

INTERPRETER

A JOURNAL OF LATTER-DAY SAINT
FAITH AND SCHOLARSHIP

VOLUME 39 · 2020

THE INTERPRETER FOUNDATION

OREM, UTAH

THE INTERPRETER FOUNDATION

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Daniel C. Peterson, President
Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Vice President of Special Projects
Steven T. Densley Jr., Executive Vice President
Jeffrey D. Lindsay, Vice President
Noel B. Reynolds, Vice President
Allen Wyatt, Vice President of Operations

MANAGEMENT

Kent Flack, Treasurer
Jeffrey D. Lindsay, Co-Editor
Deidre Marlowe, Manager of Peer
Review
Deborah Peterson, Secretary
Tanya Spackman, Manager of
Editorial Services
Allen Wyatt, Managing Editor

BOARD OF ADVISORS

Kevin Christensen
Brant A. Gardner
Louis C. Midgley
George L. Mitton
Gregory L. Smith
Ed Snow
Ted Vaggalis

BOARD OF EDITORS

Matthew L. Bowen
David M. Calabro
Craig L. Foster
Taylor Halverson
Benjamin L. McGuire
Tyler R. Moulton
Martin S. Tanner
Bryan J. Thomas
A. Keith Thompson
John S. Thompson

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Robert S. Boylan
Kristine Wardle Frederickson
Benjamin I. Huff
Jennifer C. Lane
David J. Larsen
Ugo A. Perego
Stephen D. Ricks
Lynne Hilton Wilson
Mark Alan Wright

LEGAL ADVISORS

Preston Regehr
Scott Williams

INTERPRETER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Larry Ainsworth, Chairman
Rob Haertel, Vice-Chairman

DONOR RELATIONS

Jann E. Campbell

TYPESETTING

Timothy Guymon

THE INTERPRETER FOUNDATION

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS

Eden Buchert

Daniel Evensen

Jolie Griffin

Don Norton

Julie Russell

Kaitlin Cooper Swift

Elizabeth Wyatt

MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY

Richard Flygare

Mark Johnson

Steve Metcalf

Tyler R. Moulton

Tom Pittman

Alan Sikes

S. Hales Swift

Victor Worth

© 2020 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution — NonCommercial — NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

ISSN 2372-1227 (print)
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

Mission Statement

Supporting The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through scholarship.

The Interpreter Foundation supports the Church in the following ways:

- **Promotion:** We provide tools to encourage and facilitate personal learning by study and faith, and disseminate accurate information to the public about the Church.
- **Explanation:** We make the results of relevant scholarship more accessible to non-specialists.
- **Defense:** We respond to misunderstandings and criticisms of Church beliefs, policies, and practices.
- **Faithfulness:** Our leadership, staff, and associates strive to follow Jesus Christ and be true to the teachings of His Church.
- **Scholarship:** Our leadership, staff, and associates incorporate standards of scholarship appropriate to their academic disciplines.

The Interpreter Foundation is an independent organization that supports but is not owned, controlled by, or affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The material published by the Interpreter Foundation is the sole responsibility of the respective authors and should not be interpreted as representing the views of The Interpreter Foundation or of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

This journal compiles weekly publications. Visit us online at InterpreterFoundation.org
You may subscribe to this journal at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/annual-print-subscription/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Reckoning with the Mortally Inevitable</i> Daniel C. Peterson	vii
<i>Temporal Mercies and Eternal Being: Using the Science of Time to Understand God’s Nature and Our Own</i> Jared R. Stenson	1
<i>“To Seek the Law of the Lord”: Forword, Introduction, and Biographical Highlights</i> James R. Rasband.....	41
<i>Nephi’s “Shazer”: The Fourth Arabian Pillar of the Book of Mormon</i> Warren P. Aston	53
<i>John W. Welch: A Personal Reminiscence</i> Stephen E. Robinson.....	73
<i>“God Hath Taken Away His Plainness”: Some Notes on Jacob 4:14, Revelation, Canon, Covenant, and Law</i> Matthew L. Bowen	81
<i>Baptized for the Dead</i> Kevin L. Barney.....	103
<i>Theories and Assumptions: A Review of William L. Davis’s Visions in a Seer Stone</i> Brian C. Hales.....	151
<i>Oral Creation and the Dictation of the Book of Mormon</i> Brant A. Gardner	191
<i>Faith, Hope, and Charity: The “Three Principal Rounds” of the Ladder of Heavenly Ascent</i> Jeffrey M. Bradshaw.....	207
<i>“That Which They Most Desired”: The Waters of Mormon, Baptism, the Love of God, and the Bitter Fountain</i> Matthew L. Bowen	261
<i>The Transcendence of Flesh, Divine and Human</i> James E. Faulconer.....	299

The Expanse of Joseph Smith's Translation Vision
Brant A. Gardner 321

Jesus's Courtroom in John
John Gee 325

RECKONING WITH THE MORTALLY INEVITABLE

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *Every human enterprise — even the best, including science and scholarship — is marred by human weakness, by our inescapable biases, incapacities, limitations, preconceptions, and sometimes, yes, sins. It is a legacy of the Fall. With this in mind, we should approach even the greatest scientific, cultural, and academic achievements with both grateful appreciation and humility. J. B. Phillips’s rendition of Paul’s words at 1 Corinthians 13:12 captures the thought nicely: “At present we are men looking at puzzling reflections in a mirror. The time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face! At present all I know is a little fraction of the truth, but the time will come when I shall know it as fully as God now knows me!”*

It can be argued even now, in this age of social-media-facilitated skepticism, that science enjoys the greatest universal prestige of any cultural phenomenon in the modern world. And not without justice. Its achievements — from its development of vaccines and medicines that have saved and extended the lives of millions, through its creation of astonishing earthly technologies, to its ever-progressing exploration of space and its peering back to the very dawn of creation in the Big Bang — richly merit the respect they typically receive.

Yet science is an inescapably human endeavor, pursued and interpreted and employed by fallible mortals. Its history is instructive in many ways — not least as a stage upon which human weaknesses, errors, and biases are fully displayed. An article in a recent issue of *Scientific American* takes a brief but clear-eyed look at a small selection of embarrassing episodes in that venerable magazine’s own past.¹ More on that shortly, though.

1. Jen Schwartz and Dan Schlenoff, “Reckoning with Our Mistakes: Some of the Cringiest Articles in the Magazine’s History Reveal Bigger Questions about

This issue of *Scientific American* is full of articles worthy of notice. With Moritz Stefaner and Jen Christiansen, for example, Lorraine Daston considers “The Language of Science: How the Words We Use Have Evolved Over the Past 175 years.”² Maryn McKenna’s “Return of the Germs: For More Than a Century Drugs and Vaccines Made Astounding Progress against Infectious Diseases. Now Our Best Defenses May Be Social Changes,” leads off with a confident prediction made by the distinguished Australian virologist Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet (d. 1985), a Nobel laureate, in his co-authored 1972 book *Natural History of Infectious Disease*. After surveying with distinct satisfaction the rise of antibiotics and the triumph of vaccines over smallpox, measles, mumps, rubella, and polio, Burnet opined that “The most likely forecast about the future of infectious disease is that it will be very dull.”³

We know better these days.

And, in his fascinating article “How Astronomers Revolutionized Our View of the Cosmos: The Universe Turns Out to Be Much Bigger and Weirder Than Anyone Thought,” the British cosmologist and astrophysicist Martin Rees, Baron Rees of Ludlow, formerly master of Trinity College Cambridge and president of the Royal Society and, since 1995, Astronomer Royal, seems to be making a valiant effort to repair previous neglect (or even suppression) of the major contributions made by female scientists to the topic he’s discussing.⁴

This is entirely appropriate for the pages of *Scientific American*, since its own history in this regard is far from blameless.

Scientific Authority,” *Scientific American* 323/3 (September 2020): 36–41, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/reckoning-with-our-mistakes/>.

2. Lorraine Daston, with Moritz Stefaner and Jen Christiansen, “The Language of Science: How the Words We Use Have Evolved Over the Past 175 Years,” *Scientific American* 323/3 (September 2020): 26–35, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-language-of-science/>.

3. See Maryn McKenna, “Return of the Germs: For More Than a Century Drugs and Vaccines Made Astounding Progress against Infectious Diseases. Now Our Best Defenses May Be Social Changes,” *Scientific American* 323/3 (September 2020): 50–56. The article is also available online, unhelpfully under a different title (“In the Fight against Infectious Disease, Social Changes Are the New Medicine: Vaccines and Drugs Drove a Century of Progress, But Today’s Contagions Thrive on Inequality”), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/in-the-fight-against-infectious-disease-social-changes-are-the-new-medicine/>.

4. Martin Rees, “How Astronomers Revolutionized Our View of the Cosmos: The universe turns out to be much bigger and weirder than anyone thought,” *Scientific American* 323/3 (September 2020): 58–64, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-astronomers-revolutionized-our-view-of-the-cosmos/>.

Schwartz and Schlenoff, both of whom are senior editors with the magazine, begin by discussing an article about women engineers that was published in *Scientific American* by Karl Drews in 1908. One might well have expected it to be something of a celebratory piece. After all, women were moving rapidly forward in the United States; several states had already granted them the vote. Final ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, which made voting in federal elections accessible to both sexes, was only twelve years away.

Almost as visible and much more directly relevant was the role played by Emily Warren Roebling in the completion of the famous Brooklyn Bridge. For the decade during which her husband Washington Roebling was bedridden with a serious long-term illness, she effectively assumed his role as the project's chief engineer, not only demonstrating an extensive understanding of such topics as stress analysis, the strength of materials, cable construction, and the calculation of catenary curves, but also taking over day-to-day supervision of the internationally-watched project until its completion. When the bridge was finally opened in 1883, a carriage carrying Emily Roebling and President Chester A. Arthur was the first to cross over it.⁵ Speaking on the occasion, Congressman Abram Hewitt, a future mayor of New York City, described the Brooklyn Bridge as “an everlasting monument to the sacrificing devotion of a woman and of her capacity for that higher education from which she has been too long disbarred.”⁶ Still in use today, the Brooklyn Bridge bears a plaque dedicated to the memory of Emily Warren Roebling, her husband Washington Roebling, and her father-in-law John A. Roebling, who had created the initial designs for the structure but who had died of tetanus in 1869, as the result of an accident.⁷

Karl Drews, however, would have none of that.

Obstacles to the success or prospects of female engineers, he wrote, are “inherent in the nature of the case and are due to women's comparative weakness, both bodily and mental.” And he elaborated, saying that “The work of the engineer is creative in the highest sense of the word. From his brain spring the marvels of modern industry,”

5. David McCulloch, *Brave Companions: Portraits in History* (New York City: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 116.

6. See the entry on Emily Warren Roebling at the website of the American Society of Civil Engineers, <https://www.asce.org/templates/person-bio-detail.aspx?id=11203>.

7. A photograph of the plaque is available at <http://www.hmdb.org/PhotoFullSize.asp?PhotoID=68007>.

in contrast to women, “whose notable performances have hitherto been confined to the reproductive arts.” The path to the workshop, he condescendingly continued, takes “blistered hands, not dilettante pottering and observation.” Drews declared that even “the most resolute and indefatigable of women” cannot overcome these difficulties. And, in support of the soundness of his reasoning, he appealed to female inferiority in other fields beyond engineering. There has been, he noted, “no great woman composer, painter, or sculptor.” Even “the best of woman novelists are surpassed by men.”

“After making these conclusions in the first few paragraphs,” say Schwartz and Schlenoff, “Drews does something more insidious: he invokes data to support his case.” It seems that Drews mailed a letter to several dozen engineering firms and technical societies seeking to “obtain some definite information on the subject.” And then he cherry-picked, manipulated, and spin-doctored the “data” he had received in order to support his apparently pre-ordained conclusion.

A few women, for example, were mentioned in the responses that came to him. But the only woman he regarded as worthy to be mentioned in the same breath with male engineers didn’t really count because, he said, she was too “masculine.” When he found that some women had identified themselves in the previous United States Census as boilermakers, he consulted an electrical engineering institute to ask whether these self-identifications could possibly be authentic. The institute’s response? Absolutely not! In their reply, they explained that they were “too chivalrous” to permit any such thing.⁸

It’s not only sexism that was scientifically promulgated in *Scientific American*. Scientific racism also found expression in its pages. “The trappings of science,” report Schwartz and Schlenoff, “have been misused in these pages to uphold systemic oppression. Under the cloak of empirical evidence, some writers entrenched discrimination by framing it as unimpeachable truth.”⁹

William Tecumseh Sherman, of course, was famous for his “March to the Sea” in the American Civil War that had raged from 1861 to 1865 and, overall, for his harsh “scorched earth” tactics of “total war.” He followed similar principles in the subsequent Indian Wars, in which he expressly declined to distinguish between men and women, children and adults, and in which millions of bison were deliberately slaughtered,

8. For their discussion of the article by Karl Drews, see Schwartz and Schlenoff, “Reckoning with Our Mistakes,” 38–39

9. *Ibid.*, 40.

nearly rendering the species extinct as a means of bringing the native Americans to their knees and forcing them onto reservations.

In an 1868 column, the editors of *Scientific American* commented on a report from General Sherman about how railroad construction was being hindered in the West by “Indian affairs.” (The famous “Golden Spike” that linked the transcontinental railroad would be driven at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory, on 10 May 1869.) The magazine felt that Sherman wasn’t being sufficiently aggressive. “The Indians must be summarily and thoroughly squelched,” remarked *Scientific American*. “They are the most treacherous, as well as the most inhuman, of all barbarous races.”¹⁰

“During the 19th century,” Schwartz and Schlenoff flatly declare, “*Scientific American* published articles that legitimized racism.”¹¹ Here is another example, supplied yet again by senior editors of the magazine itself:

Already in 1871, Charles Darwin had made the claim, heard around the world, that all living humans had descended by a process of evolution from the same biological ancestors. And, of course, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam had long taught that all peoples of the world were the posterity of Adam and Eve.

Very soon, though, a doctrine called “Social Darwinism” arose, in which the idea of the “survival of the fittest” was often used to account for, to defend, and even to advocate the natural superiority of certain classes. It is commonly linked, especially, with the philosopher and sociologist Herbert Spencer (d. 1903) and the statistician Sir Francis Galton (d. 1911), who was Darwin’s half-cousin.

On 5 October 1895, *Scientific American* published the text of a speech by Daniel G. Brinton, the president of the prestigious American Association for the Advancement of Science. (A surgeon turned ethnologist, Brinton also presided over the American Philosophical Society, the nation’s oldest learned society, at one point.) In that speech, Brinton contended that “the black, the brown, and the red races differentiate anatomically so much from the white ... [that] they never could rival its results by equal efforts.” From birth, he declared as a self-evident fact requiring no defense or supporting evidence, a baby’s race determines “his tastes and ambitions, his fears and hopes, his failure or success.”

The highest goal of anthropology, according to Brinton, should be to measure what he called the “peculiarities” of “races, nations, tribes,” so that people can be governed according to the nature and capacities of their “sub-species.” The differences between those sub-species, Brinton

10. Ibid., 39–40.

11. Ibid., 40.

announced to the most elite scientific organization of his day, over which he presided, “supply the only sure foundation for legislation; not a priori notions of the rights of man.”

So much for the quaint notion of the “self-evident” truth “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,” as enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence; now it was time for rule by scientific “experts.”

It may not be wholly coincidental that the very next year, 1896, saw the landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision by the Supreme Court of the United States. In that decision, the Court upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation under the doctrine of “separate but equal.” As Loren Miller, a justice of the Supreme Court of California, remarked in a 1966 book, *Plessy v. Ferguson* “smuggled Social Darwinism into the Constitution.”¹²

However, views that we today would consider deeply racist didn’t vanish from the pages of *Scientific American* with the end of the nineteenth century. The magazine continued for decades to report on ideas of eugenics — “improvement” of the human species through controlled breeding — that had been passionately advocated by Galton, and which later became an obsession of the National Socialist movement in Germany and a principal element of government policy under Hitler’s Third Reich.¹³ Class prejudice and racial bias appeared in the magazine under the guise of dispassionate science, with the editors responding uncritically to it, and sometimes not even neutrally. When articles opposing eugenics and its racist agenda appeared, they “were often labeled ‘the opposition.’”¹⁴

Although a *Scientific American* staff writer argued in 1932 that humans, including scientists, were too ignorant to be able to effectively institute eugenic policies, “articles promoting eugenics as scientific consensus continued to appear in the magazine.” In 1933, for instance, one article promoted the then-controversial practice of birth control as a means of preventing the reproduction of “defectives.” The article was accompanied by a photograph depicting people in what appears to be a bread line, with an accompanying image of guinea pigs in a cage

12. Ibid.

13. For Hitler’s own Social Darwinist views, see Richard Weikart, *Hitler’s Religion: The Twisted Beliefs that Drove the Third Reich* (Washington, DC: Regnery History, 2016); also Anton Grabner-Haider and Peter Strasser, *Hitlers Mythische Religion: Theologische Denklinien und NS-Ideologie* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2007).

14. Schwartz and Schlenoff, “Reckoning with Our Mistakes,” 40.

alongside it. The following year, in 1934, the president of the so-called Human Betterment Foundation opined in *Scientific American* that the “trend toward race degeneracy is evident in statistics so well known that they need not here be rehearsed.” A quotation in the article features an assertion from the famous Viennese surgeon Adolf Lorenz — father, incidentally, of the famous ethologist Konrad Lorenz — that the eugenic sterilization of undesirable elements “eventually will come to all civilized countries as a means of getting rid of the scum of humanity.” In 1935 — only five or six years before the Nazis began their “Final Solution” to the “Jewish Problem” — *Scientific American* published an article with the distinctly ominous title “The Oddest Thing about the Jews.”¹⁵

A passage from the late Hugh Nibley seems apropos here. Writing in an essay entitled “Fact and Fancy in the Interpretation of Ancient Records,” he wrote

Science represents a high court from whose judgment there is no appeal, the idea (Freud expresses it in his *The Future of an Illusion*) ... that all other judgments are outmoded traditions; [that] the judges are free from prejudice and bias, and above petty personal interests, if they let the facts speak for themselves; that they suspend all judgment until all the facts have been gathered; that they proceed cautiously and carefully, step by step, making no mistakes, no guesses, never accepting a proposition until it is proven; that to question such a judge is an affront to his dignity and to his high office; that the judges never guess but always know; that they make no pronouncements until they have proven and verified everything; that they begin their investigations by accumulating facts with completely open minds, neither selecting or eliminating as they go; that their procedures and conclusions are in no way colored by any previous experience. That they never trust anything to luck and rarely make mistakes; that their accumulated decisions of the past compose a solid and reliable body of tested and proven knowledge called science; that by following the instructions and example of the judges, our civilization can emancipate itself from the darkness of ignorance; that to accept the decision of the judges as definitive is the mark of an intellectual person; that the knowledge of the judges is so deep and specialized that it

15. For their discussion of eugenics, see *ibid.*, 40–41.

cannot be put into ordinary language or understood by the layman but [that] science is a necessary domain of highly specialized experts and so forth ...

Well, every one of these propositions is completely false.¹⁶

However, the purpose of my drawing upon this article and these episodes from the history of *Scientific American* is not to denigrate science. As I said earlier, the sciences have earned justifiable respect for their enormous achievements to date. Instead, I'm simply trying to point out that human fingerprints are visible, and unavoidable, in every human enterprise — science among them. Science should not be summarily rejected. It should also not be deified. And if human factors have influenced even so rarified and seemingly pure a discipline as mathematical logic, as has been persuasively argued,¹⁷ how much more so will this be true in “softer,” less clear-cut fields such as history, archaeology, philosophy, theology, and the social sciences?

We can, I think, respect the powers-that-be at *Scientific American* for their frank acknowledgment of some grave mistakes, even moral errors, in the magazine's past. On the other hand, no great courage is required to admit the “sins” of others, to acknowledge the missteps of predecessors. Doing so can even sometimes be a form of moral preening or virtue-signaling in the present.

But acknowledging our own errors can be extremely difficult. Not only morally but, precisely, because we can't always easily discern them. The authors called out in the article by Schwartz and Schlenoff were probably not evil people by the standards of their times. They may well even have been idealists. But, as we see today, they were blind — just as blind as the countless laypeople, politicians, administrators, religionists, bureaucrats, and captains of industry who relied upon and followed the all-too-human scientific experts. (This is a real-world example of the blind leading the blind.)

16. Hugh Nibley, “Fact and Fancy in the Interpretation of Ancient Records,” 55 pp., d.s. typed transcript of an address given at the third annual Religion Lecture Series at Brigham Young University on 11 November 1965, 6–7. (The transcript of this address has also been circulated under the title “Intra-Ancient Records.” Topics include Karl Popper, science, bias, and dogmatism.) Thanks to Shirley S. Ricks for locating this item for me.

17. For a discussion of human factors in mathematical logic, see William Barrett, *The Illusion of Technique: A Search for Meaning in a Technological Civilization* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979), 3–117.

So here is the question that I raise: How can we be certain that we're not blind today? This question is even relevant regarding — and perhaps even especially regarding — matters on which there is broad consensus, sometimes especially among experts. If we're blind to our own errors and mistakes, we will obviously not see them.

That is why broad scientific conclusions, and apparent historical and social scientific truths, often need to be not only gratefully received but also carefully examined and, even if they appear to withstand scrutiny, at most tentatively accepted. Humility is an intellectual virtue as well as a practical virtue for everyday life. We cannot be certain which of today's obvious facts will be overturned in the light of the morrow. We can be certain only that, as has demonstrably happened in earlier generations, it will happen again. Humans will not stop being humans; mistakes will be made, discovered, and discarded. The march of science, and of historical and other forms of understanding, hasn't stopped. It hasn't culminated with us.

Let me close with a word concerning the present, on a matter about which I am sure there is no discernible error on my part. As this volume of *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Faith and Scholarship* goes to press, it is a special pleasure for me to acknowledge the efforts of those who have made it possible. Allen Wyatt has now been joined in his demanding duties as the Journal's editor by Jeff Lindsay, for which we're grateful. We also appreciate the time and energy expended by the writers in these pages, who receive no compensation beyond our gratitude and, I hope, a sense of satisfaction for doing important things that are appreciated by many others. Peer reviewers, source checkers, and copy editors are all anxiously, selflessly, and expertly engaged in what we view as a good cause. (A fuller accounting of those involved with the Foundation — sans peer reviewers, who necessarily do their work in anonymity — can be found on pp. ii-iii of this volume.)

I am keenly aware that without the generous donations of time, energy, and, yes, funding that come from many people, the Interpreter Foundation could not accomplish its work.

Daniel C. Peterson (*PhD, University of California at Los Angeles*) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served as editor-in-chief until mid-August 2013. He has published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for

its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled Muhammad: Prophet of God (Eerdmans, 2007).

TEMPORAL MERCIES AND ETERNAL BEING: USING THE SCIENCE OF TIME TO UNDERSTAND GOD’S NATURE AND OUR OWN

Jared R. Stenson

Abstract: *How does God relate to time? How do we? Modern science and revelation offer distinctive and fascinating perspectives to these questions. Specifically, the physical mechanisms underlying time have doctrinal parallels, they appear to be operative at the Fall, and they correlate with several phenomena that make God’s mercy possible.*

Time is clearly not our natural dimension ... Whereas the bird is at home in the air, we are clearly not at home in time — because we belong to eternity! Time, as much as any one thing, whispers to us that we are strangers here. – Elder Neal A. Maxwell¹

People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion. – Albert Einstein²

Questions about time arise as soon as you begin reading the standard works. From the very first sentence, “In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1:1), we may ask, what is this beginning? If it was the moment of this earth’s creation, how could the “evening and the morning” be called the “first day” if the bodies by which “days” are defined, wouldn’t even be organized for four days (see Moses 2:14–19)? If, instead, this beginning refers to the singular event of the Big Bang,

1. Neal A. Maxwell, “Patience,” *Ensign* 10, no. 10 (Oct 1980).

2. Taken from a letter of condolence sent to the family of Einstein’s recently deceased friend Michele Angelo Besso in 1955, as quoted in Freeman Dyson, *Disturbing the Universe* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 193.

which is presumed to have created not only the universe but time itself, can it have a cause? Can causality — and with it, law, rationality, truth, or freewill — exist apart from time? And if these did have a beginning, must they have an end?³

Should these questions be settled, deeper theological ones appear. Specifically, how does God relate to time? The traditional view sees him as “infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting ... unchangeable” (D&C 20:17); “self-existent”;⁴ and without even a “shadow of changing” (Mormon 9:9–10). His power is “without beginning of days or end of years” (D&C 84:17) and is dispensed according to his “foreknowledge of all things” (Alma 13:7–9). Yet almost in flat contradiction to this, we are told that God’s power is also wielded by faith,⁵ which Alma defines as “*not* to have a perfect knowledge of things” (Alma 32:21). Not only does this incompleteness require the temporalizing virtue of patience (see Ether 12:6), it lays bare the curious tension implied in God’s aim to “to bring to pass” our “eternal life,” as if *constancy* is founded on fundamental *change* (see Moses 1:39, Mosiah 27:25–26). But how can we ever truly *become* like him if it is not in his nature to *become* anything, but to always *be*? Moreover, why would an eternal God admit concepts like “beginning,” “before,” “after,” “patience,” “change,” “becoming,” or even “faith” or “agency,” if these very terms suggest realities that are contrary to his *eternal* nature? The fact is, God’s purposes are only meaningful if the reality of change is admitted, but his power is only reliable if it is undeviating. The idea that organizes these questions of divine dynamics into a clear narrative is time.

Discussions of time and timelessness — whether in nature, in God, or in ourselves — inevitably lead to confusion. Infinite regresses, singularities, and

3. In the King Follett sermon, Joseph Smith raised this curious logic in regard to eternal being: “I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man — the immortal part, because it has no beginning. Suppose you cut it in two; then it has a beginning and an end; but join it again, and it continues one eternal round. So with the spirit of man ... As the Lord liveth, if it had a beginning, it will have an end.” The Prophet calls this “good logic,” despite displaying less certainty earlier, saying, “That which has a beginning *may* have an end.” Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 353–54, emphasis added. This prophetic vacillation between a finite and endless experience, especially as it relates to our identity, illustrates the tension explored in this paper.

4. Smith, *Teachings*, 352.

5. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2000), 1:13–16. See also Heb. 11:1–3.

paradoxes arise; the terms used are ill-defined; and we clearly have a bias — like a fish to water, we are *in* time, we breathe it. This has not stopped philosophers, scientists, and theologians from discussing it, however. Aristotle’s formal relation of time to motion and change⁶ was largely carried forward in Newton’s somewhat intuitive formalization of “absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flow[ing] equably without relation to anything external” toward the future.⁷ Similarly, Augustine’s 4th century elaboration of Greek notions laid the foundation for what has become the traditional Christian intuition regarding divine timelessness.⁸

Recently, a parallel expansion of both scientific and philosophic time has reoccurred. Modern physics presents an unexpected picture of time at both the cosmological and microscopic scales. In the former, time is a dimension that combines almost indistinguishably with space to form a larger whole called spacetime. Rather unexpectedly, however, this spacetime stage on which events occur dynamically responds to the energy, motion, and light of the actors within it. In the latter, time’s flow, if it exists at all, can be viewed as an emergent property of microscopic systems that are themselves potentially timeless.⁹ At the same time, some philosophers have advanced a view of God as genuinely collaborative and responsive.¹⁰ Contrary to the traditional

6. Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (MIT Classics Online) Chapter 4, parts 10–13, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/physics.4.iv.html>. Even before Aristotle, Heraclitus, and Parmenides famously began the discussion by disagreeing as to whether reality was fundamentally static or dynamic.

7. From Newton’s *Principia*, quoted in Jeffery C. Leon, *Science and Philosophy in the West* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 73.

8. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book XI, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/augconf/aug11.htm>.

9. While physicists interpret the facts differently, many agree that there is a “problem of time” to be addressed. Julian Barbour argues the Parmenidean view that reality is fundamentally timeless in *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Our Understanding of the Universe* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999). See also Craig Callender, “Is Time an Illusion?” *Scientific American* 302, (June 2010): 58–65. Lee Smolin, on the other hand, makes a case for the fundamental reality of time in *Time Reborn* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013) as does Tim Maudlin in “A Defense of the Reality of Time,” interview by George Musser, *Quanta Magazine* (May 16, 2017), <https://www.quantamagazine.org/a-defense-of-the-reality-of-time-20170516/>. For fairly objective, accessible, and comprehensive treatments of the physics of time see Sean Carroll, *From Eternity to Here: The Quest for the Ultimate Theory of Time* (New York: Dutton, 2010) or Paul Davies, *About Time: Einstein’s Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

10. See Douglas Browning and William T. Meyers, eds., *Philosophers of Process* (New York: Fordam University Press, 1998) for an introduction to this broader field of process thought. Clark Pinnock et. al. develop a milder version of this strain

static view, he is open to the uncertainty, tenuousness, and change inherent in the human temporal experience. This implicitly assumes God shares at least some aspects of our temporal nature, including the limitations it imposes. While many Latter-day Saint thinkers agree with this view, many have challenged it as well.¹¹

In either case, these questions take on particular import for Latter-day Saints for at least two reasons. First, Latter-day Saint doctrine asserts a material yet eternal God. Latter-day Saints therefore accept a special challenge to make sense of the dynamics of physical element in the context of supernatural truths — to reconcile spiritual realities with spacetime concepts. Second, Latter-day Saints take seriously the admonition to become like God, even seeing themselves as his literal offspring, sharing his divine nature and destiny. Joseph Smith taught, “If men do not comprehend the character of God [and this presumably includes his temporal nature], they do not comprehend themselves ... It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of

of thinking as it applies specifically to the narrower theological discussion in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994). For philosophical discussions outside the narrow field of openness or process thought see the definitive works of Huw Price and J.M.E. McTaggart (see footnote 16).

