventually edited to be {-th} consistently:

1611, King James Bible

He **sticks** not to spend his life with his wife,
and **remembereth** neither father nor mother nor country.
[1 Esdras 4:21]

The Book of Mormon has more than a dozen examples of nearby 3sg inflectional variation with main verbs, as in these two examples:

about 6 per cent., Apocrypha 35 per cent., and New Testament 5 per cent." John S. Kenyon, "Ye and You in the King James Version," *PMLA* 29, no. 3 (1914): 454, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/456929>.

15. See Barber, *Early Modern English*, 166.

1 Nephi preface

The Lord **warns** Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem because he **prophesieth** unto the people concerning their iniquity

Nephi **taketh** his brethren and **returns** to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews.

This same nearby variation is attested in the 17th-century textual record. EEBO₁ has one instance of *warns* and *prophesieth* occurring in the same paragraph (1677, A42781), and there are 11 distinct cases of the verbs *taketh* and *returns* occurring within 20 words of each other (dating between 1579 and 1700), as in these two examples:

1652, Alexander Ross [1591–1654] *The history of the world* [A57652]
he **taketh** divers towns and **returns** to Spain; [page image 762]

1679, Robert Barclay [1648–1690] *Apology for the true Christian divinity* [A30896]

To all this he **returns** no answer, which **taketh** up six pages in my apology, [page 17]

A corpus linguist might be interested in quantifying this inflectional variation during the early modern period. For the purposes of this study, I am merely interested in showing that sometimes we find specific matching between early modern variation and Book of Mormon usage, many times with very little or no pseudobiblical support.

Irregular past participles

Three-form verbs such as *drive* ~ *drove* ~ *driven* or *sink* ~ *sank* ~ *sunk* are much less common than two-form verbs in English, and so the force of analogy toward the more common, simpler two-form type drives the leveling of past participles toward past-tense verb forms. Tyndale provides an example of the leveled past participle *smote* (instead of King James–style *smitten*). The syntax is a match with a Book of Mormon example (shown further below):

1530, William Tyndale (translator), [The Pentateuch] [A13203]

And it continued a week *after that* the Lord **had smote** the river [Exodus 7:25; page xii]

This 1530 translation has another case of “had smote” and one of “had smoten” (there are 15 instances of *smoten* in EEBO₁). The 1611 King James text reads “And seven days were fulfilled, after that the Lord had smitten the river.” The Coverdale Bible, Great Bible, Geneva Bible, and Bishops’ Bible each have 10 or 11 examples of invariant “had smitten.”

Even though the use of *smote* as a past participle instead of *smitten* in this past perfect context was the exception during the early modern period, it wasn’t rare. In EEBO₁ it occurs about nine percent of the time

(29 out of 328 possible cases), despite strong biblical influence favoring “had smitten.” Though it was on balance always the less-common usage, past participle leveling became particularly prevalent in the textual record in the 1600s, with a wide variety of verbs.

The earliest text of the Book of Mormon has dozens of instances of past participle leveling, with many different verbs (see GV 599–627). Here is the one that is just like the above example:

1 Nephi 4:19

And *after that* I **had smote** off his head with his own sword,

The syntactic match with Tyndale’s rendering of Exodus 7:25 includes archaic “after that” (in italics) as well as “had smote.”

The Book of Mormon clearly favors the past-participial verb form *smitten* over *smote*, 42 to 6, but it has three instances of “had smote” and none of “had smitten.”

Tyndale provides an example of another kind of past participle leveling, involving the verb *eat*:

1530, William Tyndale (translator), [The Pentateuch] [A13203]

And when they **had eat** up that corn which they brought out of the land of Egypt [Genesis 43:2; page image 145]

The past participle of *eat* has adopted a few different forms through the centuries. In the above example, the pronunciation of the past participle was probably /et/, with a short *e*, to judge from the Oxford English Dictionary entry. Here is another instance of this leveled past participle from Tyndale’s writings, along with a Book of Mormon example:

1536, William Tyndale, *An exposition upon . . . Matthew* [A14133]

and the rest they and their households did eat before God, as though they **had eat** and drunk with God,

Alma 8:23

after he **had eat** and was filled, he saith unto Amulek:

The original Book of Mormon text has four instances of “had . . . eat” (all edited out) and two of “had . . . eaten.”

For a long time, past participle leveling was relatively favored after *had*, in the pluperfect, which is the tense of the above examples. This tendency even persists to this day with some verbs, such as *speak*. For example, “had spoke” is still more commonly used than “have/has spoke.”¹⁶ Here is an example of “had spoke” from a Douay–Rheims annotation:

16. More than 80 percent of “he/they has/have/had spoke” leveling currently occurs in the pluperfect, according to this Google Ngram Viewer chart: [https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=\(he+had+spoke%2Bthey+had+spoke\)%](https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=(he+had+spoke%2Bthey+had+spoke)%)

1609, Douay Old Testament [A11777]

and therefore *spoke*, as if God himself **had spoke** in divine person,
[Exodus 3:1, annotation; page 162]

Past-tense *spoke* (in italics) occurs just before the past participle *spoke*
(in bold).

The Book of Mormon has 12 examples of the leveled form “had spake,”
as in the following case:

3 Nephi 28:4

And when he **had spake** unto them,

The poet John Donne provides a similar example of “had spake” (also
in a subordinate clause headed by *when*) in a sermon that he gave as a
Church of England clergyman:

1619, John Donne [1572–1631] *Fifty sermons* (1649) [A36296]

when he **had spake** of light, and a firmament, and earth, and sea,
[page 93]

Sermon No. 11, preached at Lincoln’s Inn, most likely before 18 April 1619.

Past participle leveling was less common in passive contexts (and it
still is), but it did occur, and so we can find examples of passive “been
smote” and “been spake” in the textual record, with matches found in
the Book of Mormon:

1683, John Bulteel (translator) [fl. 1683] | François Eudes de Mézeray
[1610–1683] *A general chronological history of France* [A70580]

They say he immediately fell into a fit of madness,
as if he had **been smote** from heaven, [page 60]

Alma 17:39

bearing the arms which had **been smote** off by the sword of Ammon

■ ■ ■

1646, John Bastwick [1593–1654] *The utter routing of the whole
army of all the independents and sectaries* [A26759]

This had not **been spake** of at all (*saith the Author*) if some
idle men to gull the world had not given the honor of the day
to those who had but little or no share in it. [page 634]

Alma 6:8

according to the revelation of the truth of the word
which had **been spake** by his fathers

This latter match is rare; currently only three instances of “been spake” are known outside of the Book of Mormon: the above 17th-century example and two others from the same century.

■ ■ ■

Another kind of past participle leveling is when a past participle immediately follows a conjunction. The distance from the auxiliary verb *have* increases the likelihood of leveling. Here is a possible example of this:

1610, Douay Old Testament [A11777]

All these things I **have** considered and **gave** my heart on all the works that are done under the sun. [Ecclesiastes 8:9; page 327]

The interpretation that *gave* in this verse might actually be a past participle — that is, “have . . . gave” — finds support in an earlier Bible, which has “have given” in this verse:

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

All this have I seen and **have given** mine heart to every work which is wrought under the sun, [Ecclesiastes 8:9; page 249]

The original Book of Mormon text has an example of this kind of leveling with the same verb:

1 Nephi 5:8

the Lord **hath** protected my sons and delivered them out of the hands of Laban and **gave** them power

Here is one of three similar examples I’ve been able to verify in EEBO₁:

1560, John Daus (translator), Sleidane’s *Commentaries* [A09567]

He **hath** chosen Octavius to his son in law, and **gave** to his father Aloise the city of Novaria forever, [page image 749]

Two other examples of this syntax are found in A57385 (1657) and A51846 (1684).

Double negation

Double negation wasn’t uncommon in Early Modern English, and so it’s possible to find it in early English Bibles. Here are two examples of one type of double negation that is also found in the Book of Mormon:

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

When the jaws shall scarce open and **not** be able to chew **no** more. [Ecclesiastes 12:4, note g; page 250]

therefore he feared him, and would **not** see his face **no** more. [1 Maccabees 7:30; page 415]

Other Bibles, including the King James text, have single negation in 1 Maccabees 7:30: “would [ø] see his face no more.”

Alma 23:7

they did lay down the weapons of their rebellion,
that they did **not** fight against God **no** more,

Another kind of double negation which was quite common during the early modern period is “nor no,” occurring with various noun phrases.¹⁷ For instance, the original reading of 4 Nephi 1:17 was “nor no murderers.” Similar examples of this double negation with agentive noun phrases can be found in the textual record, such as “nor no preachers” (1648, A64135) and “nor no troublers of Israel” (1656, A27047).

While the 1611 King James Bible doesn’t have any examples of “nor no,” the EEBO₁ database has nearly 4,500 instances in just over 2,300 texts. In the 16th century, “nor no” (as opposed to “nor any”) occurred about 20 percent of the time. In the 17th century, the usage rate of “nor no” dropped to 12.5 percent, and in the last decade of the century it was approaching nine percent. Chart 2 compares the usage rates of “nor no” and “nor any” during the early modern era. This chart shows that the decade of the 1550s was the last one where “nor no” was used as frequently as “nor any.”

The Ngram Viewer indicates that the usage rate of “nor no” (as opposed to “nor any”) was about 3.5 percent in the 1820s, but the actual rate was lower than that (probably much lower), since there are many instances of old, reprinted language in that decade of the Google Books database.¹⁸

Here is an example of “nor no” in a 16th-century Bible, along with a Book of Mormon example:

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

That our oxen may be strong to labor: that there be none invasion
nor going out **nor no** crying in our streets:
[Psalm 144:14; page image 509]

The King James text reads “that there be no complaining in our streets.”

Mosiah 3:17

And moreover I say unto you
that there shall be no other name given **nor no** other way nor means
whereby salvation can come unto the children of men,

17. For a specific mention of “nor no,” as well as a general discussion of double negation in Early Modern English, see Barber, *Early Modern English*, 198–99.

18. The reality is that the later in time we go, the more contamination of reprinted language there is in many textual corpora, such as the Google Books database, which underlies the Ngram Viewer.

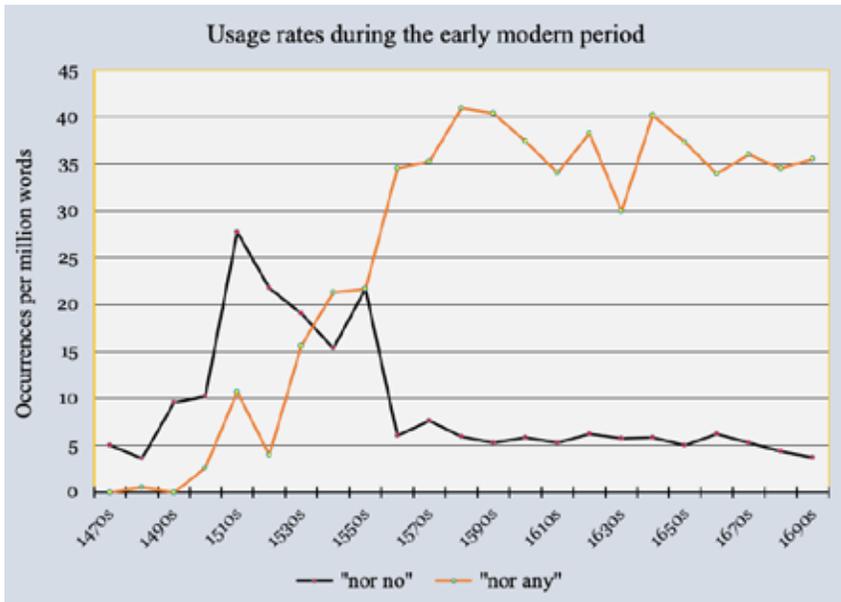


Chart 2. Comparison of “nor no” and “nor any.”

Tyndale has an example of “nor no” in a prologue:

1530, William Tyndale (translator) [The Pentateuch] [A13203]

For the Holy Ghost is no doom God [‘God of judgment’]

nor no God that goeth a mumming [‘who disguises himself’]

[Leviticus, prologue; page image 359]

In addition, the Bishops’ Bible has an example of “nor no” in a margin note at Romans 10:2; the Rheims New Testament has five instances: one in the preface and four in annotations; and the later Douay Old Testament has one as well:

1609, Douay Old Testament [A11777]

we attribute no more **nor no** less to Christ, nor to our lady,

by the one reading than by the other:

[Genesis 3:15, annotation; page 12]

Subjunctive ~ indicative variation after *if*

There are quite a few cases of variation in grammatical mood after the hypothetical *if* in early English Bibles. This variational syntax involves a subjunctive verb form followed by a conjoined indicative verb form. Here are nine examples of this:

1534, William Tyndale (translator) The New Testament [A68940]

If any man **long** after life and **loveth** to see good days
[1 Peter 3:10; page cccxviii]

1535, Coverdale Bible [A10349]

But if his offering **be** a goat and **bringeth** it before the LORD,
[Leviticus 3:12; page image 105]

But if he **be** poor and **getteth** not so much with his hand,
[Leviticus 14:21; page xlvij]

If any man **teach** otherwise and **agreeth** not unto the wholesome
words of our LORD Jesus Christ, [1 Timothy 6:3; page image 1139]

1539, Great Bible (1540 edition) [A10405]

Either if a soul **swear** and **pronounceth** with his lips to do
evil or to do good [Leviticus 5:4; page image 87]

For if any man **hear** the word and **declareth** not the same
by his works, [James 1:23; page image 1014]

The Bishops' Bible has the same verb forms as the first excerpt.

1560, Geneva Bible (1561 edition) [A10675]

If any man **teach** otherwise and **consenteth** not to the wholesome
words of our Lord Jesus Christ, [1 Timothy 6:3; page 90]

The Bishops' Bible has the same verb forms.

1582, Rheims New Testament [A16049]

If any man **come** to me and **hateth** not his father and mother,
[Luke 14:26; page 181]

The Bishops' Bible and the King James Bible have subjunctive *hate*.

1611, King James Bible

If a man **say**, I love God, and **hateth** his brother, he is a liar.
[1 John 4:20]

As shown immediately above, even the 1611 King James Bible has an example of this syntactic variation, and surprisingly, *hateth* has never been changed to *hate*.

The Book of Mormon has four examples of this nearby variation:

Mosiah 26:29

And if he **confess** his sins before thee and me
and **repenteth** in the sincerity of his heart,

Helaman 13:26

if a prophet **come** among you
and **declareth** unto you the word of the Lord,

3 Nephi 27:11

But if it **be** not built upon my gospel
and **is** built upon the works of men or upon the works of the devil,

Moroni 7:44

And if a man **be** meek and lowly in heart
and **confesses** by the power of the Holy Ghost

Searches indicate that the mixture of subjunctive and indicative verb forms in 3 Nephi 27:11 — “if <subject> be . . . and is” — rarely occurred after the hypothetical in the textual record. Here is one early 16th-century example:

1525, translation, Jerome Brunschwig [about 1450–about 1512]
The noble experience of the virtuous handiwork of surgery [A03315]
If it **be** in a fleshly place and **is** not possible to be holpen
after this manner aforesaid [page image 66]

In contrast with this 1525 usage, in 3 Nephi 27:11 the subjunctive is used for what is not the case, and the indicative is used for what is the case.

Object *who*

Although *whom* is used in object position the vast majority of the time, the late 16th-century Bibles have at least two instances of object *who*. In both cases below, the relative pronoun *who* precedes the verb that normally triggers object marking on *who*:

1568, Bishops' Bible [A10708]

Meaning that he was not like in strength to the king of the Assyrians,
who the Babylonians overcame.
[Ezekiel 31:2, note b; page image 963]

The relative pronoun *who* is the object of the verb *overcome*.

1582, Rheims New Testament [A16049]

the obdurate obstinacy that is in such **who** I have, for so great
sins, forsaken. [Romans 9:17, annotation; page 407]

The relative pronoun *who* is the object of the verb *forsake*.

When a pronoun precedes a verb that normally triggers object marking on the pronoun, then the pronoun adopts the object form at a slightly lower rate.

The following Book of Mormon example of object *who* occurs in the same syntactic context:

Mosiah 2:19

And behold also, if I, **who** ye call your king,
who has spent his days in your service

The second instance of *who* (in italics) is in subject position.

The same syntactic phenomenon is seen in the case of object *they* here:

Jacob 1:14

they_(object) which are friendly to Nephi I shall **call**_(governing verb) Nephites

Examples of this kind of object *they* syntax — including a close paraphrase of Luke 11:52 — are found in the early modern textual record:

before 1534, John Bouchier (translator), Antonio de Guevara's
The golden book of Marcus Aurelius (1537) [A02303]

He hated delicate and gay nurses, and **they** that were laborous,
homely, and wholesome he **loved**, [page image 51]

before 1687, Thomas Watson, *A body of practical divinity* (1692) [A65285]

ye entered not in yourselves, and **they** that were
entering in ye **hindered**. [page 9]

King James Bible, Luke 11:52
ye entered not in yourselves,
and **them** that were entering in, ye **hindered**.

Conclusion

This study has presented a number of matches involving the grammatical usage of early Bibles and the original Book of Mormon text. In the case of the latter, most of these instances have been and are considered to be instances of poor grammar produced by Joseph Smith. However, a broad early modern view of most of its English usage accounts nicely for this bad grammar, while a modern dialectal view fails in several respects. This reality supports not viewing any of the above items as emanating from Joseph's own language, except rarely as inadvertent misreadings of words that were given to him. The same reasoning applies to virtually all of the bad grammar found in the earliest text, whether or not it appears in earlier Bibles.

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Appendix

Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup>.

Early English Bibles: EEBO A13203 (1530), A68940 (1534),
A10349 (1535), A10405 (1540), A10675 (1561),
A10708 (1568), A16049 (1582), A11777 (1609–1610).

Critical text: Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*
(New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009).

GV: *Grammatical Variation* (Provo, Utah:
FARMS and BYU Studies, 2016)

NOL: *The Nature of the Original Language* (Provo, Utah:
FARMS and BYU Studies, 2018)

Eighteenth Century Collections Online: [https://www.gale.com/
primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online](https://www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online).

Google Books: https://books.google.com/advanced_book_search.

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Twenty-five pseudobiblical texts consulted for this study
(about 580,000 words total):

LONGER PSEUDOBIBLICAL TEXTS (12)

- A. Robert Dodsley, *Chronicle of the Kings of England* (1740)
[London] [about 16,500 words]
- B. Jacob Ilive, *The Book of Jasher* (1751) [London]
[about 22,800 words]
- C. John Leacock, *American Chronicles* (1775) [Philadelphia]
[about 14,500 words]
- D. Richard Snowden, *The American Revolution* (1793)
[Philadelphia] [about 49,300 words]
- E. Matthew Linning, *The First Book of Napoleon* (1809) [Edinburgh]
[about 19,000 words]
- F. Elias Smith, *History of Anti-Christ* (1811) [Portland ME]
[about 15,000 words]
- G. Gilbert Hunt, *The Late War* (1816) [New York]
[about 42,500 words]
- H. Roger O'Connor, *Chronicles of Eri* (1822) [London]
[about 131,000 words]
- I. W. K. Clementson, *The Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp* (1827)
[Brighton UK] [about 18,000 words]
- J. Philemon Stewart, *Sacred Roll* (1843) [Canterbury NH]
[about 62,000 words]
- K. Charles Linton, *The Healing of the Nations* (1855) [New York]
[about 111,000 words]
- L. Richard Grant White, *The New Gospel of Peace* (1863)
[New York] [about 59,000 words]

SHORTER PSEUDOBIBLICAL TEXTS (13)

- M. Horace Walpole, *Book of Preferment* (1742) [London]
[about 2,700 words]
- N. *The French Gasconade Defeated* (1743) [Boston]
[about 900 words]
- O. Benjamin Franklin, *Parable Against Persecution* (1755)
[Philadelphia] [about 400 words]
- P. *Chronicles of Nathan Ben Saddi* (1758) [Philadelphia]
[about 3,000 words]
- Q. Samuel Hopkins, *Samuel the Squomicutite* (1763) [Newport RI]
[about 600 words]
- R. *The Book of America* (1766) [Boston] [about 2,500 words]
- S. *Chapter 37th* (1782) [*Boston Evening Post*] [about 600 words]
- T. *Chronicles of John* (1812) [Charleston SC?] [about 800 words]
- U. *The First Book of Chronicles, Chapter the Fifth* (1812)
[*The Investigator*, SC] [about 1,800 words]
- V. Jesse Denson, *Chronicles of Andrew* (1815) [Lexington KY]
[about 4,800 words]
- W. White Griswold, *A Chronicle of the Chiefs of Muttonville* (1830)
[Harwinton CT] [about 900 words]
- X. *Reformer Chronicles* (1832) [Buffalo NY] [about 700 words]
- Y. *Chronicles of the Land of Gotham* (1888) [New York]
[about 1,300 words]

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Eleven early writings of Joseph Smith consulted for this study (up to January 1833; texts available at <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org>):

	INDEXED WORDS
Letter to Oliver Cowdery, 22 October 1829	334
Letter to the Church in Colesville, 2 December 1830	908
Letter to Martin Harris, 22 February 1831	245
Letter to Hyrum Smith, 3–4 March 1831	579
Letter to Emma Smith, 6 June 1832	632
Letter to William W. Phelps, 31 July 1832	2,731
Letter to Emma Smith, 13 October 1832	836
Letter to William W. Phelps, 27 November 1832	1,088
Letter to Noah C. Saxton, 4 January 1833	1,771
Letter to William W. Phelps, 11 January 1833	766
History, circa Summer 1832	2,037

DISCIPLESHIP OF YESTERDAY FOR TODAY

Matt Gardner

Review of Eric D. Huntsman, *Becoming the Beloved Disciple: Coming unto Christ through the Gospel of John* (Springville, UT: CFI, an imprint of Cedar Fort, 2018). 176 pages. \$19.99.

Abstract: *What does the Gospel of John say about discipleship? Does early Christian discipleship matter today? Can coming unto Christ be different for each person? Eric Huntsman offers answers to these questions through his excellent scholarly background in Greek, which lends to crisp exegetic interpretations on the fourth gospel. Even more, Huntsman provides valuable hermeneutic applications for a growing diversified membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, this book delivers a better understanding of how each child of God uniquely comes to know Jesus Christ.*

When I think about the Book of John, my mind recalls reading a Hugh Nibley statement years ago given in response to Wilford Griggs when he asked Hugh Nibley if had ever considered writing a commentary on John. Nibley's response was something along the lines, "No, I haven't. It would take 300 or 400 pages, and then I would be to verse 5."¹ Such a commentary is needed. However, Eric Huntsman, whom I respect and call a friend, opted to write a pleasantly restrained yet nuanced exegesis of discipleship such as permeates John. All who read this book, no matter their background, will likely come away motivated to either start, resume, or continue in their individual path of discipleship in Christ.

1. LeGrand L. Baker, "John 1:1-4 & Alma 13:1-20 — 'in the Beginning' — 'Orders' of Premortal Priesthood — LeGrand Baker" (January 2, 2015), <https://www.legrandlbaker.org/2015/01/02/john-11-4-alma-131-20-in-the-beginning-orders-of-premortal-priesthood-legrand-baker/>.

Becoming the Beloved Disciple showcases Huntsman’s lifetime of consecrated expertise and research. A professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, Huntsman is trained in classical Greek and as an expert in Johannine literature never fails to maintain and exemplify Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s attitude toward scholarship: “LDS scholars can and should speak in the tongue of scholarship, but without coming to prefer it and without losing the mother tongue of faith.”²

The overarching intent in Huntsman’s book is to detail the time, place, and actions of the timeless people in the gospel of John. In doing so, we can come to understand the different ways people come to know and accept Jesus. In turn, Huntsman invites us all to apply this to our own lives and the lives of others.

At a time when the Church and society-at-large are grappling with questions of unity and diversity, the characters of John show that there are many ways to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Yet there are some fundamental beliefs and experiences that we must share if we are to remain faithful in this turbulent and changing world and press forward in Christ to lay hold of life and salvation. (xvi–xvii)

Huntsman offers the reader both a prologue and a conclusion, along with seven wonderful devotional chapters of exegetic and hermeneutical material that capture the early disciples’ processes of conversion, each unique and individualized.

Chapter 1, *The First Disciples: Come and See* (1–15), comfortingly displays a seemingly prosaic but powerful approach to gaining a relationship with and testimony of Christ, primarily by hearing about the good news through prophets, friends, and family. Some perceive that to know that Jesus is the Christ, we must have a “road to Damascus” moment. However, heeding the words and testimony of friends and family appears to be one way to begin a relationship with the Savior.

Huntsman stresses how Andrew and John the Beloved represent

how we can respond to what we hear from prophets like John — especially the fact that Jesus is both the Lamb and Son of God, come to take away all our sin. If we are not careful, however, this core belief can get lost in our perceived need to understand and accept the entirety of the history, teachings,

2. Neal A Maxwell, *Deposition of a Disciple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 16.

and experience of the Church and its people in the almost two centuries that have passed since its restoration. (20–21)

Chapter 2, *The Mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene: Women as Witnesses* (28–39), discusses how women were treated primarily as second-class citizens during the life of the Savior. However, according to Huntsman, the Gospel of John displays how the Savior contested cultural norms and practices in the way he treated women in his ministry. Huntsman illustrates this through the Savior’s interactions with Mary the Mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene:

The importance of their testimonies is striking given the time and culture in which they lived, when the witness of a women was not even admissible in court. Their examples show us the importance of every person’s discipleship — regardless of sex, ethnicity, economic status, or other background — and encourage us to learn from and be led by such women of faith today. (29)

Moreover, Huntsman reveals remarkable exegetic insight concerning John’s phraseology that surrounds the tender moment when the resurrected Savior calls out Mary Magdalene’s name near the empty tomb:

Although the King James Version reads, “Jesus saith unto her, *Touch me not*; for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17), the Greek text actually reads, “Do not keep touching me.” ... This conveys the impression that Mary, having found Jesus, was holding on to him and did not want to lose him again. (35–36)

Indeed, this already tender moment now becomes more tender when we are exposed to the Greek.

Chapter 3, *Nicodemus: How Can These Things Be?* (40–52), may prove useful to those who may struggle in coming to receive a witness of the Savior. Nicodemus perhaps represents a growing segment of Church members today who struggle to accept Jesus based primarily on trusting and believing in the words of others.

Sometimes we have a desire to believe, but our questions take us along a different path than others travel. We may struggle to understand what others accept more easily, looking for more evidence or trying to square gospel propositions with what we already accept or assume to be true. Sometimes we may be hesitant to embrace privately or proclaim publicly what we either suspect or want to be true. Still, though our path may be different

than the paths others follow, when we come to know Jesus for ourselves, our discipleship can be no less genuine — and in the end, no less saving as long as we still come to Christ. (41)

Huntsman’s sensitivity and perspective mirror the sensitivity Christ showed to Nicodemus. Huntsman’s interpretation highlights this sympathy in John 3:11: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.” “By shifting from the singular, ‘thee,’ to the plural, ‘ye,’ ... Jesus indicated that Nicodemus was not alone in having difficulty understanding these kinds of spiritual matters” (45). In other words, you’re not alone and are not the only person who may struggle with faith. The path of discipleship is different for all, and doubting can potentially be a component for later, lasting faith, as when Nicodemus procures a suitable burying place for the Savior.

The example of Nicodemus reminds us that we must be careful about judging the spiritual journeys of other people. Sometimes we can be too quick to judge the faith of others, faulting them for questioning or perhaps insisting that people testify that they “know” when sometimes what is important is just believing or having the desire to believe. (49)

Chapter 4, *The Woman at the Well: Drinking the Waters of Life with the Woman of Samaria* (53–70), is another example how Jesus flipped cultural customs to recast proper social relations concerning God’s children in society and in God’s kingdom. Huntsman’s acumen provides the reader with valuable historical insight regarding the social relations between Samaritans and Jews. One especially clear example is how Jewish men avoided contact with those outside their ethnic group and, even more, generally avoided contact with women in public (56). Interestingly, when there was such contact, wells were common places where men went to find a wife. “Rather than resulting in marriage, the Samaritan woman’s meeting with Jesus resulted in her entering into a covenant relationship with him when she accepted him as her Messiah and Lord” (57).

Christ’s actions show that he is willing to go out of his way to meet people where and as they are. Along the way, Jesus broke social rules and customs to ensure that the marginalized had the proper chance to receive a witness of his divinity, including the opportunity to enter a covenant relationship.

Chapter 5, *Followers of Jesus and “Hard Sayings”*: *Murmur Not among Yourselves* (71–88), is yet another excellent example for members today who struggle to find belief in an age of disbelief. Huntsman catalogs the miraculous events Jesus performed in Galilee. However, when Jesus

proclaimed higher truths behind these miracles that reveal his identity, such as “the bread [Jesus/Jehovah] came down from heaven,” it caused potential followers — including his own disciples — to cease to follow and believe in him. “This is a hard saying; who can hear it? And [they] walked no more with him” (John 6:60, 66).

Jesus’s hard sayings created adverse feelings among his disciples: “doth this offend you?” (John 6:61). Huntsman reveals that the Greek word *offend* “means to repel, shock, or give cause to anger; it originally meant to cause to fall or trip” (82). Likewise, many today within the Church may find reason to repel, trip, or become angry. Nevertheless, Huntsman stresses, “Peter did not claim that Jesus’s sayings had not been hard; rather he simply clung to the testimony of Christ that he did have” (73).

Further, Huntsman provides guidance:

Historical questions, former racial attitudes, the behavior of past and even current leaders, difficult doctrines, the roles of women, the sometimes unkind treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals by other members, and policies that impact social issues such as contemporary views of marriage equality or the status of the children of same sex couples can also be hard sayings for us that require additional faith to understand or at least accept in faith until better understanding comes through the inspiration of the Spirit or future revelation. (83)

Chapter 6, *Friends of Jesus: Lord, If Thou Hadst Been Here* (89–105), underscores another instance of faith promotion through the tragic death of Martha and Mary’s brother Lazarus. Huntsman skillfully navigates the nuances of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus’s background, mainly their social and economic status, including prior episodes of sisters with the Savior. By juxtaposing the historical context, Huntsman leads the reader to greater appreciation of the family’s personal actions of faith toward the Savior amid Lazarus’s tragedy.

Martha’s faith was revealed in word, though still accompanied by service, while Mary’s was in deed, in an action that was born from love and richly symbolic. ... On the other hand, Lazarus, a character who does not speak and is acted upon rather than acting, represents how all of us are recipients of grace and saving power if we obey his call. (101)

The family’s responses to Lazarus’s death teach us that discipleship allows us all to respond differently to tragedy while still preserving a faithful integrity. Moreover, we learn through the Savior that “perhaps

the best consolation we can offer those who grieve as Mary did is simply to express sorrow” (96).

Chapter 7, *Peter and Thomas: Impulsive but Devoted Disciples* (106–22), demonstrates great examples between two gospel approaches. On one hand, Peter has a habit of jumping full-heartedly into the gospel before fully understanding and thinking through the nuances. Conversely, Thomas, reluctant to trust others’ reports, cynically doubts what he hears.

Huntsman contrasts these men’s imperfect approaches toward the Savior. For example, before accompanying Jesus to Bethany, Thomas proclaims that the twelve should be ready to die with Jesus there. However, Huntsman explains, “his declaration on that occasion was fatalistic, expecting the worst, and he seems not to have taken seriously Jesus’s foreknowledge that what was about to happen in Bethany was intended to build their faith” (107). Further,

despite their lapses in faith and faithfulness, through Christ they overcame their weaknesses and went on to be powerful, faithful witnesses of him. Second, the contrast between their early failings and later, complete restorations is a powerful example of Christ’s grace that can give us hope and encouragement. If the Lord was able to use such imperfect vessels, he will also forgive us and then use us in his kingdom as well. (108)

The depth of Huntsman’s message in *Becoming the Beloved Disciple* is most evident in its simplicity. I mean that in the most complimentary way. By no means does Huntsman’s devotional approach lack crisp exegesis and valuable hermeneutic application. His overall approach is the right approach, and Johannine commentaries lack the sophistication inherent in simplicity. It takes extraordinary skill to boil the fourth gospel into bite-sized pieces and yet feel spiritually fed and satisfied.

Becoming the Beloved Disciple is an exceptional book in that it has the power to increase one’s desire to trust and follow Christ. It teaches me that we all have our own distinctive ways to come to know Christ. It also shows that despite the various kinds of discipleship, Christ achieved both unity and welcomed diversity within his flock of disciples. While unity and diversity may at times appear to be mutually exclusive, Christ’s grace is sufficient to draw imperfect people and institutions together.

Huntsman sums it up in his conclusion:

Seeing this vast array of believers and their varied responses underscores that diversity in the family of Jesus Christ is real — and good. However, John’s presentation of such a variety of

experiences is not just a validation of diversity. This Gospel also contains a powerful call for unity. ... Jesus pled, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are ... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:11, 23). (124)

Even more,

With the Beloved Disciple we can be embraced in the love of Jesus, which love we can feel and receive in great measure through priesthood ordinances. With him we can stand at the foot of the cross, firm in our faith in his atoning sacrifice. And with him we can run to the empty tomb, sustained by the hope that because he lives, we all shall live. (130)

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FIRST VISIONS AND LAST SERMONS: AFFIRMING DIVINE SOCIALITY, REJECTING THE GREATER APOSTASY

Val Larsen

Abstract: *There is a kinship between Lehi and Joseph Smith. They are linked to each other by similar first visions, and they faced roughly the same theological problem. Resisted by elites who believe God is a Solitary Sovereign, both prophets affirm the pluralistic religion of Abraham, which features a sôd ʔlôhim (Council of Gods) in which the divine Father, Mother, and Son sit. These prophets are likewise linked by their last sermons: Lehi's parting sermon/blessings of his sons and Joseph's King Follett discourse. Along with the first visions and last sermons, the article closely reads Lehi's dream, Nephi's experience of Lehi's dream, and parts of the Allegory of the Olive Tree, John's Revelation, and Genesis, all of which touch on the theology of the Sôd (Council).*

A kinship between Lehi and Joseph Smith has been too little noticed and appreciated. It is surprising, given the temporal and spatial distance that separates them, but these prophets seem to have roughly the same ecclesiastical duty: establish a new priesthood line authorized to administer the gospel, build temples, and perform temple ordinances. They seem to confront roughly the same theological problem posed by elites who teach roughly the same incorrect ideas about who God is. They receive their prophetic calling and are given their mission in the same way: through similar First Visions. And there are thematic linkages between the prophets' last sermons. Indeed, Lehi makes his connection to Joseph Smith the main theme of his very last sermon. These similarities in their experiences and circumstances may be tokens of an important partnership. We may better understand the mission of Lehi if we see how it overlaps the mission of Joseph, and we may likewise

better understand the still unfolding Restoration Joseph bequeathed us if we read Lehi closely.

The parallel First Visions of Lehi and Joseph begin with a pillar of fire followed by a theophany in which the prophet sees the Father and the Son.¹ First noting the presence of the Father, both Lehi and Joseph are instructed mostly or entirely by the Son, Joseph receiving verbal instructions from the Son and Lehi reading a book the Son gives him. The joint appearance of the Father and Son as corporeal beings, accompanied by a retinue of angels,² contains an implicit message — the most important message each prophet receives: God is a social being who lives in community with other divine beings. Lehi and Joseph must reject the orthodox religion espoused by elites that frames the Father as a transcendent, solitary sovereign, a Being without face, feet, or family because God rejects that creed. In his first few words to both Lehi and Joseph, the Son declares the creeds/deeds of their respective days to be an *abomination* (1 Nephi 1:13; Joseph Smith 2:19). When each prophet subsequently shares with those in authority his message about the nature and being of the Gods, they persecute him (1 Nephi 1:19–20; Joseph Smith 2:21–22).³

In the wake of a first vision that affirmed the existence of a corporeal Father and divine Messiah Son, thus indicating that the official faith of his day was false, Lehi appears to have clung to the older religion of Abraham that kings and priests were trying to supplant. And Joseph rejected beliefs of those same kings and priests that had, by his time, successfully supplanted original doctrine. He restored beliefs once held by the patriarchs and Lehi. In later visions and revelations, Lehi and Joseph suggest the work and glory of the Gods, who live in the community

1. Lehi's experience as the Book of Mormon opens can be read as one vision with two parts, as I read it, or as two separate visions.

2. Joseph Smith's 1835 account of his first vision will be less familiar to most readers than the Pearl of Great Prices account: "and I saw many angels in this vision." So like Lehi, Joseph saw the Father, the Son, and concourses of angels. "Journal, 1835–1836," The Joseph Smith Papers, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/25>.

3. While Lehi and Joseph both face persecution when they offer a conception of God and the Gods that differs from the orthodoxy of their time, the deed (persecution) does not automatically follow from the creed (belief in a Solitary Sovereign God). Many have believed in the orthodox God without persecuting those who have a different view. As Joseph noted, "It dont [sic] prove that a man is not a good man, because he errs in doctrine." See *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 184.

of the exalted, is to bring to pass membership in that community for all their sons and daughters who are willing to receive it.

Forces that, in their respective times, sought to suppress belief in divine sociality and the community of the exalted gave Joseph and Lehi another thing in common. Preaching to the public the doctrine that God is a social being was dangerous for both. Those who heard Lehi preach sought to take his life, as they had taken the lives of Zenos and Zenock, who taught as he did. And 81 days before his death, Joseph stated in his last, most revelatory conference sermon that people in his Latter-day Saint audience would seek his life were he to discuss ideas his hearers held to be nonbiblical.⁴ For both men, the most fraught of fraught topics may have been the idea that God has a wife. The dangers these men long faced if they commented on the community of the Gods or the wife of God seems to have conditioned them to be rhetorically cautious.

Providentially, their caution allowed those who read their words to see what they needed to see as the gospel was gradually restored. With little attention given to its actual content when first published, the Book of Mormon first functioned as a sign that the heavens were again open and that prophets again walked the earth.⁵ As Joseph indicated in that last sermon, had many of the book's first readers seen more, they would have turned away. Now, almost 200 years since publication, we focus intensively on the content of the Book of Mormon. Additional voices have spoken from the dust, providing context for Lehi's words. And changes in the *zeitgeist* have created a strong interest in the feminine Divine. Taken together, these factors have positioned the Book of Mormon to play a role that it could not play when first published. This keystone text in the Restoration may now help disclose truths understood by Lehi and Joseph about God, humanity, and their relationship to each other.

A Word on Method

The degree of overlap between the missions of Lehi and Joseph is most apparent if we read the Old Testament and Book of Mormon through the lens of Joseph Smith's (and his successors') mature and presumably normative theology, a theology in which Elohim, the Father, is distinguished from

4. Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2: 193–208.

5. James B. Allen, "The Significance of Joseph Smith's 'First Vision' in Mormon Thought," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1966): 29–45; Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Jehovah/Yahweh, the Son, and in which Yahweh and all of us are understood to have a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father.⁶ The fruitfulness of reading scripture through the lens of Joseph's theology is apparent in John Welch's *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon at the Mount* and Grant Hardy's *Understanding the Book of Mormon*. On point after point, Welch greatly illuminates Christ's two most important sermons by viewing them through the lens of the modern temple endowment that Joseph revealed to us. The coherence and point of the sermons becomes much clearer when they are read as an endowment.⁷

Grant Hardy likewise demonstrates the value of reading the Book of Mormon as if it were what Joseph Smith claimed it to be, a text mostly written or edited by Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni. Writing for an audience that includes many who are not members of the Restored Church, Hardy brackets the question of whether Mormon, Moroni, and Nephi are in fact historical figures. But he amply demonstrates that the Book of Mormon is most intelligible and thus most fruitfully read if we take at face value the idea that it reflects the world views and preoccupations of its claimed authors. Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni each have different conceptions of who their audience is and of what messages are likely to be relevant and persuasive for them. We more fully understand the text, Hardy sufficiently demonstrates, if we recognize the different voices and rhetorical purposes of its putative authors.⁸

Having accepted revelations of Joseph Smith and his successors, members of the restored Church generally believe that heaven is governed by a Divine Council presided over by Father and Mother in Heaven. They regard Jehovah/Yahweh as the First-Born Son of those Heavenly Parents, as one who has special status in the council and who played the pivotal role in redeeming humanity from sin. Most hold that Adam, Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph of Egypt, and Lehi each understood much about the role of Yahweh in redeeming humanity from sin.⁹ And they believe that apostasies from the truth over the course of time explain why Jews and modern

6. For Joseph's teaching on Mother in Heaven, see footnotes 87 and 88 and associated text.

7. John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999).

8. Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

9. "Council in Heaven," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "Mother in Heaven," <https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven?lang=eng>; Russell M. Nelson, "Come Follow Me," *Ensign* 49, no. 5 (May 2019), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2019/05/46nelson?lang=eng>.

Christians do not believe in this governing council and Divine Family. If this Latter-day Saint theology correctly describes how heaven is populated and organized, there should be traces of the Divine Council and its members in the scriptures that have been handed down to us that have ancient provenance: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price. In this study I read scriptural texts with that expectation.

In a more limited and ad hoc way, I also build upon insights from secular Bible scholarship, which, through brilliant, creative, and often persuasive reasoning, has constructed a set of coherent narratives that integrate and make intelligible seemingly disparate and contradictory strands in the Old Testament. To be sure, the evidential foundation for this scholarship is often thin, the work being mostly grounded in intelligent close reading of the text. As Meir Sternberg has observed,

the independent knowledge we possess of the “real world” behind the Bible remains absurdly meager. ... For better or worse, most of our information is culled from the Bible itself, and culling information entails a process of interpretation. ... There is no escaping this necessity — though, again, many would like to and may even pretend they do. Source-oriented critics often imply that they deal in hard facts. ... If seriously entertained, this is a delusion.¹⁰

Where historical evidence outside the Bible is so limited, any evidence that survives by chance and is discovered, e.g., the Ugarit library, can dramatically change the conclusions of Bible scholars.¹¹ Were secular scholars to accept the writings of Lehi and Nephi as well-attested sixth century BC documents, many foundational assumptions and lines of interpretation would change.¹² And yet, while Joseph taught that the Bible was systematically changed as it passed through the hands of those who

10. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 16.

11. Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). The importance of a single archaeological discovery is discussed in William G. Dever, “Asherah, Consort of Yahweh? New Evidence from Kuntillet ‘Ajrūd,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 255 (Summer 1984): 21–37. For the effects of presuppositions and paradigms on interpretation, with special attention to Margaret Barker’s work, see Kevin Christensen, “Light and Perspective: Essays from the Mormon Theology Seminar on 1 Nephi 1 and Jacob 7,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 31(2019): 25–69.

12. See D. John Butler, *The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men* (self-pub., 2012), and D. John Butler, *Plain and Precious*

translated/transmitted it to us, he also believed it still contains many truths. And secular scholars have surely uncovered many of those truths through extraordinarily diligent application of much human creativity and intelligence. I accordingly draw on that scholarship where it converges, as if often does, with major themes in the theologies of Joseph and his successors. But to be clear, Joseph's theology is the main lens through which the text is read. In this article, secular scholarship is merely adjunct.

In various reflections on scriptural hermeneutics, Kevin Christensen has highlighted the importance of interpretive paradigms as determinants of what we see or don't see in a text. He played an important role in bringing the scholarship of Margaret Barker to the attention of Restoration scholars and the wider membership of the restored Church. Barker illustrates well the importance of baseline assumptions. Building as she does on the ideas she and Joseph Smith share — the central importance of the temple, the expectation that Christ will be present in the Old Testament, and the significant role of the Divine Mother — Barker often arrives through scholarship at readings that overlap Joseph's revelatory insights. While Joseph's theology is the most important foundation for the readings offered in this essay, Barker, Christensen, Daniel Peterson, and D. John Butler have each provided important insights I incorporate in this essay.

Grant Hardy has suggested that the broad approach to the Book of Mormon with the odd combination of most promise and least past use is the literary approach.¹³ A literary reading of a text is sensitive to structure, symbols, archetypes, intertextuality, and how the text speaks to present issues or concerns. While a textual historian may properly focus on the author's communicative intent in the moment of composition, a reception historian on how a text was understood at a given moment in time, those who offer literary readings typically seek to create a new moment in reception history by revealing unseen dimensions of meaning now cognizable and compelling. Such meanings, unlike historical meanings in their narrowest sense, are not fixed in time or by time. They are shaped by events that occur *ex post facto*, including events happening now. So while history may add important dimensions of meaning to a text, in a literary reading it subserves other larger truths and rhetorical purposes.

Consider an example discussed below: Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. For Christians, the true meaning of that narrative is determined not by the intent of the author who composed it in the moment of composition but

Things: The Temple Religion of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men (self-pub., 2012).

13. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*.

by God's sacrifice of his Son in the meridian of time. Intertextual linkages with an event that occurred and a narrative that was written long after Genesis became the decisive determinants of the text's emergent meaning. In this instance, the archetype is far more important than the episode. It expresses an underlying, universal truth that the episode merely exemplifies in a particular historical moment. (To be sure, that story, rather than others, was probably preserved precisely because it embodied an especially important and resonant archetype.) It was the fact that literature expresses these enduring, archetypal, probable or necessary truths that led Aristotle to say, rightly, that literature is higher, more philosophical, more profoundly true than history.¹⁴ Thus, to understand more fully the ways the Book of Mormon is true, we need to shift some of our attention from narrow questions of historicity to larger questions of archetypal, eternally consequential, sometimes emergent literary meaning.

In a section of the Book of Mormon closely read below, Nephi models the kind of creative, literary reading of a text that reveals its archetypal, eternally consequential meaning. He reads Lehi's dream by seeing its far-flung connections across time and space with events ranging from a birth in Bethlehem to the final collapse of Nephite civilization. These far-flung events are connected thematically by symbol and archetype, not by narrow, local historical causation. And Nephi underscores the intertextuality of his own vision by linking it to another, similarly wide-ranging vision, the Revelation of John. In the opening sections of this article, I do something similar as I read Joseph Smith through the lens of Lehi and vice versa. Though I believe it no accident that Lehi's core theological problem is very similar to that of Joseph Smith, and I believe there are causal connections between the theology of elites in Lehi's and Joseph's day, in my view even these important contingent, historical correlations reflect an archetypal opposition between monism and pluralism within a larger cosmic master narrative.

14. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. S.H. Butcher. "It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen — what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. ... The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims." See <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.mb.txt>.

The Religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Any comprehensive discussion of Old Testament theology inevitably involves a great deal of inference and conjecture. The corpus of textual and archaeological evidence is so inescapably limited that many gaps in our knowledge must be filled by informed speculation. Since later speculations build on earlier ones (now implicitly accepted as fact), the entire intellectual edifice may be undermined if new evidence or reasoning throws foundational assumptions into question. The outcome of this type of theological work varies greatly depending on initial assumptions. The most consequential assumption will often be the degree of inerrancy, if any, that readers ascribe to the biblical text. That will be an important issue for readers of this article because the article suggests, based on Book of Mormon evidence, that a large group of plain and precious theological truths were scrubbed from Hebrew theology and the Bible in Lehi's time and that those truths were replaced by doctrines God condemns.¹⁵ Readers who hold the Bible as inerrant or largely inerrant will naturally reject the reading offered here.

Those whose views are not inerrantist may be open to an important premise of this article: that before Lehi's time, the Hebrews in the Kingdom of Judah had a theology very different from the one that developed during and after Lehi's life.¹⁶ In its broad outlines, this point is not controversial among non-fundamentalist Bible scholars. There is considerable agreement that the earliest books of the Bible

15. Secular scholarship also affirms that major theological changes were made in the Hebrew religion during Lehi's time. Weinfeld refers to changes made in this time as a "theological revolution." Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy's Theological Revolution," *Bible Review* 12, no. 1 (1996): 38–41, 44–45. See also Jeffrey G. Audirsch, *The Legislative Themes of Centralization: From Mandate to Demise* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

16. "We are entering the all-decisive phase for Old Testament theology: only in the exile were the traditions of ancient Israel collected, set down in writing and worked on as the fundamental documents of faith. ... For only from the sixth century BCE in Israel was the exclusive faith in one God Yahweh established firmly for all parts of the population and all social groupings." Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "The Faith Community of 'Israel' after the Deportations," in *Theologies in the Old Testament*, trans. John Bowden (New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 207. See Margaret Barker for a discussion of the issues that focuses on dimensions of special interest to Latter-day Saints. Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord* vol. 1, *The Lady in the Temple* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); and Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion," *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4:69–82. Kevin Christensen, "The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 16, no. 2 (2004): 59–90.

— Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers — were written by authors whose overarching theological outlook and conception of God differed from that of authors who wrote after Lehi’s time.¹⁷ Of course books written earlier had to pass through later hands to get to us. And there is evidence that as they did, changes were made to conform those earlier texts to the later theology. Those changes increase the degree to which reconstruction of the early beliefs must be conjectural. But a measure of respect for the text seems to have constrained the zeal with which later scribes deleted or changed the ancient writings, so many traces of the older theology remain. Nor is relevant evidence limited to the Bible text. Though their numbers are limited, ancient nonbiblical texts sometimes add important context to our Bible reading. The discovery of a library in the ruins of Ugarit in 1929 greatly added to our understanding of how the ancients viewed their pantheon. It revealed some overlap in gods, i.e., El was the high god of Ugarit as of Israel, and overlap in poetic and narrative forms. Archaeological discoveries also add relevant context. Taking all the sources together, a sufficient body of evidence exists for some scholars to believe the following.

In the theology prevalent when the older Bible books were written, the high god, El, was understood to be an anthropomorphic being who lived in heaven in a royal court much like the royal courts of Middle Eastern kings on earth at that time.¹⁸ Like the Middle Eastern kings, El was thought to govern his dominions through the ministrations of those one would typically expect to see at court: Elah, the wife of El the king, the bene Elohim, the sons and daughters of El, *noble and great* heavenly servants,¹⁹ e.g., the *malākīm* or angels, and various representatives of the

17. Douglas A. Knight, “Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomists,” in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James Luther Mays, David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 65–66.

18. David M. Carr, “Genesis,” in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 7–11; Taylor Halverson, “The Path of Angels: A Biblical Pattern for the Role of Angels in Physical Salvation,” in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, ed. D. Kelly Ogden, Jared W. Ludlow, and Kerry Muhlestein (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 154; Jon D. Levenson, “Genesis: Introduction,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 8–11; Steven O. Smoot, “The Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 27 (2017): 155–80.

19. Abraham 3:22–24

divine army, the host of heaven, El being the Lord of Hosts.²⁰ These and other participants in the court were part of the כֹּהֲנִים, *Sôd*, the governing council, who shared to one degree or another the divinity of El and the governance of El's kingdom.

This reading is uncontroversial in its broad outlines. Few mainstream scholars doubt that the governing council was believed to exist before Lehi's time. There is more controversy about details, e.g., what specific named figures besides El were members of the Biblical *Sôd*. A reading with some ancient support consistent with what we find in Joseph's theology and the Book of Mormon acknowledges El Elyon as the most high Father God. It casts the goddess Asherah as Elah, wife of God and Mother of the bene Elohim.²¹ It frames Yahweh, a ben Elohim, the son of El and Elah, as the God of Israel. These gods have associated symbols. God is signified by the sun, the host of heaven by the stars, and Elah/Asherah by a tree, often an almond tree cut to grow in the shape of a menorah.²² Were the Book of Mormon broadly accepted as the single most extensive and best attested document we have from 600 BC, this reading would have broader support because the Book of Mormon quite clearly affirms it.²³ Since the Book of Mormon isn't generally regarded as our most reliable text from that period, the reading is controversial.

20. Gerald Cooke, "The Sons of (the) God(s)," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 76, no. 1 (January 1964): 22–47; E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980); Matitiah Tsevat, "God and the Gods in Assembly: An Interpretation of Psalm 82," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 40/41 (1969–70), 123–37.

21. "Before Josiah and Deuteronomy, ... when Yahweh assumed all the ancient roles and titles of El, Asherah would have been the consort of El, and Yahweh would have been the son of El and his consort, Asherah." Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 122. El, the singular for *God*, is used in the Old Testament, but the plural *Elohim* is much more common. John Day notes that the wife of El is sometimes called *Elat*, meaning "goddess." See John Day, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 3 (1986): 387. I refer to the goddess as *Elah*, a form Barker mentions as reflecting English morphology inherited from Hebrew. Barker mentions the connection to *elah*, the terebinth tree. See also Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 23–24.

22. Joan E. Taylor, "The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 66 (June 1995): 29–54.

23. As Sternberg asserts, most reasoning about how theology developed in Old Testament times is grounded in close reading of the text. Were the Book of Mormon to become part of the canonical text scholars reason from, conclusions about what was known anciently would change dramatically. See footnote 10.

For reasons we discuss in the next section, Elohim and Yahweh are not generally differentiated in the biblical text. They are often conflated. The grammatically plural Elohim, which literally means “Gods,” is usually, though not always, coupled with singular verbs and adjectives and is normally translated as *God* rather than *Gods*. But in Joseph Smith’s account of creation, attributed to Abraham, both the Gods and the verbs are plural (Abraham 4:1-21). Joseph said the same would be true of the Bible were it translated correctly.²⁴

Less controversial than the particular membership of the *Sôd* are the following points. The earthly home of the Elohim, which corresponded with their heavenly home, was Solomon’s temple. In the inner sanctum of the temple behind the temple veil in the Holy of Holies was the mercy seat, the throne of El, which was formed by Cherubim atop the ark of the covenant. Like El, Elah Asherah was very much at home in Solomon’s temple. For most of its history, a statue representing her stood in the temple courtyard.²⁵ The temple was decorated with tree images (1 Kings 6:29–36; Psalms 52:8) and was lighted by the menorah, a symbolic almond tree and the specific symbol of Asherah (Exodus 25:31-33). Inside the ark of the covenant was another almond tree, Aaron’s staff (Hebrews 9:4), which had miraculously blossomed and borne fruit (Numbers 17:8). So along with symbols of El, symbols of Elah/Asherah were pervasive in the temple.

Elements of this underlying story can be seen in foundational narratives in Genesis. God was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as אֱלֹהֵי שָׂדַי, *El Shaddai*, a title that can be read as signifying a divine male

24. “In the very beginning the Bible shows there is a plurality of Gods beyond the power of refutation. . . . The word Eloheim [sic] ought to be in the plural all the way through. . . . When you take [that] view of the subject, it sets one free to see all the beauty, holiness and perfection of the Gods.” Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 372.

25. “Of the 370 years during which the Solomon Temple stood in Jerusalem, for no fewer than 236 years (or almost two-thirds of the time) the statue of Asherah was present in the Temple, and her worship was a part of the legitimate religion approved and led by the king, the court, and the priesthood.” Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3rd Enlarged Edition (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 50. Taylor, “The Sacred Tree,” 32. William Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?: Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 58, 121. 2 Kings 21:7 says the object in the courtyard was a “graven image of Asherah,” so it was probably a statue. This supposition is also supported by the fact that woven clothing or hangings dressed the Asherah (2 Kings 23:7).

and female couple, El and Shaddai (Exodus 6: 3).²⁶ When Abraham first entered the covenant land of Canaan at Shechem, a place most religiously notable for its great sacred oak tree, he built there an altar and saw God for the first time (Genesis 12:1-6). (As Genesis 21:33 indicates, Abraham's standard place of worship and covenant making seems to have been at altars constructed under sacred trees.) The Hebrew word for *oak* is אֵלֶּה, *elah*, which may be translated either as *oak* or as *Goddess*. So the association between Elah and her sign, the sacred tree or grove, seems to be established in Abraham's first religious experience in the Promised Land. Jacob later returned to Shechem — where Abraham had begun their covenant life and first seen God — and sacrificed the false gods of his household members under that same sacred oak tree (Genesis 35: 4). This initial visual experience with El Shaddai in Shechem is the first of many. These visual encounters in which the patriarchs see their God suggest that El and Shaddai were corporeal beings.

After an only begotten covenant son was born to Abraham of Sarah, Abraham was commanded by El Shaddai to take that son, Isaac, to Mount Moriah, the temple mount now at the heart of Jerusalem, and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:1-14). This in the same place where, in Jewish tradition, Adam and Eve first constructed an altar and offered a sacrifice to God after being expelled from the Garden of Eden.²⁷ As father and son approached the mountain, Isaac asked Abraham where the sacrificial lamb was. Abraham replied, אֱלֹהִים יִרְאֶה, *Elohim yir'eh*, the Elohim will see it or, less literally, will provide it.²⁸ Elohim is a plural, meaning Gods, and so we could read this as saying that El and Shaddai, the divine Father and Mother, will provide the sacrificial lamb, though it can also be read more conventionally as Father El will provide. Abraham bound Isaac, placed him on the altar, and raised his hand to slay him.

26. Since El Shaddai is coupled with singular verbs, this reading, like my reading of Elohim, would be on the assumption that the High God is constituted by the union of a male/female dyad, that the High God does not exist except in this form, and that the two always act as one. For a more extended discussion of the various plural/singular forms and ways of construing them that are consistent with this male/female dyad reading, see Val Larsen, "Hidden in Plain View: Mother in Heaven in Scripture," *SquareTwo* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2015), <http://squaretwo.org/Sq2ArticleLarsenHeavenlyMother.html>.

27. Johnathan Z. Smith (1969), "Earth and Gods," *The Journal of Religion* 49, no. 2 (Apr. 1969): 115. Cf. Maimonides in *Beit Abachria*, cap. 2.

28. God's seeing is foreseeing, and foreseeing can imply providing — as in the colloquial *see to it*. Indeed, the English word *provide* derives from Latin, *pro*, signifying before, as in *prospectivei*, and *videre* signifying to see, as in *video*.

But he was stopped and told that he had proven himself to the Elohim. Abraham then saw a ram caught in the thicket, sacrificed it instead of Isaac, and named the place, יהוה יראה, *Yahweh yir'eh*, Yahweh will provide.

In this story, Yahweh provides the sacrificial lamb Isaac asked about that takes the place of Isaac as proxy on the altar. The Elohim provide the suffering Parent or Parents who take the place of Abraham, whose suffering in sacrificing his son would likely have equaled or exceeded the suffering of Isaac. The deepest possible bond is formed between El Shaddai and Abraham, between Yahweh and Isaac. They understand each other. Each has been or will be in the place of the other. This mutual knowledge is the foundation of the covenant between them. And this all happens in the very place where the altar of Solomon's temple will later be built of unhewn stones (Deuteronomy 27:5). The unhewn stones of the temple altar presumably commemorate the unhewn stones used in that same location by Adam, Eve, and Abraham to construct their unhewn altars and make covenants with God through burnt offerings. Those offerings anticipate the atonement and death of the ben Elohim, Yahweh, who will voluntarily lay himself upon the altar, take away the sins of the world, and thus open to humanity the entrances of the *Sôd* council so that all the children of El Shaddai can have the opportunity to enter and join it.

The tangible, corporeal anthropomorphism of El, implied by the ability of the patriarchs to see him, is made explicit in Genesis 32:24-30, an important passage in which Jacob receives the new name by which he and his people will be known. In this passage, Jacob literally wrestles all night with El, then receives the new blessing name *Israel*. El is initially described as an unspecified אִישׁ, '*ish*, man, suggesting that this divine being has the form of a man. After Jacob and El have wrestled through the night, El asks Jacob to let him go because the day is approaching. Jacob refuses unless El gives him a blessing. El asks, "What is your name?" Jacob replies. Holding and being held by Jacob in a tight embrace, El then gives Jacob a new, sacred name that incorporates El's own: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for [thou hast] power with God, and with men, and hast prevailed." Jacob then names the place פְּנֵי אֵל, *Peniel*, a combination of the words פְּנִים (*penim*, "face"), and, אֵל (El, God), "for I have seen God face to face." The Gods of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are Beings one can touch on earth and speak with face to face.

The name *El Shaddai* is important because, as noted, it may refer to the divine partners El and Saddai. This name is prominently featured on the two occasions when the blessing of posterity is most conspicuously pronounced on Abraham and Jacob. This fits the general pattern in the

Old Testament, where Shaddai appears 48 times and in almost every instance is associated with fruitfulness, procreation, birth, and posterity. In the King James Bible, the divine name *Shaddai* is always translated as “Almighty.” Every occurrence of that word in the KJV marks an appearance of Shaddai. That conjectural translation assumes a linkage with the word שָׂדַד, *shadad*, meaning “destroyer” or “plunderer.” An alternative conjectural translation assumes a linkage with the word שָׂדַיִם, *shadayim*, meaning “breasts” and yields a translation of El Shaddai as the God with breasts or the Goddess.²⁹ Given the nearly universal association with procreation and posterity, this reading seems more plausible than *plunderer* or another conjecture that links the word with the Akkadian word for *mountain*.

The first appearance of El Shaddai is in Genesis 17:1-19, a passage in which 99-year-old Abram and Sarai receive the sacred new names *Abraham* and *Sarah* and are promised that, despite Sarah’s old age, they will have a son and a great posterity. That posterity will become the covenant community of the faithful and ultimately the community of the exalted. The second appearance is in Genesis 28:1-5 where Isaac commands Jacob to go get a wife. Isaac then says: “And El Shaddai bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee.”

In yet another passage, Genesis 49:22-25, which would have been of special interest to Lehi, Joseph receives a patriarchal blessing that will be most conspicuously fulfilled by his descendant Lehi. In this blessing, Jacob separately invokes El (Father), Shaddai (Mother), and Yahweh (Son and Good Shepherd). Yahweh is called אַבִּיר *Abir*, a term that is always and only associated with him and that Lehi may use to refer to Yahweh.³⁰ In this passage, Shaddai is explicitly linked to the blessings of the breasts and of the womb: “Joseph is a fruitful bough ... whose branches run over the wall: ... his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty one [אַבִּיר *Abir*, always Yahweh] of Jacob (from thence is the shepherd, the stone [אֶבֶן, *eben*] of Israel). Even by El [אֵל translated *God*] ... who

29. Biale, David, “The God with Breasts: El Shaddai in the Bible,” *History of Religions* 21, no. 3 (February 1982): 240–56.

30. The other five occurrences of אַבִּיר, *Abir* (Psalms 132:2, 5; Isaiah 1:24, 49: 26, 60: 16) all explicitly state that the *mighty one* (sometimes as here in the KJV rendered *mighty God*) is Yahweh. The American Standard Version, the Jerusalem Bible, and the Holman Christian Standard Bible all translate the *Abir* in Genesis 49:24 as “Mighty One.”

shall help thee; and by *Shaddai* [שדי translated *Almighty*], who shall bless thee with ... blessings of the breasts [שדים, *shaddaim* in Hebrew], and of the womb." Important meanings in this passage are expressed through wordplay. *Shaddai*, שדי, is connected with breasts, *shaddaim*, שדים, suggesting that she is a Goddess. And Yahweh is characterized as the rock of Israel through wordplay (אביר, *Abir* of Jacob = אבן, *eben* of Israel), a linkage that becomes salient in Lehi's First Vision.

The Deuteronomist Greater Apostasy

Lehi lived in *the* pivotal moment in theological history: the moment when the pluralist theology and ethos of the corporeal *Sôd* council seems to have been displaced by the monist theology and ethos of the incorporeal Solitary Sovereign.³¹ The ethos of a council is consensual, consultative, collaborative, and open to compromise and negotiation. Social and ontological distance within a council is comparatively low. The intimate grappling of Jacob and El, the negotiation between them and compromise that lets each achieve his objective and remain friends with the other, reflects this ethos. In this wrestling narrative, God and Jacob are, ontologically, of one kind, both being an איש, *ish*, "a man." A pluralist council ethos is also reflected in the patriarchal blessing of Joseph. Joseph receives blessings from multiple members of the *Sôd*, the divine beings El, Shaddai, and Yahweh, who all share an interest in and work together to promote his well-being. As will be discussed below, the monist ethos of the Solitary Sovereign is grounded in the presumption of infinite social and ontological distance between the sole creator of heaven and earth and all his creations.

The agents of change from the *Sôd* to the Solitary Sovereign were probably the Deuteronomists, aggressive theological reformers, including refugees from the Kingdom of Israel³² who were allied with

31. The shift from corporeal to incorporeal divine beings is reflected in emergent Deuteronomist aniconism. Nathan MacDonald notes, "Programmatic aniconism was the creation of the YHWH-alone movement, and we should be suspicious of any representation of Israel's history which describes aniconic worship prior to Hezekiah or Josiah. An early aniconism, *de facto* or otherwise, is purely a projection of the post-exilic imagination." See Nathan MacDonald, "Aniconism in the Old Testament," in *The God of Israel*, ed. Robert P. Gordon, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 26–27.

32. John Sorenson notes that the E textual tradition is generally thought to be associated with the Northern Kingdom of Israel. More than the J tradition, it has "a relatively spiritualized, distant and abstract conception of God," i.e., it expresses the logic that at its limit becomes the Solitary Sovereign. John L. Sorenson, "The 'Brass

King Josiah. These reformers seem to have been stringent monotheists who rejected the concept of the *Sôd* and the community of Gods. They believed in Yahweh alone. Their signature scripture was “Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord. ... I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me” (Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:39). Evidence suggests these reformers subsumed all the functions and stories associated with El in Yahweh.³³ Thus their Yahweh had no companions.

The Deuteronomists apparently viewed themselves as the true disciples of Moses, whom they followed above all other prophets. Their Yahweh required one thing of Israel: strict adherence to the entirely sufficient Law of Moses. All figures in the community were required to subserve this all-encompassing behavioral code. The king was subordinate to the Law, which contains a kingship code that forbids abuses typical of kings (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Prophets were subordinate to it, since any prophecy or teaching that contradicted the Law merited death (Deuteronomy 13:1-5). All had obligations to the poor and the stranger. Many good things were prescribed, many bad things prohibited. And importantly, the canon was closed. There was nothing left to say after God revealed to Moses his fully sufficient revelation, the Law: “Hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them. ... Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2).³⁴ Above all, the Law prescribed exclusive worship of Yahweh, the one true and living God, and prohibited notice of any other divine being. Any violation of this prescription merited death (Deuteronomy 17:3-7).

In their conception of God and emphasis on the Law, the Deuteronomists exhibited a centralizing, monist impulse at odds with the pluralism inherent in the council ethos. The implementation of their vision required an earthly analogue of their heavenly Solitary Sovereign, a Yahwist monarch.³⁵ Thus the most important Deuteronomist was

Plates’ and Biblical Scholarship,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 10, no. 4 (Fall 1977): 36. The themes emphasized by the Deuteronomists are similar to those of Hosea, a Northern prophet who wrote shortly before the Deuteronomist revolution.

33. Smith, *Biblical Monotheism*, 141.

34. Missionaries sometime cite this scripture to refute those who quote Revelation 22:18-19 to show that the scripture canon is now closed. Using this verse to demonstrate that the canon is not closed is valid but ironic. The Deuteronomists wrote the statement with the intent to close the canon.

35. “The scribes gave full expression to the religious national aims of Hezekiah and Josiah in the laws dealing with cult centralization and the extirpation of the foreign cult. ... The Deuteronomist could not conceive of the implementation of the

Josiah, the king. Without his leadership, the Deuteronomist revolution would have been impossible. Worship of the Abrahamic Gods of the *Sôd* was too entrenched and widespread to be eliminated without a strong monarch leader. This is apparent from the fact that a large number of Asherah figurines have been discovered in and around Jerusalem from the time and just before the time of Josiah and Lehi.³⁶ But Josiah had attributes that made him the perfect revolutionary: “like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to Yahweh with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him” (2 Kings 23:25). Josiah was precisely the kind of honest, idealistic, incorruptible, energetic, uncompromising, puritanical, relentless, pitiless ideologue that must take the lead if massive social change is to be forced on an unwilling populace in a short period.³⁷

In a multidimensional push to centralize theology, ritual, worship, and governance, Josiah took things in hand (2 Kings 23:4-20).³⁸ The Jerusalem temple was full of things associated with members of the *Sôd*. He destroyed them. He dragged the Asherah statue — in the temple for at least 236 of its 370 years³⁹ — down into the Kidron valley and burned it. He destroyed all the ancient temples and sacred groves in the high

moral law contained in the ‘book of the Torah’ in the absence of the monarchy.” Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992), 166–70.

36. Barker cites Kletter on the distribution of the Asherah figurines (Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 119). See Raz Kletter, *The Judean Pillar-Figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1996), 4, 10, 45, 47. Dever strongly affirms that the figurines represent Asherah (Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?*, 58).

37. Liverani refers to the “reforming fury of Josiah.” See Mario Liverani, *Israel’s History and the History of Israel*, trans. Chiara Peri and Philip R. Davies (London: Routledge, 2007), 177. Halpern calls Josiah’s reform “bloody minded. ... It aimed at anything cultic that moved. ... This reform was fundamentally, radically, and self-consciously monotheistic.” Baruch Halpern, “‘Brisker Pipes Than Poetry’: The Development of Israelite Monotheism,” in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Baruch A. Levine, and Ernest S. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 97. Weinfeld notes, “The severity with which Josiah executed his programme is echoed in the laws of Duet. 13, which ... reflect a typical revolutionary atmosphere.” Weinfeld, *Deuteronomistic School*, 166.

38. Josiah “made the centralization of the cult a ‘device of cult control’ and primarily served the king’s interests.” Audirsch, *Legislative Themes: 27*. See also Ingrid Hjelm, “Cult Centralization as a Device of Cult Control?,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 13, no. 2 (1999): 298–309.

39. Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 50.

places, Shechem, Bethel, etc., where the patriarchs had worshipped the Gods of the *Sôd*. As Deuteronomy 12:19 required, he centralized all public ritual in one place, Jerusalem, where he could oversee and control it. As Deuteronomy 3:1-11 mandated, he killed all the priests who facilitated the worship of *Sôd* members and all the prophets who taught that there was any God with God. There is a nontrivial possibility that he killed Zenos and Zenock. Zenock taught that there was a God with God, a ben Elohim who would come down to redeem humanity from its sins (Alma 33:13-16). Zenos taught that and also emphasized the importance of humanity being closely, rather than distantly, connected with the “mother tree” (Jacob 5:54-60).⁴⁰ If Josiah didn’t kill Zenos and Zenock, he would have if they had been alive teaching these things during his reign.