11. BYU professor Eugene England popularly professed a rather open view of God’s knowledge. See England, “Perfection and Progression: Two Complementary Ways to Talk About God,” *BYU Studies* 29, no.3 (1989), 31–47, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/perfection-and-progression-two-complementary-ways-talk-about-god>. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, on the other hand, famously listed this view (in an apparent response to England’s earlier articulation of his ideas in 1979) as the first of his seven deadly heresies. See McConkie, “The Seven Deadly Heresies,” Brigham Young University fireside, June 1, 1980, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie_seven-deadly-heresies/). Nonetheless, an open view of God is increasingly popular among Latter-day Saints. For instance, two decades after the England-McConkie exchange, Latter-day Saint philosophers David L. Paulsen and Matthew G. Fisher gave a review of Pinnock’s book, saying “This study of God’s openness should be of special import to Latter-day Saint readers, for the Latter-day Saint tradition also rejects many absolute elements in the classical view of God and providence ... The Latter-day Saint portrait of God as found in scripture reflects a loving, sensitive, responsive, and concerned God who suffers when his children turn from him and is elated when they seek his fellowship. We read about a God who has endowed his children with significant freedom that allows for free choices, both good and bad. This, too, is how God is understood in openness thought.” David L. Paulsen and Matthew G. Fisher, Review: [Untitled], *BYU Studies* 42 (2003): 3–4.

God.”¹² More specifically, early Church teachings warned, “any rational and intelligent being” must have “a correct idea of [the] character, perfections, and attributes” of God in order to “exercise faith ... unto life and salvation.”¹³ How, then, does the Latter-day Saint reconcile her real experience of inexorable time along with its attendant attributes of uncertainty, weakness, temporality, and decay with the eternal yet responsive character of God and, more significantly, with her own atemporal identity as his offspring? In other words, what role does physical time play in the Latter-day Saint account of the Fall, redemption, and exaltation of humanity?

Though many have written on this topic, it is difficult to marry modern spiritual and scientific insights in an accessible way.¹⁴ Doing so demands multiple and sometimes competing perspectives from philosophy, religion, and science while forcing us to reexamine basic assumptions in each that have long been taken for granted. As a result, discussions quickly become broad, speculative, and even uncomfortable.¹⁵ It is risky to associate transient science too closely with enduring doctrines — it not only undermines the circumspection that science seeks, but believers do not want faith cast aside when scientific winds shift, as they always do. Other difficulties are met when trying to place a metaphysic of timelessness into a logical sequence because the subject itself transcends linearity. For instance, beneath the approximate

12. Smith, *Teachings*, 343–45, emphasis added. See also John 17:3.

13. Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 3:2,4.

14. Blake T. Ostler’s *Exploring Mormon Thought*, vol. 1, *The Attributes of God* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2001) discusses the philosophy of time from a Latter-day Saint perspective, but its rigor narrows its audience. C. Robert Line’s recent book *Understanding the Doctrine of God’s Time* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2015) is a focused and accessible addition but, like others, lacks scientific sophistication. The most balanced piece integrating Latter-day Saint thought with the physics of time is by astronomer J. Ward Moody, though it is less specific and does not draw on quantum physics to the degree that we do here. (See J. Ward Moody, “Time in Scripture and Science: A Conciliatory Key?” in *Converging Paths to Truth: The Summerhays Lectures on Science and Religion*, ed. Michael D. Rhodes and J. Ward Moody [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011], 101–22, <https://rsc.byu.edu/converging-paths-truth/time-scripture-science-conciliatory-key>.)

15. Non-Latter-day Saint physicist Frank Tipler offers an attempt to be thoroughly scientific about the immortality of the soul and the reality of the resurrection in *The Physics of Immortality* (New York: Doubleday, 1994). While a worthwhile aim — perhaps especially for Latter-day Saint thinkers — Tipler demonstrates the degree to which secular speculation and assumption can metastasize.

and necessarily linear language of this paper is a network of parallel but recurrent and contrary themes such as coherence and corruption, becoming and being, relativity and rationality, progression and return, causality and agency, mercy, and light.

Still, enduring insight can be gained despite the temporality of the tools. In particular, the Latter-day Saint view makes a compelling case that things temporary and temporal are not flaws but divine tools — often preparatory and merciful in nature — used by God to develop our identity as not just timeless but eternal beings (see Moses 1:39). To show this, we first lay out two competing views of time from Latter-day Saint scripture. Then, drawing on modern scientific perspectives, they are illustrated, justified, and related. This will be of special interest when considered in light of the Fall narrative, since many of the physical conditions and mechanisms needed to understand the emergence, effect, and ultimate transcendence over time have parallels and connections to the conditions necessary for and brought about in God’s plan of redemption (see Alma 42:13). Some experiences such as seership, prayer, and atonement will finally illustrate how God’s nature and our own interact in and out of time. In the end, God’s merciful purposes emerge and are clarified as an effectively timeless character of divine reality comes into view. In that picture we see ourselves as creatures swimming in both time and eternity.

Conflicting Evidence

Latter-day Saint scripture presents conflicting evidence regarding the temporal nature of God and, as we have said, Latter-day Saint thinkers have come down on both sides. Some interpretations suggest time exists on the level of “element” as described in D&C 93:33 — a fundamental component of reality, co-eternal with and uncreated by God. God dwells *in* time (he is Immanent) and thus works within strict temporal bounds. Other views see time as contingent, a property that only arises from the organization of timeless element.¹⁶ This places God *outside* and above time (he is Transcendent). Inasmuch as man is his offspring and ultimately shares in his nature, this also makes mortal time a basically

16. This distinction is consonant with McTaggart’s division of conceptions of time into his A and B series — the A theory is a *tensed theory* in which the past, present, and future is an objective property of reality while the B theory is an *untensed theory* in which these divisions are subjective. See <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/time/#McTArg>.

exceptional experience. Let us explore these competing interpretations in more depth.

1. God is *In Time and Bound by It*

The Lord told Joseph Smith that all intelligent beings reckon time “according to the planet on which they reside” (D&C 130:4–5). On earth, for example, it is divided into days, months, and years based on the relation of the planet to its governing star. The fact that this reasoning is explicitly applied to “God’s time” (see v. 4) is consistent with Abraham’s report that God himself resides on a planet with particular astronomical features. Abraham 3:2–9 clearly implies that there is a “reckoning of the Lord’s time” and that in it, “one revolution was a day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest” (v. 4). Furthermore, Kolob, the planet or star “nearest to the ... residence of God,” is “last pertaining to the measurement of time” and “moveth more slow” (see facsimile 2, Fig. 1; Abr. 3:5,9). Thus, it appears that God does have a time associated with him, that it is determined by external factors and can be reckoned, but it is such that even prolonged and significant human events are only a “small moment” by comparison (see D&C 121:7).

In addition to these specific passages, there are also many implicit references to the divine’s deference to time. If gospel concepts are authentic, then the themes of creation, conversion, forgiveness, agency, faith, patience, and progression make a strong case for the ultimate temporality of God because they place the past and the future on very different footing — they all assume the dynamic evolution of one state into another. Furthermore, the Lord’s general use of language in scripture — not avoiding words such as “before,” “after,” “first,” “last,” “past,” etc. — implies a real temporal element in the experience of God and man.

2. God is *Outside of Time and Beyond It*

While D&C 130:4 declares that “the reckoning of God’s time, angel’s time, prophet’s time, and man’s time [is] according to the planet on which they reside” it also strongly challenges a traditional understanding of time by stating that “all things ... are manifest, past, present, and future and are continually before the Lord” (v. 7). Indeed, all things of both lower and higher order kingdoms can be made known (v. 9–10). This reality seems to contradict the definition of time as linearly and inexorably accumulating with each successive pass of a planet around its governing star. Furthermore, inhabitants of particular planets — ones that are

a “sanctified and immortal” “globe like a sea of glass and fire” (v. 9, 7) or possessors of particular devices called Urim and Thummim — can apparently view history and future as simultaneous (see Mosiah 8:13, 17; Ether 3:23–25; D&C 130:7). Without distinctions between what is past and what is future, this would suggest that time as we know it is an illusion.

Again, indirect evidence mounts with the usage of concepts such as foreknowledge, truth, omniscience, immortality, eternity, everlastingness, unchangeableness, being, and perfection. Each implies a state that exists without cessation and presumably without need or possibility of change or increase.

God as Both Temporal and Eternal

While it is natural to consider these options as mutually exclusive, it is also possible to marry them. Before speculating as to how this can be done, it may be useful to lay a conceptual framework to prepare our minds for the union. To do this, we briefly consider the Plan, the Principles, and the Presence of God.

God’s Plan

Latter-day Saint doctrine presents God’s plan as cyclic: man leaves his heavenly home to dwell in the immortal yet temporarily paradisiacal state of Eden, corruption and death enter via the Fall, and mortality begins. At the “meridian of time” (Moses 6:62), a Savior intervenes, creating an inflection point. Eventually, by death, man leaves the world only to be reborn in the resurrection as a newly embodied spirit, incorruptible and inhabiting a temporary millennial paradise. Eventually, his return is complete as he reenters his Father’s presence. In this sense, the course of the Lord is “one eternal round” (D&C 3:2; 35:1).¹⁷ But in addition to its cyclic nature, a doctrine of progression or becoming is also strongly evident — upon returning, man is not only *near to* but now also *similar to* God. He is now enabled to begin the cycle again with his own offspring (see D&C 84:35–38; 132:19–20), for he has

17. A general cyclic model of “eternal return” is not unique to Latter-day Saint thought but in fact has ancient and modern roots. Mircea Eliade’s *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1954) discusses this and distinguishes two types of time: sacred, which is cyclic, and profane, which is linear and irreversible. This general concept is also reflected in contemporary thought in the formal ideas of Poincare or Nietzschean recurrence, oscillatory cosmologies, or self-similarity (see Carroll, *From Eternity to Here*, 202–27; Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality*, 74–103).

gained not only the capacity for eternal life, but also for “eternal lives” (see D&C 132:24, 55). Thus, even while returning, man progresses along a cumulative, linear path.

The union of these two patterns — progression and return — is familiar to the Latter-day Saint mind, even if not fully understood. Planets make unending orbits, yet they grow old with age. Similarly, man becomes new even as he completes a repetitive course of return. Schematically, then, the human orbit of divine potential is a helix winding ‘round and ‘round even while it ascends. Alternatively, the discrepancy can be resolved as one of scale: like the earth’s surface, time appears flat despite its rounded nature only because our view is limited. In this way, mortal time is the linear unfolding of one tiny segment of one eternal cycle.

God’s Principles

Among the indispensable principles God honors are the twin virtues of Justice and Mercy. Conceived loosely as the inevitable operation of eternal laws and the limited circumvention of these laws respectively, these appear to be opposites. However, taken together — and they must be taken together — they give another metaphor for how time and timelessness can be united in God’s character.

Alma articulates their relationship to his son, Corianton. Justice continually “executeth the law” while Mercy “appease[s] the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (see Alma 42:13–15, 22). In other words, mercy can operate only in and emerge only from a more fundamental background of eternal justice, not in violation of it — “If so, God would cease to be God” (Alma 42:13, 25). If the methodical and inevitable operation of eternal law can be correlated with timelessness and the properties of mercy with time (we argue for these correlations later), then this presents a framework for gathering the two concepts into one: though perhaps morally primary, Mercy (time) is metaphysically secondary since it emerges from and must be consistent with Justice (timelessness).

God’s Presence

Perhaps the most compelling anecdotal evidence that God can be both temporal and timeless stems from an analogy with his presence. The Restored Church of Jesus Christ uniquely claims that God is both embodied and omnipresent. That is, his person has a specific and well-defined spatial location, and yet Latter-day Saints also comfortably claim that he is everywhere present, aware, and active by means of his Spirit.

But nature has forced our hand: modern scientists must treat time and space on equal footing. The result is that many principles and arguments regarding space have an analogy in time.¹⁸ Hence, it is very reasonable to assume that if God can occupy a specific spatial *location* and yet fill all of space by means of his Spirit, he can equally occupy a specific *moment* while being in and through all times. This simply embraces the dual spatiotemporal meaning of the term *omnipresent* — he is “present” in terms of being *here* as well as in terms of being *now*.

Defining Time

“What then is time?” Augustine famously asked. “If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not.”¹⁹ This confusion, likely resulting from a messy attempt to unify views (1) and (2) above, can be mitigated if it is realized that (1) defines time only in terms of regular laws and periodic events (i.e. planetary or other motions), whereas the intuitive difficulties with (2) arise from defining a unique temporal direction, one in which time inexorably flows *only* from past to future, not vice versa. The first view is merely the effect of any precise and orderly process as it evolves according to fixed laws; the second, as we will see, is the natural result when these laws operate in complex and uncorrelated systems. A failure to distinguish these physical differences is perhaps the source of much historical confusion.

Greater scientific sophistication has clarified the issues, but it has also made singular definitions of time harder to come by. In his book *From Eternity to Here*, cosmologist Sean Carroll outlines two relevant and common definitions.²⁰ In the first, time is seen in terms of the duration of a process as measured by the relative motions and changes

18. A significant difference is that we can move forward or backward in space but can only move toward the future in time. In part, this is because we have multiple spatial dimensions allowing us to rotate our gaze — if facing north, we can turn to the south by briefly passing through a view of the western horizon. Physicists Stephen Hawking and James Hartle famously proposed how this could be done with time by positing “imaginary time” (imaginary in the formal mathematical sense, not in the colloquial “make-believe” sense). If time can be imaginary, they argue, the remaining differences between time and space effectively vanish, and even the creation of time from the pure space of the Big Bang may be explained (see Davies, *About Time*, 183–95). Interestingly for our purposes (as will be seen shortly), in imaginary time, dissipative systems become cyclic, and vice versa.

19. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book XI, paragraph 17.

20. Carroll, *From Eternity to Here*, 10–25. Carroll actually lays out three definitions, but the first is largely inconsequential for our purposes.

in other real processes such as orbital motions in planets or crystal vibrations in an electronic stopwatch. It is in this sense that Galileo was able to formulate tractable laws of motion before precise clocks existed — he simply compared changes in one part of the universe to changes in another labeled “clock” (In his case, the motion of a ball was tracked using the periodic beats of his heart or the steady accumulation of water in a nearby bucket). The parameter t that litters physics equations today is merely an artifact of this artificial division of the world into “timer” and “timed” because it summarizes, in a single numeric label, the cadence of the “clock” (i.e. some other system) without burdening us with its details. The implication, however, is fascinating: t could be removed if these divisions were mended!²¹ Since these relative changes are presumed to occur according to fixed laws, in this sense time is a fundamental expression of the timeless laws of nature and the relational aspects of its basic constituents (see D&C 88:34–43) and is grounded in precision, order, and wholeness. Furthermore, the characterization of states as either past or future is arbitrary, since the whole of events are, as C.S. Lewis put it, at once “interlocked” by laws. Going from one to the other is more nearly an inevitable logical step than an unanticipated creation. This leads many to confuse such evolution with timelessness itself. We will call this effective timelessness *Periodic Time*.

But time is not just experienced as the fact of change. As Carroll discusses in his second definition, it is also widely correlated with the quality of those changes. Time is not just a static number line with arbitrary, albeit periodic, tick marks and labels; the labels are arranged in ascending order. In experience, this manifests as a temporal direction, known in physics as the *Arrow of Time*, which points to the future and leaves the past irretrievably behind. This steady flow of events toward the future is a property, as we will see, that emerges from the complexity and incoherence of systems. On the everyday scale, it stems from dissipation and loss. This is frequently called *Thermodynamic Time*.²²

21. The reductionist approach employed here by Galileo has been so successful that its compromises are sometimes not appreciated. One of the most pressing contemporary questions in physics is to discover a grand *unified* theory. That timelessness may result from healing the wounds of reductionism is illustrated in the reunification efforts of modern physicists. See footnote 35.

22. The labels Periodic and Thermodynamic are not used elsewhere but are chosen to emphasize the physical mechanisms that underlie each. Other labels could be and have been used. For instance, there is some similarity to McTaggart’s A and B series of time or Mircea Eliade’s writing on the Sacred and Profane mentioned earlier. Philosopher and theologian William Lane Craig has also distinguished

Separating these two times in principle, even though they are inextricable in practice, is possible and important. We can easily imagine a pendulum swinging without dissipation, but dissipation cannot occur without swinging. In a similar way, Periodic Time and Thermodynamic Time do not have equal ontological status: like motion and dissipation, or Justice and Mercy, the latter emerges from and relies upon the former. Recognizing this makes it possible to claim that a divine nature is at once both temporal and (effectively) timeless — options (1) and (2) above both hold but in different senses or on different scales. While a clumsy empiricism conflates the two, being careful about the scientific mechanisms of both dynamics and dissipation elucidates their separate physical origins and even gives a foretaste of the merciful purposes in this dual nature.

The Science of Time

All intelligent beings reckon their temporal experience “according to the planet on which they reside” (D&C 130:4–5). In naive astronomical terms this is straightforward: our experience is divided into days, months, and years based on the motion of our planet relative to its starry heavens. But counting the days is far less than creating them; tick marks don’t make time flow. Section 88 makes clear that these heavenly bodies make their eternal rounds, giving “light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years.” They share light. More than merely providing the means to count time, this light apparently “giveth life to all things [and] is the law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:7–13, 44–45). In some sense, shared light creates time.

To see this, consider the light of our sun. It shines in periodic cycles — days and nights, summers and winters — to different regions of the earth. Weather patterns, water cycles, and ocean currents are driven by it; plants are nourished and blossom by it; animals sleep, work, and self-regulate by it. Even microscopic geological, chemical, and biological processes are affected.²³ In fact, chronobiological studies show that sunlight is the

Metaphysical from Physical Time (or, similarly, Static from Dynamic). See William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God’s Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001). Various other adjectives replacing Periodic could be Deep, Pure, Ideal, Spiritual, or Eternal, the contrasting terms for Thermodynamic Time then becoming Shallow, Corrupt, Real, Physical, or Mortal. In any case, there is general but not precise conceptual agreement between these various proposals.

23. Invisible sunlight contains infrared radiation which affects molecular motion and is experienced as heat; ultraviolet and x-ray light induces deeper chemical processes as in photosynthesis, sunburns, vitamin D production,

principle determinant of the human sense of time.²⁴ Cued by light and proceeding by fixed laws, each individual cycle fits together in a complex interlocking hierarchy of biochemical rhythms — like planetary tracks across the sky or the gears of a clock — causing “our minds [to] construct the past, present, and future ... sometimes [getting] it badly wrong.”²⁵ For instance, when isolated from external time cues (sunlight), human systems can lose their tempo, like an orchestra playing without a conductor. Though each performer follows exact prescriptions under his or her own power, lack of coordination creates disharmony. In humans, this manifests in an altered sense of duration, simultaneity, sequence, memory, anticipation, and even self. Conversely, under the right conditions (e.g. regular days and nights) this discord can be lessened or even avoided. Hence, not only are basic natural traits orchestrated by laws, they are also cued by light. In fact, when properly coupled, collections of timekeepers such as pendulum clocks, electronic oscillators, swarms of pulsing lightning bugs, or human biorhythms can pull each other out of irregularity and into an undiminished synchronicity — the pull of dissipation can be transcended. Just as Thermodynamic Time emerges from Periodic Time, it also can dissolve back into it as systems achieve unity.²⁶ To see how this is, we need to understand the underlying physical laws regarding motion and thermodynamics.

Two Views of Periodic Time

Latter-day Saints have an extraordinary amount of scripture regarding the fundamental laws of creation. Revelation to Joseph Smith states, “all kingdoms have a law given,” these laws are “irrevocably decreed” with

phosphorescent minerals, or when shielding vital organs from a dentist’s x-ray exam; higher energy gamma radiation from solar flares or nuclear reactions at the solar core affects even sub-atomic processes to cause ionization or mutation; and finally, radio waves can interfere with earth-bound electromagnetic devices such as communication satellites. Other microscopic effects of a radiative environment are explored later in the discussion of decoherence.

24. Steven Strogatz, *Sync: How Order Emerges from Chaos in the Universe, Nature, and Daily Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 98–100. The body’s master clock (the suprachiasmatic nucleus) is closely connected to the visual faculty and is located near the optic chiasm.

25. George Musser, “Time on the Brain: How You Are Always Living in the Past, and Other Quirks of Perception” *Scientific American* blog, Sep 15, 2011, <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/time-on-the-brain-how-you-are-always-living-in-the-past-and-other-quirks-of-perception/>. See also Pascal Wallisch, “An Odd Sense of Timing” *Scientific American* 19, no. 1 (2008): 36–43.

26. See Strogatz, *Sync* for a discussion of the phenomenon of spontaneous temporal self-organization.

“certain bounds . . . and conditions,” and “that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same.” Furthermore, a law is given “unto all things, by which they move in their times and seasons; and their courses are fixed” (see D&C 88:34–39; 130:20–21). In its attempt to discover and expound these immutable laws, physics offers two equally valid, somewhat opposed, but complementary theories.

Einstein’s theory of relativity explains the observed fact that duration (Periodic Time) is a personal notion dependent both on one’s motion and environment. Moving clocks run slower, as do clocks near large planets or stars. In fact, if one were to observe a clock moving at the speed of light or resting at the event horizon of a black hole, the interval between tick and tock would be infinite — its time would stand still.²⁷ Although this relativity is consistent with passages such as D&C 130:4–5, it is still surprising. This is in part because it is not merely a perceptual illusion. For a given observer, any dynamic process — whether swings of a pendulum, vibrations of a crystal, or the beating of a heart — will slow in these circumstances because the laws of physics themselves operate at a slowed pace. Furthermore, while one observer might experience one event before another, observers with different speeds or locations could experience the pair as simultaneous or even reversed in order. While this both preserves and constrains our notions of causality,²⁸ it is important to recognize that “it is [still] philosophically possible,” according to Latter-day Saint astronomer J. Ward Moody, “to assign every instant of time [not necessarily every *pair* of instants] as being ‘now’ to someone . . . ‘now’ is not unique.” Continuing his logic: “If every point of time can be called ‘now’ according to some perspective, then the entire extent of time must already be created” in much the same way that every signpost on a journey exists regardless of whether the traveler is currently passing by it. “Therefore all time — and with it, all past, present, and future

27. It is natural to speculate and explore the many obvious theological allegories of relativity theory. For instance, because “God is light” (1 John 1:5) he appears eternal and unchanging. But if we enter his “rest” as a frame of reference and view the human race as he sees it, every instant of time dilates becoming an eternity. At the same time, spatial intervals contract, making “all things . . . continually before the Lord” as one eternal here and now (D&C 130:7; Smith, *Teachings*, 220). For further discussion of the theological lessons of light see David Grandy, “Physical Light and the Light of Christ,” *BYU Studies* 53, no. 4 (2014): 6–36.

28. Causality is “preserved and constrained” because some pairs of events, called time-like related events, cannot be simultaneous or reversed in *any* frame of reference. Only these pairings can be conceived of as being causally related in the traditional sense.

— must already exist.”²⁹ Thus, in a common scientific view, time is not an absolute external condition imposed upon nature. Rather, it is only a malleable part of a larger, fixed “block universe” — an unchanging block of spacetime — and each of us affect it by the way we inhabit it.³⁰

Periodic time is also seen to have an elusive character when considered at the microscopic, or quantum, scale. As expressed in the famous Uncertainty Principle, there is a well-known but still mysterious reciprocal ambiguity in the duration and energy of all processes that contributes to the fact that quantum laws are only probabilistic: they predict only the distribution of results from a large number of “identical” trials, not the individual trials themselves.³¹ But the resulting patterns show a curious coordination — each individual must anticipate and accommodate the behavior of its cohort in order for the predicted pattern to obtain. When all trials occur close together, this is not too surprising — after all, a teacher giving an exam to a large group of students works very hard to avoid “undesirable coordination” (i.e. suspiciously matching answers). What is significant in the quantum case however, is that even if the individual trials are taken one-by-one — even hours apart — the same coordination appears!³² More to the point, what if a teacher went

29. Moody, “Time in Scripture and Science.”

30. Mass and energy can so warp this spacetime that even distant events can become local, much as two distant edges of a blanket can touch when folded. In these wormholes, as they are known, one could pass from one time and place to another far distant one simply by making a short trip. While this sort of time travel is possible in principle and is a rich subject for science fiction writers, the practical limitations and unknowns are still enormous.

31. Formulating an appropriate interpretation of the quantum formalism, such as the Uncertainty Principle, is an open question; some even claim the theory gives no account of a physical world, let alone of time. For this discussion to proceed, then, we must adopt some interpretive stance that necessarily goes beyond the minimalist one. Of the many possibilities, what we say here is largely uncontroversial even if a bit unconventional.

In the most standard quantum approach, however, the problem of time is made more difficult because time is given such a unique role. All “observable” quantities like energy, position, or momentum must be represented a certain way, but time is not. In the standard view, it cannot therefore be considered observable! This prevents giving a coherent account of it. Non-standard interpretations such as the de Broglie-Bohm formulation provide other perspectives. See Peter R. Holland, *The Quantum Theory of Motion: An Account of the de Broglie-Bohm Causal Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 215–17.

32. This is an adaptation of an analogy by Craig Martens at the University of California at Irvine. To avoid ambiguity, it should be pointed out that it is

so far as to offer each student an exam on different days with a rubric not yet set — only *after* the exam-taking process does she decide whether she will grade only odd-numbered questions or every fifth question, etc. This is a version of what physicists call a “delayed choice” experiment. Even in these cases — cases for which the experimental conditions are not fully set until some time *after* the physical system has been probed — *the time of the decision doesn't matter!* Coordination persists. Of course, students may talk outside the classroom, but how do they account for their teacher's *late* decision *at the time* of the exam? It is as if either the students know what the teacher will choose beforehand, or the teacher's choice can reconfigure the past collusion of the students!

In addition to microscopic co-located events separated in time, correlations can also occur between simultaneous events separated in space. This sort of coupling can result when particles are specially prepared in what is called an entangled state. Continuing the analogy, if two “entangled” students take an exam *at the same time but on distant campuses* their results are correlated. Even with a delayed choice such as suddenly changing the exam conditions, the distant student will be seen to instantaneously respond to the change! This “action at a distance” was famously called “spooky” by Einstein because it seemed to violate the last vestige of causality that relativity theory had so subtly preserved: it manifests *instantaneously*, no matter the distance or how late in the process the causal decision is made. Later work by John Bell and others has confirmed that holding to the familiar idea of locally causal determinism has serious consequences.³³ Therefore, giving a coherent

explaining something as iconic as the quantum two-slit experiment. If one sends an individual electron through two closely spaced slits in a barrier, it will eventually appear as a tiny, randomly located dot on a screen placed some distance away. The quantum formalism does *not* address this. However, if this is repeated with 10,000 identically prepared electrons, the random locations *taken together* form a familiar but still perplexing pattern. It is this *accumulated* pattern that is predicted, verified, and repeatable in quantum theory, *not the individual outcomes*. It is as though the individual electrons — like conspiring students — work together to coordinate their movements. The intuitive explanation — that they can coordinate because they are spatiotemporally “close” — is flawed because the pattern results *even if each electron is sent into the apparatus hours after the previous exited*.

33. In his famous inequality theorem, Bell showed that a doctrine of *local* causation can be preserved only if one gives up the objective reality of microscopic properties. In stark terms, if one holds that the moon *does* exist even when no one looks at it, one cannot also believe in traditional causality. See N. David Mermin, “Is the Moon There When Nobody Looks? Reality and the Quantum Theory,” *Physics Today* 38, no. 4, (1985): 38. For this reason *correlation* is a more fundamental

physical narrative of quantum phenomena has led to the proposal of some decidedly atemporal mechanisms.³⁴ Time simply does not appear to be a well-defined or absolute constraint on the most fundamental scale, even when involving free choices.

Periodic Time as Timelessness

Does time then exist? Redemptive themes in the Christian message suggest the fundamental reality of and accessibility to change — a fact we call mercy — but even this must “appease the demands of justice [eternal laws], that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15). Ironically, this appeasement itself yields a sort of timelessness because “that which is governed by law is also preserved by law” (D&C 88:34). Thus, the precision and immutability of eternal law allows for or even causes a blurring of the distinction between Periodic Time and what many identify as timelessness.³⁵

consideration than is *causation*. A philosophical analog of this trade-off in determinism is explored in William James’s “The Dilemma of Determinism” in *Philosophers of Process*, 54–78.

34. While fuzzy temporal pictures are not forced upon us, they are one way to broadly accommodate the non-classical behavior of the world. Which is accepted depends on one’s preferred philosophical approach, in particular, it would seem, on one’s proclivity to either preserve or defeat determinism. Among the possibilities are: (1) the de Broglie-Bohm picture which preserves determinism in doing away with purely local interactions; (2) Feynman’s Path Integral formulation that asserts particles simultaneously take all possible paths between points A and B only to distill the determinate one through interference; (3) a Many Worlds Interpretation posits an infinite number of parallel temporal sequences; and, finally, (4) there is a growing class of *retrocausal* interpretations which, like Aristotelian Final Causes, seek to make sense of present phenomena from future states (see for example George Musser, “The Quantum Mechanics of Fate,” *Nautilus* 009 (Feb 19, 2015), <http://nautil.us/issue/21/information/the-quantum-mechanics-of-fate-rp>).

35. This is illustrated in part by modern efforts to find a so-called Theory of Everything. Physicist Julian Barbour speculates, “unification of general relativity and quantum mechanics may well spell the *end of time*. By this, I mean that it will cease to have a role in the foundations of physics. We shall come to see that time does not exist.” Barbour, *End of Time*, 14. Consider the Wheeler-DeWitt equation of quantum cosmology, which aims to describe the universe as a *whole*. In finally undoing the Galilean division of things into system and observer, it makes no reference to time! Cosmic evolution is merely the timeless interconnection of possible universal configurations. Paul Davies likewise summarizes, “Quantum cosmology has abolished time ... [it] is *simply meaningless*.” Davies, *About Time*, 180–81. See also “Quantum Experiment Shows How Time ‘Emerges’ from Entanglement,” *Physics arXiv* blog (October 23, 2013), <https://medium.com/>

This equivocation may seem suspect; it certainly has difficulties. Much of this, however, is due to an innate human bias: all mortal experience is temporal, making it difficult even to imagine the possibility of anything to the contrary. Yet it can be simply illustrated by imagining an isolated, rotating sphere. How does even a careful observer know it is rotating? Usually this can be inferred from features that periodically pass through her field of view. But if the sphere is truly *symmetric*, it has no distinguishing features. This produces a motion that is confused with stillness. Only if the sphere were asymmetric — having a tiny pockmark on one side, for instance — would the detection of time’s passage be possible (see Alma 40:8).

Pressing further, we can see that even this conclusion is strained: while *marking* revolutions, the pockmark does not *distinguish* them — its first sighting is equivalent to its five-hundredth. Even with a reckoning provided, there is nothing to distinguish what is past from what is future. This makes even measurement impossible.³⁶ Only if the imperfect sphere were *not* isolated, such as by including messy interactions with air or with a surface, would it show a temporal preference — it would grind to a halt. Thus, the mere *presence* of time and its *past-future distinction* are separate but related issues. Though clearly significant to human experience, the latter apparently depends keenly not just on the absence of symmetry but on interactions with a complex environment. This is well understood in the field of Thermodynamics.

Thermodynamic Time Emerges

Periodic time is easily conflated with timelessness in speech, thought, and analysis because “the deep down microscopic rules of nature,” as Carroll calls them, are symmetric with respect to time-reversal.³⁷

the-physics-arxiv-blog/quantum-experiment-shows-how-time-emerges-from-entanglement-d5d3dc850933.

36. Augustine explains: “It is not then [time intervals], which now are not, that I measure, but something in my memory, which there remains fixed. It is in thee, my mind, that I measure times.” *Confessions*, paragraph 35. That is, a mortal measuring of duration always depends, in some degree, on the past-present distinction because once an interval ends, its beginning is in the past.

37. Strictly speaking, the “deep down ... rules of nature” are actually *not* symmetric with respect to time-reversal T. The real symmetry is known as CPT symmetry. That is, T must be accompanied by two other considerations, represented by C and P, for the laws to truly “run equally well forward or backward in time.” As these other conditions are fairly mundane — like requiring you to turn around before retracing your steps from the kitchen — it is rather common for physicists

The underlying laws of nature do not pick out a preferred direction of time, any more than they pick out a preferred direction in space ... Rather, like the up/down orientation space picked out by Earth, the preferred direction of time is also a consequence of features of our environment ... That distinction between the fixedness of the past and the malleability of the future is nowhere to be found in the known laws of physics. The deep down microscopic rules of nature run equally well forward or backward in time from any given situation.³⁸

If this symmetry held at the human level rather than just “deep down,” the future would be as real as the present, death could precede birth, and memory would be indistinguishable from anticipation. While challenging us to formulate notions of free will, causality, and correlation more carefully, these are, interestingly, distinctions that prophetic language seems to often neglect (see Mosiah 3:13; 16:6–7; Jarom 1:11).

This can be illustrated using billiard balls. If one were to watch a movie of two simple and isolated billiard balls colliding, there would be no physical way of distinguishing whether the movie was played forward or in reverse because the laws of physics are satisfied either way — in either case two balls move into the frame, collide, change direction and speed in regular ways, and move out of the frame. However, if the movie consisted of many billiard balls (i.e., not simple) on green felt (i.e., not isolated) there would be a difference. In one temporal direction, a neatly racked set of balls is left in a disorganized configuration, whereas in the other, the disorganized configuration spontaneously pulls together into a racked pattern with only a single ball emerging into the gentle catch of a yielding cue stick. In both cases the balls are perfectly law-abiding — the motion, energy, and forces of each is consistent with known laws. However, in closed systems the *combinations* of motion, energy, and forces *required by the whole* to achieve the second result are statistically impossible, despite being physically allowed. This is because with such a complex system and without any outside influences directing traffic, there are overwhelmingly more roads that lead to disorder than to order, even if the roads are two-way streets.

On the macroscopic scale, this inevitable loss of order gives the impression that events are inevitably marching toward something (disorder). However, this is just the natural result when many

to just speak of T itself when they actually mean a slightly qualified or “fixed-up” version (see Carroll, *From Eternity to Here*, 119–40; Davies, *About Time*, 196–218).

38. Carroll, *From Eternity to Here*, 31–32, 42.

symmetrically interlocked microscopic events evolve according to prescribed and unchanging laws. The irreversible losses are interpreted by mortal minds as future-flowing (Thermodynamic) time. In human molecules, cells, and tissues, the mounting decay particularly manifests not only as aging and death but also as the mental capacity to remember only the past and exercise volition concerning the future.³⁹

Coherence and Decoherence

This description suggests that immortality could be achieved with complete isolation. Only if absolutely cut off from any environmental influence could a neatly racked billiard table remain so forever. In principle, even the slightest vibration or fall of a dust particle could break the order. Similarly, at the atomic level, any environmental disturbance — whether a single particle of light or even a tiny amount of heat (random microscopic motion) — could be enough to deflect a lone particle out of its prescribed place. As with billiard balls (who themselves are complex collections of many particles), this can set off a domino effect leading to the loss of coherent patterns or correlations in the same way that a gentle rain can obscure the symmetry of ripples produced by a stone dropped in a pond. Physicists call this process decoherence.

From either a physical or soteriological perspective, however, isolation is not only undesirable, it is impossible. Even when the proverbial billiard room of the atomic world is walled-off, cooled, darkened, suspended, and evacuated, something seething remains. A space once regarded as absolutely empty, still, and cold is, in fact, irreducibly filled with roiling energy, particles, and fields. As a shifting stage for existence, this new “vacuum” prohibits isolation. Instead, it *guarantees* a degree of restlessness at the smallest scales that may account for time’s arrow, because even orderly systems are quickly rattled loose by the subtle yet constant bombardment of something within which they are inevitably immersed.

Curiously, this universal field also plays a physical role analogous to the spiritual one filled by the Light of Christ — it “proceedeth forth [from our Creator] to fill the immensity of space” and is “above,” “in,”

39. Carroll gives an account of memory as arising from asymmetric time in Chapter 9 of *From Eternity to Here*. See also Stephane Rogeau, “We Do Have Memories of the Future; We Just Cannot Make Sense of Them,” *PhilSci Archive* (Oct 1, 2014), <http://philsci-archive.pitt.edu/11303/>. It is common to believe living systems provide a refutation to this general pull toward disorder. However, they typify it. They are merely *open systems* that are particularly good at absorbing energy from and offloading disorder into their environment. This allows for organization and growth.

“through,” and “round about all things.” More significantly, both have been associated with light and heat.⁴⁰ Taking this loose association seriously, we may speculate as to one way in which the Light of Christ “giveth [at least a rudimentary] life to all things” and is a basic “law by which all things are governed” (D&C 88:12–13, 41): like thermal or quantum fluctuations, it may provide a gentle stirring in all things — a sacred imprecision — that makes their future different from their past. Like rolling waters seeking their level (see D&C 121:33) or sunlight dispersing from an organized sphere “to fill the immensity of space,” this asymmetry seems to leave the principles of life, growth, and order in its wake. But how is it done?

While preventing the isolation that would nominally save us from the ills of Thermodynamic Time, quantum laws ironically (and the Light of Christ unsurprisingly) may also provide a way to overcome its ravages. Once opened to others around them, systems don’t just lose their self-coherence, they become increasingly connected with their environment — ripples on a pond do lose their pristine circularity in the rain, but the new pattern more fully reflects the atmospheric whole.⁴¹ When this happens, spontaneous

40. “Joseph Smith is reported to have taught ‘that all light and heat are the “Glory of God,” which is his power, that fills the “immensity of space,” and is the life of all things, and permeates with latent life, and heat, every particle of which all worlds are composed.’” Cited in Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe*, vol. 1, *Foundations of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1968), 262. (As part of the vacuum, the afterglow radiation from the Big Bang also fills the universe with a tiny, irremovable trace temperature). After citing similar evidences in 1908, John A. Widstoe also writes, “Such quotations, from the men intimately associated or acquainted with the early history of the Church, prove that Joseph Smith taught in clearness the doctrine that a subtle form of matter, call it ether or Holy Spirit, pervades all space; that all phenomena of nature, including, specifically, heat, light and electricity, are definitely connected with this substance.” John A. Widstoe, *Joseph Smith as Scientist: A Contribution to Mormon Philosophy*, (Grantsville, UT: LDS Archive Publishers, 1998), 26. Although the idea of a classical ether is in disrepute, the essential teaching of the Prophet still lingers in modern science. Nobel Laureate and Stanford physicist Robert B. Laughlin explains, “The word ‘ether’ has extremely negative connotations in theoretical physics because of its past association with opposition to relativity. This is unfortunate because, stripped of these connotations, it rather nicely captures the way most physicists actually think about the vacuum ... space is more like a piece of window glass than ideal Newtonian emptiness” in *A Different Universe: Reinventing Physics from the Bottom Down* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 120–21.

41. An article by Natalie Wolchover summarizes recent proposals to link the arrow of time to the wider spread entanglement resulting from decoherence rather than to the classical idea of increasing disorder.

self-organization is possible.⁴² Even if initially out of sync, two pendulum clocks can eventually and naturally come to swing in unison because they hang on a shared wall.⁴³ Distant particles can display perfectly coordinated properties if properly prepared and coupled. When conditions are right, entangled systems can actively pull each other out of chaos and into unison — even across time and space — spontaneously overcoming the natural but degrading march towards disorder.

As one of many examples, consider the phenomenon of superconductivity. Under normal conditions, a flowing electrical current will quickly diminish due to the resistance that stems from the decohering influence of the metal nuclei through which the electrons must clumsily flow. This is often overcome by providing a power source such as a battery. However, in certain materials and at sufficiently low temperatures, the flowing electrons couple, the two acting as a whole. In this special state, resistance vanishes! Electrical current can flow endlessly, without loss and without a power supply.⁴⁴ Each pass around the circuit marks the passage of (periodic) time — motion happens — but no degradation occurs; the last cycle is indistinguishable from the first. Is it too much to wonder about the possibility of a similar potential for the quantum matter of which we ourselves are made?

Our Fall into Time

The scientific account of the onset of temporality is mirrored by a corresponding doctrinal one. The scriptures indicate that time as we know it became identified with earthly experience at the Fall of Adam. Lehi tells us

Natalie Wolchover, “Time’s Arrow Traced to Quantum Source,” *Quanta Magazine*, April 16, 2014, <https://www.quantamagazine.org/quantum-entanglement-drives-the-arrow-of-time-scientists-say-20140416/>.

42. While we provide a physical rationale for the divine tendency to order, in contrast to the natural tendency to disorder, others have taken a more general approach. See Hugh Nibley, “The Meaning of the Temple” in *Temple and Cosmos* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 1992). <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1123&index=4>.

43. Water molecules self-organizing into crystals in the presence of a cold environment is another common example. For further exploration of this phenomena as it manifests in animate and inanimate systems, see Strogatz, *Sync*. For the historical discovery of the specific behavior in pendula mentioned, see pp. 103–108.

44. In experiments, current has been observed to flow for years without significant attenuation, something that would normally happen in fractions of a second. Presently, much research is directed at creating high-temperature superconductors, circuits for which dissipation can be avoided in everyday-type environments (see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superconductivity>).

that while in the pure paradise of Eden, “all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end” (2 Nephi 2:22). This is not to say that time (in a periodic sense) didn’t exist — planets had their motions, light shined in patterned ways, laws operated — but the organization and environment was such that things avoided decay. Whether in the thermodynamic act of metabolizing fruit or in his expulsion from the edifying environment of Eden, Adam’s Fall caused his system to become corruptible (i.e. subject to decoherence).⁴⁵ This raised the need to “put on incorruption” again, otherwise his flesh would “[lay] down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more” (2 Nephi 9:7).

Alma’s epistle to Corianton further tells us that these changes not only cut man off from God spiritually but “temporally” as well (see Alma 42:7). Many take this to mean that man was spatially separated from God’s divine presence and placed on this earth, but “temporally” refers directly to time.⁴⁶ Thus, a literal reading suggests Adam was removed from an experience of time that he shared with God and was placed in one that was in some way incommensurate with his eternal nature. This is supported by Alma’s summary, “And thus we see, that there was a time granted unto man” (Alma 42:4). To emphasize that this new order was

45. Although corruption is often used interchangeably with evil and sin, it is used here in the same way a computer file becomes corrupted: alterations are introduced that do not preserve the original intent or order. In this view, corruption leads to *death*, not necessarily to *sin* (though it does make it possible) — Jesus Christ is an example of a sinless life in a corrupted tabernacle. Thus, corruption is not synonymous with *sin* but with *weakness* or *mortality*. Its opposite is not *righteousness*; it is *purity* or *coherence*. It is in this sense, we argue, that creation was corrupted in the Fall.

46. The Latin root of “temporal” is *temporalis* or *tempus* meaning time. The fact that “temporal” is casually taken to mean worldly, mortal, or earthly seems to derive only from the fact that time is the inescapable metaphysical backdrop for these conditions. It is significant that the translation of Alma’s message (found in chapters 39–42) invokes the specific phrase “temporal death” since many other adjectives could have been used. As further evidence that timing and duration specifically were on Alma’s mind, note the word “time” appears 16 times in a 7-verse span of chapter 40 wherein Alma addresses questions of the timing and foreknowing of events in and out of mortality. This includes the statement, “Time is only measured unto man” (v. 8). While Alma 41 doesn’t use “time” specifically, it connects Justice to the Doctrine of Restoration just as we have connected it to cyclic return and Periodic Time. Alma 36 furthers this progressive-yet-cyclic theme in its famous chiasm. Finally, we have cited Alma’s discussion of Justice and Mercy in chapter 42 as archetypal of time and timelessness, which he also illustrates using the Fall narrative.

not created *ex nihilo* but was merely an extension or adaptation of an already extant dynamic (Periodic Time), Lehi alternatively writes that time was “prolonged” or “lengthened” (see also 2 Nephi 2:21).⁴⁷

As we have seen however, separations in time are often representative of separations in space. Some early leaders of the Church taught that coincident with Adam’s fall, the Earth literally fell from its birthplace near Kolob to its present place in the solar system, thus obtaining a new reckoning (see Abr. 5:13).⁴⁸ Though far-fetched by modern scientific standards,⁴⁹ if true, the implications of this are not only significant but remarkably consistent with the account we have developed so far. Removing the earth from the Kolobian environment in which it was first formed would bathe it instead in the presumably coarser solar gravity and radiation. With the fixed rules of relativity and quantum mechanics, this new “glory” could dilate and decohere Edenic systems at a much different rate. More than mere accounting, this would change the clocks themselves (altering decay rates and transition probabilities) and potentially wash away the subtle correlations that unite and sustain otherwise decaying

47. This agrees with St. Augustine’s description of time as a “distention” or “protraction” of the soul or mind away from God. *Confessions*, Book XI. Moody makes a similar, though less-developed argument. He writes, “Here is speculation that must be viewed as such. Adam and Eve lived in a garden where they did not have to farm to obtain food. The Garden of Eden took care of itself and brought forth fruit spontaneously without labor. Does this mean the law of increasing disorder was not in effect for them? After the Fall they were cast into a world where they earned their bread by the sweat of their brow, fighting, as we do today, the consequences of increasing disorder. Was the Fall of Adam an injection into a world where the law of increasing disorder, and hence time, functions as we know it now, while before in Eden it did not? Can we say, then, that time as we know it began at the Fall?” Moody, “Time in Scripture and Science.”

48. Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Parley P. Pratt, John Taylor and others taught this. For instance, Apostle Erastus Snow pointed out, “Until the earth assumed its position [in this solar system] ... present modes of reckoning time could not be appointed to man — either our days, or months or years, all of which are determined by the revolutions of the earth upon its axis, and the moon around the earth, and the earth in its orbit around the sun.” For references and a thorough discussion that attempts to formulate a coherent account of prelapsarian events while taking this teaching seriously see Eric N. Skousen, *Earth: In the Beginning* (Orem, UT: Verity Publishing, 1997), 225–59 (see p. 150 for above quote).

49. This idea is not as foreign as it may have once appeared. Models of planetary migration for solar system formation are being proposed (see “Exoplanets’ Complex Orbital Structure Points to Planetary Migration in Solar Systems,” University of Chicago, Phys.org, published May 11, 2016, <https://phys.org/news/2016-05-exoplanets-complex-orbital-planetary-migration.html>).

bodies, thus creating a new mortal estate. Whatever the actual processes during the Fall, the net result is that all individual bodies — those of people organized into families, those of particles organized into tissues — tend toward a state of ultimate disorder and decay; the organizations of which they are constituents approach dissolution. Interestingly, inasmuch as these bodies live a celestial law — by Latter-day Saint standards one espousing purity and consecration, leading to harmony and oneness — these degrading effects would presumably cease, making thermodynamic “time no longer” (see D&C 88:21–32, 110).

It is significant, then, that this temporalizing process was not just allowed but actively preserved in the Fall. After partaking of the Tree of Knowledge, the Lord was quick to block the way to the opposing tree “lest [Adam] should put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever.” Importantly, we are also told why: “If Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever [in an unchanging yet corrupted state], according to the word of God, having no space [time] for repentance” (Alma 42:3, 5). Thus, because of the introduction of death and the time that carries us toward it, our state “became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless [timeless] state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead” (Alma 12:24, see 21–27). In other words, along with its limitations, (Thermodynamic) time brings opportunities.

Merciful Consequences of Time

Amidst its messiness, disorder, forgetfulness, weakness, and limitation, Thermodynamic Time brings with it two important possibilities: *development* and “*ends*.” These prepare and provide for other “beginnings” vital to the Christian dynamic such as repentance, rebirth, and becoming a new creature. This makes sense since only in a world of “ends” and “beginnings” are changes allowed that go beyond just the operation of impassionate and timeless law. To illustrate, let’s consider how mortal time expands freewill to become what is an otherwise latent moral agency.

Latter-day Saint understanding suggests that moral agency requires three elements: (1) an ontological structure of *law in nature* must exist that establishes genuine alternatives as the sure consequences of particular actions; (2) finite minds must be able to *learn and understand* so that it is possible for them to comprehend the actual nature of these alternatives;

and (3) the mere *freedom to act* must exist.⁵⁰ While prelapsarian man possessed this raw ability (3), he may have lacked a *full* agency because one or both of the first two conditions remained unsatisfied.⁵¹ The emergence of linear time facilitates the satisfaction of the first two conditions.

1. Causality, Predictability, and Classicality

To see how mortal time could have established (1), consider decoherence. While not knowing the precise conditions surrounding the Fall, we know different environments can cause matter to display very different — sometimes abruptly different — features. To be sure, systems could evolve faster or slower, but more importantly, the *character* of physical law can also significantly change. Just as a slight change in temperature causes liquid water to become solid — the former described by complex fluid dynamics, the latter a block whose motion is much simpler — paradisiacal, immortal, atemporal creation could have crystalized into a more concrete, causal, and determinate state simply because of the environment into which it was then placed.

As we have seen, *isolated* microscopic systems can evolve as if in many states at once; these possibilities can interfere, correlations can entangle widely separated bodies, and observations are constrained by irremovable uncertainties. But these traits would limit agency because by them, individual mortal agents can't unambiguously predict the consequences of their actions. By contrast, in the everyday (Newtonian) world, objects have a definite state, they concretely exist, reductionism is

50. See D. Todd Christofferson, "Moral Agency," *Ensign* 39, no. 6 (June 2009): 46–53.

51. On this point, there is an inherent tension in the Latter-day Saint Fall narrative. On one hand, it is clear that man exercised choice *prior* to the Fall (see Alma 13:3), yet various passages report God as saying, "*in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency,*" at least a portion of which entailed expanding his vision to comprehend opposition (Moses 7:32; see also Moses 6:55–56; 2 Nephi 2:26–27; Alma 42:7 (2–7)). Put differently, Adam's presumably informed choice in the garden required knowledge of alternatives but this was the very knowledge he stood to gain from making the choice. See Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Truth About Eden: Understanding the Fall and our Temporal Experience* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2013). It appears that Elder Christofferson's trio of elements — similar to Lehi's three themes of law, opposition, and action in 2 Nephi 2 — bring these ideas into sync: in the garden, Adam possessed a raw freedom to act (3) but he was not yet a *full* moral agent because he could not yet comprehend the nature of the opposites (2). We have called this condition "latent agency." Pre-mortal agency presumably became latent when Michael crossed the veil to become Adam, thus necessitating its restoration, and even expansion, in the Tree of Knowledge. Time facilitates this process.

an adequate approximation, and properties are reasonably unambiguous. How can this be? What makes the indeterminate and connected order causal and bite-sized? Decoherence — the same process that contributes to Thermodynamic Time — is generally regarded as the mechanism by which this quantum-to-classical transition is achieved. When it is included in scientific models, persistent paradoxes melt away, leaving an everyday world that is the well-defined, causally determinate, sensible one of which we are so fond. A world emerges in which distinct alternatives actually and recognizably exist.⁵² This mimics Lehi’s language as he also derives agency from the fall of nature: all things were a metaphysical “compound in one,” until temporality removed superpositions of right with wrong, or “sense” with “insensibility,” enabling us to be “enticed by the one or the other.” By this, he says, “the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself” (2 Nephi 2:11, 16).

2. Logic, Learning, and Rationality

Metaphysical distinctness allows an epistemic clarity that makes rational thought and learning possible in finite minds, satisfying condition (2) for moral agency. This is because the linearity imposed by the Arrow of Time places certain realities in order — or at least forces us to comprehend them one-by-one — so the mind is led along a sequential path (experienced in time as logic) that makes the conclusions compelling. Thus, although objects and ideas may exist in a web of somewhat symmetrically interlocked being, it is natural to speak more linearly of a “chain” of reasoning that terminates in a conclusion that “follows.”⁵³

52. Moody also connects the temporality introduced at the Fall to choice: “The Fall cast Adam and Eve into a world where they could choose for themselves. They could choose before then, but not in the same full sense that they could after the Fall ... Time is what facilitates choice.” Moody, “Time in Scripture and Science.” This connection is also reflected in the writings of Augustine and in Henri Bergson’s *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1950).

53. Despite the enduring nature of logic itself, the *practice* of the logician does depend on time. While the Law of Non-Contradiction stands indefinitely — a thing cannot objectively be both A and not A *at the same time* and in the same way — it assumes a definition of simultaneity that Einsteinian relativity prohibits. Furthermore, a cognitive connection between rational thought and time is revealed in the psychological effects of the internal desynchronization that results in time isolation studies. Some subjects detach from normal, rational functioning, nearly going mad. It has also been suggested that an uncommon rigidity of our internal sense of time may explain schizophrenia (see Wallisch, “Odd Sense of Timing”; Musser, “Time on the Brain”; Strogatz, *Sync*).

To illustrate, imagine doing a puzzle. Can one complete it by simply opening the box and looking at the pieces? Probably not. Rather, a common approach is to create a space on which to spread out the pieces such that no two are interfering or overlapping each other. Only then will the solver comprehend the task and execute it rationally, or deliberately. In a similar way, can one do a puzzle without spreading it out in *time*? If it weren't for the sequential nature of forward-flowing time, the realization of the end result would be clouded by the simultaneous confusion of the beginning with the errors of the middle, all present in one complex but "eternal now." For a god, presumably, this is unproblematic, but for creatures of finite capacity, this would not only disorient but also destroy. In this state, Lehi argues, we would not experience joy or pain, neither "happiness nor misery ... wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of our creation" (2 Nephi 2:11–12). Thus the injunction to take everything "in order," "line upon line, precept upon precept" (Mosiah 4:27; 2 Nephi 28:30), to continue from "grace to grace" (D&C 93:13), is not merely an ethical maxim but a rational, or even metaphysical, imperative. Milk simply cannot come before meat if there is no "before."

This has at least two important implications for our learning and growth as agents. First, tasks are not only more digestible in this way but also less threatening. With temporality we can "learn from [our] experience without being condemned by it," because change and recovery is possible.⁵⁴ It literally gives us time to learn, a "space for repentance" (Alma 42:2–5), and *prepares* the mind for and even *necessitates* that mental exertion toward the future that is faith.⁵⁵ Second, seeing how time enables rational thought helps us appreciate what might be characterized as irrational yet clear cognitive moments. Just as learning "by study" requires time to sort through and assemble the jumbled mess of concepts presented by experience, learning "also by faith," or by revelation (see D&C 88:118), can allow one to comprehend complex ideas *as a whole in an instant*. Joseph Smith described this as receiving "*sudden strokes of ideas*" as "pure intelligence flow[s] into you,"⁵⁶ a seemingly time-independent process. It is from these "sudden strokes of ideas" that the rational sequence of temporal articulation often grows. C.S. Lewis explained this saying, "something beyond Nature [beyond that which is bound by spacetime] operates when we reason ... Each [human mind]

54. Bruce C. Hafen, "The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign* 34, no. 5 (April 2004).

55. Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 7:3.

56. Smith, *Teachings*, 132, emphasis added.

has its tap-root in an eternal, self-existent, rational Being, whom we call God.” In this way, “[our] rationality [even while playing out in time] is the little telltale rift in Nature which shows that there is something beyond or behind her.”⁵⁷

So authentic, in fact, is our need for temporal sequence and so real the (effectively) timeless perspective of the Divine, that even God recognizes a need to navigate the differences. Doctrine and Covenants 29:31–35 states that “all things,” including man, are created “both spiritual and temporal,” but the spiritual (*atemporal*) is more fundamental (see v. 34). The Lord “[speaks] unto [us] that [we] may naturally understand; but unto [him his] works have no end, neither beginning; but it is given unto [us in these terms] *that [we] may understand*” (see also 50:10–12). Hence, the temporal language of God to us may be interpreted as merely a merciful convenience, not an expression of his limitation but of his accommodation of ours. In this way, God further facilitates the agency of man, for he provides for our preparation, pondering, learning, proving, and most importantly repentance, none of which could occur in the Garden of Eden as it was (see 2 Nephi 2:22–23, 27).

Given that mortal minds operate vitally on temporal sequence, it is expected that questioning time will be difficult, even irrational. But in these cases, especially in discussing the nature of God, it seems very plausible that it is not the premises that fail as much as our own mental capacity for making sense.

God’s Nature and Ours

To illustrate the implications of the view proposed here, consider the famous philosophical question, Can God *know* the future? If he does, many argue we cannot be truly free (fatalism). Conversely, if we are truly free, God cannot know all future with absolute, specific foreknowledge (incompatibilism; the position that such knowledge is consistent with free will is compatibilism).⁵⁸ In addressing this question, we’ll assume God interacts with time in a dual manner (as do we) but because he is

57. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 38, 43, 45.