On their own terms, Josiah’s reforms were a smashing success. With respect to rhetoric, he remains almost preeminently celebrated in the Old Testament because those who came after him and preserved or wrote the scriptures were almost all Deuteronomists. The Old Testament we have is a substantially Deuteronomist text. Josiah’s reform endured such that 600 years later, the Jews remained devoted Deuteronomists. Their rejection of Christ, a man claiming to be the Son of God, God with God, would have pleased Josiah.

But while triumphant culturally, Josiah did not fare as well with respect to objective political facts reported in the text.⁴¹ The Deuteronomist prophetess Huldah had prophesied that because of his righteousness, Josiah would die in peace (2 Kings 22:18-20). He did not. The chronicler reports that he died needlessly because he heedlessly attacked Pharaoh Necho, who was passing peacefully through his kingdom. He died prematurely because he was unwilling to hear the word of God coming from an unexpected place, the mouth of Necho (2 Chronicles 35:21-24). Politically, his actions were disastrous for his country. Israel had survived for 360 years under kings the Deuteronomists regarded as mostly wicked. It lasted only 22 years after Josiah putatively purged it of its sins. In the wake of Josiah’s death, in the

40. John Sorenson has suggested that Zenos and Zedock were Northern prophets. Some scholars believe refugees from the Northern Kingdom inspired the Yahwist exclusivism of the Deuteronomists. So it is possible that Zenos and Zedock were killed by Northern predecessors of the Southern Deuteronomists. Sorenson, “The ‘Brass Plates,’” 33-34.

41. “The supreme role claimed for the king and temple had not justified itself in history, and there emerged an urgent need for a fresh interpretation of events.” Andrew D. H. Mayes, “Deuteronomistic Ideology and the Theology of the Old Testament,” *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament* 82 (March 1999): 70.

reign of his son Zedekiah, it suffered the greatest calamity of its history: utter destruction. Only a small remnant survived, carried away captive into Babylon. Non-Deuteronomist critics attributed the fall to Josiah's attacking the Gods of the *Sôd*.⁴² The Deuteronomists carried to Babylon, who wrote the more enduring, widely read histories in the Bible, offered other, self-justifying rationales for the destruction.

The Deuteronomist concept of God as Solitary Sovereign may have been rooted in a perceived revelatory linkage between God's name and the Hebrew verb *to be*, which yields a sophisticated reading of Moses's first encounter with God in Exodus 3:1-15. There Yahweh declares that his name is אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, 'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh, "I Am that I Am." This name statement can be read, philosophically, as saying that Yahweh is pure BEING, BEING as such, the only thing that exists in and of and by itself.⁴³ Speaking in the first person, God says אֶהְיֶה, 'ehyeh, "I Am," and reveals his unique status as pure BEING. Speaking of God in the third person, we say יְהוָה, *yahweh*, "He Is," so we refer to God, the great I Am as Yahweh, He Is. And we may think of him as the one and only thing that purely, self-existently IS.⁴⁴ This monistic way of thinking about

42. Mother in Heaven was known as *Wisdom*. Critics were "surprisingly consistent in their account of what happened in the time of Josiah. ... The godless people in the temple became 'blind' and abandoned Wisdom just before the temple was burned and the people scattered. Those who set up the second temple and its cult, ... that is, those who collected and edited the Hebrew Scriptures as we know them, were described as apostates." Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 8. Citing a specific group, Barker writes, "There were also refugees at that time who fled to Egypt. Those in Pathros had been devotees of the Lady, and it was neglecting her, they said, that had caused the fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 44.15-19)." Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 231.

43. "The concept of 'being' is the presupposition and the basis for all branches of philosophy. ... Religion, also, in so far as it is pure monotheism, is built upon the idea of 'being,' which is best proven by the classical and first monotheistic declaration, with which God introduced Himself to Moses during the revelation of the bush, proclaiming as His being 'I am that I am' (Exodus 3:14). The God of pure religion ... introduces Himself as 'being,' thus transporting 'being' from the sphere of philosophy ... to the sphere of religion. ... God [is] the only and incomparable being, thus eliminating the possibility of any other being besides Him. ... [Nature] is not independent, and does not exist by itself, for God is the presupposition for its existence, and He is its creator. In this way God, the only and unique being, enters the relationship with creation, which arises as the result of the singularity of God. He thus acquires in addition to the meaning of being the only cause for everything in existence." Trude Weiss Rosmarin, *Religion of Reason: Herman Cohen's System of Religious Philosophy* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1936), 22-23, 83.

44. "The Being of God is now defined as the absolute Otherness in contrast to the world of things. The Jewish monotheistic revelation expressed in the divine

God as pure BEING, as the ground of all being,⁴⁵ makes him abstract, transcendent, prior to and separate from all created things.⁴⁶

Whether derived philosophically or not, Yehezkel Kaufmann has suggested that the conception of God as the Solitary Sovereign was the defining characteristic of the Israelite religion which the Deuteronomists promulgated: “The basic idea of Israelite religion is that God is supreme over all. There is no realm above him or beside him to limit his absolute sovereignty. He is utterly distinct from, and other than, the world; he is subject to no laws, no compulsions, or powers that transcend him.”⁴⁷ This change from seeing God as of a kind with man and part of the world to seeing him as a transcendent Solitary Sovereign led to a recasting of an important Sinai narrative. Exodus portrayed the leaders of Israel as seeing an embodied God: “Then went up Moses ... and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone” (Exodus 24:9-10). The Deuteronomists changed that, declaring, “ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; ... ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb: ... Lest ye corrupt yourself and make ... the similitude of any figure ... male or female” (Deuteronomy 4:12, 15-16). God was then framed as a being who cannot be seen, who is different in kind from human beings who have gender, shape, and form. This was a critically important change, because being

proclamation ‘I am that I am’ (Exodus 3:14) [leads] to such statements as the following: ‘In fact there is no greater miracle in the history of thinking than that which is revealed in this sentence. A primitive language ... stammers the deepest saying of all philosophy. God’s name shall be: I am that I am. God is the Being. God is the ego which is the same as being.’ But does this conception of God not imply the annihilation of every other being save Himself? Is then the world not conceived as a mere function of God? [The answer:] The uniqueness of God with regard to the world means the causation by God of the world. For the becoming of things has its logical origin in Him. The essence of the Being of God is to cause the Becoming of the world of things. Thus the origin of Becoming is in God’s Being.” Adolph Lichtigfeld, *Twenty Centuries of Jewish Thought* (London: E. O. Beck Limited, 1938), 57.

45. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *Existence and the Christ*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 10.

46. On connections between name theology and Josiah’s political/theological centralization, see Audirsch, 29–40. “Variants of the name theology idiom occur eight times in Deuteronomy, all of which accompany a centralization motif.” Audirsch, *Legislative Themes*, 29.

47. Yehezkal Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 60.

a seer and seeing God had earlier been the proper goal and defining characteristic of authentic religious experience.⁴⁸

Given the limited data available, it is hard to know how fully the Deuteronomists themselves understood the implications of their monism. (Lehi's apparent response to them suggests they articulated their views with some measure of philosophical sophistication.) But those implications and the associated reasoning were later specified with impeccable logical rigor by two brilliant theologians, Maimonides and Calvin, whose views I briefly recount. In Maimonides's list of Thirteen Principles of Faith⁴⁹ (possibly Joseph Smith's inspiration for the Articles of Faith⁵⁰), the first four principles focus on the attributes of the Solitary Sovereign God who was held to be (a) the self-existent ground of all being who created all other things *ex nihilo*, (b) a monad, the essence of indivisible oneness, (c) incorporeal and (d) outside of time. As noted above, this conception of God created infinite ontological distance between God and humanity, distance so great that God ceased to be in any ordinary sense a father.

Calvin then most fully worked out the implications of God being the only self-existent entity and the ground of all being. From these Deuteronomist assumptions, it follows that God alone acts. All other events and behaviors must be expressions or enactments of the Divine will. If one is saved, another damned, it is because God created and predestined the one for salvation and the other for damnation. All apparent human choices are foreknown and have as their first, fully sufficient cause an act of God. Calvin's God acts always and only for his own glory and honor, saving and damning souls eternally in accordance with his "mere arbitrary Will."⁵¹

48. Margaret Barker and Kevin Christensen, "Seeking the Face of the Lord: Joseph Smith and the First Temple Tradition," in *Joseph Smith Jr.: Reappraisals after Two Centuries*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Terryl L. Givens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 143–72.

49. "Maimonides' 13 Foundations of Judaism, translated by Marc Mermelstein," Mesora. <http://www.mesora.org/13principles.html>.

50. Maimonides's Thirteen Principles of Faith would have been the logical text for Joshua Seixas to use to teach the basic theology of Judaism when he taught Joseph and others in Kirtland.

51. Important tenets of Calvinism in the New England form Joseph Smith encountered them are well described by Jonathan Edwards in his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Other Christian denominations frame matters differently and, from a Latter-day Saint point of view, more correctly than Calvin. But they do so by reasoning with less rigor from first principles they share with

From the point of view of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ, this Deuteronomist conception of God as the Solitary Sovereign ground of Being was the Ur error of antiquity. It was the Greater Apostasy that served as the essential foundation for the later Great Apostasy. The moment it supplanted the *Sôd* was the moment in which the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints — which, like the faith of Abraham, remains pluralistic in its conception of God — became separated from the other major religions with Old Testament roots: Judaism, Islam, and Western Christianity.⁵² So this was the moment when the Restoration became necessary. And it was the most important error the Restoration corrects.

Lehi and the Elohim

As the Book of Mormon opens, Jerusalem is in the throes of the theological revolution just discussed. The religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is being violently purged by the aggressive new Deuteronomist orthodoxy. In a quintessential prophetic vision, Lehi is called to join the losing side, to defend the old theology being suppressed. Heeding the call to be a visionary man and speak prophetically, he boldly declares that Jerusalem has abandoned true faith and is therefore on the verge of destruction. It must repent and believe in a ben Elohim, a God with God, the Messiah who will come down from heaven to redeem the world or it will be destroyed. The Deuteronomist religious and political leaders of Jerusalem mock these teachings, then seek to take Lehi's life.⁵³ Lehi lives because God commands him to flee into the wilderness.

As mentioned above, Lehi's First Vision is analogous in important respects — fiery pillar, appearance of the Father and Son and angels — to

Calvin. They use concepts such a free will to separate God from humanity, suggesting that God creates free beings capable of making choices contrary to his will. But a God outside of time/space foreknows all freely chosen acts before they are chosen. He has the option of creating only that subset of beings who freely choose to do good. If he creates beings who, he foreknows, will do monstrous evil, then he, the creator, must have willed that the evil be done or he would not have created the perpetrator. Knowing all things and being the cause of all things, God is responsible for all that happens. The logically gifted Calvin understood that what *is* and God's *will* are tautologically equivalent, given Solitary Sovereign premises. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. A Sermon Preached at Enfield, July 8th, 1741," Electronic Texts in American Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1053&context=etas>.

52. The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints is less disconnected from Eastern Orthodoxy because the *filioque* of that religion preserves a measure of pluralistic sociality in God and, by extension, between God and humanity.

53. See 1 Nephi 1:18–20 and 2 Chronicles 36:15–16.

the First Vision of Joseph Smith. Lehi prayed fervently, then “there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much” (1 Nephi 1:6). This first vision is deeply symbolic. The pillar of fire signifies both Father El and Son Yahweh who come to Lehi in vision. They appear here in the form they took as they led Israel through darkness on its journey to the Promised Land (Exodus 13:21). Their appearance in this form suggests that Deuteronomist Israel is sunk in darkness but that El and Yahweh will lead Lehi and his family out of the darkness and on to the Promised Land. The rock in the vision signifies that Son Yahweh is the Messiah Redeemer and that Father El is the King of Heaven. It places them in the locations where they were found in the ancient temple — upon the altar and behind the veil.

The unhewn rock on which the pillar of fire rests signifies both the altar, the beginning, and the Holy of Holies, the end of a ritual life journey. As noted above, the altar was located on Mount Moriah in the very spot where Adam and Eve were thought to have first offered a sacrifice after being cast out of the Garden of Eden and where Abraham sacrificed Isaac. It is on this spot that our journey back to the Tree of Life and the presence of God begins, with sacrifices that symbolize Christ’s atonement.

By appearing to Lehi as a fire that burns on an unhewn stone like that of the temple altar, Yahweh marks himself in this first vision as the proxy who replaced Isaac, the ultimate holocaust sin offering, the promised Messiah Redeemer who mediates our return through the veil into the Holy of Holies and the presence of God.⁵⁴ El marks himself in this vision as the King of Heaven. In addition to signifying the temple altar, the rock in Lehi’s vision signifies the *eben shetiya*, the raw foundation stone behind the temple veil upon which rested the Holy of Holies, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy seat — the earthly throne of the Elohim. The *eben shetiya*, often called simply the *Rock*, is located today beneath

54. The rock altar is the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament cross. It may signify an unhewn stone upon which Christ leaned as he suffered the sins of the world in the Garden of Gethsemane. Adam S. Miller also reads the stone on which the pillar of fire appears as an unhewn altar on which holocaust offerings are made. He links it with other occasions when God manifests himself as a pillar of fire (Exodus 13: 21) or as fire descending from heaven to rest on rock altars (Leviticus 9:23–24; 2 Chronicles 7:1–2; Judges 13:19–20; 1 Kings 18:37–39). Adam S. Miller, *Future Mormon: Essays in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016), 15–18.

the Dome of the Rock on Mount Moriah and remains a sacred place for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.⁵⁵

This reading of the first vision in the Book of Mormon and the supposition that Lehi believed in the old theology are supported when Lehi returns home and casts himself upon his bed. The vision resumes, the heavens again open, and Lehi sees “God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels” (1 Nephi 1:8). This is the El of the *Sôd*, the corporeal Lord of Hosts celebrated in the old theology. In token of El’s desire to exalt him, Lehi has been invited to look into the *Sôd*. The heavenly throne Lehi sees is twin to the earthly throne, the mercy seat that rests upon the Rock, the *eben shetiyya* (Isaiah 6:1; Psalms 11:4).

Then as believed in the old Abrahamic but denied in the new Deuteronomistic theology, Lehi sees a God with God — *One* (in Hebrew possibly אביר, *Abir*, an epithet that always means Yahweh),⁵⁶ who descends “out of the midst of heaven, [whose] luster was above that of the sun at noon-day” (1 Nephi 1:8). This second God is linked, as often happens in the old theology, with the sun. Twelve angel figures, the host of heaven, follow after the One and, as is typical in the old theology, are linked with the stars: “he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament” (1 Nephi 1:10).⁵⁷ Yahweh (and the apostles) who have descended to Lehi mediate between him and El. This pattern will be repeated in Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s experience of Lehi’s dream. Yahweh comes to Lehi, gives him a book, and bids him read. Having read its prophecies, Lehi exclaims, “Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!” (1 Nephi 1:14). In saying this Lehi may praise the Son, Father, and Mother, the major figures in the *Sôd*. *Lord God Almighty* is the King James translation of *Yahweh El Shaddai*.⁵⁸

The text then continues: “Because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish! And after

55. Wise Solomon built his temple upon a rock, the *eben shetiyya*. Matthew 7:24 may allude to the *eben shetiyya*.

56. The word *One* may translate the Hebrew אביר (*Abir*), which, as noted in the text above and footnote 30, is often rendered as “mighty *one*” in Joseph’s patriarchal blessing, as it is in 1 Nephi 21:26 and Isaiah 49:26. *Abir* derives from the primitive root אבר (*abar*), which signifies to *soar* or *fly*, wordplay appropriate for this descent from heaven. *Abir* always refers to Yahweh, as does *One* here. As noted above, *Abir* and *Eben*, Yahweh and the rock, are equated in the Genesis wordplay (Genesis 49:24).

57. Deuteronomy 4:19 condemns these linkages of divine beings with sun and stars that Nephi uses without compunction.

58. Nephi and Jacob also use this phrase, Nephi in 2 Nephi 28:15 and Jacob in 2 Nephi 9:46.

this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God [Elohim, seen on the throne]; for his soul did rejoice and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord [Yahweh, the One coming down] had shown unto him” (1 Nephi 1:14-15). If we back translate *Lord* and *God* through King James English to their Hebrew equivalents, we get *Yahweh* and *Elohim*. The Hebrew plural Elohim may refer to the divine couple, El and Elah. Having seen and heard, Lehi caps his testimony to the people of Jerusalem by saying that his vision “manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world” (1 Nephi 1:19).

When Lehi’s testimony is rejected by the Deuteronomist leadership of the Jerusalem Jews and they seek to take his life, God validates Lehi’s exclamation — that God is merciful and will not suffer that the faithful perish — by fulfilling through Lehi the patriarchal blessing given jointly by Yahweh, El, and Shaddai to Lehi’s progenitor, Joseph of Egypt (1 Nephi 5:14).⁵⁹ This branch of Joseph’s posterity runs over the wall and is ultimately planted on a fertile new continent (Genesis 49: 22, 24-25).

Lehi’s Dream

After fruitful Lehi runs over the wall by leaving Jerusalem, these important themes in the old theology are further developed in a second great vision. In this second vision, Lehi’s dream, the old theology seems to be again affirmed and the new theology rejected. This meaning of the dream will be more apparent if we recognize that it is set in the Jerusalem Lehi knew so well and reflects events then occurring there. The highest point in Lehi’s Jerusalem is Mount Moriah, where the temple sat, temples being archetypically located in a high place. On the east side, the temple mount declined steeply into the narrow Kidron valley and then ascended up the slope of the Mount of Olives. Water flowed through the Kidron valley.

In the dream, there is a great and spacious building high in the air that is full of mocking people who are dressed in fine clothing. The highest and, other than the king’s palace, the greatest and most spacious building known to Lehi was Solomon’s temple, then completely controlled, as was the palace, by the Deuteronomists. The priests in the temple were instructed to wear fine clothing (Exodus 28:5-8, 39; 39:27-29), and among those who rejected the warnings of prophets like Lehi, 2 Chronicles tells us, were “the chief of the priests” (36:14-16). The large middle room of the temple was called the *Hekal*, a word also commonly used to refer to the

59. See Michael Austin, “How the Book of Mormon Reads the Bible: A Theory of Types,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26, 58–59.

entire temple or to any great building. If Lehi said *Hekal* when recounting his dream, as seems likely, the alternative translations of the word were “great and spacious building” and “great and spacious temple.”⁶⁰ The connection between the great building in the dream and Zedekiah’s palace and Solomon’s temple is supported by the fact that all are filled with people hostile to sacred trees and Sons of God, and all are on the verge of a great fall because those who are in them mock the prophets and reject their warnings (1 Nephi 11:36; 2 Chronicles 36:16-19). So thus far, Lehi’s dream corresponds closely, as dreams often do, to what he experienced as he sought to warn the people of Jerusalem and tell them about the Son of God who would come to redeem them.

Lehi’s guide in the dream is a man dressed in a white robe and again Yahweh acting as mediator. Yahweh will be Nephi’s initial guide through the same dream, and Lehi twice invokes the “Lord,” meaning Yahweh, before he beholds a sacred tree and the remainder of the dream. Eventually, Lehi sees the sacred tree on the side of the valley opposite from the great and spacious building. In Jerusalem topography, that places the tree on the Mount of Olives, where the Garden of Gethsemane will be located and where the Son of God will atone for the sins of the world. It was also the place where Josiah had chopped down an Asherah tree that had been located there, apparently, since the time of Solomon (2 Kings 23:13-14).⁶¹

In an act that affirms his belief in the older theology of Abraham and the appropriateness of worshipping in the groves of Elah/Asherah/Shaddai which the Deuteronomists are destroying, Lehi comes to the sacred tree and begins to eat its fruit, which is “desirable to make one happy” (1 Nephi 8:10). Asherah and the tree may be linked by Hebrew word *play*, the words *happy*, אֲשֶׁרֵי, *ashre*, and *Asherah*, אֲשֶׁרָה, differing only in their final consonant.⁶² Nephi’s experience of the dream will later confirm that this tree is an Asherah that symbolizes the Mother of the Son of God. In the context of the time when the elites in the great buildings, the palace and the temple, were aggressively chopping down sacred trees, making that symbol salient for Lehi and his family, the tree is quite clearly a high-place grove. Lehi is practicing the old-time religion that includes worship of Elah and the bene Elohim; and Yahweh is the mediator who has led him to the tree, to his Heavenly Mother, and to

60. See Butler, *Plain and Precious Things*, 57.

61. The “mount of corruption” is the Mount of Olives. The word *groves* translates the Hebrew word אֲשֶׁרָה, *Asherah*.

62. Peterson points out the possible word play. “Nephi and His Asherah,” 24.

the fruit that comes from her, Yahweh himself being the fruit.⁶³ Details support the supposition that Yahweh is the fruit. The fruit Lehi eats is “sweet, above all that I had ever before tasted [and] white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen” (1 Nephi 8:11). The superlative *sweetness* and *whiteness* of the fruit signifies that it is a thing of heaven. The only white thing mentioned before as part of the dream is the white robe of the guide, Yahweh. So the fruit born of Elah, mother of the ben Elohim, whose symbol is a tree, is Yahweh, divine Son of El and Elah. The fruit Lehi eats is the body and blood of Christ.

Lehi next describes an iron rod that leads to the tree and numberless concourses of people pressing forward that they may come to the tree. But there arose “a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost” (1 Nephi 8:23). As noted above, Lehi is at what seems to be the most consequential pivot point in theological history, the moment when the purge of the Deuteronomists enduringly obscures the true nature of God and humanity and in particular, our relationship with our Mother in Heaven. An exceedingly great mist of darkness that still swirls around us is an apt metaphor for the creed then arising which continues to affect our worship and which God will later declare to be “an abomination in his sight” (Joseph Smith 1:19). Reading the mists of darkness onto the topography of Jerusalem and what was happening at the time, they would seem to be product of the burning in Kidron of the Asherah and other temple vessels associated with the bene Elohim and the *Sôd* council, i.e., they are the monist doctrines arising to supplant the religion of Abraham.

Lehi concludes the dream by refocusing on the great and spacious building full of people whose “manner of dress was exceedingly fine” (1 Nephi 8:27). These people in a great, public building whose dress is what we would expect the Deuteronomist king, high priest, and community elites to wear, are scoffing, mocking, and shaming those who publicly worship at the sacred tree. Many worshipers fall away because of the social pressure against affiliating themselves with the tree, Heavenly Mother, and her fruit, the Son of God. This image apparently reflects what was happening at the time: the pressure elites were successfully putting on the

63. Taylor notes that “up until Josiah there is no denouncing of any asherah at Bethel [the house of El, also known as *Lûz*, almond tree], either by Amos or Hosea, indicating probably that it was considered by Hebrews an acceptable part of the cult of Yahweh until the Deuteronomistic Reform.” Taylor, “The Sacred Tree,” 48, 50. Lehi’s behavior supports the view that the groves were an integral part of the Abrahamic religion.

people to discontinue their traditional worship of the *Sôd* Gods and, in particular, the Mother God Asherah, whose symbol was a sacred tree.

In the midst of the dream, Lehi, seeing his family in the distance, beckoned them to join him in eating the sacramental fruit. Sariah, Nephi, and Sam did. Laman and Lemuel refused, perhaps, as Rappleye has argued, because they themselves were Deuteronomists who did not approve of sacred trees and Sons of God.⁶⁴ Lehi, Sariah, Nephi, and Sam remained with the heavenly tree, the divine fruit, with Mother and Son. Their ending there, like Lehi's initial vision of Father El on his throne, suggests that this faithful family is building a relationship with Father, Mother, and Son and is being inducted into the community of the exalted.

Lehi and Zenos's Allegory of the Olive Tree

Nephi gives three main accounts of his father's teaching (the dream, the olive allegory, and the last blessings/sermons). In each, the Mother tree is a core thematic element. Lehi's olive allegory teaching is very briefly recounted (1 Nephi 10:12-14). Nephi has more to say on the topic (1 Nephi 15:12-16). Jacob gives the full account, quoting Zenos, Lehi's fellow prophet and apparent exponent of the Abrahamic religion. In the full account, the allegory clearly describes the efforts of the *Sôd* to save souls. The Lord of the Vineyard is El. The Servant, a council composite,⁶⁵ is mostly Yahweh. The laborers brought in at the end would seem to be a mix of heavenly and earthly members of the *Sôd*.

The other key part of the allegory, the tree, has three distinct parts: a trunk and roots, branches, and fruits. The trunk and roots, four times referred to as the "Mother tree" (Jacob 5:54, 56, 60) and celebrated "because of their goodness" (Jacob 5:36-37, 59), seem to be Elah/Asherah. Zenos may allude here to the Asherah artifact, a common archeological find in the 600 BC layer of Jerusalem, which represents the Goddess as torso and head of a woman atop the trunk of a tree, hence Elah as trunk and roots. The branches of the tree are the nations/cultures of the world. The fruit is individual human souls. Thus, in this allegory, Elah/Asherah is portrayed as the spiritual Mother, not just of Yahweh as in Lehi's dream, but of all souls.

64. 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.

65. Jacob 5:21-22 is a poor fit for the Father/Son relationship, so the servant is probably a composite. See Val Larsen, "A Mormon Theodicy: Jacob and the Problem of Evil," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 239-66.

In the allegory, the fruits go bad and the Lord of the Vineyard asks, “Who is it that has corrupted my vineyard?” The Servant replies:

Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard — have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good? And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves. Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted?

As the branches grow and become lofty, distant from the Mother root, they lose their connection with something essential. The implication may be that when separated from the Mother trunk and root by cultures that do not recognize her, the fruit, souls, go bad. As the Hebrew religion turns from Father, Mother, and Son to the lofty Solitary Sovereign of the lofty political and cultural elites, it apparently loses some of its capacity to save souls.

In his introduction to the allegory, Jacob seems to comment aptly on the Deuteronomists who are then rejecting the plain truths of the Abrahamic religion:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them [the Divine Family of the Sôd, Father, Mother and Son], and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand [a Solitary Sovereign who is pure BEING], because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it, that they may stumble. (Jacob 4:14)

Lehi’s Last Sermons

In a blessing/sermon given to his son Jacob, the next to last of his life, Lehi engaged philosophically the issues that seem to have differentiated his worldview from that of the Deuteronomists. Using abstract, philosophical language, he affirmed his commitment to the pluralism characteristic of the Sôd council. As a kind of pluralist statement of first principles, he tells Jacob: “It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things, ... Wherefore, all things must be a compound in one” (2 Nephi 2:11). He suggests that a monad, pure unitary BEING of the sort that seems to be the first principle of the centralizing Deuteronomists, is nihilistic. “If it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither

death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility” (2 Nephi 2:11). Lacking any dynamic potential, any internal disequilibrium, this divine monad would be “a thing of naught,” a thing with “no purpose,” with no potential to be other than what it already is.

Lehi actually says, and a Deuteronomist would focus on this point in responding to his argument, “created for a thing of naught” and having “no purpose in the end of its creation.” To speak of creation, a Deuteronomist would reply, when talking about the pure BEING that is the I Am, is to miss the point. Yahweh is the one thing among all that exists which could never be created. He is self-existent, prior to creation, the uncreated and uncreatable ground of all created things. Given this reply, Lehi would have to admit that he spoke imprecisely, and yet his central argument would remain unanswered. Granted that it is uncreated, what reason would there be for the Deuteronomists’ monad of self-complete, fully self-consistent, pure unchangeable BEING to act? And what would it have but its own, completely finished and unchangeable self to act upon?⁶⁶

Lehi flips the argument. For him, God is a being who always exists in community, in the Sôd, having the attributes of wisdom, eternal purposes, a commitment to justice and mercy that are the form of his relationship with other existing and acting entities. If, as in the monad, there is no underlying matrix of acts and consequences in binary opposition, with predictable linkages between them, e.g., between righteousness and happiness versus sin and misery, then there is no field within which a relational God can act. So that God will not exist and, therefore, will not create, leaving nothing extant to act or be acted upon, meaning that all has vanished, and there is nothing.⁶⁷ And that nothing is, arguably, indistinguishable from the pure, static, unchangeable BEING of the Deuteronomists. Again, by a different chain of reasoning, Lehi asserts that the centralizing Deuteronomists are nihilistic.

66. The answer is *nothing*. The only thing outside the monad of pure being is nothing. Thus, in mature Deuteronomist theology, creation is held to be *ex nihilo*, from nothing.

67. Granting the important difference between their pluralist/monist assumptions, there is a kinship between Lehi’s argument here and Maimonides’ First Principle of faith: “This Creator is perfect in all manner of existence. He is the cause of all existence. He causes them to exist and they exist only because of Him. And if you could contemplate a case, such that He was not to exist, . . . then all things would cease to exist and there would remain nothing.”

After making his abstract, philosophical statement, Lehi rounds out his pluralist theology of opposition by alluding to the great heavenly Sôd council in which Satan and Yahweh presented plans of salvation, during which Satan rebelled when his plan was rejected, having been found to be “evil before God” (2 Nephi 2:17). Satan’s rebellion created a symmetrical, oppositional relationship between the two most prominent ben Elohim of the council. Each being a prominent child of Elah, that opposition was signified by the opposition between two trees (both symbols of Elah) with their fruits being symbols of the two great bene Elohim who opposed each other. These trees mark a cycle of departure and return. We begin in the presence of our divine parents, signified metonymously by a Mother Tree (the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), and we return to their presence, signified metonymously by a Mother Tree (the Tree of Life).

The richness and openness of the Sôd ethos is embodied in these trees. Having dwelled in heaven (or Eden) with God, we knew good in a flat, unidimensional way. But to fully comprehend what good was, we had to add another dimension to our experience. We had to taste evil. The fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is Satan. It is he that gives us the fruit — himself — and persuades us to eat it. Having eaten it, Eve knows who Satan is because she understands his essence, evil. Having encountered Satan, we have a new depth of knowledge about what good is, seeing it more clearly from its contrast with Satanic evil. Knowing Satan, having the taste of him in our mouths, separates us from the Elohim. But if, as in Lehi’s dream, we come to the tree in its other guise, the Tree of Life that bears its other Son as fruit, if we then eat the fruit of that tree, the taste or influence of Satan is washed out of us and we qualify ourselves to be reintegrated into the divine Sôd — but now having the deep, full knowledge of good and evil that makes us as one of the Gods.

Lehi may have had several cogent reasons to share these philosophical thoughts with Jacob. In his discussion of the need for opposition in all things, Lehi provides a rationale for the existence of evil in the world. Jacob is an especially sensitive, spiritual, depressive soul who is deeply troubled by the problem of evil. Lehi here helps him see the linkages between opposition and agency.⁶⁸ And Lehi may intuit through prophetic insight that Jacob will in later years be confronted by Sherem, an influential Deuteronomist theologian, backed by the second Nephite king.

In his final blessing/sermon (he subsequently blesses Laman and Lemuel’s children without any sermon), Lehi focuses at length on the relationship

68. Larsen, “A Mormon Theodicy,” 39–266.

between himself and his relative and mission partner Joseph Smith. He cites Joseph of Egypt, who is their common ancestor and who foresaw their intertwined missions. Lehi and his descendants would flourish, write, and fall into apostasy. Joseph Smith would play the crucial role of restoring to them their words and, ultimately, their ancient, Abrahamic faith.

Nephi and the Elohim

In his First Vision, Nephi sees what Lehi saw in his dream. But while Lehi's recounting of the dream reflects quite narrowly his conflict with the Deuteronomists in his time, Nephi's vision enlarges the meaning of the symbols with linkages to a wide variety of key events in the cosmic drama of exaltation and damnation. Indeed, Nephi explicitly links his First Vision with the expansive last vision of John the Revelator. Like his father, Nephi sees the sacred tree, but he makes its meaning more explicit. He underscores its connection with Elah, the spiritual Mother of Yahweh.

As the vision opens, Nephi is "caught away in the Spirit of the Lord . . . into an exceedingly high mountain" (1 Nephi 11:1). This will be a temple vision, high mountains being the conventional temple location and the earthly threshold of heaven. As was true for Lehi, Yahweh, the mediator between heaven and earth, is Nephi's guide. He has brought Nephi to heaven's threshold. There, he asks what Nephi wants. Nephi replies that he wants to see what his father saw, i.e., the tree, its fruit, and a vision of heaven. His worthiness to enter heaven, David Bokovoy suggests,⁶⁹ is now tested with a question: "Believest thou that thy father saw the tree?"

When Nephi says "yea," it appears that he immediately enters heaven and the presence of the most high God. The Spirit exclaims, as if suddenly in God's presence, "Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all." "Most high God" translates the Hebrew "El Elyon," the Father God who heads the Sôd council. The man Nephi, in a temple context like the man Adam, now appears to be in heaven in the presence of the Father and the Son.

As seems to be the pattern of heaven and the temple, the Son now gives Nephi a two-step presentation in which the thing first occurs as plan (conceptual or spiritual creation) and then occurs as act (physical creation). Nephi is told what he will see, and then sees it. The Spirit tells him: "Behold this thing shall be given unto thee for a sign, that after thou hast beheld the tree which bore the fruit which thy father tasted,

69. David E. Bokovoy, "'Thou Knowest That I Believe': Invoking The Spirit of the Lord as Council Witness in 1 Nephi 11," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 1 (2012): 1–23.

thou shalt also behold a man descending out of heaven, and ... ye shall bear record that it is the Son of God.” In heaven where he now is, Nephi will first see the symbol of Elah/Asherah, the tree that bears Yahweh as its fruit. (He probably also [or instead] sees the symbol’s referent, Elah herself.) He will then see the fruit, Yahweh, descending from heaven. This juxtaposition of images is a sign that signifies something significant. The Mother bearing fruit, then the Son of El and Elah descending, could signify the heavenly, spiritual birth of Yahweh. This supposition receives support at the end of the vision.

In what will become the key structural marker in the vision, the Spirit now gives Nephi a command, “Look!” What had been described conceptually now occurs physically: “And I looked and beheld a tree; and it was like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow. And it came to pass after I had seen the tree, I said unto the Spirit: I behold thou hast shown unto me the tree which is precious above all.”

Nephi is still in heaven. The superlative descriptors, “beauty that exceeds all other possible beauty, whiteness that exceeds all possible earthy whiteness,” mark the heavenly aspect of the thing he now sees. These attributes, superlative beauty and radiant glory, are what we might expect to see if we were to look at our Heavenly Mother. In the remainder of the vision, the word *precious* will be used nine times to refer to things wrongly taken out of scripture. The excision of plain and precious things from scripture is one of the vision’s major themes. The frequent repetition of the word *precious*, first used here in the vision, may underscore the idea that knowing we have a Mother in Heaven is among the plainest and most precious things taken from scripture. (As we have seen, there are indications that Lehi’s adversaries, the Deuteronomists, did indeed scrub Elah from the text.)

The Spirit now asks Nephi, “What desirest thou?” And Nephi replies, “To know the interpretation thereof — for I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the form of a man; yet nevertheless, I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord; and he spake unto me as a man speaketh with another.” This verse alludes to Exodus 33:11, “And the Lord [Yahweh] spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” and to the four other Pentateuch passages that refer to Moses speaking with Yahweh “face to face.” It suggests that the Spirit of the Lord with whom Nephi speaks is the premortal Yahweh. That supposition is confirmed in what follows.

“And it came to pass that he said unto me: Look! And I looked as if to look upon him, and I saw him not; for he had gone from before my presence.” Yahweh commands Nephi to look at him, but when Nephi does, the Lord disappears. The setting then suddenly shifts. Nephi is no longer in heaven. He is on earth, where he complies with the command. “I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair and white.”⁷⁰ When Nephi looks to see the Lord Yahweh, he sees instead a virgin in Nazareth who has the same two attributes that characterized the tree Nephi saw in heaven: exceptional beauty and whiteness.

Now on earth without a guide, Nephi next says, “I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me.” The descent of the angel from heaven confirms that Nephi is now on earth. The angel asks, “Nephi, what beholdest thou?” Nephi says, “A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.” This reiteration of her superlative beauty again links this young woman to the tree in heaven, but the domain of comparison for her beauty is more limited than that of the tree/woman in heaven. It is an earthly comparison, with all other young women, not a comparison with all things that exist.

The angel now asks Nephi: “Knowest thou the condescension of God?” Given the context, this refers to the birth or coming down of Yahweh as a mortal man. The logic of Nephi’s seemingly non sequitur reply — “I know that he loveth his children” — is probably the following: the greatest token of the Elohim’s love for us is the birth of their beloved Son that Nephi will next witness. As Nephi will soon make clear in his interpretation of the tree’s meaning, Christ the Son is the tangible manifestation of God’s love.

The angel now says, “Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh.” If the Son of God had only one mother, this statement would have been unqualified. The qualifier “after the manner of the flesh” implies that the Son of God has another Mother “after the manner of the spirit,” the Heavenly Mother, signified by the glorious tree Nephi saw while still in heaven, from whom the Son

70. Nephi here uses the same strategy Lehi used to connect things and show they were different representations of the same thing. Lehi linked his guide and the fruit using the whiteness attribute they shared. Nephi here links the tree symbol and what it represents, Mothers of Yahweh, through their shared whiteness. Nephi adds one other shared attribute, beauty, to make the connection.

descended. As the narrative continues, the mother after the manner of the flesh is “carried away in the Spirit” for a space of time.

The angel now, for the first time, repeats the command Yahweh had previously given Nephi: “Look!” When that command was last given and Nephi tried to look, the Spirit of the Lord disappeared. Hearing the command again, Nephi again looks and this time sees Yahweh: “And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.” The Spirit of the Lord in this vision has sometimes been held to be the Holy Ghost.⁷¹ Close reading makes clear it is the premortal Yahweh. Were it the Holy Ghost, it would have remained as Nephi’s guide. Yahweh disappeared at the command “Look!” in order to reappear at the repetition of the command “Look!” in new guise as the baby Jesus.

The angel now says, “Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!” The title “Lamb of God” is significant. It highlights the role of Christ as holocaust offering, as he who will shed his blood to purify the hearts of the children of men, a role alluded to in Lehi’s First Vision when the holocaust fire burns upon a rock. The phrases *Lamb of God* and *Son of the Eternal Father* are grammatically and semantically parallel with the definition Nephi will now give for the meaning of the tree, the *Love of God*.

The angel comes to the point: “Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?” Nephi answers, “Yea, it is the Love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things [echoing Lehi’s *desirable to make one happy, ashre*, 1 Nephi 8:10]. And he spake unto me, saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul [echoing *it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy*, 1 Nephi 8:11].” This statement, rich in meaning, is linked to the Lamb of God, Son of the Father just mentioned, and to the fountain of living waters that is about to be mentioned as also signifying the Love of God.

Love in this phrase can refer to a person or thing loved, as when one says “she is the love of his life,” or it can refer to a feeling God possesses. Here, “a person or persons” is the primary meaning. This is apparent from the fact that this *Love* is an agent that acts. It sheds itself abroad. In fact, it is Yahweh, the Lamb/Son/Love of God, metonymically signified by his blood that sheds itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men each time they partake of the sacrament. This metonymic meaning is

71. James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988); Terryl L. Givens, *Wrestling the Angel: The Foundations of Mormon Thought: Cosmos, God, Humanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

marked by the word *shed*, a verb associated with blood in all but two of its 39 Old Testament and 46 Book of Mormon appearances (and the exceptions are also atonement related). Christ is the beloved of God who sheds his blood to redeem all humankind.

But the Love of God is not just the Son. In Lehi's account of the dream, tree and fruit, Mother and Son, are inseparable objects of worship. Here, too, they are confounded as the dual objects of God's love. As the vision resumes, Nephi underscores the fact that Elah, too, is the Love of God by equating the Tree of Life with another feature of Jerusalem topography, the Gihon spring. Spring and tree are the joint terminus of the iron rod: "the iron rod . . . led to the fountain of living waters, or to the Tree of Life, which waters are a representation of the Love of God; and I also beheld that the Tree of Life was a representation of the Love of God." The Gihon spring, a fountain of pure water that flowed into the Kidron Valley near the temple, was associated with the divine Mother and also known as the Virgin's Spring.⁷² Josiah's closest ideological ally, Hezekiah, had blocked its flow, diverting it into the city, but in Lehi's vision it flows again into the valley. It is, however, displaced from the now corrupt great and spacious temple that is about to fall. It flows instead out of Gethsemane from the sacred tree. Both tree and fountain signify objects of God's love, wife Elah, and the fruit of her womb, Yahweh the Son.

Nephi next connects these pure, maternal waters by juxtaposition and textual echo with the birth and baptism of Christ. Earlier in the vision, Nephi characterized Christ's physical birth as "the condescension of God," bracketing that phrase with mentions of the virgin who would give birth (1 Nephi 11:14-20). He now echoes what he said there by repeating the phrase "the condescension of God" to characterize Christ's baptism, a spiritual rebirth from the fountain of pure water. Because it signifies birth, baptism is an inherently female symbol, and the associated fountain of water from which one emerges is maternal.⁷³ In the baptism described here, symbolically enfolded in and born of the fountain that signifies his spiritual Mother, Christ reluctantly begins the ministry that will end with him hung upon a tree, the other symbol of his spiritual Mother. Nephi later hints at Christ's reluctance to be baptized, saying that to be baptized, he had to "humble himself before the Father" and be "obedient unto him" (2 Nephi 31:7). This reluctance,

72. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, 82, 100.

73. Given this association of Heavenly Mother with the baptismal fountain of pure water, all of us are symbolically born again spiritually of our Heavenly Mother when we are baptized.

also evident in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39), is understandable. Unlike all other baptisms that cleanse a soul from sin and are an occasion for joy, this baptism that makes all others possible loads upon Christ all the sins of the world.⁷⁴ As he surely understands, this baptism is the alpha of a ministry that will end with the omega of Gethsemane and the cross.

In Alma₁'s restoration of the Gospel following Deuteronomist apostasy in the New World, Nephi's three related symbols — the tree, the fountain of pure water, and baptism — combine to reveal the purposes of the *Sôd*. At the Waters of Mormon, the place that provided Latter-day Saints with the historical nickname Mormon, protected in his ministry by a grove of trees at the edge of "a fountain of pure water" (Mosiah 18:5), Alma baptizes his people into "the fold of God." They thus join the covenant *Sôd* community, where they will communally bear one another's burdens that they may be light, mourn with those who mourn, comfort those who stand in need of comfort, and stand as witnesses of the Elohim in all times and places. By doing these things, they will be redeemed of the Elohim and be numbered with those of the first resurrection who have eternal life, the exalted life of a member of the *Sôd* (Mosiah 18:8-10).

When these same people shortly thereafter fall into the hands of Noah's priests and are oppressed by them, Yahweh demonstrates that they have joined him in the covenant community. He is obligated to them, as they are obligated to each other. Echoing their baptismal covenant, he comforts them: "Lift up your heads and be of good comfort." He bears their burdens that they may be light: "I will ease the burdens ... put upon your shoulders that ... you cannot feel them. ... And now ... the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light" (Alma 24:13-15). Unlike the Deuteronomist Solitary Sovereign whose glory is to stand alone, the work and glory of the Gods of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — Yahweh, El, and Shaddai — is to ever enlarge the circle of their spiritual children who live with and are like them.

At the eighth command from the angel to Look, Nephi says, "I looked and beheld the Lamb of God; ... yea, the Son of the everlasting

74. The links between Christ's mother, water, and wine are apparent in the wedding in Cana where Christ performed his first miracle just before his baptism, turning water into wine (John 2:1-11). Read through the prism of the Last Supper, water becomes wine, which becomes blood. (These links are particularly salient for Latter-day Saints, who use water rather than wine in the sacrament.) So we are baptized in pure maternal waters which are also the blood of Christ, and Christ was baptized in his own blood, an apt symbol for what he would suffer to take away the sins of the world. Cf. John 5:5-8.

God ... was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world” (1 Nephi 11:32-33).⁷⁵ As in Lehi’s dream, so in Nephi’s vision Christ hangs from a tree (Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29), the cross. Here as in Lehi’s dream, Elah is connected with Yahweh as he redeems the world. She is present not only in her symbol, the tree, but in her surrogate Mary, who stands at the foot of the cross, suffering with her son (John 19:25-27).

As the story of Abraham and Isaac shows and as King Benjamin shows in his great sermon, the Father and Mother are an integral part of the Son’s atonement. Benjamin positions Christ’s parents — El the Father and Mary the mother after the manner of the flesh, who is surrogate for Elah, Mother after the manner of the spirit — in the midst of the atonement between Gethsemane and the Cross (Mosiah 3:7-9). This positioning of the parents signifies the involvement of the *Sôd* in Christ’s redeeming mission. In Gethsemane, the *Sôd* sends an angel to strengthen the Savior in his suffering (Luke 22:43). And as Christ hangs on the Cross, symbolically upon his suffering Mother, the Father who is in Abraham’s place but with no reprieve, sorrowfully wields the sacrificial knife by withdrawing his spirit from his Son, leaving him to exclaim, “My El, my El, why hast thou forsaken me” (Mark 15:24). This withdrawal of the Father pierces the souls (Luke 2:35) of Christ’s mother and Mother, who are with him where he hangs (John 19:25-26). It takes nothing away from the Son who fully paid the price of our sins through his suffering to know that he did not pay the price alone, to understand that all the Gods of the council were pained by his pains and suffered with his suffering.

John’s Last Vision

At the 11th and last command from the angel to Look, Nephi says, “I looked and beheld a man, ... one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ... And I, Nephi, heard and bear record, that the name of the apostle of the Lamb was John” (1 Nephi 14:19-20, 27). Nephi’s vision is to be read as the companion piece of John’s Revelation, for “the things which this apostle of the Lamb shall write are many things which thou hast seen” (1 Nephi 14:24).

In Revelation, John describes literally what Nephi had described symbolically: glorious Elah and the spiritual birth of Yahweh in heaven.

75. Ernest Martin argues that the cross was located on the summit of the Mount of Olives at the site of the altar of the red heifer where Israel burned sin offerings to expiate their sins. Ernest L. Martin, *Secrets of Golgotha: The Lost History of Jesus’ Crucifixion*, 2nd Edition, (Portland, OR: Academy for Scriptural Knowledge, 1996). The two sites most widely believed to be those of the crucifixion, Gordon’s Golgotha and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, are not on the Mount of Olives.

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. ... And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne” (Revelation 12:1-5).

John notes the special hatred Satan feels toward his Mother, his special effort to make her hidden and unknown after he is cast out of heaven: “And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child” (Revelation 12:13). “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, ... into her place, where she is nourished for a time. ... And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:6, 13-14, 17). The Woman is the Mother of the Son born in heaven, but also as Zenos indicates, of all spirit children of God, and doubly so for those born again from the maternal fountain of pure water, the baptized, who then keep the commandments and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Lehi lived in the moment when Satan’s war on the Woman, a key figure in the true Abrahamic faith, and on those who had a testimony of her Son, the Ben Elohim Jesus Christ, was most successfully prosecuted. In his day, Elah, who had been known to her children, was driven into the wilderness, where she mostly remains to this day.

But while Satan makes war on her, Mother Elah continues to play a redeeming role. As the last chapter of Revelation opens, she again appears in her symbolic guises as the Tree of Life and the fountain of pure water that Lehi and Nephi saw. “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of [it] ... *was there* the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2). Apparently linked to the menstrual cycle, this bearing of fruit is a birth, and the fruit that is born brings salvation. The setting here, Butler argues, is the Holy of Holies in the temple where the Tree of Life is represented by the Menorah and where the twelve fruits are the twelve loaves of shewbread, a food offering given to the Gods.⁷⁶ Like Lehi, as we come to the Tree of Life and partake of its fruit, we eat the food that makes us like God because that food is the atonement. Along with signifying the bread of

76. Butler, *Plain and Precious Things*, 73-78.

the presence in the temple, these 12 fruits signify the sacramental bread offered to the 12 apostles at the Last Supper and to all of us each Sunday. As we partake of the sacrament, we eat the Last Supper, the shewbread, the fruit of the Tree of Life, all of which transform us, if we consume them worthily, into members of the *Sôd*, into the Gods that El, Elah, and Yahweh invite us to become.

Joseph Smith and the Elohim

Exactly 200 years ago, the Restoration opened with Joseph Smith's First Vision and a hard saying. Joseph reports the first words Christ spoke to him as follows:

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. . . . I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight. (Joseph Smith 1:18-20)

The modern church no longer emphasizes this declaration. It is not mentioned in missionaries' First Vision account, and in 1990, the temple ceremony was changed to delete a section consistent with this condemnation of other religions' concept of God. In a world that is increasingly and aggressively secular, contemporary Latter-day Saints tend to view other religions as allies in their struggle to preserve space in the public square for the free exercise of religion. Moreover, as two different articles entitled "Are Christians Mormon?"⁷⁷ have suggested, the distance between the Latter-day Saint understanding of God and that of other Christian denominations has generally narrowed in the years that have intervened since the First Vision.

These important changes notwithstanding, this opening declaration of Christ cannot be ignored, given its source and primacy in the Restoration. It says something noteworthy about how God looks at how we look at Him. In *The Christ Who Heals*, Fiona and Terryl Givens provide a framework for understanding the import of this opening declaration. The Givenses suggest that a wholesale restoration would not have been needed in the 19th century if Christianity had not lacked plain and precious truths. "The Lord's message to Joseph in the grove, using

77. Truman G. Madsen, "Are Christians Mormon?" *BYU Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 1, 73-94. David L. Paulsen, "Are Christians Mormon?: Reassessing Joseph Smith's Theology in His Bicentennial," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1, 35-128.

disturbingly stark language, was that certain crucial, creedal declarations about Christian fundamentals were devastatingly, destructively wrong. ... No religious contribution of Joseph Smith could possibly transcend in significance a restored knowledge of the true nature and character and conduct of God.” “Clearly, the Lord knew the religious world we have inherited from well-meaning Reformers is rife with teachings, assumptions, doctrines, and dogmas that take us further away, rather than closer to, the gospel Christ taught.”⁷⁸

The foundational assumption upon which error compounded was the idea that God is the Solitary Sovereign, a transcendent being “without body, parts, or passions,”⁷⁹ “not then in space, but above space and time and name and conception.”⁸⁰ The Deuteronomists were the source and scriptural warrantors of that assumption. Their legacy of stringent monotheism, combined with the Greeks’ similar monism and disparagement of materiality, created pressure for early Christians to develop an understanding of God compatible with those theological and philosophical ideals. The paradoxical, nonbiblical concept of the Trinity, a Triune Three-One God, met these requirements and provided a foundation for further reasoning.⁸¹ The Greater Apostasy thus provided the foundation for the Great Apostasy.

As noted above, Calvin worked out the predestinarian implications of these assumptions with impeccable logic. Augustine had earlier provided a congruent conception of humanity. In reasoning that became foundational in Western Christianity, he developed a theology/anthropology that coupled the utter perfection and completeness of God with the utter depravity and emptiness of human beings, who are universally contaminated by original sin.⁸² These creatures had no capacity to become like God, but some could be saved by God’s grace and return to his presence to adore him.

Augustine, Calvin, and other like-minded reformers directly influenced the New England Puritans and New York Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists who contended for the allegiance of

78. Fiona Givens and Terryl Givens, *The Christ Who Heals: How God Restored the Truth that Saves Us* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2017), 3, 6. Some quotations are paraphrased.

79. *Ibid.*, 21.

80. *Ibid.*, 19.

81. See *ibid.*, 17–25.

82. *Ibid.*, 41–42.

Joseph Smith.⁸³ Speaking of the theology current (but waning) in Joseph's day, the Givenses write:

One can understand ... why God would have condemned such creeds to the boy prophet Joseph. For they declare our Heavenly Father to be arbitrary, fickle, as content to damn as to save, all-controlling and manipulative. He foreordains to damnation, without reason or recourse. ... These particular creeds emphasize his total independence from human concerns, human suffering, human conceptions of fairness, or human yearning to understand him. His counsels are "unsearchable," and his concern is only with "his own will." The ... catechism refers to his "fervent zeal for his own worship" and "his revengeful indignation" of incorrect forms of worship.⁸⁴

The characteristic response to this God was fear, even terror. In his first account of the First Vision, Joseph reports that he suffered the anxiety characteristic of people taught that they were sinners in the hands of an angry God. That first account suggests that relief from anxiety about the welfare of his soul was the most salient immediate takeaway Joseph received from his experience. But an element of all four First Vision accounts — visitation in a pillar of fire or light — suggested that much more was at stake in this visit than the welfare of a single soul. Echoing Exodus 13:20–22 as in Lehi's vision, the pillar of light suggested that God's children in Joseph's time, like those in Lehi's, were sunk in darkness and that he intended to lead them, too, out of the darkness and on to the Promised Land. The most explicit message in all four accounts was the statement that the fullness of the gospel was not then on the

83. Ibid., xvi. The Givenses note that the degree of deviation from original Christianity was roughly the opposite of what Mormons have often supposed. Eastern Orthodoxy, little influenced by Augustine, preserved ideas about the dignity/perfectibility of humanity (28–29) and the role of free will (34) that align its theology in many ways with the restored gospel of Jesus Christ (9). Thus, Orthodoxy shares the Latter-day Saint belief in theosis, though theosis cannot be as complete. For Latter-day Saints, God and humanity share ontology, so human beings can become fully like God. In Orthodoxy, God is ontologically different from humanity, so human beings can never be fully like God. Though it was strongly influenced by Augustine, Catholicism, too, was less dissonant with Mormon views than the Protestant faiths. On the influence of Calvin on Methodism, see Allen C. Clifford, "John Calvin and John Wesley: An English Perspective," <http://www.nrchurch.co.uk/pdf/CalvinAndWesley.pdf>.

84. Givens and Givens, *The Christ Who Heals*, 24.

earth. The most consequential revelation was the appearance of God the Father in the form of a man.

That most consequential element of the vision is also the most underplayed in Joseph's accounts of the experience. He does not mention it at all in the first account and passed over it lightly in the three later accounts, noting only that the Father appeared and spoke to introduce the Son. It is worth asking why this most important fact is so little emphasized. One possibility is that Joseph did not initially understand how important the appearance of the Father was. A more likely explanation is that he fully understood that the appearance of the Father was the most heretical element in the vision, the element that most put him at odds with the beliefs of all around him and that would most evoke resistance from those who heard him. God's appearance in anthropomorphic form collapsed the distance between God and man. It completely transformed both theology (our understanding of who God is) and anthropology (our understanding of who we are). Implicit in this initial revelation that God is anthropomorphic were all Joseph's most distinctive subsequent theological doctrines.

Since the existence of a Father strongly implies the existence of a Mother,⁸⁵ the First Vision appearance of the corporeal Father in the Sacred Grove implied the existence of a corporeal Mother in Heaven. Present at the First Vision by implication in the body of the Father, Mother in Heaven may also have been present symbolically. The First Vision is now inseparably connected with the Sacred Grove, a term with Old Testament resonance that Lehi would have instantly recognized. *Grove* appears in the Old Testament 41 times. In 40 of the 41, it translates some variant of the name אֲשֵׁרָה, *Asherah*, the figure understood in Lehi's time to be the wife of El. Lehi's contemporaries went to sacred groves to know and worship the being they perceived to be Heavenly Mother. As noted above, when Lehi worships at the Tree of Life, he appears to endorse that practice. An essential element of the Restoration inaugurated in the Sacred Grove — the place one goes to know a divine Mother — was the knowledge that we have a Mother as well as a Father in Heaven. Intimations of that revelation

85. "Can you think of having a father without a mother?" Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1996), 22. "Logic and reason would certainly suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven." Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign* 21, no. 11 (November 1991): 100, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1991/11/daughters-of-god?lang=eng>.

may be present in the name, known to all Latter-day Saints, of the place where the Restoration began: the Sacred Grove.

Joseph's Last Sermon

In his last conference sermon, Joseph did for the religion of the patriarchs and Lehi what Calvin had done for the Deuteronomists: he provided a clear statement of their faith that made explicit important implications of their beliefs.⁸⁶ In that last sermon, the King Follett Discourse, Joseph noted the importance of beginning with a correct understanding of who God is: "If we start right, it is very easy for us to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, ... it is a hard matter to get right."⁸⁷ With the theological revolution of the Deuteronomists, Judeo Christian theology took a major and enduring wrong turn. Twenty-five centuries later, the Deuteronomists' misperceptions of the character of God and man were deeply entrenched orthodoxy. Thus, just as the political power of the king, priests, and elites had made it dangerous for Lehi to defend the old-time religion of Abraham, even so the entrenched orthodoxies of the Deuteronomists, now the old-time religion, made it dangerous for Joseph to promote a return to the faith of Abraham. Like Lehi, Joseph was surrounded and opposed by guardians of the Solitary Sovereign who would put his life at risk if he deviated from the approved dogma of

86. Evangelical scholars, citing other prominent Christian and Jewish scholars, have acknowledged apparent parallels between Joseph's beliefs and strands of Jewish belief not directly available to him in upstate New York in 1829 and 1830. "James H. Charlesworth, in a lecture delivered at Brigham Young University entitled 'Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha and the Book of Mormon,' points to what he describes as 'important parallels ... that deserve careful examination.' He cites examples from 2 *Baruch*, 4 *Ezra*, *Psalms of Solomon* and the *Testament of Adam*. If [the] world's leading authority on ancient pseudepigraphal writings thinks such examples deserve "careful examination," it might be wise for evangelicals to pay attention. ... Yale's Harold Bloom is perplexed as to how to explain the many parallels between Joseph Smith's writings and ancient apocalyptic, pseudepigraphal, and kabbalistic literature. He writes, 'Smith's religious genius always manifested itself though what might be termed his *charismatic accuracy*, his sure sense of relevance that governed biblical and Mormon parallels. I can only attribute to his genius or daemon his uncanny recovery of elements in ancient Jewish theurgy that had ceased to be available either to normative Judaism or to Christianity, and that had survived only in esoteric traditions *unlikely to have touched Smith directly*.'" Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, "Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics, and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?" *Trinity Journal* 12, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 179–205.

87. All quotations from the discourse are taken, not always in the order they occur in the speech, from Larson, "King Follett Discourse."

the Deuteronomist Bible: “The doctors ... say, ‘If you say anything not according to the Bible, we will cry treason.’ Men bind us with [doctrinal] chains. ... The Scriptures say thus and so, and we must believe the Scriptures, for they are not to be altered. ... I am not allowed to go into an investigation of anything that is not contained in the Bible. If I should, you would cry treason, and ... there are ... many learned and wise men here who would put me to death for treason.”

This danger notwithstanding, in his last sermon, Joseph professed the pluralistic religion of Abraham that recognized the essential sociality of God and the governance of the *Sôd*: “In the beginning the Head of the Gods called a council of the Gods. The Gods came together ... to create this world and the inhabitants.” As noted above, *ex nihilo* creation was a necessary implication of the Solitary Sovereign. Joseph understood this. “The learned doctors ... say that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. They account it blasphemy to contradict the idea.” Joseph nevertheless contradicted it, asserting its logical opposite. The elements of creation are coeval with God and can be neither created nor destroyed: “Element had an existence from the time [God] had. The pure principles of element ... may be organized and reorganized, but not destroyed. ... They never can have a beginning or an ending; they exist eternally.”

Like the elements, human beings are self-existent and coeternal with God: “Where did [the soul — the immortal spirit — the mind of man] come from? All doctors of divinity say that God created it in the beginning, but it is not so. ... We say that God Himself is a self-existent God. ... It’s correct enough, but ... who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principle? ... The mind of man — the intelligent part — is as immortal as, and is coequal with, God Himself. ... God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all. ... The first principles of man are self-existent with God.” Ontologically, God and man are of one kind. God himself was once a man, and human beings have the capacity and calling to be like God: “God Himself who sits enthroned in yonder heavens is a Man like unto one of yourselves — that is the great secret! ... If you were to see Him today, you would see Him in all the person, image, fashion, and very form of a man, like yourselves.” “He once was a man like one of us and ... God Himself, the Father of us all, once dwelled on an earth. ... Here then is eternal life. ... You have got to learn how to make yourselves Gods in order to save yourselves ... the same as all Gods have done — by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, ... from grace to grace, ... from exaltation to exaltation — till you are able to sit in everlasting burnings and everlasting power and glory.”

God's First Vision appearance in anthropomorphic form collapsed the distance between God and man. It implied that he is indeed our spiritual father, that as children have the capacity to grow and become like their parents, so we have potential to be like God. In this last sermon, Joseph made that truth explicit. What he did not explicitly state in the sermon, or otherwise publicly state, is that this exhortation to achieve theosis was as applicable to women as it was to men. But while he is the one, and only, Restoration prophet who did not mention Mother in Heaven publicly before his death,⁸⁸ probably due to fears discussed above, Joseph affirmed her existence privately.⁸⁹ His confidant W. W. Phelps wrote poems celebrating her just before⁹⁰ and just after⁹¹ Joseph's death. And Joseph's plural wife, Eliza R. Snow, wrote "O My Father" near the time of Joseph's martyrdom, then stated, "I got my inspiration from the Prophet's teachings."⁹² Most importantly, because he viewed it as being the most important part of his mission, Joseph affirmed the existence of divine couples ritually by capping the endowment with the sealing of husband and wife. A man, he taught, could not achieve the highest degree of exaltation without a woman nor a woman without a man (Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20). If we must be sealed, male and female, to be exalted and attain the kind of life God lives, it follows

88. All Joseph's successors have stated we have a Heavenly Mother. See David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1, 71-97. The Church's most basic introduction to Mormon doctrine states that we have "heavenly parents": *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2009), 9.

89. Paulsen attests that Phelps's presentation of the idea as a commonplace suggests that he presented what Joseph was known to be teaching. David L. Paulsen, "Response to Professor Pinnock," in *Mormonism in Dialogue with Contemporary Christian Theologies*, ed. David L. Paulsen and Donald W. Musser (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007), 536-38. For Zina Huntington's testimony about Joseph's teaching, see *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days, Vol. 1, The Standard of Truth, 1815-1846* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2018), 404.

90. W. W. Phelps, "A Song of Zion," *Times and Seasons* 5, no. 3 (1 February 1844): 431.

91. W. W. Phelps, "A Voice from the Prophet: 'Come to Me,'" *Times and Seasons* 6, no. 1 (15 January 1845): 783.

92. Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 5.

that God himself is sealed and that the Elohim, the Gods, exist through the eternal union of a divine male and divine female.

Conclusion

Along with priesthood keys, the most important thing Joseph Smith bequeathed us was an understanding that there is a community of Gods, that we are of a kind with God, and that the work and glory of our Heavenly Parents and Savior is to draw us into community with them such that we live with and like them. The temple endowment ritually enacts the process of theosis that brings us back into their presence. As noted above, the Book of Mormon, and especially the writings of Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob, contributes to the restoration of these truths. The visions and teachings of these prophets suggest that Christ is as bonded to his Heavenly Mother as to his Heavenly Father and that the Mother plays a role in our salvation commensurate with the role played by the Father.

But human beings have joined God in co-creating the world in which we live. And revelation is path-dependent. What can be revealed, understood, and accepted at any given moment depends upon what preexisting beliefs people have who hear the revelation. For two millennia, the Judeo-Christian tradition has been shrouded in the Deuteronomists' mists of monist darkness that Lehi describes so well. Even "Latter-day Saints are still too reliant upon the assumptions, the implications, and especially the language that generations of well-intentioned but misguided theologians and Reformers alike introduced into the domain of religious thought."⁹³ It thus remains an open question whether members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ are culturally prepared to fully emerge from the mists of darkness, ignore the inevitable mocking that would ensue from various great and spacious buildings, and more openly and consistently speak of their Mother in Heaven as Lehi and Nephi seem to have done. But ready or not, additional truths will be restored, very likely among them additional knowledge of our Mother in Heaven. Some of that knowledge may come to us through closer reading of the scriptures we already have. Other knowledge may come to us through revelation to living prophets and apostles.⁹⁴ As President Russell M. Nelson recently

93. Givens and Givens, *The Christ Who Heals*, 3.

94. This article has an important limitation. The literary reading advanced here is a work of theology. As Adam Miller has noted, "theology is always tentative and nonbinding. Theology, though sensitive to what is normative, never decides doctrine." Its approach is hypothetical. Given the path dependency of revelation, theology may open minds and hearts to receive new knowledge by identifying

declared: “We are witness to the process of restoration. If you think the Church has been fully restored, you’re just seeing the beginning. Wait till next year, and then the next year. Eat your vitamin pills, get your rest. It’s going to be exciting!”⁹⁵

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possibilities in a scriptural text, but the doctrinal validity of its readings rests, ultimately, on whether they are endorsed and disseminated by the men and women in governing councils, the appointed earthly *Sôd*, which is authorized to declare doctrine. On this as on other matters, the Saints will likely and rightly follow the lead of Church General Authorities. Adam S. Miller, *Rube Goldberg Machines: Essays in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012), 61.

95. Russell M. Nelson, Twitter, November 1, 2018, <https://twitter.com/nelsonrussellm/status/1058116730352893953?lang=en>.

SCRIPTURES THROUGH THE JEWELER'S LENS

Mark J. Johnson

Review of Terryl Givens with Brian Hauglid, *The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). 285 pages. \$34.95 (hardback).

Abstract: *Among the many revelatory works of Joseph Smith, members and scholars alike seem to give lesser attention to what is found in the Pearl of Great Price. In The Pearl of Greatest Price, Terryl Givens and Brian Hauglid attempt to provide some of the attention that has been lacking. The result is a book that, while spotty in places, provides a good resource that should receive wide exposure in academic circles. Believing members, on the other hand, may find the book lacking or downright questionable because of the secular approach it takes to dealing with scripture understood to have a divine provenance.*

In *The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture*, Terryl Givens takes the reader on a deep dive to rediscover the Pearl of Great Price. His insights reveal a beautiful, important, and complex book of scripture that can be as challenging as it is dazzling. In this book, Givens gives readers a sweeping survey of the doctrines of the restoration as reflected by the Pearl. This is done in the context of Joseph Smith's experiences in and often in contrast to his Christian-cultured environment.

Givens sees the Pearl of Great Price as Mormonism's greatest treasure and best kept secret. The book's subtitle, "Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture" is the loupe Givens gazes through in his examination of the Pearl. He is eager to show where the Pearl really shines, but he also takes note of any blemishes in the material. The notion of discussing the flaws of the scriptures might be uncomfortable to some readers, but such an approach is a useful and often necessary conversation. Such discussions can certainly shed light on and possibly discredit some claims of the critics; but more importantly, it can

illuminate our own unexamined assumptions and faulty expectations about the scriptures which we might have mistaken for fact.

Givens has noted that *The Pearl of Greatest Price* is a follow-up to his earlier book, *By the Hand of Mormon*,¹ which explored an early Latter-day Saint viewpoint that the Book of Mormon took the role of an eschatological milestone on the road of the foretold events of the Second Coming. *The Pearl of Greatest Price* can also be seen as a companion to Philip L. Barlow's *Mormons and the Bible*,² as they both examine Latter-day Saint interaction with the biblical text and explore Joseph Smith's role as prophet and seer from a secular standpoint.

This concept of coming from a "secular standpoint" cannot be glossed over. Givens is a believing member of the Church, but because he has written this book aimed at an academic audience, some Latter-day Saint readers might be confused by the tone they find in the pages of the book, especially if they read with homiletic or devotional expectations. Instead, Givens follows an academic approach of historiography to make observations about the Pearl of Great Price from a scholarly position. *The Pearl of Greatest Price* follows the academic influence of what has been called the "New Mormon History," wherein scholars examine "Mormonism" with the intent of viewing it from a larger historical and cultural perspective, rather than attempting to prove or disprove the Church's religious claims. In this writing style, Givens is presenting in the same vein as other Latter-day Saint scholars, who "consciously learned to write in a tone the secular audience could hear."³

The Pearl of Greatest Price begins with a detailed history of the Pearl of Great Price and its individual components: the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST) with emphasis on Moses 1, Moses 6–7, JST Matthew 24, and a discussion of the nature and purpose of Joseph's revision of the Bible. Next is a detailed survey of the Book of Abraham, its possible means of production, and potential cultural influences on its contents. He also provides a review of the controversies associated with the Book of Abraham. The Book of Abraham is also shown to have an important role in Joseph Smith's developing doctrines of the priesthood as well as his temple theology. A third section discusses the canonized

1. Terry L. Givens, *By The Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

2. Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion - Updated Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

3. Bruce C. Hafen and Marie K. Hafen, *Faith is not Blind* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018), 5.

version of Joseph Smith's history, and the fourth section assesses the Articles of Faith in their historical context.

The Platform of Controversy

The foundational idea of *The Pearl of Greatest Price* is that Joseph Smith's own experiences, teachings, and revelations directly tear at the underpinnings of Christianity as it existed in antebellum America. Givens has explored this idea since 1997 in his first book, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy*.⁴ Again picking up this theme, Givens explores the Pearl of Great Price as juxtaposed primarily against 19th and 20th century Christianity. Givens frames the Pearl of Great Price as controversial because of the implications it has on the Christian concept of creed and canon. Givens explains:

It is ... in the pages of the Pearl of Great Price that we find the essential foundations of a radically new religious tradition. Here Old Testament narratives are totally recast as human ascent rather than fall, a new covenant theology is propounded that reaches back to human premortality, God's nature is redefined in ways diametrically opposed to Christian creedal formulations, Trinitarianism is undone, the possibilities of human theosis are first limned, and the template of the Zion society Smith was called to build is first laid out. (4)

Controversial stances can also be found in the Latter-day Saint rejection of other Christian traditions such as an *ex nihilo* creation; a Bible that is the sole word of God, sufficient alone for instruction; and that the heavens, along with the scriptural canon, are irrevocably closed.

Givens's thesis puts forward that Mormonism's *supposed* heretical and dangerous nature (from the viewpoint of other Christian traditions) comes not from its practices but rather by its total demystification of Christianity itself. Joseph Smith's religious innovations dwell in the realm of the literal, which had all but been abandoned by the early church fathers who defined and redefined early Christian belief with an affiliation of Hellenism, philosophy, and rhetoric.

An example explored by Givens can be found in regard to the nature of God. He cites typical Christian thought that God cannot be "literally troubled or grieving for his wayward creatures ... because it would make God hostage to the whims of those creatures" (48). God

4. Terryl Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

as taught by Joseph Smith, however, is no longer the “uncreated and incomprehensible” God of the creeds, but he is the actual Father and creator of the human race, with a body, parts and passions, who weeps over the suffering of his children.