58. The qualifications “all,” “absolute,” and “specific” of God’s foreknowledge are common in philosophy but carry much baggage. We hope to avoid this baggage because it is too technical and distracting for our purposes. By “all” we simply address whether God knows everything or if it excludes indeterminate events such as acts of freewill; by “absolute” we address whether God’s knowledge is in principle certain or probabilistic, and by “specific” we address whether God has a knowledge of minute details or only of larger, overarching trends.

pure and incorruptible, at least part of that interaction — specifically the part that distinguishes past from future — is very different from ours. Also, and importantly, we must take special care due to the fact that because time is necessary for rational thought, there will be no purely rational arguments (even here) that can unambiguously discuss time (see Isaiah 55:8–9). The failure of compatibilist arguments, therefore, may not be a failure of compatibilist doctrine but only of our ability to construct arguments independent of uni-directional, linear time. For instance, the formulation “Can God know what I will freely choose before I choose it?” *assumes* a posture with respect to time that begs the question — invoking *foreknowledge* at all biases the discussion — because it assumes the term “before” has a singular meaning.⁵⁹

Without clarity on these subtle points, there has been some ambiguity on the question of divine knowledge in Latter-day Saint theology.⁶⁰ Some have suggested that God’s knowledge is merely a function of his familiarity with his children,⁶¹ and some have disagreed.⁶² Many

59. As we saw in the discussion of relativity theory, a non-*causal* relationship — a *correlative* one, perhaps — between an event and God’s knowing of it would make “before” a relative term.

60. In a critique of “The Mormon Concept of God” evangelicals Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish observe: “When it comes to the doctrine of omniscience, Mormons appear to be divided. Some Mormons seem to believe a view of omniscience that is consistent with classical theism, that God has perfect knowledge of past, present, and future. On the other hand, there is a much more dominant tradition in Mormonism which teaches that God knows everything that can possibly be known, but only that which is actually occurring (the present) or has occurred (the past) can possibly be known.” Francis J. Beckwith and Stephen E. Parrish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 41.

61. In *The Articles of Faith* Elder James E. Talmage writes: “God’s knowledge of spiritual and human nature enables him to conclude with certainty as to the actions of any of his children under given conditions; yet that knowledge is not of compelling force upon the creature.” James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith: Being a Consideration of the Principal Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 173. This is the most official statement of this idea of which we are aware. It is also the softest. Other less authoritative writers make the case more forcefully.

62. Beckwith and Parrish report: “[Elder Neal A. Maxwell] writes, ‘The past, present, and future are before God *simultaneously* — Therefore, God’s omniscience is not solely a function of prolonged and discerning familiarity with us — but of the stunning reality that the past, present, and future are part of an “eternal now” with God.’” Beckwith and Parrish, *Mormon Concept*, 50. However, Latter-day Saint philosopher Blake T. Ostler writes, “In fairness to Elder Maxwell, we must recognize

Latter-day Saint incompatibilists align themselves with Process or Open theology as advanced by Whitehead or Pinnock respectively. Of Open Theology Pinnock writes:

Though we wither and die, God abides and is not threatened or undone by time. We need an understanding of God's eternity that does not cancel or annihilate time but stands in a positive relation to it ... When I say God is eternal I mean that God transcends our experience of time, is immune from the ravages of time.

To explain he then continues,

Philosophically speaking, if choices are real and freedom significant, future decisions cannot be exhaustively foreknown ... the future is not fixed like the past, which can be known completely. The future does not yet exist ... Future decisions cannot in every way be foreknown, because they have not yet been made. God knows everything that can be known — but God's foreknowledge does not include the undecided.⁶³

As a solution, Pinnock goes on to propose that God, like a wise (and perfect) parent, knows us intimately and how we are likely to react in any given situation and He genuinely reacts himself. He does not *foreknow* our choices any more than our mortal parents do, but He handles them with wisdom and grace when they occur.

While Pinnock's first sentiment above is reflective of and even calls for the dual definitions of time we have developed here, the conclusions drawn in the second quotation equivocate on these definitions and exclusively emphasize the mortal and asymmetric perspective that "the

that his observations are meant as rhetorical expressions to inspire worship rather than as an exacting philosophical analysis of the idea of timelessness." He continues, "Furthermore, in a private conversation in January 1984, Elder Maxwell told me that he is unfamiliar with the classical idea of timelessness and the problems it entails." Ostler, *The Attributes of God*, 50. Ostler's private discussion with Elder Maxwell notwithstanding, as late as May 2003 Elder Maxwell again stated, almost as if recalling this specific conversation, "Our own intellectual shortfalls and perplexities do not alter the fact of God's astonishing foreknowledge, which takes into account our choices for which we are responsible. Amid the mortal and fragmentary communiqués and the breaking news of the day concerning various human conflicts, God lives in an eternal now where the past, present, and future are constantly before him." Maxwell, "Care for the Life of the Soul," *Ensign* 33, no. 5 (May 2003).

63. Pinnock et. al., *Openness of God*, 120, 123, emphasis added.

future does not yet exist” (despite Moody’s suggestions to the contrary). Openness theology thus fails to recognize that the “distinction between the fixedness of the past and the malleability of the future is nowhere to be found in the known laws of physics,” as Carroll stated. It is only an emergent property of something more timeless. This oversight biases the conclusion. Beyond these philosophical technicalities, this approach preserves agency only by interpreting God’s knowledge as that of a mortal chess master: his victory is *statistically* certain because of perfect strategy, familiarity, and crises management skills, not knowledge “of things as they really will be” (see Jacob 4:13; D&C 93:24).⁶⁴

While the incompatibilist answer is common among Latter-day Saints who rationalize God’s knowledge, it is not a necessary conclusion. There are instead several reasons to accept the compatibilist view. To begin, one need not presuppose an asymmetry to time that is not forced upon us either scripturally or scientifically. It appears to be only a function of our local experience and grammar, not of fundamental reality. Like the blind violinist who “sees” the curves of his instrument with his hand sequentially and who cannot anticipate what comes next or even conceive of color, we see the course of our lives unfold along a directed timeline and cannot conceive of something to the contrary. God, on the other hand, has developed the power to “open his eyes,” taking in the whole of the violin at once — neck, body, and strings in an orchestration of color. He comprehends the curves, the context, and the player at once.⁶⁵

This view is also supported by the scriptural distinction of prophet from seer, a distinction rarely found in the relevant literature but uniquely

64. See James, “Dilemma of Determinism.” However, a difficulty with this type of familiarizing analogy is that it is only valid in the limit as one’s godliness approaches infinity, analogizing it with continuous limits familiar in calculus. We simply disagree that those limits apply. Due to the reality of the mysterious but fundamental transformations of rebirth, sanctification, becoming a new creature, receiving a new heart, obtaining a resurrected body, and gaining celestial glory, our approach to Godhood appears to be rather *discontinuous*. Without this realization, any metaphorical limit merely projects what we are onto God rather than arriving at what he is.

65. Even though the blind violinist experiences the violin’s features in sequence, the first need not *cause* the second any more than the neck must *cause* the body. Rather, the causal relationship is an expression of the fact that these features are ontologically interlocked (correlated) by their natures into a whole. It is from this sensuous sequence that we infer cause and effect. What we are incrementally knowing is just the law of one’s own nature articulated “after the manner of the flesh,” “line upon line” (see Alma 7:12–13; 2 Nephi 28:30; Isaiah 28:9–11).

developed in Latter-day Saint restoration thought.⁶⁶ By definition, seers, including God, actually *see* events. Their experience appears to be visual, not just vague, implicit, or manufactured abstractions. Perhaps this is why Limhi states that “a seer is greater than a prophet” — in prophecy, the latter declare *contingencies* based upon past and present circumstances while the former possess a “high gift from God,” being able to “look” and

know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them [seers] shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also *things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known.* (Mosiah 8:13–17)

Accordingly, the Brother of Jared was given two stones and a pair of spectacles, the Urim and Thummim, that would “magnify to the eyes of men” all the Lord desired to reveal such as, in his case, “all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be . . . even unto the ends of the earth” (Ether 3:23–25). The receipt of a similar device enabled Abraham to see the stars from the least to the greatest, each with their specific times and seasons, names and orders (see Abraham 3). Joseph translated ancient records by looking at or through stones, enhancing what must have been a visual experience. Finally, those who inherit God’s presence will dwell on a planet that is itself a Urim and Thummim giving them vision of “inferior kingdoms” and will receive a small white stone by which they can “see all things pertaining to a kingdom of a higher order” (D&C 130:4–11).⁶⁷

Visions offered by the seeric gift can also contain amazing resolution. In addition to the cases just cited, Isaiah (and Nephi) report the experience of Martin Harris and Charles Anthon with stunning specificity (see 2 Nephi 27), the fall of a sparrow or hair of the head is not unnoticed (see Matt. 10:29–31), and Nephi predicts the details of a crime scene and a subsequent interrogation with an accuracy that is apparently legally binding (see Helaman 8–9). Likewise, when Moses spoke with the Lord, he

66. In his book, Pinnock discusses the Openness view of prophecy extensively. He does not, however, distinguish or take up the separate, but related, topic of seership.

67. In these cases, it is interesting and instructive that seers require a physical device of some kind. Whether mortal or immortal, they do not appear to live in a constant state of seeing (and knowing) but only have the gift of being able to rise to claim this knowledge when necessary. This may tell us something of the nature of God’s temporal experience.

cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and *there was not a particle of it which he did not behold*, discerning it by the spirit of God. 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. (Moses 1:27–28)

As with the Brother of Jared, Isaiah, Nephi, or Moses, Latter-day Saints claim that “if [a man] believe[s] in [Jesus Christ] that he could show unto him all things — it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he [would know] that the Lord could show him all things” (Ether 3:26). Though certainly not definitive, these passages suggest a more stable scriptural basis for the absolute and specific knowledge of God than is recognized in traditional arguments.⁶⁸

C.S. Lewis articulates a compatibilist view as it relates to freewill, petitionary prayer, and providence. To “correct the admittedly false picture of Providence” as involving a clockmaker God who determines all events both evil and good at the outset by setting things in motion, Lewis says

It is probable that Nature is not really in Time [as several physicists suggest] and almost certain that God is not. Time is probably (like perspective) the mode of our perception. There is therefore in reality no question of God’s at one point in time . . . adapting the material history of the universe in advance to free acts which you or I are to perform at a later point in Time. *To him all the physical events and all human acts are present in an eternal Now.*

To illustrate the reconciliation this idea offers, Lewis discusses an instance of prayer, while taking care to keep separate time as the inevitable action of law from time as a past-present distinction.

Most of our prayers if fully analysed, ask either for a miracle or for events whose foundation will have to have been laid before I was born, indeed, laid when the universe began. But then to

68. As an extension of this point, consider further that various other passages state that the *thoughts* and *intents* of our hearts will condemn us (see Alma 12:14; 18:32; D&C 88:109). But if God cannot know our future actions with certainty because they are only present potentialities (as incompatibilists assert), it seems likewise reasonable that neither could he also know our thoughts and intents, which also are only present potentialities. In other words, present intents are of the same species as future actions — the latter are the offspring of the former — so an inability to know one ought to imply an inability to know the other. If God cannot *know* potentialities, it seems problematic, then, to use them as legal grounds for condemnation.

God (though not to me) I and the prayer I make in 1945 were *just as much present at the creation of the world as they are now* and will be a million years hence. God's creative act is timeless and timelessly adapted to the 'free' elements within it: but *this timeless adaptation meets our consciousness as a sequence and prayer and answer ...* The event certainly has been decided ... But one of the things taken into account in deciding it, and therefore one of the things that really cause it to happen, may be this very prayer that we are now offering. Thus, shocking as it may sound, I conclude that we can at noon become part causes of an event at ten a.m. (Some scientists would find this easier than popular thought does.)⁶⁹ ... Thus something does really depend on my choice. My free act contributes to the cosmic shape. That contribution is made in eternity or 'before all worlds'; but my consciousness of contributing reaches me at a particular point in the time-series.⁷⁰

Thus, the picture one has who embraces full divine knowledge with genuine agency is one that does not ask if God can know of my actions *before* I choose them but that recognizes that God can know them *as* I choose them. Rather than destroy the authentic joy of novelty, creativity, and surprise that many incompatibilists cherish and strive to preserve, this merely presents the situation as that of a loving parent who feasts on the sight of his or her unknowing child opening a gift that has already been purchased. The hidden beauty of the present, however, is that it "has not *already been* purchased;" it is also purchased *now*. When the gift is God's grace, this means a new future is possible, no matter the path along which we arrive at the present because, even while our "courses are fixed," all human orbits intersect and coexist in the singular moment of Gethsemane. This makes all petitions, decisions, change, and forgiveness possible in a way that does not "rob" timelessness (see Alma 42:25) because, in a poetic sense, Christ is at the crossroads dynamically adapting our path to our choice.

To make sense of this timeless atoning moment, it has been suggested that the simultaneity in Abinadi's words (borrowed from Isaiah) is literal: "*When* his [Christ's] soul has been made an offering for sin he shall *see* his seed" (Mosiah 15:10).⁷¹ Thus, we might imagine that during

69. See discussion of retrocausal theories in footnote 34.

70. Lewis, *Miracles*, 290–92 (emphasis added).

71. See Merrill J. Bateman, "The Power to Heal from Within," *Ensign* 25, no. 5 (May 1995); Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book,

those few moments when the Savior — the “Great *I am*” — knelt in Gethsemane, he also entered eternity, seeing and comprehending each of us individually in the totality of our experience, yet in the present. Perhaps in the same way that Moses saw the earth, “he cast his eyes” and “beheld the inhabitants thereof [his seed], and there was not soul which he beheld not; and he discerned them by the Spirit of God” (Moses 1:27–28) affording each of us, according to C.S. Lewis, “infinite attention” while not having to deal with us “in the mass.”⁷²

Finally, the compatibilist view is articulated in another Isaiahic passage that also respects the dual definitions of time even while weaving them together. It also highlights the merciful purposes of the seemingly untenable idea of having certainty regarding action for which the actor is still uncertain. Perhaps its opacity is naively attributable to the fact that it is given by a notoriously cryptic 8th century BC Jew, but we can now see that he is attempting to explain what we have drawn on millennia of philosophy and science to illustrate and yet have concluded is fundamentally an irrational reality. Nephi’s transcription reads:

Behold, I [the Lord] have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them. I did show them *suddenly*. And I did it because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; And I have even from the beginning declared to thee; *before it came to pass I showed them thee*; and I showed them for fear lest thou shouldst say — Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image hath commanded them. Thou hast seen and heard all this; and will ye not declare them? And that I have showed thee new things from this time, *even hidden things*, and thou didst not know them. *They are created now, and not from the beginning*, even before the day when thou heardest them not they were declared unto thee, lest thou shouldst say — Behold I knew them. (1 Nephi 20:3–7)

Isaiah, himself a seer, here ties together several themes relevant from our discussion. Principally, his (accommodated) language supports a compatibilist position inasmuch as it explicitly recognizes both the certainty of the declarations — Jehovah stakes his reputation on them — and that the associated events “are created now [by free human

2000), 140–42.

72. See C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 166–68.

action], and not from the beginning [at the time of their being known and declared].” Moreover, a merciful motivation is revealed: “hidden things” are suddenly and visually foretold that Jehovah might be known, significantly, as the eternally present “I am” and not as merely an extrapolation of our finite capacities, as are our idols.

An Experience

In closing, I give an anecdotal experience from graduate school. During lunch, a group of students would meet to discuss issues in the history and philosophy of science and religion. At these meetings, various professors would direct the group in a reading, discussion, or presentation.

At one particular meeting, around five students showed up to participate. On his laptop, a professor had a very simple computer program. Given the position and velocity of a number of virtual balls in a box, the computer would model their evolution in time. He chose some parameters and started a run. As he introduced the topic, the balls on the screen moved and collided with each other and with the walls of the box. After outlining some of the same thoughts discussed here, he paused the animation and showed a printout of the precise locations and velocities of each of the balls in the simulation. At this point he reversed the motion of each of the balls and continued the simulation, effectively running the system in rewind.

Because of time symmetry in the programming, the expectation was that the balls would all return precisely to their original locations in precisely the same amount of time along precisely the same paths, just as if time flowed backwards. But soon the professor’s message became clear. The balls began to traverse completely different paths than they had previously. Due to the corruption necessarily introduced in storing finite data — an approximation whose error compounds exponentially in systems like this — the ball locations were not just a little off their original values, they were wildly off. Within seconds, time-reversal symmetry was effectively destroyed. Because of tiny imprecisions, the past was very different from the future. The balls never returned to where they started.

As the professor explained this result, the students began to grasp the reality and difficulty of the question: can anyone, including God, really predict the future with any sort of precision? He then suggested God could not know the future with certainty. Because he is bound to participate in time with us, this simulation forced us, it was argued, to take a non-literal interpretation of divine knowledge: God knows the

future only as we do, based on inference from theoretical considerations, and can react to our choices only after they are made.

It was an interesting and impressive demonstration. However, at this point a girl shyly raised her hand and shared an experience. She reported a dream in which she had a memorable conversation with her mother under some fairly unextraordinary circumstances. Upon awaking, she found that within days the experience in her dream was realized in every detail even down to the lace pattern on the drapes. It did not seem this girl shared her experience to challenge the professor but to ask how his model could explain it. The professor gave a standard response in terms of anomalous results in experimental science. However, the impact of the girl's experience was multiplied when a young man then raised his hand and said he had the very same experience, a dream had become actualized in vivid detail some time after having it. If these accounts are authentic and accurate, even if rare, they would pose significant challenges to the thesis that God's omniscience is only figurative, incomplete, unspecific, or limited with regards to the future. As it is, their place in the discussion is uncertain: deeply personal experiences are difficult to rigorously analyze and yet, as opposed to the philosophizing above, they may be the most relevant because they are the most raw.

Perhaps we will never know the true nature of time; perhaps we cannot. In this mortal life, dominated by temporality, it appears to be a basis for achieving understanding and therefore cannot be its object except by the seemingly *atemporal* experience of eternity slicing in to enlighten the mind with a "sudden stroke." If so, although time is a veil that separates us from God, it is a merciful one that protects and prepares as much as it prevents. On the one hand, it permits change, learning, clarity, simplicity, and order, making an active mortal agency possible. On the other, it brings with it a burden to live in the face of incompleteness and decay, requiring faith. With a scientific view, it is exciting to see that the physical mechanisms behind time — coupling and coherence in particular — give a hint, even if only in analogy, as to how natural systems can rise to "put off" these conditions (see Mosiah 3:19). But is it only analogy? Is it mere coincidence that modern revelations center Celestial society so strongly on oneness, exactness, and purity as well (see D&C 38:27; 88:21–22; 97:15–21; Moses 7:18)? Whatever the case, time and eternity are obviously topics on which much remains to be learned, for as we pass through that final veil to enter the highest estate, "time is no longer" (D&C 84:100). The past, present, and future stretch before us as one eternal and wonderful now.

Jared Stenson grew up in Wyoming and Oregon in a large family of artists, musicians, poets, and entrepreneurs. After serving a mission in Madrid, Spain, he realized he wanted to channel his professional energy into a field that, for him, was a very natural outgrowth of this upbringing — theoretical physics. He received a BS and MS from Brigham Young University and went on to complete a PhD at Oregon State University. His research interests lie at the intersection of pedagogy and philosophy with conceptual and theoretical foundational issues in quantum mechanics with a special interest in how humans interact with science. Always with the goal to teach, he currently is an Assistant Teaching Professor at Rice University in Houston and teaches early morning seminary. He and his wife, Stacey, have seven children.

“TO SEEK THE LAW OF THE LORD”

Abstract: *This prefatory material to the festschrift for John W. Welch gives an overview of his exceptional life, full of variety and intensity. As James R. Rasband writes: “His candle burns bright whatever the project.” Hoskisson and Peterson characterize “Jack” as a “polymath” as they give a thumbnail sketch of the history of FARMS (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies), which he founded and of the book which honors his numerous contributions. A final contribution to this installment provides a useful collection of highlights of his personal and professional life.*

[**Editor’s Note:** Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. This single article combines three items from the original book: the Foreword, Introduction, and Biographical Highlights. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.]

See “*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), ix–xx. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/to-seek-the-law-of-the-lord-essays-in-honor-of-john-w-welch-2/>.]

Foreword

James R. Rasband

I am honored to pen the foreword to this *Festschrift* for John W. Welch (Jack). A few years ago, Jack received the Karl G. Maeser Distinguished Faculty Lecturer Award, the most prestigious academic

recognition awarded by Brigham Young University (BYU). At the time, I was serving as the dean of the BYU Law School where I have been Jack's colleague for the last 21 years. In that role, I was asked to assess whether his contributions had truly been "exceptional," as the award criteria demands. To answer the question I hypothesized writing a history of the university and asking whether the work of a nominated faculty member would merit mention in the long history of the university. Most of us, I suggested, would be thrilled with a footnote but, in my view, Jack's work could merit a whole chapter; it surely merits this *Festschrift* — celebratory 'feast script' — from the estimable colleagues whose work is assembled in this volume.

The story of Jack's discovery of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon during his mission will likely be familiar to those who read this collection. I won't repeat the story. Those who want the details can read Jack's own reminiscence.¹ What I've always loved about the story is that it's pure Jack Welch, even at age 19. While most missionaries would have been eager to use their preparation day to explore the Bavarian Alps, Jack saw a poster for a New Testament class taught by the Regensburg Priests' Seminary and decided that he and his junior companion would attend. The first lecture touched on chiasmus and mentioned a new book by a German scholar on the literary art in the Gospel of Matthew. On the way back to their apartment, Jack insisted on stopping at a religious bookstore, found the book, and records that he "could not put it down."² Imagine Jack's missionary companion, wondering what was to become of P-days and how companion study was going to work. Jack's extraordinary wife of 48 years, Jeannie Sutton Welch, surely needs no such imagination; she knows — and loves — the drive and focus.

As readers will recall, upon learning that chiasmus in the New Testament was evidence of Hebraic influence, Jack was prompted to look for it in the Book of Mormon. He wrote: "[w]ith faith that this might be so, I got out of bed...went over to the desk on the other side of our one-room apartment" and commenced the search.³ We all know what he found. If part of religious devotion is asking hard questions in a faithful pursuit of truth, Jack's approach to chiasmus is the paradigm. His desire to learn more truth took him to the class at the Seminary, to the bookstore, and to devouring a book that was hardly regular missionary

1 John W. Welch, "The Discovery of Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon: Forty Years Later," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 74–87, 99.

2 Ibid., 78.

3 Ibid., 79.

fare. Then, presented with a hard question — would the Book of Mormon really yield such evidence of Hebraic influence? — Jack set out in faith to discover an answer. He’s been doing so ever since.

From his undergraduate work on chiasmus, to his 1979 founding of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), to his influential role in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* and the Joseph Smith Legal Papers, and to his almost 25+ year editorship of *BYU Studies*, Jack has been asking — and encouraging others to ask — hard questions faithfully. The answers, of course, don’t always come as powerfully and clearly as they did that early morning in Regensburg, but his work has cast light upon question after question and had a powerful influence on the trajectory of Mormon Studies, particularly in linguistic analysis of the Book of Mormon. Jack is truly the sort of bilingual scholar that President Kimball in his *Second Century* address suggested was the necessary aspiration for all BYU faculty.⁴ Jack has spoken credibly to secular scholars of ancient and religious texts while simultaneously pursuing illumination from the doctrines and truths of the restored gospel.

As a long-time colleague, I can attest that Jack’s prolific contributions are the result of a prodigious work ethic. Few have been the Saturdays when I have been in my law school office and not encountered Jack working away in his own office on his latest book, article, or issue of *BYU Studies*. He’s still the young man who just can’t put the next book down. The result has been more than 250 publications on a range of topics, including Roman and Jewish law in the trial of Jesus, the use of biblical laws in colonial America, commentaries on the Sermon on the Mount and King Benjamin’s Speech, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, editing the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, and even a practical guide to forming a partnership in Utah.

Lest one think Jack is all work and no play, Jack is an ebullient risk-taker. We’ve been members of the same church congregation for 21 years. When he was the bishop of the congregation, I worked with our young men. I recall one evening on a backpacking trip in the Uintah Mountains when a group of boys were carefully studying a jump from a lakeside cliff only to have Jack run by them whooping and plunging off the ledge into the water. To the boys’ surprise, the erudite Bishop Welch they knew on Sunday was quick to take the chance. Whether cliff jumping or joining

4 Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” *BYU Speeches*, 10 October 1975, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/spencer-w-kimball_second-century-brigham-young-university/.

his father on a heli-skiing adventure, the common theme is intensity. His candle burns bright whatever the project.

In September 2003, Jack gave a BYU devotional address in which he inquired what it meant to love God with all one's mind. His remarks were thoughtfully conceived but particularly powerful because they flowed out of long personal experience and conviction that serving at BYU demanded just such an effort. Jack closed his talk with a teacher's prayer for his students and, I believe, an entire university community:

May you not just pass through BYU, but may the spirit of this university pass through you.

May you know it is possible to love God with all of your mind.

May you love Him with invigorating questions.

May you perceptively discern between truth and error.

May your intellect be keen and sharp but never harm even the least intelligent of the children of God....⁵

Jack's own words capture for me what we celebrate with this *Festschrift*. I can think of no better way to honor him than by a collection of papers exploring yet more invigorating questions.

James R. Rasband is the Hugh W. Colton Professor of Law at Brigham Young University's J. Reuben Clark Law School. He received his B.A. from Brigham Young University and his J.D. from Harvard Law School where he was an editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. Following law school he clerked for Judge J. Clifford Wallace on the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He then practiced law at Perkins Coie in Seattle, Washington where his practice focused on Indian treaty litigation and the Endangered Species Act. He joined the BYU Law faculty in 1995 and has published a variety of articles and book chapters on public land and natural resources law topics. He is coauthor of *Natural Resources Law and Policy*, a groundbreaking casebook used in law schools around the country. Professor Rasband served as dean of BYU Law School from

⁵ John W. Welch, "And with All Thy Mind," *BYU Speeches*, 30 September 2003, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/john-w-welch_thy-mind/.

2009–2016. Prior to his appointment as dean, he served in the university administration as the Associate Academic Vice President for Faculty. He has also served in a number of other leadership positions in professional and academic organizations and is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

Introduction

It is with affection and admiration that we dedicate this volume to a great scholar, John W. Welch, a polymath who is known to his many friends as “Jack.” We are honored to honor a man who has contributed prodigiously — as author, editor, and organizer — to a growing body of rigorous, faithful Mormon scholarship.

Jack started his life in the valleys of Southern California, but his unique journey into the scholarship of Latter-day Saint scripture and history — a journey that has had enormous impact on those fields and on a large audience — began when he was a young missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Germany. It was there that, serendipitously or not, he encountered the concept of chiasmus and, almost immediately thereafter, discovered the existence of significant chiasms in the Book of Mormon.

After completing bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Brigham Young University, his talents and interests took him to the University of Oxford and through law school at Duke University. There followed a promising period as an attorney in Los Angeles that proved to be just a short detour from his true vocation — an extraordinarily prolific academic career.

It was in Los Angeles that Jack recognized the need for a clearinghouse of solid Latter-day Saint scholarship related to the Book of Mormon. This led to his establishment of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, fondly known for many productive years as FARMS.

Early in the history of Brigham Young University’s J. Reuben Clark Law School, Jack was recruited to join its faculty. As part of the agreement, he brought FARMS with him, and he was eventually given some space on campus to house it.

In view of his background in law, his deep commitment to the scriptures and doctrines of the Restoration, and his interests and training in ancient history and languages, it was perhaps natural — but scarcely inevitable — that Jack also helped to create the “Biblical Law” section of the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in which he has been a major presence. In multiple senses of the phrase, Jack has

exemplified the injunction in Ezra 7:10 “to seek the law of the Lord.” Hence the title of this volume.

Most recently, in the wake of the decision by new leaders at the former FARMS to take that organization in a very different direction, Jack has been centrally involved in the creation of Book of Mormon Central, a cloud-based clearinghouse for Latter-day Saint scholarship regarding the Book of Mormon.

Volumes such as this, which celebrate the life and career of an esteemed colleague, are typically described with the German term *festschrift*, a word that denotes not only festive celebration but esteem, respect, and gratitude for contributions that deserve to be honored. We deliberately use the word in the subtitle of this book, intending to express precisely those sentiments.

Those of us who have watched and worked with Jack over many years of extraordinarily rich productivity have sometimes wondered whether he ever sleeps. We have benefited enormously from his work, and wish him many more years of energy, good health, and remarkable insight.

We are grateful for the financial support of the Sorenson Legacy Foundation, which has enabled us to produce and publish this token of the deep appreciation that we and our collaborators feel for John W. Welch — both for his almost innumerable contributions and for the remarkable man himself, our friend — and for the indispensable help of Shirley Ricks and Allen Wyatt, without which it would never have become a reality.

Paul Y. Hoskisson
Daniel C. Peterson

John Woodland Welch: Biographical Highlights

It might be that at least in Latter-day Saint circles, Jack Welch (as he is called familiarly) is best known for his discovery of chiasmus (poetic parallelism) in the Book of Mormon, but his academic accolades stretch far beyond this landmark event. That being said, the discovery of chiastic structures was only the beginning of his development of a significant corpus of literary studies of the Book of Mormon, not to mention establishing it firmly as an ancient text. Because of his work, no one can doubt that the complexity of this Book of Mormon literary form far surpassed the abilities of a farm boy from upstate New York with a minimal education.

Of the Book of Mormon, Welch has said, “Since the time I was a young man, I have always felt very satisfied in my testimony of the Book of Mormon. At first, I believed that the book was true with little or no evidence of any kind at all. Perhaps because I never expected to find much in the way of proofs or great evidence for the Book of Mormon, I have been even more richly satisfied by those things I have learned or found...I am grateful to two witnesses, a good seminary teacher and a truth-loving Sunday School teacher, whose joint influences prompted me to see the Book of Mormon as a spiritual tutor. With this book, I had my first experience in asking God for wisdom, as James 1:5 challenges, when, as a high school junior, I put Moroni 10:4 on the line, kneeling by my bedside. I cut my spiritual teeth on the Book of Mormon and learned to recognize the promptings of the spirit. I learned that one of the gifts of the Book of Mormon is that a person can know that it is true without yet knowing everything it contains.”⁶

Early Life

John Woodland Welch was born on October 15, 1946 to John S. and Unita Welch. Jack recounts: “I grew up in the home of a consummate lawyer. Upon the advice of my parents, who always held out hope I would become a lawyer, I studied a fair amount of Latin in high school taught by two dedicated women...Then, as a college freshman in one of Professor Hugh Nibley’s Book of Mormon classes at Brigham Young University in 1964, I became aware of the great extent to which the cultures of the ancient Israelites, Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians, as well as the general milieu of the ancient Near East, shed light on the political and social world out of which Lehi, Nephi, and their ensuing civilization is said to have emerged...Nibley’s command of a wide array of ancient sources and his facility in linking diffused texts enriched his faith and moved the inert cerebral mountains of many of his students, mine included.”⁷

6 John W. Welch, “Good and True,” in *Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars*, ed. Susan Easton Black (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1996), 232–33.

7 John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press and Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2008), xii–xiii.

1966–1968 Mission and Introduction to Chiasmus

“In 1967, midway through my two years as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I was stationed in Regensburg, Germany, where I learned in a theological lecture in the local Catholic seminary about chiasmus (a significant literary form in the Bible). I was led a few days later to find several excellent examples of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon.”

Education

Welch received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from BYU (BA in History, MA in Latin and Greek). As a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, he studied Greek philosophy at Oxford University. Returning to the States, Welch received his JD from Duke University.

Law Practice and Development of Study of Chiasmus

Welch practiced law from 1975 to 1980 in Los Angeles with O’Melveny & Myers. “During this time, I edited a collection of studies entitled *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, which contains analyses of several...legal texts, notably the narrative of Haman’s injustice in the book of Esther, the case of the blasphemer in Leviticus 24, and the stoning of the Sabbath breaker in Numbers 15. In this work, I was fortunate to collaborate with Yehuda T. Radday (a faculty member at the Technion in Haifa)...Professor Radday brought Professor Bezalel Porten of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem into this project. As a lawyer, I was especially intrigued by Porten’s discovery of chiasmus in Aramaic legal papyri from two family archives from the fifth century BC.”⁸

Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies

In 1979, Welch created the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and served on the Board of Directors up to and during the time FARMS was brought into Brigham Young University in 1999. (FARMS was eventually renamed the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.) Among the many publications Welch either wrote or edited while directing FARMS, perhaps the best-known series is the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (1985–2010).

8 Ibid., xiii–xiv.

Career at Brigham Young University

“In 1979, an invitation from Rex E. Lee, dean of the newly formed law school at Brigham Young University, to join its law faculty gave me an opportunity to combine my professional interests in law with the study of ancient scriptures. Dean Lee told me that if I would teach one business-related course, I would be free to teach anything else I wanted. Almost in jest, but testing to see if he really meant what he had just said, I asked, ‘How about a course on Babylonian law and the Book of Mormon?’ Without a second’s hesitation, he smiled and said, ‘That would be perfect. I can’t think of anything better. That’s the kind of thing we want at this law school.’ I was surprised at his response, but recognizing this as a chance to see where further research in this direction might lead, and with careful consideration and the concurrence of my wife and family, I accepted the position.”⁹

Since 1991, Welch has been editor in chief of *BYU Studies*. In 1996, Welch was named the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School of Brigham Young University and in 2010 he was designated the Karl G. Maeser Distinguished Faculty Lecturer, the most prestigious award given by the University.

Other important contributions during Welch’s time at the University include significant involvement in organizing the BYU Museum of Art’s exhibit of the Minerva Teichert paintings of the Book of Mormon in 1998 and in planning and executing the Joseph Smith Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress in 2005. In addition, he is one of the contributors to the BYU New Testament Commentary project.

Society of Biblical Literature

In 1982 Welch presented a paper entitled “Ancient Near Eastern Law and the Book of Mormon” at the regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) in Denver, Colorado. Since that time, he has not only presented papers and served on the executive committee of the Biblical Law Section of the SBL, but in 2005 he organized at the national SBL level a now-permanent section called “Latter-day Saints and the Bible,” which he continues to chair.

9 Ibid., xiv–xv.

Encyclopedia of Mormonism

Welch played a major role in the organization and editing of the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, published in 1992, and has been responsible for its continuing availability on the web.

Masada and the Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1997, after months of negotiation with the Dead Sea Scroll Foundation, the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in collaboration with the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel Ministry of Tourism, the Schussheim Foundation, and the Israel Exploration Society, Welch was largely responsible for bringing this landmark exhibit to the BYU Museum of Art. It ran from March to September 1997. In conjunction with the exhibit, there was an equally landmark conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls hosted by BYU, with scholars coming from all over the world. The events spawned a traveling Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit which went not only all over the United States, but eventually to Europe.

Publications

The list of Jack Welch's publications is extensive, but it is worth mentioning that his study of the Sermon on the Mount as a temple text has received worldwide acclaim. In 2009, Ashgate in London published his *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*. And *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999) continues to be a seminal work on the subject for Latter-day Saints. His *Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon*, published in 2008 by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, brought together Welch's many years of research in the fields of ancient law and the Book of Mormon in a groundbreaking work that brought new insights into many overlooked and important details. A selected list of his publications can be found at the back of this volume.

Book of Mormon Central

Besides teaching at BYU, editing *BYU Studies*, being a contributing editor to the Joseph Smith Papers project, lecturing around the world, writing and editing books, Welch has been instrumental in the creation of a website called "Book of Mormon Central." This website is gathering a vast searchable archive of material relating to Book of Mormon research. In addition, through the use of email, video, and podcast presentations it proposes to invite all people, especially the rising generation, to:

- Build faith in Jesus Christ
- Learn and cherish pure doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3-4)
- ‘Remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon’ (D&C 84:57)
- Access scholarly evidence from Book of Mormon Central (BMC) to answer hard questions about the Book of Mormon, including its origins — so that they may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5)¹⁰

Family

Welch is married to the former Jeannie Sutton, and they have four children and seventeen grandchildren.

10 <https://bookofmormoncentral.org/about>

NEPHI'S "SHAZER": THE FOURTH ARABIAN PILLAR OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Warren P. Aston

Abstract: *Many Book of Mormon students are aware that several locations along Lehi's Trail through the Arabian Peninsula now have surprising and impressive evidence of plausibility, including the River Laman, Valley of Lemuel, Nahom, and Bountiful. One specific named location that has received much less attention is Shazer, a brief hunting stop mentioned in only two verses. After reviewing the potential etymology of the name, Warren Aston provides new information from discoveries made during field work in late 2019 at the prime candidate for the Valley of Lemuel, discoveries that lead to new understanding about the path to Shazer. Contrary to previous assumptions about Lehi's journey, Aston shows there was no need to backtrack through the Valley of Lemuel to begin the "south-southeast" journey toward Shazer. It appears that Nephi's description of crossing the river from the family's campsite and then going south-southeast toward Shazer is exactly what can be done from the most likely candidate for a campsite in the most likely candidate for the Valley of Lemuel. In light of fieldwork and further information, Aston also reviews the merits of several locations that have been proposed for Shazer and points to a fully plausible, even probable, location for Shazer. The account of Shazer, like Nahom, the River of Laman/Valley of Lemuel, and Bountiful, may now be a fourth Arabian pillar anchoring and supporting the credibility of the Book of Mormon's Old World account.*

And it came to pass that we did take our tents
and depart into the wilderness, across the river Laman.
And it came to pass that we traveled for the space of four days,
nearly a south-southeast direction,

and we did pitch our tents again;
and we did call the name of the place Shazer.

And it came to pass that we did take our bows and our arrows,
and go forth into the wilderness to slay food for our families;
and after we had slain food for our families
we did return again to our families in the wilderness,
to the place of Shazer.

—1 Nephi 16:12-14

At first glance, the two verses in Nephi’s account that mention Shazer offer little expectation that this brief hunting stop might be located on the modern map at all, much less with any confidence. This essay reviews the likely etymology of the name before reporting new discoveries made in late 2019 at the prime candidate for the Valley of Lemuel, finds that ultimately form part of the story of Shazer. Several of the locations discussed have not been pictured previously in Latter-day Saint publications. After weighing the various locations proposed over the years, it concludes that recent explorations seem likely to have bridged the 2,600-year gap between Nephi’s day and our own, yielding a fully plausible, even probable location for Shazer.

Alongside the River of Laman/Valley of Lemuel, Nahom, and Bountiful, Shazer thus becomes the fourth Arabian pillar anchoring and supporting, in the real world, the credibility of the Book of Mormon’s Old World account.

The Etymology of the Name “Shazer”

Along with the other place names in the Lehigh account, much attention has been given by commentators over the years into understanding what “Shazer” — a name bestowed by the Lehighites upon their first camp after leaving the Valley of Lemuel — may signify. This essay contributes to that discussion by suggesting that the identification of the most plausible location for Shazer has strong implications for the suggestions made to date.

In 1952, while making no attempt at locating it, two scholars published quite different suggestions that have dominated discussions of the etymology of “Shazer” down to the present. The most enduring was the suggestion of Sidney B. Sperry that the name may derive from the Hebrew root *šzr*, referring to “twisting, intertwining.”¹ While

1. Sidney B. Sperry, *The Book of Mormon Testifies* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), 59. See, also, Matthew L. Bowen, “Shazer: An Etymological Proposal in Narrative Context,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith*

it has received only qualified support from other Church scholars,² this suggestion has become accepted as quasi-authoritative by being incorporated into the footnote for the first appearance of the name in the 1981 and 2013 official editions of the Book of Mormon. Since then, various ideas have sought to explain what the “twisting and intertwining” may have referred to; these have ranged from the shape of the *location*, for example a twisting *wadi* (Arabic for a valley or watercourse), to the shape of *trees* that likely grew there.

The second proposal came from Hugh Nibley, whose first book noted that the Arabic term *shajer* “is quite common ... it is a collective [noun] meaning ‘trees.’” He also pointed out that in Arabic, particularly Egyptian Arabic, the word is often pronounced as *shazher*, which seems to at least approximate the likely vocalization of the name as it appears in Nephi’s text, surely not an inconsequential point.³ Nibley’s suggestion makes sense, since the group was traveling in Arabia and had just spent a substantial period encamped in a place where Arabic would have been the *lingua franca* allowing them to engage with locals, both at the valley and now at Shazer.

The probable location of Shazer, as discussed in this essay, now comes into play. Any examination of maps and satellite imagery of any of the candidates will reveal only the common-place meandering of almost all Arabian wadis; there is nothing especially “twisting and intertwining” about their shape. It follows, therefore, that Shazer’s name arose for some reason other than the valley’s contours.

As will be discussed, the leading candidate for Shazer is notable for three reasons: its distance from the Valley of Lemuel, its proximity to mountains where game could be hunted, and its profusion of trees. All these features can be readily discerned in satellite imagery, although they are best appreciated at ground level. This makes it seem very likely that the place name Shazer ultimately derives from its *trees*, as Nibley had suggested.

and Scholarship 33 (2019), 3n4, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/shazer-an-etymological-proposal-in-narrative-context>.

2. See, for example, *Book of Mormon Onomasticon*, s.v. “Shazer,” last modified July 20, 2020, 08:04, <https://onoma.lib.byu.edu/index.php/SHAZER>.

3. Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952), now available as *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 5:78–79. For the suggested vocalization of Nahom, see the “Pronouncing Guide” published at the end of the Book of Mormon, 1981 edition.



IMAGE 1. A vivid pre-Islamic hunting scene showing the use of the bow in nearby Yemen appears in Mohammed Maraqtan, “Hunting in pre-Islamic Arabia in light of the epigraphic evidence,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, vol. 26 (2015), 208–34 [this drawing, one of many illustrations, appears as Fig. 16, p. 224]. Image courtesy of Dr. Mohammed Maraqtan, Heidelberg University.

To be sure, the matter may not be that simple. For example, Matthew L. Bowen’s recent paper on the etymology of the Shazer name⁴ introduces the possibility that Nephi’s text may have also been shaped to produce a chiasm recording emphasis of the place as one that provided food for the group, further suggesting that the name may also link to an Old Arabic term for a “young gazelle,” among the likely animals hunted in that area, both then⁵ and still today. In any case, Bowen’s suggestions are not necessarily exclusive of Nibley’s — Shazer may have been named by the Lehites to account for both features.

4. Bowen, “Shazer: An Etymological Proposal in Narrative Context,” 1–12.

5. Sometime prior to 100 BC, Greek historian Agatharchides of Cnidus wrote of the northwest Arabian coast near the Sinai Peninsula and thus the area under discussion. In addition to domesticated flocks and herds he described “wild camels and, in addition, deer and gazelles.” See *Agatharchides of Cnidus: On the Erythraean Sea*, trans. and ed. Stanley Mayer Burstein (London: Hakluyt Society, 1989), 151–52.

Reaching Shazer from the Valley of Lemuel: The New Findings

The story of Shazer has its beginning at the previous encampment: the Valley of Lemuel. In Nephi's account, the Lehite group — surely guided by the Liahona that had appeared outside of Lehi's tent that very morning — departed the Valley of Lemuel by first crossing the River of Laman that flowed through it. Taken in conjunction with the words that immediately follow, telling us the duration of travel (four days) and the direction taken (nearly SSE), this indicates rather clearly that the group's encampment in the valley had been on the *north* side of the valley. That is, the river at that point must have been flowing in approximately an east-west direction.

Desert travel using loaded camels is usually reckoned at ranging between 20–25 miles (32–40 km) per day, thus giving us robust parameters whenever the number of days of travel is mentioned by Nephi.⁶

As part of a larger re-examination of the Lehite exodus from Jerusalem, in 2018 and again in 2019 with a colleague, I conducted new explorations of the area in and around Wadi Tayyib al Ism in the Tabuk province of Saudi Arabia; some of my primary conclusions were published in *BYU Studies Quarterly*.⁷ This article concluded that Wadi Tayyib al Ism was the candidate that “most plausibly matches Nephi's account” of the Valley of Lemuel. In fact, exploration of the entire area within the parameters given by Nephi (the three days' travel into the wilderness after arriving at the Red Sea recorded in 1 Nephi 2: 5–6) has effectively ruled out any other credible contenders for the valley. That being the case, the *oasis* within the valley must be considered the most plausible specific site for the Lehite encampment, one that lasted many months, if not a year or longer.

6. See the sources cited in Warren P. Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia: The Old World Setting of the Book of Mormon* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2015), 56n7.

7. Warren P. Aston, “Into Arabia: Lehi and Sariah's Escape from Jerusalem: Perspectives Suggested by New Fieldwork,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2019), 99–126, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/into-arabia-lehi-and-sariahs-escape-from-jerusalem-perspectives-suggested-new-fieldwork>.



IMAGE 2. A view facing southwards over the oasis in Wadi Tayyib al Ism, the candidate for the Valley of Lemuel. Enclosed within mountains, the valley runs in a roughly east-west direction, beginning further inland and descending to the shore of the Red Sea.

In seeking a holistic understanding of the journey from the valley to Shazer, my 2018–19 explorations of the oasis had two primary objectives. Firstly, were there any locations that could have served as **an encampment** for more than half a dozen tents?⁸ Secondly, and more importantly, was it, in fact, possible to **travel from the oasis through the surrounding mountains to Shazer on nearly a SE heading** as Nephi's text records?

In both cases, the new discoveries conform with remarkable consistency to Nephi's account.

1. An Encampment Area in the Valley of Lemuel

While other, smaller clearings nearby cannot be ruled out, on the north side of the valley, one quite large clearing beside the oasis stood out. Its smooth level base made it appear ideal as a safe camp site. Overlooking the valley and its clusters of palms, it is elevated above the flood level (flash floods still occur today) and thus would have sat above the level of the river in Nephi's day.

8. Following the arrival of Zoram and then Ishmael and his family, and the weddings that followed, the group now totalled at least eight couples, all requiring their own tents.



IMAGE 3. A large flat area suitable for an encampment sits on slightly higher terrain next to the oasis on its north side. This view faces roughly north.

2. Access Directly Out of the Valley of Lemuel Southeast toward Shazer

Most significantly, there indeed proved to be a valley — only one — leading through the mountains enclosing the valley. Importantly, it is the *only* feasible route to leave the valley in a southward direction for many miles. Its general direction leads southeast through the mountains to emerge in a broad plain (see image 5) offering a multitude of possible pathways that bring the traveler to the huge Wadi Ifal basin and then to the town of al Bad. Thus, no backtracking at any stage was necessary.

Had Lehi and his group used another valley further inland — i.e., further to the east — there would have been no need to cross the River Laman at that point; of course, such a scenario does not fit Nephi's straightforward account.



IMAGE 4. After crossing to the southern side of the oasis (across the River Laman in Nephi's account) this valley is the only one allowing travel through the mountains in a general SE direction. This view faces in the direction of travel.



IMAGE 5. The valley exiting the south side of the oasis in Wadi Tayyib al Ism (shown in image 4) arrives at this plain. From there, access through several routes lead southeast in the direction of Shazer.

Finally, whether merely a happy coincidence or not, the valley leading southeast from the oasis lies *almost opposite* the encampment

area, neatly accommodating the Book of Mormon's description of the particulars of the journey to Shazer. In other words, the group left their campsite, crossed the river, and then immediately entered the one valley permitting travel that would ultimately lead them to Shazer, all the while maintaining the "nearly south-southeast" direction that Nephi recorded. The next verse records their arrival at Shazer.

Taken strictly at face value, Nephi's stipulation that the journey took 4 days' travel in nearly a SSE direction to arrive at Shazer can be accepted as both accurate and entirely feasible.



IMAGE 6. Wadi Tayyib al Ism oasis and the features discussed.

Locating Shazer — The Proposals

Over the years, researchers have proposed several candidates for Shazer. In chronological order these proposals are as follows:

Gulf of Suez Area, Egypt

A 1944 article titled "Lehi's River Laman" by Ariel L. Crowley in *The Improvement Era* contained what is probably the first proposal for the location of Shazer ever published.⁹ Believing that no natural rivers ran into the Red Sea, Crowley suggested that an ancient canal running from one of Egypt's "Bitter Lakes" through a natural valley, Wadi Tumilat, to the Red Sea near Suez may have been what Nephi referred to. Although the dating remains contested, building of the canal is believed to have

9. Ariel L. Crowley, "Lehi's River Laman," *The Improvement Era* (January 1944), 14–15, 56–57, 59–61, <https://archive.org/details/improvementera4701unse/page/n15/mode/2up>.

begun as early as the 20th century BC before the canal fell into disuse; around 610 BC it began to be restored by Pharaoh Necho II.

Crowley went on to hypothesize that the Lehiite group then continued their journey to Bountiful along the *Egyptian* side of the Red Sea, continuing deep into Africa and then east across the Horn of Africa until reaching modern Somalia. In this scenario, therefore, Shazer would lie somewhere near the Gulf of Suez in Egypt.

Unsurprisingly, the logic of this concept was demolished in Hugh Nibley's 1952 *Lehi in the Desert*, effectively ruling out a non-Arabian journey,¹⁰ but in 1988, Josiah Douglas resurrected and fleshed out Crowley's idea in a *Church News* article titled "He [Lehi] May Have Gone Another Way."¹¹ Douglas went so far as to suggest that Nephi's Bountiful may be identified with the Nogal Valley in modern Somalia. The article notes Shazer only briefly as a stop at an unspecified place in Egypt "with springs and trees" the requisite 4 days' travel from the Valley of Lemuel.

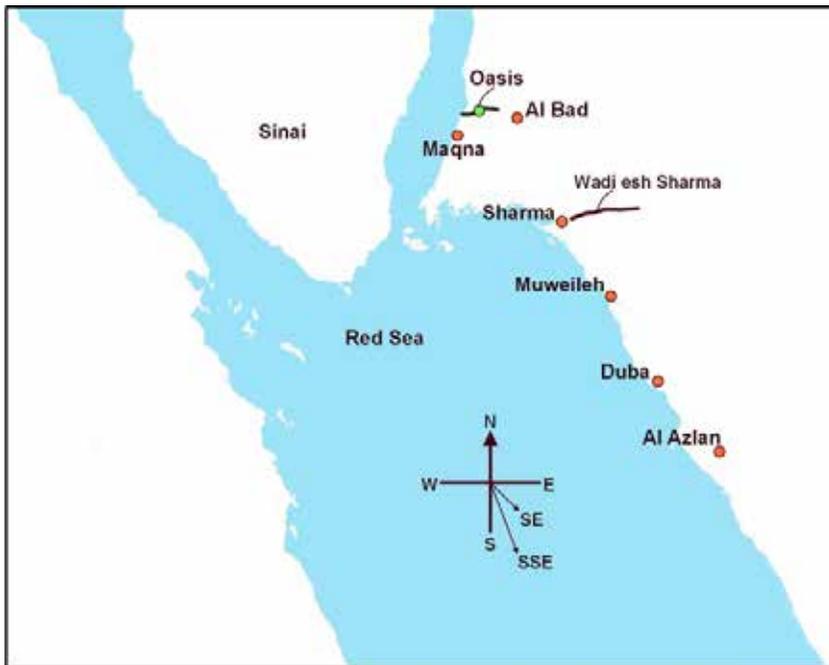


IMAGE 7. The various locations proposed for Shazer in relation to the Valley of Lemuel encampment.

10. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites*.

11. Josiah Douglas, "He May Have Gone Another Way," *Church News* 58 (January 1988), 11, 13, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1988-01-02/he-may-have-gone-another-way-154212>.

Wadi al Azlan/Wadi al Aznam

In 1976, pioneering Latter-day Saint explorers Lynn and Hope Hilton published the first proposal for the location of Shazer in Arabia.¹² Believing the Valley of Lemuel was possibly the vast Wadi Ifal and its ancient Midianite capital, al Bad (al Beda), they suggested that four days' travel would bring the group to *Wadi al Azlan* on the Red Sea coast, which they describe as "long an important and large oasis on the Red Sea coastal plain." They visited water wells in the area and noted that the place was a stretch of "sterile sand" with gently rising "mountains" in the east.

Now more commonly known as *Wadi al Aznam*, the wells of this oasis have supported a large fort or castle that provided protection for Muslim pilgrims traveling from Egypt and North Africa on one of history's most important routes: the Egyptian Hajj Road. Al Aznam Fort was built during the 14th century, one of 16 structures that survive to the present along the coastal trail to Medina and Mecca.



IMAGE 8. The oasis at Wadi al Aznam showing the low hills nearby.

12. Lynn M. Hilton and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 50, 77.



IMAGE 9. One of several water wells, recently enclosed in concrete, at Wadi al Aznam.



IMAGE 10. The fort at Wadi al Aznam, now restored, helped protect water sources and travelers making the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. View taken facing northeast.

As a Shazer candidate, however, Wadi al Aznam suffers from an insuperable difficulty: at some 145 miles (233 km) the distance from the Valley of Lemuel is probably in excess of what a loaded caravan of camels could reach in four days. That remains true even if we regard the Wadi Ifal as the Valley of Lemuel as the Hiltons proposed; accepting

Wadi Tayyib al Ism as the valley only compounds the matter, for then closer to seven–eight days' travel would be required. The fact that only low *hills* lie nearby, where prey is unlikely to have been present, rather than true mountains, is also an impediment to considering it as Shazer. Substantially better possibilities exist.

Wadi al Muwaylih/Wadi al Muweileh

Twenty years later, in the 1996 update of their original book, the Hiltons made a new proposal, suggesting that Wadi al Muwaylih, located considerably closer to al Bad, was a promising location for Shazer. Making no reference to their original proposal, their book describes the new candidate as the terminus for Wadi Sirr (or Wadi Surr), an “amazing desert oasis covered by at least eighty acres of date palms ... close to the Red Sea beach.”¹³

Now more commonly presented in maps and on signage as *Wadi al Muweileh*, the fort here is larger than at Wadi al Aznam but belongs to the same era and follows the same style. Adjacent to the fort, large areas of date palms grow, both along the coast and stretching inland. As image 13 shows, the mountains, however, are a considerable distance further inland.



IMAGE 11. Palm trees reach the Red Sea coast at Wadi al Muweileh.

13. Lynn M. Hilton and Hope Hilton, *Discovering Lehi: New Evidence of Lehi and Nephi in Arabia* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 1996), 103–10.



IMAGE 12. The restored fort at Wadi al Muweileh.



IMAGE 13. Palm trees extending inland at Wadi al Muweileh toward the distant mountains.

Wadi al Muweileh is a substantially more attractive candidate for Shazer than Wadi al Aznam; it has a larger fertile area that continues to allow date palms and other crops to grow, and its distance from the Valley of Lemuel (about 88 miles [142 km]) could be reached in four days. However, as it lies on the Red Sea coast the distance inland to reach mountains where game might be hunted is substantial.

If no other locations in the area met Nephi's description, it *could* be considered a candidate for Shazer, but with the reservation that it lies distant from any opportunities for hunting.

Wadi Agharr/Wadi esh Sharma

Fortunately, a third proposed location for Shazer exists that lacks the difficulties of the others. In 2003, Latter-day Saint expats George Potter and Richard Wellington reported a major valley named Wadi Agharr that reaches the Red Sea near the town of Sharma. While two main areas of oasis are present today, one in the narrowest section near the coast and one further inland where the wadi widens, they noted a traveler's account from less than a century ago that described the date palms extending over a distance of 15 miles (24 km).¹⁴

More commonly now known as *Wadi esh Sharma*, the wadi stretches inland a considerable distance with low mountains close on both sides initially and then later broadens considerably. The most fertile and vegetated area west of the wadi is now commonly known as Wadi esh Sharma or simply Wadi Sharma; some of it stretches further inland and often appear on maps under names such as Wadi Arab and Wadi al Alas.

Since Shazer is mentioned only as a stop where hunting took place, it is of great interest that locals living in the valley today have confirmed the ongoing presence of game such as ibex in the surrounding mountains.¹⁵

While access into the wadi is easily made from the Red Sea coast, it is perhaps more likely that the Lehite group entered via a short wadi that leads straight from Wadi Ifal and intersects Wadi Sharma, as seen in image 14.

14. George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness: 81 New, Documented Evidences That the Book of Mormon Is a True History* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003), 73–78.

15. *Ibid.*, 77–78.



IMAGE 14. Wadi esh Sharma can be readily accessed from the Valley of Lemuel through the short wadi, an extension from Wadi Ifal, seen here in red. The two main oasis areas in Wadi esh Sharma can be easily seen.

Image courtesy of Google Earth.



IMAGE 15. These impressive mountains face the traveler in Wadi Sharma near the easternmost oasis. This view was taken facing eastwards near the easternmost oasis.



IMAGE 16. A panoramic view of the easternmost oasis in Wadi Sharma, facing eastwards. The continuation of the wadi inland is visible to the right of these mountains.

Wadi esh Sharma thus meets Nephi's account in ways that no other location does. At about 70 miles (110 km) from the Valley of Lemuel, it easily fits the description of being four days' travel, is readily accessible, and provides a pathway further into the interior of Arabia. It alone has the oasis resources of water and crops, especially the ubiquitous date, that a traveling group would find valuable, but also mountains in the immediate vicinity that would have hunting opportunities, as they do today. This precise match to the text makes it the most plausible location for Shazer by far.

Conclusions

As the initial stage of the Lehite journey leading to the ocean crossing and arrival in the New World, the land locations discussed here are of no little importance. They represent an enormous investment of energy and time by researchers over many years to provide the Nephite record with a firm footing that assures potential readers that the account is authentic history.