This rejection of a literal interpretation of deity and his interactions with mankind has been noted years ago by Hugh Nibley, “The two things that have ever rendered eschatology odious to the intellectuals have been 1) its literalism and 2) its supernaturalism. They can accept the supernatural-if they don’t have to take it literally; and they can be literal enough, provided one omits the supernatural.”⁵ Givens also notes this unsavory idea of accepting certain doctrines at face value, “Legions of theologians and commentators have resorted to semantics, Higher Criticism, or simple fideism to resolve the most repugnant aspects of biblical literalism” (70). This was the crime of Joseph Smith. He was visited by God, who was both tangible and corporeal. Joseph witnessed firsthand that Jesus has experienced a literal, bodily resurrection. And shockingly enough, Joseph taught that God literally speaks again from the heavens.

The Pearl of Great Price

Givens begins with an examination of the history behind the Pearl of Great Price including the formation of the individual sections of the Pearl and their being brought together by Apostle and President of the British Mission Franklin D. Richards in 1851. By this date, the number of Saints living in Great Britain was almost triple that of those living in the Salt Lake Valley. These British saints sorely needed books and materials to continue the work of proselyting and combatting the claims of the enemies of the Church. More copies of the scriptures were needed, as were hymnals and apologetic pamphlets. Issues of the Church’s UK newspaper *The Millennial Star* were also printed and sold as were copies of books such as Parley P. Pratt’s *A Voice of Warning*. Speaking of Elder Richards’s work, Givens notes, “Apparently, his assembly and printing of the Pearl of Great Price was, in his estimation, just one more project among myriad works he was ushering into print, not deserving of any particular notice in the larger field of his endeavors” (6).

Just as the initial compilation was released in 1851 with virtually no fanfare, so too was the canonization of the Pearl proper. This new book of scripture appeared almost as an afterthought to the 1880 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. The canonization wouldn’t have been

5. Hugh W. Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, eds. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum and Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 289.

a surprise to anyone of the era, as the Pearl of Great Price was very much in the public eye, having been used more and more frequently in General Conference addresses. The Pearl of Great Price quickly rose past being a theologoumenical item to becoming authoritative scripture.

The original Pearl of Great Price contained different material than the later canonized version, including Joseph's "The Prophecy on War" which was later canonized as D&C 87 as well as questions and answers regarding the Book of Revelation which later became D&C 77. The Pearl of Great Price was reworked and republished in 1878 with new content including "A Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant" which was later brought into the fold of the D&C as section 132. Givens further notes that the "potpourri character of the volume was still evident in the 1970s, when two long-neglected revelations (one by Joseph Smith and one by his grand-nephew Joseph F. Smith) were added to the Pearl of Great Price — but only as a kind of way station on the path to canonization in the Doctrine and Covenants a few years later" (22).

The Joseph Smith Translation

The discussion of the JST begins by noting that in Joseph Smith's time, it wasn't uncommon for ecclesiastical leaders to produce their own Bible translations. Givens briefly discusses these translations, ranging from earlier efforts such as John Wesley's bible translation of 1775 to those of Joseph Smith's own time, such as the translations made by Alexander Campbell and Noah Webster.

Joseph Smith's translation project was, of course, very different than that of his contemporaries. The very existence of the JST shows the Bible was in itself inadequate as a religious foundation. Givens notes, as have other authors, that Joseph became aware of the limitations of the Bible in his early search for religious truth, which events led to his prayer in the grove. This awareness grew with the later visit by the angel Moroni, who quoted scripture "with a little variation" from that of the Bible (JS-H 1:36). Finally, Joseph was taught as he translated the Book of Mormon that many "plain and precious things" (1 Nephi 13:29) would be lost from the Biblical text.

Joseph Smith's revision of the Bible has been difficult to grasp by students of the scriptures because it has multiple manifestations. The additions by the JST differ among themselves in size, purpose, style, and method of production. Some of the large narrative additions read like a restoration of lost material while other parts of the JST are clearly

narrative or doctrinal harmonization, and other parts strongly suggest editorial work by the prophet to improve the text.

These categories of changes cover a wide swath of territory resulting in a multiplicity of categories due to the varied nature of the final product. This results in confusion and controversy to students regarding the nature and purpose of the JST. Difficulties in understanding arise if students insist on casting all the JST changes into one category.

Thomas A. Wayment also notes a significant factor for the confusion regarding the nature of the JST, in that it is disproportionately represented in the Latter-day Saint versions of the scriptures. The earliest portions of the JST became canonized scripture in the form of the Book of Moses, which were extracted from the first eight chapters of the translation of Genesis as well as the text of JST Matthew 24 (Joseph Smith – Matthew). Other selections of the JST are published in an Appendix of the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible. Some selections are included in the footnotes of the Bible, and many changes aren't included at all. Wayment summarizes the problem:

[The uneven presentation of the JST] combines to create a rather mixed message about the text. Because of the way that it is presented to us in print, [the JST] is something that can be used selectively, disregarded in some cases, and highlighted in others. It is also a lot like a footnote, which includes references to maps, Topical Guide entries, and language study helps. I think it would be difficult for the Latter-day Saint reader to avoid making the conclusion that the Joseph Smith Translation was similar in most ways to the other footnotes.⁶

Further, Givens notes that the JST gets “little more than passing notice in LDS curriculum” (32). In spite of modern uncertainty about the JST and its place in doctrinal matters, Givens describes the biblical revisions as Joseph Smith’s “most theologically significant endeavor” (34), and to his credit, he discusses the JST with less of an emphasis on production and more focus on theological and doctrinal matters.

Givens examines the Book of Moses and the revision of Matthew 24 under the larger umbrella of the JST as a whole. This allows him to explore themes shared with the other corrections made by the Prophet. Turning to some of the non-canonized portions of the JST, he notes that numerous

6. Thomas A. Wayment, “10 questions with Thomas Wayment,” interview by Kurt Manwaring, *From The Desk* (blog), January 2, 2019, <https://www.fromthedesk.org/10-questions-thomas-wayment/>.

revisions contribute to the theme of God's Everlasting Covenant. These adjustments reveal that the covenant was established with the patriarchs before the time of Moses, reaching all the way back to Adam and Eve. The children of Israel under Moses's stewardship also were to enlist in the covenant, but according to the JST, their sins in the wilderness made them heirs of an "impoverished" version of the everlasting covenant (76) without the full array of salvific ordinances. Givens shows that Smith's version of biblical history demonstrates a fullness of the Everlasting Covenant which was conceived since before the time of Adam and Eve rather than it being a growing doctrinal and theological system which finally found realization in the fledgling Christian church of the New Testament.

Moses: "Caught Up to an Exceeding High Mountain"

Building on the theme of Mormonism as a flat-out rejection of Smith's contemporary Christianity, Givens highlights the theological content of the early chapters of the Book of Moses showing how the Genesis narrative was recast or restored so as to present lost doctrinal truths. God's purpose is the exaltation of his children, a premortal existence of souls, a spiritual followed by a physical creation, and Adam and Eve participating in a beneficial fall are some of the "new" doctrines which had long since disappeared from mainstream Christianity. Givens notes that the notion of a premortal existence similar to the one presented in the Book of Moses is also found in certain Jewish and Christian traditions.

Givens supplements these doctrinal restorations (particularly the plurality of worlds) with similar ideas from ancient and medieval commentators as well as from poets and theologians. This idea of multiple worlds quickly resonated with the early members of the Restored Church who saw themselves as belonging to part of a much larger heavenly society.

Givens advances through the creation in the Book of Moses to the Adam and Eve narrative, noting that these restorations also hearken back to a premortal existence with a view of the Grand Council in heaven. This serves as a backdrop for Satan's rebellion, which Givens notes, had Satan seeking to destroy the agency of man. The doctrine of agency quickly became a "concept of unprecedented significance in LDS theology" (40).

The Prophecy of Enoch

The Enoch narrative (Moses 6–7) is introduced against a backdrop of other apocryphal works such as *The Apocryphal New Testament* and the backlash that followed such publications from the larger Christian community. Givens states that "the mere retrieval of those selections that

lost out was an implicit rebuff to an arbitrarily designed — and closed — canon” (44).

Givens’s work on the ancient prophet Enoch lists a handful of ancient parallels between the Enoch of the Pearl of Great Price and the Enoch of ancient tradition and apocryphal lore. Givens confesses that he isn’t attempting to prove the Enoch material correct but merely to shine a light on the inspiration and prophetic genius of Joseph Smith.

Givens returns to the themes from his earlier book *The God Who Weeps*.⁷ He maintains that the significance of the Enoch pericope in the Book of Moses is its presentation of God as one who uniquely loves and feels. Indeed, he notes that God’s dominion and power “flow from his love and vulnerability, whose infinite power is grounded in his infinite empathy” (55).

The revelation on the prophet Enoch and his city of Zion had important implications for the upcoming work of Joseph Smith. Givens notes that the idea of Zion began as a grand spiritual ideal where healing would be provided for a sick world. Soon, however, the idea of Zion became associated with a “brick-and-mortar” city to be built for the gathering of Israel (56). Indeed, Smith’s intentions soon ambitiously included gatherings and reunions with an American Zion (which he taught was the New Jerusalem of scripture), a renewed old-world Jerusalem, and the original Zion (the city of Enoch). Joseph Smith so yearned for a gathering of the saints, that he dedicated a site for the city and began with a plat for the city’s layout. Givens correctly observes that the narrative of Enoch in the Book of Moses was the springboard to launch the Zion of the latter-days.

Joseph Smith — Matthew

After discussing the theological import of Zion, Givens transitions to the part of the Pearl of Great Price entitled “Joseph Smith–Matthew.” Givens approaches this section by asking, “Why was such special significance accorded to one New Testament chapter out of the dozens Smith reworked?” (7).

Givens sees the inclusion of JST Matthew 24 in the Pearl of Great Price as fueled by the Church’s yearning to return to their lost Zion. “Smith focused more editorial effort on Matthew 24 than on any other single chapter of the New Testament he revised. Doubtless this was in large part due to the prominence of millennialism in Smith’s surroundings as well as in his own religious thinking” (63–64). The dominance of the imminent millennium can even be seen in the early use of the Book

7. Terryl Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (Melrose Park, IL: Ensign Peak), 2012.

of Mormon within the Church. The early Saints perceived the Book of Mormon, not for its teachings but rather for its role in eschatological history, where it was seen as a sort of millennial fulcrum, as an instrument in the hand of the Lord leveraging the beginning of the last days.

Givens notes that the desire to build Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, was at a time when many of the surrounding Christian denominations held a strong preoccupation with millennialism. He writes, “The inclusion of Matthew 24, with its detailed accounting of the events accompanying the Second Coming, would have been both an important reaffirmation of millennialism and a comforting reassurance that ‘the little season’ could not last much longer” (66). Givens then insightfully returns to the example of Enoch and his city of Zion as a template and aspiration for the Saints to build their own Zion, a New Jerusalem where they settled in Missouri. This desire was soon seared into the collective consciousness of the Saints as they were expelled from the state, requiring them to put this desire into a long hiatus. Today, the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are increasingly teaching of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the building up of Zion, but the return to Jackson County proper is conspicuously absent. Givens’s readers will have to carefully consider his claims that such a return to Jackson County is largely a forgotten doctrinal relic of the past (67).

The Book of Abraham

Givens lays out his approach regarding the chapters of the Book of Abraham, asking, “How were they produced, and does their unique manner of production bear on their scriptural status? What are the challenges to their standing as inspired scripture today?” (8).

Much like the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham is a radical return to ancient eternal principles that so crassly defy the creeds of Christendom. “[Joseph Smith] was remaking Christianity from the bottom up, propounding an entirely new *ex materia* cosmology, a covenant theology that put preexisting human souls alongside heavenly parents as members of a divine family” (124). The Book of Abraham continued to elevate the innovation begun in the Book of Moses by solidifying the existence of mankind in their premortal realm and that the fall of Adam and Eve was no catastrophic setback but rather an anticipated stage in their eternal progression. This culminates, according to Givens, in the sacramental rites performed in the temple endowment, for the endowment narrative was introduced on the heels of the publication of the Book of Abraham. He clarifies by noting that

“the Book of Abraham provided the theological material that allowed Smith to reconstitute the temple in the sense in which it had been understood anciently — mapping human origins and destiny in the context of premortal covenant-making” (128).

Building on the theme of doctrinal restorations that came with the Book of Abraham, Givens notes that the Book of Abraham is closely tied to two aspects of the priesthood. This first aspect is discussed in regards to the Book of Abraham’s contribution to the growing understanding of the Patriarchal Order. Second, he discusses the role of the Book of Abraham in the priesthood and temple ban put in place during the presidency of Brigham Young.

Givens shows that the Book of Abraham was translated simultaneously with Joseph Smith’s growing understanding of the blessing power held by the biblical patriarchs. Givens continues this theme of an evolving understanding of priesthood power and this power as the engine behind the emerging theology of eternal marriage. He then filters these newly revealed doctrines through the Abrahamic covenant to show friends and family sealed together in “eternal bonds” (133).

At this point, Givens continues this line of reasoning to a supposed logical conclusion that Joseph Smith would have seen the Abrahamic blessing of seed as numerous as the sands of the sea (Genesis 15:5). This, together with Abraham’s taking an additional wife, led Joseph and other church leaders to take plural wives of their own to participate in the fullness of the Abrahamic covenant by having eternal “seed” and an endless posterity. Givens may or may not be correct in this observation, but he has to do some mind-reading of Joseph Smith to arrive at this conclusion. It is also worth noting research by Dan Bachman showing the revelation on marriage (D&C 132) was not received during the time of the Book of Abraham translation but more than a full decade earlier, as Joseph Smith was working his way through his translation of the early chapters of Genesis.⁸ This could be significant, as it would modify the importance of the Book of Abraham’s influence on Givens’s pattern of doctrinal evolution.

The reader should pay special attention to the short section on the Book of Abraham’s role in the former restriction of priesthood and temple ordinances to primarily African-Americans. It was the opinion of some Church leaders that the Book of Abraham explained the ban. The Book of Abraham notes that some souls that God made were “good,” and

8. Danel W. Bachman, “New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage,” *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978): 25.

consequently, these souls were to be made “rulers.” It isn’t a big step to see that those on Earth who were not rulers must not have been “good” in the premortal realm. This, in addition to theories regarding the biblical curse of Cain, reinforced a prevalent idea of the day used by Christian exegetes to justify slavery in America. Givens carefully demonstrates (as have other authors) that priesthood restriction described in the Book of Abraham was one of birth order and not one of race. Looking at this controversy reveals that some beliefs harbored in certain corners of Christianity (in this case, that black Africans were the descendants of the biblical Cain and therefore belonged to a cursed race) are not truths from God but rather speculations and philosophies of men that have then been co-mingled with scripture for their justification.

Many factors make an understanding of the Book of Abraham difficult to unpack. Just enough papyri and manuscript evidence exist to begin a look at the origins of the Book of Abraham, but there isn’t close to enough of either to arrive at any type of conclusion with any degree of confidence. The overall lack of manuscript and papyri evidence invites tempting quick judgments on the origins of the Book of Abraham.

The most apparent complications are in regard to Joseph Smith’s ability to translate and what relationship the finished product of the Book of Abraham, including the explanations of the included facsimiles, have to the hieroglyphic Egyptian of the scrolls. It is also unclear whether Joseph was actually attempting a translation of Egyptian vignettes or merely providing an interpretation based on the contents of the Book of Abraham and other revelatory items.

Unlike the JST and, to some degree, the Book of Mormon, we don’t have the original transcript of the Book of Abraham. We have only copies. These copies, most commonly known as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers (KEP) don’t contain the whole Book of Abraham, only the earliest segments of the translation. This has led some scholars to see this small segment as evidence that the KEP represents all that the Prophet had translated up to that point, although the actual evidence for that theory is hardly conclusive.⁹

Further, these early manuscript copies of the translation have been used as working papers, not for the translation of the Book of Abraham, but rather for a side project to recover the original language of Adam. Joseph Smith and some participants of the Kirtland “School of the

9. Kerry Muhlestein and Megan Hansen, “The Work of Translating: The Book of Abraham’s Translation Chronology” in *Let Us Reason Together: Essays in Honor of the Life’s Work of Robert L. Millet* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2016), 157.

Prophets” went beyond the mere translation of the ancient Abrahamic record to (arbitrarily) apply characters from the papyri onto copies of the original transcription. This folding of hieratic Egyptian characters back into the manuscript copies has resulted only in contested ideas of how the translation was completed.

Other obstacles in the understanding of the translation method appear with the introduction of Hebrew lexes into the text of the Book of Abraham. These textual glosses serve to blur the line between Joseph as the translator of the ancient record and Joseph as an active creator of the record. Because of these complicated details, one could easily describe the Book of Abraham as “Mormonism’s most beleaguered scripture.”

There are a few complications with Givens’s (or perhaps Hauglid’s) treatment of the Book of Abraham. Perhaps most visible is the contrast between the treatment of the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham. This, of course, is because the Book of Moses wasn’t produced in conjunction with the appearance of ancient artifacts. The extra accoutrement arriving with Abraham’s record adds layers of nuance to our levels of examination.

Givens noted earlier in the book that Moses and Enoch material in the Book of Moses have similarities (often quite striking) with ancient sources, which are shown to demonstrate Joseph Smith’s tapping into ancient ideas. Givens also details parallels of the Book of Abraham’s heavenly council and those featured in Mesopotamian and Ugaritic literature. However, Givens also takes the time to examine other ancient parallels posited by scholars to the Book of Abraham. Some of these ring true to Givens, while others are treated as superfluous *parallelomania*. Readers will have to draw their own conclusions on Givens’s approach, but this discussion does raise important considerations and should be at the forefront of future research on the Book of Abraham.

Givens explores potential problems with the possibility of the Book of Abraham’s physically existing on one of the Egyptian scrolls as a secondary text. This idea has been called the “Missing Scroll Theory” and is largely based on the fact that only 13% of the Egyptian texts owned by Joseph Smith are still extant.¹⁰ One possible problem notes that the Book of Abraham translation apparently references the Book of Breathings made by Isis, linking the text of the Book of Abraham not to an Abrahamic record on the scrolls but, mistakenly, to the first vignette

10. John Gee, “A History of the Joseph Smith Papyri and the Book of Abraham” (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 11.

of the Book of Breathings. This would weaken the likelihood of the Book of Abraham's also being contained on the scroll. Givens explains:

In Abraham 1:12 the text reads, referring to Abraham being placed on an altar: "I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record." In the next verse, Abraham 1:14, referring to the representations of certain Egyptian gods under the altar, the text reads: "that you may have an understanding of these gods, I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning." This immediately suggests that the recovered Fragment-A, which was attached to the recovered Facsimile 1, should contain the text of the Book of Abraham [which it doesn't]. (155)

This appears to be troubling evidence against the Book of Abraham's existing as a separate narrative on the scrolls, but this difficulty is diminished as these internal references of the Book of Abraham to the first facsimile (1:12b–14) are written in the upper margin of the oldest of the copies of the translation, suggesting these verses aren't original to the Book of Abraham but rather a clarification added to the text after the first manuscript copy was created.¹¹

Joseph Smith — History

Givens provides a historical summary of the published history of Joseph Smith. He then asks, "What does its elevation to scriptural status signify? Why this particular version — and how significantly does it vary from other versions?" (8)

Givens traces the evolution and various editions of Joseph Smith's history, noting that the demeanor of the accounts changes poignantly from the 1832 account to the 1838 account due to the persecution he and the Saints had suffered at the hands of those who should have been supportive Christian brothers. Whereas the 1832 account contained an implicit condemnation of the denominations, the 1838 account made it explicit. The 1838 version, reworked into the 1842 letter to Chicago newspaper editor John Wentworth, later became the canonized version in the Pearl of Great Price.

11. For further discussion on the textual gloss in Abraham 1:12b-14, see Mark J. Johnson, "Scriptures with Pictures: Methodology, Unexamined Assumptions, and the Study of the Book of Abraham," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship*, 25 (2017): 16.

Givens has much to say regarding the canonized history of Joseph Smith as it fits into his thesis of controversy. Givens notes that the teachings and tenets of the Restored Church are a broad rejection of the creedal Christian notion of *sola scriptura*, which is the doctrine of the Bible as the sole source of truth and doctrine with other religious teachings and writings being subordinate. The witness of Joseph is that he had to abandon a search for truth via the Bible and instead found it in a divine theophany, and that speaks volumes against this Christian tradition.

The Church of Jesus Christ claims not to be merely a reformed church but rather a restored church. This has resulted in finding our Latter-day Saint authoritative heritage not in historical/traditional lines nor in a mere application of Biblical principles but in a new, divinely ordained authority. As such, the validity of this ordained authority has become inseparable from the man who was ordained. If Joseph didn't receive this commission and ordination, the Latter-day Saint claims of authority are nil. Because of this, Givens notes, a belief and testimony of the Latter-day Saint authority is necessarily based on a belief in the historicity of the First Vision and the Prophet Joseph Smith's other divine experiences. This curious circumstance is expounded by Givens:

Latter-day Saint testimony has come to be shaped more in terms of assent to intellectual propositions than as confession of spiritual transformation — as in the Puritan or evangelical traditions. Church of Jesus Christ leaders have even advocated a witnessing template that gives priority to the truthfulness (i.e., historicity) of the Book of Mormon, or of Smith's calling (i.e., historically specific appointment) as prophet, rather than to the spiritual rebirth occasioned by these discoveries. (225)

Givens goes on to note that while the Latter-day Saint community emphatically does not worship Joseph Smith, many items built into our belief systems necessarily keep Joseph near the center (such as the inclusion of a newspaper editorial into the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants that canonizes the idea that Joseph Smith had done more for human salvation second only to Jesus Christ).¹² The focal point of Latter-day Saint theology is Jesus Christ, but because our religion was received by revelation, the Prophet Joseph Smith is an obligatory component of our testimonies. The canonization of the Joseph Smith

12. *Revelations in Context: The Stories Behind the Sections of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016), 304–305.

story, then, is necessarily the historical, doctrinal, and theological foundation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The Articles of Faith

Givens's focus for the Articles of Faith is expressed by asking, "Given Smith's often-expressed disdain for creeds, why did the church move to canonize these expressions of church belief, and why at this time? How do they, and how do they not, function as a church creed?"(8). The Articles of Faith are explored by Givens as a document of creedal status yet a curiosity for a church founded in large part because the existing Christian creeds of the day were all corrupt.

Givens outlines early forerunners of the Articles of Faith, such as versions by Oliver Cowdery and Parley P. Pratt (249–53), showing that these attempts were largely demonstrating a sense of sameness with other churches rather than setting forth differences. Givens views this in contrast to the older Christian sects, who formulated their creeds "as boundary markers to elucidate heresy, as well as to codify ambiguous or newly emergent doctrines" (241). The final version of the Articles mirrors the same priorities as the creeds perfectly, affirming some Christian tenets while repudiating others. Givens goes on to note that the Articles of Faith are comprised of ecclesiological items, "how the church was organized and what the ordinances, scriptures and spiritual practices entailed" (264).

In conjunction with his study of the Articles of Faith and the function of creeds, Givens also details Joseph Smith's attitudes toward the creeds of Christendom. Joseph Smith held anti-creedal positions in part due to what he learned in the Sacred Grove but also because he felt the creeds were constrictive in their nature, which limited men and women from seeking knowledge from God. Joseph is on record as saying: "I believe all that God ever revealed & I've never heard of a man being damned for believing too much, but they are damned for unbelieving."¹³

The Latter-day Saint experience is one not handcuffed by formal creeds. Indeed, many of the religious doctrines in the Church of Jesus Christ are based on what we tend to call "correct principles." Brigham Young encapsulated this wide sweep of beliefs, saying, "I want to say to my friends

13. "Discourse, 16 June 1844-A, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-16-june-1844-a-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/4>, Spelling and punctuation modernized.

that we believe in all good. If you can find a truth in heaven, earth or hell, it belongs to our doctrine. We believe it; it is ours; we claim it.”¹⁴

The Articles are statements of belief, but they are largely non-binding. Members of the Church can, as an example, obtain a temple recommend even if they don’t believe all the tenets of the Articles of Faith. One need not believe in being subject to kings, rulers, magistrates, and the like to be in good standing with Church authority. Indeed, members of the Church may entertain a very broad array of beliefs, for example, that the earth is flat or that the moon landings were faked, without fear of disciplinary action.

Translation Theories

It has been previously mentioned that Givens is acutely interested in Joseph’s methods of translation as well as Joseph’s understanding of his own role as prophet and seer. In *The Pearl of Greatest Price*, Givens explores the notion of various artifacts and influences from antiquity acting as inspirational catalysts for the Prophet Joseph to create new scriptural narratives and expand on growing doctrinal themes. He writes regarding the so-called “catalyst theory” of the production of the Book of Abraham:

The value of such a possibility [that the papyri acted as a catalyst for new revelation] ... is that it brackets the questions of historicity and accuracy altogether and enables a new range of questions to emerge. Instead of evaluating Smith’s work by looking back through the lens of contemporary Egyptology, we may learn the workings of Smith’s prophetic imagination and his own unique cultural moment by entering more fully into his nineteenth-century context. (180)

Along these lines, Givens sees the Book of Abraham as being born from the phenomena of “Egyptomania,” predominant in the early nineteenth-century (181). Should this be the case, it is fair to ask if the Book of Abraham texts reflect any of the popular tropes associated with early nineteenth-century understandings of Egypt. Notably absent from the Book of Abraham are references to pyramids or obelisks. No hints of sphinxes, scarabs, and sarcophagi are present in the text. Even mummies, a significant source of curiosity among the residents of Kirtland, are absolutely absent in the Book of Abraham. The magical view of hieroglyphic writing was very present contemporaneously with

14. Brigham Young, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 16.

the translation, but this also is missing within the translation itself.¹⁵ The environment immediate to the mummies and scrolls in the Kirtland era is steeped in this Egyptomania, but this phenomenon is a non-factor regarding the translated product.

One could argue that the Egyptomania of the day may account for the mummies and scrolls extracted from their tombs and eventually making their way into the hands of Joseph Smith. Beyond this, any connection to this cultural vogue is vague at best. Andrew H. Hedges summarizes this approach, noting: “Had the ideas of his neighbors been Joseph Smith’s inspiration for the Book of Abraham, in short, the book would have been a very different thing than it actually is.”¹⁶

Givens puts forth the novel idea that Joseph Smith’s understanding of “translate” was also intertwined with the physical translation of the prophets, especially that of Enoch, who was caught up to heaven with his people. Following this interesting paradigm, Joseph would have “translated” the scriptures to elevate them to a more sacred sphere of true doctrine, being as they are in God’s own bosom (D&C 35:20). He elaborates that:

“translation” might be better defined in Smith’s case as the ongoing task of transmitting and assembling an earthly counterpart to an original, heavenly *urtext*, prompted by whatever oracular devices and textual fragments were at hand to catalyze, inspire, or trigger his prophetic imagination. (95)

This definition of translation is particularly adept, as it can be applied to all the types of changes Joseph Smith made to the biblical text. Note however that the definition is in part particularly adept because it is also particularly unspecific. While I take no real issue with his observations on scripture building on the small scale (such as the numerous doctrinal harmonizations in the JST), I see some difficulty in assigning this definition of translation to the larger revealed narratives. One such instance involves the production of the Book of Moses. Givens quotes Katherine Flake¹⁷

15. Abraham 1:14 does have a non-contextual reference to hieroglyphics, but this segment is among the added material that likely was not part of the original dictated translation mentioned above. This strongly implies that the reference to the hieroglyphics was an addition to the text by Joseph Smith or one of his fellow participants in the original language project.

16. Andrew H. Hedges, “A Wanderer in a Strange Land: Abraham in America, 1800–1850,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant, Studies in the Book of Abraham* 3, eds. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 187.

17. See Kathleen Flake, “Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith’s Narrative Canon,” *Journal of Religion* 87, no. 3 (October 2007): 507.

about the working dynamics of receiving the restorative revelations of the Book of Moses, saying, “it appears that when [Joseph] read he saw events, not words. What he saw, he verbalized to his scribe” (92).

Granted that while the Prophet Joseph kept the particulars of his methods to himself, the text of the Book of Moses can supply some necessary clues. Turning to Moses 1, we find textual features such as authentic Hebraisms (see examples of *antenantiosis* in Moses 1:28 or the use of compound prepositions in Moses 1:1), established biblical figures of speech (such as *litotes* in Moses 1:10 or *synecdoche* in Moses 1:11), and accurate examples of poetic parallelism (such as *antithetical parallelism* in 1:4 or *synthetic parallelism* in Moses 1:39).

Moses chapter 1 also features onomastic Hebrew wordplay. Nathan J. Arp has demonstrated that the name *Moses* in this chapter is used in relation to its meaning in Egyptian (to give birth) as well as showing additional parallel with the Hebrew meaning of his name (to draw out).¹⁸

From a perspective of narrative discourse, Joseph Smith’s word choices have the lineament of an ancient biblical text. In this light, it seems probable Joseph was given the verbiage of the revelation instead of describing witnessed events according to his own “prophetic imagination.”

The aforementioned historical-critical look at the scripture text, examining the cultural environment of Joseph Smith, really works only when practiced outside the text. Frank Kermode notes the limitations of the method: “The historical critic is always seeking something in the text that is not the text, something the text of itself, is not seeking to provide.”¹⁹

Givens makes note of the translation time of the book of Abraham. He maintains emphatically that Joseph Smith translated only up to Abraham 2:18 in the months following purchasing the scrolls in 1835. This early translation effort resulted in the aforementioned KEP copies, one of which includes up to Abraham 2:18. This suggests that this was all that was translated up to this point. This seems to be collaborated by the first published installment of the Book of Abraham, which also contained the translation up through 2:18. This would leave what Givens terms the “Nauvoo translation” of Abraham 2:19–5:21 to be completed in the days before their publication in 1842.

18. Nathan J. Arp, “Joseph Knew First: Moses, the Egyptian Son,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 189–90.

19. Frank Kermode, “The Canon” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 607.

The idea of an early translated portion which was completed in 1835 and a later portion which was translated in 1842 seems to work on the surface. However, a look at the quantity of material translated versus the length of time the translation sessions occurred raises significant questions about the plausibility of these two translation periods.

If the first translation period proceeded only to chapter 2 verse 18 in July and later in October of 1835, the second translation period necessarily would have continued at 2:19 and moved through 5:21 over the space of two days in March of 1842. Muhlestein and Hansen have noted that the rate of this second translation period would have occurred at *nine* times the rate of the 1835 translation.²⁰

Another difficulty in having the remainder of the translation occur in 1842 is that Joseph was quoting teachings from the Nauvoo translation portion of the Book of Abraham well before the church moved to Nauvoo.²¹ In addition to this, the prophet occasionally taught items related to Abraham that appear to be beyond the five chapters of published material from 1842. One example of this is was taught by the Prophet in May of 1841:

[The] Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham's record, are called: God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the Witness or Testator.²²

The material from the so-called Nauvoo translation appearing before this second translation period of March 1842 is a strong indicator that Joseph had translated much more material at a much earlier date.

Givens's argument for the 1842 translation period hangs on a strict adherence to the Prophet's own journals and their cataloguing the times the Prophet was engaged in translating. However, Givens himself has radically redefined the term "translation" as has been mentioned above. This newly defined terminology seriously undermines a reliable translation timeline based on the information provided in Joseph's journals.

20. Muhlestein and Hansen, "The Work of Translating," 143.

21. Muhlestein and Hansen note as an example the name "Shinehah" of Abraham 3:13 is also used in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in sections 86, 96 and 98. See Muhlestein and Hansen, "The Work of Translating," 144.

22. Joseph Smith, "Discourse, circa May 1841, as Reported By Unknown Scribe-A," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-circa-may-1841-as-reported-by-unknown-scribe-a/1>.

Joseph the Seer and Speculative Theology

A main inquiry of *The Pearl of Greatest Price* attempts to uncover Joseph Smith's own understanding of his prophetic role. One possibility sets up Enoch as the prototype prophet for Joseph to follow. Givens notes that, "Enoch was the single most important figure for Smith's self-conceiving and understanding of his prophetic role, and the prophecy of Enoch was his template for its successful implementation" (60). In preparing his followers to access the presence of God, whether it be through the founding of Zion or through the temple, Enoch was the example *par excellence*. This insight may illuminate how Joseph saw himself in the role of prophet and seer, but as Givens himself notes, explicit conformation from Joseph Smith is sorely lacking.

Givens is also greatly interested in seeing Joseph Smith in his own environment and culture and how this background influenced his thoughts, methods, and identity. He writes:

While there is obvious value in attempting a definition of *translation* as the term might have operated in Smith's mind, this section attempts to paint a picture of a dynamic, conceptual universe, much of which may have been within his cultural orbit, that may go some way to enlarge and enrich our view of the term as it operated in Smith's mind and historical moment alike. (184)

Givens, who is clearly influenced by the ideas of literary critic Harold Bloom, portrays Joseph as a savant who fashions new realms through a subconscious gift of spiritual intuition, a prophet whose creativity and inspiration appear to create and shape new texts, new doctrines, and a new theology that leaves traditional creedal Christianity far behind. Givens suggests Joseph Smith's "entire habit of mind" (193) was one that assimilated any available religious, spiritual, and mystic debris around him to create order to his own universe. This casts Joseph as acting as a *bricoleur*. Following terminology employed by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, Givens suggests Joseph's theological and scriptural productions are an act of *bricolage* (creation from any varied materials in proximity). This is akin to the process Barlow describes as *barauification*, a term he bases on the Hebrew verb *bārā*, meaning 'to create.'²³

This model of bricolage in Joseph Smith's speculative theology is a useful template in understanding the way Joseph framed the doctrines of the restoration. By and large, Givens provides a logical sequence for

23. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible*, xxxii.

the evolution of these doctrines. However, this argument for a *bric-à-brac* construction of the scriptures translated by Joseph Smith ignores the actual methods of translation as well as the statements of those who were involved in the process. David F. Holland has noted regarding Joseph Smith's role in the process:

In his forays into the ancient world — whether the Book of Mormon, or the book of Abraham, or his inspired translation of the Bible — he was ever the vehicle for other men's histories, always the receiver, the transcriber, the transmitter of knowledge about the ancient world, not the producer. He simply gave his modern readers the records as he encountered them, translated but otherwise unaffected.²⁴

It can certainly be noted that Joseph felt free to alter the texts of his revelations after he received them. The additions of Hebrew into the translation of the Book of Abraham²⁵ or the twice-revised verses in the JST²⁶ are evidence of this. The question of how much latitude Joseph Smith had to voice the revelations in his own words is still unanswered and will likely be debated for years to come.

Givens concludes his survey of the various translation theories by noting: "Some believers and nonbelievers alike have sought to find alternatives to Smith's designation as either translator of ancient records or conniving con man." Fortunately, there are "adjustments [available] to nineteenth-century paradigms that have offered millions [!] of believers a way forward, relying on faith without forsaking reasonableness" (201).

This new edifice of understanding is designed to save believers from simplistic, persisting (and perhaps embarrassing) ideas such as notions of Smith's translating actual ancient records of para-biblical stories. Indeed, seeing Smith drinking deeply from the well of spirituality and enlightenment while tapping into long lost ancient thought helps any

24. David F. Holland, "American Visionaries and their Approaches to the Past," *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, eds. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015), 47.

25. Matthew Grey, "The Word of the Lord in the Original" *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, 274.

26. Thomas A. Wayment, "Intertextuality and the Purpose of Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible" in *Foundational Texts of Mormonism: Examining Major Early Sources*, eds. Mark Ashurst-McGee, Robin Scott Jensen, and Sharalyn D. Howcroft, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 93–98.

student of the restored gospel avoid what some see as the repugnant literalism of actual revelation from God.

Perhaps there is an irony in all of this.

Canon

Undeniably, one of the most important aspects of the Pearl of Great Price is that it is a tangible proof of modern revelation and an open canon. Givens's discussion of canon invites a look at our current day and what is regarded as scripture in the Church of Jesus Christ. This is especially true as the members of the Restored Church regard the words of its living prophets as scripture. The most prominent example of this today is "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."

Even as recently as the October 2019 semi-annual General Conference, Elder Dallin H. Oaks emphasized the authoritative status of the proclamation on the family by noting it bears the signatures of the then-current fifteen apostles. The discussion of the debated definition of the family will have the proclamation's authority in the background and will indeed touch on the terrain that is covered by "canon."

What with the nature of an open canon, *The Pearl of Greatest Price* might find itself somewhat out of date should other items be lifted up to the rank of official scripture.

Conclusion

The Pearl of Greatest Price makes numerous contributions to the study of Joseph Smith and the early history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its benefit is in exposing the reader to the beauty of the message of the Pearl. Givens correctly observes: "it is the least studied, written about, understood, and appreciated book in the LDS canon, but it outweighs in theological consequence and influence all the rest" (3).

Givens provides fascinating nuance to the work of Joseph Smith in conjunction with Christianity contemporary with Joseph's day. Joseph's words and works sent shockwaves through the foundations of the churches. As such, I would argue that Joseph Smith didn't necessarily set out to set at defiance the current creedal conventions of Christianity, but the works he produced and the doctrine and theology that followed certainly had that as a result.

The concept of bricolage has interesting potential for understanding Joseph's learning and framing of the doctrines of the kingdom, and Givens makes a very good case for its use in Joseph Smith's theological world-building. However, applying this method to describe the production

of ancient scripture doesn't take the revealed restoration of ancient scripture seriously on its own terms. Any scripture touted as a restored ancient record needs to be examined from inside with its own words before it is held up in comparison to the decade in which it came to light.

The historical-critical genre of the New Mormon History certainly has its limitations, chief among them the built-in failure to deal with the divine, which can result only in recreating an empty replica of the real Church of Jesus Christ. While I would personally like to see the Lord as a participant in this book instead of merely having a singular focus on Joseph Smith, it would be unfair to criticize Givens for not writing a book he didn't intend to write.

As an introduction of the Prophet Joseph and his work in the Restoration to an academic audience, *The Pearl of Greatest Price* is a very good resource I hope gets wide exposure. Despite its secular approach, it presents Joseph Smith as a monumentally important character who bears further study, and his scriptural projects (especially those that resulted in the Pearl of Great Price) deserve considerable attention.

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THE CHARACTER AND KNOWLEDGE OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF CHRIST

A. Keith Thompson

Abstract: *The Virgin Mary is arguably the archetype of the virtuous woman and even the divine feminine on earth, but we know very little about her. She is remembered in Christianity in a variety of ways including with cathedrals built in her honor. Though many seek her intercession when they pray, that does not seem to accord with Luke's account of her self-effacing and private character. This article considers what Latter-day Saints know about Mary from the scriptures, distinct from others of Christian faith who seek to honor her in different ways. That discussion also includes surmise as to what she may have learned from the wise men on their visit of homage shortly after the nativity and what she may have passed on to John in accordance with the two-way charge Jesus gave to both of them from the cross recorded in John 19. There is also consideration of the commonality of the teachings of her two most famous sons.*

Because I believe God's choice of Mary as the mother of Christ marks her as His preeminent example of the virtuous feminine, I have always wanted to know more about her. In this essay, I therefore consider what we do know about the character and knowledge of Mary, though that is closely protected by what Luke reports as her consistent choice to keep what she knew in her own heart (Luke 2:19, 52). In part one, that consideration will include a brief discussion of her foreordination to be the mother of the Son of God and the limited discussion of that possibility in the teaching of non-Latter-day Saint Christian scholars and theologians. Unlike her most famous son, I observe that she does not seem to have been an indefatigable conversationalist.¹ Indeed, she appears to have gained most

1. S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 27–28, 299, 383–84.

of her knowledge through personal revelation following unheralded study and reflection,² and it is clear she believed in constant prayer (Acts 1:14).

In part two, I discuss what we know of Mary from the Gospels and particularly the infancy narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. That discussion includes consideration of the scholarship of non-Latter-day Saint scholars who generally do not believe that prophets can foretell events beyond their own time even though Matthew and Luke clearly believed otherwise. I also introduce two speculative ideas in the spirit of the “Musings on the Birth of the Savior Jesus Christ” by Kristine Wardle Frederickson.³ First, I suggest there was a lot of unrecorded conversation between the wise men, who came a great distance, and Mary and Joseph, Christ’s parents. I ponder what they might have discussed and the material that those conversations would have given Mary to reflect upon throughout her life. Secondly, I suggest that Christ’s direction from the cross that Mary regard John as her son and that John regard Mary as His mother, may have deeper significance than many have realized (John 19:26, 27). These were unlikely instructions concerning aged care since, except in Roman Catholic tradition,⁴ Mary had other competent sons and also because she was unlikely to have been more than 50 years of age when Jesus died.⁵ Jesus may have been asking

2. Compare with Jesus’s own learning, which may largely have come from personal revelation (Matthew 3:25, JST).

3. Kristine Wardle Frederickson, “Musings on the Birth of the Savior Jesus Christ,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 179–94, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/musings-on-the-birth-of-the-savior-jesus-christ/>.

4. See, for example, Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), who observes the Roman Catholic belief that Mary was a virgin all her life both because of her immaculate conception and because she did not ever have sexual relations with her husband Joseph (pps. 64, 132, 258, 303–6, 314, 361, 398, 518, 530, 570, 605–7, 701).

5. Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3. Note that Mary was likely between 12 and 14 years of age when Jesus was born. Hayyim Schauss (“Ancient Jewish Marriage,” My Jewish Learning (website), last accessed January 30, 2020, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ancient-jewish-marriage/>) says only that “[i]n biblical times, people were married in early youth.” Charles Pope says “[y]oung women were married almost as soon as they were physically ready approximately aged 13” (“Marriage and Family at the time of Jesus,” *Community in Mission, Creating a Culture of Encounter* (blog), March 26, 2017, <http://blog.adw.org/2017/03/marriage-family-time-jesus/>). If Mary was between 12 and 14 years of age when Jesus was born, she would likely have been in her mid to late forties when Christ died. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, says that Mary’s betrothal would “usually [have been] entered into when the girl was between twelve and thirteen years” of age and that “would constitute a legally

His mother to complete John's spiritual education so that he could complete his foreordained future mission, including the book of Revelation, which includes his symbolic record of the stellar events that may have surrounded Jesus's birth as the Messiah.⁶ If that is so, then John as the second son of thunder was being instructed to pay patient and humble attention to the woman God the Father foreordained to be the mother of His Only Begotten Son (Mark 3:17). Most of the consequences of these speculations may be appreciated by all believing Christians since they suggest that John's Gospel and his subsequent letters and book of Revelation include the influence of Mary's instruction and insight. In part three, I further review how the wise men may have known of the birth of Christ, and I use the astronomical insights of Ernest Martin and Frederick Larson and the critique of Raymond Brown as the foundation for that discussion.

Then, in part four, I discuss the resonances between the teachings of Jesus, particularly in the Sermons on the Mount and Plain and those of His half-brother James in the Epistle of James. In that analysis, I engage some of the work of James D. Tabor even though I disagree with his reason for the analysis.⁷

My conclusion is that Mary's character and her knowledge have resonated through time because she planted seeds of example and instilled faithful confidence by her trademark humility and her unwavering testimony (Luke 1:38, 46–55). Male and female, we would

ratified marriage in our terms" (123). See also Brown's doubt of Mary's perpetual virginity since "this approach flourished at a time when Christian women were entering ascetic or monastic orders to live a celibate life," and it is unlikely that "a twelve-year-old [Palestinian Jewish] girl would have entered marriage with the intention to preserve virginity and thus not to have children" (304). Brown accepts that it is more correct to refer to Jesus's siblings as "stepbrothers" and sisters than as "half-brothers" and sisters if one accepts that Mary was not their biological mother (605–7). Brown also observes that Luke does not appear to have been aware of the tradition that Jesus was an only child (398).

6. Part of the nature of John's mission after the crucifixion was foreseen by Nephi more than 600 years beforehand. See 1 Nephi 14:19–28. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, notes the idea that "[t]he passage in Rev 12:1–5 has been advanced as another support for the Matthean narrative of Herod's attempt against Jesus" but without giving a reason, says "it would be hazardous to identify the dragon as a symbol for Herod" (226).

7. James Tabor strives to prove that both Jesus and James were traditional Jews schooled in and tied to the Mosaic Law. His thesis is that the Apostle Paul was the true founder of modern Christianity and the cause of its separation from Judaism (*Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013]).

do well to ponder her faith in the face of life's crises, to identify her righteous behavioral patterns, and to emulate them in faith so we can learn and bless others and "our children"⁸ in eternity.

Part One — Was Mary foreordained to be the mother of the Son of God?

There are no direct references to Mary in either the Doctrine and Covenants or the Pearl of Great Price,⁹ but in Nephi's view of his father's vision of the Tree of Life, he said both that the unnamed virgin who would bear the Son of God was "beautiful" (1 Nephi 11:15) and "exceedingly fair and white" (1 Nephi 11:13).¹⁰ Since he saw her only in a vision and apparently did not see her speak or act, he could not otherwise comment on her character and knowledge. But Alma the Younger may have seen more. He learned from undisclosed sources that "the Redeemer" (Alma 7:7) would be born of "a virgin" named "Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers" and that she would be "a precious and chosen vessel, who [would] be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Alma 7:10). Alma's reference to Jerusalem as the land of our forefathers seems to understand Jerusalem as a city-state like Zarahemla, which would have been familiar to his readers,¹¹ though Alma's expression has been explained in other ways by different apologists¹² and criticised by Book

8. Abinadi observed that the seed of Christ would be those who believed on his words (Mosiah 14:10; 15:10). In a similar symbolic way, those who learn from and stand on the shoulders of other teachers on earth are the children of those teachers.

9. Though Mary is not directly mentioned by name or mission in Abraham 3:22, 23, it is safe to assume she was foreordained as one of "the noble and great ones" of whom Abraham was there informed.

10. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, notes views that the idea of Mary's being favored in Luke 1:28 and 30 may have included the idea that she was "graceful, beautiful" and even "charming," but he concludes that "Mary's physical beauty has nothing to do with the" angel Gabriel's greeting and that he was only referring to the privilege accorded her "of conceiving the Son of the Most High" (326).

11. For more detail see Bruce E. Dale and Brian Dale, "Joseph Smith: The World's Greatest Guesser (A Bayesian Statistical Analysis of Positive and Negative Correspondences Between the Book of Mormon and the Maya)," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 100–101, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/joseph-smith-the-worlds-greatest-guesser/>. Note also their use of Michael D. Coe and Stephen Houston's work, *The Maya*, 9th ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2015).

12. See, for example, "If Jesus was born in Bethlehem, why does Alma say he would be born at Jerusalem?" *Book of Mormon Central*, February 1, 2018, <https://>

of Mormon skeptics.¹³ Some Christian scholars also consider that Isaiah's reference to a young woman conceiving and giving birth to a child to be named Immanuel is at least a parallel reference to Mary as the mother of Christ (Isaiah 7:14).¹⁴ But Alma understood that a precious virgin named Mary had been chosen to be the mother of the Redeemer of all mankind.¹⁵ Mary's character qualities were thus foreknown to the Father and some seers long before the Redeemer was made flesh and came to live among His people on earth (Alma 7:7).

Raymond Brown has discussed in detail the non-Latter-day Saint Christian scholarship around Christ's preexistence and whether Isaiah's prophecy and sign to King Ahaz in chapter 7 verse 14 that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a child to be named Immanuel, meaning "God with us," indicates early Christian belief that Mary's role as the

bookofmormoncentral.org/qa/if-jesus-was-born-in-bethlehem-why-does-alma-say-he-would-be-born-at-jerusalem.

13. See, for example, Wayne Jackson, "The Birthplace of Jesus: Bethlehem or Jerusalem?" *Christian Courier*, last accessed January 30, 2020, <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/940-birthplace-of-jesus-bethlehem-or-jerusalem-the>; and Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, "Was Jesus born 'at Jerusalem?'" *Mormon Research Ministry*, last accessed January 30, 2020, <https://www.mrm.org/jerusalem>. Note also Brown's (*Birth of the Messiah*) discussion of the connection of Bethlehem with Jerusalem without the Book of Mormon context (421–23n44).

14. Other interpretations limit Isaiah's reference to the conception of someone known to both King Ahaz of Judah and Isaiah, or to Isaiah's own wife as a sign to King Ahaz that he should trust the Lord rather than an alliance with Syria or Ephraim. See, for example, discussion of Brown's scholarship below and in the text supporting footnotes 16–19.

15. Though Terryl Givens has identified the idea of preexistence in human theology, philosophy, poetry and literature, mainstream Christianity continues to deny it even though it is harder to deny when an author from any of those disciplines accepts the idea that God intended for man to become like Him (as in the doctrine of theosis) (*When Souls Had Wings, Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* [Oxford University Press: 2010]). Origen's theology of preexistence (ix, 58, 91–99) is more troubling where the preexistence of Mary is concerned for a number of reasons. The largest of those reasons is that much of his theology has been treated as heretical in Western Christianity because of its inconsistency with the doctrine of original sin (Givens, *When Souls Had Wings*, 92–95, 125, 127). Secondary reasons include his idea, upheld in Roman Catholic Christianity, that Mary was a virgin for life (see his commentary on Matthew 13:54, 55, "Origen's Commentary on Matthew (Book X)," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 9: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A. D. 325*, ed. Allan Menzies [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994], 424) and that Jesus dwelt in John after the crucifixion so that Mary was John's mother (see his commentary on John 19:26, "Origen's Commentary on John (Book 1)," in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 9: 299–300).

mother of the Son of God was foreknown. He suggested that Matthew used Old Testament quotations to help his early Christian readers “prove to the Synagogue that God had foretold the career of Jesus ... down to the least detail” and that all “lay within God’s foreordained plan.”¹⁶ But while Brown acknowledged that Matthew used Isaiah’s prophecy about the conception of a virgin in precisely that way (Matthew 1:22, 23), he was very careful not to disagree with the scholarship that says Hebrew prophets could not foresee the distant future and that the reference to a virgin in Isaiah 7:14 meant nothing more than that a young girl known to King Ahaz in Isaiah’s own time would give birth to a child to be named Immanuel.¹⁷ Brown chose not to engage with scholarly questions about the authorship of Isaiah at all in his book about the infancy narratives. What remains is Brown’s understanding that Matthew saw Isaiah’s prophecy that a virgin would conceive and bring forth a child to be named Immanuel “as scriptural support for both the Davidic and the divine aspects of the Who and the How of Jesus’s identity.”¹⁸ Ironically, Brown did not take similar care to avoid treading on scholarly eggshells when it came to Isaiah’s prophecy “to the House of David,” popularized by George Fredrich Handel in his oratorio *The Messiah*. Here, Brown seemed convinced by the Old Testament exegesis of both Matthew and Luke, which Brown said continued a gospel tradition before they wrote. Brown noted that Matthew and Luke both accepted that Isaiah had seen

the coming birth of a wonderful child who would be the sign of God’s continued presence ... [and who] was to be given governance and to sit upon the throne of David, and to be called, “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6–7)¹⁹

16. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 97–99.

17. *Ibid.*, 143–53. Note that even some Latter-day Saint scholars are attracted by the idea that the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy was not a prophecy of Mary’s forthcoming virgin birth. Joseph Spencer has recently suggested that this prophecy by Isaiah referred to the forthcoming birth of Ahaz’s son named Hezekiah (Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All: Twenty-Five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi’s Record*, [Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2016], 209 and 211). Note also Donald Parry’s criticism in “An Approach to Isaiah Studies,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 250–53, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/an-approach-to-isaiah-studies/>.

18. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 149.

19. *Ibid.*, 161.

In this passage, Brown seems to rejoice in his ability to ignore the Politically Correct shackles of contemporary biblical scholarship and confess with both Matthew and Luke his own witness of the divinity of the Son who would be born to the most famous virgin of all time.²⁰

Whether it is accepted that Mary was one of God's choicest preexistent daughters or not, the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and modern Latter-day Saints accept that her role as the mother of the coming Messiah was known and prophesied in advance of her birth.²¹ It also seems to be accepted by those infancy narrators that the young woman chosen as the mother of the Son of God had to check all the female-virtue boxes accepted in ancient Israel as set out in King Lemuel's famous summary of his mother's words:²²

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.

20. Ibid., 160–61.

21. Isaiah 7:14. See also 1 Nephi 11:13–21, 2 Nephi 7:14 and Alma 7:10.

22. Note that although opinions as to what constituted feminine virtue likely changed between the time of King Lemuel in the Old Testament and Mary's time on earth at the beginning of the New Testament, it is doubtful King Lemuel's Old Testament view of feminine virtue would have been frowned upon in Mary's time since observant Jews were such good students of scripture, including the book of Proverbs. Whether Professor Mariotinni is right that Lemuel was the king of Massa, this description of feminine virtue does appear to have been accepted in the 10th century BCE when Solomon is traditionally accepted to have reigned and contributed to the Book of Proverbs (Claude Mariotinni, "Who was King Lemuel?" *Dr Claude Mariottine, Professor of Old Testament* (blog), May 18, 2009, <https://claudemariottini.com/2009/05/18/who-was-king-lemuel/>). Other biblical scholars incline to the view that Lemuel is Solomon himself and that Solomon is the author of the whole book of Proverbs.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.

She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates. (Proverbs 31:10–31)

Though Mary had not had time to establish herself as an accomplished and industrious woman if she was only 13 or 14 years of age at the time

Jesus was born,²³ God the Father had already seen in her the qualities He wanted in the mother of His Only Begotten Son. To identify those qualities, we have only the brief accounts of the four gospel writers as source material.

Part Two — Mary’s character and knowledge as revealed in the Gospels

Luke provides us with more insight into Mary’s character than the other gospel writers. His first quill strokes in that characterization are the journey to visit her kinswoman Elizabeth and her hymn of praise (known as the *Magnificat*) when Elizabeth recognized her unique role and mission:

My soul doth magnify the Lord,

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. (Luke 1:46–55)

23. For example, see “Mary, a Teenage Bride and Mother”, *Truth or Tradition*, September 12, 2013, <https://www.truthortradition.com/articles/mary-a-teenage-bride-and-mother>; and Gerald N. Lund, *A Celebration of Christmas* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 31. The former source suggests she may have been as young as twelve when betrothed, and the latter estimates 16. See also the sources referred to above at note 7.

Raymond Brown has said that “no serious scholar would argue today that the Magnificat was composed by Mary.”²⁴ “[S]uch finished poetry” as the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus* (Zacharias’s poem of praise recorded in Luke 1:67–79 when his tongue was loosed after he confirmed his son John the Baptist’s name), the *Gloria in Excelsis* (the song of the angels heard by the shepherds in Luke 2:13, 14) and the *Nunc Dimittis* (Simeon’s poem of praise when he met Joseph and Mary and the infant Christ in the temple in Luke 2:28–32) “obviously ... could not have been composed on the spot by ordinary people.”²⁵ They are most likely pre-Gospel Christian canticles or hymns Luke adapted for his narrative to summarize the traditions about these parts of the nativity story passed along to him by his various informants.²⁶ In the case of “Mary’s Magnificat,” the authors were likely the poor and downtrodden Anawim members of the early Christian church who had passed all their worldly possessions to the Twelve for distribution to the poor and who thus understood what it was to be lowly, humble, and hungry but hoped for exaltation at the judgment day.²⁷ All the words of the Magnificat alluded to the great Israelite exodus story and Hannah’s canticle of praise when she learned that God had heard her prayer and that Samuel would be born to her.²⁸ But there is no suggestion in Brown that Zacharias, as a seasoned priest, was incapable of expressing developed prophetic sentiments in his poem of praise because it is Jewish rather than Christian in flavor.²⁹

In part, Brown seems to think Zacharias could have composed a poem, but Mary could not, because he accepts what he calls Luke’s assumption that the Holy Spirit did not begin its prophetic ministry among men until after the day of Pentecost.³⁰ But, with respect, that assumption is unjustified and is Brown’s assumption rather than Luke’s. While Luke certainly crafted his infancy narrative from existing sources as a historian rather than as a personal eyewitness,³¹ he credits the content of these hymns respectively to Mary, Zacharias, the shepherds who heard the angel’s song, and to Simeon himself. And here perhaps Latter-day Saint understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit can make

24. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 340.

25. *Ibid.*, 346.

26. *Ibid.*, 347–52.

27. *Ibid.*, 350–55, 361–65.

28. *Ibid.*, 355–62.

29. *Ibid.*, 377–92.

30. *Ibid.*, 378.

31. See also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2006), 15.

a contribution to more accurate understanding of the composition of these poems/hymns of praise than is possible if we rely only on the studied insights of scholars. That is because modern revelation has confirmed the ancient insight that perfect praise can come from the mouth of babes,³² the most prominent example having occurred during the Savior's Nephtite ministry when "the multitude ... saw and heard ... children ... [and] babes ... open their mouths and utter marvelous things," which were too sacred to be recorded (3 Nephi 26:16). In that context, it is not difficult to accept that Mary could have expressed and remembered such a "refined hymn of praise"³³ under the "special inspiration of the Holy Spirit."³⁴

In the eighth century, the Venerable Bede noted from this poem-become-hymn both Mary's submissiveness to God's will and her recognition that she would be famous through all the generations of time because God had chosen her as the mother of His Son.³⁵ Brown confirms that Mary consented to God's will in these matters, observing that unlike Sarah, whose response was to laugh,³⁶ the spirit of Mary's psalm says that like her

32. Consider, for example, the idea picked up in Matthew 21:16 from Psalm 8:2 and in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians where he wrote:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. (1 Corinthians 1:27 — 29)
See also Doctrine and Covenants 1:19, 35:13 and 128:18.

33. Lawrence E. Frizzell, "Mary's Magnificat: Sources and Themes," *Marian Studies* 50, (1999): 41, https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol50/iss1/6.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Paul O. Iacono, "The Magnificat of Mary, A Beautiful Analysis By the Venerable Bede," The Fra Angelico Institute for Sacred Art, December 22, 2012, <https://fraangelicoinstitute.com/2012/12/22/the-magnificat-of-mary-a-beautiful-analysis-by-the-venerable-bede/>.

36. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 319. Note, however, that Sarah's laugh referenced in Genesis 18:12 has been interpreted in a variety of ways. While Brown said it manifested her cynicism, others have observed that God was unhappy in the following text because she thus manifested a lack of faith (Kristine Gift, "Sarah's Laughter as Her Lasting Legacy: An Interpretation of Genesis 18:9–15," *Midwest Journal of Undergraduate Research* 2, [2012], <http://research.monm.edu/mjur/files/2019/02/MJUR-i02-2012-7-Gift.pdf>). But Kristine Gift also notes Tammy Schneider's observation that the words translated as laughter in Genesis 18:12 can also mean excitement and joy (pp. 100–101). The Joseph Smith translation also uses that translation in the case of Abraham's laughter, but Kevin Barney thinks that

Son,³⁷ she always chose the Father's will. Bede also notes Mary's awareness of the fact that God had made her a central player in a covenant history that began with father Abraham.

Others have noted that Mary's references to Hannah and other faithful women in Israel show her sense of what it meant to be a virtuous woman in that tradition.³⁸ Though it is her son as Messiah who would ultimately bring justice and equality to the whole world and who would "crush the serpent's head" (Genesis 3:15), it was Mary's duty as His mother to help Him develop and hone those capacities. Mary's psalm suggests she was fully aware of her responsibilities as a mother to enable this special Son to develop leadership that would displace the proud and feed the hungry in time and eternity. But those duties were not going to involve her in any break with tradition. She would follow as perfectly as she could the examples of righteous mothers in Israel before her.

Most of the remainder of our direct scriptural knowledge of Mary, like this psalm, comes from Luke. Only Luke records the testimony of the shepherds and the circumcision visit to the temple where Anna and Simeon made their prophecies. Mary knew an angel had testified to shepherds that her child was the Christ, the Savior of the world, and that He would eventually bring peace and good will to the earth. Even though those shepherds publicized what the angel had told them, Luke suggests that Mary did not tell anyone what she knew of her son's destiny; she simply let the shepherds' testimony add to what she already knew.

Without the benefit of an understanding of contemporary culture in Israel at the time of Christ, it is forgivable for modern Latter-day Saint readers to conclude that Mary was "hiding her talents"³⁹ and failing in her missionary duty to "open her mouth"⁴⁰ and share her testimony of her son's divine mission and destiny. Though even now personal advocacy of the qualities or calling of a loved one can be unseemly, in Mary's day,

translation does not work and presents it as a case of the Prophet Joseph Smith protecting the Patriarch Abraham from the censure here given Sarah by the angel with his translation (Kevin Barney, "He Rejoiced," *By Common Consent*, March 11, 2018, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2018/03/11/he-rejoiced/>).

37. Matthew 26:42. Compare also the sentiments he expressed in "the Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2) and the preexistent words attributed to him by Moses in the Pearl of Great Price (Moses 4:2).

38. Steven Wedgworth, "The Meaning of the Magnificat," *Wedgewords* (blog), December 14, 2014, <https://wedgewords.wordpress.com/2014/12/14/the-meaning-of-magnificat/>. See also Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 355–62.

39. Compare Matthew 25:14–30 (24–30); Luke 19:14–27 (22–26).

40. Compare Doctrine and Covenants 60:2, 3.

Jewish women followed the Graeco-Roman norm, which denied any female the right to speak in public unless she were invited to do so by the men in attendance. Such an invitation by the presiding men would signal that the other men present would not be offended by her sharing.⁴¹ Paul's misunderstood first letter to the Corinthians confirms that these cultural practices were followed in the early Christian communities.⁴² So how are we to interpret Mary's interaction with Simeon in the temple, and how was Mary to interact with the wise men when they came with entourage to her home in Bethlehem when her son was a toddler? And how was Mary to share her knowledge and build the faith of other members of the church when their culture did not accommodate our modern Latter-day Saint testimony meeting practice?

Perhaps Mary sensed before Simeon's warning that opposition to her son's work would also bring her great soul pain. Perhaps, the further warning to Joseph of the need to seek sanctuary in Egypt after the visit of the wise men underscored the need for this family to fly under the radar. But whether her silence was a cultural requirement or not, it seems clear, particularly after the flight to Egypt to avoid the reach of King Herod, that Mary was not inclined to seek the limelight either for herself or her son. The testimony of Anna and Simeon in the temple before the flight from Herod affirmed what she already knew about her son's foreordained mission of universal salvation and redemption. He would not only redeem Israel, but He would lighten the Gentile world.

41. See, for example, Armin D. Baum, "Paul's Conflicting Statements on Female Public Speaking (1 Corinthians 11:5) and Silence (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)," *Tyndale Bulletin* 65, no. 2 (2014): 247, <http://www.armin-baum.de/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Pauls-Conflicting-Statements-on-Female-Public-Speaking-and-Silence-Tyndale-Bulletin-65-2014-247-274.pdf>). Compare with a contrary view expressed by Professor Karen L. King at Harvard University's Divinity School. She believes that women were very active in ministry, including administration of the Eucharist during the New Testament era and that our scriptural texts were altered by scribes to suppress accurate accounts of the leadership of Mary Magdalene, among others ("Women in Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries," *PBS Frontline* [April 1999], <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.html>). Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes observe that "many of the modern works written on chapters 11-14 [of First Corinthians] are ... far more certain about conditions than they should be. [W]e don't know how often they met, how big their congregations were, the role played by the local leadership, [or] to what extent they understood a hierarchy of authority" (*New Testament Commentary, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2017], 514).

42. Baum, "Paul's Conflicting Statements," 259n54.

Luke does not seem to have known the story of the wise men nor of the flight to Egypt, which is odd if one of his eyewitness sources was Mary as Raymond Brown accepts (Luke 1:1–2).⁴³ Thus, if the stories about Simeon and Anna came from Mary, they did not come directly, since she would surely have told him about the wise men and the flight to Egypt rather than have Luke believe the family returned to Nazareth in Galilee immediately after the temple visit within six weeks of the child’s birth (Luke 2:21–39). Matthew is thus the only gospel writer who mentions the visit of the Magi. Those ancient seers seem to have come, if not from a Semitic people in Mesopotamia, then from that direction.⁴⁴ However, they did not arrive in Bethlehem until the young child was walking.

There are three reasons we can reasonably infer that the child Jesus was walking when the wise men came to Bethlehem from Matthew’s text, but the first two are more significant than the third. The first is the Greek word translated into English as “young child” in both verses 12 and 13 of Matthew’s second chapter. The second is Herod’s direction that his soldiers should kill all children under two years of age in the “coasts

43. See also Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 238. Brown’s acceptance that Mary’s testimony was one of Luke’s sources requires us to accept either that he never spoke to her personally but rather spoke to others who knew her or that Luke consciously edited “the flight to Egypt” story out of his narrative.

44. “From that direction” here refers to the east, since they saw His star “in the east” and came “from the east to Jerusalem ... to worship him” (Matthew 2:1–2). Ernest Martin suggests from Herodotus “that they [we]re originally one of the six tribes of the Medes, a priestly caste similar to the Levites among the Israelite” (*The Star That Astonished the World*, 2nd ed. [Portland, OR: Ask Publications, 1996], 24). Brown (*Birth of the Messiah*, 167–68) notes Herodotus’s view that they were Zoroastrian priests but also notes Mann’s view that they were “Babylonian Jews who dabbled in black magic and star worship.” Edersheim notes from Philippians and Josephus that they were “Eastern (especially Chaldee) priest-sages” who “practice[d the] magical arts” whose “mysterious and unknown [researches] ... embraced much deep knowledge, though not untinged with superstition” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, rev. ed. [1886; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993], 203). Those who accept that Isaiah could see beyond the confines of his own time and space have considered that this journey of homage was foreseen by that prophet when he wrote:

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. (Isaiah 60:3, 6)

of Bethlehem” in response to the astrological coordinates unwittingly provided by the wise men during their visit to Jerusalem (Matthew 2:16).

The Greek word *paidion* means literally a young child in training and normally refers to a child aged under seven. That Greek word *paidion* stands in contrast to the word *brephos* as used in Luke 2:12 when the text clearly referred to the newborn babe. Some modern translators have been inclined to translate *paidion* into English as ”toddler”.⁴⁵

In the 19th century, Edersheim suggested Herod’s wicked logic before ordering the murder of innocent children under the age of two in the vicinity of Bethlehem:

[W]ithout committing himself as to whether the Messiah was already born, or only expected ... [he asked] them the question of His birthplace. This would show him where Jewish expectancy looked for the appearance of his rival, and thus enable him to watch alike that place and the people generally, while it might possibly bring to light the feelings of the leaders of Israel. At the same time he took care diligently to inquire the precise time, when the sidereal appearance had first attracted the attention of the Magi. This would enable him to judge, how far back he would have to make his own inquiries, since the birth of the Pretender might be made to synchronize with the earliest appearance of the sidereal phenomenon. So long as any one lived who was born in Bethlehem between the *earliest* appearance of this “star” and the time of the arrival of the Magi, he was not safe. The subsequent conduct of Herod shows, that the Magi must have told him that their earliest

45. Ray Geide discusses opposing views on his website - “How old was Jesus when the Wise Men Came?” *Ray on the Bible*, last accessed January 30, 2020, <http://breakthroughversion.com/rayonthebible/howoldwasjesus.html>. Gary Amirault is an exponent of the “toddler view,” “The Christ Child and the Wise Men,” *Tentmaker*, December 1998, <https://www.tentmaker.org/articles/ChristChildandWiseMen.html>. Similarly, the “Light the World Nativity” video released in December 2019, depicts the wise men bowing down before an infant child that can walk, see The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Christ Child: A Nativity Story, #LightTheWorld,” Gospel Media, 17:56, Nov 23, 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media-library/video/2019-09-0050-the-christ-child-a-nativity-story-lighttheworld?lang=eng>.

observation of the sidereal phenomenon had taken place two years before their arrival in Jerusalem.⁴⁶

It is of course possible, contrary to Edersheim's logic, that the child was younger than two and that Herod merely enlarged the infanticide period out of an abundance of jealous caution. But the third point is now also made. The family had moved from the stable or cave they had occupied on the night of the birth and now occupied a house where the wise men found the "young child with Mary His mother" (Matthew 2:11) with Joseph not mentioned at first. This third reason does not prove the age of the child because if the family had decided to stay on in Bethlehem after the birth, it is doubtful they would have stayed in the inhospitable lodgings of the birth night any longer than absolutely necessary. But it is reasonable to infer from Matthew's lack of mention of Joseph at the beginning of the visit, that the Holy Family had stayed on for longer than a passing visit since, otherwise, Joseph would likely have been found with the family when the wise men arrived.

While Joseph may not have been at home when the wise men arrived, given the custom of the day which prevented women talking to strange men, it is likely he returned before the formal visit began and the wise men paid homage and presented their gifts. It is also unlikely the caravan of the wise men arriving in that village would not have been brought quickly to his attention wherever he was if not at home. It seems clear that Joseph knew the details of their visit and departure because

46. Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 205. McConkie notes that

Herod was [not] in a class by himself ... [i]n ordering the slaughter of a host of innocent children ... He was but following the iniquitous path of all autocratic rulers, rulers whose thrones rest on the bones and are bathed in the blood of the slain. Ghenghis Khan, Caesar, Nero, Gadianon, Hitler, Stalin, Kruschev, and thousands of others are guilty of similarly gross crimes and mass murders. (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965], 1:106).

Martin, *The Star that Astonished*, 6 notes that in the year 63 BCE, the year Augustus Caesar was born, the Roman Senate ordered all boy babies to be killed who were born in that year because prophetic dreams and astrological signs suggested that a 'King of the Romans' was to be born ... [which would have been] anathema to the government of the republic.

Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 204–5 has noted scholarly estimates of how many boys were killed in Herod's slaughter with numbers ranging from 20 to 144,000. Like McConkie, Brown also notes many precedents for "attempts by a wicked ruler to kill the hero whose birth had been foretold" (227n39).

Matthew recorded the warning they received not to return to Herod, which would not have been known if they had already left the family and Bethlehem. Indeed, it seems likely the wise men spent at least one night in Bethlehem, some of them perhaps enjoying the hospitality of the Holy Family. Joseph was clearly alert to Herod's jealous and violent reputation, but that is not the reason the family left, perhaps the very next night. Joseph was a visionary man.⁴⁷ He had been convinced in a dream to take Mary as his wife despite her pregnancy, and now an angel warned him that Herod would seek Jesus's life (Matthew 2:13).⁴⁸ His caution and care also explain why the family left Bethlehem by night, perhaps the very next night, without leaving a forwarding address (Matthew 2:13, 14).