As we begin the 2020s, we can look back and see in detail how each stage of the Arabian crossing of that journey of journeys is now plausibly situated. At almost the beginning of that journey, the impressive Valley of Lemuel and River of Laman stand without credible challengers; similarly, as discussed here, Shazer can now be identified with a high degree of certainty.

Nahom, marking the burial place of Ishmael and the major change in travel direction has, uniquely, inscriptional support for the name that dates to the correct period.¹⁶ The final, most difficult leg across Arabia saw the group eventually arrive in Bountiful, a place “prepared of the Lord” with all the resources required to build a ship that could cross oceans. Here we currently have two relatively nearby candidates in southern Oman, one of which, Khor Kharfot, is accepted by many researchers, while the other, Khor Rori, also has notable champions.¹⁷ Over time, we can expect that this dichotomy will be resolved.

Going forward, there is of course more to do. For the Arabian journey, more needs to be done to define the journey from Shazer to Nahom, about which the text says very little. When conditions allow researchers to return to Yemen, additional work is needed in further comprehending this region and what transpired there.



IMAGE 17. The entire Lehiite route across Arabia as currently established, showing the origin point, Jerusalem, in addition to the 4 pillars discussed in this article.

16. Warren P. Aston, “A History of NaHoM,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012), 78–98, <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol51/iss2/6/>.

17. For recent treatments on the subject of the Old World Bountiful, see Potter and Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness*, 121–62 and Aston, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia*, 101–55.

The process of *consilience* takes place when evidence from unrelated and independent sources converge. When that happens, the resulting conclusions move beyond being mere claims; they become substantial and significant, requiring the observer to consider the strong likelihood that they are objectively true.

From the standpoint of the Book of Mormon's Old World setting, the emergence of candidates for each specific location in Nephi's text — plausibly and precisely situated from *all* perspectives — surely qualifies as an example of this. Of the four "pillars" of credibility discussed here, Shazer stands as the most recent illustration of this process unfolding.

Can we hope that these Old World pillars will now begin to contribute towards a resolution of the New World setting? Better understanding of the bridging events between these two worlds — the ships used in the various migration voyages and the ocean routes taken — may become keys to moving us ahead. If so, the Book of Mormon would then be positioned to emerge anew in its *full* real-world setting, ready to impact a vastly greater audience.¹⁸

[**Author's Notes:** My 2019 exploration in the oasis area of the Valley of Lemuel and the various Shazer candidates was facilitated and greatly enhanced by the contributions of my traveling companion, Jon Nelson. This article also benefited greatly from the comments made by three anonymous reviewers. The color images in this article are by the author and were made without filters or digital enhancements. They may not be reproduced without written permission.]

Warren Aston is an independent researcher based in Brisbane, Australia. Since 1984 his exploratory efforts throughout the Near East and Mesoamerica have identified the candidates for "Nahom" and the Old World "Bountiful" now accepted by most LDS scholars. In 2013 he co-founded the Khor Kharfot Foundation, leading several international teams undertaking fieldwork at the site. He is the author of *In the Footsteps of Lehi (1994)*; *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia: The Old World Setting of the Book of Mormon (2015)* and numerous papers and articles. Warren's

18. See the sobering assessment provided in Kirk A. Magleby, "Church Membership Growth" at <https://bookofmormonresources.blogspot.com/2019/04/church-membership-growth.html>. Magleby's 2019 analysis concludes that after almost 200 years the Book of Mormon has so far reached "less than than 1/15 of 1%" of the world's population.

findings have been reported in Church Education System manuals, BYU Studies Quarterly, Encyclopedia of Mormonism and the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies. They have also been presented at non-Latter-day Saint forums such as the annual Seminar for Arabian Studies in the UK and in publications such as the Journal of Arabian Studies. His work continues in both Arabia and Mesoamerica, including a major Book of Mormon Central exploratory project focused on the hill Ramah/Cumorah.

JOHN W. WELCH: A PERSONAL REMINISCENCE

Stephen E. Robinson

Abstract: *In these glimpses of the early private life of a very public figure, Stephen E. Robinson provides a portrait that will enable readers to see how the child became father to the man.*

[**Editor's Note:** Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.]

See Stephen E. Robinson, "John W. Welch: A Personal Reminiscence," 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), 1–8. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/to-seek-the-law-of-the-lord-essays-in-honor-of-john-w-welch-2/>.]

John Woodland Welch (Jack) has been my friend and colleague for more than 65 years, since we attended the same Junior Sunday School and Primary in the old La Cañada Ward of the Glendale Stake in Los Angeles, California. Jack is a year older than I am so sometimes we were in the same church class or quorum, and sometimes not. My first distinct memory of Jack is from our Blazer class at Primary. I realized at a young age, what I would come to realize again and again many times since, that Jack already knew all about "stuff." In that first case, it was all the Scout stuff, which had remained largely a mystery to me. Our Blazer leader, Paul Griffen, finally got me to learn the Scout Oath and a little more, but Jack almost a year earlier had memorized it *all*: the Oath, the Motto, the Law, and all the paragraphs in the Scout

Handbook pertaining to each. It was a precedent to be repeated over and over again in my experience with Jack as we grew up.

Jack and I were blessed with remarkably good ward leaders and teachers. Our early morning Seminary teacher, Sister Elaine Walton, once said she expected our class to produce bishops, stake presidents, and even *more*. I remember as she finished her sentence that her eyes were resting on Jack. I also believe her feelings on that occasion have proved to be prophetic.

Under the tutelage of that greatest of all Scoutmasters, Cy Watson, Jack quickly became an Eagle Scout. I remember from our days at Cherry Valley and other Scout camps that Jack was a decent shot, but a superb swimmer. Also, I do not remember him ever having to “hold up trees” on any of our frequent Scout outings—a punishment sometimes meted out to the many ruffians among us. Finally, a few years later, Jack and I were blessed to attend a Sunday School class taught by a very young Richard Callister, brother to Elder Tad R. Callister of the Seventy. Those were glorious Sundays, even for us teenagers. Brother Callister’s grandfather, Elder LeGrand Richards, occasionally attended our ward and always addressed the congregation when he did. The deacons, teachers, and priests sat in the front of the chapel and were privileged to hear that grand old man preach the Gospel up close. All in all, I believe Jack’s adolescent experiences and training in the La Cañada Ward provided a “perfect storm” of influence and support to aid him in achieving his magnificent future accomplishments.

As a youth, I remember going to the beach with Jack and his family. I recall being *hugely* (though silently) impressed that the chatter in the back of the station wagon was about music and literature as much if not more than the usual teenage trivia and sibling bickering one might expect. I was often a guest at the Welch family swimming pool, either alone or with others in our ward. However, my most vivid memories of Jack during our teenage years are mostly connected to the High Sierra Mountains, for which Jack and I share a particular love—especially the John Muir Trail and the wild areas adjacent to it.

It was in the High Sierras that I first really encountered Jack’s more spiritual side when, quite unintentionally, he taught me the meaning of the Sabbath Day. One summer in the early 1960s, Jack, his brother James, and I, together with our fathers backpacked into the Hilton Lakes for an extended weekend fishing trip. The company and the fishing were fine, and the mountains were magnificent. But on Sunday morning after breakfast, as my father and I were rigging up our poles for the day’s

fishing, the Welches all found comfortable logs or stones to sit on and began to study their scriptures.

“Aren’t you guys fishing?” I asked with amazement.

“No,” Jack replied quietly. “Not on Sunday.”

None of the Welches said anything else, and there was no hint of censure or judgment in their demeanor. Even so, the damage was done—the seed had been planted. In succeeding years as I sought the Lord somewhat more diligently, when planning my weekends I would sometimes hear again Jack’s quiet, “No, not on Sunday.” To this day I am grateful.

I believe a major key to understanding John Woodland Welch lies in the architecture of the church building he worshiped in as a young man. The wall behind the pulpit in the La Cañada Chapel contains a large and beautiful stained glass window. In the center panel the Savior stands holding a lantern by a garden door. The left-hand panel depicts an open scroll labeled “the Stick of Judah,” while the right hand panel displays a similar scroll identified as “the Stick of Joseph.” In almost every church meeting of his early life, as Jack listened to the speakers and partook of the Sacrament, he saw before him the Savior of the world flanked on the left and on the right by the scrolls of Judah and Joseph in glorious stained glass. By the time he was an adult, that theme had been firmly stamped upon his mind and heart. That stained glass window is certainly a fitting icon to represent Jack’s eventual contributions to the study of the scrolls—not only the stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph, but of many other scrolls as well—all in the service of the Lord. I privately suspect that even the initial impulse to create the Foundation of Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) can be found somewhere in that wonderful stained glass.

In our youth, Jack often intimidated me (as he does anyone with intelligence). I was never able to beat him at *anything* (except, perhaps, at football—which doesn’t count for much in academic circles). I remember once in high school bragging to Jack about what I thought was a very good SAT score. He granted that it was indeed a fine score, but when I strongly pressed him to tell me what *he* had scored on the same exam, he admitted finally to having earned a perfect 1600! In the fifty years since then, I have only personally known two other people who have accomplished this seeming impossibility. In many ways, Jack was my Socratic gadfly—often to my consternation—urging me on to attempt and achieve more in school than I might have undertaken without his example to follow. Neither of my own parents had attended college, and

I had no other role models; however, in academics, as in Scouting, I was aware early on that Jack already knew “stuff.”

In fact, it was Jack and his father, also named John W. Welch, who initiated me into my first serious academic study of religion in general and of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) religion in particular. I had had an encounter with anti-Mormon literature sometime in junior high school, and being somewhat flustered on that occasion I had quite sensibly ended up at the Welch home. There, Jack and his father introduced me to *History of the Church*, some writings by Hugh Nibley, and several other important LDS reference works. After an hour or two of study I learned two essential life-lessons that afternoon: one, anti-Mormons often lie; and two, that any serious Latter-day Saint needed a personal reference library such as the Welch family possessed.

I suspect that one cannot adequately understand Jack as an adult without having some knowledge of his immediate nuclear family and of his extraordinary upbringing. For example, all the Welches were musically gifted—not just talented, but genuinely gifted. Jack’s brother James is a professor of music and a professional organist. Growing up, I always expected that Jim would one day be the Tabernacle organist; he is certainly that good. Jack himself plays a mean clarinet among other instruments. I remember college date nights at Jimba’s (the premier Provo watering hole back then) when Jack and his Dixieland group provided the live entertainment for appreciative audiences. Jack’s parents, John and Unita, were the very definition of a power couple. Jack’s father was the most personally imposing and intellectually stimulating individual I had yet met in my early life—or for many, many years afterwards. Jack once told me that his family home evenings were often heated and intense as the Welch family not only taught and learned the Gospel but also debated, defended, analyzed, dissected and even extrapolated its principles in a family free-for-all. John W. Welch, Sr. was known as one of the best attorneys in California, yet I remember him primarily as someone who pushed me physically up the trail on pack trips or Scout outings, and as one who pushed me intellectually up the trail in several other settings. John Sr. once taught me a whole semester’s worth of synthetic logic in five minutes when I foolishly attempted to decline payment for service at his daughter’s wedding reception. I remember thinking later at Brigham Young University (BYU) that after John W. Welch Sr., Aristotle was fairly easy to deal with. I can reliably report, after a long association with the whole clan, that the vein of spiritual and

intellectual ore in the Welch family runs wide and deep and is of the very highest grade.

Sometime around Jack's fifteenth year he arrived at an intellectual and spiritual turning point that affected the rest of his professional life. His family had made a pack-in camping and fishing trip to Matlock Lake, above Onion Valley in the Sierras. On a truly inspired prompting, Unita carried in her pack a copy of Hugh Nibley's book *Lehi in the Desert*. When, a day or two into the trip, Jack had grown bored with fishing and did not want to hike, she produced the Nibley volume for him, and Jack stayed near camp to read it. He both consumed it, and was consumed by it. Jack told me later that it all came together for him there in the mountains—the Savior and the sticks of Judah and Joseph. And I think it grandly appropriate on the occasion of that personal conflagration, that it was Hugh Nibley who struck the match.

Jack continued to provide an academic role model for me throughout my college career. At one point, he graciously invited me to room with him, though I stupidly declined his invitation. I was afraid that living with Jack would overwhelm me—like being forced to drink from a fire hose. Still, I sometimes wonder how much better a scholar I would be now if I had not been so timid then.

The Honors Program at BYU was created in 1960, and Jack was one of its earliest and brightest stars. Though I hardly knew what an Honors Program was, at Jack's insistence I did apply and the experience changed my intellectual life. Again, in those years it was Jack rather than my family or my teachers who was my greatest mentor. Moreover, when I became an English major, I encountered Jack in his role as an assistant to Robert K. Thomas, then Honors Program Chair. When I added a Philosophy minor, Jack again was the teaching assistant, this time working for C. Terry Warner, another Honors Chair. And when I moved toward Classics, Jack was already there—eventually receiving his graduate degree in Classics at Oxford University where he studied as a Woodrow Wilson scholar.

Several years later, when I applied to Duke University in the Graduate School of Religion, I again found the ubiquitous John W. Welch, still a year or two ahead of me, pursuing his law degree there. However, his interest in Biblical Studies had remained so great that Jack sat in on several of my graduate courses in Religion. I particularly remember a course with James Charlesworth in the Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament when we were introduced, among other documents, to the *Narrative of Zosimus*. On the one hand, I was *impressed* by *Zosimus* and

noted in my mind some of the parallels between that text and the Book of Mormon. Jack, on the other hand, showed up in class a few days later *with a written paper* thoroughly mapping out the parallels—and this despite his own work load on the Duke Law Review! Over the years, I have come to expect this sort of impossible productivity from Jack. I have found it practical simply to consider him an elemental force of nature, like magnetism or gravity, and to resignedly appreciate his activity in much the same way I do those other natural forces.

While at Duke University I attended my first academic conference, the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) in Washington, D. C. Jack, whose membership in the SBL predated my own, drove us up from Durham. My first professional publication was a translation and commentary on the Coptic *Apocalypse of Adam*. Jack edited that paper for me and greatly improved it, thus teaching me that I had not yet learned all the skills I would need as a serious scholar. My first professional paper and my first professional travel were also sponsored by Jack and the Welch family at the inaugural meeting of FARMS which they so generously founded and funded. So, in looking back at my own early career, I must gratefully acknowledge that at most of the major crossroads, Jack was somewhere nearby quietly exerting a positive influence. And in the decades since then, I have watched him continue to sponsor, edit, and improve the work of scores (and perhaps hundreds) of other scholars as well.

When I arrived at BYU after several years teaching in the eastern United States, Jack was already at the Law School. President Jeffrey R. Holland also appointed him to a position in Religious Education to help improve scholarship there. This made perfect sense given Jack's training in Classics and Religious Studies. So it greatly surprised me to find Jack somewhat in the role of a Samaritan at BYU. With credentials in both Law and Religion, Jack encountered a few in both worlds who disliked his mixing of the two. I am embarrassed to admit that many of the "old guard" in Religious Education resented Jack—whom they considered an outsider—stepping onto their turf, and a few in the Law School apparently questioned his preoccupation with the sticks of Judah and Joseph. I mention this not to reopen old wounds, but to make it clear just how *exceptional* Jack's achievements at BYU have been. Universities are political entities, and BYU is more political than most. Much of what Jack has accomplished at BYU has been done in the face of well-entrenched factional opposition from many different directions. Indeed, he and I have not always been on the same side of an issue; nevertheless, I was

always uncomfortable and especially cautious when that was the case, for few have had more experience than I with both Jack's intelligence and his integrity.

In my career at five different colleges and universities, I have known faculty who have received *tremendous* honors from their institutions for their charisma—and for surprisingly little else, particularly academic productivity. Such are the politics of the academy. I believe in Jack's case; however, this has worked the other way round. True, Jack has received many honors, but in my mind he has never gotten the full credit from *all* quarters that he deserves. In my private opinion, Jack's discovery of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon and his inspired connection of the Sermon on the Mount with the Temple may be the two most important additions to the academic study of the sticks of Judah and Joseph in his generation. Yet Jack's full contributions to the BYU and to the LDS Church have sometimes been only grudgingly acknowledged by those who cannot overlook his greatest sin—his penchant for invading the turf of others with his powers of telescopic observation and microscopic analysis combined with his irritating habit of being right.

I have been privileged in my academic life to know three of the world's true geniuses (though I think "genius" is an overused term today). I have actually observed these three quite closely, having studied under, worked with, and worked *for* all three. The first of these giants was Hugh Nibley. The second was W. D. Davies, one of the greatest New Testament scholars of my generation. The third was Jacob Neusner—in my mind the Johanan ben Zaccai of post-holocaust Jewish Studies. I do not think anyone who has known these three would disagree with my assessment of their brilliance. In all honesty and candor based on my own long personal experience, I must add John W. Welch as the fourth on the list. I suspect that a few might disagree with me here or suspect me of special pleading; nonetheless, they are wrong. I have known Jack longer and at closer quarters than *any* of his critics. Perhaps one difference between Jack and the other three is that while Nibley, Davies, and Neusner pursued single meteoric careers, the genius of Jack—besides creating his own prodigious body of published work—has been diverted to fill many other streams: Law, Classics, FARMS, the Nibley archive, the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, the Religious Studies Center at BYU, the BYU New Testament Commentary Project, the Joseph Smith Papers, and the virtual salvation (or should I say exaltation?) of *BYU Studies*. After nearly seventy years experience with the man and in the field, it is my firm conviction that if John W. Welch is not remembered

as the single brightest star in the academic firmament of his generation, it will only be because he has provided entire constellations for us to explore in many different parts of the sky, and each constellation contains its own stars—brightened and polished by their mentor. May God continue to bless and prosper him!

Stephen E. Robinson was born and raised in Los Angeles, California. Between 1966 and 1968 he served a mission to the Northern States. He graduated from the BYU Honors Program in 1971 with a degree in English Literature and Philosophy. In 1978 he received a doctorate in Biblical Studies from Duke University.

Brother Robinson taught at five different colleges and universities before coming to BYU in 1986 and served as the department chair in Religion at Lycoming College (a Methodist school) while he was bishop of the Williamsport, Pennsylvania Ward of the LDS Church. He was the first Latter-day Saint to be granted tenure in religion at a non-LDS school. At BYU, he served as the department chair in Ancient Scripture for seven years and has published ten books and thirty-seven articles both in and out of the Church on biblically related topics. The Society of Biblical Literature published his monograph, *The Testament of Adam*. Two of his books, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* and *Following Christ: The Parable of the Divers and More Good News* have each received both the “Best Doctrinal Book” and “Book of the Year” awards from the Independent LDS Booksellers. *How Wide the Divide?* received a Best Book award from the Protestant publication *Christianity Today*. Brother Robinson has also received the Deseret Book Award for Exceptional Contribution to LDS Literature and several “best teacher” awards at BYU.

Brother Robinson is married to the former Janet Lynn Bowen, who is currently a CPA in Provo, Utah. Together they have six children.

“GOD HATH TAKEN AWAY HIS PLAINNESS”: SOME NOTES ON JACOB 4:14, REVELATION, CANON, COVENANT, AND LAW

Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *This article examines Jacob’s statement “God hath taken away his plainness from [the Jews]” (Jacob 4:14) as one of several scriptural texts employing language that revolves around the Deuteronomic canon formulae (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [13:1]; cf. Revelation 22:18–19). It further examines the textual dependency of Jacob 4:13–14 on Nephi’s earlier writings, 1 Nephi 13 and 2 Nephi 25 in particular. The three texts in the Hebrew Bible that use the verb בָּרַח (Deuteronomy 1:5; 27:8; Habakkuk 2:2) — each having covenant and “law” implications — all shed light on what Nephi and Jacob may have meant when they described “plain” writing, “plain and precious things [words],” “words of plainness,” etc. Jacob’s use of Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree as a means of describing the Lord’s restoring or re-“adding” what had been “taken away,” including his use of Isaiah 11:11 (Jacob 6:2) as a hermeneutical lens for the entire allegory, further connects everything from Jacob 4:14 (“God hath taken away”) to Jacob 6:2 with the name “Joseph.” Genesis etiologizes the name Joseph in terms of divine “taking away” (’āsap) and “adding” (yōsēp; Genesis 30:23–24; cf. Numbers 36:1–5). God’s “tak[ing] away his plainness” involved both divine and human agency, but the restoration of his plainness required divine agency. For Latter-day Saints, it is significant the Lord accomplished this through a “Joseph.”*

The biblical double-etymology for the patriarch Joseph’s name roots it in divine action. The etymology characterizes that divine action in terms of two antonymous verbs: “And she [Rachel] conceived, and bare a son; and said, *God hath taken away* [’āsap] *my reproach*: And she called his name *Joseph* [yōsēp]; and said, *The Lord shall add* [yōsēp] to me another son” (Genesis 30:23–24). In other words, the Genesis text depicts Rachel

naming her elder son, Joseph (“may he [God] add”), on the basis that “God ha[d] taken away” or “withdrawn” (< “gathered up”) the shame¹ or stigma of her erstwhile childlessness through Joseph’s birth and her expressed wish that the Lord would “add” her another son in the future (“may the Lord add to me another son”). The latter explanation hints at the birth of Benjamin (*binyāmîn* “son of the right hand”) as that future “son” (*bēn*).

Another, later Pentateuchal text echoes the double-etymology of Genesis 30:23-24 with direct wordplay on the name *Joseph* in terms of the antonymy of “adding” and “taking away.” Numbers 36 details a revelation given to Moses which intends to alleviate concerns about tribal inheritances being “impaired by the permission given to the daughters of Zelophehad to inherit from their father”² (as detailed in Numbers 27). In other words, the heads of the tribe of Joseph worried that their inheritances would be “taken away” and “added to” the inheritances of other tribes:

And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of *the families of the sons of Joseph* [*yôsēp*], came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: and they said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be *taken from* [*yiggārēa*'] the inheritance of our fathers, *and shall be put to* [*shall be added to, wěnôsap*] the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. And when the jubile [jubilee] of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance *be put unto* [*be added to, wěnôsēpâ*] the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance *be taken away* [*yiggāra*'] from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, *The tribe of the sons of Joseph* [*yôsēp*] hath said well. (Numbers 36:1-5)

1. See also the use of the idiom *'āsap herpâ* in Isaiah 4:1: “only let us be called by thy name, to take away [*'ēsōp*] our reproach [*herpātî*].”

2. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, ISR: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 174.

The revelation that follows in Numbers 36:6-13 aimed to preserve the overall territorial *status quo* among the tribes in the promised land. Regarding the wordplay on Joseph in Numbers 36:1-5, Moshe Garsiel observes: “The twice-used root *y-s-p* here explicates the name of ‘Joseph,’ which appears both before and after the passage, in verses 1 and 5.”³ The twofold mention of Joseph’s name thus frames the wordplay in a small inclusio. The verb *gāraʿ*, which is synonymous with Hebrew *ʾāsap* in the senses of “take away” or “withdraw,”⁴ emphasizes the etiological connection between the name Joseph and “adding” and “taking away” — here in terms of antonyms *yāsap* and *gāraʿ* — as previously established in Genesis 30:23-24 in terms of antonyms *yāsap* and *ʾāsap*. The wordplay on Joseph here involving *yāsap* and *gāraʿ*, in its totality emphasizes the threat of Joseph’s tribal inheritance being “taken away” from his descendants and “added to” those of the other tribes.

The stark antonymy of “adding” and “taking away” reflected in the double-etymology for Joseph and in the instructions regarding tribal inheritances is mirrored again later in the so-called Deuteronomic canon formulae — i.e., passages intended to maintain the “textual *status quo*”⁵ of the book of Deuteronomy and its divine instruction: “*Ye shall not add [lōʾ tōsipû]* unto the word which I command you, *neither shall ye diminish [wēlōʾ tigrēʾ û]* ought from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2); “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: *thou shalt not add [lōʾ-tōsēp]* thereto, *nor diminish [wēlōʾ tigrāʾ]* from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32 [Masoretic Text 13:1, hereafter MT]). The canon formula of Revelation 22:18-19 and the language of its anticipated misapplication (see 2 Nephi 29:1-10) also echo this antonymy.

I have argued elsewhere⁶ that Nephi’s prophecy in 2 Nephi 28 quotes Isaiah 28:10, 13 (“For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and

3. Ibid.

4. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2001), 74–75, 203–04. Hereafter cited as *HALOT*. Cf. the entries for *grʾ* on pp. 203–04 with those for *ʾsp* on pp. 74–75.

5. “The formula makes it clear that its intent is to preclude both literary and doctrinal innovation by safeguarding the textual status quo.” Bernard M. Levinson, “You Must Not Add Anything to What I Command You: Paradoxes of Canon and Authorship in Ancient Israel,” *Numen* 50 (2003): 7.

6. Matthew L. Bowen, “And the Meek Also Shall Increase’: The Verb *YĀSAP* in Isaiah 29 and Nephi’s Prophetic Allusions to the Name Joseph in 2 Nephi 25–30,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 30 (2018): 5–42. See especially pp. 29–30.

there a little,” 2 Nephi 28:30)⁷ in order to interpret revelation as divine “adding.” Nephi’s prophecy then declares: “And blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom. For unto him that receiveth *I will give more [I will add]*; and them that shall say we have enough, from them *shall be taken away* even that which they have” (2 Nephi 28:30; cf. also Matthew 13:12; 25:29; Mark 4:25; Alma 12:9–11). This passage should be understood as reflecting the antonymy of divine “taking away” and “adding” of the Joseph etiology in Genesis 30:23–24 and, in an ironic way, against the background of the Deuteronomic canon formula (especially Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32 [MT 13:1]). Nephi’s oracle in 2 Nephi 29:1–10, which begins with a *Gezera Shawa*⁸ on Isaiah 29:14 and 11:11 in terms of *yôsîp/yôsîp*, reflects a similar relationship (cf. also 2 Nephi 25:17, 21) with the foregoing passages.

I have additionally argued⁹ that the Lord’s statement to Moses, as part of the vision preserved in Moses 1, should be understood as employing the language of these so-called canon formulae: “And in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught *and take many of them from the book* which thou shalt write, behold, *I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again* among the children of men — among as many as shall believe.” Moses 1:41 thus

7. Book of Mormon references here will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

8. *Gezera Shawa* — also spelled *Gezerah Shawah*, *Gezerah Shavah*, or *Gezera Shava* — literally means “equal ordinance” or “equal statute.” As an exegetical practice, *Gezera Shawa* consists in the joining together of biblical texts from isolated passages on the basis of shared terminology and the interpretation of them in light of each other. Although it received the name *Gezera Shawa* in later rabbinic times, the practice is older. On *Gezera Shawa*, see H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Markus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 18–19. Jesus uses a clear example of *Gezera Shawa*, as preserved in Matthew 22:36–40, when he combines what he calls the first commandment “And thou shalt love [*wě’āhbtā*] the Lord thy God with all thy heart” (Deuteronomy 6:5) with the second lesser-quoted commandment “but thou shalt love [*wě’āhbtā*] thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18), declaring that “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Jesus’s *Gezera Shawa* exegesis makes one commandment of two separate commandments in the Torah. For additional examples of this practice in the Book of Mormon, see 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.

9. 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): 297–304.

constitutes a prophecy of the “rais[ing] up” one “like unto Moses” named Joseph (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-22; 2 Nephi 3:6-16), through whom the Lord’s words “shall be had again” — or re-“added.”

The evident thematic relationship between 2 Nephi 28:27-30; 29:3-10; and Moses 1:41 and the canon formulae in Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [MT 13:1], viewed against the backdrop of the “Joseph” etiologies (Genesis 30:23-24), raises the question: how do other prophetic passages that describe the “adding to” and “taking away” from divine teaching and the repository of divine teaching in “canonical” scripture relate to these same biblical texts? One such prophetic text is 1 Nephi 13 with its emphatic predictions that a Gentile “great and abominable church” would “take away” many “plain and precious things” and covenants (see especially 1 Nephi 13:26-40).¹⁰ Another related prophetic text is Jacob’s prologue to his quotation of Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people, and *they despised the words of plainness* and killed the prophets and sought for things [words] 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 [words] which they cannot understand because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it that they may stumble. (Jacob 4:14)

In this short article, I explore the meaning of Jacob’s interconnected phrases “they despised the words of plainness” and “God hath taken away his plainness from them” in Jacob 4:14 and their textual dependency on Nephi’s descriptions of the “plainness” of divine words and writing in 1 Nephi 13:26-35, 40; 16:29; 2 Nephi 25:4-7, 20, 28 and elsewhere. Jacob’s assertion that “God hath taken away his plainness” should be understood as language that harks back to and revolves around the language of the Deuteronomic canon formula (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [MT 13:1]). Though the agents appear to differ in each case, the “taking away” of God’s “plainness” among the Jews invites comparison with the Gentiles’ “taking away” of “plain and precious things” in 1 Nephi 13:26-29, 40, inasmuch as both result in the “stumbling” of many (cf. Malachi 2:8). Both situations required divine action: the divine re-adding or restoration of divine words in their plainness — scriptures and covenants — in order to “take away” stumbling blocks (1 Nephi 14:1; cf. Jacob 4:14-15), and

10. Separate study forthcoming.

to enable both Jew and Gentile to “build” upon the “sure foundation” (Jacob 4:17; cf. the title-page of the Book of Mormon).

“Stiffnecked People[s]”

Jacob’s prologue to Zenos’s allegory (Jacob 4:14) begins with the statement “But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people ...” This description of ancient Judahites needs to be considered first in light of biblical statements that describe ancient Israelites as a “stiffnecked people” (see, e.g., Exodus 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9 and Deuteronomy 9:6, 13).¹¹ Second, it should also be viewed against the backdrop of Nephi’s earlier description of his own people as a “stiffnecked people,” a text from which Jacob borrows heavily in Jacob 4:

And now behold, my people, *ye are a stiffnecked people*. Wherefore *I have spoken plainly unto you*, that *ye cannot misunderstand*. And the words which I have spoken shall stand as a testimony against you, for they are sufficient to *teach* any man the right way. For the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not, for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law. (2 Nephi 25:28)

In addressing his own people, Nephi appears to quote Exodus 33:5: “For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, *Ye are a stiffnecked people* [’*attem* ’*am-qěšēh-’ōrep*]” (cf. the similarly worded description “thou art a stiffnecked people,” Exodus 33:3; Deuteronomy 9:6). Jacob’s son, Enos, would describe the Nephites of his time in polyptotic¹² fashion as “a *stiffnecked* people [’*am-qěšēh-’ōrep*], *hard* [’*qāšēh*] to understand” (Enos 1:22). It is significant that Jacob specifically correlates ancient Judahite “stiffneckedness” with their failure to “understand” divine truth as embodied in Jesus Christ (“[they] sought for things which they could not understand,” “many things which they cannot understand”). Nephi, Jacob, and their successors recognized that such obduracy made “understanding” impossible.

“The Words of Plainness”

Jacob next mentions that ancient Judah-Israel “*despised the words of plainness* and killed the prophets and sought for things [words] that they

11. See further Deuteronomy 31:27 and Judges 2:19.

12. *Polyptoton* is a wordplay involving terms derived from the same root. On polyptoton see further Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 117.

could not understand” (Jacob 4:14). For Jacob, these things constituted symptoms of general spiritual “blindness.” This spiritual blindness had devastating consequences not only to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah in 586 BCE but also in the first century CE: “Wherefore because of their blindness, which blindness came by looking beyond the mark, they must needs fall” (Jacob 4:14). It should be noted that not all of Jesus’s Jewish contemporaries were, in Jacob’s words, “looking beyond the mark.” All of Jesus’s first followers, including all of the apostles, were Jewish. All of the earliest “Christians” — to use that term somewhat anachronistically — were Jews. In fact, the earliest church members saw themselves within Judaism, not outside of or apart from it.¹³ Nevertheless, as Jacob states elsewhere, “because of priestcrafts [cf. the Sadducees and many ‘chief priests’] and iniquities they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified” (2 Nephi 10:5). Jesus himself wept over Jerusalem,¹⁴ and he lamented: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not [or, you were not willing]!” (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34).¹⁵ What was “plain” to some was not plain to all.

At this point it becomes necessary to identify as nearly as possible what Jacob meant by the “words of plainness” that God’s covenant people despised. To help one get a fuller sense of what Nephi and Jacob may have meant, writing in the sixth century BCE, by “plain” writing, “plain and precious things [words],” and “words of plainness” at least three passages from the Hebrew Bible offer some insight.

First, Deuteronomy 1:5 reports the following regarding the body of instruction that Moses gave to Israel just before their entry into the

13. See, e.g., Mark D. Nanos, “Paul and Judaism,” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 552. Nanos writes, “Paul saw himself wholly within Judaism, as one who was assigned a special role in the restoration of Israel and the nations (Rom 11:1–15; Gal 1:13–16).”

14. “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou kindest not the time of thy visitation.” Luke 19:41–44, KJV.

15. Cf. Also 3 Nephi 10:4–6.

promised land: “On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare [*bē’ēr*, make plain] this law, saying. . . .” The key term in this verse is the verb *b’r*, which here means “to explain, to elucidate (a law).”¹⁶ Robert Alter suggests that the use of *b’r* in Deuteronomy 1:5 “provides a central rationale for the whole book [of Deuteronomy]” as a repetition of previously enunciated divine law.¹⁷ The Book of Deuteronomy, on some level, *makes plain* the Lord’s instruction — or “law” — through Moses.

The second relevant text occurs toward the end of the Book of Deuteronomy after most of the “instruction” or legislation. There the verb *b’r* occurs for the second and only other time in the entire corpus of the Pentateuch, as Deuteronomy further records the Lord’s commandment given to Moses regarding this “law”: “And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law *very plainly* [*ba’ēr hêtēb*]” (Deuteronomy 27:8). In the context of writing, including the writing of scripture, *b’r* takes on the meaning “to write down clearly.”¹⁸ The use of *b’r* at the outset of Moses’ reiteration and explication of the Lord’s instruction or law and at or near its end creates a kind of inclusio or envelope figure demarcating the “plain” content. Moreover, what began as “plain” spoken words in Deuteronomy 1:5 becomes “plainly” written covenant *tôrâ*.

A third passage now warrants our consideration. Beyond its use in forming the inclusio at Deuteronomy 1:5 and 27:8, the verb *b’r* occurs in the entirety of the Hebrew Bible a third and final time in the written prophecies of Habakkuk, a prophet active around 612 BCE, whose writings may have been on the brass plates and thus may have influenced Lehi and Nephi. Habakkuk records: “And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, *and make it plain* [*ûbâ’ēr*] upon tables, that he may run that readeth it (Habakkuk 2:2, KJV). “Write the vision; *make it plain* [*ûbâ’ēr*] on tablets, so that a runner may read it” (Habakkuk 2:2, NRSV). From Habakkuk’s vision we have one of the plainest meristic¹⁹ statements of what Nephi called “the doctrine of Christ” in scripture: “but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

16. HALOT, 106.

17. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible, Volume 1: The Five Books of Moses* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019), 617.

18. HALOT, 106, glosses *b’r* as “to write down clearly” for Deuteronomy 27:8 and Habakkuk 2:2.

19. *Merismus* is a rhetorical device in which a whole is referred by one or several of its constituent parts. On meristic references to the doctrine of Christ in the Book of Mormon, see Noel B. Reynolds, “Biblical *Merismus* in Book of Mormon Gospel References,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 26 (2017): 106–34.

O. Palmer Robertson recommends that “rather than envisioning a placarded statement so large that a person running by might read it, the context of the prophetic vision on tablets for the ages to come suggests the ‘running’ of a messenger to ‘proclaim’ the vision.”²⁰ It is interesting to consider the image of a vision or revelation “ma[d]e ... plain on tablets [or plates], so that a runner may read it” in the context of latter-day prophets and missionaries running with a “plain” message originally written on metal tablets or plates in ages past for future generations.²¹ Robertson cites several examples of “prophetic” running from the Hebrew Bible: the “running” of the false prophets who were not authorized to run with a divine message (Jeremiah 23:21, the opposite of authorized running), Gehazi running for the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 4:26), and Zechariah hearing the Lord command a divine messenger to “run” with a message (Zechariah 2:4).²²

Moreover, regarding the Lord’s instructions to Habakkuk regarding his vision, Robertson writes: “The context suggests an intentional allusion to the inscribing of the original ‘ten words’ of the book of the Covenant (Exod. 31:18; 32:15–16; Deut. 9:10). Originally, Israel also had been directed to ‘inscribe’ on whitewashed stones all the words of the law, and to ‘make very plain’ (*ba’er hêtēb*) this inscription (Deut. 27:28). Habakkuk is directed to *make it plain [ba’er] on the tablets* the vision being given him” (emphasis in the original).²³ The Hebrew term *lūah*, plural *luhôt*, “tablets” (i.e., “wooden, stone, or metal tablet[s]”)²⁴ can just as well mean “plates.”²⁵ Making divine instruction “plain” on metal “tablets” or plates appears to be what Isaiah is doing after Isaiah 8:1, when he is instructed to write *bēhereṭ ’ēnôš* (“with a human [engraving] stylus”),²⁶ on a large *gillāyôn*, which in Isaiah 3:23 clearly constitutes

20. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 169.

21. My thanks to Jeff Lindsay for this added insight. Moreover, I would further note that Mormon has preserved for us (on metal plates) the image of Abish doing a prophetic type of running: “she ran forth from house to house making it [i.e., the theophanic events in Lamoni’s palace] known unto the people” (Alma 19:17) as part of a message that we too now “run” to “proclaim.”

22. Robertson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 169.

23. *Ibid.*, 168.

24. *HALOT*, 522–23.

25. Cf. BDB, 531–32. 1 Kings 7:36 states that Hiram carved cherubim, palm trees, and lions on the “plates [*halluhôt*] — its ledges [literally, ‘hands’]” (my modification of the KJV) or “plates of the stays” (JSP Tanakh 1917, ASV, ERV).

26. H.G.M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (London: Bloomsbury/T&T Clark, 2018), 193–203. It should be further noted

something like a metal mirror (i.e., a metal plate used as a mirror, *wēhaggilyōnīm*). Making divine instructions “plain” on metal “tables” — i.e., “tablets” — or plates is precisely what we find Nephi, Jacob, and their successors doing.

Where ancient Israel had been commanded not to “add to” or “diminish from” Yahweh’s “law” (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32 [MT 13:1]), the writing of Habakkuk’s vision constitutes a strong example of Yahweh adding to — or updating — his own “law.” Robertson further notes: “Reflecting the long-established pattern of inscribing a fresh copy of covenant law as an essential step in covenant renewal, Habakkuk’s instructions include inscribing his vision on the tablets.”²⁷ This insight seems particularly significant when we consider the function of Nephi’s small plates as both a political²⁸ and religious document. Doctrine and Covenants 84:57 designates the entire Book of Mormon, including the small plates, as “the new covenant,” a phrase ultimately derived from the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31: “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” — i.e., an added or re-added covenant. When Nephi, Jacob, and their successors wrote their visions, revelations, and the doctrine of Christ, they did just what Moses and Habakkuk did: they “made [them] plain” on covenant “tablets” or plates (see, e.g., 2 Nephi 25:7 and below). Their “plain” writings would become a part of a covenant and eventually “canon.”

“God Hath Taken Away His Plainness ... and Delivered unto Them Many Things Which They Cannot Understand”

In Jacob 4:13-14, Jacob makes an important general statement regarding prophecy, the function of the Holy Ghost, and the type of revelation that they were to record or “make plain” on plates. He then segues into commentary on how “plainness” can be retracted through divine agency. Moreover, Jacob appears to refer to his father Lehi’s rejection as a prophet at Jerusalem, including the attempts on Lehi’s life, and the heavenly book that Lehi read which “manifested plainly” of Jesus Christ:

JACOB: 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

that the *heret* used to shape the golden calf in Exodus 32:4 clearly constitutes an engraving tool.

27. Robertson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 168.

28. Noel B. Reynolds, “The Political Dimension in Nephi’s Small Plates,” *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (1987): 15–37.

they really are and of things as they really will be. Wherefore *these things are manifested unto us plainly* for the salvation of our souls. But behold, we are not witnesses alone in these things; for God also spake them unto prophets of old. But behold, *the Jews* [ancient Judahites] were a stiffnecked *people*, and *they despised the words of plainness* and *killed the prophets and sought for things* [words] *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* [words] *which they cannot understand*, because they desired it. And because they desired it God hath done it *that they may stumble*. (Jacob 4:14)

NEPHI: And it came to pass that *the Jews did mock him* because of the things [words] which he testified of them, for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations. And he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and *also the things* [words] *which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah* and also the redemption of the world. *And when the Jews* [ancient Judahites] *heard these things* [words] *they were angry with him*, yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain. And *they also sought his life* that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord is over all those whom he hath chosen because of their faith to make them mighty, even unto the power of deliverance. (1 Nephi 1:19-20)

What, then, did Jacob mean by the statement “God hath taken away his plainness from them [the ancient Judahites], and delivered unto them many things which they cannot understand” in Jacob 4:14? Evidence from the text of Jacob 14:13-18 suggests that he refers to at least three things: (1) the complexity of ancient Israelite prophetic writings in general and those of Isaiah in particular without “the key of knowledge,”²⁹ (2) the enigmatic nature of the law of Moses and its types, shadows, and rituals, and (3) the withdrawal of the Holy Ghost.

Jacob’s prologue to Zenos’s allegory in Jacob 4:13-18 contains specific lexical links to the prophecies of Isaiah. For example, the stone (*’eben*)

29. I.e., the “key of knowledge” mentioned in Luke 11:52. See further along in this section.

mentioned in Jacob 4:15-16 alludes directly to Yahweh as the “stone of stumbling [*ûlē'eben negep*] and for a rock of offence [and for a rock of stumbling, *ûlēšûr mikšôl*] to both the houses of Israel” in Isaiah 8:14 and the foundation “stone” in Isaiah 28:16 (see also Psalms 118:22). The phrases “they must needs fall,” “that they may stumble,” (Jacob 4:14), “the stumbling of the Jews” (4:15), and “stumble because of my anxiety for you” (Jacob 4:18), all refer to Isaiah 8:15 (“And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken”) and Isaiah 28:13 (“But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, *and fall* [and stumble, *wĕkāšĕlû*] *backward*, and be broken, and snared, and taken”). Jacob’s use of “safe foundation” (Jacob 4:15) and “sure foundation” (4:16-17, 2 times) allude to and quote the collocation “sure foundation [*mûsād mûsād*]” from Isaiah 28:16.

That Jacob has Isaiah’s words in mind in Jacob 4:14 finds confirmatory evidence in that fact that in Jacob 4:13-14 he also employs the prophetic language of his brother Nephi writing about the words of Isaiah and their “plainness”:

JACOB: 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 [words] as they really are, and of things [words] as they really will be. Wherefore these things are manifested unto us plainly for the salvation [*yĕšû'at*] of our souls. But behold, we are not witnesses alone in these things; for God also spake them unto prophets of old. But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people, and they despised the words of plainness and killed the prophets and sought for things [words] 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 [words] which they cannot understand because they desired it. And because they desired it, God hath done it that they may stumble.* (Jacob 4:14)

NEPHI: Wherefore hearken, O my people which are of the house of Israel, and *give ear unto my words, for because that the words of Isaiah [*yĕša'yāhû*] are not plain unto you — nevertheless they are plain unto all they that are filled with the spirit of prophecy,*

But I give unto you a *prophecy* according to the *Spirit* which is in me — *wherefore I shall prophesy according to the plainness which hath been with me* from the time that I came out from Jerusalem with my father. For behold, *my soul delighteth in plainness* unto my *people*, that they may learn. Yea, and *my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah*, for I came out from Jerusalem, and mine eyes hath beheld the *things* [words] of the *Jews*. And I know that the *Jews* do understand the *things* [words] of the *prophets*. And there is none other people that understand the *things* [words] which were spoken unto the *Jews* like unto them, save it be that they are taught after the manner of the *things* [words] of the *Jews*. But behold, I Nephi have not taught my children after the manner of the *Jews*; but behold, I of myself have dwelt at Jerusalem, wherefore I know concerning the regions round about. And I have made mention unto my children concerning the judgments of *God* which hath come to pass among the *Jews*, unto my children according to all that which *Isaiah hath spoken*, and I do not write them. *But behold, I proceed with mine own prophecy according to my plainness*, in the which I know that no man can err. Nevertheless in the days that the *prophecies of Isaiah* shall be fulfilled men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass. (2 Nephi 25:4-7)

Terms translated “spirit”; “plainly,” “plain,” “plainness”; “prophesy,” “prophesieth,” “prophets,” “prophecy,” “prophecies”; “understand,” “understanding”; “hath spoken,” “speaketh”; “words”/“things”; “Jews”; “God,” and “people” establish clear, firm lexical links between Nephi’s adumbration of his hermeneutical keys³⁰ to Isaiah in 2 Nephi 25:1-7 and Jacob’s statement on “plainness” in Jacob 4:13-14. Moreover, one can perhaps detect Jacob using an allusive wordplay on the names Isaiah (*yěša’ yāhú*, “Yahweh is salvation”) and Jesus (*yěšúa’*, “salvation”) in the expression “for the *salvation* [*yěšú’at* (*lišú’at*)] of our souls” (Jacob 4:13).

In 2 Nephi 25 and Jacob 4:13-14, Nephi and Jacob both emphasize the importance of the Holy Ghost as the key to understanding prophecy, including the written prophecies of the “prophets of old” (Jacob 4:13).³¹

30. See, e.g., Donald W. Parry, “Nephi’s Keys to Understanding Isaiah (2 Nephi 25:1-8),” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 47-65.

31. Jacob’s use of this idiom in the context of the obduracy of ancient Jews toward their own prophets may have some reference to what Nephi mentions near

Those writings clearly included what Nephi designates as the “words of Isaiah” or “prophecies of Isaiah.” Nephi and Jacob both knew that when Isaiah had received his prophetic commission, the Lord had commanded to make the message difficult for his hearers: “And [the Lord] said: Go and tell this people — Hear ye indeed, but they understood not; and see ye indeed, but they perceived 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 with their heart, and be converted and be healed” (2 Nephi 16:9-10, quoting Isaiah 6:9-10). Jacob quotes Isaiah acknowledging, “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season unto thee, O house of Israel, when ye are weary” (2 Nephi 7:4, quoting Isaiah 50:4). The message of Isaiah and the messages of all the Israelite “prophets of old” required the Holy Ghost — the spirit of prophecy bearing testimony of Jesus (Revelation 19:10) — to “manifest [them] plainly” or to making them “plain.”

Jacob’s statement “God hath taken away his plainness from them” echoes an earlier divine statement regarding “adding” and “taking away” recorded by Nephi: “For unto him that receiveth I will give more; and them that shall say we have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (2 Nephi 28:30; cf. 2 Nephi 29:3-10). Jacob’s words also recall Nephi’s repeated description of the “taking away” of “plain and precious things [words],” including divine scripture, doctrine, and covenants, by “the great and abominable church” as described in 1 Nephi 13:26-40.

Jacob 4:14 exhibits a number of additional, significant lexical connections to 1 Nephi 13. Shared terminology between Jacob 4:14 and 1 Nephi 13:29 abounds:

JACOB: But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people, and *they despised the words of plainness* and killed the prophets and *sought for things [words] 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 [words] which they cannot understand*, because they desired it. And because they desired it, God hath done it *that they may stumble*. (Jacob 4:14)

the outset of his record: “And when the Jews heard these things, they were angry with him, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out and stoned and slain” (1 Nephi 1:20).

NEPHI: *And after these plain and precious things [words] were taken away [by the Gentile “great and abominable church”], it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles. And after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters — which thou hast seen — with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, and thou seest because of the many plain and precious things [words] which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God — and because of these things [words] which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them. (1 Nephi 13:29)*

Paul Hoskisson, writing on the meaning of the phrase “looking beyond the mark” in Jacob 4:14, offers the following important insight: “Given that Jesus Christ is the general and specific subject of the chapter, a priori it can be expected that Christ and the mark are one and the same. Indeed, one verse in particular in chapter 4 seems to provide a hint on how to read verse 14.”³² He cites Jacob 4:5 as the relevant verse: “Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him.”³³ Hoskisson sees archery imagery at work in the metaphor of “the mark,” but relatedly the broader idea of arrows as pointers and guides³⁴ to divine instruction leads us back to the Liahona.

As I have proposed elsewhere,³⁵ Jacob uses a wordplay on the meaning of *tôrâ* (“law,” or better “instruction”) in terms of the verb **yry/yrh*, “instruct, teach,”³⁶ which appears to have had the original sense of “stretching out the finger, or the hand, to point out a route.”³⁷ In other words, Jacob is playing on the idea of the Law of Moses as a corpus of divine instruction that teaches by pointing: “And for this intent we

32. Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Looking Beyond the Mark,” in *A Witness for the Restoration: Essays in Honor of Robert J. Matthews*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Andrew C. Skinner (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 149–64, <https://rsc.byu.edu/witness-restoration/looking-beyond-mark>.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Hugh W. Nibley, “The Liahona’s Cousins,” *Improvement Era* 64, no. 2 (February 1961): 87–89, 104–11.

35. Matthew L. Bowen, “Scripture Note: ‘Pointing Our Souls unto Him,’” *Religious Educator* 20, no. 1 (2019): 165–71.

36. *HALOT*, 436.

37. *HALOT*, 1710.

keep the law [*tôrà*] of Moses, it pointing [cf. *yry/yrh*] our souls to him” (Jacob 4:5; see also Alma 34:14). Here the imagery and terminology pertaining to the Law of Moses and the Liahona converge.

All of the foregoing helps us appreciate the significance of Nephi’s description of the Liahona with its pointers as a means of delivering divine instruction, teaching, or “law” through writing thereon: “And there was also written upon them [the pointers] *a new writing, which was plain to be read, which did give us understanding concerning the ways of the Lord; and it was written and changed from time to time, according to the faith and diligence which we gave unto it.* And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things” (1 Nephi 16:29). This instruction was “law” — instruction by pointing — and scripture for Lehi and his family, every bit as much the law of Moses and the words and prophecies of the “prophets of old.”

When God “[took] away his plainness” and “delivered unto them [the ancient Judahites] many things [words] which they cannot understand” he retracted the guidance of the Holy Ghost which made the writings of Isaiah and other prophets “plain.” Thus its absence left what would otherwise have been “the words of plainness” to remain “hard saying[s]”³⁸ to the eyes and ears of the obdurate, especially those of “the builders” (Psalms 118:22; cf. “build” in Jacob 4:15-17) — the religious leadership. Moreover, the Lord had “take[n] away” the fulness of the priesthood (“I will *take away* the priesthood *out of their midst* [cf. the Hebrew idiom *hāsîr X miqqereb*, “take away ... from the midst],³⁹ JST Exodus 34:1; see also D&C 84:25).

The apostle Paul, who called the Law of Moses “holy” and its commandments “good.”⁴⁰ also averred that initially “the law [*nomos*] ... was added [*prosetethē*]⁴¹ because of transgressions” (Galatians 3:19). JST Exodus 34:1 states that the Lord instructed Moses to “hew” a second set of tablets “like unto the first,” and promised that he would “write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but it shall not be according to the first.” This “added” law would be “after the law of a carnal commandment” (JST Exodus 34:2). Not only would he “take away the priesthood” — i.e., his “holy order and the ordinances thereof” — but

38. Cf. John 6:60.

39. For some examples of *hāsîr X miqqereb*, see Exodus 23:25; Joshua 7:13; and Zephaniah 3:11. The idiom used in Isaiah 58:9 is similar.

40. Romans 7:12; 1 Timothy 1:8.

41. *Prostithēmi* is the verb same verb used in the LXX versions of the canon formula Deuteronomy 4:2 and 13:1 and in Revelation 22.

they would lose access to his immediate “presence” (“my presence shall not go up in their midst,” JST Exodus 34:1). For those ancient Israelites who “hardened their hearts” and did not “enter [the Lord’s] rest,”⁴² the “tak[ing] away of [God’s] plainness” involved both divine subtraction and addition.

The “taking away” of God’s “plainness” also involved human agency. The obduracy of religious leaders before, during, and after Jesus’s time created further obstacles to understanding. Jesus criticized the lawyers (Gk. *nomikoi*) — i.e., the scripture scholars — for hindering rather than helping their fellow Israelites. Luke records Jesus declaring, “Woe unto you, lawyers [*tois nomikois!*] for *ye have taken away* [Greek *ērate*] *the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered*” (Luke 11:52). The Joseph Smith Translation of this verse identifies “the key of knowledge”: “Woe unto you, lawyers! for *ye have taken away the key of knowledge, the fulness of the scriptures; ye enter not in yourselves into the kingdom; and those who were entering in, ye hindered*” (JST Luke 11:53). Joseph Smith may have conceived of this “key of knowledge” as “the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God” as administered by the “greater priesthood” (i.e., Melchizedek priesthood) that the Lord had “take[n] away” from their midst (JST Exodus 34:1; D&C 84:25). To this same greater priesthood also pertained the “sealing or binding power” as “the keys of the kingdom, which consist in the key of knowledge” (D&C 128:14).

Abinadi explained why the Law of Moses was given to ancient Israel and why ancient Israel found the Law with its vast array of performances, ordinances, and types so enigmatic:

And now I say unto you that it was expedient that there should be a law given to the children of Israel, yea, even *a very strict law* [*tôrâ qāšâ mē’ôd*]. For they were *a stiffnecked people* [*‘am-qěšēh-‘ôrep*], quick to do iniquity and slow to remember the Lord their God. Therefore there was a law given them, yea, *a law of performances and of ordinances*, a law which they were to observe *strictly* from day to day to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him. But behold, I say unto you that *all these things were types of things to come*. And now, did they understand 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

42. See Psalms 95:8–11.

not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God. (Mosiah 13:29-32)

The performances, ordinances, and types of the Law of Moses (*tôrât mōšeh*) reflect the method of divine “teaching” (cf. Hebrew *yry/yrh*) through symbolism, found in visions (e.g., Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1, 10; the Book of Revelation), and eminently in Jesus’s parables. The allegory of the olive tree reflects this type of teaching as an extended parable or an extended symbolic narrative.

We find another excellent example of how the Lord uses symbolism to teach in Lehi’s dream as recounted in 1 Nephi 8. Nephi writes that his father Lehi received this vision because of his “faith on the Son of God — and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come” (1 Nephi 10:17; see further 1 Nephi 11:1-7). Nephi, for his part, then declares, “I Nephi was desirous also that I might see and hear and know of these things by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men” (1 Nephi 10:17). Lehi and Nephi both saw or looked to “the mark.” Of him, they both bore witness after they saw him (see 1 Nephi 10:4-11; 11:7; etc.).

When Nephi sees “the things which [his] father saw” he also attains to an understanding of what its symbols meant (e.g., the rod of iron = the word of God⁴³ = Christ; the tree of life and = the love of God = Christ,⁴⁴ etc.). His brothers attained to no such understanding. Upon Nephi’s return from seeing this vision, his brothers were fighting about their father’s dream and its symbolism (“And it came to pass that I beheld my brethren, and they were disputing one with another concerning the things which my father had spoken unto them,” 1 Nephi 15:2). They could not see the symbolism and thus could not see “the mark”: “For he truly spake many great things unto them which was hard to be understood save a man should inquire of the Lord. And they being hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought” (1 Nephi 15:3).

In short order, Lehi would find the Liahona to be another type, shadow, and means of giving “plain” writings as “instruction” or “law” (1 Nephi 16). It taught the family the need to “look to God and live” (Alma 37:38-47, especially vv. 46-47). If the etymology and meaning of Liahona — Egyptian *l/r* (“to”) + *yhw* (“Yahweh,” “the Lord”) + *'i nw*

43. 1 Nephi 11:25; 15:23-25; JST Revelation 2:27; Helaman 3:29; cf. 1 Nephi 17:26, 29. See, e.g., Matthew L. Bowen, “What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?” *Insights* 25, no. 2 (2005): 2-3.

44. 1 Nephi 11:14-25.

(> Coptic *anau*, look!),⁴⁵ “see that ye look to God and live,” Jacob’s use of the phrases “it pointing our souls to him” and “looking beyond the mark” (Jacob 4:14) beyond a reference to Law of Moses (i.e., *tôrâ* — “instruction [by pointing]”) has some reference to the *Liahona* and the one to whom the *Liahona* “pointed”⁴⁶ — Jesus Christ himself. As Jesus himself said: “Behold, I am the law [*hattôrâ*], and the light. *Look unto me*, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life” (3 Nephi 15:9; cf. Alma 34:14).

Since all spiritual blindness and apostasy results, as did Nephite apostasy, in the Lord “tak[ing] away his word” and “withdrawing [his] spirit,” as Samuel the Lamanite put it (Helaman 13:8), both the Lord’s “word” and his “spirit” are precisely what must be “had again among the children of men” (Moses 1:41) — or re-added — in order for the conditions of apostasy to be reversed.

“He Shall Add ... to Recover His People”: The Prophetic Framing for Zenos’s Allegory

The dual realities that “God ha[d] taken away his plainness from” ancient Israel and Judah and that the “great and abominable Church” among the Gentiles had “taken away” many “plain and precious things” (including covenants) from Jewish scripture resulted in “an exceedingly great many” Gentiles “stumbl[ing]” (1 Nephi 13:29) and “the stumbling of the Jews” (Jacob 4:14–15).

The collective human “stumbling” from all that had been “taken away” necessarily required divine, prophetic “adding.”