Part Three — What did the wise men discuss with the Holy Family?

The Bethlehem visit of the wise men invites further reflection upon what Mary knew and understood about the conception, fatherhood, and birth of her son. For if the wise men did spend a night in Bethlehem, how much of their time was spent with Joseph and Mary, and what did they talk about? Joseph and Mary would surely have asked why they came and what signs they saw in the night sky, and the wise men likely told Joseph and Mary all they had told Herod and his priests and more. And if Joseph or Mary even indirectly informed Matthew about this visit of the wise men, and if Mary and John later spent significant time in one another's company, as Christ directed them (John 19:26,27),⁴⁹ is it also possible that Mary told John of those signs in the night sky which had brought the wise men to Jerusalem and Bethlehem?

From Matthew chapter 2, we know the wise men knew that what Edersheim has called a "sidereal appearance"⁵⁰ signalled the birth of a new king among the Jews. Their observance of the night sky told them to come to the land of the Jews if they were to pay homage to that infant king, but they did not know where in that land to seek him. Since they

47. Brown says that though Matthew's account notes that Joseph had three visions in the infancy narratives, he receives "two supplementary divine communications," which are described in the original Greek with the same words (*Birth of the Messiah*, 129).

48. *Ibid.*, 129 notes that Joseph's five angelic dreams did not need an interpreter and that he responded to all five "to the letter" (203). According to Brown, this was part of Matthew's purpose in connecting "Joseph the legal father of Jesus and Joseph the patriarch who dreamed dreams and went to Egypt" (29).

49. Brown doubts that Mary lived at John's house (238n6).

50. Edersheim, *Life and Times*, see n46 and supporting text.

had seen His star in the east (Matthew 2:2), they reasonably came to the capital city of the Jews, perhaps expecting that He would be related to the existing ruler or that they could find news of Him there. But neither the king of that land nor his sages had recognized the sign that caught the attention of the wise men, and Herod's sages had to search their scriptures for mention of the origins of anyone who might match the expectations of the wise men. That search also shows that the wise men did not know the prophecy of Micah which said the only future king known in Jewish scripture would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah (Micah 5:2), the birthplace of their ancient king David (I Samuel 16).

For Raymond Brown, the symbolism from Micah revealed more than the fact that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Messiah. Though

[t]he setting for prophecy [in Micah 4–5] is the humiliation of Jerusalem/Zion by the Babylonian armies ... which leads the nations to judge that Jerusalem/Zion is finished (4:10–11) ... Micah contends that the nations do not know the thoughts of the Lord (4:12). The sufferings of Jerusalem/Zion are not terminal, but are like those of a woman in labor. When her time to bear has come, the Lord will rescue her from her enemies (4:10; 5:2(3)). The final result will be triumph. Jerusalem/Zion is the mountain of the house of the Lord, and peoples and nations will flow to it (4:1–2). Jerusalem/Zion is Migdal Eder, the Tower of the Flock to whom the former kingdom will be restored (4:8). This victory will be achieved by a ruler from David's place of origin, Bethlehem Ephrathah ... where a king descended from a shepherd would rule.⁵¹

Brown continued that “these motifs in Micah 4–5 ... have parallels in Luke 2:1–20.

Micah's flow of peoples and nations to Jerusalem resembles the movement of the whole world effected by the census of Augustus, a movement which brought Joseph to the city of David. Micah's twice-mentioned “woman in birth pangs” resembles the birth motif in Luke ... [and] “this day” of the

51. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 421–22. Brown's primary references in this passage are to the verse numbering in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament book of Micah.

birth of Jesus (2:11) is the fulfillment of “the time when she who is in travail has brought forth.” (Micah 5:2 [3])⁵²

Though Brown elsewhere observed that it is no more than a guess for readers of the infancy narratives to surmise that “Mary told John of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus,”⁵³ noting that “[t]he passage in Revelation 12:1–5 has been advanced as another support for the Matthean narrative of Herod’s attempt against Jesus,”⁵⁴ the virgin’s birth with a dragon ready to destroy the child in John’s image is an easy connection to make from this “complicated compound citation”⁵⁵ no matter how “difficult” it may be.⁵⁶

If Mary and Joseph were unaware that Jesus’s birth had fulfilled Micah’s prophecy before the visit of the wise men, they knew it afterward. But if Mary also learned and understood all that John recorded in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, then she also knew that constellations which had existed for eons, including one known as “the Virgin,” seemed to have told the story of the birth of a regal son in the tribe of Judah in Israel.⁵⁷ And because of Gabriel’s annunciation, she also knew her virgin birth was to bring the very Son of God into the world (Luke 2:26–35). If she reflected on the connections between the revelation of Gabriel and the explanations of the wise men, it is not difficult to understand why this already righteous and submissive young woman would have withdrawn to the safety of her own counsels and those of the Holy Spirit.

52. Ibid. Note again that Brown’s references to Micah are to the verse numbers from the Septuagint and are slightly out of synch with the King James Version.

53. Ibid., 238.

54. Ibid., 226.

55. Ibid., 51n26. See also 102, 175 and 184–86.

56. Ibid., 675n256.

57. Martin, *The Star that Astonished*, chapters 1 and 4. Martin surmises that the astronomical events which brought the wise men to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem included the conjunction of Jupiter (which he calls the King Star) and Venus (the mother) in the constellation of Leo (the star sign for the tribe of Judah since Judah was named as the Lion’s whelp in Genesis 49). He also notes other astronomical signs which saw Jupiter stop in the belly of the constellation of the Virgin and crown the child born of the virgin as a king. For another similar view of what the wise men saw on their journey to Jerusalem, see Frederick A. Larson, “A Coronation,” *The Star of Bethlehem* (website), last accessed January 30, 2020, <http://www.bethlehemstar.com/starry-dance/coronation/>. See also John C. Iannone, *The Star of Bethlehem: The New Evidence* (self-pub., Createspace Independent Pub, 2013); crediting Frederick Larson for many of his insights and Jeffrey D. Holt, *From the East, A Book of Mormon Perspective on The Three Wise Men* (Sandy, UT: Sounds of Zion, 2002).

With whom, apart from Joseph, could she discuss these things? For even if Gabriel's prophecy before her conception meant that her nativity was foreordained, the fact that she had "know[n] not a man" (Luke 1:34) and that a constellation in the heavens witnessed such a birth, there were very few people with whom she could discuss these things within the bounds of becoming modesty. The need for spiritual understanding from another woman also presents as a primary reason for her earlier visit to Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea since culture would likely have forbidden discussion with other men (Luke 1:39–56).⁵⁸

If the wise men did explain the significance of these things which appear to have played out in the night sky, there was also much to be concerned about. For in Frederick Larson's view, no sooner had that Virgin in the night sky given birth to a royal child, than the forces of evil, characterised in the image of a terrible dragon sought to devour and destroy the child.⁵⁹ Mary and Joseph would therefore need to be very watchful if they were to protect the child which had been entrusted to their care.

Did the wise men realise all the safety consequences of what they recounted to Joseph and Mary? If they did, it is hardly surprising that Joseph was alert to the warning he received from an angel to leave Bethlehem perhaps the night after the wise men had departed (Matthew 2:13, 14). What is clear from Matthew's account of the wise men's visit of homage is that those seeric visitors were warned that they should not return to Herod as arranged, and they left the land of the Jews by another way (Matthew 2:12). We do not know what the wise men were told in the warning they received nor how it connected with what they had discussed with Joseph and Mary or what they had discussed with Herod and his sages beforehand. That they were warned not to return to Herod suggests they recognised danger to themselves and perhaps also to the child and His family, even if they

58. See above n41 and discussion in the related text.

59. Larson, "The Birth of a King," *The Star of Bethlehem* (website), last accessed January 30, 2020, <http://www.bethlehemstar.com/starry-dance/the-birth-of-a-king/>. Brown says that "even were we sure that the author of Revelation was referring to the physical birth of Jesus, it would be hazardous to identify the dragon as a symbol for Herod," but he does not explain the hazard (*Birth of the Messiah*, 226). Brown's interpretive hazard appears to vest in the difficulty in explaining the meaning of any of the book of Revelation and the failure of modern scholars to accept that prophecy might have been intended to have parallel or multiple fulfillment. Note the idea of the multiple meaning and fulfilment of prophecy in Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "Scripture Reading and Revelation", *Ensign* (January 1995), (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1995/01/scripture-reading-and-revelation?lang=eng>).

did not connect Herod with the dragon — a connection which Frederick Larson accepts but which Raymond Brown doubts.

Other insights into Mary’s character and knowledge from the New Testament

Because I have already noted the close connection of John the Apostle and Mary, Jesus’s mother, after Jesus’s death and resurrection (John 19:26, 27), I briefly discuss why the connection was so strong.

Christ was on the cross, the agonies of Gethsemane had returned,⁶⁰ the soldiers had cast lots for His clothing, and His mother and John looked on together. Jesus then said to His mother, “Woman, behold thy son!” and to John, “Behold thy mother!” (John 19:26). The record of the interchange ends with John’s simple comment that “from that hour [John] took her unto his own home” (John 19:27).

Most commentators, including those responsible for the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible,⁶¹ consider that by these instructions, Jesus placed His mother in John’s care. But with respect, that may misread the order of Jesus’s instructions and perhaps His intent. Certainly, it is possible that Jesus addressed His mother first out of respect, and His intent was therefore what most commentators say it was. But those instructions are odd in a number of respects. The largest and most obvious of those is that even though Mary was probably a widow and perhaps a widow twice by the time of Jesus’s death,⁶² she still likely had at least four competent

60. Elder Bruce R. McConkie expressed his opinion that the pains of Gethsemane returned while Christ was on the cross in his final General Conference address in April 1985 (“The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” *Ensign* [May 1985], <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/05/the-purifying-power-of-gethsemane?lang=eng>).

61. John 19, Headnote (Latter-day Saint edition). Edersheim, *Life and Times*, 2:602. James E. Talmage said John “immediately assum[ed] the new relationship established by his dying Master” (*Jesus the Christ* [Provo, UT: Deseret Book, 1982], 612). Dean Frederick W. Farrar agrees (*Life of Christ* [London: Cassell and Company, 1909] 519) as does Cunningham Geikie noting that “[n]one of His ‘brothers or sisters’ were there” (*The Life and Word of Christ* [New York: Hurst & Co, 1877], 784–85).

62. See, for example, the view that Clophas may have married Mary in a levirate marriage after Joseph died (James Tabor, “Sorting out the Jesus Family: Mother, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,” *Taborblog, Religion Matters from the Bible to the Modern World* (blog), December 19, 2015, <https://jamestabor.com/sorting-out-the-jesus-family-mother-fathers-brothers-and-sisters/>). Note that other interpretations of the “Marys” in the gospel suggest this Tabor interpretation is the simple result of a confusion of those “Marys.”

sons who could take care of her.⁶³ Secondly, it seems unlikely that Jesus's half-brothers would accept their oldest brother's unheard direction that John was to be their mother's caretaker in the future. For one thing, that would breach the principle behind Moses's fifth commandment (Exodus 20:12), which Jesus had so strongly endorsed when He clashed with the Pharisees over their use of temple trusts to defeat their obligation to care for aged parents.⁶⁴ It thus appears reasonable to ask whether there is another explanation, and there may be.

Since God the Father had trusted Mary and Joseph to raise Jesus, and since Mary had clearly been adjudged a competent teacher, it is possible that Jesus was indicating to Mary and John that He wanted Mary to complete John's spiritual education in some way. That interpretation of Jesus's instructions from the cross to Mary and John raises additional questions, including in what respects John's education may have been incomplete. We may infer incompetence against his own parents or impatience and other character failings in John that may not be so unjust.⁶⁵ But it is also possible that Jesus's instruction operated as a kind of code by which Jesus indicated to His mother that He wanted her to confide all she knew of Jesus's mission and the fulfilment of prophecy so that John could record it.⁶⁶ And that interpretation gains some

63. Mark 6:3—James, Joseph, Juda and Simon along with “sisters.” In Matthew 13:55, Joseph is Joseph, and Simon appears to be older than Juda. The names of the sisters are not given in New Testament scripture, but there are reputed to have been two named Mary and Salome (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 78.8–9 and compare *Gospel of Phillip* 59:6–11 with *Protoevangelium of James* 19–20). Note that other sources suggest Jesus had three or more half-sisters (Robert J. Matthews, *Selected Writings of Robert J. Matthews* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999], 232–33).

64. Matthew 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–24.

65. For example, John was nicknamed a “son of thunder” or Boanerges, in apparent reference to his impatience during his apostolic training (Mark 3:17).

66. Note, for example, the view of Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes in *The Revelation of John the Apostle* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2016) that some scripture is provided in code. There, they have written in relation to “Interpretive Methodology”:

God gave the vision and preserved it for a purpose. He meant his Saints to understand it. It is not, however, a book for the spiritually faint-hearted or intellectually lazy, mainly because one cannot use a straightforward approach in tackling it. The reason is that God gave the visions in a kind of code. Both John and Nephi knew that to be the case, but Nephi articulated the reason why. He explained that the Bible would go through the hands of the “great and abominable church ... [and] they (will take) away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and

traction given Nephi's account of John's foreordained role as a heavenly recorder noted above (1 Nephi 14:19–28). The consequence of this for our understanding of John's Gospel, his later epistles, and his apocalyptic book of Revelation is that John also had Mary as one of his sources. But because Mary was such a circumspect source,⁶⁷ this interpretation may also explain why John would use the third person rather than refer to himself in his gospel.⁶⁸ Further, if one of the reasons Jesus told Mary to provide John with further spiritual tuition was so John could learn to suppress his own personality in favor of the greater good of the Father's work,⁶⁹ then that character trait presents as one from which other aspiring disciples of Jesus should learn as well. This understanding also suggests that Mary might deplore the too frequent use of her name⁷⁰ and the creations of orders in her honor.

There are two other gospel accounts of Mary's interaction with her messianic son. The first is John's account of the first miracle at Cana in Galilee, where she effectively asked Him to resolve the fact that the

also many covenants of the Lord" ... This was done in a deliberate attempt to pervert the gospel and lead the people astray (1 Nephi 13:14–28). The problem was how to get the message, so much of which was designed for those living in the last days, through the editors of the great and abominable church. God knew how. (18)

67. In his record of the nativity, Luke twice observes Mary's inclination to reflection (Luke 2:19, 51) in continuation of his recognition of her humility during the visit to Elizabeth and her expression of the Psalm which has come to be known as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55).

68. John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20. Bauckham says that the reason many names were omitted from the gospel texts was to protect the identity of those living when the relevant gospels were written (*Eyewitnesses*, 127). Luke was a clear exception to this rule, as his book was dedicated (*ibid.*, 301).

69. For example, Luke records that Jesus rebuked James and John for their wish to call down fire from heaven upon Samaritans who would not let Jesus's party pass through their village on their way to Jerusalem, teaching them that He and they were "not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Luke 9:51–56 [56]). And then again, in the final week of Jesus's mortal life, when "the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him", desired that He would "Grant that these my two sons, may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom", there was no apparent demur from either of her sons there present. In consequence, Jesus taught all the Twelve that they were called to be servants and ministers rather than princes (Matthew 20:20–28), which is a lesson similar to that earlier recorded by Luke. Some scholars think this fiery temperament was one of the reasons Jesus named James and John, Boanerges, or the sons of thunder (Mark 3:17).

70. See also D&C 107:2–4.

wedding family had run out of wine in breach of custom (John 2:1–3). His reply is reasonably interpreted as a gentle rebuke — “Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come” (John 2:4). But it may also be interpreted as a mother prompting her son to step forward, or a mother who has given enough that she is entitled to ask an unselfish favor of both her son and His Father. Since by the time John wrote his gospel, he had Mary as one of his primary informants, it may be that she is the direct source for this account.⁷¹ If so, it stands in remarkable contrast to the self-effacing way she acted in every other circumstance where we see any trace of her personality. But if this was a family wedding, as some have surmised, it is in character with her approach along with some of her children in the events recounted by Mark in chapter 3 and Matthew in chapter 12. In Mark’s account, He had just called the Twelve (Mark 3:14–19) and was immediately confronted by the Jerusalem scribes who dogged Him with their refrain that His power to cast out devils came from the devil and that He was thus a servant of the adversary of all righteousness (Mark 3:22).⁷² He pointed up the illogicality of their reasoning (Mark 3:23–30; cf Matthew 12:25–37) but was informed that His mother and at least some of His half-brothers sought His attention (Mark 3:31–32; cf Matthew 12:46–47). He used the interruption to explain that all who kept the commandments would be His brothers and sisters (Mark 3:33–35; cf Matthew 12:48–50).⁷³ But the interaction does not suggest that He disavowed His family ties, though He elsewhere acknowledged that the call to such service would create conflict within many households (Matthew 10:34–37). And though Jesus appears thus to have made it clear that nepotism would form no part of His kingdom on earth or in heaven, Mary was still there as His mother at the cross and at the tomb.⁷⁴ She was prepared to minister to His body when the angel announced the resurrection to the women at the tomb.⁷⁵ And in

71. Some have questioned why, unlike Matthew and Luke, John did not begin his gospel with a birth narrative or include any related stories. Brown’s answer is that the author of the Gospel of John relied on proof of Christ’s preexistence rather than miracles surrounding His birth, to prove His divinity (*Birth of the Messiah*, 284, 481).

72. In Matthew’s account, the encounter follows a council of the Pharisees as to how they might destroy Him (Matthew 12:14) and they prosecuted their plan by presenting a possessed man who was immediately healed after which they ran their argument that His power to cast out devils came from the devil (Matthew 12:22–24).

73. This teaching may have been an oblique reference to the doctrine that all those who qualify for a place in the celestial world will be joint-heirs with Christ.

74. Matthew 27:55–56, 61; Mark 15:40–41, 47; Luke 23:49, 55–56; John 19:25–27.

75. Matthew 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–7.

Matthew's account, with those women, she also became a personal witness to His resurrection before any of the Eleven, though her testimony does not seem to have convinced them until they had seen Him for themselves.⁷⁶

The final New Testament reference to Mary's character and practice comes after the post-resurrection 40-day ministry had ended with Christ's ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9–11) during the period when all the disciples had been instructed to return to Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Ghost. There we learn simply that she was gathered with the other disciples under the leadership of Peter as Chief Apostle when Matthias was called to take the place of Judas Iscariot in the Twelve (Acts 1:15–26). Luke's record in Acts says simply that she continued in prayer with all the other disciples (Acts 1:14). She had known from the time of Simeon's prophecy perhaps 34 years earlier in the temple, that she would also have a cross to bear. She knew perhaps more than any mortal could know of the hand of the Father in the affairs of men, and yet she too had to walk by faith and set an example for others who drew faith from her example.⁷⁷

Part Four – Insights into Mary's character and knowledge from the common teachings of her children

Though I acknowledge debate about the identity of the author of the New Testament epistle of James, in this article I am proceeding on the basis that the author was Jesus's half-brother and the first Bishop of Jerusalem.⁷⁸ My purpose in this part is to identify the similarity between the teachings in this epistle and those of Jesus Himself. James Tabor has identified 30.⁷⁹ I also recognise that Martin Luther denied the epistle of James was the work of an apostle because of its emphasis on works in the process of justification rather than grace, which he deemed all-sufficient.⁸⁰ However, the reason Luther rejected the epistle of James,

76. Matthew 28:9–10. See also Mark 16:13 and Luke 24:1–9, 22–23.

77. For these and other reasons, Raymond Brown calls her the first disciple (*Birth of the Messiah*, 357, 364, 621, 629 and 647).

78. Paul acknowledges Jesus's half-brother James as an Apostle in Galatians 1:19.

79. James D. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2013), 41–45.

80. Though some commentators suggest that Luther recommended the epistle of James be left out of the New Testament and that he placed it at the end of his German translation without page numbers, others explain that he simply denied it helped Christians understand the essence of faith and how Paul had explained the reconciliation of man to God which that faith in Christ had achieved (see, for example, "Did Martin Luther Really Want James Taken Out of the Bible,"

coupled with the similarities between the epistle's teachings and those of Jesus himself, is the point I think bears review, as both of these holy men were raised by the same mother. For if Jesus was entrusted by God the Father to Mary's care and tuition, and James received the same attention, then the coincidence between the teaching of her two sons at least suggests the impress of her instruction.⁸¹

Though there are many bases from which to take issue with James Tabor's thesis that Paul is the real author of Christianity,⁸² Tabor's identification of significant commonality between the teaching of Jesus and James does suggest Mary's common influence even though that possibility for the similarity is not canvassed in Tabor's work.⁸³ Tabor introduces his discussion of these similarities with the observation "that the ethical content of [the letter of James] teaching is directly parallel to the teachings of Jesus that we know from the Q source."⁸⁴ Tabor shares the view of many other Christian scholars, that the four Christian gospels are not the earliest writings about the life and ministry of Christ but maintains that all drew content from a lost source called "Q" by scholars and recorded around 50 CE.⁸⁵ Tabor also doubts any of the gospels were written by those for whom they are named, though he does credit the authors named with input into those final gospel products.⁸⁶ Despite the speculative nature of much of Tabor's research, his comparison of the ethical teaching of Jesus and James from source material he does trace to these two half-brothers, is relevant because it relies on the same material accepted as canonical by orthodox Christians everywhere since the 27 books of the New Testament were consolidated into the current scriptural canon.

Tabor connects "thirty direct references, echoes and allusions" from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and the Sermon on the Plain

Zondervan Academic (blog), March 6, 2019, <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/martin-luther-james-bible>).

81. Another compelling view is that James simply alluded to the teachings of Christ without attributing them in his general epistle.

82. Tabor, *Paul and Jesus*, 6.

83. *Ibid.*, 37 where Tabor observes that they were "nursed with the same milk."

84. *Ibid.*, 41.

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*, 8, 71. Richard Bauckham comes to this same conclusion after in-depth consideration of all the scholarship till 2006 (*Eyewitnesses*).

(Luke 6) into the Epistle of James.⁸⁷ His summary includes the following table:⁸⁸

Jesus's Teachings in the Q Source	Teachings of James
Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. (Luke 6:20)	Has not God chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom. (2:5)
Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments ... shall be [called] least in the kingdom. (Matthew 5:19)	Whoever keeps the whole Torah but fails in one point has become guilty of it all. (2:10)
Not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" shall enter the kingdom ... but he who does the will of my Father. (Matthew 7:21)	Be doers of the word and not hearers only. (1:22)
How much more will your Father ... give good gifts to those who ask him. (Matthew 7:11)	Every good gift ... coming down from the Father. (1:17)
Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. (Luke 6:24)	Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. (5:1)
Do not swear at all, either by heaven for it is the throne of God, or by earth for it is his footstool ... let what you say be simply "Yes" and "No." (Matthew 5:34, 37)	Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath but let your yes be yes and your no be no. (5:12)

Tabor also notes connections between the practice of Jesus and James in "the practice of anointing the sick with oil," citing Mark 6:13 and James 5:14,⁸⁹ and their connection of confession of sins and prayer as "the way to salvation."⁹⁰ Though Tabor suggests James was "directly echoing and affirming what he had learned and passed on from his brother Jesus,"⁹¹ it is also possible that both learned the same principles at the knee of Mary and Joseph in "Family Home Evenings" in Nazareth during their spiritual formation as Jewish children. While Tabor argues strongly that the Jewish obsessions of both Jesus and James⁹² distinguish

87. Ibid., 41.

88. Ibid., 42.

89. Ibid., 43.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid., 5, 15, 31, 43, 97, 149–51, 176, 184, 212. Tabor would doubtless similarly see Mary as a traditional Jewess.

them from Paul and make the latter the true founder of Christianity, Tabor spends no time identifying what in Jesus's teaching so irritated the Jewish orthodoxy of His day.

The point in this discussion of Mary's character and knowledge is the identification of similarity in the doctrinal outlook of her two most famous sons and the spirit of the only things we directly know about her from the scriptures. In all, there is an unmistakable thread of humility, of submissiveness to the will of the Father and the certainty that prayer connects us very literally with the power of heaven both in time and in eternity. Mary and Jesus's similar expression of their humility in the Magnificat and Gethsemane have already been noted.⁹³ But James's expression has the same humble spirit. For not only does he exhort his readers to patience in trial directly on three separate occasions in five chapters,⁹⁴ he also wrote:

[T]he wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality; and without hypocrisy.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:17, 18)⁹⁵

The connection made by all three between prayer and the powers of heaven is marked. Jesus, of course, taught prayer throughout His ministry, but in the single verse we have about Mary after the crucifixion and resurrection (Acts 1:14), Luke records that she was with the early saints in earnest prayer for Peter's release from prison. James's most famous affirmation of the power of prayer comes from his fifth chapter where he said:

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

And He prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. (James 5:16–18)

93. Above n37 and supporting text.

94. James 1:2–4, 12; 5:7–8, 11, 13.

95. See also James 4:7, 10 where he admonishes his readers to “[s]ubmit [them] selves to God, and he will draw nigh to you” and to “humble [them]selves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”

None of this asserts that Mary taught Jesus, James, or Jude all they knew. In the case of Jesus's education, the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 3:24, 25 says Jesus did not need mortal instruction:

And it came to pass that Jesus grew up with his brethren, and waxed strong, and waited upon the Lord for the time of his ministry to come.

And he served under his father, and he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him.

While Jesus evidently learned the things of the Spirit by direct instruction from the Holy Ghost and thus proceeded from grace to grace (D&C 93:12–14), it is unlikely this passage intends to convey that He was not socialized and taught language and Hebrew scripture within the family circle by the parents chosen for Him by God the Father. Nor should it be surprising that the patterns developed within that family, to which He must have contributed, manifested themselves in the teachings of the Apostle James when he came to the gospel.⁹⁶ One of the things Mary seems especially qualified to have taught the infant Christ was how to recognize and respond to the influence of the Holy Ghost, who became His principal teacher.

Conclusion

Before she was a mother, Mary recognized the hand of God in all things and deferred to His will in the faith that He knew best for her and all of us. Like us, she could not see all the threads of His handiwork woven into the tapestry of human experience. But she trusted that God would bring about His eternal purposes and that those purposes were never frustrated. Scripture does not include many of her biographical details. Tabor surmises that is because the Pauline apologists were responsible for all New Testament scripture, including the versions of the gospel canonized in our modern bible. But I suggest it is more likely the consequence of Mary's humble desire to work unseen like the Father of her holy son. While Jesus was not self-effacing and could speak and act with dangerous boldness when that was required to emphasize truth or call out hypocrisy, He learned to be the servant of all through the Holy

96. The Gospel accounts do not name any of Jesus's half-siblings among His disciples before the resurrection. That supreme miracle and its witnesses seem to have been a large factor in the conversion of at least James and Jude, the authors of the New Testament epistles which bear their names.

Ghost and the example of the divine mother whom His Father had chosen for him. The fact that James similarly extolled humility and meekness, suggests the nature of the instruction that all of Mary's children received at her knee and witnesses the nature of her example and character.

If Mary is to female virtue what Christ is to the divine masculine, then it seems in all our virtue-getting, we need to get humility, meekness and obedience to God the Father before we get anything else.

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WAS THE DENARIUS A DAILY WAGE? A NOTE ON THE PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS IN LUKE 7:40–43

Taylor Halverson

Abstract: *This note provides a brief overview of Roman economic history and currency in order to throw light on the value and significance of the two debts illustratively used by Jesus in his parable to Simon the Pharisee. Though we cannot with accuracy make the claim that a Roman denarius was always the daily wage, we can determine that the debtors of Jesus's parable owed something on the order of a year's worth of wages and ten years' worth of wages.*

The parable of the two debtors in Luke 7:40–43 poses a scenario of contrast between two servants, each in debt to a creditor. This is a three-point parable, with three main characters, each representing a lesson to derive from the story. The three characters are (1) a lord or master, or in this instance a creditor, who represents the Lord; (2) a servant in debt to the lord for 500 denarii; and (3) another servant in debt for 50 denarii. These two contrasted servants represent the readers or listeners.¹ Jesus shares this parable with Simon the Pharisee, who had expressed distaste for Jesus's having his feet washed by a sinful woman. To castigate Simon's lack of charity and to highlight why Jesus's forgiveness of the woman meant more to her than the same forgiveness might mean to Simon, Jesus tells the parable of two debtors. In doing so, Jesus hopes

1. Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990). Blomberg identifies the following New Testament parables as representing the "three-point form" of a parable: Matthew 11:16–19; 13:24–30, 36–43; 13:47–50; 21:28–32; 24:45–51; 25:1–13; Luke 7:41–43; 15:4–7; 15:8–10; 15:11–32; and 16:19–31.

Simon will recognize his error and empathize more fully with the sinful woman as she rejoices in the forgiveness of her overpowering debt.

In order to magnify the meaning of the parable in our modern day, this research note will answer the questions: What was a denarius? How much was it worth? Was the denarius a daily wage? The answers to these questions helps us contextualize the value, amount, or the relative significance of the debt these two servants carried and helps us to clarify the parable's significance and application for our own lives.

Brief History of the Origin of the Denarius

Though coins were not unknown on the Italian peninsula between 900 BC and 300 BC, most numismatists of Roman coinage date the origins of the Roman coinage system to approximately 300 BC. This system consisted of four original independent units, large bronze bars, struck silver coins, struck bronze coins, and large bronze discs, all of which became somewhat systematized and interrelated around 250 BC. Nevertheless, at this early period, the Roman economy was still only partially monetarized. For example, the military was not paid in coins, but in kind or through the spoils captured in conquest. In essence, the Romans did not have a pervasive and workable coinage system. Instead, they intermixed local coinage systems with their own unregulated and rather unsystematized coinage types.²

Standardization of the coinage system and monetarizing of the society quickly changed during the Second Punic War (218–201 BC), when Romans battled Carthage for supremacy in the Mediterranean basin. The existing Roman monetary system suffered because of the heavy financial strains brought on by war. In an effort to raise money, the Roman leaders devalued their existing coinage system: they struck gold coins, debased silver coins, and reduced weight standards. But these financial strategies failed to produce the intended monetary gains. Effectively, Hannibal's war against Romans destroyed the original Roman coinage system. In its place, the Romans invented the denarius system, creating a monetary standardization that persisted for nearly half a millennium.³

2. Kenneth W. Harl, *Coinage in the Roman Economy: 300 B.C. to A.D. 700* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Michael H. Crawford, *Coinage and Money Under the Roman Republic: Italy and the Mediterranean Economy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

3. Robert A.G. Carson, *Principals Coins of the Romans. Volume I: The Republic c. 290–31 BC* (London: British Museum Publications, 1978); Michael H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

The word *denarius* is a Latin adjective that means “of ten” or “containing ten.”⁴ As a monetary unit, the denarius was originally a silver coin valued at 10 *asses*. The Roman bronze *as* was the official unit of reckoning, much like the dollar is today for the USA. Because of its connection to the popular coin, the Latin adjective *denarius* eventually became used as a noun.⁵

With the invention of this new coinage system around 212–211 BC, Romans became more aggressive at ensuring that Roman coins were used in all transactions, and the Roman military began to use the denarius to pay soldiers. Originally, the denarius consisted of 4.5g silver (100 denarii would weigh about one pound), though throughout the centuries, war and economic crises precipitated weight decreases and silver debasement as a way to increase money. For example, about 140 BC, the values of silver and bronze had not maintained a relational balance, and so Romans re-tariffed the denarius at the value of 16 bronze *asses* instead of 10. Though this numerical relationship (16 *asses* to 1 denarius) persisted for nearly 400 years, continual debasement eventuated in the antoninianus, or double denarius, becoming the principle Roman coin by AD 238. Thereafter, the Roman Empire rapidly decreased minting new denarii, and this standard of the Roman coinage system that had endured for 500 years disappeared from currency.⁶

Was the Denarius the Standard Daily Wage?

The denarius was never the standard daily wage for employment in the Roman world, unless one considers the rare historical moment when it was the daily wage for a Roman legionary, notably during the New Testament period. Simply put, the sheer vastness of geography and chronology make it nearly impossible to calculate what a daily wage would be in the Roman Empire. Even if it were possible to calculate, that daily wage would fluctuate

4. John Melville Jones, s.v. “Denarius,” *A Dictionary of Ancient Roman Coins* (London: Seaby, 1990), 85–88.

5. The word *denarius* influenced the use of other monetary terms in other languages still in use today, such as the *dinar* (Iraq) and *dinero* (a word that generally means *money* in Spanish-speaking countries).

6. For a general overview of coin value debasement in the ancient world, see Christopher Howgego, *Ancient History from Coins* (London: Routledge, 1995), especially chapter 6, “Crisis”; R.A.G. Carson, *Principals Coins of the Romans. Volume II: The Principate c. 31 BC - AD 296* (London: British Museum Publications, 1980); Aurelio Bernardi, “The Economic Problems of the Roman Empire at the Time of its Decline,” in *The Economic Decline of Empires*, ed. Carlo M. Cipolla (London: Methuen & Co., 1970): 16–83.

from profession to profession.⁷ Our own society provides a vivid portrayal of the difficulty in determining what represents a daily wage. In the United States today, there is no standard by which to measure a daily wage, even though the federal government has imposed a minimum hourly wage and an arbitrary dividing line to distinguish those in poverty from those who are not. Then, as now, the value of a daily wage is determined by its capacity to purchase the basic needs for daily survival. In the Roman Empire, this included wheat, oil, and wine.

Historians of the ancient Roman economy estimate that each year the average male citizen required 48 modii (705 pounds) of wheat, 48 sextarii (7 gallons) of oil, and 288 sextarii (43 gallons) of wine. Translated into daily rates, the average male required two pounds of wheat, one-third cup of oil, and two cups of wine. Estimates of the yearly dietary needs for a peasant family of four are 120 modii (1762 pounds) of wheat, 120 sextarii (17 gallons) of oil, and 720 sextarii (106 gallons) of wine. To purchase these dietary necessities, historians estimate a cost of 200 denarii a year in first century (ca. AD 75–125) Rome and 100 denarii a year outside of Rome.

In Palestine specifically, wheat prices were significantly cheaper, up to one-third the cost of wheat in Rome. Hence, a family of four in Palestine may have been able to survive on as little as 70 denarii a year. But that likely would have been just above subsistence living. If we define a “daily wage” as what provides sufficient for an individual’s basic dietary needs, a laborer in New Testament Palestine would need to earn one denarius about every three weeks. If that same laborer was providing for a family of four, he would need to earn about one denarius about every five days. By these calculations, inexact as they may be, for a laborer in New Testament Palestine a denarius may represent five days of earning or work. Perhaps we could conclude, working from the estimates provided by economic historians, that anyone earning a denarius or less a week during this period was living in poverty or on the margins of poverty.

Let’s return to the scene in Luke 7:41, where Jesus teaches Simon the Pharisee about love and forgiveness. In the parable that compares two indebted men, one owes 50 denarii and the other 500 denarii; it is readily apparent that both debts are considerable. However, Jesus employs this device for effect — the comparable magnitude of debt for the first man is far more onerous by an order of ten. A Palestinian man with no family obligations, in Jesus’s day, having 50 denarii in debt may owe ten months

7. Richard Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

of wages; 500 denarii of debt would be a whopping eight or more years of wages, a veritable path of slavery.⁸

We conclude by “translating” this parable into our terms. If Jesus were speaking to Simon the Pharisee today, he might share the parable in Luke 7:40–43 in this way:

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed \$500,000 (or eight years’ worth of labor), and the other \$50,000 (or nearly one year worth of labor). And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Likening scriptures to ourselves requires at times an understanding of the context in which a teaching is expressed. Understanding more about the lowly denarius is an illustrative example at point.⁹

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8. For background on the history of coins and Roman coinage in New Testament times see the following sources. Larry J. Kreitzer, *Striking New Images: Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

9. Sources consulted for this article but not appearing in other footnotes include: Andrew Burnett, *Coinage in the Roman World* (London: Seaby, 1987); Richard Duncan-Jones, *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Daniel Sperber, “Costs of Living in Roman Palestine,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965): 248–71; Daniel Sperber, “Costs of Living in Roman Palestine,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 9 (1966): 182–211; Daniel Sperber, “Palestinian Currency Systems during the Second Commonwealth,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 56, no. 4 (1966): 273–301; Daniel Sperber, “Costs of Living in Roman Palestine,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 11 (1968): 233–74; Daniel Sperber, “Costs of Living in Roman Palestine,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13 (1970): 1–15; Daniel Sperber, *Roman Palestine 200–400: Money and Prices* (Ramat-Gan, ISR: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1974); Peter Temin, “The Economy of the Early Roman Empire,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20:1 (2006): 133–51; Rachel M. McCleary and Robert J. Barro, “Religion and Economy,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (2006): 49–72.

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THE LOST PROLOGUE: READING MOSES CHAPTER ONE AS AN ANCIENT TEXT

Mark J. Johnson

Abstract: *The character and complexion of the Prophet Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible (JST) is often a puzzle to students and scholars. One text in particular, the first chapter of the Book of Moses, claims that its very words would be lost and later restored to the believing. As this bold claim has not yet been verified by the discovery of an ancient copy of this text, clues to the antiquity of this document will need to be discovered within the text itself. This study investigates Moses 1 with the tools of biblical and literary criticism to discover if the text has the characteristics and content of an ancient religious document.*

As part of his calling, the Prophet Joseph Smith revised and “re-translated” the text of the King James Version of the Bible. This was not a translation in the typical, scholarly sense of the word but a whole new reworking of the text. Joseph’s process appears to restore lost writings, to bring clarity to certain passages, and to correct perceived errors in the Biblical text. Among the material created for the JST is a prologue to the beginning of the book of Genesis. This account reiterates Moses’s prophetic call (giving him and his book authoritative legitimacy), relates an epic confrontation with Satan, and establishes Moses’s commission to write about the creation of the world and history of Israel. This revelation became the first chapter of the Book of Moses.

A curiosity of Moses 1 is its assertion that the text itself would be lost and restored at a later date. The text placing itself in antiquity is a bold claim. This claim has not been confirmed by archeological methods; manuscript fragments of these texts have yet to be excavated from the dust of millennia. However, this claim does put Moses 1 in company with the Book of Mormon. Aside from the gold plates from which the

Book of Mormon was translated, ancient copies of any Nephite records have yet to be unearthed. In spite of this, the Book of Mormon has shown innumerable characteristics of an authentic record written by ancient Israelites. With Book of Mormon scholarship having blazed the way, Moses 1 can be treated with the same scholarly scrutiny.

The narrative of Moses 1 flows into the Prophet's reworking of the book of Genesis. As such, it invites the same methods of analysis for this chapter that are used by biblical scholars to examine the Hebrew bible.

Robert J. Matthews advocates this type of scholarly examination by asking, "Does the JST offer any substantial evidence that would indicate a restoration of original material? Indeed it does! It is found in the literary style of the JST. It is significant to notice not only *what* is said in the JST, but *how* it is said, and *where* it is said."¹

Taking our cue from Matthews, this approach will examine the words of Moses 1 to note not only what is portrayed in the text, but also how the narrator presents characters, plot, and dialogue to influence the reader in discovering the author's intents.

Methodology

This approach to Moses 1 will predominantly feature an examination of literary elements to see if the chapter has the characteristics of an ancient document. This literary assessment aims to show "how to read and appreciate the Bible itself by training attention on its artfulness — how it orchestrates sound, repetition, dialogue, allusion, and ambiguity to generate meaning and effect."² Because of the complex nature of biblical narration, the message of the scriptural text must be sought in how the text builds its story, in specific forms and structures that guide the narrative, and in how the narrator seeks to evoke thought and feeling rather than pontificating directly to the reader.

Note that my use of a literary critical method will be a broad approach closer in spirit to the foundational studies of Robert Alter, Northrup Frye, Meir Sternberg, and others. Alter explains his intentions: "By literary analysis I mean the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the

1. Robert J. Matthews, "The Role of the JST in the Restoration," in *Plain and Precious Truths Restored: The Doctrinal and Historical Significance of the Joseph Smith Translation*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Robert J. Matthews (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 47. Emphasis in the original.

2. Steven Weitzman, "Before and After The Art of Biblical Narrative," *Prooftexts*, 27 (2007): 191.

artful use of language.”³ This literary awareness will be used in conjunction with the methods of rhetorical criticism and form criticism.

Form Criticism is the study of forms, both written and oral. The form-critical method seeks to understand the text by its basic elements: structure, genre, setting, and intention. According to Martin Buss, form criticism “brings patterns of speech into full reflective awareness. Since these patterns embody significant structures of one’s own as well as of other cultures, the study of literary forms lays bare and clarifies major movements of human life.”⁴ As different forms of text are examined, scholars seek to find the roots of the text, whether they be narrative, poetry, lamentation, allegory, etc., and thereby discover how these texts were then used and understood by their intended audience.

Rhetorical Criticism “concerns itself with the way the language of texts is deployed to convey meaning. Its interests are in the devices of writing, in metaphor and parallelism, in narrative and poetic structures, and in stylistic figures.”⁵ Richard N. Soulen explains that “whereas Form Criticism, traditionally defined, seeks the typical and representative, [Rhetorical Criticism] ... seeks the unique and the personal in order to trace the movement of the writer’s thought.”⁶ James Muilenburg, the founder of modern rhetorical criticism, sets the standard for this type of analysis:

What I am interested in, above all, is in understanding the nature of the Hebrew literary composition, in exhibiting the structural patterns that are employed for the fashioning of a literary unit, whether in poetry or in prose, and in discerning the many and various devices by which the predications are formulated and ordered into a unified whole.⁷

The rhetorical critical method performs its functions on the final form of the text. Examining the received version of the text will show its texture in the form of literary units that might otherwise go unnoticed by other reconstructive methods. Studying the text as it stands is especially crucial because “the literary unit is in any event an indissoluble whole, an artistic

3. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 12.

4. Martin J. Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in its Context* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 18.

5. *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and David J. A. Clines (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 16.

6. Richard N. Soulen, s.v. “Rhetorical Criticism,” *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 169.

7. James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969): 8.

and creative unity, a unique formulation.”⁸ Francis I. Anderson clarifies the point by noting, “If the text is left as it is, and its grammatical structure is taken seriously as serving artistic purposes, more positive conclusions about the integrity of a passage and the solemnity of its style are possible.”⁹

By studying the unique features of the text, we hope to see the motive of the biblical authors as well as to unearth subtleties of their writings. George Kennedy explains that “if fundamental and universal features of rhetoric are kept in mind ... rather than simply quarrying a text for examples of classical figures, we can significantly enhance our appreciation of its meaning without violence to the author’s intent.”¹⁰

As this is an examination of the scriptural narrative, this study is mindful of exploring traces of lexes, patterns, and forms that might indicate a Hebrew original.

This approach of seeing hints of the Hebrew language in the background of Moses 1 will be similar to the work of Matthew L. Bowen, who has been highly successful in discerning sophisticated wordplay in the onomasticon of the Book of Mormon. Bowen explains his method:

We can use our knowledge of the languages [of the scriptures] to posit reasonable suppositions about what they contain. Biblical scholars engage in this type of activity (i.e., textual criticism) when they analyze the non-Hebrew witnesses to the text (e.g., the Greek Septuagint [LXX], the Syriac Peshitta, the Old Latin, etc.). Using a knowledge of these other biblical languages can help us arrive at what the Hebrew *Vorlagen* of those text may have looked like (vis-à-vis the Hebrew Masoretic text), pending further evidence.¹¹

In following this pattern, attention will be given to possible Hebrew features that may be discerned through what would be a translucent layer of translation, assuming the existence of a lost ancient original version.

8. Ibid., 9.

9. Francis I. Anderson, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague, NL: Mouton, 1974), 40.

10. George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 12.

11. Matthew L. Bowen, *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: The Interpreter Foundation, 2018), 18–19.

Authorship and Narrative

Much ink has been spilled in the pursuit of the biblical authors. Discussions have ranged from Moses being the principal author of the Pentateuch, to the biblical text having been adapted from old myths and stories. Other scholars have suggested that various parts of the Pentateuch were created to accompany important events in Israel's history, such as the reforms of King Hezekiah and King Josiah, or to having portions of the Pentateuch created after the Babylonian exile to supply the returning people of Israel a founding mythology.

In this quest to find the original authors, Richard Elliott Friedman counsels that “if one is interested in the historicity of the biblical accounts, then one must inquire into when the writer lived. Was the writer a witness to the events he described? If not, what were his sources?”¹² He further asks, “Did the author of a particular biblical story live in the eighth century BC or the fifth? — and thus when the author uses a particular expression do we understand it according to what it meant in the eighth century or the fifth?”¹³

While these are seemingly important questions, the answers are not as easily found as some would have us assume. For example, R. Norman Whybray notes, regarding the dating of the biblical documents, that “there is at the present moment no consensus whatever about when, why, how, and through whom the Pentateuch reached its present form, and opinions about the dates of composition of its various parts differ by more than five hundred years.”¹⁴ Sternberg summarizes the situation: “When all is said and done, the independent knowledge we possess of the ‘real world’ behind the Bible remains absurdly meager, almost non-existent.”¹⁵ This leads us to note that the so-called search for the original authors is less concerned with *who* wrote the biblical histories, but rather *when* they were written.

If the authors of the biblical text are out of reach, a fair question to ask is if knowing the author is actually necessary to understand the text.¹⁶

12. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible? Second Edition* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 23.

13. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

14. R. Norman Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 12–13.

15. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 16.

16. This aspect of authorship is different from that of the Book of Mormon. As far as its authorship goes, the Book of Mormon has an unbroken provenance of its

Perhaps not. The search for the author actually might be an impediment and distraction to sufficiently grasp of the meaning of the text.

If the actual author is unavailable, we instead look to the narrator for guidance along our way. “In story-telling, the real author creates a narrator who has the role of the storyteller. This creates an additional layer of interaction, represented by the relation narrator-narratee: the persons who are supposedly telling and listening to the story.”¹⁷ Yair Mazor elaborates on this point:

The text is the only reliable medium a scholar has, and a skilled scholar should be able to detect aesthetic devices, ideas, and interpretations without outside help. Thus, the biographical author must remain outside the picture when it comes to analysis of a text. . . . The narrator is only a rhetorical function that mediates between the text.¹⁸

This is vital for the reader to remember, for the narrator controls the presentation of the plot and all of its features, including its participants. “To define the narrator as a fictional construct is to put the narrator into a category similar to that of the characters. Indeed, it might be helpful sometimes to think of the narrator as a character, distinct from the other characters. The narrator is a character who tells the story while the other characters enact it.”¹⁹

The stories of the Pentateuch give us Adam, Abraham, Moses, and a host of other figures. But the narrator cannot give the reader the actual Adam, Abraham, etc., so he provides us with the versions of these characters that he needs to tell his stories. In other words, the biblical author presents his message through the creation of biblical literature. Sternberg, therefore, advises that the reader “must take into account that every item of reality given in the text may have been stylized by conventions and for purposes alien to historical science.”²⁰

So while some scholars hold that discovering the authorship of the text is tantamount to comprehending the scriptural word, we have seen

sources, while there are significant gaps in the lineage of biblical text where the manuscripts have spent centuries in the dark.

17. Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narratives* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 46.

18. Yair Mazor, *Who Wrought the Bible? Unveiling the Bible's Aesthetic Secrets* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 27.

19. David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1993), 53.

20. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 16.

that the identity of the biblical authors must remain in the background while the narration takes center stage as the key to understanding.

Narrative Form and Structure

Shimon Bar-Efrat correctly surmises that the narratives of the Hebrew bible “are of the highest artistic quality, ranked among the foremost literary treasures of the world.”²¹ The prose of the Hebrew bible has a beauty and logic quite different from that of modern literary masterpieces. Many differences are due to different tactics employed for the power of persuasion. Noel B. Reynolds explains the differences between Western and Hebrew rhetoric:

Commentators have noted that the rhetoric we have learned in the Western tradition is *hypotactic* in that it is direct, open, linear, and logical. Hebrew rhetoric, in contrast, is *paratactic* in that it tends to be indirect, making important points both through its structure and through words that may have their full meaning developed and adjusted gradually throughout the text.²²

Robert Alter has noted that the parataxis of the biblical narrative serves as a template by which biblical prose was composed. This paratactic prose was manifest in a deliberate syntax. He observes that “parataxis is the essential literary vehicle of biblical narrative: it is the way the ancient Hebrew writers saw the world, linked events in it, artfully ordered it, and narrated it, and one gets a very different world if their syntax is jettisoned.”²³ The syntax of biblical prose is dominated in form by parallel clauses chained together with the particle *waw* (which is translated as “and”), which serves as a prefix attached to the first word of the clause.

Another step in our literary analysis is recognizing that Hebrew thought sought beauty and balance in writings by the use of repetition. While western poetry is largely based on rhyming of sounds, the prose and poetry of the biblical text finds greater value in what one might call the *rhyming of ideas*. In other words, poetic verse and narrative structure were built on the foundation of repetition. Jack R. Lundbom emphasizes that:

21. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 9.

22. Noel B. Reynolds, “Rethinking Alma 36,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 34 (2020): 283.

23. Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), xvii.

repetition is the single most important feature of ancient Hebrew rhetoric, being used for emphasis, wordplays, expressing the superlative, creating pathos, and structuring both parts and wholes of prophetic discourse. Its importance can hardly be overestimated. Repetitions can be sequential or placed in strategic collocations to provide balance. ... [They] can form a tie-in between the beginning and the end.²⁴

Repetition in the Hebrew bible was a technique of presentation manifest at all levels of the author's composition. Forms of repetition can be visible from the minute level of strophes and stanzas in poetry, to multiline units such as poems, speeches, and oracles. The principles of repetition are also seen in the structuring of character arcs and even as the backbone of whole books. This type of repetition is frequently called *parallelism*.

Because of the differing size and scope of repetition as well as their presence in both poetry and prose, scholars have differing opinions about what can be truly classified as parallelism.²⁵ Donald W. Parry's perspective positions parallelism equally with poetry and prose, noting that "not all parallelistic forms are poetic, for parallelism serves in a variety of rhetorical and literary functions."²⁶

Generally, this parallel-style of repetition is expressed in a linear (AB/AB) or a coaxial (AB/BA) form. For the purposes of this study, I will primarily examine larger parallel structures that are used for the framework of a narrative. These longer forms of parallelism will be referred to in this study as parallel paneling (the repetition being ABCD/ABCD and the like) and chiasmus (where the repetition is inverted, i.e., ABCD/DCBA).

Sean McEvenue notes that *parallel panels* are two or more instances told in the same form. "This technique of structure we shall call 'panel writing.' ... The literary delight is partially the repetition, and partially the logical play of putting different materials in identical forms."²⁷

As an example, Yair Zakovich has noted that the book of Genesis is largely compiled of matching (as well as often contrasting) stories placed

24. Jack R. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 167–68.

25. For a useful discussion, see Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism, Revised and Expanded edition* (Grand Rapids, MI; William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 1–7.

26. Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2007), xi.

27. Sean McEvenue, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer* (Rome, IT: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1971), 15.

side-by-side as parallel panels. These structures can display an amplification of ideas, a second panel building upon the first. Zakovich explains:

Much material that is embedded in the biblical text is itself exegetical material, constituting “inner-biblical interpretation”: one verse or story intended to influence our reading of another, either to solve a problem in that text, or to adapt it to the interpreter’s own beliefs and ideas. One type of inner-biblical interpretation is achieved through the juxtaposition of two units: the placement of two texts one after another, one or both of which is meant to affect our reading of the other.²⁸

Lundbom emphasizes the same idea: juxtaposition is “a way for theological statements to be made without so much as a word being said.”²⁹ He demonstrates with the examples of Jeremiah chapters 34 and 35. These chapters are out of chronological sequence, but their pairing together shows a stark difference between obedience and disobedience.

Similarly, *chiasmus*, a poetic, structural, and rhetorical device, can be “an inversion of words, word cognates, fixed pairs, syntactic units, and even sounds in the bicolon, the verse, and the larger composition.”³⁰ As a rhetorical device, chiasmus not only highlights the beginning and the end of the pericope, it can also supply closure to the story. It is a way for authors to make a strong emphasis on their own priorities by putting the point of importance at the center of the structure. The chiasmic pattern also can rhetorically reflect the narrative direction of the unit. This boomerang of a form is appropriate when the plot rises and falls, when the first shall be last and the last shall be first, and when things lost are to be restored.

Before we look behind the scaffolding of Moses 1, it would be beneficial to exhibit some of the narrative potentials elsewhere in Genesis. A ready example is found in the short story of the Tower of Babel. The story of the tower in Genesis 11 has long been known as

28. Yair Zakovich, “Juxtaposition in the Abraham Cycle,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish and Near Eastern Ritual, Law and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, eds. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 510.

29. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), xxxvii.

30. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism*, 174.

a sophisticated model of Hebrew narrative styling despite its brevity.³¹ While an English translation presents a fairly straightforward story, the Hebrew original contains many complexities. Consider the word-play present in the Hebrew transliteration of verse three:

Come let us make bricks	<i>hā-ḥāh nil-bē-nāh lē-ḥē-nīm</i>
And bake [them] thoroughly	<i>wē-niš-rē-ḡāh liš-rē-ḡāh</i>
And they had brick for stone	<i>wat-tē-hi la-hem hal-lē-ḥē-nāh lē-’ā-ḥen</i>
And asphalt they had for mortar.	<i>wē-ha-ḥē-mār hā-yāh la-hem la-ḥō-mer</i>

The author of the Babel segment has made the story of the confounding of languages into a literal tongue-twister with vigorous repetition of consonantal sounds *h*, *b*, and *l*. In addition to the repeated sounds of the story, the author also extracts meaning from his writings by his use of narrative structure. Here the author uses specific words and phrases and then inverts their order while proceeding through the text.

- A “all the earth one language” (11:1a)
- B they settled “there” (11:2b)
- C “each one [said] to his neighbor” (11:3a)
- D “Come on, let’s make bricks (*hābāh nilbēnāh*)” (11:3b)
- E “let’s build for ourselves” (11:4a)
- F “... a city and tower” (11:4a)
- G “and YHWH came down” (11:4b)
- F’ “the city and the tower” (11:5a)
- E’ “which the humans had built” (11:5b)
- D’ “Come on, ... let’s confuse (*hābāh ... wēnābēnāh*)” (11:7a)
- C’ “each one [will not hear] his neighbor’s speech” (11:7b)
- B’ YHWH dispersed them “from there” (11:8)
- A’ “language of all the earth” (11:9a)³²

This chiasmic structure is fitting for the rise and fall of the city and the tower. It also is appropriate with YHWH coming down to dispense a reversal of fortune.³³ The people begin by mixing mortar, and they

31. Jan Fokkelman devotes an entire chapter to the Babel narrative. See J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis, Second Edition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1991), 11–45. See also Isaac M. Kikawada, “The Shape of Genesis 11:1–9,” in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenberg*, ed. Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler (Pittsburg: The Pickwick Press, 1974), 18–32.

32. Jerome T. Walsh, *Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 94. I have modified Walsh’s arrangement to include the center element.

33. For the sake of clarity and continuity, I will use the Tetragrammatron (YHWH), the four-letter name of God of the Hebrew Scriptures, to refer to the God of Israel, otherwise known as Jehovah or Yahweh.

are answered with the Lord's mixing their language. The appearance of YHWH is the natural turning point and center focus of the story. McEvenue notes that the form both repeats and interlocks the doings of the people with the purposes of YHWH.³⁴

As impressive as the inversion is, it is also possible to see the structure of the narrative as a set of matching parallel panels. These two panels concern themselves with the plot of the story. The first half of the story is the plans and progress of the people, while the second is the crumbling of the plans and the people's confounding and consequent scattering.

- A The whole earth has the same language
- B and the same speech.
- C The people build a city and a tower
- D the people desire to make them a name
- E lest they be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth
- A' The people are the same
- B' They all have the same language
- C' They begin to build the tower
- D' The Lord names the people and the tower Babel
- E' The Lord scatters them abroad

Concerning these structures, Wenham notes that the "simultaneous use of parallel panels and palistrophe [extended chiasmus] is remarkable and unusual."³⁵ As an artistic technique, the use of both types of structures at work in the same text shows great compositional skills. Jan Fokkelman finds that this dual technique of chiasmus co-mingled with parallel paneling is also present in 2 Kings 4:1-7, where Elisha blesses an unnamed widow. He notes that "we are justified in observing a certain simplicity here, but this proves to be the result of the total and flexible mastery of form, and much more is going on in the text than the simple message to be read on the surface."³⁶ Fokkelman's observation of this small episode in chapter 4 equally applies to Genesis 11 and, as we shall see, Moses 1.

The placement of Moses 1 adjacent to the extant biblical text sets an expectation for the Moses 1 narrative to follow suit in showing a complexity that might not be apparent at first glance.

34. McEvenue, *Priestly Writer*, 113.

35. Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 236.

36. Jan P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 18.

The Shape and Structure of Moses 1

Having overviewed literary method and technique, we are prepared to take a much closer look at the features of Moses 1 with the methods of biblical criticism. The first step in this rhetorical-critical analysis is the discovery of the boundaries and framework of the text. This allows the scholar to examine all related parts of the pericope in order to witness the movement within the narrative. This, together with a careful study of poetic and stylistic features, reveals the motives of the author.

The beginning and end (boundaries) of biblical literary units are frequently marked by an *inclusio*, which consists of matching or similar key-words that signal the beginning and the end of the section. It is “repeated or balanced vocabulary or else a clear return of thought that brings about closure.”³⁷ The *inclusio* is a common form used by the biblical authors to frame their written words.³⁸

Moses 1 consists of three scenes arranged in a concentric pattern. The episodes of ascent form an obvious frame for the chapter.

- A 1st Ascent to the presence of God
- B Confrontation between Moses and Satan
- A' 2nd Ascent to the presence of God

Looking at the boundaries of the unit, the beginning is already set, as it is the start of the narrative. The corresponding *inclusio* comes at the beginning of the next chapter in the Book of Moses:

The words of *God*, which he *spake* unto *Moses* at a time when *Moses* was caught up into an *exceedingly high mountain*. (Moses 1:1)

And it came to pass that the *Lord* *spake* unto *Moses*, saying: Behold, I reveal unto you concerning this *heaven*, and this *earth*; write the words which I speak. (Moses 2:1a)

The *inclusio* is based on synonymous terms. The names *God* and *Lord* are equivalent in these verses. The *exceedingly high mountain* is a medium locus that connects the heaven and the earth.

Comparison of the two ascents shows a doubling in the sequence of the story, which serves to shape the narrative. These are presented as two

37. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 29.

38. It might be worth noting that Radday has seen an *inclusio*-type link between Genesis chapters 1 and 49. Because Moses 1 and JST Genesis 50 both mention Moses’s being called to deliver Israel as well as a future coming forth of the word of God, a connection may also be drawn between these two texts. See Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, ed. John W. Welch (Hildesheim, DEU: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981), 97–98.

parallel panels so the end of the story mirrors the beginning. The parallel panels unfold like this:

Moses 1:1–41

- A Moses is caught up to see God (1)
- B God declares himself as the Almighty (3)
- C God is without beginning of days or end of years (3)
- D Moses beholds the world (7)
- E Moses beholds the children of men (8)
- F Moses sees the face of God (11)
- G Moses is to worship the Only Begotten (17)
- H Moses bore record of this, but due to wickedness, it shall not be had among the children of men (23)
- A' Moses beholds God's glory (24–5)
- B' God declares himself the as Almighty (25)
- C' God will be with Moses until the end of his days (26)
- D' Moses beholds the earth (27)
- E' Moses beholds the earth's inhabitants (28)
- F' Moses sees the face of God (31)
- G' Creation is through the Only Begotten (33)
- H' Moses is to write the words of God, but they shall be taken away (41)

The text of Moses 1 is an intricate and carefully planned episode. The chapter is crafted so that ideas that appear in the first half of the chapter are repeated and expanded in the second half. The beginning has Moses experiencing a Heavenly Ascent in which he is caught up to God's Presence in the same fashion as other prophets. He sees God, and talks to Him face-to-face. Only after the confrontation does Moses defeat Satan in a spiritual face-off, prove himself loyal to God, and is returned to his presence.

The two halves of this chapter act independently, each using a unique vocabulary.³⁹ This form is used so that when the latter panel is read, it brings to mind the first panel, and the reader can compare and contrast the two. Without the first half of the story, the second half would lack its force and power. On the other hand, without the second part of the story, the narrative comes to a halt and wouldn't give the upcoming story of the creation in its proper setting and context.

The contest against Satan completes a tripartite structure folded between the ascent accounts. Satan's sudden arrival, his temptation of Moses, and his expulsion are a natural hinge for the following concentric arrangement:

39. Compare, for instance, "the children of men" in verse 8 with the "inhabitants of the earth" in 28–36.

Moses 1:1–2:1

- A The word of God, which he spoke unto Moses upon an exceeding high mountain (1)
- B Endless is God’s name (3)
- C God’s work is his glory (4)
- D The Lord has a work for Moses
- E Moses is in the similitude of the Only Begotten (6)
- F Moses beholds the world and the ends thereof (7–8)
- G The presence of God withdraws from Moses (9)
- H Man, in his natural strength, is nothing (10)
- I Moses beheld God with his spiritual eyes (11)
- J Satan came tempting him (12)
- K Moses’ responded to Satan (13–15)
- L Moses commanded Satan to depart (16–18)
- M Satan ranted upon the earth (19)
- N Moses began to fear
- O Moses called upon God
- N’ Moses received strength (20)
- M’ Satan began to tremble and the earth shook
- L’ Moses cast Satan out in the name of the Only Begotten (21)
- K’ Satan cried with weeping and wailing
- J’ Satan departed from Moses (22)
- I’ Moses lifts up his eyes unto heaven (23–14)
- H’ Moses is made stronger than many waters
- G’ Moses beholds God’s glory again (25)
- F’ Moses is shown the heavens and the earth (27–31)
- E’ Creation is by the Only Begotten (32–33)
- B’ God’s works and words are endless (38)
- C’ God’s work is his glory (39)
- D’ Moses is to write the words of God (40–41)
- A’ The Lord speaks unto Moses concerning the heaven and earth (Moses 2:1/JST Genesis 1:1)

The structure of the chapter dictates that the second half of the chapter is very closely related to the first half. The parallels are striking. The two divine encounters of the author tightly frame this epic battle, with Satan at the center of the chiasm and the turning point of the

story being Moses calling upon God and being strengthened. One of Nils Lund's laws of chiasmus demonstrates that the center of the chiasm often has a parallel theme in the outer portion of the arrangement as well.⁴⁰ The center of the arrangement has Moses strengthened. This theme of strength occurs in verse 10 and later in verse 25. Perhaps the most interesting parallel is the pairing with the oft-quoted Moses 1:39, where God's work and glory is explained, with its counterpart in verse 5. Verse 39, when seen as an expansion of verse 5, gives God's work and glory a cosmic context that places humankind as a higher priority than all the rest of creation.

The center of the pericope appropriately focuses on the Only Begotten and Moses being in His similitude. Moses's understanding of being in the similitude of the Only Begotten will be key in the next scene of the story. Dan Belnap elaborates: "The differences between the two encounters will reflect the new understandings of the vision Moses gains through his confrontation with the adversary."⁴¹

The use of both parallel paneling and interwoven chiasmus shows not only a textual harmony but also extraordinary literary skill. Nibley has correctly referred to Moses 1 as a "literary tour de force."⁴²

We need to consider another structural configuration in the narrative. This arrangement serves as the backbone to the confrontation between Moses and Satan. We have seen in the above chiastic-chapter outline that this middle episode is arranged concentrically, the turning point being Moses calling upon God for strength. In stark relief to the chiasm, this episode can also be seen as roughly plotted parallel paneling.

Each panel begins with a repetition of "when Moses had said these words" as keywords. This introductory formula is followed by Moses's direct interaction with Satan. Both panels feature Satan commanding Moses to worship him, which is countered with Moses commanding Satan to depart. The differences in these panels is that the first panel is filled with a lengthy monologue by Moses, whereas the second panel contains action and drama of spiritual warfare.

The common elements between the panels can be charted as follows:

40. Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 42.

41. Daniel Belnap, "'Where Is Thy Glory?' Moses 1, the Nature of Truth, and the Plan of Salvation," *Religious Educator* 10, no. 2 (2009): 167.

42. Hugh W. Nibley, "To Open the Last Dispensation," *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978), 6.

Introduction:	“when Moses had said these words” (12/19)
Enticement:	“Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man worship me” (12) “Satan cried with a loud voice ... saying, I am the Only Begotten, worship me” (19)
Rejoinder:	Moses is commanded to “call upon God” (17) Moses calls upon God for strength (20)
Counter-action:	Moses tells Satan to “depart hence” (18) Moses cases out Satan “in the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence” (21)

Notice that while these parallel elements cover the same verses as the chapter’s center chiasm, the turning point of the chiasm and the starting point of the second parallel panel are in different places of the text. The center of the chiasm is placed in the story when Moses calls upon the name of the Only Begotten for strength (Moses 1:17), while the hinge of the parallel panels begins with the repetition of identical keywords (Moses 1:19). The overlay of chiasmus with parallel panels shows the author has a profound mastery of his material.

One last structural device warrants our attention. The end of Moses 1 contains an injunction from the Lord to Moses to write his words, which is carried through to Moses 2. Kent Jackson notes that in the transition between chapters “[the words of Moses 2] do not give the impression of having been written to stand at the head of a new document, but to continue the texts that precede them.”⁴³ This flow of the words invites a look for literary features. Here we find a connecting link between these two separate revelations in the form of a small chiasm. The earlier revelation of Moses 1 is presented in regular type, while the subsequent revelation (Moses 2) is in italics.

Moses 1:40–2:1

a	... this earth upon which thou standest
b	write the words which I shall speak. (40)
c	And in a day when the children of men
d	shall esteem my words as naught
e	and take many of them from the book,
f	behold, I will raise up another
f'	like unto thee
e'	and they shall be had again
c'	among the children of men

43. Kent P. Jackson, “The Vision of Moses and Joseph Smith’s Bible Translation,” in *To Seek The Law Of The Lord: Essays in Honor of John W. Welch*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 163–64.

- d' as many as shall believe. (41)
 b' ... write the words which I speak
 a' ... and the earth upon which thou standest. (2:1)

The chiasmic structure is well suited to report the loss of the words of the Lord and then to have the words restored as the structure swings back around.⁴⁴ Note that verse 42 has been left out of the arrangement because it is a parenthetical aside from the Lord to the Prophet Joseph Smith and is not part of the vision itself.⁴⁵ The presence of chiasmus in these verses links these two revelations together, suggesting a deliberate textual unit. The words “earth upon which thou standest” act as an inclusio demarcating the limits of the segment.

If a narrative structure contains elements from both the JST and the extant biblical text, it strongly suggests a textual unity between the two. Lundbom asserts, “In discerning the structure of discourse, rhetorical criticism can isolate added material in the text and material that appears to have fallen out.”⁴⁶ The implications for the study of the JST should be obvious. The fact that this textual unit is formatted as a narrative structure demonstrates that the text should be treated as a whole literary unit. If the additions by the JST are found embedded in such structures, it is reasonable to view those as a restoration of a preexisting text.

Literary Technique in Moses 1

Having seen the structure and delimitations of Moses 1, we turn to examine the literary features of the chapter. The Hebrew Bible as well as the New Testament call upon specific authorial techniques to bring out the power of persuasion in the text. One would expect Moses 1 to use the same techniques if it hails from the same ancient Israelite environment.

44. Note that a similar arrangement has been presented by Matthew Bowen. See Matthew L. Bowen, “And They Shall Be Had Again?: Onomastic Allusions to Joseph in Moses 1:41 in View of the So-called Canon Formula,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 301.

45. David Calabro has argued otherwise — that verse 42 was also part of the original narrative. While his reasoning has merit, I see the flow of the text without verse 42 as evidence that these last instructions were an addition for the instruction of the Prophet Joseph. See David M. Calabro, “Joseph Smith and the Architecture of Genesis,” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Interpreter, 2016), 169.

46. Lundbom, *Biblical Rhetoric*, 31.

Narration and Dialogue

We have stated that a rhetorical or stylistic analysis of a text needs to begin with a focus on the narrator. Mazor shows that the narrator is the foundation of any meaning conveyed by the text:

The rhetorical layer of the biblical text primarily consists of the narrator, his point of view, and the aesthetic devices he enlists to communicate with the reader. The narrator of a literary text is a rhetorical figure, a device embedded in the text. ... The narrator who takes no part in the plot, yet who is still part of the literary text, is an external narrator, one who reports on the action and the evolving events from a distance, as an observer. That the external narrator is *not* part of the plot and has no role in it confers more objectivity in narration.⁴⁷

The narrator of Moses 1 is not visible in the story. The distance at which he remains allows him a certain omniscience to present his story on large and small scales, although he positions himself close to Moses, allowing the reader to see what Moses sees and to feel what he feels. As is typical of biblical authors, the narrator remains anonymous in identity and purpose. And while Moses is commanded to write the dictated word of God, the narrator is silent in his motives for his own created chronicle.

The text of Moses 1 is dialogue-bound narrative. The narrator of Moses 1 carefully selected what information to present about the characters of the chapter and the presentation of the plot. The story is told in the third person, and the narrator describes the events of the action while letting the characters (God, Moses, and Satan) introduce ideas and doctrinal concepts through their dialogues with each other. Verses 10 and 11 seem to be the exception: Moses speaks to himself so as to recap the previous ascent and transfiguration for the audience.

Shimon Bar-Efrat observes that “conversation is the principal, often the sole component of biblical scenes, which present a specific event occurring at a defined time and place. ... The scenes do not give the reader an outline of what has happened, but rather create the impression that the events are taking place before the reader’s very eyes.”⁴⁸ This is also the preferred type of storytelling in Moses 1; the account moves forward through conversation.

The dialogue style is distinctively biblical. The author does not distinguish between the characters in the narrative by providing them a unique style and vocabulary. Old Testament characters rarely have

47. Mazor, *Who Wrought the Bible?*, 100.

48. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 149–50.

voices that are different from the voice of the narrator.⁴⁹ The dialogue in the chapter follows Alter's observations that "the biblical scene, in other words, is conceived almost entirely as verbal intercourse, with the assumption that what is significant about a character, at least for a particular narrative juncture, can be manifested almost entirely in the character's speech."⁵⁰ The story of Moses 1 follows the same rule: the participants in the chapter speak of their own glory and power or lack of glory, and these descriptions are not supplied by the narrator.

The biblical authors also exploit what can be called *contrastive dialogue*. Here the writer will "juxtapose some form of very brief statement with some form of verbosity."⁵¹ For example, Potiphar's wife spoke just the small phrase "Lie with me" (Genesis 39:7, 12) to Joseph of Egypt. Joseph retorted with a lengthy discourse rejecting "such great wickedness." The differences in the amount of dialogue invite the reader to view Joseph and Potiphar's wife at the opposite ends of a spectrum. Indeed, "the use of dialogue enhances the depth of characterization. Dialogue weakens characters with silence or minimizes the role of other characters with limited discourse."⁵² Moses 1 contains this same technique: Satan tempts Moses with only a few words, while Moses's rebuttal is quite lengthy by comparison. Moses declares that Satan is limited in his glory compared to the glory of God; the length of dialogue further illuminates the distance between the two. This technique is also present in the dialogue between Moses and God. God's abundance of discourse sets him apart from Moses, who, by comparison, asks only a small number of questions.

The narrative style of biblical prose is neither flowery nor descriptive. The narrator keeps his words to a very minimum and chooses the words that would provide the maximum impact upon the audience. The reticent narrator "frequently disappears into the background. The biblical narrator supplies sparse details and recounts events without giving commentary or telling the reader how to interpret the story."⁵³ Alter describes this as the "famous laconic quality of biblical narrative." He continues:

49. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 65.

50. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 70.

51. *Ibid.*, 72–73.

52. Adam P. Hock, "Narrating the Scriptures: Using a Literary Approach to Enhance Scripture Teaching," *Religious Educator* 17, no. 3 (2016): 38.

53. *Ibid.*, 30.

There is never leisurely description for its own sake; scene setting is accomplished with the barest economy of means; characters are sped over a span of years with a simple summary notation until we reach a portentous conjunction rendered in dialogue; and, in keeping with all of this, analysis and assessment of character are very rare, and then very brief.⁵⁴

The narrative of Moses's experiences is composed with carefully weighted words, so every word needs to be considered carefully.

It should also be noted that the syntax of Moses 1 follows the same format as other biblical prose. Consider Moses 1:28–29:

And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof,
and there was not a soul which he beheld not;
and he discerned them by the Spirit of God;
and their numbers were great,
 even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore.
And he beheld many lands;
and each land was called earth,
and there were inhabitants on the face thereof.

Multiple clauses linked together through the particle “and” are representative of proper biblical Hebrew syntax.

The pace of the action is also an important tool to guide the audience. The cadence of the narrative is frequently employed in the biblical authors' use of time. Time is manifest in the scriptures in the duration of events, in the sequence of particular events, and in the time when the event specifically happened. The biblical author shows no reservation in juxtaposing events for effect (even if it means his presentation is out of chronological order) in casting events for a specific duration of time for numeric symbolism or even collapsing years of history to bring an earlier and a later event together. The use of time as a narrative tool is clarified by Richards and O'Brien:

The biblical authors *were* intentional about the sequence in which they presented events, even if they weren't preoccupied with historical, chronological order. We Westerners can focus

54. Robert Alter, “Introduction,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds., Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 22.

so much on the *time* (chronology) that we miss the *timing* (the meaning of the sequence) in a biblical passage.⁵⁵

The presentation of events by the narrator indicates his purpose and priority, particularly if the timing or duration of event is manifestly contrived. As an example, when we are presented with two paired stories of creation (Moses 2–3), it is tempting to recast them into a spiritual followed by a physical creation, thereby becoming chronologically satisfactory, but this might be at the expense of the intended purpose of the author. The narrator’s use of time and pacing in Moses 1 will be shown in the next section.

Another tool used by the biblical authors is *motif*, a recurring image, pattern or design that emerges during the narrative of a character. Alter describes it as

a concrete image, sensory quality, action, or object recurs through a particular narrative. ... It has no meaning in itself without the defining context of the narrative; it may be incipiently symbolic or instead primarily a means of giving formal coherence to a narrative.⁵⁶

Motifs act as contributory elements which subtly stitch points in the narrative together. Understanding the use of motif in the text adds nuance and shading to a story-arc where it might otherwise be missed.

Moses is associated with the motif of water. This motif often uses water in conjunction with deliverance, whether deliverance from the Egyptians by way of crossing the Red Sea or being saved by the gushing of water from a rock in the wilderness. Even Moses’s own name is defined in terms of deliverance from water. Regarding this nomenclative art, Nathan Arp aptly notes, “The Hebrew and Egyptian etymologies come together in the idea of pulling from water — whether that be amniotic water or baptismal water.”⁵⁷ Indeed, he correctly observes that “Moses’s name is not an auxiliary ornament of rhetoric, but a guiding component to the story of the Exodus.”⁵⁸ Moses made stronger than many waters is not only a prophetic statement, but also another accurate echo of his

55. E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 149.

56. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 95.

57. Nathan J. Arp, “Joseph Knew First: Moses, the Egyptian Son,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 32 (2019): 187–98.

58. *Ibid.*, 192.

motif. Being made stronger than many waters also puts Moses in the similitude of God, God's throne being on many waters (Psalms 29:3, 10).

A Stylistic Reading

Continuing our examination of literary functions, I will demonstrate how a close reading of the text with an eye for stylistics can reveal an extra layer of meaning that otherwise might be missed. This brief exploration of the text is by no means exhaustive but is intended to demonstrate some possibilities that can be found in a close reading.

Most of Moses 1 consists of the ascent form, so the narrator, needing to distinguish between the two occurrences, carefully controls the content and pace of the first ascent so the second will have a greater impact in the mind of the reader. The first ascent of Moses feels hurried and incomplete. Note that in the first verse, Moses was said to have talked to God face-to-face at the beginning of the episode. However, the narrator shelves any speech by Moses and instead lets the Lord do all the talking. The Lord then promises to show Moses only one thing, which leaves both Moses and the audience hungry for more. Then, just as quickly as it began, the lights turn off, the curtain falls, and Moses is back on earth. The ending in verse nine mirrors the introduction in verses 1–2. This gives the audience an abrupt ending to the ascent, almost as if the reader tripped and fell down these steps, not unlike Moses falling to the earth:

Moses was caught up into an exceedingly high mountain.

Moses saw God face to face, and he talked with him.

The glory of God was upon Moses.

Moses could endure his presence. (Moses 1:1–2)

The presence of God withdrew from Moses.

God's glory was not upon Moses.

Moses was left unto himself.

Moses fell to the earth. (Moses 1:9)

Moses is back on solid ground. The narrator is carefully mindful of the directional dimensions of his story. Moses isn't described as standing up if he had in fact fallen down. Any indication of upward movement is reserved for the next ascension establishing an acute awareness of spatial stratum.

Looking back, Moses is intensely aware of the magnitude of this ascent and vision. It has caused him to marvel and wonder (1:8) at the vastness of the Earth. As is typical for the narrator, this is accomplished through internal monologue or narrated summation of thoughts. This

type of brief look into the emotions of the character or even through the character's eyes allows the narrator to inject a moment of characterization into the story with the briefest of words. Adele Berlin makes note of this type of presentation:

[This] way of showing a character's point of view is by informing the reader what he thought, felt, feared, etc. — in other words, by portraying the inner life of the character. This lets the reader know how the character perceives the events of the story, how he is affected and how he is likely to react.⁵⁹

In these verses, the readers, along with Moses, see the created world and the children of men. We also experience the marvel and wonder by this glance into Moses's inner life.

Verse 10 also presents a glimpse into Moses's feelings by the use of a figure of speech common to the Bible. Called *litotes*, this idiom is appropriate when something is dramatically understated to enhance or elevate something else. This is apparent in Moses 1:10, where Moses declares he is nothing in comparison to the glory and power of the Almighty and Endless God. Compare this statement alongside Abraham's discussion with the Lord in Genesis: "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). Both Moses and Abraham debase themselves to magnify the holiness of the Lord.

Richards and O'Brien note another item, that "God said that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). In fact, the Bible frequently uses 'alone' as a negative term."⁶⁰ Here in these verses, we may be tempted to see Moses enjoying a moment of serenity, but we are casting our ideas on his situation. Solitude leads one to be vulnerable to attack.

No sooner than Moses begins to collect himself, Satan appears as a new character in the narrative. As he begins this new episode in the story-arc, the narrator chooses a new method of working the pace of the story. We have seen that verses 12–23 are roughly plotted with parallel paneling. The narrator takes advantage of the panels to form a contrast to increase the tension and pace of the narrative. This is accomplished as the lengthy sections of dialogue in the first panel that give way to a flurry of action words that accelerates the pacing of the story. The narrator presents an urgency in the text by having Moses first defend himself with dialogue; and after a signal with the use of a key-word (the

59. Adele Berlin, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 61.

60. Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture*, 78–79.

repeated “when Moses had said these words”), the story turns to action and emotion, and the dialogue remains minimal.

Note that items in the first panel are reflected and intensified in the second. The temptation of verse 12 turns into the tumult of verse 19. The apparent glory of darkness becomes the bitterness of hell in verse 20. The twice repeated admonition to call upon the name of God in 17 and 18 gave Moses strength in 20 and 21. Lastly, the urgency increases as each attempt to cast out Satan is met with greater intensity.

Notice also that the narrator returns us to the *inner life* point of view, where again we see what Moses saw and especially note that he felt fear in the moment.

Satan’s words “Moses, son of man, worship me” are curious in a number of aspects. As he begins, Satan uses the incorrect title for Moses by calling him “*the son of man.*” Stephen O. Smoot notes that when Moses was caught up into the presence of God, Moses was made a member of the heavenly court (or divine council), by bestowing the title the “son of God.” Smoot explains:

When viewed within the context of the divine council, this dialogue between Satan and Moses takes upon itself a new meaning. Satan’s tactic was to bring Moses down to a level of mere humanity by calling him a “son of man.” ... However, since Moses was designated a “son of God” by God himself, he was much more than merely a “son of man.” His deification into the divine council put him far above the status of a groveling human. Satan wished to strip Moses of his prophetic legitimacy by denying his association in the divine council as a “son of God.”⁶¹

While we are dealing with names and titles in these verses, we would be remiss not to recall the importance of names and titles in antiquity. It must be remembered that “in most civilizations of the past, a very high value was placed upon having one’s name live on after one’s death.”⁶² The blessing of having one’s name written in the book of life is to perpetuate one’s name beyond death; likewise, having one’s name

61. Stephen O. Smoot, “I Am a Son of God”: Moses’ Ascension into the Divine Council” in *2012 BYU Religious Education Student Symposium* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2012), 136.

62. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 220.

blotted out can mean either a premature temporal death or a spiritual punishment and damnation.

When Moses notes Satan's appearance with "Who art thou?" Satan is denied a name/title that would rightfully and properly belong to a god. Here, the lack of a name was equivalent to having one's name blotted out. To be denied a name is also perhaps an ironic item. One of the names and titles of YHWH in the scriptures is "I Am," which could be described as the ultimate identity.

The narrator ends this episode with an aside that effectually gives Moses and the reader a chance to catch our breaths and to prepare for the next segment. The mention that Moses bore record of these things, only to have them removed by wicked men, returns us to the writer's table, and we are reminded of the narrator's presence. This type of narrative aside isn't uncommon in the Hebrew Bible. The biblical author occasionally reveals the status of his subject at the time of his writing. This can be compared to examples such as 1 Samuel 30:25, where the narrator explains rules for dividing war spoils which had originated in King David's time and are still in effect "unto this day." The authorial aside gives a small glimpse into the time of the narrator.

Now that evil has been cast out, Moses is ready to receive additional light and knowledge from the Lord. This second ascent expands the contents of the first ascent and shows Moses and the audience an increase of God's creation.

The second ascent with its accompanying visions provides us with a glimpse into the narrator's use of numbers and scale. We might imagine that the second vision would showcase an expansive universe of grandeur, somewhat like what Terryl Givens has called "a panoramic vision of the cosmos,"⁶³ but this is not the style of the narrator. In Moses 1, God's glory and his creations are presented not as a three-dimensional Technicolor tour of the galaxy but rather in more linear terms of number and quantity. This type of presentation is expressed through the descriptive "many" (25, 29, 34, 35, and 37). The souls Moses saw were as "numberless as the sands upon the sea shore." The Lord's creations are worlds without number, and they are innumerable unto man.⁶⁴ The Lord himself describes his glory in terms of *endless* and *eternal*.

63. Terryl Givens with Brian Hauglid, *The Pearl of Greatest Price: Mormonism's Most Controversial Scripture* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), 37.

64. It should also be noted, based on our observations of number and increase, that the astronomy of the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham are presented differently. The order of heavens and planets in the Book of Moses is cardinal, while the Book of Abraham presents them as ordinal.

The author of Moses 1 has shaped his text with the use of description, dialogue, motif, wordplay, figures of speech, pacing, direction and structure to guide the reader/listener to his messages.

Form/Genre

A central tenet of form criticism aims to understand the *gattung* (genre) of a text and the *sitz im leben* (the social setting) that lies behind the genre. But note that the form critical approach to genre, according to Buss, “is best viewed as an open or virtual class which describes a possibility, rather than as a class of actual objects which meet a certain description.”⁶⁵ Genre is best understood as describing events and actions in human life as conforming to an expectation of the reader.

The text of Moses 1 is composed of two different genres. The first and last part of the chapter are from the apocalypse genre, while the middle of the chapter is a prophetic lawsuit. Examples of these genres are also found somewhat frequently in the ancient Near East, the Bible, and the Book of Mormon.

The Heavenly Ascent

The first type of genre manifest in Moses 1 is that of apocalypse. While the term *apocalypse* often evokes imagery of cataclysmic cacophony, the meaning of the Greek word (ἀποκάλυψις) is “uncovered” or “revealed.” Things apocalyptic are God’s revealed word to mankind. John C. Collins defines the apocalypse genre thus:

Apocalypse may be defined as a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world.⁶⁶

Collins notes that this genre is manifest as many subsets. These may include Epiphanies, Visions, Theophanies, Heavenly Book(s),

65. Martin Buss, ed., *Encounter with the Text: Form and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), quoted in Soulen, s.v. “Gemeindeordnungen, Gemeindegeln,” *Handbook*, 76.

66. John C. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979), 9, quoted in Blake T. Ostler, “The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis,” *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (1986): 88.

and Ascents.⁶⁷ This ascent subgenre is the form for much of Moses 1. Bradshaw explains the significance of the ascent experience:

The overall narrative structure and literary details of Moses 1 place it squarely in the genre of the ancient heavenly ascent literature. Although stories of heavenly ascent bear important similarities to ancient and modern temple liturgy, they make the claim of being something more. Whereas temple rituals dramatically depict a *figurative* journey into the presence of God, the heavenly ascent literature contains stories of exceptional individuals who experienced *actual* encounters with Deity within the *heavenly* temple — the “completion or fulfillment” of the “types and images” found in earthly ordinances. In such encounters, individuals may experience a vision of eternity, participate in worship with the angels, and have certain blessings conferred upon them that are “made sure” by the voice of God Himself. They may also acquire membership and a mission as a member of the divine council.⁶⁸

Because the Heavenly Ascent pattern of Moses 1 has been thoroughly researched by other authors, I refer the reader to research by Bradshaw and Larson,⁶⁹ as well as Smoot, for further details.

***Rib* disputation pattern or Prophetic Lawsuit**

The *rib* (רִיב) disputation pattern is a well-documented formula used by biblical Israel and her neighbors. The Hebrew word *rib* signifies a contest or dispute, and the KJV often translates this word as “controversy.” It is a “[technical term] in OT studies for the complaint which one member of the covenant (usually Yahweh or his prophet) issues against the offending member.”⁷⁰ The term *lawsuit* is a bit misrepresentative in that it implies a formal legal setting whereas this was often not the case.⁷¹ For our purposes, it is sufficient to know that this form was used as a vehicle

67. Ibid.

68. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, David J. Larsen, and Stephen T. Whitlock, “The Heavenly Ascent of Moses 1 as a Prelude to a Temple Text: New Light from the *Apocalypse of Abraham*” (unpublished manuscript, 2019), 2–3.

69. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (West Valley City, UT: Eborn Books, 2010), 13–50.

70. Soulen, s.v. “*Rib* Pattern,” *Handbook*, 170.

71. See John W. Welch, “King Benjamin’s Speech as a Prophetic Lawsuit,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom*, eds. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 225–32.

for delivering a rebuke or a call to repentance from the Lord through his prophets to Israel in times of their infidelity. Examples of this pattern can be found in Isaiah 1:2–9, Jeremiah 2:4–13 and Hosea 4:1–10.

The four parts of a prophetic lawsuit can occur with some variation, depending on the violation or just the biblical author's preferences. The *rib* pattern typically begins with a summons or an introduction to the participants. The next step provides the "charges" against the offender, while the third step delineates the innocence of the offended. The last step involves a proposition for the end of the conflict, in which the offender either turns away from his or her wrongs or receives punishment according to the stipulations of the covenant. Richard M. Davidson clarifies the significance of this genre:

I suggest that the covenant lawsuit is not only a (sub)genre, with a specific literary form and/or technical terminology ... but constitutes a motif that suffuses the entire warp and woof of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. ... The ריב pattern is part of the Hebrew mentality, part and parcel of the way that God is depicted in Scripture.⁷²

He further notes that "the 'covenant lawsuit' structure forms a virtual mirror image of Israel's covenant-making pattern."⁷³ The accusations against the covenant breaker are in similitude of the very covenant being broken. This pattern therefore reminds the audience of the initial covenant and tells of the penalties of mocking God by breaking the covenant.

Consider the following consolidation of details frequently featured in the *rib* pattern.⁷⁴ This listing is from instances in the Bible as well as other contemporary ancient eastern cultures. Instances of the pattern follow the four-part outline and can include the subunits listed here in one form or another.

- I. Summons to dispute
 - Call of covenant witnesses
 - Call to attention of accused
- II. Accusation against the offender
 - Declaration of obligations/interrogation
 - Declaration of violations

72. Richard M. Davidson, "The Divine Covenant Lawsuit Motif in Canonical Perspective," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 21, no. 1–2 (2010): 70.

73. *Ibid.*, 64.

74. Robert H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 42.

- Declaration of culpability
- Rejection of ritual compensation
- III. Exoneration of the offended
 - A. Covenant innocence
 - 1. Voluntary initiation of the covenant
 - 2. Loyalty to the covenant
 - Recount of past benefits
 - Present offer of reinstatement
 - B. Right to vindication
 - Trial by combat
- IV. Ultimatum
 - A. Threat
 - Repeal of covenant benefits
 - Continued/partial/total destruction
 - B. Appeal
 - 1. Appeal proper
 - 2. Motivation
 - Description of present distresses
 - Renewal of Covenant benefits
 - 3. Condition
 - Terms of reinstatement/reparations

Micah 6:1–8 serves as an example the *rib* pattern in the oracles of the prophets. In these verses, the prophet Micah requests the tribunal on behalf of the Lord. Note the manifestation of the four elements of the lawsuit described below:

In this passage, the prophet utilizes a legal model and legal terminology in order to underscore his message of justice. The word *rib* is repeated three times, as the mountains and hills are called forward as judges: there can be no mistaking the courtroom setting and trial language in these first few verses [1–2]. As with most prophetic poetry, however, there is a twist: rather than hearing YHWH's accusation, as we hear in many other *rib* oracles, we realize that YHWH has convened the court in order to challenge Israel to lay her charge against *him* [3–5]. And then, instead of prosecuting God, Israel wants to reconcile — a model, perhaps, of restorative justice rather than an adversarial process. But Israel seeks cultic means to solve a juridical problem, and that will not suffice [6–7]; according

to the last verse, it is only just action toward other people, and loyalty to YHWH, that can resolve this dispute [8].⁷⁵

Turning to Moses 1, we find the elements of the prophetic lawsuit in Moses's confrontation with Satan. This instance has Moses acting in place (or in similitude) of the Only Begotten in delivering the *Gerichtsrede* to the accuser. The twice repeated line of "I can judge between . . ." is a legal formula used elsewhere in the Hebrew bible.⁷⁶ The Hebrew word *shaphat* is behind the word *judge* in the King James Version and is instructive for understanding these verses. The same Hebrew word is also used in Exodus 18:13–23, where Moses sits in judgment of the people of Israel before installing lesser judges at the counsel of his father-in-law. Haim Shipira explains Moses's role as judge: "In the original more primitive system described here, Moses acts as a judge-prophet, whose function was to decide various disputes according to the word of God. . . . Under this system, the prophet serves as a judge who implements 'the Divine judgment.'"⁷⁷

This is the same situation in Moses 1, with Moses handing down the "Divine judgment." So while Satan desperately claims to be the Only Begotten, Moses has already put on the mantle and sits in judgment. The notion of Moses as judge in Moses 1 is entirely in keeping with his role as prophet and the presentation of that role by the biblical author.

As we work our way through the narrative, we see the narrator take Moses through all four stages of the *rib* pattern:

1. **Summons to dispute.** The controversy begins with Satan appearing to tempt Moses. The word *tempt* in Hebrew (*nâsâh*) is also defined as "test" or "trial," which has overtones of a legal setting.

2. **Accusation.** However, Moses quickly turns the tables on Satan and puts him under interrogation. In doing this, Moses formalizes the legal proceedings. This exordium accuses Satan of blasphemy (contempt of the Only Begotten) and temptation to worship a false god. Moses uses the glory of God as his platform to build his case.

- Moses declares Satan to have no glory, in direct contrast to the Only Begotten, who is full of glory.

75. Chaya Halberstam, "Law in Biblical Israel," in *The Cambridge Companion to Judaism and Law*, ed. Christine Hayes (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 60–61.

76. Other instances of this formula include Genesis 16:5, Exodus 18:16, Numbers 35:24, 1 Samuel 24:12 and Ezekiel 34:17.

77. Haim Shipira, "For The Judgment Is God's: Human Judgment And Divine Justice In The Hebrew Bible And In Jewish Tradition" *Journal of Law and Religion* 27, no. 2 (2011), 285.

- Moses declares that Satan is different from YHWH. Satan can be seen while “in the natural man,” while God may not be seen without His intercession.
- Satan’s glory is like darkness.

These accusations challenge Satan’s assertions for worship. Moses declares Satan to be without glory and therefore unworthy and undeserving of worship. Moses notes that even if Satan had glory, Moses wouldn’t be able to look upon Satan without being in a state of transfiguration. As he continues to lay out his case, Moses says he can look upon Satan with his “natural” eyes. Further, Moses still has the spirit of God and discernment, even though he had just declared that he himself was nothing (1:10). Contrast this with Satan, who has less than the empty canvas of nothing. Satan’s glory is like darkness.

Moses now closes the accusation portion of the lawsuit with the formula “And I can judge between thee and God” (1:15).

3. ***Exoneration of the offended.*** Moses details his covenant innocence with a list of his righteous qualifications:

- Moses is in the similitude of the Only Begotten.
- Moses will not cease to call upon God.
- Moses notes that he has been the beneficiary of past blessings from the Lord, when he was visited by the Lord at the burning bush.
- Moses has experienced God’s glory.

Moses concludes his defense argument with the formula “wherefore, I can judge between him and thee” (1:18).

Note the inversion of the formula in verse 15 with its usage in verse 18. Verse 15 lists Satan first and then, by way of contrast, God. This acts as a concluding statement, that Moses has completed judging Satan against the superior example of God. In verse 18, we find the reverse. Moses, having noted the goodness of God, declares that he can judge between the righteousness of God and the works of Satan.

Verse 18 also marks a transition to the Ultimatum in the use of the word *wherefore*, which acts as a statement of conclusion that now leads to the next phase of the lawsuit. M. O’Rourke Boyle shows that the *rib* pattern of Amos 3 uses “wherefore/therefore” as a characteristic introduction to the pending punishments or reconciliations.⁷⁸

The Exoneration shifts over to a *trial by combat*, in which Moses attempts to cast out Satan, but Satan resists (1:20). This can be viewed as

78. Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle. “The Covenant Lawsuit of the Prophet Amos: III 1 - IV 13” *Vetus Testamentum* 21, no. 3 (1971): 356.

a *theomachy*, which is defined as a battle among the gods. As a member of the divine council, Moses has the credentials to participate in this type of genre.

4. **Ultimatum.** This ultimatum is different from other examples of the *rib* pattern, as there is no olive branch extended to Satan. Satan's destiny is to be cast out; opportunities to make reparations have long past. The narrator also makes note of Moses's present distresses, which are epitomized by Moses seeing the very bitterness of hell. Moses, finally successful, casts Satan out in the name of the Only Begotten (1:21).

Boyle insightfully notes that at the end of the dispute in Amos 3, the name of the Lord is invoked to act as a seal of authority.⁷⁹ This is also resonant of Moses 1, where the dispute pattern ends with Moses using the name of the Only Begotten to successfully cast out Satan. The name of the Only Begotten brings the disputation to a close.

Narrative Themes

The central or dominating idea of a work of literature is its theme. The intent of the biblical narratives can often be found in the narrator's use of a repeated key-word or theme. These repetitions are significant mileposts along the narrative as they direct the reader to see the author's priorities in his written word.

The Glory of God

One such key-word in Moses 1 is the word *glory*. As a central theme in the chapter, it is used 14 times, including one instance in the original manuscripts that isn't in our published version.

Moses saith I will not cease to call upon God I have other things to inquire of him for his glory has been upon me & it is glory unto me wherefore⁸⁰
(OT1, page 1, lines 41–42.)

The predominance of the word warrants a closer look at its place in the chapter and its place in the larger theology of the Pentateuch. The glory of God is commonly referred to as the *Shekinah* by commentators of the Hebrew Bible, even though the word doesn't appear in the Bible itself. The *Shekinah* (*šekinah*, meaning "dwelling" or "settling") can be

79. Ibid., 361.

80. Kent P. Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2005), 146.

described as “the nimbus or halo of light ... experienced in the presence of God.”⁸¹ The idea of glory “settling” is in fact a good fit with Moses 1, where God’s glory came upon Moses as he entered God’s presence.

Dan Belnap elaborates that “God’s glory includes both the physical light represented by the Shekinah-type experience and also truth, the conscious awareness of the way things really are, the latter [referring] especially to Moses in this chapter.”⁸²

When we see Moses 1 as a lost prologue, the text serves as an introduction to the Book of Genesis as well as the rest of the Pentateuch. What might be overlooked is that this chapter is also an introduction to God and to his Only Begotten. As such, it is singularly focused on glory. The certainty of YHWH is attested because of this glory. It is glory that sets YHWH apart from Ra, Horus, Enlil, Marduk, or any of the gods of Canaan.

The emphasis on glory is also abundant in Moses’s confrontation with Satan. The binary choice between glory and no glory reflects the ancient doctrine of the Two Ways, where men and women must daily choose between following the way of darkness or the way of light.⁸³

Glory is also an important component of entering into the presence of God. Margaret Barker notes:

Beyond the veil was the glory. This was described as “the presence” or “the face” of the Lord. ... The glory came to the tabernacle when it was consecrated. The cloud covered the tent, “the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34). ... To see the glory of the Lord’s presence — to see beyond the veil — was the greatest blessing.⁸⁴

Note, however, that the notion of glory isn’t as cut-and-dry as might be expected. Kerry Muhlestein notes:

The power of the Lord seems to have been particularly hard for the biblical writers to convey. This difficulty may account for the ambiguous use of the term *kâbôd*. As has been noted, this term usually conveys the meaning of weight, or heaviness.

81. Belnap, “Where Is Thy Glory?” 164.

82. *Ibid.*, 163–80.

83. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness: Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Book of Moses* (West Valley City, UT: Eborn Books, 2010), 328–29.

84. Margaret Barker, *Christmas: The Original Story* (London: SPCK, 2008), 14.

However, it sometimes is associated with light, and this is frequently the case in theophanic accounts.⁸⁵

While it is likely true that the biblical writers had difficulty conveying God's glory, it is also true that readers share the same difficulty. "Words fall short, but not without reason. God's glory is too active to fall into a simplified man-made compartmentalization of the subject."⁸⁶

One of the difficulties faced by interpreters is that *glory* in the English translations is often one of half-a-dozen different Hebrew words used within the biblical text. Philippe Paul-Luc Vigulier tells that *kâbôd* is the predominant word for *glory* in the Hebrew bible, but numerous secondary words are used as well. A variety of Hebrew terms are used to translate *glory* in the King James Version that can help inform our understanding of glory in Moses 1. Hebrew words such as *kâbôd*, as well as *âdar* (to be majestic, to be exalted) or *pâ'ar* (to adorn, beautify), have all been translated as "glory" in the King James Version. It doesn't seem unreasonable that one word in the revealed translation might represent a number of different words in the original.⁸⁷

Due to the multiple possibilities for glory in Moses 1, some of our observations of the English text remain limited. As an example, Moses notes that he was transfigured before the Lord. Was this event similar to when he returned down from Sinai, when his face shone and he had to veil his face?

The predominance and preeminence of the word *glory* reveals Moses 1 to be doxological, that is, being a witness and praise to God's glory.

Strength

Another theme of Moses 1 is the word *strength*, which can be seen as another key word that functions in the text. There are three instances of strength as a factor in the narrative. The first instance is Moses possessing

85. Kerry Muhlestein, "Darkness, Light, and the Lord: Elements of Israelite Theophanies," in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, eds. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Matthew J. Grey, and David Rolph Seely (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2013), 249.

86. Philippe Paul-Luc Vigulier, "A Biblical Theology of the Glory of God," (master's thesis, The Master's Seminary, 2012), 2.

87. The King James translators of First Corinthians have done this in 14:20 with the word *children*. Paul uses the word παιδιον ("a young child, an infant") in the beginning of this verse, while the second instance of *children* is the verb νηπιάζετε ("to be childish, infantile"). Here, the choice of the translators obscures Paul's original meaning.

“natural strength like unto man.” This state of strength appears to be adequate for the natural man, but Moses soon finds it wholly inadequate to deal with Satan’s wrath and fury. As fear flooded his heart, Moses called upon God and received additional strength, which enabled him to overcome his fears and triumph over the evil one. In the third instance, the strengthened Moses is promised additional strength which would be greater than many waters. This would endow Moses with powers to be in similitude of YHWH, to divide the waters from the waters (similar to Genesis 1:6) at the shores of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21).

There is a significance in this three-tiered leveling of personal strength and spirituality. The narrator, with his awareness of space, describes strength in patterns reminiscent of sacred geography, each tier bringing Moses closer to God.

Narrative and Temple Texts

The tabernacle and later temples were the center of biblical Israel’s worship, so it should not be surprising that the ordinances and themes of the temple saturate the biblical text. As the biblical authors were writing from a temple-centered environment, their writings can be better understood when viewed with the workings and doctrines of the ancient temple in mind. The presence and presentation of temple-related themes are relevant to our study, as these themes are factors that inform the words of the narrative.

Such texts that contain reference to the teachings and ordinances of the temple are called *temple texts*. They are “a symbolic narrative of the ‘mystery’ of how God’s plan of salvation will work out according to his will in the end.”⁸⁸ John W. Welch elaborates:

A text can be seen as a temple text if it is obviously connected with the temple or with temple functions. Some texts ... are temple texts as they comprise the historical, theological, or covenantal underpinnings of the ceremonies, symbols, and purposes behind the construction and ceremonies of the temple. ... Any number of clues may signal to readers that a text has temple connections. These clues include background contexts, coded vocabulary, or holy pronouncements, but most indicative of all are references to encounters with the divine presence.⁸⁹

88. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘I Have Done According to thy Will,’ Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text,” in *The Temple: Ancient & Restored*, 235.

89. John W. Welch, “Experiencing the Presence of the Lord: The Temple Program of Leviticus,” in *The Temple: Ancient & Restored*, 273.

Most of Moses 1 consists of Moses in the presence of God, which, in a temple setting, is a function reserved for the high priest in the Holy of Holies. Thus I would argue that the temple covenant-making themes in former times influenced both the structure and the content of the material included in the Book of Moses.

Throughout the text of the Book of Moses, its author stops the historic portions of the story and weaves into the narrative framework ritual acts, such as sacrifice and sacrament ordinances such as baptism, washings, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, and oaths and covenants, such as obedience to marital obligations and oaths of property consecration. These items can rightly be viewed in a temple-worship framework within the Book of Moses, thus conforming to the themes of a temple text.

The manifestation of temple texts in the Bible have led some scholars to construct a *hypothetical* platform wherein these texts could have been used in liturgical functions. These scholars place these supposed ritual performances in conjunction with the ancient Israelite festivals, such as the Feast of Tabernacles. One such (re)construction shows selections from the Psalms as the libretti of a sacred processional drama.⁹⁰ The substance of this reconstructed ritual is outlined by Allan Petersen,

In these psalms Yahweh is depicted as a mighty king who reigns over the entire world (47.3, 8, 9, 10). He subdues foreign nations under Israel (47.4). Israel rejoices, sings and bows down before Yahweh (95.1, 2, 6; 97.8) and so do the nations (47.2, 7, 8; 97.1; 98.4–6; 99.3; 100.1–2). The peoples enter the courts of Yahweh with songs of praise and offerings and prostrate themselves before him (96.7–9). With joyous song and the sound of a shofar, Yahweh ascends (47.6). He seats himself on his holy throne (47.9), the throne that was established long ago (93.2). An important expression in these descriptions is יהוה מלך (93.1; 96.10; 97.1; 99.1), [which may be translated] as “Yahweh has become king.”⁹¹

In addition to the Psalms, other scholars have found temple themes in the early chapters of Genesis. Stephen D. Ricks notes that the first 34 verses of Genesis were used in a temple setting for liturgical use in the

90. Janet Ewell, “Seeing Psalms as the Libretti of a Holy Drama,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 31 (2019): 259–76. See also Legrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2010), 74.

91. Allan Rosengren Petersen, *The Royal God: Enthronement Festivals in Ancient Israel and Ugarit?* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 15.

Second Temple Period and were likely used in pre-exilic Israel for that purpose as well.⁹² The historical contents of the Book of Moses also fit this scenario of temple worship. David M. Calabro notes,

Foundational religious narratives (like the Genesis account) become “mythological precedents” for rituals, adding authority to the ritual by showing that it had a powerful and ancient origin. . . . When one participates in a ritual that has a mythological precedent, the frame of the original narrative and the frame of the ritual overlap. A number of passages in Moses 1–7 could be viewed as mythological precedents, for instance Adam’s offering of sacrifice, his baptism, and the ascent of Enoch. If Moses 1–7 is viewed as a ritual text, these passages could be understood as episodes narrated by a ritual leader in order to lend authority to similar actions performed in the ritual.⁹³

By placing the passages of the Pentateuch in a temple setting, we can visualize the creation enacted or the high priest and the priests acting as the Lord and his angels performing atoning acts, bringing order to creation and being admitted into the presence of God. As this history was recited, acts, ordinances, and ceremonies would have been performed. For instance, during the story of Enoch and his city of Zion, members of the attending congregation could have been put under oath to be a chosen, covenant people and to keep all things in common, with all their property belonging to the Lord.⁹⁴

Calabro notes that the Book of Moses narrator seems to “turn aside” during his narration and directly address the audience. This type of narrative movement is called *lamination* and is indicative of a ritual context.⁹⁵ Reading the Book of Moses while mindful of this type of narration highlights passages that may be seen as stage directions in a drama.

92. Stephen D. Ricks, “Liturgy and Cosmogony: The Ritual Use of Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 118–23.

93. Calabro, “Joseph Smith and the Architecture of Genesis,” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, 167.

94. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The LDS Story of Enoch as the Culminating Episode of a Temple Text,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2014): 39–73 for a further treatment of this theme.

95. Calabro, “Joseph Smith and the Architecture of Genesis,” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, 168.

As an example of this technique, Calabro cites Moses 6:68. This verse explains how Adam became qualified as a son of God, after which the narrator turns to address the audience, instructing them that they “may all become the sons of God.” The idea of narrative lamination could inform our reading of Moses 1 and reveal the intent of the author. An example of this might be demonstrated in Moses 1:7, where the Lord shows Moses the created world. This verse reads like stage directions, where the doubling of the statement of showing the world to Moses suggests extending the presentation to a listening audience.

A Note on the JST

It has been noted above that the JST is a puzzle of sorts to many scholars and students. Haley Wilson and Thomas A. Wayment correctly report that “characterizing the overall intent and purpose of Smith’s retranslation of the Bible has been a somewhat elusive endeavor.”⁹⁶ Recent research has shown that Joseph Smith used a contemporary biblical commentary by Adam Clarke as the basis for many of the small, miscellaneous changes to the Bible text. This has challenged many of the current assumptions about the nature of the JST.⁹⁷

The recent trend in JST research has been on determining 19th-century sway on the Prophet’s method. The connections with the Clarke commentary certainly show the utility of this type of approach. In the same vein, another recent study by Wayment explored Moses 1 in its 19th-century surroundings, concluding that it was likely a product of antebellum America. Wayment posits that Moses 1 was a reflection of theological discussion in early 1830 and “representing, perhaps, Smith’s personal contemplations or prayers.”⁹⁸ This is part of a larger picture of how the JST began its formation. He explains:

96. Haley Wilson and Thomas A. Wayment, “A Recently Recovered Source: Rethinking Joseph Smith’s Bible Translation,” *Journal of Undergraduate Research* (2017), <http://jur.byu.edu/?p=21296>.

97. Thomas A. Wayment, “10 questions with Thomas Wayment,” interview by Kurt Manwaring, *From The Desk* (blog), January 2, 2019, <https://www.fromthedesk.org/10-questions-thomas-wayment/>. See also Kevin Barney’s helpful assessment of the discovery, “The JST and the Adam Clarke Commentary,” *By Common Consent* (blog), August 15, 2019, <https://bycommonconsent.com/2019/08/15/the-jst-and-the-adam-clarke-commentary/>.

98. Thomas A. Wayment, “Intertextuality and the Purpose of Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible” in *Foundational Texts of Mormonism: Examining Major Early Sources*, eds. Mark Ashurst-McGee, Robin Scott Jensen, and Sharalyn D. Howcroft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 86. To be fair,

It is at least possible that the Bible revision was, in its infancy, a kind of editing project to bring existing canonical texts into harmony with newly given revelatory texts. . . . Seeing Moses 1 as a document that was added to the Bible revision project provides an important piece of evidence to understanding the origins and initial interests of the JST.⁹⁹

The motive for the Bible revisions then seems to have been to bring the Bible into harmony with Smith's revelations.¹⁰⁰

The difficulty of this approach is that it refuses to take the text on its own terms, instead opting to exclusively entertain an environmental influence in the production of the text. Kathleen Flake has noted how this approach "explains Smith's approach to the text largely in terms of contemporary practices that did not distinguish authors from editors," arguing that Smith used these conventions "creatively" and consistent with "prophetic writers of ancient times," She continues,

My differences with this argument are slight and result primarily from my emphasis on those sections of the JST that are not merely editorial, but radical reformulations of the biblical narrative. I believe these additions are too extensive to be rationalized by nineteenth-century editorial conventions, especially given the Bible's near-fetishistic canonical status during this period.¹⁰¹

The large additions to the biblical text are different from the types of changes Joseph Smith made later in the project. Flake further notes, "It can be said that, notwithstanding its English source, the JST asks to be understood as a translation, because it does not arise out of the infinite variations available to fiction but, rather, within the limits of an existing narrative of past events."¹⁰² The Book of Moses arrives as a narrative history and so must be read first and foremost as such.

The viewpoint that the Book of Moses (or the Book of Mormon, for that matter) is merely the product of 19th-century practices may have

Wayment was writing for a non-Latter-day Saint audience as well as for Oxford, which is by in large not interested in publishing devotional items in its academic works. Wayment's carefully worded placement of Moses 1 in the 19th century might not be a firm as it appears.

99. Ibid., 88.

100. Ibid., 95.

101. Kathleen Flake, "Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith's Narrative Canon," *The Journal of Religion*, 87, no. 3 (October 2007): 508n37.

102. Ibid., 508.

some traction when examined as an item of circumstantial evidence, but this type of examination is tenable only from outside the text. Following a similar model of Book of Mormon research, I posit that due to its external parallels with other ancient manuscripts as well as its intricate and authentic internal narrative,¹⁰³ no one in the 19th century could have written Moses 1, let alone anyone who was following contemporary exegetical practices.

The JST was a complicated and varied project. The additions by the JST differ among themselves in size, purpose, style and method of production. This has led some to see the JST to be a restoration of an original text, others pointing out portions that seemed to provide inspired prophetic clarifications. Others have shown other portions to be correction of doctrinal errors, harmonization of supposed contradictions; others note changes that seek to improve and modernize the text. These categories of changes cover a wide swath of territory due to the varied nature of the final product.

The entire JST was not produced in one sitting, with the Prophet Joseph dictating the additions and changes to his scribes. Understanding that the Prophet used more than a singular method to produce his “new translation” should encourage scholars to be open to multiple categories of changes and corrections under a broader banner. We should resist the notion that the gist of the JST is just one thing. There is room in the marketplace of ideas to view portions of the JST to be a restoration of a once original text.

Conclusions

Stephen Smoot concludes that “this remarkable narrative [of Moses 1] is compelling evidence for the authenticity of Joseph Smith’s revelation concerning Moses. It roots the narrative of the Book of Moses in the world of the ancient Near East.”¹⁰⁴ The aggregate of evidences presented in this study place Moses 1 comfortably at home in antiquity.

The present study has demonstrated that this chapter has the lineament of a lost and restored text, just as it claims. The tools of biblical criticism spotlight Moses 1 as a literary masterwork, fit to coexist alongside other texts of the Bible. Moses 1 follows the procedures of biblical composition with precision.

103. For additional examples of ancient features in Moses 1, see Mark J. Johnson, “Scriptures through the Jeweler’s Lens,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 36 (2020): 101–102.

104. Smoot, “I Am a Son of God,” 130.

I also hope to have highlighted the rewards of reading with attention to literary strategies. Adam Hock encourages the benefit of this type of reading in our classrooms, noting, “Literary analysis allows a class to explore the nuances of a text and identify authorial intent of the scripture while encouraging students to see a complex, beautiful narrative.”¹⁰⁵ Following a literary approach will lead students of the Book of Moses to see a transcendent yet elaborate narrative work that will reward their reading with beauty and truth. I have shown that a close reading of the text with an eye keen to literary and rhetorical method will help the reader enchant the fire and force from the written word.

Lastly, David Noel Freedman elucidates on an oft-overlooked aspect of examining literary form and features that I hope will be adopted by Latter-day Saint students of the scriptures. He speaks specifically of parallelism, but his words can be applied to the other types of devices in the text, saying, “I am confident that the reader will readily agree . . . that the study of parallelism is, above all else, fun.”¹⁰⁶

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105. Hock, “Narrating the Scriptures,” 29.

106. David Noel Freedman, foreword to *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism — Revised Edition*, by Adele Berlin (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), xi.

PITFALLS OF THE NGRAM VIEWER

Stanford Carmack

Abstract: *Google's Ngram Viewer often gives a distorted view of the popularity of cultural/religious phrases during the early 19th century and before. Other larger textual sources can provide a truer picture of relevant usage patterns of various content-rich phrases that occur in the Book of Mormon. Such an approach suggests that almost all of its phraseology fits comfortably within its syntactic framework, which is mostly early modern in character.*

During the past decade, with the advent of Google's Ngram Viewer (books.google.com/ngrams), many have become interested in noting the historical (textual) popularity rates of various cultural, content-rich Book of Mormon phrases such as "demands of justice." Some have concluded by what they have seen in Ngram Viewer charts that the evidence suggests the Book of Mormon is 19th-century in character and that Joseph Smith was the author or the partial author of the text (from revealed ideas).¹ My purpose here is to show that this recently developed interpretive tool is quite often misleading in relation to the Book of Mormon and that it's important to reserve judgment on historical usage patterns until multiple textual sources have been consulted. It's also important to recognize the type of language can tell us something definitive about Book of Mormon authorship and the fundamental nature of its language.

A database such as Google Books, which contains a large number of religious writings, is potentially an appropriate corpus to use in comparing Book of Mormon English. That is because, though dictated, the Book of Mormon text presents itself as a written translation of authors and editors who also wrote out their compositions (though

1. An example of this is found at "19th Century Protestant Phrases in Book of Mormon," *LDS Church is True* (blog), March 7, 2017, www.churchistrue.com/blog/19th-century-protestant-phrases-in-book-of-mormon/.

some chapters are said to be transcripts of oral discourse). The narrative complexity, matching internal references, exact phrasal repetition (sometimes at a distance), intricate structuring (both large- and small-scale), and even instances of syntactic complexity suggest a primarily written work rather than a primarily oral production.

Because the text is full of biblical blending and religious language set in a framework of mostly early modern syntax, the Early English Books Online database² provides the largest amount of matching language — religious, lexical, and syntactic. EEBO contains many religious writings, including sermons as well as the early biblical texts [1530–1610]. After EEBO, the next most relevant database for comparison is Eighteenth Century Collections Online.³ After EEBO and ECCO, the most relevant corpora are probably Google Books⁴ and the early American databases, Evans and Shaw-Shoemaker (these also contain many British writings republished in America, overlapping with content found in ECCO and even EEBO).⁵

On Content-Rich and Content-Poor Language

Before considering the data, some general comments are in order about the implications of two types of textual evidence: cultural, religious phrases (content-rich) and syntax (content-poor). It's helpful to bear in mind that cultural, religious language occurs within a syntactic framework. These are separable objects of study: it is a straightforward matter to abstract away from either one in order to carry out linguistic and literary analysis.

Content-rich phrases like “demands of justice” involve a high degree of conscious thought in their production, while content-poor phraseology like “the more part” is chiefly the result of nonconscious production. Because authors do not consciously control what they nonconsciously

2. Early English Books Online, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebogroup/>.

3. Eighteenth Century Collections Online, accessed March 9, 2020, www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online.

4. “Advanced Book Search,” Google Books, accessed March 9, 2020, https://books.google.com/advanced_book_search.

5. “Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639–1800,” Readex: A Division of Newsbank, accessed March 9, 2020, www.readex.com/content/early-american-imprints-series-i-evans-1639-1800, “Early American Imprints, Series II: Shaw-Shoemaker, 1801–1819,” Readex: A Division of Newsbank, accessed March 9, 2020, www.readex.com/content/early-american-imprints-series-ii-shaw-shoemaker-1801-1819, and Evans Early American Imprint Collection, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/>, (5,000 Evans texts, freely available in WordCruncher [wordcruncher.com]).

produce, they reveal their native-speaker preferences in their (content-poor) syntax. Consciously produced content varies greatly in frequency according to context and subject matter and genre. In contrast, the frequency of syntactic usage is less influenced by these things (although some aspects of syntactic usage are affected by context, subject matter, and genre, such as which tenses are predominantly used). There are many generalizable usage patterns that can be analyzed and compared. Because a large amount of syntax is visible in the verbal system, studying the verbal system is of paramount importance.

A late-modern view of the Book of Mormon's cultural, religious phrases tends to be popular in the literature. Such phrases, however, are unable to establish either the fundamental character of the language or that Joseph Smith was the author of the Book of Mormon. The suggestion that content-rich phrases are dispositive evidence for determining these things stems from inadequate reflection on details and implications of natural language production. It is the syntactic building blocks of language that indicate the fundamental character of textual language. When it comes to determining Book of Mormon authorship, content-rich phrases are overruled by the syntax. The latter indicates that most of its language is early modern in character and that Joseph wasn't the author or partial author.⁶

A phrase examined below, "demands of justice," is a cultural and religious phrase that has been used in a relatively limited set of writings and contexts. It provides a substantial amount of meaning independently. Another phrase considered below, "the more part," is a content-poor phrase that had the potential to be used in a relatively large number of writings and contexts. There is a significant difference between these two types of language in terms of their diagnostic value in relation to determining Book of Mormon authorship. Specifically, the phrase "demands of justice" is a persistent phrase that arose in the early

6. The descriptive reality that the original Book of Mormon text is full of extrabiblical Early Modern English doesn't mean it's an early modern text, in a narrow sense. While it's accurate to characterize the vast majority of the Book of Mormon's verbal system (the syntactic core of the language) as early modern in character — namely, verb complementation, verb agreement, various aspects of tense, inflections, auxiliary usage, grammatical mood, negation and inversion patterns, etc. — this reality doesn't mean that all content-rich phrases that appear within the mostly archaic framework must be or are early modern phrases. However, rather than characterizing persistent phrases (early modern through late modern) as 19th-century phrases, since they're enveloped in mostly early modern syntax, it's sensible to view them as early modern.

modern era, while *more part* phraseology (the non-adverbial type) did not persist robustly past the late 1600s, although we do see some related, vestigial use in the late modern era (some of this is discussed toward the end of this article).

Consider also the phrase “plan of destruction” (3 Nephi 1:16). This is a late-appearing phrase, textually speaking — it is currently first attested in 1768.⁷ But “plan of destruction” was conceptually part of English a century earlier, since the structurally and semantically similar phrases “plan of peace,” “plan of religion,” “plan of doctrine,” and “plan of (our) redemption” did occur in the late 1600s. As a content-rich phrase, “plan of destruction” cannot overrule the diagnostic value of content-poor phraseology such as “the more part of X” (where X is a noun phrase) or “of which hath been spoken”. These are less contextually dependent and were in obsolescence at the beginning of the late modern period. This makes the presence in the Book of Mormon of the comparative phraseology “the more part of X” and the referential phraseology “of which/whom «be»⁸ spoken” diagnostically important. (Ten of eleven instances of the referential phraseology are archaic in formation; all instances of *more part* phraseology are nonbiblical in formation.) It also means that the presence of language like “plan of destruction” is mostly diagnostically unremarkable.

- Cultural, religious phrases:
 - high degree of contextual dependence
 - low usage rates (on balance)
 - provide little information about nonconscious native-speaker tendencies
- Content-poor syntax:
 - low degree of contextual dependence
 - potential for much higher usage rates
 - reveals nonconscious native-speaker tendencies

The Google Books Database

The very creators of the Ngram Viewer have pointed out the risk for their charts to mislead analysts vis-à-vis earlier cultural trends. According

7. “Plan of destruction” can currently be found in the Evans database under the text ID N08651, and in the Google Books database under the book ID 8Y0BAAAQAAJ (the phrase occurs in several books; this one may be the earliest one with the language).

8. By «be» is meant various forms of the verb *be*, including the perfect forms “hath been,” “has been,” and “have been.”

to them, the popularity trends of 18th-century cultural phrases are particularly susceptible to being misstated in the charts.⁹ Others have mentioned that this is the case even for early 19th-century trends,¹⁰ once again citing the published papers of the Ngram Viewer creators. This is because of the limitations of the underlying Google Books database.

It's important to note that the Viewer can be less misleading in relation to syntactic studies involving content-poor phrases. Such phrases have the potential to be more heavily represented in the underlying data. As a specific example, we are more likely to get an accurate picture of popularity in comparing usage rates of the infinitive construction "caused <object pronoun> to" with the finite construction "caused that <subject pronoun>" than in looking at the trajectory of "demands of justice" (shown below).

As mentioned, the Viewer is based on the Google Books database. This has only a fraction of the 18th-century coverage of the largest database, ECCO. The 18th-century Google Books portion is currently about 12 percent of the size of ECCO, and the first half of the 18th century is underrepresented compared to the second half of the 18th century. The underrepresentation of English usage in Google Books is even greater as we go back further in time to the early modern period (details shown below). This means that the Viewer is highly unreliable for the 16th and 17th centuries.

Unfortunately, the inevitable result of this underrepresentation is that charts are often generated by the data underlying the Ngram Viewer that do not accurately represent prior usage patterns. This is shown here by a comparison of Viewer charts with the charts provided by the ECCO database and with charts generated from a 740-million-word corpus that

9. Roger Finke and Jennifer M. McClure, "Reviewing Millions of Books: Charting Cultural and Religious Trends with Google's Ngram Viewer," in *Faithful Measures: New Methods in the Measurement of Religion*, eds. Roger Finke and Christopher D. Bader (New York: NYU Press, 2017), 290, <https://books.google.com/books?id=bF0vDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA290#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," *Science* 331 (2011): 176–82, DOI: 10.1126/science.1199644, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/331/6014/176>. Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Supporting Online Material for 'Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books,'" (2011):16–17, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/suppl/2010/12/16/science.1199644.DC1/Michel.SOM.revision.2.pdf>.

10. See, for example, Finke and McClure "Reviewing Millions of Books," 290.

covers the years 1473 to 1700 (made from Phase 1 texts of the EEBO database).

Language Examined for this Study

I will briefly discuss the following six phrases and phrase types:

- “demands of justice” [first EEBO example is 1647]
- “first parents” [first EEBO example is 1483]
- “infinite goodness” [first EEBO example is 1479]
- “forbidden fruit” [first EEBO example is 1550]
- “plan of X” [first EEBO example is 1689; X = *divinity*]
- “the more part of X” [first OED example is 1398;
X = *the heritage*]

Corpora Used in this Study

Here are the three corpora that generated the charts shown in this study, along with some relevant details:

- Google Books (sparse coverage up to the 18th century):
 - 4.4 million 16th-century words
 - 63.9 million 17th-century words
 - 1.8 billion 18th-century words¹¹
 - 49.5 billion 19th-century words
 - 299.5 billion 20th-century words
- ECCO: 180,000 18th-century titles (as currently noted on the initial search page). From this number of titles and the number of 18th-century words in Google Books, we find that ECCO could have approximately 15 billion 18th-century words, with a large amount of duplication.
- EEBO (Phase 1 texts): approximately 740 million words in 25,367 texts, from the late 15th century through the 17th century. EEBO₁ has almost 11 times the coverage of Google Books for the same time period, with high-quality transcriptions that are much more reliable.

11. According to the Google Books total_counts file (version 20120701: Google Books Ngram Viewer, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://storage.googleapis.com/books/ngrams/books/datasetsv2.html>), the database has 21,495 18th-century titles (1701 to 1800). Just over three-quarters of the words are from the second half of the century (1751 to 1800).

Popularity Profiles of Six Nonbiblical Book of Mormon Phrases

“Demands of justice” [1647 (earliest attestation)]

We begin our investigation of Book of Mormon phrases with the cultural, religious phrase “demands of justice,” a phrase that arose, textually speaking, in the middle of the 17th century. Because the Ngram Viewer is based on relatively sparse coverage of the first half of the 18th century, a misleading chart (Figure 1) is currently generated by the underlying data (the vertical axis gives word-occurrence rates; the values [very small] are irrelevant in the context of this paper).

Figure 1 leads us to believe that there was hardly any usage of the phrase “demands of justice” in the early 18th century. (In this study, I have mostly restricted Viewer charts to the 18th century and beyond, since the data coverage of the 16th and 17th centuries is relatively minimal, frequently generating charts with discontinuous spikes.)¹² Because ECCO is based on more than eight times the number of titles, its term frequency chart is more reliable than the Viewer, though not entirely, since the later one goes in the 18th century, the more books are encountered with repeated language (which is also a problem with the Viewer). ECCO’s popularity chart helps in this regard, to some degree, since it can give users the percentage of documents per year that have a given word or phrase.



Figure 1. Ngram Viewer chart of “demands of justice.”

12. Another current problem with the Viewer is that some links at the foot of charts don’t yield any book results, even though the chart and the link suggest that there are textual results to be verified. Links that yield no results indicate an algorithmic limitation of some kind. In many cases, however, when there is no data, the Viewer indicates this explicitly by stating that there are no valid ngrams to plot.

Figure 2 is an ECCO popularity chart of “demands of justice.”¹³ It clearly shows usage of the phrase in the first half of the 18th century and that there was only a slight upward trend during the entire century. Against what the Viewer indicates, there was no sharp upward trend from zero that began near the middle of the century. Moreover, if we look at an earlier corpus, EEBO, we find that in the publicly available Phase 1 portion of the database (EEBO₁), 0.23 percent of the documents in the 1670s have the phrase “demands of justice” (6 of 2,608 documents) and that 0.33 percent of the documents from the 1690s have the phrase (10 of 3,006 documents). Figure 3 is a composite chart of the earlier usage rates, combining EEBO₁ and ECCO data (from 1473 to 1800). It shows no clear increase in the popularity of the phrase “demands of justice” from the 1670s to the 1790s.

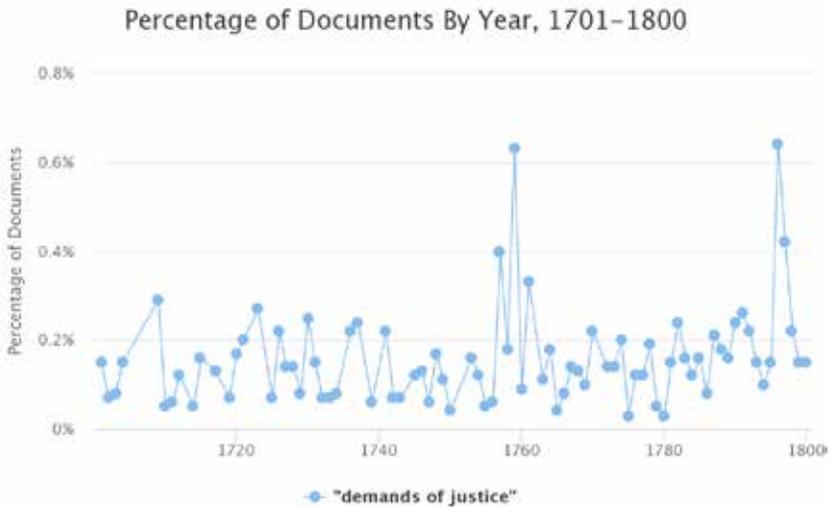


Figure 2. ECCO chart of “demands of justice.”

Consider too that popularity rates of uncommon content-rich phrases like “demands of justice” can vary greatly depending on the composition of the corpus — that is, the weighting of the genres in the corpus. In this case, if the corpus has a large percentage of religious texts or legal texts, then the popularity rate of “demands of justice” has the potential to be higher. If not, popularity rates will be lower. In contrast, content-poor syntactic phrases have a greater potential to give a truer

13. Charts were made from the general English (2012) corpus, case-sensitive, with 5-year smoothing.

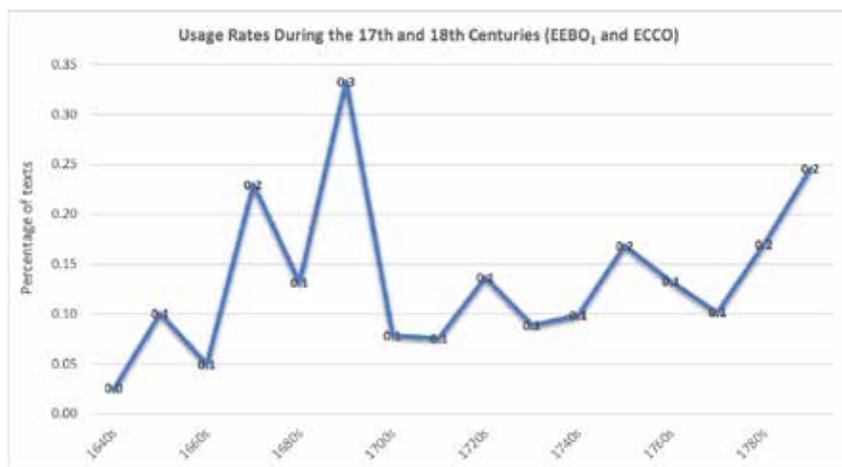


Figure 3. Combined EEBO₁ and ECCO chart of “demands of justice.”

picture of past usage rates and popularity. The genres represented in the corpus are less important in the case of such phrases, though not always of no consequence.

The first appearance of the phrase “demands of justice” in EEBO occurs in 1647 (A57963, page 66). The earliest occurrences of phrases are among the most interesting to consider. Beyond showing authorial creativity, in the case of potentially inspired religious language, they are more likely to be the result of divine influence than later instances, which are more likely to be influenced by earlier usage. In this case, the 1647 author of “demands of justice,” Samuel Rutherford, a delegate to the Westminster Assembly (a multi-year Church of England reform council), provides not only this content-rich coincidence with Book of Mormon usage, but also examples of extrabiblical syntactic usage and variation found in the earliest text, such as archaic “because that S_1 and that S_2 ” usage (1648, EEBO A57980; 1 Nephi 2:11, Jacob 5:60) and nearby *ye was* ~ *ye are* variation (1664, A57970; Alma 7:18–19; also *we was* ~ *we are*: 1652, A57982).

Of the four instances of “demands of justice” found in the Book of Mormon, the last one occurs closely with two instances of the phrase “plan of mercy” (Alma 42:15). This language is currently first attested in 1746, but it would not have clashed with late 1600s language, since a few different “plan of X” phrases are attested beginning in the late 1680s. The adjective phrase “perfect just” occurs right after “demands of justice,”

meaning ‘perfectly just’; it provides a good example of characteristically early modern syntactic usage in which the adverb lacked the {-ly} suffix. In EEBO₁, “perfect just” (without intervening punctuation) occurs 16 times, at a higher rate in the 16th century than in the 17th century (five times the rate; see Figure 4). Another syntactic item in this verse involves a subordinate clause headed by *except* with the conditional auxiliary verb *should*, usage that was also more characteristic of the 16th century than the 17th century (peaking textually in the 1550s; see Figure 5¹⁴). Overall, the language in this passage doesn’t clash, and there are stronger reasons to classify it as early modern in character than late modern.¹⁵

“First parents” [1483]

The next phrase we’ll consider is another nonbiblical one, “first parents.” The phrase occurs 13 times in the Book of Mormon, first at 1 Nephi 5:11. It is used there with some archaic syntax: “Adam and Eve, *which was* our first parents.” This syntax corresponds precisely with the usage of Thomas Becon in 1566: “Adam and Eve, *which was* made of the ground.” Becon also used “first parents” in 1542 (A06719). We encounter many such coincidences in the Book of Mormon, as in this case and the case of the writings of Samuel Rutherford. EEBO₁ has thousands of examples of the phrase “first parents,” including four from the 1480s alone.

14. The WordCruncher search string used was “((excepte + except) #.2,0 ?_s) /subj /should”, with one additional complication not shown. (The phrase list terms */subj* and */should* represent many different subject pronouns and forms of the auxiliary verb *should*, including spelling variants.) This search permitted only pronominal subjects, excluded intervening punctuation, excluded biblical language (Matthew 24:22, Luke 9:13, Acts 8:31), and included variants of the auxiliary verb *should*. For EEBO₁, the search returned results from 245 texts [1517–1700].

15. Some promote the idea that the original language of the Book of Mormon is a hybrid of (1) clashing archaic language, (2) early modern usage clashing with late modern usage, (3) ungrammatical variation, and/or (4) content-rich language clashing with archaic syntax. Some of these are subjective views. Proper investigation of these matters requires a large amount of research and analysis. Because there were no large digital corpora to check these unstudied claims, scholars felt free to make them. However, now that the syntax can be seriously studied, we find that there is very little clashing language — much less than previously thought. As two specific examples, there isn’t a blatant misuse of second person pronouns in the original Book of Mormon text; it matches some earlier usage. There isn’t improper mixing of {-th} and {-s} inflection; it matches some earlier usage. More generally, a host of variational usage matches verifiable early modern tendencies, and cultural, religious, content-rich phrases don’t clash with the framing language.

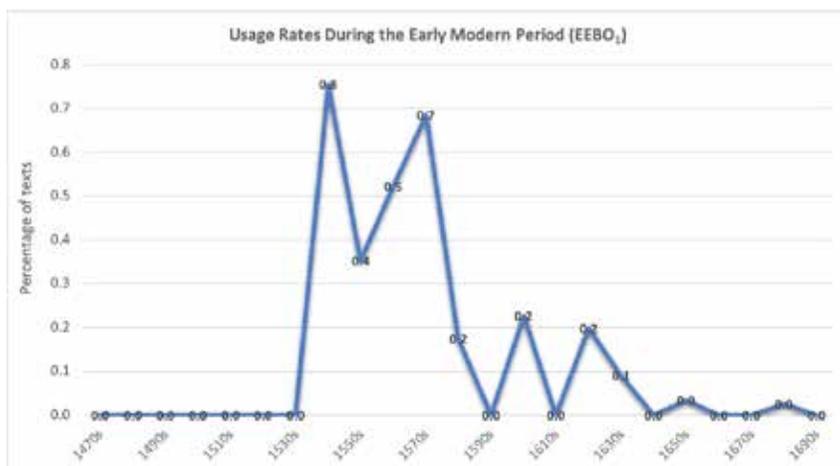


Figure 4. EEBO₁ chart of “perfect just.”

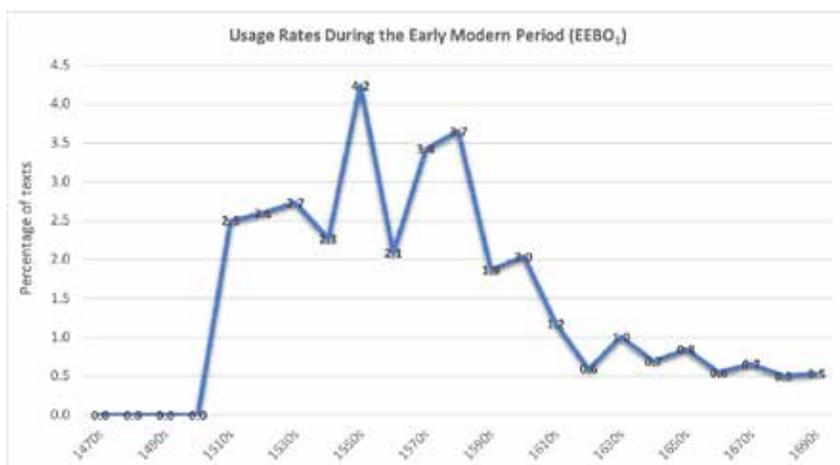


Figure 5. EEBO₁ chart of “except <subj. pron.> should <infinitive>” syntax.

According to an ECCO popularity chart, the usage rate of “first parents” didn’t change that much over the course of the 18th century, ranging between three and six percent, as shown in Figure 6.

But according to the Viewer, the usage rate of “first parents” rose significantly during the 18th century, and at the beginning of the 19th century, the usage rate appears to have surged to its highest levels (see Figure 7). EEBO Phase 1 texts, however, indicate an absolute peak popularity in the 1610s (eleven percent of texts; see Figure 8). This is

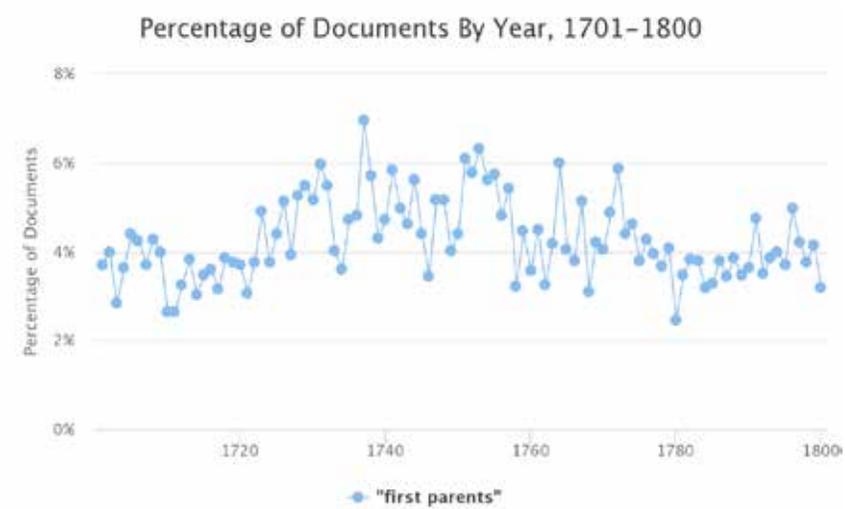


Figure 6. ECCO chart of “first parents.”



Figure 7. Ngram Viewer chart of “first parents.”

a figure significantly above the four percent of the 1790s that ECCO indicates.

Some of the rise we see between 1801 and 1830 in the Viewer is a skewing brought about by later editions and the republishing of earlier texts, as previously mentioned. In any event, a doubling in the usage rate of “first parents” during the first three decades of the 1800s could have raised its per document rate to a maximum level of seven or eight percent. Based on current information, the 1610s is a stronger candidate for peak popularity of “first parents” than the early 1800s.

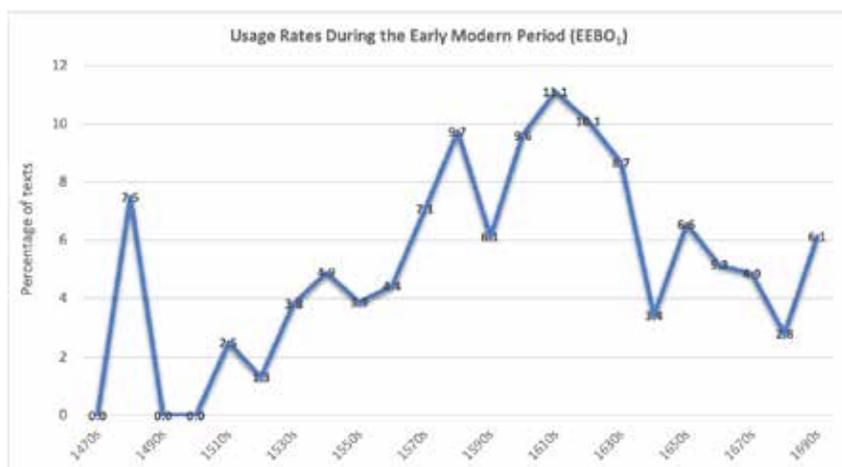


Figure 8. EEBO₁ chart of “first parents.”

“Infinite goodness” [1479]

In a review of a text-critical publication on grammatical editing in the Book of Mormon, Grant Hardy lists 16 nonbiblical phrases that he says were commonly used in the 19th century, stating that “these do occur as early as the seventeenth century.”¹⁶ The phrase “as early as” most likely conveys ‘no earlier than,’ leaving readers with the sense that these phrases were most popular after the 17th century. One of the phrases in his list is “infinite goodness,” occurring at 2 Nephi 1:10, Mosiah 5:3, Helaman 12:1, and Moroni 8:3.

Hardy might not have consulted EEBO and ECCO, something that is necessary to do in order to determine when these phrases arose and to have any chance at accurately determining when they might have been most popular. It’s possible that he entered them into the Ngram Viewer and was misled by what he saw in the charts. Consider, for instance, a Viewer chart of “infinite goodness” between 1500 and 1830 (Figure 9). In this chart we see two early spikes based on seven results total. Then there is a continuous jagged rise, suggesting that the year 1830 was the height of popularity. This might have been as far as Hardy went in gauging the trajectory of this phrase’s textual popularity.

An important issue when dealing with a phrase that might have arisen during the first half of the early modern period is spelling variation. In this case, there are six obvious variants of the word *goodness* to consider

16. Grant Hardy, “Approaching Completion: The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project,” *BYU Studies* 57, no.1 (2018): 176n20.



Figure 9. Ngram Viewer chart of “infinite goodness.”

and more than that for the word *infinite*. This means, of course, that there are at least 40 possible spelling variants of the phrase, although the large majority of the potential spelling variants of the phrase probably never co-occurred in the textual record.

There is no easy way to enter so many variants in the Viewer, and there are large gaps in Google Books’ coverage for the earlier period, especially the 1500s (see above). So, we must go to EEBO, using spelling variants, in order to approach a sense of early modern popularity. This can only be easily done using a third-party EEBO corpus. It cannot be done using the EEBO website search page, since the search engine has difficulty with complicated wildcard searches. From a WordCruncher EEBO corpus¹⁷ we obtain the chart in Figure 10, showing usage rate per document. To complete the comparison, we consult an ECCO popularity chart of “infinite goodness” (Figure 11). Taken together, these charts indicate that the height of popularity of “infinite goodness,” textually speaking, was the 1530s or the 1570s.

The impression that Hardy gives his readers is that the 16 nonbiblical Book of Mormon phrases reached their height of popularity in the late modern period rather than the early modern period. We see that this is questionable for “infinite goodness” and “first parents” (another of his 16 phrases), and as it turns out, it’s questionable for more than half of the phrases.

Hardy’s statement that these phrases occur as early as the 17th century (taken to mean ‘no earlier than the 17th century’) might be inaccurate for 69 percent of the phrases. Here is his list, ordered according to date of first attestation in EEBO (mean date = 1565; median date = 1578):

17. The WordCruncher program is freely available online at wordcruncher.com; the EEBO₁ corpus is available in the WordCruncher bookstore.

1473 God of nature
 1479 infinite goodness
 1479 fall of man
 1483 first parents
 1532 sacrifice for sin
 1538 Great Mediator
 1552 temporally and spiritually
 (as *temporally, spiritually & eternally*)

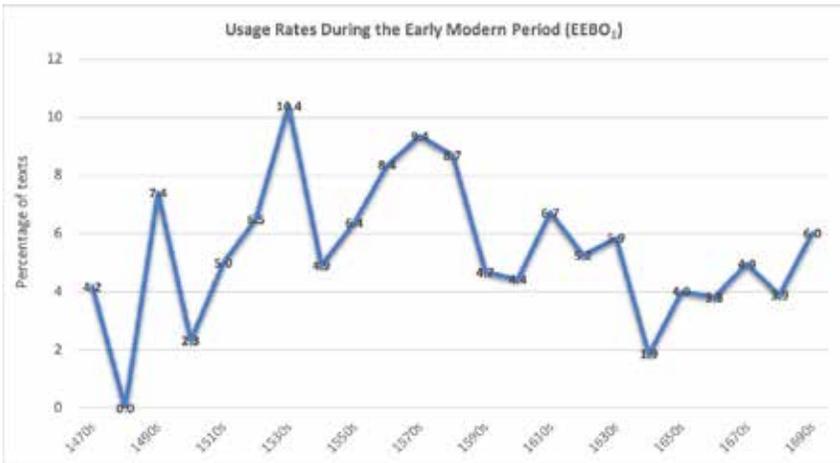


Figure 10. EEBO₁ chart of “infinite goodness.”

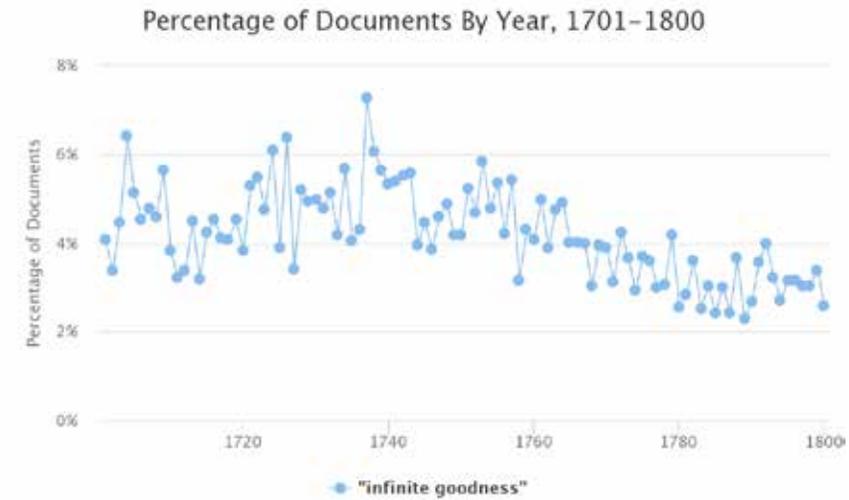


Figure 11. ECCO chart of “infinite goodness.”

1563	land of liberty
1574	final state
1582	workings of the Spirit
1583	instrument(s) in the hands of God
1606	watery grave
1637	miserable forever (as <i>forever miserable</i>)
1641	condescension of God
1652	cold and silent grave (as <i>cold silent grave</i>) (<i>cold grave</i> : 1542; <i>silent grave</i> : 1590)
1660	day(s) of probation

Only five of the 16 are first attested as late as the 17th century, and both *cold grave* and *silent grave* are first attested in the 16th century. So, it is accurate to state that only one-quarter of the phrases are first attested as late as the 17th century; the rest are attested earlier.

I ran numbers on all 16 of these phrases in EEBO₁ and ECCO and obtained usage rate profiles and peaks. Here is a list of these same phrases with the decade of peak popularity shown (in the case of the two phrases with highest popularity in the late 1400s, I have also given the next highest decade). These phrases are ordered according to greatest early modern popularity when measured against their peak in late modern popularity:

Phrase	Peak popularity (textual)
temporally, spiritually	1580s
God of nature	1480s, 1630s
condescension(s) of God	1690s
sacrifice for sin	1580s
workings of the Spirit	1670s
first parents	1610s
infinite goodness	1530s
final state	1650s
fall of man	1470s, 1610s
<hr/>	
Great Mediator	1750s
miserable forever / forever miserable	1760s
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instrument(s) in the hands of God	1790s
cold grave & silent grave	1790s
watery grave	1790s
day(s) of probation	1760s
land of liberty	1790s

The immediate co-occurrence of *temporally* and *spiritually* was most characteristic of the earlier period. The phrase “land of liberty” was most characteristic of the later period and especially the end of the 1700s. Nine of the 16 phrases turned out to be more popular during at least one decade of the early modern era than they were during any decade of the 18th century. In addition, “Great Mediator” and “miserable forever” ~ “forever miserable” weren’t strongly characteristic of the late modern period over the early modern period.

In summary, most of these phrases aren’t obviously characteristic of the early 19th century, and all of them fit comfortably within a framework of mostly early modern syntax.

“Forbidden fruit” [1550]

The nonbiblical term “forbidden fruit” occurs six times in the Book of Mormon (three times in close succession in 2 Nephi 2 [verses 15, 18, 19]; also in Mosiah 3:26, Alma 12:22, and Helaman 6:26). Here is one of the earliest dated examples of this phrase found in EEBO₁:

1550, Thomas Becon, *The flower of godly prayers* [A06743]

If through the subtle enticements of Satan, they had not transgressed thy commandment by eating the **forbidden fruit**, . . .

Figures 12 and 13 suggest that the height of popularity of the phrase “forbidden fruit” might have been during the first 40 years of the 17th century, not during the 18th century. The Viewer, however, when



Figure 12. EEBO₁ chart of “forbidden fruit.”

restricted to 1700 and later, leads us to believe that the popularity of the phrase “forbidden fruit” was greatest around the year 1810 (Figure 14).

“Plan of X” phrases [1689]

Textually speaking, some Book of Mormon phrases were more popular or appear to have been more popular in the 18th century than in the 17th century. One set of phrases that occurred more frequently in the 18th century than in the 17th century is “plan of X” phrases. Most of these, though conceptually in the language by the late 17th century, are

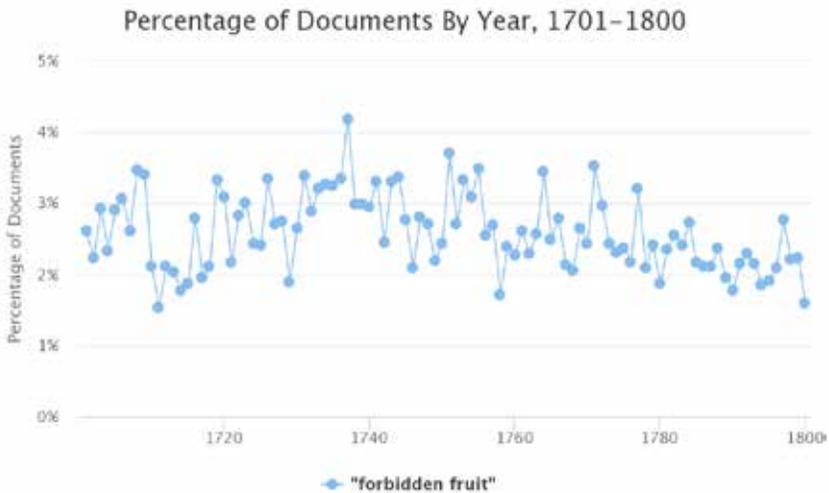


Figure 13. ECCO chart of “forbidden fruit.”



Figure 14. Ngram Viewer chart of “forbidden fruit.”

not attested until the early 18th century.¹⁸ So the Book of Mormon’s six types of “plan of X” phrases could not have been more frequent in the 17th century than in the 18th century, since there is hardly any textual usage in the 17th century.

The most common of the Book of Mormon’s “plan of X” phrases, “plan of redemption,” was the one that occurred earliest. It appears first in the 1690s (as “plan of our redemption,” in 1697). This phrase appears in nearly 500 ECCO documents (this database primarily covers the years 1701–1800). Figure 15 is an ECCO popularity chart of the simple phrase “plan of redemption.” It shows a rise in the usage rate (per document) from zero percent to half a percent (on average). Nevertheless, because the few exclusively 18th-century phrases of the Book of Mormon are enveloped in early modern syntax, they do not change the conclusion that one could reasonably reach about the fundamental character of its language and whether Joseph Smith could have authored it.

“The more part of X” [1398]

The Book of Mormon has almost two dozen instances of the phraseology “the more part of X.” It also has two instances of the adverbial constituent “for the more part” and two textually rare, exclusively

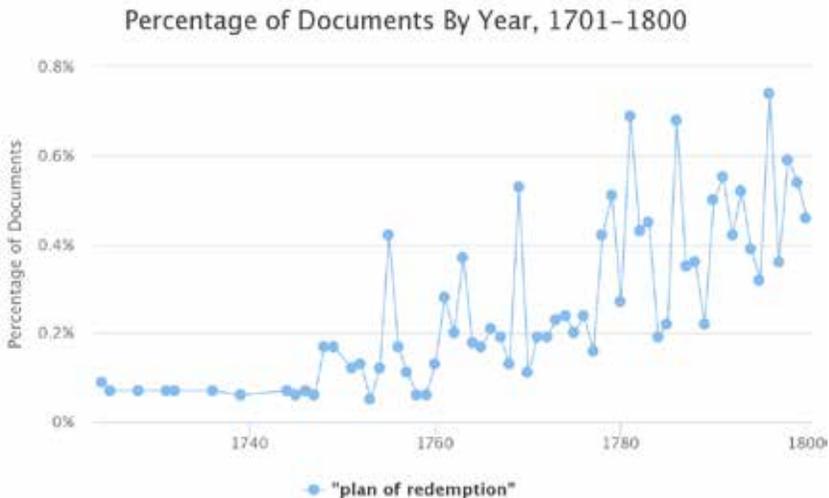


Figure 15. ECCO chart of “plan of redemption.”

18. See Royal Skousen, *The Nature of the Original Language* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2018), 202–4.

early modern variants: “a more part of X” and “the more parts of X” (three instances total). The King James Bible only uses the unmodified phrase “the more part” twice (Acts 19:32; 27:12). The Book of Mormon doesn’t have this biblical usage.¹⁹ Setting aside the three minor variants of the phraseology, the 21 instances of “the more part of X” in the Book of Mormon are quite possibly the most that had appeared in a single text in 253 years, since Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1577), which has 90 of the form “the more part of X” (in almost 2.5 million words).

“The more part of X” is a good example of content-poor phraseology that had the potential to be used in many different contexts at relatively high rates. When we abstract away from the content-rich noun phrase X, we are able to investigate a content-poor phrase type that could have been used in a large number of contexts. It thus provides valuable information for classifying the nature of Book of Mormon language.

When we consider usage rates of this phrase at the beginning of the late modern period, we find that the Ngram Viewer indicates that there was mostly persistent usage throughout the 18th century, with a slight upward trend (Figure 16). ECCO’s popularity chart also shows a low level of use throughout the 18th century, without any discernible trend (Figure 17).

The reality, however, is that almost every 18th-century document contains examples of “the more part of X” only in passages with earlier, reprinted legal language, often from the 16th century and earlier. For example, the 14 documents published in 1725 (out of 1,310) with examples of “the more part of X” (the highest data point in Figure 17) contain instances found in earlier legal language.

Nevertheless, there *is* some original use of “the more part of X” in the 1700s. But there is very little, and it is hard to know how much there actually is. We would have to wade through more than 600 instances, using the difficult ECCO interface, in order to find perhaps two or three originals. (ECCO currently gives 624 results, with many duplicates.) One noteworthy case — a 1768 poetic example found in the online, third edition of the OED — does not reveal itself in ECCO searches, since “the more part of mankind” was transcribed by the optical character recognition (OCR) software as “the tmore part of mankind.” The entire poetic line is in italics, and as a result, the OCR software didn’t get the

19. Though the King James Bible has two instances of “the more part,” the Book of Mormon’s usage is demonstrably independent of the rare biblical usage. It is also not found in 25 pseudobiblical texts that were checked for this study. Thus, this phraseology is properly included in a section discussing some of the Book of Mormon’s nonbiblical phrases.



Figure 16. Ngram Viewer chart of “the more part of X.”

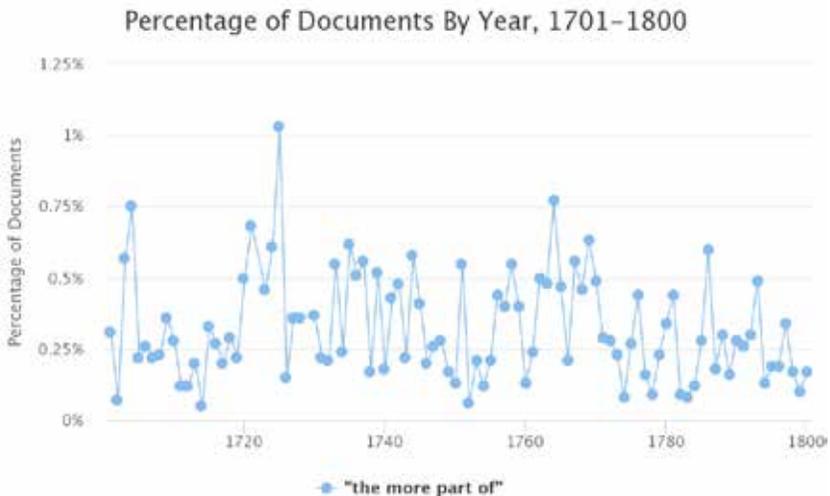


Figure 17. ECCO chart of “the more part of X.”

correct letters in the case of the word *more*. This means, of course, that these databases currently have some fundamental limitations. In the future, better databases will yield more reliable and useful results. (The EEBO database has a very low rate of transcription error, significantly lower than either ECCO or Google Books. This is because most of EEBO was not transcribed using OCR software.)

An ECCO popularity chart comparing “the more part of them” with “most of them” makes it clear that the latter was the operative phrase in the 18th century, not “the more part of them” (Figure 18). (The usage rate of “the majority of them” was also quite low during this century.) What

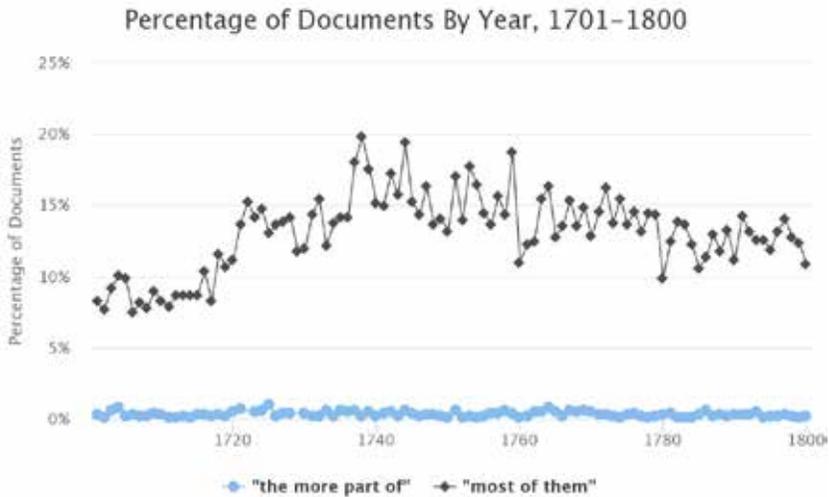


Figure 18. ECCO chart of “most of them” and “the more part of them.”

looks like low-level modern usage of the archaic phrase is, in very large part, just noise emanating from reprinted language.

Figure 19 shows the usage rates of “the more part of X” during the early modern era. This indicates that it was primarily a phrase of the first half of the early modern period. By the 1590s, popularity of the phrase had dipped to such a degree that less than three percent of texts employed it during that decade (1591–1600, aligning the years with the century). Even this EEBO₁ chart has some contamination in the late 1600s from reprinted language, but despite this it shows that usage of the phrase was close to zero in the 1690s. Only one EEBO₁ text in the 1690s (the last decade of the early modern period) has an original instance of “the more part,” which is equivalent to a meager per document usage rate for that decade of just 0.03 percent.²⁰ By that decade, “more part” phraseology was moribund. (Seven other potential examples from the 1690s were quotations of Acts 19:32 [2×], of earlier statutes [4×], and of a 16th-century author [1×].)²¹

20. One original instance of “the more part of them” is found in a sermon preached by Henry Wharton [1664–1695] on July 13, 1690 at Lambeth Chapel: “while the Members of it shall all, or the more part of them, perform their Duty.” (1698, EEBO A65594, page 530.)

21. The phraseology “the more part of X” originated before the early modern era, in late Middle English. Currently, the OED’s earliest example of “the more part of X” is dated 1398: “the more parte of therytage [the heritage].” There is also an example without *the*, dated *a*1425 [that is, *before* 1425], most likely 1384: “But more

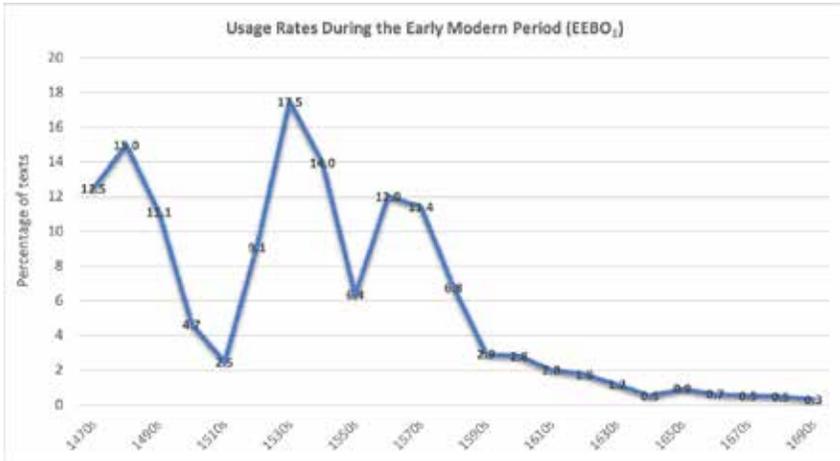


Figure 19. EEBO₁ chart of “the more part.”

The high levels of “more part” phraseology found in the Book of Mormon, its two rare variants, and Figure 19 indicate that the Book of Mormon’s usage of the phraseology is best characterized as early modern, not rare late modern.

Conclusion

Besides the importance of being aware of the potential pitfalls we can encounter in interpreting Ngram Viewer charts (and even sometimes ECCO’s term frequency charts), the conclusion to be drawn vis-à-vis Book

part of þis world erreþ here.” The earliest example in EEBO is dated 1473/1474: “the more part of his sons were dead” (from the first printed book in English). A manageable ECCO search is “the more part of all ...” The Book of Mormon has three of these. If there had been any real increase in original use of “more part” syntax in the early 1700s, we would expect to see some examples of this specific phraseology with *all*. In ECCO, the nine results from a search performed in June 2018 turned out to yield only three actual hits; but the language dated from much earlier: 1426, 1491, and 1568. So, the 18th-century titles contained 15th- and 16th-century language. This is an important reminder that, in this endeavor, just looking at raw result totals and dates of publication can be completely misleading. This same wording — “the more part of all ...” — turns up 33 times in the 16th century in EEBO₁, but not once in the 17th century. This search clearly indicates that “the more part of X” was a phrase characteristic of the 16th century (and earlier). In June 2018, I also performed a Google Books search of “the more part of X” limited to before the year 1830. A little more than 20 results were returned, but of those that I could read, all of them, besides two false positives, were examples of earlier language, many from legal documents.

of Mormon usage is that these charts, used in isolation, very often give us the wrong idea about earlier usage patterns and rates. As it turns out, the time depth of many content-rich phrases is often greater than first appears.

Here is the list of the phrases treated in this study, along with an indication of the relative popularity of these phrases (as currently indicated by raw, unfiltered textual data):

- “the more part of X” [popularity peaked in the 1530s]
- “infinite goodness” [popularity peaked in the 1530s or the 1570s]
- “first parents” [popularity peaked in the 1610s]
- “forbidden fruit” [popularity peaked in the 1630s]
- “demands of justice” [popularity peaked in the 1690s]
- “plan of X” [exclusively late modern, except for “plan of our redemption”]

Most content-rich phrases of the Book of Mormon fit well with its early modern syntax. There are some phrases that are properly classified, according to the general textual record, as characteristically late modern, but most phrases were found during the early modern period, and many of these might have seen peak popularity, or close to peak popularity, during that earlier time.

It’s possible that the easily accessible but unreliable information provided by Ngram Viewer charts has influenced the views of some Book of Mormon scholars. This information, colored by only a superficial consideration of its syntax, has led many to conclude that the original text is a mix of biblical language and 19th-century vernacular. Some have written or implied that this is the case, leaving many readers with the wrong impression of its English. Of course, such statements shouldn’t be made without undertaking a large amount of research in order to support them. Consequently, it would be wise to treat cautiously any comments made about the nature of Book of Mormon English until verifying that the maker of the comments has undertaken linguistic study of the original language, including its lexis and syntax.

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NOW IF THIS IS BOASTING, EVEN SO WILL I BOAST!

Loren Blake Spendlove

Abstract: *When the sons of Mosiah were returning from their preaching among the Lamanites, Ammon was accused by his brother Aaron of boasting. This article demonstrates how Ammon's response to this charge employed wordplay involving the Hebrew roots ה-ל-ל (h-l-l) and ש-מ-ח (s-m-ch). Identifying and understanding Ammon's use of wordplay helps us to appreciate the complexity and conceptual richness of his message.*

Following their missionary experiences in “the land of Nephi” (Mosiah 28:5)¹ the sons of Mosiah and their companions “did rejoice exceedingly, for the success which they had had among the Lamanites” (Alma 25:17). In fact, Ammon expressed so much elation in their success that his brother Aaron was afraid he had been carried away “unto boasting” (Alma 26:10). In Ammon’s capably crafted response to his brother, we encounter wordplay that can only be *fully* ascertained if his words are translated into Hebrew.²

Among its many meanings, the Hebrew root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l) — expressed by the verbal infinitives להלל (lehallel) and להתהלל (lehithallel) — can be subdivided into three principal definitions:³

1. All Book of Mormon citations are from *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, edited by Royal Skousen (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

2. I assume Ammon’s original words carried Hebrew linguistic and grammatical characteristics.

3. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1907), 237, s.v. “הלל.”

1. to shine or “flash forth light,”⁴ from which the name הֵיֵלֵל (heylel), or Lucifer is believed to be derived (see Isaiah 14);⁵
2. to praise or be praised;
3. to boast or be boastful.

This root occurs nearly two hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, and in most of those instances it is rendered as *to praise* in the KJV and other English bible translations. Among these are the following passages:

For great is Jehovah, and **praised** (מִהֵלֵל) greatly, And fearful He is above all gods. (1 Chronicles 16:25, Young’s Literal Translation⁶)

They are to stand every morning to thank and to **praise** (לְהֵלֵל) the LORD, and likewise at evening. (1 Chronicles 23:30, New American Standard Bible⁷)

Praise (הֵלֵל) ye Jehovah. **Praise** (הֵלֵל), O ye servants of Jehovah, Praise (הֵלֵל) the name of Jehovah. (Psalm 113:1, American Standard Version⁸)

Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers **praised** (הֵלֵל) You, has been burned by fire; and all our precious things have become a ruin. (Isaiah 64:11, NASB)

The root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l), within its broad range of meaning, can also properly express the idea of *to boast*⁹ in English. Amid the various

4. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2000), 867. s.v. “הֵלֵל.”

5. Koehler and Baumgartner associate the name הֵיֵלֵל (heylel, or Lucifer) with “the morning-star or crescent moon,” and as such related to the first meaning of ה-ל-ל (h-l-l) — *to shine*. Likewise, Brown, Driver, and Briggs also associate the noun הֵיֵלֵל (heylel) with the first definition. However, it seems obvious that Isaiah also intended us to infer the second definition — *to be boastful*. Read in context, verses 13–14 of Isaiah 14 appear to support this idea. Isaiah tells us that Heylel’s (Lucifer in English) fall from heaven was accompanied by some serious self-boasting. Heylel boasted, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High” (New American Standard Bible).

6. Young’s Literal Translation (hereafter YLT) was published in 1862 by Robert Young.

7. Originally published in 1971, the New American Standard Bible (hereafter NASB) was most recently updated in 1995.

8. The American Standard Version (hereafter ASV) was first published in 1901.

9. Most often expressed with the reflexive verb לְהִתְהַלֵּל (lehithallel), which is the intensive hitpaal form of the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l).

English translations of the Hebrew Bible this translation occurs more than a dozen times. These passages include the following:¹⁰

My soul **shall make her boast in Jehovah** (ביהוה תתהלל), in Yahweh she [my soul] will boast): The meek shall hear thereof, and be glad. (Psalm 34:2, ASV)

In God we have boasted (באלהים הללנו) all day long, And we will give thanks to Your name forever. (Psalm 44:8, NASB)

You will winnow them and a wind will carry them away, a whirlwind will scatter them. But you will rejoice in the LORD; **you will boast in the Holy One of Israel** (ביהוה בקדוש ישראל) (תתהלל). (Isaiah 41:16, Christian Standard Bible¹¹)

And if in a truthful, just and righteous way you swear, ‘As surely as the LORD lives,’ then the nations will invoke blessings by him **and in him they will boast** (ובו יתהללו). (Jeremiah 4:2, New International Version¹²)

It is also important to point out that in addition to *praise* and *boast*, the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l) is also often translated as *to glory*¹³ in various English translations. In each of these cases where it is rendered *to glory* it would be equally as plausible to translate the verb as *to boast*. For example, in the last two examples cited above (Isaiah 41:16 and Jeremiah 4:2) the King James Version (KJV) renders each as *glory* rather than *boast*. Additional examples of this optional translation include:

1 Chronicles 16:10:

Glory ye (התהללו hithalelu) in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. (KJV)

Boast yourselves (התהללו hithalelu) in His holy name, rejoice doth the heart of those seeking Jehovah. (YLT)

10. Not all English translations render these verses as “to boast.” Some use “to glory,” while others use “to praise.”

11. The Christian Standard Bible (CSB) is a very recent translation, with the first complete edition published in 2017.

12. The New International Version (NIV) was first published in 1978.

13. As with *to boast*, when derived from the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l), *to glory* is most often expressed with the reflexive verb להתהלל (lehitalel).

Jeremiah 9:23–24:

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man **glory** (יתהלל yithallel) in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man **glory** (יתהלל yithallel) in his might, let not the rich man **glory** (יתהלל yithallel) in his riches: But **let him that glorieth glory** (יתהלל המתהלל yithallel hamithallel) in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (KJV)

This is what the LORD says: “Let not the wise **boast** (יתהלל yithallel) of their wisdom or the strong **boast** (יתהלל yithallel) of their strength or the rich **boast** (יתהלל yithallel) of their riches, but let the **one who boasts boast** (יתהלל המתהלל yithallel hamithallel) about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD. (NIV)

As demonstrated above, different English translations of the Hebrew Bible render the verbs להלל (lehallel) and להתהלל (lehithallel) — both derived from the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l) — as either *to praise*, *to boast*, or *to glory*. A key translation feature to point out is that in order for the verb to be rendered as *to boast* or *to glory*, the subject of the verb must *boast* or *glory in* someone or something (see above examples). The Hebrew equivalent of **in** is the preposition ב (the letter *bet*), which is always prefixed to the noun to which it is related. For example, the phrase “to boast/glory in Jehovah” would be expressed as “להתהלל ביהוה” (lehithallel bYahweh). One can boast/glory **in** the Lord as well as **in** one’s wisdom, strength, riches, etc.

It is equally important to point out that *to praise* does not carry this same grammatical requirement. Rather, what we often find in the Bible is that when להלל (lehallel) is translated as *to praise*, the object of the verb (the Lord, for example) is often preceded by the preposition ל (the letter *lamed*). As with the Hebrew word for *in* (ב), ל is always prefixed to the object of the verb. The word ל can be translated as *to* or *for*, but when referring to the idea of *praise*, it is an unnecessary preposition in English grammar. So, “to praise Jehovah” would be expressed as “להלל ליהוה” (lehallel lYahweh) in Hebrew, with the ל prefixed to יהוה (Yahweh), resulting in ליהוה (lYahweh).

With this introduction to biblical usage we can now examine Ammon's response to Aaron's charge of boasting. In the nine verses leading up to Aaron's rebuke, Ammon never used the words *boast* or *glory*, and we find the word *praise* used only once but as a noun rather than as a verb: "Blessed be the name of our God; let us **sing to his praise**,¹⁴ yea, let us give thanks to his holy name, for he doth work righteousness forever" (Alma 26:8). However, following Aaron's accusation, Ammon used the words *praise*, *boast* and *glory* a total of twelve times in his response. These usages appear to be an intentional repetition of Aaron's original rebuke of *boasting* and need to be understood as related terms in Hebrew. Ammon's repeated use of *praise*, *boast*, and *glory* are meant to counter Aaron's implied accusation that Ammon was boasting *in himself*. On the contrary, Ammon's repetitive use of these terms helped clarify that his initial words were intended to be understood as praising, boasting in, and glorying in the Lord, rather than in himself.

Ammon's response to Aaron is bracketed at the beginning and the end of his discourse by two groupings of the English words *praise*, *boast*, and *glory*. I propose that all these translated English words are derived from the Hebrew root ל-ל-ל (h-l-l). The first grouping of these words is found at the beginning of his response in verses 11 through 16, and the second grouping is found at the end of his discourse in verses 35 and 36. These two groupings form an inclusio¹⁵ similar to those often found in the Hebrew Bible and in Rabbinic literature. Broken into the two groupings, his words read:

I do not boast in my own strength or in my own wisdom;¹⁶ but behold, my joy is full. Yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God. Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my

14. It is probable that Ammon did not use a word derived from the root ל-ל-ל (h-l-l) in this verse to express the idea of *praise*. Similar passages in the Hebrew Bible use the root ז-מ-ר (z-m-r) meaning *to sing*, and by implication *to sing praises* to express this concept. For example, in Psalm 9:2 we read: "I will be glad and rejoice in thee: **I will sing praise to thy name** [אזמרה שמך, *azamrah shimcha*], O thou most High." The phrase "I will sing praise" is simply expressed by the verb אזמרה (*azamrah*, I will sing), and the English word *praise* is merely inferred.

15. "An inclusio is a repeated phrase or whole line that stands at the beginning and end of a poetic unit. . . . The inclusio delimits a poetic unit, providing a strong sense of beginning and closure." Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 323.

16. The text in *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* for this verse differs from that published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

strength, I am weak. Therefore **I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God**,¹⁷ for in his strength I can do all things. Yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which **we will praise his name forever**. Behold how many thousands of our brethren hath he loosed from the pains of hell! And they are brought to sing redeeming love — and this because of the power of his word which is in us. Therefore have we not great reason to rejoice? Yea, we have reason to praise him forever, for he is the Most High God and has loosed these our brethren from the chains of hell. Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he hath brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation. And they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love. Yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work. Therefore **let us glory**.¹⁸ Yea, **we will glory in the Lord**; yea, we will rejoice, for our joy is full; yea, **we will praise our God forever**. Behold, **who can glory too much in the Lord**? Yea, who can say too much of his great power and of his mercy and of his long-suffering towards the children of men? Behold, I say unto you: I cannot say the smallest part which I feel. (Alma 26:11–16)

Now have we not reason to rejoice? Yea, I say unto you, there never were men that had so great reason to rejoice as we, since the world began; yea, and my joy is carried away, **even unto boasting** in my God; for he has all power, all wisdom, and all understanding; he comprehendeth all things, and he is a merciful Being, even unto salvation, to those who will repent and believe on his name. Now **if this is boasting, even so will I boast**; for this is my life and my light, my joy and my salvation, and my redemption from everlasting wo. Yea, blessed is the name of my God, who has been mindful of this people, who are a branch of the tree of Israel, and has been lost from its body in a strange land; yea, I say, blessed be

17. Boasting of oneself or of God is equivalent to boasting in oneself or in God. Hebrew would express “to boast of God” or “to boast in God” as להתהלל באלוהים (lehithallel bElohim). Note that in the English translation of Ammon’s response he both boasts “of his God” (verse 12) and “in his God” (verse 35).

18. The use of *glory* as a verb is rare in the Book of Mormon. In addition to this verse, *glory* is only used as a verb in four other locations: 2 Nephi 33:6, Mosiah 23:11, Alma 29:9, and Alma 48:16.

the name of my God, who has been mindful of us, wanderers in a strange land. (Alma 26:35–36)

As can be easily observed from even a casual reading of Ammon’s response to Aaron, it was not Ammon’s intent to praise himself, or to boast or glory in his own abilities or success. Rather, Ammon’s praising, boasting and glorying were all directed toward God. And while Ammon’s repeated usage of the Hebrew root ל-ל-ל (h-l-l) would have been difficult to miss in Hebrew, it is obscured in English because of the three separate English words used in translation: *praise*, *boast*, and *glory*.

Ammon’s repetitive use of the root ל-ל-ל (h-l-l) can be described by two different types of wordplay: *polyptoton* and *polysemy*. Polyptoton is a “repetition of the same root word but in a different form.”¹⁹ More fully, it “is a repetition of the same word in the same sense, but not in the same form: from the same root, but in some other termination; as that of case, mood, tense, person, degree, number, gender, etc.”²⁰ Steen added that polyptoton “is one of the most frequently employed types of repetition in the Bible.”²¹ Polysemy is “a linguistic term for a word’s capacity to carry two or more distinct meanings.”²² As noted previously, the root ל-ל-ל (h-l-l) carries multiple distinct meanings, including to *shine*, to *praise*, and to *boast*. The following are two examples of polyptotonic wordplay in the Bible:

I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and **I will wipe** (מחיתי) Jerusalem as **one wipes** (ימחה) a dish, **wiping** (מחה) it and turning it upside down. (2 Kings 21:13, NASB)

This example of polyptoton is readily observable in English — I will wipe, one wipes, and wiping — and in Hebrew (the infinitive is למחוח, from the root ח-ח-ח (m-ch-h)) — מחיתי (machiti), ימחה (yimchah), מחה (machah). However, in the following example from Isaiah, the polyptotonic wordplay is completely hidden in English, because it would not make sense to translate the text the way it is written in Hebrew. Isaiah’s double usage of *hear* and *see* makes the statement more emphatic in Hebrew, expressed by the word *indeed* in English:

19. Julia Hans, *Go Figure!: An Introduction to Figures of Speech in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2018), 61.

20. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible: Explained and Illustrated* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898), 267.

21. Janie Steen, *Verses and Virtuosity: The Adaptation of Latin Rhetoric in Old English Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 81.

22. Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 199.

And he said, Go, and tell this people, **Hear ye indeed** (שמעו שמעו, hear, you hear), but understand not; and **see ye indeed** (ראו ראו, see, you see), but perceive not. (Isaiah 6:9, KJV)

This type of polyptotonic wordplay is also a prominent feature of the Book of Mormon. For example, in 1 Nephi 8:2, Lehi told his family, “Behold, I have dreamed a dream, or in other words, I have seen a vision.” In this passage, Lehi twice utilized wordplay: חלמתי חלום (chalmati chalom — I dreamed a dream), and ראיתי מראה (raiti mareh — I saw a seeing).²³ These two examples of polyptotonic repetition are comprised of the following elements: חלמתי (chalamti, I dreamed) and חלום (chalom, a dream), both derived from the root ח-ל-ם (ch-l-m), and ראיתי (raiti, I saw) and מראה (mareh, seeing or vision), which originate from the root ר-א-ה (r-a-h).

In this final example of both polyptoton and polysemy, the wordplay is completely obscured in English while it is easily noticeable in Hebrew, just as we observed in Ammon’s response to Aaron:

If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain **from leaving** (מעזב meazov) it to him, **you shall surely release** (עזב תעזב azov taazov) it with him (Exodus 23:5, NASB).

In this example the root ע-ז-ב (a-z-b) is used three times: מעזב (meazov, from leaving), and עזב תעזב (azov taazov, translated as *you shall surely release*, but literally meaning *releasing you shall release*). The wordplay in this verse is created with the infinitive לעזוב (laazov) which can signify both *to leave* and *to release*, and represents an ideal example of both polyptotonic and polysemic wordplay.

While some wordplay is expressed in simple polyptotonic or polysemic constructions, Ammon’s discourse contains a much more complex expression of these types of wordplay. Tables 1 and 2 below show my proposed Hebrew expressions derived from the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l) for Ammon’s response to Aaron, divided according to the two groupings of usage at the beginning (Table 1) and the end (Table 2) of his response. While there is some repetition of form in the Hebrew, most word usages are unique expressions.

23. Examples of this same wordplay can be found in Genesis 37:5 where “Joseph dreamed a dream” (יوسف חלם יוסף חלום yachalom yosef chalom), and in Ezekiel 8:4, which references “the vision that I saw” (ראיתי מראה אשר ראיתי mareh asher raiti). It is also possible that Lehi used a different Hebrew root for “I have seen a vision” — ח-ז-ה (ch-z-h) — a root principally meaning *to see*. If he utilized this root, then the phrase “I have seen a vision” would have been rendered חזיתי חזון (chaziti chazon) in Hebrew (see Isaiah 1:1 as an example). Either way, the wordplay is preserved.

Table 1

Usage	Verse	English	Hebrew
1	11	I do not boast	(al-mithallel) אל-מתהלל ²⁴
2	12	I will not boast	אל-תתהלל (al-tithallel)
3	12	I will boast	תתהלל (tithallel)
4	12	we will praise	תהללו (tehallelu)
5	14	to praise	להלל (lehallel)
6	16	let us glory	התהללו (hithallelu) or תתהללו (tithallelu)
7	16	we will glory	תתהללו (tithallelu)
8	16	we will praise	תהללו (tehallelu)
9	16	who can glory	ייתהלל (yithallel) ²⁵

Table 2

Usage	Verse	English	Hebrew
10	35	boasting	תהלה (tehilah) ²⁶
11	36	boasting	תהלה (tehilah)
12	36	I will boast	תתהלל (tithallel)

As can be observed in Tables 1 and 2, the Hebrew rendering of Ammon's words displays a significant amount of polyptotic and polysemic wordplay with significant variations in the verb conjugations and forms, mixed with the noun *boasting*, Aaron's original accusatory wording. In addition, Ammon's repetitious usage of the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l) allowed him to forcefully counter Aaron's charge of self-directed boasting, and to reorient the focus of his boasting toward his actual target — God.

In addition to Ammon's wordplay with the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l), it is also apparent that Ammon employed similar polyptotic wordplay with the noun *joy* (שמחה, simchah) and the verb *rejoice* (לשמח, lismoach) — both derived from the root ש-מ-ח (s-m-ch) — in his response. As with his usage of the ה-ל-ל

24. All verbal usages of *boast* or *glory* reflect the hitpaal form of the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l): להתהלל, to be praised, to boast (of) oneself, or to glory (of) oneself.

25. English translations that are rendered as “who can [verb]” are generally expressed as “who [future tense of verb]” in the Hebrew Bible.

26. The word תהלה (tehilah) is not found in the Hebrew Bible, but it is used as the word for *boasting* in Romans 3:27 — “Where then is boasting?” — in an 1817 Hebrew translation of the New Testament. See *נעתק מלשון יון פי משיחו: ברית חדשה על פי משיחו* (London: A. Macintosh, 1817), 147.

(h-l-l) root, his use of the ש-מ-ח (s-m-ch) root is restricted to the beginning of his discourse (verses 11–16) and then again at the end of his discourse (verses 35–37), with only one mention of *joy* outside of these ranges, in verse 30. As with the root ה-ל-ל (h-l-l), I have divided the usage of the root ש-מ-ח (s-m-ch) into two separate tables, with the uses of the root at the beginning of his discourse in Table 3 and those at the end in Table 4

Table 3

Usage	Verse	English	Hebrew
1	11	my joy	(simchati) שמחתי
2	11	joy	(simchah) שמחה
3	11	I will rejoice	(esmach) אשמח
4	13	to rejoice	(lismoach) לשמוח
5	16	we will rejoice	(nismach) נשמח
6	16	our joy	(simchatnu) שמחתנו

Table 4

Usage	Verse	English	Hebrew
7	30	our joy	(simchatnu) שמחתנו
8	35	to rejoice	(lismoach) לשמוח
9	35	to rejoice	(lismoach) לשמוח
10	35	my joy	(simchati) שמחתי
11	36	my joy	(simchati) שמחתי
12	37	my joy	(simchati) שמחתי

As we can observe in Table 3, the first six uses of *joy* or *to rejoice* fit the parameters of polyptotonic wordplay extremely well, with each use a unique employment of the root ש-מ-ח (s-m-ch). However, the final six occurrences of the root (see Table 4) rely on repetitious employment of previously utilized forms of ש-מ-ח (s-m-ch). Ammon's usage of this root might also reveal a simple chiasmic-type structure:

From Table 3:

A Joy (my joy, joy)

B Rejoicing (I will rejoice, to rejoice, we will rejoice)

A Joy (our joy)²⁷

27. Note: The two chiasmic structures are book-ended by the phrases *my joy* and *our joy*, but in reverse order from each other.

From Table 4:

A Joy (our joy)

B Rejoicing (to rejoice, to rejoice)

A Joy (my joy, my joy, my joy)

Because Ammon's usage of the root ח-מ-ש (s-m-ch, meaning *joy* or *to rejoice*) is so closely connected with his use of the root ל-ל-ה (h-l-l, meaning *to praise* or *to boast*) — in both physical placement and in meaning — it seems apparent that this repetition of roots was meant as intentional wordplay by Ammon. Perhaps of most importance for this paper, Ammon's repetitive usage of the roots ל-ל-ה (h-l-l) and ח-מ-ש (s-m-ch) possibly displays an underlying Hebrew linguistic structure in the original wording of his response to Aaron.

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CHRIST AND THE WORK OF SUFFERING

Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye

Abstract: *Christ's voluntary subjection to the horrible realities of this world transformed him forever. His vulnerability became his capacity to save and heal all humankind. Our own suffering develops our capacity for love, which is the power that makes us useful to others, and humility, which is the root of wisdom.*

During chemotherapy, I live my life in fourteen-day cycles. On Day 1, I check myself into the infusion center. The nurse punches a needle into my chest. It connects to a catheter that dumps directly into a large vein in my neck. They hook me up to my life-saving poison. For the first hours, I type briskly on my computer. Then I start to feel the effects. Waves of nausea sweep over me. My vision feels thick. They flush my line with saline, filling my mouth with a metallic taste, then hook me up to a pump worn around my waist. It's like being pregnant with a laptop. My family members take me home, where I lie under blankets, watching episodes of the Great British Baking Show until it is time for everyone to go to sleep. But it's hard to sleep. I keep waking up, groping for the vomit bag in the darkness. My husband snores peacefully at my side. I am alone.

To elude the nausea, I imagine myself in one of my favorite places in the world, a place that now seems to belong to another lifetime. I am walking along a trail of deep, fine, black sand. The children and the dog bound joyfully ahead, tearing up and down the steep dunes on either side, hiding behind clumps of grass, leaping out with shrieks of delight. The trail opens up onto the windswept expanse of Te Henga, a wild beach on the west coast of Auckland. Waves from the Tasman Sea rise, crash, and line the sand with a layer of reflected light and sea foam. With their toes, the children sweep patterns into the shining sand. The wind rushes off the sea, blowing the tops off the breakers. Every once in

a while, a large wave rushes up unexpectedly, flooding the beach with water and chasing us to higher ground.

On Day 2 of the chemo cycle, I awake still nauseated, still connected to the pump, the needle still in my chest. Every seven breaths, the pump squirts out a bit more therapeutic poison. At midday, I tentatively eat mouthfuls of soup, vomit bag at hand. I feel some strength come back into my body. On Day 3, I awake and enjoy lying in bed. I listen to the hustle of the household as everyone gathers their things and rushes off to school. When the house is quiet again, I emerge and eat some of the miso soup with rice my husband has made and left on the stovetop. It is warm and salty. In the afternoon, I go to the infusion center and get “unplugged” from my pump. In the evening, I take a nice hot shower.

On Days 1 and 2, as I pass through that deep valley, I wonder whether Christ despaired in his suffering and wished it had never come to him. Did his moral perfection and divine knowledge insulate him from discouragement? Was he able to float grandly above the fray, detached from his body’s hurts and wants, observing frailty but not subjected to it? I remember he “felt exceedingly heavy”¹ and prayed, “Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.”² I remember he “shrank not to drink the bitter cup”³ but wonder if he found it unbearably bitter. Did he ever think, “I can’t do this,” or “I don’t know how long I can keep this up”?

I remember he cried out in agony and desolation, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!”⁴

On Days 3–14, I reenter life’s hustle and bustle. I drive kids to music lessons and athletic practices. I toss bunches of cilantro and carrots into the shopping cart. I pore over primary sources and send emails containing multiple exclamation points. I watch the kids scamper up the walls at the climbing gym and even try some routes myself. At home we fold dough into pretzels, pound rice into mochi, and pull hot sugar into buttermints. On Day 14, I feel buoyant and witty. Life is good. Only, tomorrow is Day 1.

I watched my mother endure two years of cancer treatments before passing away in December 2008. During the last months of her life she was in terrible pain. She was a woman of obedience and faith, who trusted in God. How can God, who is loving, good, and all-powerful, allow such undeserved suffering? For such a long time? In such a good

1. See Matthew 26:37.

2. See Matthew 26:39.

3. See D&C 19:18-19.

4. Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

and loving person, so needed by her family and by the world? All over the world, there are trials far beyond cancer. Families are torn apart. Bodies are mangled by war, collisions, gang violence. Minds are beset by addiction, depression, crushing anxiety. Innocent children die because of malnutrition or abuse or just the odd combination of genes. The powerful prosper at the expense of the weak. Yet God allows it all.

In “A Latter-day Saint Theology of Suffering,” Francine Bennion gently dismantles the notion that righteousness guarantees a mortal life free from danger and an afterlife with no conflict. Bennion points out that according to the Latter-day Saint teaching of a premortal struggle between God and Lucifer, the purpose of life is to exercise agency in the face of difficulty. If God were to control and shield our lives from harm at every turn, it would be like living under Lucifer’s plan: only one will in control, with no space for us to experience agency and choose our own path. She writes:

I think suffering on this earth is an indication of God’s trust, God’s love. I think it is an indication that God does not want us to be simply obedient children playing forever under his hand, but wants us able to become more like himself. In order to do that we have to know reality ... If we are to be like God, we cannot live forever in fear that we may meet something that will scare us or that will hurt us.⁵

Bennion argues that to experience suffering, to navigate a world of agency-created obstacles and be subject to natural laws, is to live in God’s reality. It is to live God’s life and mature in it.

On a recent Day 2, I walked the two flights of stairs to my third-floor office. Slowly, from step to step, I trudged. My lungs, compressed to two-thirds their normal capacity by a buildup of fluid, heaved without effect. After a day and a half without food or water, my body drooped. All of a sudden I remembered a story that passed across my desk as I was writing a history of Latter-day Saints in Germany — the story of a sister so faithful, so in tune with the Spirit, during World War II, she knew exactly where the Allied bombs would fall in her city. Yet she nearly starved in the postwar months when her entire family had to live on two potatoes per day, and she insisted the children eat some of her portion.

5. Francine R. Bennion, “A Latter-day Saint Theology of Suffering,” in *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women*, edited by Jennifer Reeder and Kate Holbrook (SLC: Church Historian’s Press, 2017), 320, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit/part-4/chapter-43?lang=eng>.

She was at death's door when a Latter-day Saint American soldier arrived on their doorstep with a box of food. She was so believing, so receptive to revelation, yet God allowed her to weaken day by day until she lacked the strength to stand. To a much severer degree, she also knew weakness. Her resilience carried her on to the miracle, and past it.

Suffering's value is fellowship with others and unity with Christ. It was not enough for Jesus to wield healing power, to stop up others' wounds, and to lift others' sorrows. It was necessary for him to feel wounds in his own flesh, to feel suffocating despair, to wonder when his misery would end. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Alma taught Christ would 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)

Christ's voluntary subjection to the horrible realities of this world transformed him forever. His vulnerability became his capacity to save and heal all humankind. Our own suffering develops our capacity for love, which is the power that makes us useful to others, and humility, which is the root of wisdom.

Yes, says a small voice inside me, but I wish it didn't have to be this hard. And how come it isn't this hard for everyone? Other people sail through life and say it is all because of God's blessings. They live to be old and cantankerous. Why do people who cook from scratch and run marathons get colon cancer at age 37, when people who eat Cheetos, drink soda pop, and watch five hours of TV a day do just fine?

"God," I whisper on days when I am too weary to weep and rage, "this is a terrible plan. You could take away this illness, but you don't. You could fix our problems and right the world, but you don't. You're supposed to lead us in the right way, but you let us stumble and cause harm that cannot be undone. If you are good, and if you love us, why do you allow us to suffer or inflict suffering on others? If you healed a leper, or a man with palsy, or the woman who bled, why not me and those I love?"

Suffering is often a solitary experience. In pain, I do not feel beautiful, engaging, cheerful, or strong. In the midst of unbecoming symptoms, I feel abominably weak. I feel ashamed to be so useless, so untidy. I want to crawl into a dark corner and curl whimpering into a ball. Why would I drag someone else into this sickly swamp? Company brings little comfort — only the stark contrast of my illness with others' health, my shadow with their sunny skies.

For centuries, theologians have dedicated their lives to this question of theodicy — the arbitrary cruelty of a world created for us by an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving God. I cannot solve this problem with a quote from scripture or a line from a sermon, especially when living in the middle of what Francine Bennion calls the “meeting of reality, the falling, the hungering, the screaming, the crawling on the floor, the being disfigured and scarred for life psychologically or physically.”⁶ I know the teaching: Experiencing this world with its dangers was my choice, the choice of every human. I know my own slogans: Life is a marathon. Suffering comes from attachment. No pain, no gain. But —

Where art thou, O God? When wilt thou deliver me?

I have wrestled with God, seeking some epiphany that would make the problem of suffering feel right. I found there were no answers to the hurts and indignities of this world, for these things are not questions. Suffering never feels right. It feels like suffering. Like prayer, it is a form of work.

Christ worked mightily in the final hours of his life. He struggled quietly in the Garden of Gethsemane, heavy with the sicknesses of humankind, lonely and pressed down. He stood raw and wounded, enduring the banal cruelty of magistrate and mob. He bore his burden through Jerusalem's crowded streets. Exposed, he called for water, but tasted vinegar. The weight of his body dragged on his nail-pierced hands and on his lungs, arresting his breath. He witnessed his mother's torment and could do nothing for her. Alone, he cried out into the darkness, unable to hear God's voice. Then finally his task was finished.

Going from “deathly ill, very horrible” to “very cheerful, all is well” in the course of fourteen days is not resurrection. But it has taught me about beginnings and ends. Having experienced suffering, one develops power over it — not the power to stop it, or take it away from someone you love, but to know its sorrows fade. Having experienced suffering,

6. *Ibid.*, 321.

one receives power from it — the power to share others' burdens and be humble, to see one's own burdens and be kind.

On the other side of suffering is strength. It is a peculiar sort of confidence that derives from having had no confidence at all. Things that once seemed difficult are now no trouble, and things that seemed like trouble now reveal themselves as gifts. People who once seemed vexing, inexplicable, or foreign now strike me as familiar because they have known pain. People who once seemed broken and tainted with ruin while I imagined myself to be whole are now my sisters and brothers. Truly, now I know that I am nothing, which thing I never had supposed.⁷

In the middle of the Auckland Domain there is a giant pohutakawa tree unlike any other I've seen. Many years ago it split, each half crashing to the ground. It almost died. But it remained intact at the base, just above the roots. It kept drinking water and eating sunlight. Now its sprawling limbs are covered in green leaves and red blossoms, a refuge for songbirds and a shady castle for children. One day, I sat on one of the limbs that struck the ground long ago. Thicker than my waist, worn smooth by grasping hands and scampering feet, the limb stretched along the ground, curling and dividing into branches, twigs, and leaves that reached upward toward the sun. I draped myself along the limb, smelled it, felt its warmth. As the breeze blew past my cheek and rustled the leaves, I felt the great limb move — very slowly, like a tender sigh from deep inside this living spirit. Once nearly destroyed, this tree was now more wonderful than any other in the Domain because children could play in its branches.

Christ showed us the way. He walked through paths of temptation, want, indignity, and pain. He humbled himself not just before the God of the universe, but before the ugliness and cruelty of everyday life.

Christ is here, among us. Turn your eyes from heaven and behold your fellow beings who beat their breasts. Let your hearts be broken but not afraid. Let the children play in the rough branches, around the empty oil drums, amongst the refuse of the fallen world. Weep with those in pain. Stop to tend fellow travelers by the wayside.

Like the pohutakawa tree, do not cease from drinking water and eating sunlight, even when you are nearly broken. For love and its sacred power, reach out. From the ground, from the dark abyss — stretch, stretch out your hands.

7. See Moses 1:10.

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“FEAST UPON THE WORDS OF CHRIST”

Trevor Holyoak

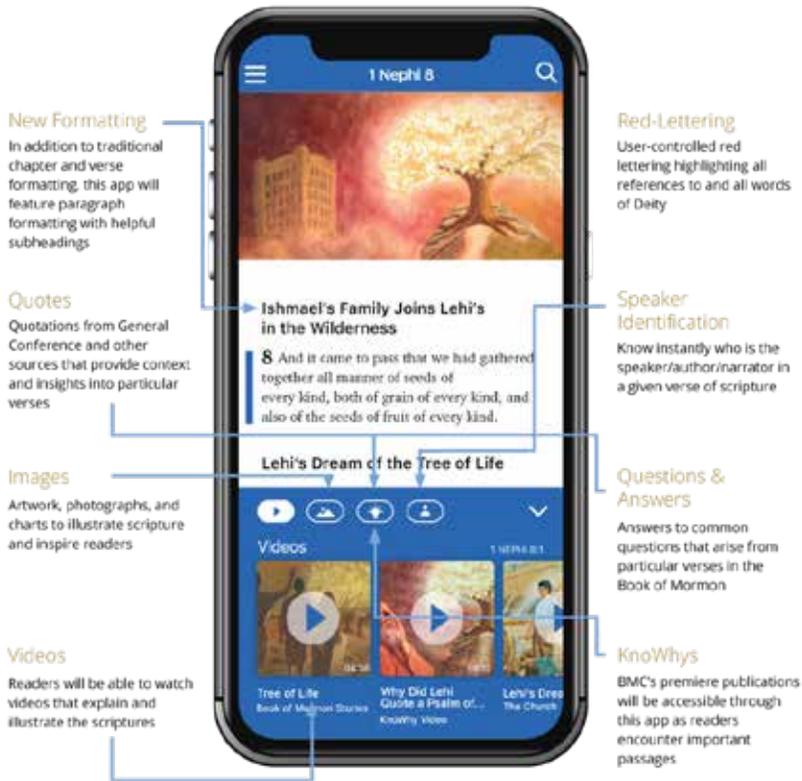
Review of Book of Mormon Central, “ScripturePlus” (<https://www.scriptureplus.org/>); The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Gospel Library” (<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/pages/mobileapps/gospellibrary>); and Living Tree Software, “ScriptureNotes” (<https://scripturenotes.com/>).

Abstract: *ScriptureNotes is a valuable tool for serious, in-depth scripture study, and it definitely has the best search functionality. ScripturePlus, in its current state, is good for daily reading of the Book of Mormon, thanks to its helpful linked resources. But if you often mark or underline as you read, you’ll need to use Gospel Library, which is also the only app that includes the Church’s vast resources beyond the scriptures.*

With today’s technology, many resources are available for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to follow Nephi’s admonition to “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3). This review explores three made specifically for Latter-day Saints. They all have their strengths and weaknesses, but I found each of them to be very useful in different aspects of my gospel study.

ScripturePlus

ScripturePlus from Book of Mormon Central is a free app available for Android and iOS. I’m reviewing the Android version. It contains all the Standard Works in English and Spanish. Each book has at least two versions — a licensed copy of the 2013 edition from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and a Book of Mormon Central edition. For all but the Book of Mormon, these appear to be the same at this time, though the greater differences between Book of Mormon versions hint at more coming in the future.



The Book of Mormon is available in four versions in English: the 1830 Palmyra Edition, Royal Skousen’s “The Earliest Text,” 2013 LDS Scriptures, and the Book of Mormon Central Edition (the latter two are also available in Spanish). The Book of Mormon Central version is particularly interesting, having been reformatted into paragraphs and with a red lettering option for “Names for Deity” and “Words Spoken by Deity.” All versions with paragraph formatting also still have verse numbers embedded for reference.

But the attractive feature of the app is the context-sensitive help that shows up in the bottom as you work your way through the verses of scripture. This help includes pictures, videos, and commentary in the form of “KnoWhys” and short selections from the writings of John Welch and Brant Gardner as well as quotes from Church leaders. At this time, it appears that the Book of Mormon has many resources linked to it, but the other books of scripture only have small amounts, if any. There

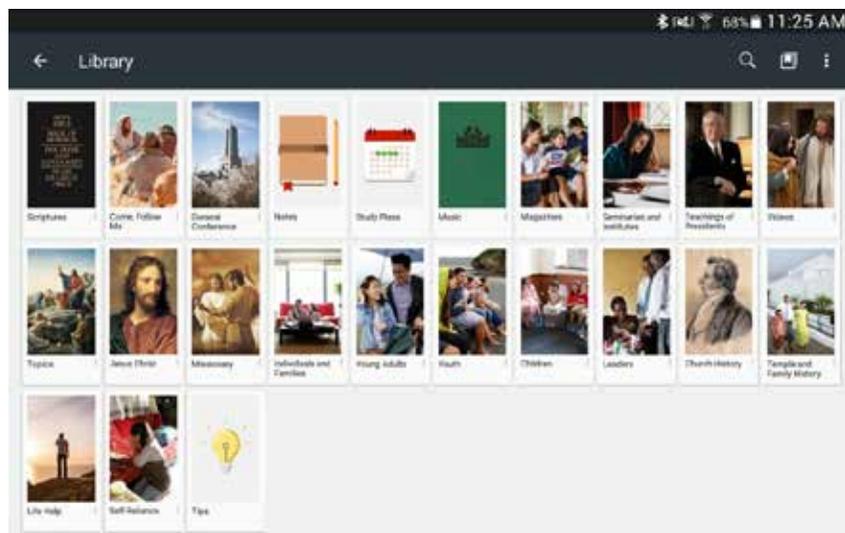
is a basic search function, which brings up results not just from the scriptures but also the other resources.

The biggest drawbacks right now are that you can’t make your own notes, and you can’t do any highlighting. However, I have been told that these are features the authors plan to add in the future. There are also currently no footnotes or chapter headings, even in the 2013 version.

A tutorial is available the first time you open the app as well as a User Guide in the Help menu. A YouTube video introduces the app and also shows some of the features planned to be added.¹ At the 2019 FairMormon Conference, Book of Mormon Central introduced the app and gave a preview. The video of their presentation is available at the FairMormon blog.²

Gospel Library

The Church’s Gospel Library is probably the best known among members, available for mobile devices as well as on the web. I’m reviewing the Android version. It contains not just the scriptures but also just about everything else the Church has published, including videos, hymns, manuals, and magazines.



The scriptures appear just as they do in the paper editions, complete with chapter headings and footnotes. The version in the app and on the

1. See https://youtu.be/j4beNcEj_E.
 2. See <https://www.fairmormon.org/blog/2019/09/16/fairmormon-conference-podcast-41-jasmin-rappleye-scriptureplus-the-future-of-scripture-study>.

web is the most up-to-date and for that reason has recently been referred to by the Church as the preferred version.



The footnotes have links that lead easily to referenced scriptures. There is functionality for marking, making notes, adding tags, etc. These are saved to your Church account, so they appear on any device you are logged in to as well as the Church’s website. It also keeps track of your history, which makes it easy to start up where you were reading yesterday, even if you’ve since used other resources in the app.

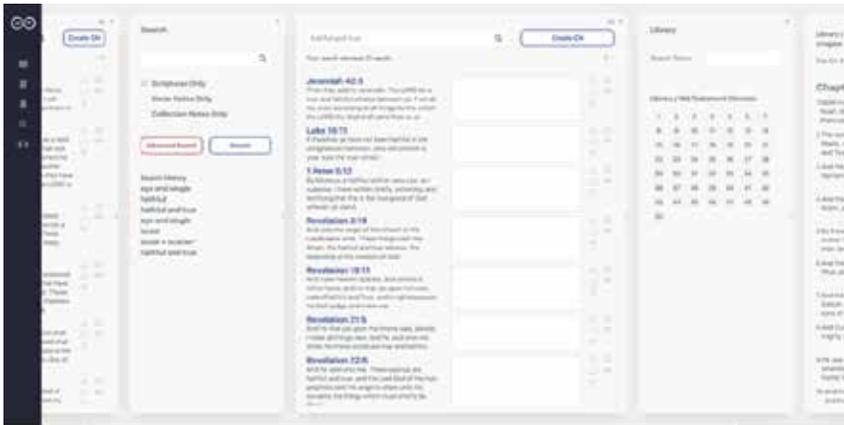
One thing I have found very useful is the ability to have several different “screens” going to keep your place in multiple things at once, which you can then switch between. These are stored and can be renamed, duplicated, and deleted. You can also drag them around on the screen to change their order.

A new feature, added recently, possibly in answer to Book of Mormon Central’s ScripturePlus app, is “Related Content,” which is tied to the scriptural text. Tiny icons appear in the right margin next to certain verses that open up related pictures and videos when you select them.

This product has been in development for much longer than the other two in this review, and it shows. However, it does have its drawbacks, the biggest being the limitations of the search facility. It will only search in content that has already been downloaded to your device, and you can only do simple searches of words and phrases. Content is apparently updated frequently, because it often updates right when you want to access something, making you wait until it’s finished.

ScriptureNotes

ScriptureNotes, a web app available at <https://scripturenotes.com/>, has been in development for more than a decade by Oak Norton, beginning when he was dissatisfied with the search abilities available in other programs. The feature that most sets it apart is that you can open an unlimited number of panes that appear side by side as you research, so you can see all of your progress open at once. It also has extensive note-taking abilities and a flexible Boolean search engine that does things I’ve always wished I could do with the Gospel Library app. The site currently contains a licensed version of the 2013 edition of the standard works. There are plans to add other content, such as the 2013 study helps and the Apocrypha.



The site uses a subscription model, with limited functionality available for free. Norton says that many features are yet to be added, and indeed I expected other features to be there, such as hyperlinked footnotes, which he told me are still in the works. He is hoping enough people will subscribe to finance his full plans. He has been very responsive to suggestions and criticisms. Finding the user interface to be a little nonintuitive, I suggested that tooltips for the icons would help, and he has been actively working on getting them added throughout the app.

Because there is a learning curve, when you sign up at the site you are sent a series of training emails, followed by a Resources series and a Study Topics series, which provide more helps and suggestions for scripture study and encourage use of the ScriptureNotes app. A YouTube channel is also available, with training videos.³

3. See <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjWsxz9kmN8w7yTSoFLS7Rw/> featured.

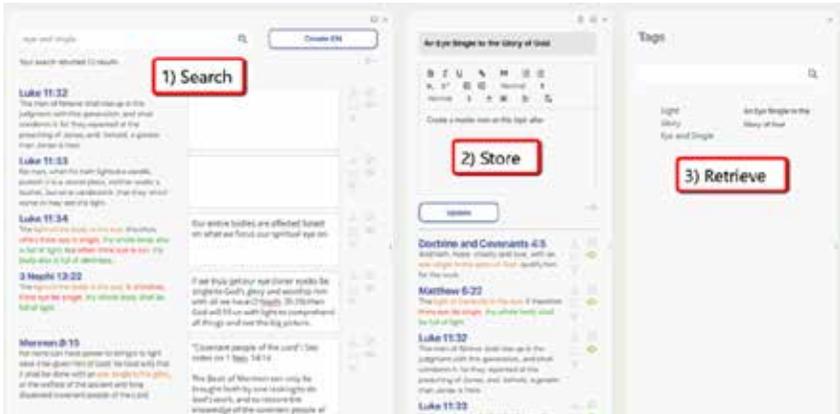
One thing I discovered from using this tool is that I've gotten out of the habit of making notes as I read the scriptures after I quit using the paper version years ago. I've only been underlining, which means I've missed out on being able to revisit insights I've had. This app lets you not only make notes for individual verses, but you can add your own footnotes and create what are called "collection notes," in which you can include unlimited verses and have them all linked together. You can also organize things by topic and create tags.



But what the app really seems to be built for is topical research. You can do a search using the powerful Boolean search engine (a cheat sheet⁴ is available to learn what kinds of searches you can do) and then create a collection note with the results found. For each verse that was found, you can add verses before and after to provide context with simple button clicks. You can also click a button to remove a verse. I can see this making it much easier to research a talk or lesson. And having each task automatically open in a separate pane, side by side, you can keep track of where you are and easily refer back to earlier steps.

When you get a number of panes open, it does become a little tedious to click on arrow buttons to scroll back and forth. I tried a touchscreen Chromebook and found that it makes scrolling much easier than on my PC with a regular screen. Norton recommends using a USB touchpad that allows you to scroll easily with a couple fingers. And because of the horizontal multi-pane user interface, the web app would not work well on a smartphone. But Norton says he has plans to do a mobile app in the future.

4. See <https://scripturenotes.com/search-cheat-sheet>.



All the information is, of course, saved in the ScriptureNotes database in the cloud. This could be a concern for long-term reliability. Norton has pointed out that the subscription program helps with that, because the money paid helps pay for storage and will eventually pay for redundant backups. He has also said that he plans to create export tools so you can create your own backups.

Besides the app itself, the site also has articles about scripture study and lists of recommended resources. (These articles are linked to from the training e-mails mentioned previously). Caution should be used here, unfortunately. Not only have some of the greatest resources currently available been missed, but some included are by people involved in the “gnostic” movement,⁵ one of whom was recently excommunicated. On the other hand, in another place the author does give warnings about some of the antagonistic material you may stumble upon when doing online searches. His advice could be applied to both extremes: Just remember to be discerning in the sources you go to and be open to the Spirit; you may find some real gems online.⁶

Conclusion

ScriptureNotes is a valuable tool for serious, in-depth scripture study and talk or lesson preparation. It definitely has the best search functionality. ScripturePlus, in its current state, is good for daily reading of the Book of Mormon, thanks to its helpful commentaries and other material. But if you often mark verses or make notes as you read, you’ll probably

5. See <https://www.fairmormon.org/conferenceaugust-2015/a-house-of-order-a-house-of-god>.

6. See <https://scripturenotes.com/resource-5-search-engines>.

want to stick with the Gospel Library app until ScripturePlus is more mature. Gospel Library is the only app that has access to the Church's vast resources beyond scriptures.

Trevor Holyoak grew up in the Salt Lake Valley and served in the Texas San Antonio Mission, spanish-speaking. He graduated magna cum laude from Weber State University with a BS in computer science and now works as a programmer and systems administrator. He has been actively involved with FairMormon for many years, received the John Taylor Defender of the Faith Award in 2014, and is a regular contributor to their blog. He is currently serving as a stake emergency preparedness director and in the leadership of the Utah Valley Amateur Radio Club. He lives in Cedar Hills, Utah with his wife and their two youngest kids.

**BECOMING MEN AND WOMEN OF
UNDERSTANDING:
WORDPLAY ON BENJAMIN
— AN ADDENDUM**

Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *Royal and divine sonship/daughterhood (bānîm = “children”/“sons,” bānôt = “daughters”) is a prevalent theme throughout the Book of Mosiah. “Understanding” (Hebrew noun, bînâ or tēbûnâ; verb, bîn) is also a key theme in that book. The initial juxtaposition of “sons” and “understanding” with the name “Benjamin” (binyāmîn, “son of the right hand”) in Mosiah 1:2–7 suggests the narrator’s association of the underlying terms with the name Benjamin likely on the basis of homophony. King Benjamin repeatedly invokes “understand” in his speech (forms of “understand” were derived from the root *byn in Hebrew; Mosiah 2:9, 40; 4:4; cf. 3:15) — a speech that culminates in a rhetorical wordplay on his own name in terms of “sons”/“children,” “daughters,” and “right hand” (Mosiah 5:7, 9). “Understand,” moreover, recurs as a paronomasia on the name Benjamin at key points later in the Book of Mosiah (Mosiah 8:3, 20; 26:1–3), which bring together the themes of sonship and/or “understanding” (or lack of thereof) with King Benjamin’s name. Later statements in the Book of Mosiah about “becoming” the “children of God” or “becoming his sons and daughters” (Mosiah 18:22; 27:25) through divine rebirth allude to King Benjamin’s sermon and the wordplay on “Benjamin” there. Taken as a literary whole, the book of Mosiah constitutes a treatise on “becoming” — i.e., divine transformation through Christ’s atonement (cf. Mosiah 3:18–19). Mormon’s statement in Alma 17:2 about the sons of Mosiah having become “men of a sound understanding” thus serves as a fitting epilogue to a narrative arc begun as early as Mosiah 1:2.*

“My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding”
(Proverbs 5:1)

Ancient Israelites understood the name Benjamin (*bin/ben*, “son” plus *yāmîn*, “right [hand]”) to mean “son of the south [i.e., the directional right hand]” or “son of the right hand [i.e., son of favored status].”¹ Given the evident meaning of the name Benjamin, royal sonship/daughterhood appropriately constitutes a major focus of the Book of Mosiah (as we now have it).²

However, “understanding” constitutes another important emphasis throughout the Book of Mosiah. The noun “understanding” is almost always represented in Hebrew by the noun *bînâ*³ or its cognate *tēbûnâ* (“understanding, cleverness, skill”)⁴ and the verb “understand” by the Hebrew verbal root *b-y-n* (*bîn* = “to understand,” “to pay attention to,

1. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Becoming Sons and Daughters at God’s Right Hand: King Benjamin’s Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 2 (2012): 2–13; Matthew L. 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. Cf. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 122. Hereafter cited as BDB.

2. Royal Skousen (“History of the Critical Text Project of the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11, no. 2 [2002], 20) writes: “Along with the loss of the first 116 pages of the original manuscript (which contained the book of Lehi), most of the original first two chapters of the book of Mosiah were also apparently lost. In the printer’s manuscript, the beginning of Mosiah was originally designated as chapter III. In addition, the title of the book (‘the Book of Mosiah’) was later inserted between the lines:

the Book of Mosiah

peace in the land ~~~~~ Chapter I<II> ~~~~~ And now there was no more ...

It should be noted that these putative two lost “chapters” would be much longer than the typical chapter divisions in the Book of Mormon. Jack M. Lyon and Kent R. Minson (“When Pages Collide: Dissecting the Words of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 51, no. 4 [2012]: 134) see Words of Mormon 1:12–18 as belonging to a 117th page retained by Joseph Smith (i.e., as part of the original “Mosiah” material contiguous with present day Mosiah 1:1). Brant Gardner (“When Hypotheses Collide: Responding to Lyon and Minson’s ‘When Pages Collide’” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 5 [2013]: 105–9) leaves the question open.

3. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner (*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 123 [hereafter cited as a HALOT]) and BDB (p. 108) both use “understanding” as the sole gloss for *bînâ*.

4. HALOT, 1680; BDB, 108, simply glosses *tēbûnâ* as “understanding.”

to consider”⁵ or “discern”⁶). The root meaning of both of these terms is to make a separation (cf., e.g., Arabic *byn* “be separated, remote, clear, obvious”).⁷ From a phonological standpoint, both the noun and verb forms of *bîn* resemble the Hebrew word *bēn* (“son”), a key element in the name Benjamin, the two differing only in the lack of a *yod* in the latter. The paronomastic interrelationship of these conceptual elements also works in Egyptian.⁸ Benjamin (“son of the right hand”) resembles the Egyptian personal name *s3 imn.t* (“son of the [deified] right hand/West”⁹ — Hebrew *yāmîn* and Egyptian *imn.t*, both “right hand,” are cognate). The noun *s3* (*z3*), “son”¹⁰ — which appears to have constituted an element in several Israelite/Nephite names¹¹ — and the noun *s3t*, “daughter” constitute homonyms of *Si3* (Sia or Saa, a divine personification of Wisdom or Perception) and *si3* (as a verb, to “recognize,” “perceive,” “know, be aware of”; as a noun, “perception or knowledge”).¹² These in turn constitute homonyms of the verb *s3i* “be wise, prudent,”¹³ the noun *s33* “wise man,” and possibly “wisdom[?]”¹⁴

In what follows, I will endeavor to show that the homophony of the name “Benjamin” (*binyāmîn*, “son of the right hand”), *bēn/bānîm/bānôt* (“son”/“sons, children”/“daughters”) and *byn/binâ* (verb “understand,” noun “understanding”), whatever Mormon’s actual written language on the plates,¹⁵ served as a paronomastic organizing principle for the

5. HALOT, 122–23.

6. BDB, 107.

7. Aimo E. Murtonen, *Hebrew in Its West Semitic Setting: A Comparative Survey of Non-Masoretic Hebrew Dialects and Traditions, Part 1: A Comparative Lexicon* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 110.

8. I wish to thank Robert F. Smith (personal communication, notes in possession of author) for bringing this to my attention.

9. Hermann Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen* (Glückstadt, Augustin, 1935), 1:280.

10. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1999), 207. Hereafter cited as *CDME*.

11. See Eve Koller, “An Egyptian Linguistic Component in Book of Mormon Names,” *BYU Studies* 57, no. 4 [2019]: 139–48. She makes an excellent case for the onomastic component *ze-* in Nephite names as derived from or representing the Egyptian word *s3/z3*, “son [of].”

12. *CDME*, 212.

13. *Ibid.*, 208.

14. *Ibid.*

15. See Mormon 9:32–33, where Moroni mentions that the plates of Mormon were written using “reformed” Egyptian and that the Nephites still continued to use Hebrew, albeit in “altered” form.

material that deals with King Benjamin, his sermon, and its legacy. First, the narrative introduction of King Benjamin and his paraenesis¹⁶ to his sons, including his royal heir Mosiah II, correlated the name Benjamin with the concepts of proper sonship and “understanding” (Mosiah 1, esp. vv. 2, 5). Second, this paraenetic paronomasia hints at the important conclusion toward which King Benjamin’s subsequent sermon drives: King Benjamin’s people were, like his own sons, “becoming” the “children of Christ, his sons and his daughters.” Their collective “becoming” men and women of “understanding” (cf. Mosiah 1:2) was key to this transformation. Thus, third, the theme of “understanding” also helps to frame portions of his subsequent temple sermon (Mosiah 2:9; 40; 4:4). Fourth, the connection between “sons”/“children,” “understanding,” and “becoming” repeatedly resurfaces throughout the Book of Mosiah, especially where the text reflects back on King Benjamin’s speech. All of this suggests that the paronomastic association between the name “Benjamin,” sonship/daughterhood (and “becoming”), and “understanding” is not only of prime thematic importance in the Book of Mosiah, but helps us to better “understand” Jesus Christ’s divine sonship — a status to which we too are called.

“That Thereby They Might Become Men of Understanding”

At the beginning of the extant Book of Mosiah, both Mormon and King Benjamin link sonship and the education given Benjamin’s three *bānīm* (“sons”) to “understanding”:

And now there was no more contention in all the land of Zarahemla among all the people who belonged to king **Benjamin**, so that king **Benjamin** [*binyāmîn*] had continual peace all the remainder of his days. And it came to pass that he had three **sons** [Hebrew *bānīm*]; and he called their names Mosiah and Helorum and Helaman. **And he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding** [*bînâ*] **and that they might know** concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers, which was delivered them by the hand of the Lord. And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: **My**

16. *Paraenesis* (*paranesis* or *parenesis*, from Greek *parainesis*) is a rhetorical term designating speech or discourse containing advice, counsel, or exhortation, particularly of a religious nature.

sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, **not knowing the mysteries of God**. For it were not possible that our father Lehi could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to **his children**, except it were for the help of these plates; for **he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians**, therefore he could read these engravings **and teach them to his children**, that thereby they could teach them to **their children**, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. I say unto you, **my sons**: Were it not for these things which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, **that we might read and understand of his mysteries** and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even **our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief**, and we should have been like unto our brethren, **the Lamanites**, which know nothing concerning these things, or even **do not believe them** when they are taught them because of **the traditions of their fathers**, which are not correct. **O my sons**, I would that ye should remember that these sayings are true, and also that these records are true. And behold also the plates of Nephi which contain the records and the sayings of our fathers from the time they left Jerusalem until now, and they are true; and we can know of their surety because we have them before our eyes. (Mosiah 1:1–6; emphasis in all scriptural citations mine)¹⁷

John Tvedtnes first noted the clear textual dependency of Mosiah 1:2–6 on 1 Nephi 1:1–4: “Both passages describe teaching and mention ‘fathers’ or ‘parents’ (the Hebrew uses one word for both), the name(s) of the son(s), ‘Jerusalem,’ the ‘language of the Egyptians,’ and the ‘mysteries of God’ and declare that the record is ‘true.’”¹⁸ Tvedtnes further remarks, “It is significant that Benjamin’s use of Nephi’s opening

17. Book of Mormon citations generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

18. John Tvedtnes, “A Note on Benjamin and Lehi,” *Insights* 11, no. 22 (2002), 3. Tvedtnes continues: “This is one of many other examples of how Nephite writers relied on earlier records as they recorded their history. Finding such direct correspondence in widely separated passages of the Book of Mormon is particularly significant when we realize that evidence suggests that Joseph Smith translated the book of Mosiah and all that follows it before turning to translate the small plates containing the record of Nephi.”

words are found at the point in the record where the king would have recently received the small plates.”¹⁹

Based on John Gee’s observations regarding the etymology of the name Nephi from Egyptian *nfr*,²⁰ I posited that Nephi’s autobiographical introduction in 1 Nephi 1:1 involves a wordplay on the meaning of his own name: “I **Nephi** having been born of **goodly** parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father. . . . 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.” Extending Tvedtnes’s initial observation, I further suggested that the textual dependency of Mosiah 1:2–6 on 1 Nephi 1:1–3 extended to wordplay on King Benjamin’s name in terms of “sons” and “understanding.”²¹

King Benjamin’s desire to have his “sons” (*bānīm*) “become **men of understanding**” that they “might read and **understand** of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes” (Mosiah 1:5), amounted to a desire to have his sons become like their righteous ancestors Lehi and Nephi (1 Nephi 1:1, 5–14). To “have his commandments always before [their] eyes” evokes the idea of frontlets and phylacteries (see, e.g., Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:8; Proverbs 6:21) that keep the word of the Lord ever present in one’s memory and consciousness. It also recalls the royal requirements in Deuteronomy 17:18–20 regarding reading the law.

Moreover, it is presumably an application of the very same principle enjoined upon all Israel in Deuteronomy 1:13: “Take you **wise men, and understanding** [*’ānāšīm ḥākāmīm ūnēbōnīm*, or “wise and understanding men”] and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.” This kind of “understanding” was considered a necessary ingredient of the best kind of leadership. For example, the Lord commends Solomon for having “asked for [himself] **understanding** [*hābîn*] to discern [hear] judgment” (1 Kings 3:11), so that he could “**discern** [*lēhābîn*, understand] **between** [*bēn*] good and bad” (3:9). The Lord declares, “I have given thee a wise and an **understanding** [*nābôn*] heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee” (1 Kings 3:12). Isaiah prophesied regarding the

19. Ibid.

20. John Gee, “A Note on the Name Nephi,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1, no.1 (1992): 189–91; Gee, “Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name Nephi,” in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, eds. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 1–5.

21. Bowen, “Becoming Sons and Daughters at God’s Right Hand,” 11n23; Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusio,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 189.

Davidic Messiah²² that “the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and **understanding** [*bînâ*], the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:2). The kind of “understanding” that characterized King Benjamin himself, also came to characterize his son, Mosiah II. For Mormon, a major point of the extant Book of Mosiah is to show how that “understanding” came to characterize Alma the Elder and his people, then later Alma the Younger, and the sons of Mosiah, the latter of whom “could not understand the words of King Benjamin” when he first spoke them.

“Open ... Your Hearts That Ye May Understand”

Mormon carries the theme of “sonship” over from King Benjamin’s paraenesis to his sons (Mosiah 1), when he describes the “family” setting of Benjamin’s farewell covenant²³ speech. In Mosiah 2:3, Mormon notes that Benjamin’s people “took of the firstlings of their flocks, that they might offer sacrifice and burnt offerings according to the law of Moses” — i.e., as required by the book of Deuteronomy.²⁴ He then states:

And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family,²⁵ consisting of **his wife** and **his sons** and **his daughters**

22. In 2 Nephi 30:9–15, Nephi applies Isaiah 11:4–9 to the Lord himself and thus also, implicitly, Isaiah 11:2.

23. On the ancient covenant/treaty pattern evident in King Benjamin’s speech, see John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 66–68; Stephen D. Ricks, “Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* eds. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 233–75.

24. Deuteronomy instructs “Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices” (Deuteronomy 12:5–6). Deuteronomy further stipulates that Israel was not to eat “the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock” at home (“in thy gates”), but “before the Lord” (i.e., at the temple; Deuteronomy 12:17). Moreover, the legislation prescribed that “all the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep. Thou shalt eat it before the Lord thy God year by year in the place which the Lord shall choose, thou and thy household” (Deuteronomy 15:19–20). See further 1 Esdras 5:47–53; 9:6, 38, 41; Mosiah 7:17, 25:1–7; Alma 2:1, 7; 2:8–10; 20:9–12, 3 Nephi 3:13–14; 4:4.

25. Compare the return of the Israelites “every man unto his family” at the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10). The “sorting out” or revelatory selection of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin in 1 Samuel 10:21 occurred as the Benjaminites “came near by their families.”

and **their sons** and **their daughters**, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another. And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which **king Benjamin** should speak unto them. (Mosiah 2:5–6)

King Benjamin’s temple-sermon was, appropriately, not only a family affair²⁶ (cf. Hebrew *bayit/bêt*, “house” = “family”; “temple”) but a generational event. The presence of grandparents, parents, and children in the Israelite audience with tents pitched “round about the temple”²⁷ underscores the generational nature, not only of this temple experience, but also of the story that Mormon presents going forward. His repetition of the terms “sons” and “daughters” anticipates King Benjamin’s focus on divine sonship and daughterhood and the climactic scene in his farewell speech (see Mosiah 5:7–15).

Deuteronomy 31 records that Moses gave instructions for the reading of the Law “in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of the tabernacles” (Deuteronomy 31:10). He instructed, “Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:13). King Benjamin’s covenant sermon in Mosiah 2–5 also served this purpose and function. Benjamin emphasized such “learning” (Mosiah 2:17) but also, relatedly and more frequently, “understanding” (cf. the importance of understanding in Nehemiah 8:2–3).

Just as King Benjamin specifically emphasized “becom[ing] men of understanding” as part of his sonship-focused paraenesis, he brings a similar emphasis to his temple sermon. In fact, the entire first movement of King Benjamin’s speech is framed by the verb “understand”

26. Stephen D. Ricks, “A Note on Family Structure in Mosiah 2:5,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 6 (2013): 9–10.

27. Numbers 1:52–2:34 details the arrangement of the tribes of Israel by families around the wilderness tabernacle. Terrence W. Szink and John W. Welch have proposed that the setting and content of King Benjamin’s sermon matches a Feast of the Tabernacles context. Gary L. Sturgess (“The Book of Mosiah: Thoughts about Its Structure, Purposes, Themes, and Authorship,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 [1995]: 107–35) compares King Benjamin’s speech to the reading of the law at the Feast of the Tabernacles in Nehemiah 8 and other cultic scenes. See especially Nehemiah 8:13–17.

(cf. Hebrew *byn*). The opening frame of the speech calls his audience to “open” their “ears” (i.e., to have “ears to hear”)²⁸ and to “open” their “hearts” so as to “understand”:

And these are the words which he spake and caused to be written, saying: My brethren, all ye that have assembled yourselves together, you that can hear my words which I shall speak unto you this day, for I have not commanded you to come up hither to trifle with the words which I shall speak, but that you should hearken unto me, and **open your ears that ye may hear and your hearts that ye may understand and your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view.** (Mosiah 2:9)

We earlier noted the textual dependency of Mosiah 1:2–6 on 1 Nephi 1:1–4, including the wordplay on “Benjamin” in terms of “sons” and “understanding.” King Benjamin’s use of “understand” to frame his discourse to his people serves a similar function to Mormon’s use (or replication) of it in Mosiah 1:2 and Benjamin’s own use of it in Mosiah 1:6. Just as King Benjamin wished his sons to “become men of understanding” and to “read and understand of his mysteries,” his ultimate objective for his people is that they “become his [Christ’s] sons and his daughters”²⁹ enthroned at “the right hand of God” and to “understand” all “the mysteries of God.”

It should be additionally noted here that the phrase “mysteries of God” also recalls 1 Nephi 1:1 (“having had a great knowledge of the goodness and **the mysteries of God**”) and other similarly worded statements from Nephi: Nephi testifies that he had “great desires to know of the mysteries of God, wherefore, [he] did cry unto the Lord. And [the Lord] did visit [him] and did soften [his] heart that [he] did believe all the words which had been spoken by [his] father” (1 Nephi 2:16). He further avers, “For he that diligently seeketh shall find, and **the mysteries of God** shall be unfolded to them by the power of the Holy Ghost as well in this time as

28. Compare Deuteronomy 29:4 [MT 29:3] (“the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day”) and Ezekiel 12:2 (“Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house”). On Jesus’s use of the spiritual “ears to hear” concept, see Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 8:8; 14:35; and see especially 3 Nephi 11:5, when the Lamanites and Nephites “open their ears to hear” the voice of God the Father.

29. Mosiah 5:7.

in times of old and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore the course of the Lord is one eternal round” (1 Nephi 10:19).

Taken together, King Benjamin’s summons to his people to “open [their] hearts that [they] may understand” for the express purpose “that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to [their] view” especially recalls Jacob’s statement regarding the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem and their failure to “understand” (Jacob 4:18–22). They failed to “understand” the Lord’s *sôd*³⁰ — his “secret” (KJV Amos 3:7), or, better, his “plan” and the “council” in which that “plan” was presented — which prophets, the “stewards of the mysteries of God,”³¹ like Lehi had declared to them:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people, and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets and **sought for things that they could not understand**. Wherefore because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for **God hath taken away his plainness from them and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand** because they desired it. And because they desired it, God hath done it that they may stumble. And now I Jacob am led on by the Spirit unto prophesying, for **I perceive** by the workings of the Spirit which is in me that by the stumbling of the Jews they will reject **the stone** upon which **they might build** and have safe foundation. But behold, according to the scriptures, this **stone** shall become the great and the last and the only sure foundation upon which the Jews can **build**. And now my beloved, how is it possible that these, after having rejected the sure foundation, **can ever build upon it** that it may become the head of their corner? Behold, my beloved brethren, **I will unfold this mystery unto you** if I do not by any means get shaken from my firmness in the Spirit and stumble because of my overanxiety for you. (Jacob 4:14–18)

Jacob’s entire critique revolves around an extended paronomasia involving the verb “understand” (*bîn*), “stone” (*eben*)/“son” (*bên*, from vv. 5, 11 and drawn from Isaiah 8:14–15; 28:16; and Psalms 118:22) and the verb

30. HALOT, 745, glosses *sôd* as “confidential discussion”; “secret, scheme” (as consequence or result of discussion); “circle of confidants” (i.e., a council). BDB, 691, glosses *sôd* as “council, counsel” including an “intimate circle”; “assembly, company” and “secret counsel.”

31. 1 Corinthians 4:1, Paul says of his apostolic role: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God [*mystērion theou*].”

bānâ, “build.” Notably, *’eben* (“stone”), and *bēn* are both apparently related to *bānâ*, while *bîn* (“understand”) constitutes an etymologically-unrelated homonym. All of these images Jacob juxtaposes with the temple-architectural images of the “sure foundation” (*mûsād mûssād*) from Isaiah 18:16³² and the “head” stone of the corner from Psalm 118:22.³³

King Benjamin’s opening commandment that his people “understand” that the “mysteries of God may be unfolded to [their] view” recalls King Benjamin’s assertion: “**My sons**, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, **we must have suffered in ignorance**, even at this present time, **not knowing the mysteries of God**” (Mosiah 1:3). The “mysteries of God” here and in other contexts has at least partial reference to the esoterica of the temple and its rites (cf. Greek *mysteria*)³⁴ that enabled one to “become” one of the “saints” or “holy ones” and participate in the divine council³⁵ — the *sôd*.

One of the most important *sôd*-texts³⁶ in the Hebrew Bible is found in Jeremiah 23:18–22, which conceivably constituted one of the “many

32. See discussion in Matthew L. Bowen, “I Have Done According to My Will: Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text” in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, eds. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation, 2016), 235–40. Cf. also Job 38:6; Matthew 7:24–27 (3 Nephi 14:24–27); 21:42; Luke 6:48; 20:17; Romans 9:32–33; 11:11; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 3:11; 10:4; 1 Peter 2:6–8.

33. Jesus himself quotes Psalms 118:22 in Matthew 21:42, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner” (see also Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17). The early disciples also used this passage to describe Jesus (see Acts 4:10–12). The Psalms 118:22 image constitutes the basis for the description of the polity of the church in Ephesians 2:20: “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” Cf. again the stonemasonry imagery in Isaiah 28:16; Jeremiah 51:26; Zechariah 4:7.

34. Greek *mysterion* (plural *mysteria*): “‘secret, secret rite, secret teaching, mystery’ a relig[ious] t.t. [technical term] (predominantly pl[ural]) applied in the Gr[eco]-Rom[an] world to mostly to the mysteries with their secret teachings, relig[ious] and political in nature, concealed within many strange customs and ceremonies. The principal rites remain unknown because of a reluctance in antiquity to divulge them.” Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 661. While the word “mysteries,” *per se*, does not occur in the Hebrew Bible, it does occur in New Testament passages like Matthew 13:11. Some modern Hebrew translations have rendered *mysteria* as *sôd* (“secret,” “plan”) or by its plural *sôdôt*.

35. See, e.g., Isaiah 6:1–10; 1 Nephi 1:7–15; Ezekiel 1:4–28; 10:1–22.

36. Besides Jeremiah 23:18–22, some other important *sôd*-texts include Amos 3:7; Psalm 25:14; 55:14; 89:7; 111:1; Proverbs 3:32; Ezekiel 13:9; and Job 15:8.

prophecies which have been spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah” found on the brass plates.³⁷ Lehi³⁸ and his son Nephi,³⁹ like Jeremiah their contemporary, became prophets whose legitimacy was confirmed by their having “stood” in Yahweh’s *sôd*:

For who hath stood **in the counsel** [*sôd*, **council**] of the Lord, and hath perceived [seen] and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days **ye shall consider it perfectly** [*titbôněnú bāh binâ*; or, in the latter days **you will understand it clearly** (NRSV)]. I have not sent these [false] prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But **if they had stood in my counsel** [*sôd*, “council”] and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. (Jeremiah 23:18–22)

Notably, Jeremiah mentions *sôd* or “(divine) council” and the concept of prophets standing in the divine council in the context of the Judahites’ failure at that time to “understand clearly” (*titbôněnú bāh binâ*, literally, you will understand in it understanding) the Lord and his purposes. As Jacob had noted (see above), Judah and Jerusalem did not then “understand” the Lord or his purposes and “sought for things which they could not understand.” Jeremiah prophesies, in essence, that what was then mysterious to the hardhearted inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem would be “made bright at last”⁴⁰: the day would come when they would clearly understand the Lord and his purposes after they have come to complete fulfillment.

In commanding his people to “open ... your hearts that the ye may **understand**, that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view,” King Benjamin expressed his desire that his temple audience

37. 1 Nephi 5:13. Cf. also Helaman 8:20.

38. 1 Nephi 1:5–15.

39. 1 Nephi 11–14; see David E. Bokovoy, “‘Thou Knowest That I Believe’: Invoking the Spirit of the Lord as Council Witness in 1 Nephi 11,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 1–23.

40. Borrowing the language of Katharina von Schlegel, “Be Still My Soul,” *Hymns*, trans. Jane Borthwick (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 124.

have an experience akin to the Prophet Joseph Smith’s description of the experiences that he and Oliver Cowdery experienced in the Kirtland Temple in D&C 110:1–2: “The veil was taken from our minds, and **the eyes of our understanding were opened**. We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.” They, in effect, stood in the Lord’s *sôd* — the divine council — as in a kind of endowment⁴¹ and “understood.” The “fruit” of their nascent “tree[s] of life”⁴² would thus “enlighten [their] understanding” as it began “to be delicious to [them]; “[their] understanding [could then] begin to be enlightened, and [their] mind[s] ... begin to expand” (Alma 32:28, 34).

The prologue of King Benjamin’s sermon echoes Isaiah 6:9–10: “And he said, Go, and tell this people, **Hear ye indeed, but understand not** [*wě’al tābîn*]; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and **understand** [*yābîn*] **with their heart**, and convert, and be healed.”⁴³ The directive given to Isaiah in the divine council uses the verb *bîn* twice. In commissioning Isaiah, the Lord had commanded him to make the message difficult for his audience — an audience that “sought for things that they could not understand” and in their “blindness” were thus given “many things which they cannot understand” (Jacob 4:14). The Lord apparently directed King Benjamin to do just the opposite for his temple audience on this occasion.

“I Have Spoken Plain unto You That Ye Might Understand”

Just as King Benjamin opens his speech with a call for his audience to “open ... their hearts that [they might] understand” (Mosiah 2:9), he closes the first part of his speech with an address to those who *could* “understand” his words and a testimony given in such a way that they *would* “understand” his words:

O all ye old men and also ye young men and **you little children which can understand my words** — for **I have spoken plain unto you that ye might understand** — I pray that ye should

41. See especially William J. Hamblin, “The Sôd of YHWH and the Endowment,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 147–54.

42. Alma 32:40–43; 33:23.

43. Isaiah 44:18 similarly describes ancient Israel and Judah: “They have not known **nor understood** [*wě’lô’ yābînû*]: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.”

awake to remembrance of the awful situation of those that have fallen into transgression. And moreover I would desire that ye **should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God**; for behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual. And if they hold out faithful to the end, they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true, for the Lord God hath spoken it. (Mosiah 2:40–41)

In alluding to the doctrine of Christ with the words “hold out faithful to the end” (see especially 2 Nephi 31:20) and the promise of eternal life (see 2 Nephi 31:15, 20), Nephi helped his readers understand his instruction in terms of the covenant path and the architectural and ritual design of the temple itself.⁴⁴ Among those whom King Benjamin cites as being able to “understand” his words were *some* of the “little children” present on the occasion. Mormon has deliberate reference to this statement when he describes those a generation later who “could not understand the words of King Benjamin, being little children” (Mosiah 26:1; see further below).

King Benjamin’s statement “I have spoken plain unto you that ye may understand” recalls numerous earlier statements by his ancestor Nephi that connect “plainness” of writing and speech with “understanding.”⁴⁵ However, like his earlier use of the verb rendered “understand” in Mosiah 2:9, King Benjamin’s use of “plain” and “understand” in Mosiah 2:40 recalls the words of Jacob in Jacob 4:

Behold, my brethren, he that prophesieth, **let him prophesy to the understanding of men**, for the Spirit speaketh the truth and lieth not. Wherefore it speaketh of things as they really are and of things as they really will be. Wherefore **these things are manifested unto us plainly** for the salvation of our

44. On the connection of 2 Nephi 31–32 to the temple, see Jared T. Parker, “The Doctrine of Christ in 2 Nephi 31–32 as an Approach to the Vision of the Tree of Life,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision*, 2011 Sperry Symposium, eds. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 161–78. On the principles of “faith” and “enduring to the end” as remaining “faithful to the end” (including the possibility of martyrdom), see, e.g., Alma 5:13; Revelation 2:10; Hebrews 2:1–4; 2 Maccabees 13:14; Matthew 24:13; Joseph Smith — Matthew 1:11, 30.

45. 1 Nephi 13:29; 14:23; 16:29; 2 Nephi 31:3; 32:7.

souls. But behold, we are not witnesses alone in these things; for God also spake them unto prophets of old. But behold, the Jews [i.e., the inhabitants of 8th–7th century Judah and Jerusalem] were a stiffnecked people, and **they despised the words of plainness** and killed the prophets and **sought for things that they could not understand**. Wherefore because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall; for God hath taken away his plainness from them and **delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand** because they desired it. And because they desired it, God hath done it that they may stumble. (Jacob 4:13–14)

King Benjamin’s statement of purpose in Mosiah 2:40 (“I have spoken unto you plain that ye might understand”), like the prologue to his address and like Nephi’s “delight” in “plainness,” is nearly the opposite of the prophetic commission given to Isaiah. As also noted above, when Isaiah received his prophetic commission, he was commanded to make his message difficult for his audience (“Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, **but understand not** [*wəʿal tābīnū*]; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, **and understand** [*yābīn*] **with their heart**, and convert, and be healed,” Isaiah 6:9–10).

The difficulty of Isaiah’s message is mentioned throughout his writings. He was “given the tongue of the learned” so that he would “know how to speak a word in season to the weary” or “unto thee, O house of Israel” (2 Nephi 7:4). In Isaiah 28, the prophet asks: “Whom shall he [the Lord] teach knowledge? and whom shall he **make to understand** [*yābīn*] doctrine [literally, a “hearing” or a “report”]? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people” (Isaiah 28:8–11). Importantly, it is this very text that precedes Isaiah’s prophecy about the “fall” of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the “stone” (Isaiah 28:13–16) that Jacob correlates, via *Gezera Shawa*, with Isaiah 8:14–15 and Psalm 118:22 in Jacob 4:18–22.⁴⁶

46. Bowen, “I Hove Done According to My Will,” 235–38; Bowen, “Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and *Gezera Shawa* in the Book of Mormon,” 271–72.

Isaiah later mentions what could be viewed⁴⁷ as an eventual reversal of the mystification of his message: “And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash **shall understand** [*yābîn*] **knowledge**, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak **plainly** [*ṣāhôt*]” (Isaiah 32:3–4). In contrast to Isaiah, King Benjamin successfully made his message plain to the understanding of his temple audience. The words of Proverbs 8:8–9 would have thus been at home on the lips of Nephi, Jacob, or King Benjamin himself: “All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. **They are all plain** [*nēkōhîm*] **to him that understandeth** [*mēbîn*], and right to them that find knowledge.”

A part of the work of “understanding” that King Benjamin wishes his people to do is to “consider on [i.e., reflect on, meditate on⁴⁸] the **blessed and happy state** of those that keep the commandments of God” (Mosiah 2:40–41). The phrase “blessed and happy state” evokes the image of Lehi’s tree of life — the “tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one **happy**” (1 Nephi 8:10). Daniel C. Peterson has noted the probable allusive wordplay involving “happy” (Hebrew *’ašrê*) and the asherah, a stylized “tree of life” that was a part of the worship of some Israelites,⁴⁹ though the asherahs and the practices associated with them were later condemned outright by the ascendant, so-called “Deuteronomists.”

Wisdom and “understanding” are thus intrinsically connected to “happiness” and the “tree of life,” and both are associated with the “right hand” (*yāmîn*): “**Happy** [*’ašrê*] is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth **understanding** [*tēbûnâ*]; “length of days is **in her right hand** [*bîmînāh*]; “She is a **tree of life** [*ēṣ hayyîm*] to them that lay hold upon her: and **happy** [*mē’uššār*] is every one that retaineth her” (Proverbs 3:13–18).⁵⁰

“They Hardened Their Hearts and Understood Not” vs. “Becom[ing] as Little Children”

In the second portion of his speech, King Benjamin uses a verb rendered “understand” just once. Relating the words of an angel, he describes ancient Israel’s response to the Law of Moses as a typological system:

47. Cf. Rashi’s commentary on Isaiah 32:3–4. Rashi specifically connects Isaiah 32:3 with Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 28:11.

48. See, e.g., Psalms 77:12.

49. Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and His Asherah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 24.

50. Cf. also Proverbs 11:30; 13:12; 15:4.

Yet the Lord God saw that his people were a stiffnecked people, and he appointed unto them a law, even the law of Moses. And many signs, and wonders, and **types** [cf. the Hebrew noun *tabnît* < *bny*] and shadows shewed he unto them, concerning his coming; and also holy prophets spake unto them concerning his coming; and yet **they hardened their hearts, and understood not** that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood. And **even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed;** for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins. (Mosiah 3:14–16)

Deuteronomy frames Israel's obedience to the Law of Moses in terms of wisdom and understanding. Moses declares, "Keep therefore and do them [the Lord's statutes and judgments]; for this is your wisdom **and your understanding** [*bînatkem*] in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and **understanding** [*nābôn*] people" (Deuteronomy 4:6). The angel who spoke to King Benjamin, in turn, frames "understanding" specifically in terms of understanding the sacred "types and shadows" specifically associated with the tabernacle/temple architectural and ritual design in Exodus 25:8–9, 40 (cf. Hebrews 8:5).⁵¹ Unfortunately, ancient Israel's response to the divinely-appointed "many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows" was to "harden their hearts." As a result, they "understood not" the meaning of their miraculous deliverances, their temple with its sacrificial system, and all that they "pointed" to: the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh and "the atonement of his blood."

The angel's assessment of ancient Israel's failure to "understand" Christ's atonement and the typological system that pointed to it had particular relevance to King Benjamin's temple audience who themselves should have been familiar with the types in the sacrificial system, the temple's ritual and structural architecture, and in the temple's

51. The idea of "type" corresponds to Hebrew *tabnît* as used in Exodus 25:8–9, 40: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the **pattern** [*tabnît*] of the tabernacle, and **the pattern** [*tabnît*] of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it"; "And look that thou make them **after their pattern** [*bētabnîtām*], which was shewed thee in the mount." Cf. Mosiah 13:10, 31; Alma 25:10, 15; 33:19; Romans 5:14 (*typos* = type); Colossians 2:17 (*skia* = shadow); Hebrews 8:5 (*skia* ... *typon* = shadow ... pattern/type, citing Exodus 25:40, *typos* = *tabnît*); 10:1 (*skia*).

appurtenances. Moreover, they were descendants of the very Israelites who had hardened their hearts and failed to “understand.”

King Benjamin’s use of “little children” in this instance refers, of course, to all children in general under the age of accountability.⁵² However, in the context of the foregoing it also recalls “the little children” in his audience at the temple, some of whose “hearts were hardened” as they grew to adulthood (Mosiah 26:3), including Mosiah II’s sons — King Benjamin’s grandsons. King Benjamin knew that the greatest obstacle to spiritual “understanding” is the hardness of heart that comes through pride and carnality. The antidote for hardness of heart is divine sonship or daughterhood — to become as a “child”:

And moreover I say unto you that there shall be no other name given nor no other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ the Lord Omnipotent. For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just. And the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy, but men drinketh damnation to their own souls **except they humble themselves and become as little children**⁵³ and believeth that salvation was and is and is to come in and through the atoning blood of Christ the Lord Omnipotent. For the natural man is an enemy to God and has been from

52. See e.g., Moroni 8:10: “Behold, I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach: repentance and baptism unto they which are accountable and capable of committing sin. Yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves as their little children, and they shall all be saved with their little children.” JST Genesis 17:4–7, 11: “And God talked with him, saying, My people have gone astray from my precepts, and have not kept mine ordinances, which I gave unto their fathers; and they have not observed mine anointing, and the burial, or baptism wherewith I commanded them; but have turned from the commandment, and taken unto themselves the washing of children, and the blood of sprinkling; and have said that the blood of the righteous Abel was shed for sins; and have not known wherein they are accountable before me”; “And I will establish a covenant of circumcision with thee, and it shall be my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations; that thou mayest know for ever that children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old.” D&C 29:46–47: “But behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten; wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me.”

53. See also Matthew 18:3–4, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child.”

the fall of Adam and will be forever and ever but if he yieldeth to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and **becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord and becometh as a child**, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, **even as a child doth submit to his father.** (Mosiah 3:17–19)

Paradoxically, those who become men and women of understanding “humble themselves and become as little children.” These men and women recognize that the “natural man” (or natural woman) “is nothing,”⁵⁴ “even less than the dust of the earth,”⁵⁵ and, worse, an enemy to God. They recognize that the only wise course of action is to “put off the natural man” as one would take off clothing and, in Paul’s words, “put on Christ” — that is, “become a saint through the atonement of Christ” and “become as a child”⁵⁶ (Mosiah 3:19).⁵⁷

At this point King Benjamin, recalls the name of his own royal “son” and heir “Mosiah” when he declares, “And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of a **Savior** [*môšîaʿ*] shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:20–21). The name Mosiah probably derives from⁵⁸ or contains the term *môšîaʿ*, the Hebrew term for “savior.”⁵⁹ On the occasion of his son Mosiah’s ascension to the

54. Moses 1:10.

55. Mosiah 4:2; Helaman 12:7.

56. Cf. Jesus’s statement as recorded in 3 Nephi 11:37–38: “And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and **become as a little child**, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.”

57. Alma the Younger quotes a portion of the angels words to and cited by King Benjamin in Mosiah 3:19 (“becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit ...”) almost verbatim in his speech to the people of Ammonihah (“becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long-suffering”).

58. John W. Welch, “What Was a Mosiah?” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), 105–7; see also Paul Y. Hoskisson, s.v. “Mosiah,” Book of Mormon Onomasticon, last modified May 30, 2016, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/MOSIAH>.

59. Isaiah 19:20; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8; Jeremiah 14:8; Hosea 13:4; Obadiah 1:21; Psalm 106:21.

throne and using the angel's words, King Benjamin employed a wordplay pointing to the true *môšīa'* or Savior that Mosiah typified.

“That Ye May Hear and Understand the Remainder of My Words”

Amid the dramatic proskynesis⁶⁰ of his people in response to the second part of his speech and amid further ritual actions through which they place themselves under a formal oath and covenant with the Lord (see Mosiah 4:2; 5:1–6), King Benjamin re-opens his sermon with yet another call to “understand”: “And king **Benjamin** again opened his mouth and began to speak unto them, saying: My friends and my brethren, my kindred and my people, I would again call your attention, **that ye may hear and understand**⁶¹ the remainder of my words which I shall speak unto you” (Mosiah 4:4). King Benjamin's third call to “understanding” marks the opening of the third part of his speech and recalls his earlier emphasis on understanding in his speech (Mosiah 2:9, 40; 3:15), and the emphasis on “understanding” in the paraenetic material of Mosiah 1:2–6.

“Ye ... Have Become His Sons and Daughters”

King Benjamin emphasized his son Mosiah's royal sonship at the outset of his speech: “[the Lord God] hath commanded me that I should **declare unto you this day**, that **my son** Mosiah is a king and a ruler over you”; “**if ye shall keep the commandments of my son**, or the commandments of God which shall be delivered unto you by him, ye shall prosper in the land, and your enemies shall have no power over you” (Mosiah 2:30–31).⁶² The statement “I ... **declare unto you this day** that **my son** Mosiah

60. Hugh W. Nibley (*An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], 304) writes: “The proskynesis was the falling to earth (literally, ‘kissing the ground’) in the presence of the king by which all the human race on the day of the coronation demonstrated its submission to divine authority; it was an unfailling part of the Old World New Year's rites as of any royal audience. A flat prostration upon the earth was the proper act of obeisance in the presence of the ruler of all the universe.” Matthew L. Bowen, “‘They Came Forth and Fell Down and Partook of the Fruit of the Tree’: Proskynesis in 3 Nephi 11:12–19 and 17:9–10 and Its Significance” in *Third Nephi: New Perspectives on an Incomparable Scripture*, eds. Gaye Strathearn and Andrew Skinner (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2011), 107–29; Bowen, “‘And Behold, They Had Fallen to the Earth’: An Examination of Proskynesis in the Book of Mormon,” *Studia Antiqua* 4, no. 1 (2005): 91–110.

61. Cf. Hebrew *tābīnū* in Job 18:2.

62. Robert F. Smith (personal communication, notes in the possession of the author) points out that King Benjamin's promise in Mosiah 2:30–31 has strong resonances

is a king and a ruler over you” dramatically recalls the enthronement liturgy of Psalm 2:7: “**I will declare** the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art **my Son** [*běni*]; this day have I begotten thee.”

At the end of his speech, however, King Benjamin democratizes⁶³ his earlier use of the enthronement liturgy of Psalm 2:7 in a climactic rhetorical wordplay on his own name — i.e., “son of the right hand.” The first part of this rhetorical wordplay, which emphasizes the divine nature of the sonship and daughterhood to which his people were attaining, constitutes a pun on the first element in his name, “son”:

And now, these are the words which king **Benjamin** [*binyāmīn*] desired of them. And therefore he said unto them: Ye have spoken the words that I desired, and the covenant which ye have made [cut] is a righteous covenant. And now because of the covenant which ye have made, ye shall be called the **children** [Hebrew *běne* or *yaldē*] of **Christ**, **his sons** [*bānāw* or *bānāw*] and **his daughters**; for behold, **this day he hath spiritually begotten you** [cf. “have I begotten thee,” *yēlidtikā*, from Psalm 2:7], for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore **ye are born of him and have become his sons** [*bānāw* or *bānāw*] and **his daughters** [*ūbēnōtāw*]. (Mosiah 5:6–7)

The Hebrew Bible repeatedly defines and describes Israel’s covenant relationship with the Lord in terms of sonship. A prophecy by Hosea describes Israel collectively as God’s “son”: “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called **my son** [*liběni*, “as my son”⁶⁴] out of Egypt” (Hosea 11:1) — a text that Matthew notably applies individually to Jesus’s royal/divine sonship (Matthew 2:15). To be “called” God’s “son”/“daughter”/“child” was to *become* such (see Matthew 5:9;

with Leviticus 26:3–8, “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; 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, and dwell in your land safely.... And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword ... and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.” Cf. also Leviticus 25:18–19; 26:22, 36. So, too, the Lord’s promise to Nephi in 1 Nephi 2:20 reiterated throughout the Book of Mormon.

63. John W. Welch, “Democratizing Forces in King Benjamin’s Speech,” in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, eds. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 110–26.

64. Hebrew *liběni* = “as my son” < *lē* (“as,” “for”) + *běni* (“my son”).

cf. Hosea 1:10 [MT 2:1]: “It shall be said unto them, Ye are **the sons** [*běně*, children] of the living God [*’el-ḥāy*”).⁶⁵ In some of these covenant “sonship” contexts, the Hebrew term *bānīm* (“sons”) can be understood as gender inclusive — i.e., “children”: “Ye are the **children** [*bānīm*] of [belonging to] the Lord [*lyhwh*] your God ... for thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to **be** [become] a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth (Deuteronomy 14:1–2). Similarly, the Song of Moses says regarding Israel’s covenant unfaithfulness, “And when the Lord saw it [Israel’s idolatrous sacrifices], he abhorred them, because of the provoking **of his sons** [*bānāw*], **and of his daughters** [*ûběñōtāw*]” (Deuteronomy 32:19). Notwithstanding all past covenant violations, Isaiah prophesies that the Lord would gather his “sons” and “daughters”: “I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring **my sons** [*bānay*] from far, **and my daughters** [*ûběñōtāy*] from the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 43:6). The idea that Israelites were Yahweh’s *bānīm* recurs as a theme in Isaiah’s prophecies,⁶⁶ as well as Jeremiah’s.⁶⁷

King Benjamin, as noted above, quotes the royal sonship decree of Psalm 2:7 in Mosiah 5:7. There he also quotes the version of the covenant rebirth formula (sometimes called a covenant “adoption” formula) familiar to us from 2 Samuel 7:14.⁶⁸ Regarding David’s royal son, Solomon and the

65. As Jesus expressed divine/royal adoption in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9), or as he expressed it at the Sermon at the Temple (in Bountiful) “And blessed are **all** the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (3 Nephi 12:9).

66. E.g., Isaiah 1:2: “I have nourished and brought up **children** [*bānīm*], and they have rebelled against me”; Isaiah 30:1: “Woe to the rebellious **children** [*bānīm*], saith the Lord”; Isaiah 30:9: “That this is a rebellious people, lying **children** [*bānīm*], **children** [*bānīm*] that will not hear the law of the Lord”; Isaiah 45:11: “Ask me of things to come concerning **my sons** [*bānay* or, children]”; Isaiah 63:8: “For he said, Surely they are my people, **children** [*bānīm*] that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.”

67. E.g., Jeremiah 3:14: “Turn, O backsliding **children** [*bānīm*], saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion”; Jeremiah 3:18–19: “In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. But I said, How shall I put thee among the **children** [*bānīm*], and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, **Thou shalt call me, My father**; and shalt not turn away from me”; Jeremiah 3:22: “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.”

68. See Bowen, “Sons and Daughters at God’s Right Hand,” 2–13. In addition to Psalm 2:7, see Acts 13:33, Hebrew 1:5, “(sons) this day have I begotten thee”;

royal line that would issue from him, the Lord declared: “I will be [become] his father, and he shall be [become] **my son** [*lēbēn*]” (2 Samuel 7:14). What is so radical about King Benjamin’s use of these texts on the occasion of his own son’s enthronement, is that he applies them to all of his people as well. In giving his people a “name” — the name of Messiah or “Christ” — King Benjamin gave his people an endowment to “become” kings and queens as sons and daughters of Christ.

Just as the first part of the wordplay on King Benjamin’s name in Mosiah 5 emphasizes royal/divine sonship and daughterhood, the second part of the wordplay in the climax of King Benjamin’s speech emphasizes the last part of his name: the *yāmīn* or “right hand,” the place of divine favor versus the “left hand” the place of divine disfavor:

And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this [i.e., takes upon oneself the name of Christ by covenant] shall be found at **the right hand** [i.e., at the *yāmīn*] **of God**, for **he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ.** (Mosiah 5:9)

And now it shall come to pass that whosoever shall not take upon them the name of Christ must be called by some other name; therefore he findeth himself on **the left hand of God**. And I would that ye should remember also that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out except it be through transgression; therefore take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. I say unto you: I would that ye should remember to **retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God**, but that ye **hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also the name by which he shall call you.** (Mosiah 5:10–12)

King Benjamin contrasts the final state of those who have “become” Christ’s “sons” and “his daughters” at “the right hand” of God (“called by the name of Christ” or “called by the name of the Lord,” Deuteronomy 28:10),⁶⁹ with those who find themselves on the “left hand of God.” King Benjamin, like his own name (“son of the right hand”),

cf. 2 Corinthians 6:18, “and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

69. Deuteronomy 28:10: “And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee.” See also Jeremiah 15:16: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.”

associates kinship terminology (“children,” “sons,” and “daughters”) with the right hand in Mosiah 5:7–9, but not with the “left hand.” In other words, the kinship status of those found on the left hand remains *completely undefined*: they “must be called by some other name.” Finally and appropriately, king Benjamin describes the kinship relationship between the Lord and the faithful as “sealed.” The Lord “seals” the faithful “his”⁷⁰ or “to him”⁷¹ with his name “written always in [their] hearts.”⁷² All of this seems to suggest that eternal kinship relations exist “at the right hand of God” or “in the Lord” (cf. New Testament Greek *en kyriō*), but ultimately not outside of that sphere.⁷³

It should be further noted that divine rebirth (or so-called “adoption”) language first occurs here in the Book of Mormon. King Benjamin’s statements “this day he hath begotten you” (quoting Psalm 2:7, see above)

70. See John Gee, “Book of Mormon Word Usage: ‘Seal You His,’” *Insights* 22, no. 1 (2002): 4.

71. Bowen, “Becoming Sons and Daughters at God’s Right Hand,” 8–10.

72. See also 3 Nephi 18:7; Moroni 4:3. Jeremiah 31:33 describes Yahweh’s law being written, like his name, in his people’s hearts: “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (see also Hebrews 8:10). Proverbs 3:3; 7:3 also employ the image of words “writ[ten] . . . upon the table of [the] heart.” Cf. especially 2 Corinthians 3:3.

73. See, e.g., D&C 132, where the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead. Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion” (vv. 7–8); “And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, **that are not by me or by my word**, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and **shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection**, saith the Lord your God. For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed. Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world” (vv. 13–15); and so forth.

and “born of him” find later iteration in the Book of Mosiah as “born of the spirit,”⁷⁴ “born of god,”⁷⁵ and “born again”⁷⁶ (Mosiah 27:24–25, 28). Alma uses this language in Mosiah 27 and elsewhere (Alma 5:14, 49; 36:5, 23–24, 26; 38:6; cf. 22:15).

“So That They Might Understand the Words Which He Spake”

In the text that follows King Benjamin’s sermon in Mosiah 2–5, Mormon makes the first significant reference to that sermon in Mosiah 8. After Ammon,⁷⁷ a member of the former ruling Mulekite/Mulochite⁷⁷ royal family in Zarahemla,⁷⁸ successfully locates the remnant of Zeniff’s people, Zeniff’s grandson Limhi has him address his people. Mormon specifically mentions that Ammon utilized King Benjamin’s speech as a means of helping these Zeniffite-Nephites “understand” everything else that he said:

And he caused that Ammon should stand up before the multitude and rehearse unto them all that had happened unto their brethren from the time that Zeniff went up out of the land even until the time that he himself came up out of the land. And **he also rehearsed unto them the last words which king Benjamin had taught them, and explained them** to the people of king Limhi, **so that they might understand all the words which he spake.** (Mosiah 8:2–3)

In juxtaposing the name Benjamin with the verbal phrase “so that they might understand” (cf. Hebrew *bin*), Mormon recalls the foregoing paronomasia on Benjamin and “understanding” (*binâ/těbûnâ/byn*). Mormon further recalls King Benjamin’s earlier desire that his sons might read and “understand” the mysteries of God (Mosiah 1:2) and his repeated use of “understanding” in framing aspects of his sermon. In particular, the verbal expression “so that they might understand” paraphrases the purpose clause of Mosiah 2:40 (“that ye might understand”).

We learn in addition here that King Benjamin’s sermon, which had been written down and disseminated to “those that were not under the

74. See also John 3:6, 8; Moses 27:24.

75. See also 1 John 3:9; 5:1, 4, 18; Alma 5:14; 22:15; 36:5, 23–26; 38:6.

76. John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:23; Alma 5:49; 7:14; Moses 6:49.

77. See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part Three: Mosiah 17–Alma 20* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2006), 1464–70.

78. Mosiah 7:3, 13. Cf. Mosiah 25:2.

sound of his voice,”⁷⁹ must have received an even wider circulation. As one connected with Mosiah II and a member of the previously ruling royal family in Zarahemla (see Mosiah 7:3, 13), Ammon may have even had some official responsibility for this wider dissemination. In reciting King Benjamin’s speech, in part or in whole, Ammon re-contextualized temple teachings originally situated in the Zarahemla temple for a temple audience in the city of Lehi-Nephi.

On the heels of Ammon’s temple speech, there follows a dialogue between Limhi and Ammon on prophets, seers, revelators, and seership. Limhi’s people had recently discovered the twenty-four plates of Ether and was anxious to have them translated. Ammon informs Limhi that he knew of someone who could translate the plates: “the king of the people who are in the land of Zarahemla is the man that is commanded to do these things, and who has this high gift from God.” From the time of the publication of the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon, it has been customary to assume that this king was Mosiah II. However, the earliest textual evidence suggests King Benjamin was the “seer” that Ammon had in mind. Moreover, it should be remembered that Ammon’s recitation of King Benjamin’s speech (Mosiah 8:3) prompts Limhi to have Ammon read the Zeniffite record apparently to ascertain whether Ammon could interpret languages. Ammon’s response suggests that King Benjamin had not yet died at the time of his departure from Zarahemla and had a track record of translating (i.e., the record of the Brother of Jared).⁸⁰ Limhi’s response appropriately echoes the name Benjamin in terms of *bînâ/těbûnâ*:

And now when Ammon had made an end of speaking these words the king rejoiced exceedingly and gave thanks to God, saying: Doubtless a great mystery is contained within these plates; and **these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men**. O how marvelous are the works of the Lord And how long doth he suffer with his people Yea, and how blind and impenetrable are **the understandings of the children of men**, for they will not seek wisdom, neither do they desire that she should rule over them. (Mosiah 8:19–20)

79. Mosiah 2:8.

80. See Daniel B. Sharp and Matthew L. Bowen, “Scripture Note — ‘For This Cause Did King Benjamin Keep Them’: King Benjamin or King Mosiah?” *Religious Educator* 18, no. 1 (2017): 80–87.

Limhi's speech here is notable for its personification of Wisdom in the mode of Proverbs 8:16 ("By me [wisdom/understanding, *binâ* in v. 14] princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth").⁸¹ Situated in the context of the foregoing material in the Book of Mosiah, it recalls King Benjamin's paraenesis (Mosiah 1), his commandment to his people to "understand" (Mosiah 2:9, 40–41; 4:4), and their becoming "sons" and "daughters" at God's "right hand" (Mosiah 5:7–9). His description of the purpose of the interpreters, "these interpreters were doubtless prepared for the purpose of unfolding all such mysteries to the children of men" echoes the words from King Benjamin that he has just heard from Ammon: "Open ... your minds that the mysteries of God may be unfolded to your view" (Mosiah 2:9).

Limhi's statement in the context of the history of the Zeniffites also represents a significant critique of his own father, his father's priests, and his people. In his earlier "temple" speech,⁸² Limhi acknowledges their culpability in the death of Abinadi ("a prophet of the Lord have they slain," Mosiah 7:26; cf. broadly Mosiah 7:24–33). Mormon later expressly states that "Limhi was not ignorant of the iniquities of his father, he himself being a just man" (Mosiah 19:17). In other words, Limhi, as a royal son, was a man of understanding, who understood in ways that his father did not.

Thus, Limhi's description of the "understandings of the children of men" as "impenetrable" afforded Mormon perhaps the perfect narrative transition to Abinadi's earlier prophecies and his lengthy speech in King Noah's court. As we shall see, Abinadi preached to Limhi's wicked father Noah and his sycophantic priests a sermon remarkably similar to King Benjamin's speech, including an emphasis on "understanding" and Christ's divine sonship. Mormon's abridgment and inclusion of this speech takes great pains to show that King Noah and his priests, like ancient Israel,⁸³ had specifically failed to "understand" Christ's divine sonship and the types and shadows in the law of Moses that pointed to it.

81. Wisdom (*hokmâ*) was sometimes more elaborately personified as a virtuous woman as throughout Proverbs 8. Jesus similarly personified Wisdom at least once: "But wisdom is justified of her children" (Matthew 11:19) or "But wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke 7:35).

82. For the temple in the city of Lehi-Nephi as the locus Limhi's speech in Mosiah 7:18–33, see Mosiah 7:17.

83. See, e.g., Alma 33:16, where Alma cites the prophet Zenock as saying, "For behold, he said: Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because **they will not understand** thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of **thy Son.**"

“I Would That Ye Should Understand That God Himself Shall Come Down Among the Children of Men”

Some comments at the end of Zeniff’s personal royal autobiography appropriately accord with Mormon’s unfolding theme of “understanding” (or lack thereof) and royal sonship. Mormon appears to have included wholesale Zeniff’s record into his historical abridgment with little or no editorial intrusion. Nevertheless, Zeniff’s comments help us to contextualize Noah and his priests’ failure to “understand” the law of Moses, prophecy, and Christ’s divine sonship, and thus Noah’s failure as a royal “son.”

Having grappled with the Lamanite problem for most of his reign, Zeniff assesses the historical reasons behind Lamanite hardheartedness: “And his [Nephi’s] brethren [Laman, Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael] were wroth with him because **they understood not the dealings of the Lord**; they were also wroth with him upon the waters because they hardened their hearts against the Lord” (Mosiah 10:14). He continues, “thus **they have taught their children** that they should hate them, and that they should murder them, and that they should rob and plunder them, and do all they could to destroy them; therefore **they have an eternal hatred towards the children of Nephi**” (Mosiah 10:17). According to Zeniff, the generational Lamanite problem of “unbelief”⁸⁴ was a direct result of Laman, Lemuel, and the sons of Ishmael’s failure to “understand ... the dealings of the Lord.” Ultimately, their failure to “understand”⁸⁵ confirmed the legitimacy

Note the wordplay on *byn* (*yābīnū*) and *bēn*, “son” and in the following verses (Alma 33:17–18).

84. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision: The 40th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, eds. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 240–63.

85. Compare, for example, Nephi’s statements in 1 Nephi 15:6–11 with 2 Nephi 32:4. In 1 Nephi 15:6–11, Nephi shows that Laman and Lemuel’s failure to “understand” was at the heart of their “unbelief”: “And it came to pass that after I had received strength, I spake unto my brethren, desiring to know of them the cause of their disputations. And they said: Behold, **we cannot understand** the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive-tree and also concerning the Gentiles. And I said unto them: **Have ye inquired of the Lord? And they said unto me: We have not, for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us.** Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not keep the commandments of the Lord? **How is it that ye will perish** because of the hardness of your hearts? Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said? — If ye will not harden your hearts and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made

of Nephi's leadership and that of his successors⁸⁶ — especially in the Nephite view — over that of Laman and his royal successors.

Zeniff's record ends rather abruptly: "And now I, being old, did confer the kingdom upon **one of my sons**. Therefore, I say no more. And may the Lord bless my people. Amen" (Mosiah 10:22). Zeniff does not even give his successor's name. Unlike Mosiah I, Benjamin, and Benjamin's sons,⁸⁷ Zeniff's royal son, Noah, would neither be "just" nor become a "m[a]n of understanding" (see below). Mormon resumes his direct authorial/editorial intervention in the next verse with the statement, "And now it came to pass that Zeniff conferred the kingdom upon Noah, one of his sons; therefore Noah began to reign in his stead. And he did not walk in the ways of his father" (Mosiah 11:1). The fact that Mormon names Zeniff's royal son, Noah, while that son's own father does not, is striking. Mormon pejoratively exploits the meaning of that son's name — "rest" — in the evaluation and catalogue of the latter's sins that follows (e.g., "And he [Noah] caused a breastwork to be built before them **that they might rest** their bodies and their arms upon while they should speak lying and vain words to his people").⁸⁸

All of this sets the stage for Mormon's presentation of Abinadi's speech to King Noah and his priests. Todd Parker has noted numerous similarities between King Benjamin's sermon and Abinadi's speech(es).⁸⁹ Mormon uses King Benjamin's and Abinadi's speeches as two mutual witnesses that the law of Moses constituted a system of types and

known unto you" (1 Nephi 15:6-11). Nephi's later statement to the descendants of his brothers on the necessity of "asking" and "knocking" in order to "understand" with its temple imagery appears to allude, at least in part, back to that earlier event: "Wherefore now after that I have spoken these words, **if ye cannot understand them, it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock**. Wherefore ye are not brought into the light **but must perish in the dark**" (2 Nephi 32:4).

86. See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (1987): 15–37.

87. Amaleki states that King Benjamin was a "just man before the Lord" (Omni 1:25). Amaleki's description echoes Enos's description of his own father Jacob, its onomastic wordplay, and its allusions to Genesis 32–33. See Matthew L. Bowen "'And There Wrestled a Man with Him' (Genesis 32:24): Enos's Adaptations of the Onomastic Wordplay of Genesis," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 10 (2014): 151–60.

88. See especially Matthew L. Bowen, "'This Son Shall Comfort Us': An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 279–82.

89. Todd Parker, "Abinadi: The Man and the Message (Part 1)" (Provo, UT: FARMS Transcripts, 1996), 1–2.

shadows that pointed to Jesus Christ as the royal/divine Son of God (see Mosiah 3:14–15; 13:27–32). A salient aspect of Abinadi’s critique is his use of the term “understand,” which, within the context of the narrative sequence, reminds the audience of King Benjamin’s speech, although chronologically-speaking, King Benjamin’s speech would have come later. Abinadi repeatedly excoriates King Noah and his priests for their failure to “understand.” They could not “understand” the words of Isaiah or, apparently, the Law of Moses with its cultic system of types and signs — which they did not keep — and failed to teach about the one to whom they “pointed”:

And now Abinadi saith unto them: Are you priests and **pretend to teach this people and to understand the spirit of prophesying**, and yet desireth to know of me what these things mean? I say unto you: Woe be unto you for perverting the ways of the Lord For **if ye understand these things, ye have not taught them**; therefore, ye have perverted the ways of the Lord. Ye have not **applied your hearts to understanding**; therefore ye have not been wise. Therefore what teachest thou this people? And they said: We teach the law of Moses. And again he said unto them: If ye teach the law of Moses, why do ye not keep it? Why do ye set your hearts upon riches? Why do ye commit whoredoms and spend your strength with harlots, yea, and cause this people to commit sin, that the Lord hath cause to send me to prophesy against this people⁹⁰ — yea, even a great evil against this people? (Mosiah 12:25–29)

As King Benjamin also does (will do) in his sermon, Abinadi recalls ancient Israel and Judah’s failure to “understand.” If King Noah and his priests do not “understand,” they are only “fill[ing] . . . up the measure of [their] fathers.”⁹¹ Abinadi further asks, “And now, **did they understand**

90. Abinadi may be quoting or paraphrasing Jeremiah 26:12: “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city.”

91. In Matthew 23:29–32, Jesus is recorded as saying to the Pharisees: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.” [Or, as the NJB renders it “Very well then, finish off the work that your ancestors began.”] Like Jesus, Abinadi was about to undergo martyrdom at the behest of morally and ethically corrupt religious leaders.

the law? I say unto you: Nay, **they did not all understand** the law — and this because of the hardness of their hearts. For **they understood not** that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God” (Mosiah 13:32).

Like ancient Israel and Judah, King Noah and his priests did not “understand the law” to the degree that they hardened their hearts and did not keep the law. Nor could they understand what and who the law “pointed” to: Jesus Christ and his redeeming atonement.⁹² Jesus faced similar obduracy among the religious elite during his mortal ministry.⁹³ Moses had declared to Israel, which was already prone to obduracy, “Keep therefore and do [the statutes and judgments given through Moses]; for this is your wisdom **and your understanding** [*ûbînatkem*] in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and **understanding** [*wěñābôn*] people” (Deuteronomy 4:6). “Applying” one’s “heart to understanding” and being “wise” was no more and no less than wholeheartedly keeping and “teaching the law of Moses and the intent for which it was given, persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah and believe in him to come as though he already was” (Jarom 1:11; cf. 2 Nephi 25:24–30).

Like King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:15), Abinadi describes the Law of Moses as a system of “types of things to come.”⁹⁴ The name Moses itself, which in Egyptian denotes “[the God is] begotten” and which acquired the Hebrew connotation “drawer” or “puller,”⁹⁵ is loaded with christological typology. Moses as a royal⁹⁶ “begotten” son, “pulled” from the waters of birth/death (cf. Exodus 2:10; Romans 6:4), would “pull”

92. Jacob 4:5; Alma 34:14. See Matthew L. Bowen, “Scripture Note: “Pointing Our Souls to Him,” *Religious Educator* 20, no. 1 (2019): 164–71. Matthew. On the meaning and necessity of Christ’s redemptive act, see Galatians 3:13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law”; cf. also Psalms 111:9, 130:7; John 14:6, Revelation 5:9.

93. See, e.g., Matthew 19:8; Mark 3:5; cf. Psalms 81:11–12 [MT 12–13]; 95:8; Mark 10:5.

94. Abinadi describes his own life and ministry as a christological “type” (see Mosiah 13:10).

95. See, e.g., James K. Hoffmeier, s.v. “Moses,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, eds. Geoffrey W. Bromiley et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 417; Michael P. O’Connor, “The Human Characters’ Names in the Ugaritic Poems: Onomastic Eccentricity in Bronze-Age West Semitic and the Name Daniel in Particular,” in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting Typological and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Steven E. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2006), 270–71, especially notes 7–8.

96. I.e., Moses was raised by Pharaoh’s daughter in the Egyptian royal court according to Exodus 2.

Israel from the waters (cf. especially Moses 1:25) — i.e., “baptiz[ing] Israel” (1 Corinthians 10:2). One who baptizes, as Abinadi’s lone convert Alma the Elder does in Mosiah 18, represents⁹⁷ Jesus Christ himself who “pulls,” redeems, and resurrects Israel from physical and spiritual death, and divine “rebirth”⁹⁸ into the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”⁹⁹ and “newness of life”¹⁰⁰ here and hereafter.

Moses as royal “son” was royal “lawgiver.” Benjamin and Mosiah similarly filled this role in righteousness,¹⁰¹ all of them being typical of Jesus Christ. There exists no greater theological statement regarding Jesus Christ’s royal, divine sonship in scripture than the one Abinadi makes before King Noah, a failing royal son, and his priests in Noah’s royal court:

And now Abinadi saith unto them: **I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men and shall redeem his people.** And because he dwelleth in flesh [cf. Mosiah 3:5], he shall be called **the Son of God**; and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, **being the Father and the Son, the Father because he was conceived by the power of God and the Son because of the flesh, thus becoming the Father and the Son** — and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth — and thus the flesh becoming subject to the spirit, or **the Son to the Father**, being one God, suffereth temptation and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked and scourged and cast out and disowned by his people. And after all this and after working many mighty miracles among the **children of men**, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said: As a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, **the will of the Son**

97. See especially Alma the Younger’s statement regarding priests and priesthood in Alma 13:3: “And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.”

98. See John 3:3–17.

99. OT1 Moses 6:59. (OT1 is the first draft of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Old Testament.) See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Matthew L. Bowen, “By the Blood Ye Are 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): 163.

100. Romans 6:4.

101. See especially Mosiah 2:31.

being swallowed up in the will of the Father. And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death, **giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men,** having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy **being filled with compassion toward the children of men,** standing betwixt them and justice, having broken the bands of death, having taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them and satisfied the demands of justice. And now I say unto you: Who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you that when his soul has been made an offering for sin, he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And **who shall be his seed?** (Mosiah 15:1–10)

As part of his piercing exegesis of Isaiah 53 (Mosiah 14) in Mosiah 15–16, Abinadi presents Yahweh as Divine King and Divine Warrior who “came down”¹⁰² and “br[o]ke the bands” of Israel’s — and humankind’s — great enemy, Death (Mot),¹⁰³ which gave him “power” as “the Son” to “make intercession” in a priestly capacity for all humankind.¹⁰⁴ These are images that Noah, as an Israelite *king*, and his priests as Israelite *priests*, should have “understood,” appreciated, and taught to a much greater degree than they did.

Thus, King Noah “feared” Abinadi’s words, but did not ever truly “understand” them. Therefore, Noah and his priests never experienced the divine rebirth that makes one Christ’s “seed,”¹⁰⁵ though one (Alma) did (see Mosiah 17:2). King Noah’s failure to “understand” Christ’s divine sonship (and thus his own royal sonship) soon culminated in his using Abinadi’s words regarding that divine sonship as the very pretext for executing and martyring the latter (see Mosiah 17:5–20).

102. See also Abinadi’s earlier statement Mosiah 13:33–34, which frames his entire quotation and exegesis of Isaiah 53 in the chapters that follow (Mosiah 14–16).

103. The imagery of Death and Hell as Israel’s enemies pervades Israel’s ritual hymns (i.e., temple hymns), the Psalms (e.g., Psalm 18:4–5; 116:3). The image of Yahweh as a warrior “breaking bands” is familiar from texts like Psalm 107:14.

104. See, e.g., Hebrews 7:24–25: “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession [Gk. *entynchanein*] for them.”

105. See Aaron P. Schade and Matthew L. Bowen, “‘To Whom Is the Arm of the Lord Revealed?’ *Religious Educator* 16, no. 2 (2015): 90–111.

**“And Thus They Became the Children of God”:
Alma the Elder’s People**

Mormon gives an account of the people of Alma, their conversion, their society, their afflictions, and their subsequent redemption in order to demonstrate what “becoming” the “sons” and “daughters” of God looks like in praxis. Alma the Elder, as an after-type of Moses and a prototype of Christ, had baptized his people in (or, “pulled” them from) the waters of Mormon.

But it was not until they were born from above and became “one” that they fully “became” the “children of God”:

And he [Alma] commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and **one baptism**, having their hearts knit together **in unity and in love** one towards another. And thus he commanded them to preach. And thus **they became the children of God** [Hebrew *bēnê ʾēlōhîm*]. (Mosiah 18:21–22)

At this point in the narrative, Mormon’s description of Alma’s people’s divine rebirth (their “becoming”) recalls the numerous previous statements heretofore in the Book of Mosiah about “becom[ing] men of understanding” (Mosiah 1:2–5); *not* “becom[ing] an enemy to all righteousness” (Mosiah 2:37); “becom[ing] as little children” (Mosiah 3:18); “becom[ing] a saint through the atonement of Christ” (Mosiah 3:19); and “becom[ing] as a child” (Mosiah 3:19). Moreover, Mormon’s statements invoke the climactic moments of King Benjamin’s speech: “And now because of the covenant which ye have made, **ye shall be called the children [bēnê¹⁰⁶ or yaldē¹⁰⁷] of Christ, his sons and his daughters**; for behold, **this day he hath spiritually begotten you**, for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore **ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters**” (Mosiah 5:7). Like King Benjamin’s rhetorical wordplay on his own name, Mormon’s words “and thus they became the children of God” recall the royal rebirth language of 2 Samuel 7:14 (cf. Psalm 2:7) and its democratized form in Deuteronomy 14:1.

Perhaps most appropriately, the collocation “children of God” recalls Abinadi’s description of Christ’s divine birth and sonship (“he shall be called **the Son** of God; and having subjected the flesh to the will of **the Father**, being **the Father** and **the Son**”; “thus becoming **the Father** and

106. Cf. *bānîm* in Deuteronomy 14:1; 32:20, *inter alia*.

107. Cf. *yēlādîm* in Genesis 33:5; Hosea 1:2, *inter alia*.

Son”; “the flesh **becoming** subject to the spirit, or **the Son** to **the Father**, being one God, suffereth temptation ...”; “the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of **the Son** being swallowed up in the will of **the Father**”; “giving **the Son** power to make intercession for **the children of men**”; “**the Son** reigneth and hath power over the dead,” Mosiah 15:2–3, 5, 8, 20). Abinadi’s words not only helped Alma’s people — and help us — “understand” what Christ’s divine sonship involved and required, but what was required of them — and is required of us — to become the “children of God” (see again especially Mosiah 3:19: “... and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father”). From this point forward in Mormon’s narrative, the collocation “children of God” serves as a technical term that describes members of the church who have undergone the royal, divine rebirth described throughout the Book of Mosiah.¹⁰⁸

“They Could Not Understand the Words of King Benjamin”

Mormon’s abridged “Book of Mosiah” juxtaposes the account of Alma’s and Limhi’s converted peoples with an account of a faith crisis in the “rising generation” among the Nephites. A generation after King Benjamin’s speech, Nephite religion undergoes a major crisis. When Alma the Elder’s people came to Zarahemla, King Mosiah II had apparently given royal sanction to Alma’s church, which had apparently merged with the existing Nephite religion (“Now king Mosiah had given Alma the authority over the church,” Mosiah 26:8). Mosiah II was reluctant to use royal authority to intervene in the emerging crisis (see Mosiah 26:12), leaving Alma the Elder to sort things through divine revelation.

Mormon frames the problem in language that echoes King Benjamin’s paraenesis to his sons as recorded in Mosiah 1:2–7 and exhortations within his speech (Mosiah 2:9, 40–41; 3:15; 4:4) that emphasize the importance of “understanding”:

Now it came to pass that **there were many of the rising generation that could not understand** the words of king **Benjamin**, being

108. See, e.g., Alma 6:6; 30:42; 4 Nephi 1:17, 39. In 4 Nephi 1:17, Mormon gives us an especially poignant glimpse into what he was thinking when he used the collocation “children of Christ”: “There were no robbers nor no murderers, neither were there Lamanites nor no manner of ites, but they were in one, the children of Christ and heirs to the kingdom of God.”

little children at the time he spake unto his people; and **they did not believe** the tradition of their fathers. **They did not believe** what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, **neither did they believe** concerning the coming of Christ. And **now because of their unbelief they could not understand the word of God**; and their **hearts were hardened**. And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a **separate people as to their faith**, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; for they would not call upon the Lord their God. (Mosiah 26:1–4)

Mormon’s description of those of “the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake” alludes directly to Mosiah 2:34 (“there are not any among you, except it be your **little children** that have not been taught concerning these things”) and 2:40 (“**you little children who can understand my words**”). That group definitively included King Mosiah’s own sons. The “children” (cf. Hebrew *bānîm*) of “the rising generation” were pointedly unlike King Benjamin’s *bānîm*/sons (Mosiah II, Helaman, and Helorum) who became “men of understanding” (cf. Hebrew *binâ*). They were also unlike King Benjamin’s people — their own parents among them — who had, in fact, “open[ed] [their] ears that [they might] hear, and [their] hearts that [they might] understand and their minds” and thus had “the mysteries of God . . . unfolded to [their] view” (Mosiah 2:9).

Mormon’s additional comment in Mosiah 6:2 also suggests that he intended to revisit the theme of “sons”/“little children” and “understanding” later in the narrative: “And it came to pass that there was not one soul, except it were little children, but who had entered into the covenant and had taken upon them the name of Christ.” Mosiah 26 brings Mosiah 6:2 up to date.

The “children” of “the rising generation,” thus fit the Lord’s negative description of Isaiah’s audience in Isaiah 6:9–10 (i.e., hard- or “fat”-hearted and unable to “understand”). They had “dwindle[d] in unbelief” like the Lamanites (1 Nephi 12:22–23; cf. 1 Nephi 1:4) and their Israelite ancestors, the Lord’s “sons” and “daughters” of the covenant (*bānâw ûbēnôtâw*, “his sons and his daughters”) who provoked him in the wilderness, “children in whom [was] no faith [*bānîm lō’-’ēmun bām*]” (Deuteronomy 32:19–20; compare to the “Lamanites” and *lō’-’ēmun*, “no faith,” “unbelief”).¹⁰⁹

109. See Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit,” 242–43. A large amount of textual evidence in the Book of Mormon suggests that the name Laman was dysphemized from an early stage as *l-’mn* (“unfaithful,” “faithless” [Deuteronomy 32:20 MT

“Becoming His Sons and Daughters” and “New Creatures”

Although it remains doubtful or an open question¹¹⁰ whether the “angel of the Lord” in Mosiah 27:11 should be identified as the Lord,¹¹¹ Alma does mention that the Lord spoke directly to him:

For, said he [Alma], I have repented of my sins and have been redeemed of the Lord. Behold, **I am born of the Spirit**. And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women — all nations, kindreds, tongues and people — **must be born again, yea, born of God**, changed from their carnal and fallen state to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, **becoming his sons and daughters**; And thus **they become new creatures**; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. I say unto you: Unless this be the case, they must be cast off. And this I know because I was like to be cast off. (Mosiah 27:24–27)

In addressing Alma the Younger, the Lord quotes from and alludes to¹¹² the climax of King Benjamin’s address — the words that the “children” of their “rising generation,” including Alma and the sons of Mosiah, had failed to understand. The Lord’s use of the phrases “born of God”¹¹³ (from “born of him,” Mosiah 5:7), “carnal [state]” (Mosiah 4:2)

vocalization is *lō’-’emūn*], with wordplay on that name in 1 Nephi 17:23, Alma 56:4, Helaman 6:34, 36, *inter alia*). Cf. the opposite play on words at Alma 18:2, 10, “faithfulness of Ammon,” and 1 Samuel 22:14 “so faithful” (*ne’emān*). On which, see Matthew L. Bowen, “The Faithfulness of Ammon,” *Religious Educator* 15, no. 2 (2014): 65–89. See further Bowen, “Laman and Nephi as Key-Words: An Etymological, Narratological, and Rhetorical Approach to Understanding Lamanites and Nephites as Religious, Political, and Cultural Descriptors” (FairMormon Conference, Provo, UT, August 2019), <https://www.fairmormon.org/conference/august-2019/laman-and-nephi-as-key-words>.

110. See the appearance of the same “angel of the Lord” to Alma in Alma 8:14–16 as a sequel to his previous appearance.

111. John W. Welch, “Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ from the Book of Mormon” in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2003), 316–42.

112. The Lord’s language here (“born of the spirit,” “must be born again”) fore-echoes his own words as recorded in John 3:6–8: “born of the spirit” (2 x); “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”; cf. Alma 36:24, 26; 38:6.

113. Perhaps a form of Hebrew *yālād* (“bear,” “beget”) or Egyptian *ms(i)* = “give birth,” “beget.” Robert F. Smith (personal communication) sees a possible pun here in terms of Moses [*mōšeh*], *ms(i)*, and Mosiah [Yahweh is Savior (*mōšīa’*)].

and “fallen state” (Mosiah 4:5), and “becoming his sons and daughters” (from “having become his sons and daughters,” Mosiah 5:7) all have their antecedents in King Benjamin’s sermon. The phrase “becoming his sons and daughters” echoes the name Benjamin and the marvelous rhetorical play on his own name employed at the end of that sermon.

Mormon appears to suggest in Mosiah 26 that the sons of Mosiah had already been born and were present for King Benjamin’s sermon. Alma the Younger, however, would not have been present for King Benjamin’s sermon, even as a little child or when Ammon read King Benjamin’s words to Limhi’s people. Alma would have encountered King Benjamin’s words only in written or oral form after his father Alma the Elder had emigrated with his people and his own family to Zarahemla, presumably through his father or others.

Although this experience marks the beginning of Alma’s new life, including the understanding of spiritual things, Mormon still marks the sons of Mosiah as not yet “understanding” (“they fell to the earth, and **understood not** the words which he spake unto them”) until Alma gives his “born again” or “born of God” speech (Mosiah 27:24–31). From this point forward, Mormon reports,

And after they [Alma and the sons of Mosiah] had traveled throughout all the land of Zarahemla and among all the people which was under the reign of king Mosiah, zealously striving to repair all the injuries which they had done to the church, confessing all their sins and publishing all the things which they had seen, and **explaining** the prophecies and the scriptures to all who desired to hear them. (Mosiah 27:35)

They could “explain” the prophecies and scriptures to the very people that they had been deceiving, flattering, and leading astray because they now truly “understood” those prophecies and scriptures. They also now understood that they “had murdered many of **his children** — or rather led them away to destruction — ”¹¹⁴ and what they needed to do to “repair” these wrongs. All of this suggests that “understanding” constitutes a key component of being “born of him,” “born of God,” “born again,” and “becoming the children of God” in the same way that “becoming men

114. Alma 36:13–14: “Yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God and that I had not kept his holy commandments. Yea, and **I had murdered many of his children** — or rather led them away unto destruction — yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities that the very thoughts of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.”

[and women] of understanding” constitutes an important aspect of proper sonship/daughterhood (see especially Mosiah 1:2–6; 2:9, 40; 4:4; 5:6–15; 18:22; 27:24–28).

“They Were Men of a Sound Understanding”

Indeed, the sons of Mosiah became “men of understanding,” in every sense implied by Mormon’s and Benjamin’s statements in Mosiah 1:2–6. Fourteen years after the initial conversion of Alma and the sons of Mosiah, Mormon relates the story of their first meeting, this at the end of the sons’ long mission among the Lamanites:

And now it came to pass that as Alma was journeying from the land of Gideon southward, away to the land of Manti, behold, to his astonishment he met **the sons of Mosiah** a journeying towards the land of Zarahemla. Now **these sons of Mosiah** were with Alma at the time the angel first appeared unto him; therefore Alma did rejoice exceedingly to see his brethren. And what added more to his joy, **they were still his brethren in the Lord**. Yea, and **they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth, for they were** [i.e., had become and remained] **men of a sound understanding**; and **they had searched the scriptures diligently that they might know the word of God**. But this is not all. They had given themselves to much prayer and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of revelation; and when they taught, they taught with power and authority, even as with the power and authority of God. (Alma 17:1–3)

The sons of Mosiah, like Alma the Younger, became “men of understanding” as their father Mosiah II had before them (see Mosiah 1:2–7). Mormon, in fact, says that they “were” or had “become” (cf. Hebrew *hāyâ*) “men of sound understanding.” Note Mormon connects this fact directly to their “search[ing] [of] the scriptures” to “know the word of God,” which is the very thing that King Benjamin had instilled in his “three sons”: “and he caused that they should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might **become men of understanding and that they might know concerning the prophecies which had been spoken by the mouths of their fathers**, which was delivered them by the hand of the Lord” (Mosiah 1:2).

Thus we not only hear again echoes of King Benjamin’s name (“son of the right hand”) and that initial paronomasia in terms of “understanding”

(Hebrew *bînâ*), but King Benjamin’s formula for becoming “men of understanding.” Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah, like their own fathers, had not just become “men of understanding,” who knew the “word of God” thoroughly, but men of Christ and “son[s] of the right hand” — *Benjamins* (see especially Helaman 3:24–25).

Conclusion

The textual evidence suggests that the theme of royal/divine sonship and daughterhood and the repetition of “understanding” in the Book of Mosiah both revolve around the name Benjamin and the temple sermon that King Benjamin gave to his people in Zarahemla. This suggests that becoming “men [and women] of understanding” is inseparable from the process of undergoing divine rebirth and walking the covenant path to ultimate enthronement at the “right hand of God.” That divine rebirth includes receiving the ordinances and rites of the temple and “understanding” the mysteries of God (i.e., being “born again . . . into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” OT1 Moses 6:59).¹¹⁵

Becoming men and women of understanding is much like our initial experiences in language acquisition. As children we understand little of what we see and hear around us at first, but we grow quickly in our understanding. Our mortal education consists of much more than simply being inducted into the lexical semiotics of English, French, Mandarin, or Arabic. We are here to become “experts” in the doctrines and language of the gospel,¹¹⁶ the language of gospel symbolism, and the language of the temple. All of the latter were “languages” that Isaiah, King Benjamin, Abinadi, Mosiah, Alma the Elder, Alma the Younger, and the sons of Mosiah had acquired and passed on to their children and their people. So must we acquire them and pass them on to ours.

[The author would like to thank Suzy Bowen, Daniel C. Peterson, Allen Wyatt, Robert F. Smith, and Victor Worth.]

115. Bradshaw and Bowen, “By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified,” 163.

116. To the Latter-day Saints, Dieter F. Uchtdorf (“Your Potential, Your Privilege,” *Ensign* [April 2011]: 59) stated: “As a people, we rightfully place high priority on secular learning and vocational development. We want and we must excel in scholarship and craftsmanship. I commend you for striving diligently to gain an education and become an expert in your field. I invite you to also become experts in the doctrines of the gospel — especially the doctrine of the priesthood.”

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DEATH TO SEDUCERS! EXAMPLES OF LATTER-DAY SAINT-LED EXTRALEGAL JUSTICE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Craig L. Foster

Abstract: *Some people have suggested a strain of violence within nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint culture as violent as and perhaps more so than that of most Americans around them. Critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints point to a few well-known acts of extralegal violence as evidence of a culture of violence that permeated the early Church. But were these examples of violence really out of the norm of nineteenth-century American society? This article looks at examples of extralegal punishment for certain crimes, placing them and the examples of extralegal punishment in Utah within a greater historical and cultural context.*

Over the years, critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and even some historians have suggested a strain of violence that permeated nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint culture which was as violent as and perhaps more so than that of most Americans around them. Indeed, according to well-known historian D. Michael Quinn, “Those violent norms were officially approved and published by the LDS Church in pioneer Utah.”¹ As I point out in this paper, the historical record is not as clear-cut as some may assume.

Before delving into the main topic of this paper — violence in service of extralegal justice in early America — it should be noted that it is easy for present-day sensibilities to be shocked and offended by the historical accounts treated in this paper. This is understandable; one can be excused for not even knowing that early Americans were familiar with and often approving of what we, today, view as barbaric acts. Looking at

1. D. Michael Quinn, “The Culture of Violence in Joseph Smith’s Mormonism,” *Sunstone* 164 (October 2011), 28.

these accounts — distasteful as it may be — is necessary if one wants to fully understand the historical context in which singular events dredged up by critics occurred.

Examining Two Commonly Cited Examples of Church-Approved Violence

While different examples are cited to push the argument of a prevalent strain of violence in early Church culture, perhaps some of the most popular are stories of castration in early territorial Utah. Even from the nineteenth-century there were accusations of multiple cases of castration by members of the Church, such as John D. Lee's *Mormonism Unveiled* (actually mostly written by William L. Bishop), which claimed that "many a young man was unsexed for refusing to give up his sweetheart" to "old, worn-out members of the Priesthood."² Despite accusations and tales of rampant castrations, there are only two well-documented cases: the castration of Henry Jones in Payson, Utah, in 1858 for incest and of Thomas Lewis of Sanpete County in 1856.³

On 27 February 1858, Hosea Stout recorded in his diary, "This evening several persons disguised as Indians entered Henry Jones' house and dragged him out of bed with a whore and castrated him by a square & close amputation."⁴ Although a couple of historians have referred to Jones's crime as adultery, several different records identify his crime as more than simple adultery or fornication. Rather, both he and his mother were killed for incest.⁵ Furthermore, John H. Beadle, editor of *The Utah Reporter* and outspoken critic of the Church, described Jones's crimes as two separate events. He wrote in *Polygamy or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism*,

2. John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, the Life and Confessions of the Late Mormon Bishop, John D. Lee* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand & Co., 1877), 284–86.

3. "Mormonism's Early Secrets," *Salt Lake City Messenger* 92 (April 1997): 1; David L. Bigler and Will Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion: America's First Civil War, 1857–1858* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 113 and 286; D. Michael Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics Among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 271.

4. *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diary of Hosea Stout*, ed. Juanita Brooks, Vol. 2, 1848–1861 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, Utah State Historical Society, 1964), 653.

5. Bigler and Bagley, *The Mormon Rebellion*, 286 and Quinn, *Same-Sex Dynamics*, 271. Regarding incest, see Richard H. Cracroft, "Review of Orrin Porter Rockwell: *Man of God, Son of Thunder*, by Harold Schindler," *Brigham Young University Studies* 24, no. 3 (1984): 391.

“Henry ... had previously been emasculated on a charge of bestiality; now he and his mother were accused of incest, and shockingly murdered.”⁶

The castration of Henry Lewis was more complicated and the reasons less clear than those surrounding the Jones castration. An interesting and thoughtful essay by John G. Turner noted several reasons given for the castration, including a sexual crime on the part of Lewis; Bishop Warren Snow’s desire to marry a girl Lewis fancied; and the desire to make Lewis, who had a history of rebellion and violence, an example to deter other possibly rebellious young men. Turner felt the last was “the most likely conclusion.”⁷

The basic facts of the castration are that Henry Lewis, a young man residing in Manti in central Utah’s Sanpete Valley, was involved in two violent altercations in the fall of 1856 and seemed to be inclined to trouble.⁸ After the second violent altercation, Lewis, who had already been excommunicated from the Church for almost killing another man by hitting him on the back of the head with a shovel, was sentenced to five years in prison for threatening to kill another man during an argument. He was again “cut of[f] from the church.”⁹

On 29 October, Lewis was handcuffed and loaded into a wagon headed for the Utah Territorial Penitentiary. He didn’t even make it to Ephraim, a town fewer than seven miles north of Manti. At William Creek, south of Ephraim, he was “taken out of the wagon a blanket put round his head & actulay alter him like a pig by taking his Testicles clean out & he laid at this place in a dangerous state he was out two nights & part of two days before he was found.”¹⁰

6. J. H. Beadle, *Polygamy or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1882), 145. Louis J. Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias, the Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 163 and John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of sexuality in America*, 2nd ed. (1988; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 118; both discuss Jones’s castration/emasculatation as a result of bestiality.

7. John G. Turner, “‘Things Are So Dark and Mysterious’: Thomas Lewis, the Mormon Reformation, and Peace and Violence in Early Mormon Utah,” eds. Newell G. Bringhurst and Matthew L. Harris (working paper), 18–19, 22. A copy of the Turner manuscript is in possession of the author.

8. *Ibid.*, 6, 10–11 and John A. Peterson, “Warren Stone Snow, a Man in Between: The Biography of a Mormon Defender” (MA Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1985), 113–15.

9. Turner, “‘Things Are So Dark and Mysterious’” 17.

10. Elizabeth Jones to Brigham Young, 2 and 8 November 1856, Box 69, Folder 7, Brigham Young Papers, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of

Later, Elizabeth Jones, Lewis's mother, learned that Manti Bishop Warren S. Snow had planned the attack along with his brother George Snow and George Peacock. In a letter to Brigham Young, she described her son as a "bloodless breathing tabernacle."¹¹ Some members of the Church leadership were appalled at what took place. It is said that while Brigham Young remained publicly quiet about the attack, he privately supported what happened. He explained, "I will tell you that when a man is trying to do right & do[es] some thing that is not exactly in order I feel to sustain him." Henry Lewis eventually recovered physically from the brutal attack but never quite recovered mentally and lived a sad life. Lewis family members, including a brother, Canaan Lewis, tried to get revenge on Warren Snow but were unable to, and eventually the tragic event faded into memory.¹²

Historians such as John G. Turner feel the Lewis castration had to do with issues other than sexual crimes, while others, such as Warren Snow biographer John A. Peterson, argue that based on the "sermons delivered in the Manti ward, the spirit of the times, the form of punishment itself and the record of Brigham's reaction to it, make it clear that Lewis had committed a sexual crime."¹³ Given the nature of the punishment, I would agree with Peterson and would assume it was one form or another of seduction. But more on that later.

These two documented examples of extralegal violence involving castration are shocking to twenty-first century sensibilities for their level of violence and blood-letting and inevitably lead one to ask whether or not such punishment was out of the norm of nineteenth-century American society. The answer would be yes and no.

Violent Rhetoric

Critics and historians alike have noted the violent rhetoric of early Utah leaders regarding sexual sins and crimes particularly. Such rhetoric was especially strong during the time of the Mormon Reformation of 1856-1857, when sermons by Brigham Young and other Latter-day Saint leaders were meant to cause the Saints to see the evil of their sins and want to confess and be forgiven. Blood atonement was emphasized for those guilty of adultery and other serious sexual sins. Not only did the General Authorities emphasize

Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

11. Ibid.

12. Turner, "Things Are So Dark and Mysterious," 25, 28.

13. Peterson, "Warren Stone Snow, a Man in Between," 204; and Turner, "Things Are So Dark and Mysterious," 20.

painful punishment for sexual infidelity, so did local leadership. Bishop Warren Snow, for example, suggested that sisters committing adultery with Gentiles while their husbands were gone (on missions or otherwise), should have “a dagger . . . put through both their hearts.”¹⁴

Historians like the late Ronald W. Walker have argued that Brigham Young and other early Church leaders used harsh language that was like having “it raining pitchforks, tines downwards” and the sermons akin to “peals of thunder,” but more as a rhetorical device rather than a *carte blanche* to commit blood atonement or other forms of holy violence.¹⁵ Other historians have linked these sermons to Reformation acts of violence. Will Bagley and Michael Quinn have both suggested that Church leaders’ violent sermons encouraged significant levels of violence as members “carried out various forms of blood atonement.” Even Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glenn M. Leonard admitted in *Massacre at Mountain Meadows* that “the tough talk about blood atonement and dissenters must have created a climate of violence in the territory.”¹⁶

While attention has been placed on Brigham Young’s and other leaders’ sermons as a catalyst for Latter-day Saint violence, the question must be asked, were nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints alone in encouraging extreme violence as punishment for sexual sins and crimes, or did their rhetoric and actions reflect the popular views of American society?

Non-member Violent Rhetoric and Violence

First of all, Brigham Young and other Latter-day Saint leaders were not alone in preaching strong, even violent sermons regarding real and perceived sin and society’s moral problems. On Sunday, 10 August 1834, Lyman Beecher “preached three anti-Catholic sermons in three different churches. All the churches were filled beyond capacity, and each audience was treated to a barrage of denunciations of the pope, Rome, and Catholicism. Other Congregational clergy in and around Boston followed Beecher’s lead that day, and some directly denounced

14. Warren Snow, “Minutes” (Provo Central Utah State Record, November 16, 1956), as quoted in Turner, “‘Things Are So Dark and Mysterious,’” 15.

15. Ronald W. Walker, “Raining Pitchforks: Brigham Young as Preacher,” *Sunstone* 8 (May-June): 7.

16. D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 256; and Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley, and Glenn M. Leonard, *Massacre at Mountain Meadows: An American Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25, both as quoted and as part of the general discussion regarding the influence of Mormon Reformation sermons on a Church culture of violence; Turner, “‘Things Are So Dark and Mysterious,’” 1–2, 15–16.

the Ursuline convent.”¹⁷ In fact, one preacher urged his listeners to attack the convent, saying, “Leave not one stone unturned of that curst Nunnery that prostitute female virtue and liberty under the garb of holy religion.”¹⁸ These anti-Catholic sermons of Lyman Beecher, particularly his Sunday evening sermon, “The Devil and the Pope of Rome” as well as the sermons of other ministers, were said to have encouraged an angry mob to burn the Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts, the very next evening.¹⁹ “After the assault on the convent, Lyman Beecher expressed regret for the violence, but he denied that his sermons were responsible for inciting the mob.” He defiantly declared, “The excitement that produced the riot ‘had no relation whatever to religious opinions, and no connection with any denomination of Christians’ [and] contented himself with the belief that the riot would have occurred regardless of his sermons about the dangers of popery.”²⁰

Lyman Beecher’s son Edward Beecher also preached against Catholicism, describing celibacy practiced by Catholic priests as an evil that “transformed, in a very short time, an ordinary male into a raging sexual madman capable of any act of wickedness to satisfy his exorbitant and unrestrained lust. Murder, rape, incest, and child abuse were standard fare in the life of a male corrupted by the vow of celibacy.” Like his father’s sermons, Beecher’s also encouraged sectarian violence.²¹

17. Mary Anne Pagliarini, “The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest: An Analysis of Anti-Catholic Literature in Antebellum America,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 9, no. 1 (Winter, 1999), 97.

18. Bradley J. Birzer, “Anti-Catholicism in Early America & the Burning of a Convent,” *The Imaginative Conservative*, October 13, 2018, <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2018/10/catholicism-early-america-ursuline-convent-bradley-birzer.html>.

19. Pagliarini, “The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest,” 97; W. Jason Wallace, *Catholics, Slaveholders, and the Dilemma of American Evangelicalism, 1835–1860* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2010), 10; and, Wilfred J. Bisson, *Countdown to Violence: The Charlestown Convent Riot of 1834* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1989), 110.

20. Wallace, *Catholics, Slaveholders, and the Dilemma of American Evangelicalism, 1835–1860*, 11.

21. Pagliarini, “The Pure American Woman and the Wicked Catholic Priest,” 104. Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Edward, also had a violent streak. An ardent abolitionist, he helped raise money to buy rifles for anti-slavery settlers in bleeding Kansas. Beecher “believed that the Sharps Rifle was a truly moral agency, and that there was more moral power in one of those instruments, so far as the slaveholders of Kansas were concerned, than in a hundred Bibles.” Beecher joined anti-slavery vigilantes in a confrontation with pro-slavery mobbers in Cincinnati in 1836,

Other American religious denominations also had what could only be as termed cultural strains of violence. Eli Farmer, an antebellum Methodist clergyman, not only preached violence but also practiced it. In the mid-1830s he confronted an antagonistic neighbor and “thrashed” him. The man continued to verbally abuse Farmer, who finally “caught him by the throat and running him against a fence choked him til his tongue protruded and he began to beg.” Farmer and other nineteenth-century “circuit-riding Methodist clergymen from Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio included many similar boastful and at times gory accounts of their willingness and ability to dish out physical beatings to various antagonists.”²²

These early Methodist clergymen “believed that violence was a proper response to challenges to one’s manhood and public reputation.” This reflected the teachings of early Methodist minister and John Wesley’s confidant that John Fletcher’s teaching that “the kingdom of heaven ‘permits certain kinds of violence.’”²³ The concept of public reputation and honor leading to violence extended to the pulpit. Francis Asbury, of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, having committed to “either fight or die,” filled his published memoirs with accounts of “Satan’s constant assaults.”²⁴

Such assaults included physical ones. For example, frontier Presbyterian minister James Finley “once threatened to horsewhip a man who talked in a meeting.”²⁵ In 1848, this same James Finley was presiding at a quarterly meeting in Xenia, Ohio, when a Democratic congressman began haranguing him from the audience. Finley told the man to sit down and be quiet. The congressman “refused and insisted on his right to speak,” to which “Finley grabbed a large hickory cane, left the pulpit, and threatening to bludgeon him.”²⁶ A Methodist Sunday school superintendent in the Ohio Valley organized a posse to track down a tramp who had stolen a knapsack full of Bibles. When they found the tramp, the superintendent

according to Liz Sonnenborn, *Harriet Beecher Stowe* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), 28–29.

22. Douglas Montagna, “‘Choked Him Til His Tongue Protruded’: Violence, the Code of Honor, and Methodist Clergy in the Antebellum Ohio Valley,” *Ohio Valley History* 7, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 16.

23. Jeffrey Williams, *Religion and Violence in Early American Methodism: Taking the Kingdom by Force* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 3.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Violence and Culture in the Antebellum South* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1979), 113.

26. Montagna, “‘Choked Him Til His Tongue Protruded,’” 22.

insisted the man be punished immediately rather than being bound over for a trial. The thief was given thirty-nine lashes.²⁷

Another Methodist clergyman, Peter Cartwright, told about how some Latter-day Saints had disrupted a camp meeting over which he presided. He ordered them out, yelling, “Don’t show your face here again, nor one of the Mormons. If you do, you will get Lynch’s law.’ In short, the preacher threatened to kill any Saints who dared to show their faces at a Methodist meeting.”²⁸

As during the American Revolution, leading up to and during the Civil War, a number of sermons were preached that were called *war sermons*. For example, a Reverend Mr. Boardman of Pownal, Maine, preached what one parishioner called a “lynch law sermon” and others a “war sermon.”²⁹ Another minister who preached a war sermon was the Rev. Mr. Burkholder, who preached in the Sandusky Methodist Episcopal Church and whose sermon was accompanied with fervent amens. Henry Ward Beecher, one of the most famous preachers of his day, “was energized, even elated by the rebellion.” Shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter, while discussing the attack, he preached, “So far as I myself am concerned, I utterly abhor peace on any such grounds. Give me war redder than blood and fiercer than fire.”³⁰

In Auburn, Ohio, the Re. Father Creedon of the local Catholic Church “preached a war sermon in which he said, I wish every man that can leave his family to enlist.” He went on to explain that as the nation was in peril, “let every Irishman show that he is worthy to be a part of great and glorious nationality.” He ended his sermon with “There are two classes whom I most despise — traitors and cowards — and those who can enlist, and do not, are either one or the other.” An Iowa paper reported in August 1861 that the Toledo, Iowa, rifle company marched double file one Sunday to the Congregational Church, where they “listened to a very appropriate war sermon by the Rev. G. H. Woodward.”

27. *Ibid.*, 27–28.

28. *Ibid.*, 28–29. According to Richard Carwardine, “Methodists, Politics, and the Coming of the American Civil War,” *Church History* 69, no. 3 (September 2000): 593, Peter Cartwright could be combative, even violent, in the course of his circuit-riding duties because the “reminiscences of his early career in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio are seemingly little more than a succession of battles with evangelical rivals, of whom Baptists are the principal foe.”

29. “Our last Skedaddle,” *The Portland Daily Press* (September 20, 1862), 3.

30. Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2006), 327.

That same evening, the company “marched in the same manner to the M. E. Church and were ably addressed by the Rev. R. Swearingen.”³¹

In the eastern Iowa vigilance movement, the Emmeline Vigilance Committee was presided over by the Rev. Ewald Cooly, and a Rev. A. McDonald served as the group’s treasurer.³² In Socorro, New Mexico the vigilante committee included two ministers.³³ In post-Civil War Missouri, some of the most violent vigilantes were Bald Knobbers, made up mostly of Democrats and Baptists who “cracked down” on institutions and individuals “who violated their notions of moral behavior.” “This aspect of Bald Knobber vigilantism grew out of an intensely devout evangelical Christianity that many of the members practiced. The leadership of the Christian County vigilantes included many ministers, lay ministers, and church members who believed that by reforming the morals of their community that were doing God’s work.”³⁴

Latter-day Saints were not alone in encouraging extreme violence as punishment for sexual sins and crimes. Following are some examples of such ideas expressed in nineteenth-century newspapers. During the infamous Beecher-Tilton Scandal Case of 1875 in which Henry Ward Beecher was accused of adultery with a friend and fellow parishioner’s wife, Elizabeth Tilton, much was written about the accusations and ensuing scandal. The press, unsurprisingly, wrote hundreds of articles about the trial. Newspapers reported the closing argument of Tilton’s lawyer, who dramatically declared, “Let it be written on every door throughout this land, ‘Death and destruction to the seducer.’”³⁵

31. “A War Sermon,” *The Wyandot Pioneer* (4 April 1862), 3; “A Catholic Priest’s War Speech,” *The Shasta Courier* (3 August 1861), 1; and, *The Iowa Transcript* (22 August 1861), 2.

32. Michael J. Pfeifer, “Law, Society, and Violence in the Antebellum Midwest: the 1857 Iowa Vigilante Movement,” *The Annals of Iowa* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2005), 157.

33. Barbara Marriott, *Outlaw Tales of New Mexico: True Stories of New Mexico’s Most Famous Robbers, Rustlers and Bandits* (Guilford, CT: TwoDot, 2007), 69.

34. Matthew J. Hernando, *Faces Like Devils: The Bald Knobber Vigilantes in the Ozarks* (Columbus: The University of Missouri Press, 2015), 17. See also Matthew James Hernando, “The Bald Knobbers of Southwest Missouri, 1885–1889: A Study of Vigilante Justice in the Ozarks” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2011).

35. “Beecher-Tilton — Incidents of the Great Trial,” *The Grange Advance* (19 January 1875), 2. According to Larry Witham, *A City Upon a Hill: How Sermons Changed the Course of American History* (New York: Harper One, 2007), 174, the Beecher-Tilton affair became public news when Victoria Woodhull published it in her magazine. A church trial exonerated Beecher. Tilton then sued Beecher on charges of adultery with his wife, Elizabeth Tilton. “In July 1875, a divided

In 1859 the *Keowee Courier* of Pickens Court House, South Carolina, had the same sentiment: “Death to the seducer, is and should be the unwritten law, higher and more certain than written codes.”³⁶ This was a sentiment echoed in 1885 when a St. Paul newspaper reported on a sensational trial in Minneapolis: “Our Written law says that killing is murder, but there is a great unwritten law which says that he who slays a seducer shall be justified in the act.”³⁷ In 1880, the Rev. Dr. Horatio Stebbins, a well-known and esteemed Unitarian preacher, declared, as reported in an article titled “Seduction Should be Punishable with Death,” that “had he been armed on a certain occasion he would have shot the seducer of his daughter — as her husband has since done — is the confession of human nature.”³⁸

In February 1857, the *Daily Nashville Patriot*, in an article titled “A Higher Law,” about a wronged husband killing his wife’s seducer, wrote in part, “Whatever may be the code of morality, we contend that nothing but justice was administered to Clawges. Death should be the inevitable penalty of seduction; if the law does not provide it, public opinion should.”³⁹

The Philadelphia jury obviously felt the same sentiment: Sherlock, Clawges’s killer, was set free. He was not alone in being acquitted by sympathetic juries for killing seducers. In 1871, John W. S. Browne, a Memphis gas-fitter originally from Ohio, shot and killed J. Theodore Adams for seducing, impregnating, and refusing to marry Browne’s daughter. Browne was later acquitted by a grand jury. The newspaper stated that this should be a “warning to seducers, in the action of the grand jury, [that] will give society the protection which is demanded.”⁴⁰

In an article titled “Killing seducers is not criminal in California,” stating that Muybridge, a California photographer who shot and killed a man named Larkyns for seducing his wife, had been acquitted by a jury.

jury deliberated for six days but could not arrive at a verdict.” Despite the hung jury, according to Barbara A. White, *The Beecher Sisters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 205, for years there had been “gossip about Henry and various women” to the point that one contemporary Congressman remarked, “I am reliably assured that Henry Ward Beecher preaches to at least twenty of his mistresses every Sunday.”

36. “Death to the seducer,” *Keowee Courier* (30 July 1859), 2.

37. “Are we Invoking a Shower of Fire and Brimstone?” *St. Paul Daily Globe* (22 March 1885), 4.

38. “Seduction Should be Punishable with Death,” *Wheeling Register* (3 August 1880), 3.

39. “A Higher Law,” *Daily Nashville Patriot* (6 February 1857), 1.

40. “A Warning to Seducers,” *The Athens Post* (26 October 1871), 1.

Although Muybridge had claimed temporary insanity, his claim had not been believable. The jury had ignored that defense and instead acquitted Muybridge “on the ground that he was justified in killing Larkyns for seducing his wife. They said that if their verdict was not in accordance with the law of the books, it was with the law of human nature; that under similar circumstances, they would have done as Muybridge did, and they could not punish him for doing what they would have done themselves.”⁴¹

A Virginia defense attorney was even more blunt in discussing death to seducers:

The general principles on the subject of homicide have been read from the books. The law of nature underlies all human law, and has been asserted in Virginia from times immemorial. We brought from England the common law, which still exists. By it a man could, by instant death, punish the seducer of his wife or daughter. But what has been the practice? There is not a man on the jury who has not seen this law ignored, and the man who slayed another for such an offence has been acquitted. . . . The law of nature and the human heart underlie a case like this, and all the legislation on God’s earth cannot alter them. Did you ever hear of a man being hung for killing the seducer of his wife. That isn’t one millionth part as strong as this. While, in the other case, the woman is guilty, it is necessary to kill her seducer to protect society.⁴²

Kenneth L. Cannon, in his seminal work “Mountain Common Law’: The Extralegal Punishment of Seducers in Early Utah,” wrote, “Utah’s Mormon majority condoned extralegal measures in at least one area: the punishment of seducers.”⁴³ As Cannon explained in his article, Irish convert Howard Egan had returned to Utah after a period of absence from the territory and found that his wife, Tamson, had been seduced by a man named James Monroe and had given birth to a child as a result of the seduction. Monroe had wisely gotten out of town when he heard of Egan’s return and was endeavoring to leave the territory. Egan went after Monroe and eventually found him in a wagon train camped near the Utah border, where he proceeded to kill him. At his subsequent trial,

41. “Killing seducers is not criminal in California,” *Memphis Daily Appeal* (24 February 1875), 2.

42. “The Grant-Pollard Trial,” *The Daily Dispatch* (6 March 1869), 1.

43. Kenneth L. Cannon II, “Mountain Common Law’: The Extralegal Punishment of Seducers in Early Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Fall 1983): 308.

Latter-day Saint Apostle George A. Smith defended Egan and in his final remarks, speaking, as he called it, “common mountain English.” Smith expressed a sentiment similar to those expressed in other parts of the country regarding seducers: “The principle, the only one, that beats and throbs through the heart of the entire inhabitants of this territory, is simply this: The man who seduces his neighbor’s wife must die, and her nearest relative must kill him!”⁴⁴

The notion of “honor was a defining concept for most Americans, holding particular sway in the South and West.”⁴⁵ An aspect of “honor” was that no man had the duty to retreat when confronted and in serious cases, “violence against the offender was often the only way to restore lost honor.”⁴⁶ A man’s honor extended to female members of his household. “No insult to a man’s honor was more egregious, and thus more deserving of violent response, than a serious imputation on the character of a close female relative.”⁴⁷

Sexual deviance involving a man’s wife, mother, or sister, was considered an attack on his honor as well as hers, and “physical retort” was considered to be “the proper means of restoring lost honor. . . . The law did not technically

44. Cannon, “Mountain Common Law,” 312. Not only did it appear to be accepted, even expected, that a man would kill the seducer of his wife or other female member of his family; that sentiment extended to also protecting the life or safety of female members of the family. In Craig L. Foster, “The Butler Murder of April 1869: A Look at Extralegal Punishment in Utah,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 2 (Fall 2001): 107–8, the article describes the brutal assault on Ellen Close Butler and her daughters by a vagrant who used a hatchet. One little girl was instantly killed, while Ellen and another daughter suffered severe injuries. William Butler, husband and father, as well as neighbors in the farming community of Marriott, Utah, hunted the criminal down; Butler fought with him and eventually shot and killed him. Butler then went into nearby Ogden and turned himself in to local authorities, who told him he had done the right thing and to go home and take care of his family. He was later acquitted after a very short hearing and again told he had done the right thing by killing the attacker.

45. Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism In the Postbellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.* Bertram Wyatt-Brown, a renowned historian of the Southern United States and its culture of violence, wrote in *Honor and Violence in the old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 36, “that nothing could arouse such fury in traditional societies as an insult hurled against a woman of a man’s household. . . . The intensity of feeling arose from the social fact that a male’s moral bearing resided not in him alone, but also in his women’s standing. To attack his wife, mother, or sister was to assault the man himself. Outsider violence against family dependents, particularly females, was a breach not to be ignored without risk of ignominy.”

sanction such violence, but most states and juries, acting under what historians have called ‘the unwritten law,’ were loathe to prosecute, let alone convict, an aggrieved husband who killed his wife’s seducer.”⁴⁸

While death to seducers seems to have been a popular sentiment even among Latter-day Saints, particularly on the part of cuckolded husbands, castration seems to have been a barbaric way of avenging a sexual sin or crime. Further, as John Turner correctly points out in his essay “Castration as a vigilante punishment against white men ... was extremely uncommon.”⁴⁹ Sadly, this was long used as a form of extralegal punishment against black men accused of rape or other sexual crimes against white women and was usually used as a form of torture before lynching the unfortunate man.

There are, however, examples of castration of white men and other particularly violent forms of punishment for adultery, incest, and other types of sexual crimes inflicted on real and accused perpetrators by people not members of the Church. This article will look at examples of extralegal punishment for adultery, incest, rape, and seduction.

Adultery

Certainly, most cases of extralegal punishment for adultery were shooting, tarring and feathering, or whipping. Probably the most popular of those more common punishments was shooting. Most of the shooting scrapes involved a single shooter, usually the husband shooting the other man.

For example, in Holton, Kansas, Rueben R. Boan, a prominent farmer in that part of Jackson County, returned to his home and found that his wife and a man named James P. Price had bolted the door to the home. When they refused to open the door, Boan fired his shotgun through the door, hitting Price in the arm and nearly severing it. While Price was able to make an escape, Boan fired another round of buckshot into the fleeing man’s back and neck. The man died a few days later from his gunshot wound. Boan was bound over and stood trial for murder. The jury found him not guilty, the popular sentiment being the killing was justified.⁵⁰ Another case happened in Port Hope in southern Ontario,

48. Mason, *The Mormon Menace*, 5. According to Mason. p. 4, to Hector McLean and sympathetic Southerners, “Parley P. Pratt was a seducer, adulterer, and apostle of depravity who had deeply dishonored [McLean], and thus deserved his fate.” The real victim was McLean, not Pratt.

49. Turner, “‘Things Are So Dark and Mysterious,” 19.

50. “A Bad Scrape,” *The Holton Recorder* (24 December 1896), 1; “Shot by an injured husband,” *Emporia Gazette* (6 January 1897), 1; “The Boan-Price Shooting Scrape,”

Canada, where the wife of a barrister, George Brogdin, had run off and started living with another lawyer named Thomas Henderson. Six weeks after their departure, Henderson returned to the Lake Ontario town where Brogdin, who had heard Henderson would be on the steamboat, was waiting for him. Brogdin boarded the steamer as soon as it arrived and found Henderson at the boat's bar. He walked up behind Henderson and shot him in the back of the head in front of three hundred witnesses waiting on the wharf. The next day, a coroner's jury found that Brogdin had "fired under great and justifiable provocation." When Brogdin came to trial later that year, the prosecution stated there was "no plainer case of murder." The jury, however, declared Brogdin not guilty, thus ruling the "the killing was justifiable."⁵¹

Amazingly, until 1973 it was legal in Texas "for one man to kill another if the former caught the latter in the act of committing adultery with the killer's wife." A stipulation was that the man had to catch the adulterers in the actual act. Under these conditions, the law allowed cuckolded husbands "certain shooting rights." But the unwritten folk law, "commonly understood by most early-day Texas juries, was much broader. ... Not only was the cuckold granted unlimited shooting rights, but those rights were also extended to just about anyone else in his family."⁵²

But shooting adulterers was not just a male sport. There was one case of an estranged wife shooting her husband's paramour. Rather than being acquitted, she "was sent to the lunatic asylum" but was shortly after "liberated" after she had "regained her health."⁵³ A Fort Worth, Texas, woman shot her husband's lover. Her defense was she was "protecting her home." A sympathetic jury acquitted her.⁵⁴

Like shooting, whipping more often than not involved one or two people punishing the adulterer but could also involve a mob. Tarring and feathering usually involved a mob of varying size. Such incidents took place across the country and usually involved the man as the victim of the mob's wrath. Yet that was not always the case. In Ontario, Canada,

The Holton Recorder (31 December 1896), 8; "Bound Over," *The Holton Recorder* (January 7, 1897), 8; "District Court," *The Holton Recorder* (November 11, 1897), 8; and, "Not Guilty," *The Holton Recorder* (November 18, 1897), 8.

51. "Home News," *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle* (21 March 1856), 3; and Peter Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 47.

52. Bill Neal, *Getting Away with Murder on the Texas Frontier* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2006), 230.

53. *Hartford Weekly Times* (26 January 1850), 4.

54. Neal, *Getting Away with Murder on the Texas Frontier*, 230.

in 1865 a committee of women ordered an adulteress woman out of town on threat of tarring and feathering and being ridden out of town on a rail.⁵⁵ In 1872, a group of women tarred and feathered a woman accused of seducing their husbands.⁵⁶

Extralegal punishment for adultery did not stop at shooting, tarring and feathering, or whipping. There were cases of castration. Perhaps one of the better known and more bizarre cases of castration as extralegal punishment for adultery involved a United States Congressman named Robert Potter, who was described by one writer as “one of the most bloodthirsty politicians the country has seen, and certainly the most emasculating.”⁵⁷ He was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons in 1826 and served until 1828, when he was elected to Congress as a Jacksonian Democrat, where he served from 1829 to November 1831 after he attacked and castrated two men who he claimed were having an adulterous affair with his wife.⁵⁸

The incident was even more bizarre. The two men Potter claimed were committing adultery with his wife were both cousins of hers. The first was a 55-year-old reverend named William Lewis Taylor, the second a 17-year-old who was identified by different names in different accounts. Potter was able to overpower each of the men at separate times on the same day and proceeded to castrate them. He was arrested the next day for the attacks and eventually served six months in prison. Regarding his conviction, he wrote, “I am consoled by the conviction that in what I have done I have only acted upon those feelings which nature has implanted in the hearts of all men, indeed, I may say, of all animals; and that each of you would have done the same thing under the same circumstances.”⁵⁹

Unsurprisingly, Potter and his wife divorced. Despite the castrations and prison time, Potter’s constituents returned him to the North Carolina House of Commons in 1834. He was kicked out for good in 1835 after pulling a gun on another member of the House of Commons when the two got in an argument over a card game. Shortly after that, Potter left for Texas, where he signed the Texas declaration of independence, fought at the Battle of San Jacinto, became Secretary of the Navy for the

55. “Moral But Not Charitable,” *The States Rights Democrat* (14 October 1865), 1.

56. “Shocking Treatment of a Woman,” *Deseret News* (1 May 1872), 1.

57. Dirk Langeveld, “Robert Potter: Kind of Nutty,” *The Downfall Dictionary*, March 20, 2009, <http://downfalldictionary.blogspot.com/2009/03/robert-potter-kind-of-nutty.html>.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

Republic of Texas, and served two terms in the Texas senate. In 1842 he was involved in an east Texas feud known as the Regulator-Moderator War, in which he was a Moderator leader. One evening, his house was surrounded by Regulators, and he was killed.⁶⁰

While not as sensational, there were other cases of castration for adultery. In New Ross, Indiana, in 1876 a man named William Lockman was taken by a party of five masked men and castrated as punishment for adultery. The article read, “The outrage is received with comparative unconcern by the residents of New Ross, owing to the character of Lockman, who is charged with being a professional adulterer.”⁶¹ In Bedford, Michigan, an angry husband tied up a man and castrated him.⁶² In 1886, a band of masked men in Jackson County, West Virginia, took Hezekiah Alltop, a minister who “had been caught in a compromising position with a female member of his flock,” or, as another newspaper reported, “has for a long time been conducting himself in a most licentious manner with members of his flock,” and gave him a terrible flogging. They then castrated him by mutilating “his person in a shocking manner.”⁶³

Perhaps the most savage example of extralegal punishment for seduction and adultery occurred in 1880 when a man named Walrop was caught after having seduced and run away with his wife’s young sister. He was arrested in Spalding County, Georgia, but was taken from the sheriff’s custody by an enraged mob and beheaded.⁶⁴

Incest

Incest was a crime that caused strong emotions of anger and disgust. Just the accusation of incest could set off fatal events. In 1881, Berry Carpenter

60. Ibid., and Andy Cush, “Remembering Robert Potter, the North Carolina Castrator, Idiot of Yesteryear,” *Gawker*, May 19, 2016, <https://gawker.com/remembering-robert-potter-the-north-carolina-castrator-1775161444>. Robert Potter had remarried in Texas but did not have any children with his second, much younger wife. Adding to the craziness of the Potter story, according to “Hunting for Heir to a Great Fortune,” *The Salt Lake Tribune* (September 29, 1910), 14, in 1910 a search was conducted by lawyers in Texas and North Carolina for Potter’s heirs because oil and gas was found on his property and was valued at \$1,500,000, which with inflation would be approximately \$40,574,800 in 2020.

61. “Horrible Outrage at New Ross,” *The Daily Ledger-Standard* (16 February 1876), 1.

62. “A Wronged Husband’s Revenge,” *Bismarck Tribune* (23 June 1882), 6.

63. *Semi-weekly Interior Journal* (22 June 1886), 2 and “A Lecherous Minister’s Fate,” *The Sedalia Weekly Bazoo* (22 June 1886), 1.

64. *The Weekly Herald* (26 August 1880), 3.

of New Albany, Indiana, shot and killed his brother for accusing him of committing incest with his own daughter.⁶⁵ Perhaps the reaction to being accused was strong not only for the repugnancy of the crime but also because the accused knew the usual public reaction to such a charge.

There are a number of accounts of mob violence against those accused of incest. In 1873, Albert H. Essex of Newport, Rhode Island, was released because family members refused to testify against him. A mob stoned the carriage he was riding in. He caught a train, but mobbers stopped the train outside of town and chased him through the forest into a neighboring town and then beyond. He escaped but had to move to Massachusetts to get away from people trying to punish him.⁶⁶ The Rev. Benjamin Lawson of Bristol seduced and then ran away with his niece. He was caught and brought back to the southwest Virginia town, where a mob gathered to lynch him but were forced to disperse.⁶⁷ Rueben Bastrick of Gosper County, Nebraska, was arrested for impregnating his sixteen-year-old daughter, who died in childbirth. He was mobbed, as his son had been mobbed the previous year for incest with a sister.⁶⁸

While there were cases of mobs tarring and feathering and whipping men accused of incest, the *Los Angeles Daily Herald* suggested that in the case of incest, “burning at the stake would be too mild a punishment.”⁶⁹ Although there were no published cases of castration for incest, there were numerous cases of lynching and attempted lynching throughout the United States. More often than not, such cases also involved brutal beatings and other forms of punishment as a preliminary to the ultimate lynching.⁷⁰

Remarkably, some newspapers even encouraged vigilante lynching as extralegal punishment for incest. Reporting an incest case, a Kentucky newspaper ended the article with “If Judge Lynch would take charge of

65. “Fratricide,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* (11 June 1881), 8.

66. “The Essex Case,” *Rutland Weekly Herald* (20 February 1873), 5; “The Way of the Transgressor is Hard,” *Richmond Dispatch* (21 February 1873), 3. Albert H. Essex, according to FamilySearch Family Tree, was born in 1824 and died in 1898. He moved to Fall River, Massachusetts, where he lived the remainder of his life.

67. “The Laws-on Lawson,” *Bristol News* (14 June 1872), 4.

68. *The McCook Tribune* (11 November 1886), 2.

69. *Los Angeles Daily Herald* (5 May 1889), 4.

70. Very early, the term *lynching* was used for any extralegal punishment and could, therefore, be used for whipping, tarring and feathering and other mob punishment. By at least the middle of the nineteenth century, however, lynching had come to be used almost exclusively to mean hanging. It is with this in mind that I use the term *lynching*.

such a case as this there could surely be no objection from any quarter.”⁷¹ *The Arizona Champion* reported an incest case in 1884 and ended the short article as follows: “Thieves are hung on the Pacific slope for stealing a horse, and yet such brutes are spared to be dealt with according to the law. We were never an advocate of mob violence, but in the above case our protest would be very feeble.”⁷²

Rape

Rape was almost as repugnant as incest, which usually involved the rape of a family member. Because of the nature of the crime, public reaction and extralegal punishment could be swift and violent. There are numerous accounts in the newspapers of rapists being lynched or shot by angry mobs. Following are just a few of many examples of extralegal punishment: In 1875, two men were lynched in Florida for rape. The Coroner’s verdict was “Hanged by parties unknown, and served them right.”⁷³ In 1870, two teen sisters were brutally raped by a gang of six men in Fort Scott, Kansas. These men were caught and lynched by a mob. The article describing the horrific event and subsequent ruthless punishment of the perpetrators ended with “The universal verdict here is that, in this instance at least, the summary manner infliction of punishment is entirely justified.”⁷⁴ In 1881, a sixteen-year-old California boy attacked three teen girls on their way to Sunday School and attempted to rape one of them. He was arrested but shortly thereafter was taken from the jail and lynched. “The general verdict [of local citizens] seems to be, ‘served him right.’”⁷⁵ A newspaper article titled “Deserved his Fate” reported in 1886 that the lynching of Eli Owens of Hebron, Nebraska, “was one of the most exciting affairs on record.” A large mob broke the jail doors down and dragged him out, he fighting the whole time. They carried him off in a wagon while the sheriff gave pursuit. By the time Owens was found, he had been lynched. There were signs he had been severely beaten before being lynched for the forcible rape of his sister-in-law.⁷⁶

Utah was not immune to extralegal violence against rapists. The wife and young teen daughter of an Ogden man named George Wolverton

71. *Semi-Weekly Interior Journal* (24 November 1891), 2.

72. *The Arizona Champion* (8 March 1884), 3.

73. *The Grange Advance* (20 July 1875), 2.

74. “A Fiendish Outrage,” *The Stark County Democrat* (25 May 1870), 1.

75. “A Sixteen-Year Old Boy Lynched by Masked Men,” *Sacramento Daily Union* (12 January 1881), 2.

76. “Deserved his Fate,” *Arizona Weekly Journal-Miner* (23 June 1886), 2.

were raped by two transients. One man was caught, tried and found guilty. He was sentenced to fifteen years in the territorial penitentiary, but while being taken to prison, the man was shot several times by Wolverton, who was then arrested and put on trial for murder. On Saturday, 3 April 1869, Wolverton was acquitted, the jury classifying the act as justifiable homicide.⁷⁷

Lynching and shooting were not the only forms of punishment meted out on rapists and accused rapists. There were cases of stoning, tarring and feathering, and whipping. One man who raped a young girl in Ohio was caught by an enraged mob who “stoned, beat and shot him in five places, dragged his body through the streets by a horse, while life was in it, and then hung him to a tree, where he died.”⁷⁸

Legal punishment for rape could also be brutal. In Vancouver, British Columbia, a man found guilty of rape of a young girl was sentenced to two years in the penitentiary and “to receive twenty-five lashes with a cat-o’-nine-tails.”⁷⁹

But what about castration? There are a few examples of mobs punishing men with castration for rape and attempted rape. A traveling singing master chloroformed one of his students in Georgia and attempted to violate her. He was caught, whipped, and castrated by a crowd. Another man in Virginia was also taken from a jail cell and castrated for attempted rape. In Falls City, Nebraska, a man by the name of “Shorty” Wilson raped a seven-year-old girl. He was arrested and put in jail, but “a mob of three hundred citizens” broke the jail door down, took the prisoner out, and castrated him. They then returned the man to jail.⁸⁰

While these are examples of extralegal punishment, from the earliest times, castration for rape and other sexual crimes was also a legal form of punishment, or at least was considered a form of punishment. “Most frequently castration was used to punish moral crimes to make a repeat

77. “Acquitted,” *Deseret Evening News* (5 April 1869), 3 and “Summary Punishment of Criminals in Utah,” *Urbana Union* (21 April 1869), 4. See also Cannon, “Mountain Common Law,” 319–20 and Foster, “The Butler Murder of 1869,” 109–10.

78. “A Sensual Beast Meets His Just Deserts [sic],” *Little Rock Daily Republican* (2 August 1878), 1.

79. “Chinaman to be Lashed,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* (18 November 1890), 4.

80. *The Weekly Democratic Statesman* (19 March 1874), 3; “News Condensed,” *Semi-Weekly Interior Journal* (24 June 1890), 2; and “News and Comment,” *The Atchison Daily Globe* (23 August 1899), 1.

crime impossible.”⁸¹ During the Middle Ages in different parts of Europe, both homosexuality, particularly pederasty, and the rape or seduction of a virgin were punished by castration.⁸²

In colonial Pennsylvania, a person convicted a second time of rape was castrated and branded with an “R” on the forehead. A married man convicted of sodomy was also castrated.⁸³ In post-Revolution Virginia, Thomas Jefferson and others on the Committee to Revise the Laws of the Commonwealth recommended castration for bestiality, sodomy, and rape.⁸⁴ In 1890s Baltimore, Maryland, a grand jury recommended castration as punishment for rape. Legislation was also introduced at various times in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. The Kansas legislation was encouraged to legislate that “All brutes in human form found guilty of rape or incest, are to serve a term in the penitentiary, and before they are discharged, they are to be castrated.” In 1880, Senator George Edmunds of Vermont introduced a memorial into the United States Senate signed by both female and male residents of Washington, DC, asking to make rape punishable by castration.⁸⁵

Two years previous to Edmunds’s memorial, the Travis County, Texas, grand jury recommended that castration for rape be substituted by whipping. How many, if any, rape cases were officially punished by

81. Victor T. Cheney, *A Brief History of Castration*, 2nd ed., (Bloomington, Indiana: Author House, 2006), 6.

82. Mathew Kuefler, *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 256–57.

83. Kathryn Preyer, “Penal Measures in the American Colonies: An Overview,” *The American Journal of Legal History* 26:4 (Oct 1982), 33–38.

84. Alf J. Mapp, Jr., *Thomas Jefferson: America’s Paradoxical Patriot* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1987), 123–24. According to Mark Stein, *American panic: A History of Who Scares us and Why* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2014), 177, all thirteen colonies had laws that prescribed the death penalty for homosexuality. Jefferson wanted to eliminate the death penalty for sexual crimes and felt castration would be more appropriate.

85. “This Will Prevent Rapes,” *The News and Observer* (9 September 1899), 1; “The Grand Jury of Baltimore,” *Alexandria Gazette* (9 September 1899), 2; *The Ottawa Free Trader* (22 February 1879), 2; “The Arkansas Legislature,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (4 February 1881), 2; *The Indiana State Sentinel* (7 February 1883), 4; *The Atchison Daily Globe* (4 February 1897), 2; *The Rock Island Argus* (11 April 1885), 2; *Belmont Chronicle* (1 February 1883), 2; “A Summary Remedy,” *Morning Oregonian* (18 January 1895), 3; “Rape and Incest Law,” *The Western Sentinel* (5 February 1897), 4; “Here comes the Edmunds boom!” *The Weekly Kansas Chief* (8 April 1880), 2; “A Remarkable Memorial,” *Cheyenne Daily Sun* (25 March 1880), 1; and “Proposed Punishment for Rape,” *St. Albans Daily Messenger* 25 March 1880), 1.

castration isn't known, but it was the official form of punishment.⁸⁶ In the early twentieth-century, three states, "Washington in 1909, Nevada in 1911, and Indiana in 1917, introduced castration as an alternative or supplementary punishment."⁸⁷ As late as 1997, a *Slate* article stated how "Texas Gov. George Bush signed a law letting judges offer castration as an option for perpetrators of sex crimes. Florida, California, and Montana have all enacted more stringent laws to order involuntary chemical or surgical castration of these criminals."⁸⁸

Seduction

Only a few seducers were castrated by angry mobs or enraged husbands. Of those, one is of particular interest: A certain William Hoffman was said to have tried on several occasions to seduce a St. Louis, Missouri, lady named Mary Cecilia Baker. In fact, Baker claimed that at one point he tried to force himself on her, but she held him off, after which he apologized to her for losing control but again begged her to run off with him. She informed her husband, Wilson C. Baker, who then ordered Hoffman never to have anything again to do with his wife or face the consequences. Baker also gave his wife a pistol to defend herself.⁸⁹

Within a short time, Hofmann again tried to seduce Mary Baker. She fired her pistol at Hoffman but missed him. The shots, however, brought Wilson Baker and three of his friends, who took hold of Hoffman, stripped him, and tied him to the bedpost. Baker grabbed a whip and "beat him almost to a jelly, hardly leaving an inch of his body unmarked." He then produced a knife and began to castrate Hoffman but was stopped before he completed his task.

Baker and the other men were arrested and taken to jail to await trial, but the story did not end there. Hoffman recovered from his beating and partial castration and a little over a month later met Mrs. Baker while walking along a street in St. Louis. The original reports were that she chased Hoffman into a dry goods store and shot him as he attempted to hide himself, mortally wounding him. She was arrested and taken to

86. *Waco Daily Examiner* (27 November 1878), 2.

87. Cheney, *A Brief History of Castration*, 7–8.

88. Atul Gawande, "The Unkindest Cut: The science and ethics of castration," *Slate*, July 12, 1997, <https://slate.com/technology/1997/07/the-unkindest-cut.html>.

89. "Outrage in St. Louis," *Daily Evening Star* (14 March 1854), 4 and "Attempted Seduction and Terrible Punishment," *The Daily Dispatch* (11 March 1854), 3.

jail, where that night a large mob tried to break open the jail to mete out punishment on both Wilson and Mary Baker.⁹⁰

In the weeks that followed, as Mary Cecilia Baker's story came out, she explained his numerous attempts to seduce her. When those did not work, he wrote a series of anonymous letters to her husband accusing her of a bad reputation and infidelity. Finally, after all that had taken place, when they met on that St. Louis sidewalk, he approached her and called her a "damned whore." Then she pulled a gun and chased him into the store, shooting and mortally wounding him. With the full story, public opinion shifted, and when she was brought to trial in November, the jury found her not guilty, concluding that the killing was justified. Her husband, Wilson C. Baker, was also acquitted, and public opinion favored the acquittals.⁹¹

Most extralegal punishment for seduction was not this colorful or extreme. Nevertheless, stories of castration as a means of punishing seduction do exist. In this light, the tarring and feathering and attempted castration of Joseph Smith on the night of March 24, 1832, at the John Johnson Farm in Hiram, Ohio, may have been due in part to the mob's belief that Joseph Smith had been intimate with Marinda Nancy Johnson, daughter of John Johnson. Some writers have suggested that one of the mob, Eli Johnson, brother of Marinda, wanted to have Joseph Smith castrated because he believed Smith had been intimate with Marinda; other historians have disagreed, noting the lack of evidence for such a claim.⁹²

90. "A Devil of a Woman," *The Jeffersonian* (27 April 1854), 2; "Tragedy at St. Louis — Hoffman shot by Mrs. Baker," *Des Moines Courier* (20 April 1854), 2; and "The Way of Transgressors," *Monongalia Mirror* (6 May 1854), 3.

91. "Trial and Acquittal of Mrs. Baker, at St. Louis," *The New York Herald* (29 November 1854), 2.

92. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 179; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1997), 231; and Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, *Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 42–43. John J. Hammond, *A Divided Mormon Zion: Northeastern Ohio or Western Missouri?*, Vol. 3, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem: A Mormon Generational Saga* series (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2012), 311, lists the historians arguing that the attempted castration was for Smith's intimacy with Johnson. These include Brodie, Donna Hill, Newell & Avery, Quinn, and George D. Smith. Hammond notes that Bushman, Compton, Staker, and Van Wagoner dismiss accusations of sexual misconduct. Hammond then argues about the attempted castration of Smith, "Why would the 'mob' have gone to the trouble to bring along a physician to castrate *only Joseph Jr.* unless there was some connection in their minds to sexual misconduct?" According to Louis J. Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias, the Shakers, the*

Noted historian Richard Lyman Bushman is correct when he notes the lack of evidence of any sexual impropriety on the part of Joseph Smith. Still, in volatile situations like mob violence, perception always trumps reality. Despite the lack of evidence, then or now, whether Joseph Smith was actually sexually intimate with Nancy Johnson is a moot point, for in the minds of the mobbers, he had been intimate, and their actions demonstrate one of the extralegal ways of punishing a person for a sexual crime.

Castration aside, the usual forms of extralegal punishment for seduction included mobbing, shooting, stabbing, tarring and feathering, and whipping. More often than not, the newspaper articles reported approvingly of victims of seduction or enraged mobs taking revenge on seducers. Also, women arrested for punishing seducers were usually acquitted by sympathetic juries. As the *Sacramento Daily Union* reported in an article titled “The Lady and the Pistol,” “If the wrong be shown to have invited the vengeance, and outraged virtue makes this last appeal for its vindication, society looks with lenient judgement on the deed.”⁹³

Conclusion

So what does all of this mean? It certainly does not come as a surprise to most people that the United States in the nineteenth century could be a violent place. Nor were cases of extralegal punishment and violence surprising. Indeed, the popular perception of the nineteenth-century American frontier was a “rough-and-tumble” place with “nose-biting, eye gouging, hair pulling” fights and quick and violent extra-legal justice.⁹⁴

Some cases involved extreme uses of violence, such as castration. Still, as John Turner pointed out in his own essay, castration as punishment for white offenders was less common than for African-American offenders.

Mormons, and the Oneida Community, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 140, “In later years, Brigham Young lent credence to the young Smith’s reputation for amorous escapades when he claimed that Eli Johnson, one of the leaders of the mob that attacked Smith in 1832, wanted to have him castrated for putative intimacies with his sister, Nancy.”

93. “The Lady and the Pistol,” *Sacramento Daily Union* (30 June 1886), 2, as originally published in the *San Francisco Examiner*.

94. Katherine E. Ledford, “A Possession, or an Absence of Ears? The Shape of Violence in Travel Narratives about the Mountain South, 1779–1835,” in *Blood in the Hills: A History of Violence in Appalachia*, ed. Bruce E. Stewart (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012), 141n11. Ledford notes that this style of fighting was so well known that such “fights became a staple of literary accounts of the frontier and the backcountry South and Southwest.”

Nevertheless, there are examples of such, and most cases involved a sexual crime such as adultery, rape, or seduction. Castration was used or considered in various parts of the country as legal punishment for sexual crimes like rape and incest.

Ironically, in light of the attempts to associate Latter-day Saints with castration because of the two documented cases, it's interesting to note that George Q. Cannon recorded in his own journal in 1874 a threat of castration. This came at the height of the debate over the bill that became the Poland Act of 1874, which was passed to aid prosecutions of polygamy under the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act. Several Congressmen were particularly bitter regarding members of the Church. One, Mississippi Congressman George C. McKee, "said if he could, he would have every Mormon man castrated."⁹⁵

There is no denying that acts of violence took place in territorial Utah, including the two castration incidents already discussed. The examples discussed in this paper, which spanned from a little before the middle to the end of the nineteenth-century, are not meant to justify what happened in Utah. Rather, these examples are meant to place the events in Utah in a greater context and ask the question, Was Latter-day Saint-dominated territorial Utah as violent or even more violent than the territories and states surrounding it?

Obviously, Utah was not immune to extralegal and vigilante violence. Scott K. Thomas wrote in "Violence across the Land: Vigilantism and Extralegal Justice in the Utah Territory" that "the region suffered its fair share of extralegal justice."⁹⁶ Because of the theocratic beginnings of Utah territory, it is, according to Thomas, "impossible to distinguish between religious zealotry and vigilante violence."⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the level of extralegal violence in Utah appears to have been less than in surrounding areas. Historian David T. Courtwright wrote: "Some regions, such as the South and the frontier and the urban ghettos, have experienced very high levels of violence and disorder, while others, such as rural New England or Latter-day Saint Utah, have been far more tranquil places."⁹⁸

95. "2 June 1874," The Journal of George Q. Cannon (website), accessed 20 March 2020, <https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/george-q-cannon/1870s/1874/06-1874>.

96. Scott K. Thomas, "Violence across the Land: Vigilantism and Extralegal Justice in the Utah Territory," *All Theses and Dissertations* (Paper 2485, Brigham Young University, 2010), 22–23.

97. *Ibid.*, 23.

98. David T. Courtwright, *Violent Land: Single Men and Social Disorder from the Frontier to the Inner City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 1.

Legal historian D. Michael Stewart remarked about territorial Utah, “Extralegal violence was rare compared to that found in other frontier communities.”⁹⁹ And well-respected historian Thomas G. Alexander wrote:

Statistics of murders for the nineteenth century are difficult to come by. ... The available evidence shows, however, that beyond a few well-publicized murders, we have every right to believe that compared with surrounding territories, Utah was a relatively murder- and violence-free community. ... In fact, barring further evidence to the contrary, the best evidence we have at this point is that Utah was one of the least violent jurisdictions in the western United States.¹⁰⁰

Historian and folklorist Eric A. Eliason agrees with Alexander: “In fact, if anything distinguished Deseret from elsewhere in the West, it was its reputation for well-established and fair courts (administered by LDS bishops) and a remarkably low level of violence — vigilante, criminal, or otherwise.”¹⁰¹

Thus, extralegal violence in Utah, including extreme examples such as castration, were not out of the norm of nineteenth-century cases of extralegal violence. Furthermore, despite such examples of extralegal

99. D. Michael Stewart, “The Legal History of Utah,” in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan K. Powell (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 323, as cited in “Did Utah foster a culture of violence in the 19th century?” FairMormon, https://www.fairmormon.org/answers/Utah/Crime_and_violence/Culture.

100. Thomas G. Alexander, “Review of Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 42, no. 1 (January 2003): 170–71. Thomas G. Alexander’s citation reads: “James Elbert Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States*,” (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 180. On the lynching of an African-American, see Craig L. Foster, “Myth vs. Reality in the Burt Murder and Harvey Lynching,” manuscript furnished by the author. I am indebted to Foster for sharing other material on lynching as well.” Alexander quotes Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets*, 42. Alexander is cited in “Did Utah foster a culture of violence in the 19th century?”

101. Eric A. Eliason, “Review of: *Forgotten Kingdom: The Mormon Theocracy in the American West, 1847–1896*,” *FARMS Review of Books* 12, no. 1 (2000): 95–112, as cited in “Did Utah foster a culture of violence in the 19th century?” Moreover, Historians such as Eugene W. Hollon, in *Frontier Violence: Another Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), have argued that western frontier violence has been over-emphasized. Thomas J. Dilorenzo, “The Culture of Violence in the American West: Myth versus Reality,” *The Independent Review* 15 (Fall 2010): 227 writes, “An alternative literature based on actual history concludes that the civil society of the American West in the nineteenth century was *not* violent.” If this thesis is correct, Utah would have been a less violent territory within a region less violent than popular perceptions have depicted.

violence, Utah was, in many ways, less violent than the surrounding states and territories during the same time-period and Utah's society was not based on a culture of violence.

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