On the back side of his quotation of Zenos’s allegory of the olive tree (Jacob 5), Jacob uses Isaiah 11:11 as a closing frame and a hermeneutical lens through which to view the entire allegory, and especially the Lord of the vineyard’s saving action: “And in the day that *he shall set* his hand *again* [Hebrew *yôsîp*, “he shall add”] the second time to recover his people [Isaiah 11:11] is the day — yea, even the last time — that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power to nourish and prune his vineyard; after that the end soon cometh” (Jacob 6:2). I have posited elsewhere that Isaiah’s use of *yôsîp* Isaiah 11:11 provided Jacob the key lexical link

45. Matthew L. Bowen, “Look to the Lord!: The Meaning of *Liahona* and the Doctrine of Christ in Alma 37–38,” in *Give Ear to My Words: Text and Context of Alma 36–42 (The 48th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium)*, ed. Kerry M. Hull, Nicholas J. Frederick, and Hank R. Smith (Salt Lake City, Provo, UT; RSC/Deseret Book, 2019), 275–95.

46. 1 Nephi 16:26–29; Alma 37:40.

to Zenos's evident and replete use of the Hebrew "do something again" idiom (Hebrew *yāsap/yôšîp*).⁴⁷

Evidence in Nephi's use of Isaiah 11:11 and Isaiah 29:14 in 2 Nephi 25:17 (cf. 2 Nephi 25:21; 29:1) and Mormon's use of Isaiah 11:11–12 in 3 Nephi 5:23–26 suggests a longstanding paronomastic⁴⁸ association between the name *Joseph* and Isaiah's aforementioned prophecies of restoration in Nephite thought.⁴⁹ As noted above, the basic meaning of the verb *yāsap/yôšîp* — the key verb in Isaiah 11:11 is to "add."⁵⁰ With "God ha[ving] taken away his plainness" from the Jews and the Gentiles having "taken away" the "plain and precious things ... according to the plainness which is in the Lamb" from the Jewish scriptures, how appropriate that the Lord himself would undertake to "add" them again. And Jacob, like Nephi, may even have had implicit reference to the name *Joseph* ("may he [God] add") when he prophesied, using Isaiah 11:11, that the Lord would "set his hand again [*yôšîp*]" — or "add" — "to recover his people" (Jacob 6:2). Appropriately, the raised-up seer through whom much of the re-"adding" of lost "plainness" would be a "Joseph" (see 2 Nephi 3:5; JST Genesis 50:33), the one biblical Hebrew name etiologicalized in terms of divine "adding" and "taking away" (see again Genesis 30:23–24).

Conclusion

Jacob's assertion that "God hath taken away his plainness" (Jacob 4:14) should be regarded as part of a family of scriptural texts (e.g., Moses 1:41; 1 Nephi 13; 2 Nephi 28:27–30; 2 Nephi 29:1–10) with language echoing the etiology offered for the name *Joseph* in Genesis 30:23–24 in terms of antonyms *'āsap* ("take away") and *yāsap*. This language also revolves around the prohibitions in the Deuteronomic canon formulae

47. Matthew L. Bowen, "I Have Done According to My Will': Reading Jacob 5 as a Temple Text," in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City and Orem, UT: Eborn Books and The Interpreter Foundation, 2016), 247–48. See also Matthew L. Bowen and Loren Spendlove, "'Thou Art the Fruit of My Loins': The Interrelated Symbolism and Meanings of the Names Joseph and Ephraim in Ancient Scripture," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 273–98.

48. *Paronomasia* is a wordplay involving similar sounding, but etymologically unrelated words.

49. Mathew L. Bowen, "'He Shall Add': Wordplay on the Name Joseph and an Early Instance of Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon," *Insights* 30, no. 2 (2010): 2–4; Bowen, "Onomastic Wordplay on Joseph and Benjamin and Gezera Shawa in the Book of Mormon," 255–73.

50. HALOT, 418.

(Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 [MT 13:1]) against human “adding” to and “diminishing from” that instruction.

Three texts in the Hebrew Bible that use the verb *b’r* (“make plain”) — Deuteronomy 1:5; 27:8 and Habakkuk 2:2 — shed important light on the covenant and scriptural implications of what Nephi and Jacob may have meant by “manifest plainly,” “[God’s] plainness,” “plain and precious things,” “words of plainness,” “writing . . . plain to be read,” etc. The inclusion of Deuteronomy 1:5 and 27:8 marked the Deuteronomic legislation as the Lord’s “plain” instruction. In Habakkuk 2:2, the Lord commanded Habakkuk to “write his vision” and “make it plain upon tablets [plates].” Nephi and Jacob followed a similar practice upon Nephi’s small plates as they recorded the added revelation they received in “plainness.”

Jacob’s broader statement that the ancient Judahites had “despised the words of plainness” and that consequently “God hath taken away his plainness from them” should be considered in light of Nephi’s earlier statements on “plain” writing, “plainness,” and “plain and precious things” in 1 Nephi 13:26–35, 40; 16:29; 2 Nephi 25:4–7, 20, 28 and elsewhere. In 1 Nephi 13, in particular, Nephi describes the “taking away” of “plain and precious” words, covenants, and doctrine from scripture by the “great and abominable church” formed among the Gentiles as a result of which “an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them” (1 Nephi 13:29). The prophet Malachi describes a similar situation among the post-exilic Judean exiles and the priests who had failed in their responsibilities to teach the law of Moses (cf. Mosiah 13): “But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:8). The failure of Judah’s pre- and postexilic religious leadership, in particular, contributed to what Jacob described as “the stumbling of the Jews” (Jacob 4:14–15) and the withdrawal of God’s “plainness.”⁵¹

Thus, God’s “tak[ing] away his plainness” involved both divine and human agency. During his own time, Jesus asserted that the “lawyers” had “*taken away* the key of knowledge, *the fulness of the scriptures*” and thereby had “hindered” those whom they should have helped. (JST Luke 11:53). “Because of wickedness” the fulness of the scriptures, including the fulness of Moses’s record, was “not had among the children of men” (Moses 1:21). Nevertheless, as the Lord promised, “in

51. Jeremiah and Ezekiel both describe similar circumstances before and during Judah’s exile. See Jeremiah 2:8; 10:21; 12:10; 23:1–2; 50:6; Ezekiel 24:1–10. See also 1 Nephi 21:1. Cf. also Isaiah 56:9–12. Zechariah further mentions the failure of Judah’s spiritual leadership (see Zechariah 10:2–3; 11:3–5, 15–17).

a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and *take many of them* from the book which thou shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; and *they shall be had again* among the children of men — among as many as shall believe” (Moses 1:41). Jacob uses Zenos’s allegory of the olive trees to describe the reversal of God’s having “taken away his plainness from [the Jews]” (Jacob 4:14). Jacob uses Isaiah’s description of divine adding in Isaiah 11:11 as the hermeneutical lens through which he gives his audience a view of the Lord’s acting to remedy the situation described in Jacob 4:14. Immediately following Zenos’s allegory, Jacob writes: “And in the day that *he shall* set his hand *again* [yôšîp] the second time to recover his people is the day — yea, even the last time — that the servants of the Lord shall go forth in his power to nourish and prune his vineyard; and after that the end soon cometh” (Jacob 6:2). In conjunction with divine “adding” — the bringing forth of the sealed book described in Isaiah 29:14 — this is the divine re-“adding” of the “plainness” that God (and humankind) had “taken away” as described in Jacob 4:14.

[The author would like to thank Suzy Bowen, Jeffrey D. Lindsay, Allen Wyatt, Victor Worth, Don Norton, Tanya Spackman, Daniel C. Peterson, Noel B. Reynolds, and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw.]

Matthew L. Bowen was raised in Orem, Utah, and graduated from Brigham Young University. He holds a PhD in Biblical Studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and is currently an associate professor in religious education at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. He is also the author of *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2018). He and his wife (the former Suzanne Blattberg) are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.

BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD

Kevin L. Barney

Abstract: *This thorough treatment of the mention of baptism for the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:29 gives a meticulous analysis of Paul's Greek argument, and lays out the dozens (or perhaps hundreds) of theories that have been put forth with respect to its interpretation. Barney concludes that "the most natural reading" and the "majority contemporary scholarly reading" is that of "vicarious baptism." Therefore, "the Prophet Joseph Smith's reading of the passage to refer to such a practice was indeed correct."*

[**Editor's Note:** Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.]

See Kevin L. Barney, "Baptized for the Dead," in *"To Seek the Law of the Lord": Essays in Honor of John W. Welch*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson and Daniel C. Peterson (Orem, UT: The Interpreter Foundation, 2017), 9–58. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/to-seek-the-law-of-the-lord-essays-in-honor-of-john-w-welch-2/>.]

I have long admired John W. Welch (Jack) as both a person and a scholar. I first encountered Jack only obliquely through his work in a Book of Mormon class my freshman year at Brigham Young University (BYU). Darwin L. Thomas, then a professor of sociology, devoted a class period to the phenomenon of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon (I would only later learn to associate that work with Jack).¹ As fate would have it,

¹ John W. Welch, "The Discovery of Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon: 40 Years Later," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 74–87, traces the history of

I would end up following a somewhat similar path to the educational trail Jack blazed: influenced by Hugh Nibley as a missionary, majoring in classics post-mission at BYU, followed by legal studies (albeit Jack became an actual academic and I went into private practice and became only a frustrated one). Shortly after Jack organized the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) in 1979, I took the liberty of writing him a letter expressing my interest in and enthusiasm for the endeavor and suggesting a couple of projects I thought might fit under its umbrella.² He promptly wrote me back a very warm and encouraging letter, including some practical suggestions for approaching the topics I had identified. Eventually I would have the privilege of publishing reviews of some of his work.³ His talent for conceptualizing and organizing large scholarly projects is simply unmatched. I am very pleased to be able to contribute this small offering to the Festschrift in his honor.

Introduction

The Prophet Joseph Smith's first public affirmation of the practice of vicarious baptism for the dead was made during a funeral sermon for Seymour Brunson in August 1840 in response to a widow whose son had died without baptism. This led to an actual practice of such vicarious baptisms, initially in the Mississippi River near Nauvoo, Illinois, which was procedurally modified over time by subsequent revelations.⁴

The scriptural inspiration for this modern practice of vicarious baptism was undoubtedly 1 Corinthians 15:29. Early Christians who actually engaged in such a practice were deemed heretical, however, and

Jack's work with this phenomenon. I wrote a blog summary of this article, Kevin Barney, "The Discovery of Chiasmus in the BoM," May 17, 2008, <http://bycommonconsent.com/2008/05/17/the-discovery-of-chiasmus-in-the-bom/>.

2 One of the projects I later reconceptualized and published as "The Joseph Smith Translation and Ancient Texts of the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 3 (1987): 85–102. The other project I eventually published as "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 15–81. For a report of my letter, see *Insights, FARMS Newsletter* 1, no. 2 (November 1981): 4.

3 Kevin L. Barney, "The Foundation of Our Religion," *FARMS Review* 18, no. 2 (2006): 179–87; reviewing John W. Welch and Erick B. Carlson, eds., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), and Kevin L. Barney, "A Book of Mormon Casebook," *FARMS Review* 21, no. 1 (2009): 53–62, reviewing John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2008).

4 H. David Burton, "Baptism for the Dead: LDS Practice," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992) 1:95.

there has been strenuous theological resistance to any such practice from that time to today. In this article I shall explore why the Prophet Joseph's reading of that passage as referring to a practice of vicarious baptism is indeed the contemporary majority scholarly view.⁵ I shall set the stage by analyzing the structure of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15; I shall then closely analyze the Greek text of verse 29 and follow with a lexical analysis of the three key words in the expression "baptized for the dead." After I shall examine why there is resistance to that reading, and then provide a summary (of at least some) of the many alternative theories that have been proposed, showing how none of them is superior to the vicarious baptism reading.⁶

The Structure of Paul's Argument

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives a sustained argument in response to reports he had heard that some in Corinth were denying the resurrection. In approaching verse 29, it is important to appreciate its placement within Paul's larger argument. Paul does not intend to make a particular point about baptism for the dead itself; rather, he means to laud those Corinthians engaging in the practice for the belief such a practice necessarily entails in the resurrection of the dead, and to highlight such belief as a model for the faction of the Corinthian church that had rejected the resurrection. This is part of a larger logical inconsistency attack on the position of those Corinthians who deny the resurrection. The focus of Paul's argument throughout the entire chapter is on the resurrection of the dead, both of Christ himself and of others more generally.

An outline of the argument might look something like this (all verse numbers are in 1 Corinthians 15):

- I. 1–11: Summary of Christ's resurrection and post-resurrection appearances.

5 "Once the theological pressures from later possible developments of practice and doctrine are felt less constricting, the text seems to speak plainly enough about a practice within the Church of vicarious baptism for the dead. This is the view of most contemporary critical exegetes." Krister Stendahl, "Baptism for the Dead: Ancient Sources," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:97. That the vicarious baptism view of the verse is the majority understanding is also demonstrated by the English translational tradition. See Appendix B — Survey of Translations.

6 My focus in this article will be strictly on the linguistics of the verse. For a Mormon perspective on the relevant theology and history, see David L. Paulsen and Brock M. Mason, "Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 2 (2010): 22–49.

- II. 12–34: Logical Inconsistency of Denying the Resurrection.
 - A. 12–19: If Christ is not raised, our preaching and your faith are in vain.
 - B. 20–28: But in fact Christ has been raised; order of the resurrection given.
 - C. 29–34: Further Implications.
 - 1. 29: Baptism for the dead.
 - 2. 30–34: Why would Paul risk life and limb?
- III. 35–57: The Resurrection Body.
 - A. 35–44: The reasonableness of the resurrection body.
 - B. 45–49: Comparison and contrast of Christ with Adam.
 - C. 50–57: Necessity of the resurrection body and the destruction of death.
- IV. 58: Be unshaken by false teaching.

The Greek Text of 1 Corinthians 15:29

Epei ti poiēsousin hoi baptizomenoi huper tōn nekrōn; ei holōs nekroi ouk egeirontai, ti kai baptizontai huper autōn;

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? (KJV)

In approaching the Greek text of the verse, I must begin with two technical issues. First, note that the end of the verse in the KJV presupposes the reading *tōn nekrōn* “the dead.” This is clearly a late form of text; the original reading should be the pronoun *autōn* “their, of them.”⁷ This variation does not in any way affect the meaning of the passage, as the antecedent to the pronoun is indeed *tōn nekrōn* “the dead” from earlier in the verse.

Second, there is some question as to how the verse should best be punctuated. Clearly there should be a question mark at the end (represented in Greek texts with the ; symbol). The KJV has a minor

⁷ See Eberhard and Erwin Nestle, Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini and Bruce M. Metzger, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), 468 at apparatus note for v. 29.

break, represented by a comma, after the first “baptized for the dead,” and a question mark after “if the dead rise not at all.” In this it is following Martin Luther. But virtually all other Greek editions and modern translations reverse that punctuation, putting the question mark after the first “baptized for the dead” and a minor break after “if the dead rise not at all.”⁸ Although the variant punctuation does not appreciably change the meaning of the text, I believe the question mark should indeed come first and the minor break second, with the vast majority of editions. If one were to revise the KJV text to reflect these two technical issues, it would look like this:

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead? If the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for them?

The verse begins with the conjunction *epei*, which in Greek can be construed either temporally or causally, much like *since* in English. When used causally and followed by a question, as here, as a matter of idiom the word needs to be rendered something like *otherwise*, *else*, or *for then*, as the KJV correctly takes it. Thus, the opening word of the verse connects this passage logically with the preceding argument in favor of a resurrection of the dead; one might paraphrase the impact of the word with something like this: “If it were the case that, contrary to my argument, there really were no resurrection, how would you explain the following?”⁹ This shows that the verse is very much a part of Paul’s argument based on some of the logical ramifications that would result if in fact there were no resurrection.

The next word, *ti*, is the neuter of the interrogative pronoun *tis*, used here to introduce an interrogative sentence in the form of a rhetorical question, and appropriately rendered in the KJV with English *what*.

Then follows the main verb of the question, *poiēsousin*, which is the third person plural future active indicative form of the verb *poieō*, the most basic meaning of which is *to do* or *to make*. The precise connotation of the verb here is somewhat obscure, and most translations simply render it with its most basic meaning, *to do*, much like the KJV. The Revised

8 Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, 3rd edition (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 614 at punctuation apparatus note for v. 29. The punctuation apparatus is explained in the Introduction at pages xli– xlv.

9 The New International Version (NIV) makes this explicit by rendering the beginning of the verse “Now if there is no resurrection...”

Standard Version (RSV), the New Testament of which was published in 1946, renders “what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead?”; *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* paraphrases with “What must be thought of the conduct of those who receive baptism [for the dead]? Will they not seem to act foolishly?”¹⁰; and the New English Bible (NEB) begins the verse with “Again, there are those who receive baptism on behalf of the dead. Why should they do this?” It is perhaps only by such an extreme paraphrase that one can begin to approach the work the verb was meant to do here.

The subject of the verb is *hoi baptizomenoi*, which is the plural masculine present passive participle of the verb *baptizō* with the definite article, and literally means *the ones-being-baptized*, although this is typically smoothed out in English with something like “those who are baptized” or “those who receive baptism.” This is followed by the preposition *huper*, rendered “for” in the KJV, and which governs an articular plural noun (or, more accurately, an adjective being used substantively as a noun) in the genitive, *tōn nekron*, meaning “the dead.” (I shall discuss the meaning of the three key terms *baptized*, *for*, and *the dead* in more detail below.) This constitutes the initial question of the verse.

The next (rhetorical) question is introduced by the conditional particle *ei*, meaning *if*. This introduces a first class conditional sentence, in which the premise (the protasis) will be assumed to be true for the sake of argument. The verb of the protasis is *egeirontai*, which is the third person plural present indicative (the mood required of the protasis in a first class condition) passive of the verb *egeirō*, meaning *to rise*, preceded here by the negative *ouk*. The verb here has the connotation “to arouse from the sleep of death; to recall the dead to life.” The subject of the verb is *nekroi* “(the) dead,” this time without the definite article explicitly present (this noun in the plural without the article can have the connotation “all the dead”). The adverb *holōs* means “wholly, altogether,” but with a negative as here it means “at all.” The apodosis begins with the interrogative *ti* immediately followed by the conjunction *kai*, which here points to the significance of the question: “why then. . . ?” The verb is repeated here in the third person plural present passive indicative, *baptizontai* (with the subject of the verb still being *the ones-being-baptized*) followed by *huper autōn* “for them.” The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), widely regarded as the scholarly standard, thus renders the passage as follows:

10 *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* is embedded in the Blue Letter Bible. See <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G4160&t=KJV>

Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?

The Three Key Words

Any attempt to read 1 Corinthians 15:29 in some way other than as a reference to vicarious baptism will likely do so by seeking to metaphorize or otherwise avoid the straightforward meaning of one or more of the three key words in the expression “baptized for the dead”: the verb *baptizō*, the preposition *huper* + genitive, and the substantive (adjective used as a noun) *nekros*. In this section I shall examine the lexis of each of these three words, first by reviewing the original usage of these words in classical Greek, and then by outlining the way these words were used in the Koine Greek in which the New Testament itself was written.¹¹

Lexis of the Verb *baptizō*

In classical Greek, the basic meaning of the verb *baptizō* was “to dip, plunge,” often used with respect to sinking or disabling ships. Used of persons, it conveyed the sense of becoming drenched. A number of metaphorical uses developed from this basic meaning, such as speaking of crowds flooding into a city, becoming “soaked” in wine, getting over one’s head and ears in debt, or one getting into “deep water.”¹²

Moving forward in time to the religious use of Hellenistic or Koine Greek (the “common” or simplified form of Greek that grew out of the conquests of Alexander the Great and in which the texts of the New Testament were written), this secular use of the word is no longer found. Rather, the word is only used in a religious or ceremonial sense, with the following uses attested:

11 In this article I shall use the expression “secure Pauline corpus” to refer to the books of 1 Thessalonians, Philipians, Philemon, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Corinthians, and Romans. It is not my intention in doing this to make any implicit comment on the authenticity of the authorship of the other letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament. Rather, my intention is simply to avoid the complications of the authorship question when evaluating Paul’s own usage with respect to this vocabulary.

12 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) (hereafter Liddell and Scott), s.v. “baptize,” online as part of the Perseus classical library at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dbapti%2Fzw>

1. “Wash ceremonially for purpose of purification, wash, purify,” used of a broad range of repeated ritual washing rooted in Israelite tradition.
2. “To use water in a rite for purpose of renewing or establishing a relationship with God, plunge, dip, wash, baptize.”
 - a. of dedicatory cleansing associated with the ministry of John the Baptist
 - b. of cleansing performed by Jesus himself
 - c. of the Christian sacrament of initiation after Jesus’ death
3. “To cause someone to have an extraordinary experience akin to an initiatory water-rite, to plunge, baptize.”
 - a. typologically of Israel’s passage through the Red Sea
 - b. of the Holy Spirit, i.e., with fire
 - c. of martyrdom¹³

Lexis of the Preposition *huper* + Genitive

In classical Greek, the most basic meaning of the preposition *huper* + genitive was the locative one, “over.” In a state of rest the sense was “above,” and in a state of motion the sense was “across” or sometimes “beyond.” This gave rise to metaphorical uses, such as “in defense of, on behalf of,” “for the prosperity or safety of,” “in the interest of,” “instead of,” or “in the name of.” Other attested uses include “for the purpose of” and “concerning.”¹⁴

Moving forward in time to religious Hellenistic Greek, the basic locative use for “over, above” is no longer found; the word is rather used in metaphorical or nonliteral senses ultimately derived from that basic root meaning. The word appears about 450 times in the Septuagint, with a little over half governing the accusative case; in the New Testament the word appears about 160 times, with the vast majority (about 135 times) governing the genitive case, as in our passage. The preposition *huper* is sometimes used simply as a stylistic variation and thus with the same

13 Frederick William Danker, reviser and editor, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 164–65 (hereafter BDAG). This book is the most recent and most authoritative lexicon of New Testament Greek. The abbreviation BDAG refers to the authors and editors of the work over time: Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich.

14 See Liddell and Scott, s.v. “*huper*” at [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Du\(pe%2Fr](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Du(pe%2Fr)

meanings as the prepositions *peri* (about, concerning) or *anti* (in place of, instead of, in substitution for). Paul uses *huper* far more than any other New Testament author.

BDAG organizes the attested usage of *huper* governing the genitive in the New Testament into the following uses:

1. A marker indicating that an activity or event is in some entity's interest, *for, in behalf of, for the sake of someone/something*.
 - a. With a genitive of the person or a human collective: after words that express a request, prayer, etc.
 - i. after words and expressions that denote working, caring, concerning oneself about someone/something
 - ii. after expressions having to do with sacrifice
 - iii. generally *einai huper tinos* to be for someone, to be on someone's side
 - iv. after expressions of suffering, dying, devoting oneself, etc. So especially of the death of Christ: *for, in behalf of* humanity/the world
 - b. With a genitive of the thing, in which case it must be variously translated, such as "in order to atone for the sins of the world," "in order to show that God's promises are true," "for the strengthening of your faith."
 - c. *In place of, instead of, in the name of*. Papyri often have *huper autou* to explain that the writer is writing "as the representative of" an illiterate person. Sometimes the meaning *in place of* merges with *on behalf of, for the sake of* (BDAG places 1 Corinthians 15:29 here, although noting that the matter is debated).
2. Marker of the moving cause or reason, *because of, for the sake of, for*, such as with verbs of suffering, giving the reason for it.
3. Marker of general content, whether of a discourse or mental activity, *about, concerning* (about equivalent to *peri* [*tinis*]).¹⁵

Lexis of the Substantive *nekros*

In classical Greek, the root meaning of *nekros* (as a substantive derived from the adjective) is "a corpse," from which it came also to mean "a dying person." In the plural, it meant "the dead, dwellers in the nether

¹⁵ BDAG, 1030–31.

world,” as in the 10th book of Homer’s *Odyssey*. As an adjective the word means “dead, inanimate, inorganic.”¹⁶

BDAG suggests the following uses of the word in the New Testament and related literature:

A. As an adjective:

1. pertaining to being in a state of loss of life, *dead*, of persons
2. pertaining to being so morally or spiritually deficient as to be in effect dead, *dead* (as a figurative extension of A.1 above)
 - i. of persons
 - ii. of things
3. pertaining to having never been alive and lacking capacity for life, *dead*, *lifeless*

B. As a substantive:

1. one who is no longer physically alive, *dead person*, *a dead body*, *a corpse*
2. one who is so spiritually obtuse as to be in effect dead, *dead person* (a figurative extension of 1 above)¹⁷

Resistance to the Majority View

Paul uses the practice of vicarious baptism in neutral terms to make a point about the resurrection of the dead, which is his particular interest in this chapter. He neither explicitly recommends the practice nor condemns it; he simply *uses* it to make his point. Therefore, many scholars who also happen to be Christian believers have no problem reading this verse as an allusion to the practice of vicarious baptism; nor, in my view, should they. For instance, the New English Translation, a production of the Dallas Theological Seminary, gives the following note on the expression “baptized for the dead” in 1 Corinthians 15:29:

The most likely interpretation is that some Corinthians had undergone baptism to bear witness to the faith of fellow believers who had died without experiencing that rite themselves. Paul’s reference to the practice here is neither a

¹⁶ See Liddell and Scott, s.v. “*nekros*,” at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dnekro%2F6>

¹⁷ BDAG, 667–68.

recommendation nor a condemnation. He simply uses it as evidence from the lives of the Corinthians themselves to bolster his larger argument, begun in 15:12, that resurrection from the dead is a present reality in Christ and a future reality for them. Whatever they may have proclaimed, the Corinthians' actions demonstrated that they had hope for a bodily resurrection.¹⁸

This is, I believe, a proper approach to the passage. The vicarious baptism interpretation is the majority reading among critical scholars today.

There remains, however, a significant minority of Christian scholars who reject the straightforward reading of this passage. One of the rationales for this rejection is the sparse attestation of the practice in the New Testament — this one verse alone — and the lack of any contemporary historical evidence for the practice in New Testament times. (Query, however, what kind of historical evidence one might reasonably expect [beyond Paul's letters] if the practice were largely limited to Corinth in the mid-first century AD.) The more pressing concern seems to be a refusal to believe that Paul could have or would have written of such a practice without at the same time affirmatively condemning it.¹⁹

Consequently, numerous (sometimes very strained) attempts at reading the passage in some way, *any* way other than as a reference to vicarious baptism have been made over time. Below I shall survey the most common exegetical attempts at variant understandings of 1 Corinthians 15:29. My principal sources for these alternate attempts will be two books derived from dissertations concluded 55 years apart (1948 and 2003). First, the seminal treatment of Bernard M. Foschini, "*Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead*" *I Cor. 15:29: An Exegetical Historical Dissertation*,²⁰ and second the most recent extensive survey of the issue,

18 See note 17 to 1 Cor. 15:29 in the NET Bible at <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm>

19 See, for instance, John D. Reaume, "Another Look at 1 Corinthians 15:29, 'Baptized for the Dead,'" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (October–December 1995): 457–75 at note 4. Of course, this is a dangerous view to press, because the implication of this point of view would seem to be that if the verse really means what it appears to say, then Paul of necessity was affirmatively endorsing the practice.

20 Bernard M. Foschini, "*Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead*" *I Cor. 15:29: An Exegetical Historical Dissertation* (Worcester, MA: The Heffernan Press, 1951) (hereafter Foschini); Foschini's work had previously appeared in two other forms: "'Those Who

Michael F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection*.²¹ I will also add some historical theories missed by Foschini from J. W. Horsley, “Baptism for the Dead,”²² and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*.²³

How Many Theories Are There?

Realistically, it is impossible to come up with a single, definitive number of how many different theories there are with respect to “baptism for the dead” in 1 Corinthians 15:29. There are several reasons for this. First, many of the theories were proposed hundreds of years ago in various parts of the world and in different languages in sources that are often difficult to recover today. Even Foschini often had to resort to secondary descriptions of a particular theory, being unable to locate the original source. Second, people may well take different views on what constitutes a theory worthy of inclusion in any such attempted catalog. For instance, I quote below two theories from Horsley’s catalog that struck me as so bereft of argument that they did not even deserve to be listed in the catalog I have assembled here:

(25) Baptism that Death May Be Abolished. “This is an interpretation mentioned by Heinsius, but how it can be extracted from the Greek neither he nor we can see.”

(37) Rather die than deny their hope by baptism received. “This is the view of P. Colomesius, but

Are Baptized for the Dead? I Cor. 15:29: An Exegetical Historical Dissertation” (S.T.D. diss., Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1948), and a series of five articles under the same title in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 12 (1950): 260–76, 379–88 and 13 (1951): 46–78, 172–98, 276–83. Citations in this article are to the book form of this material. Foschini 55–58 gives a (negative) review of the Mormon concept of baptism for the dead, seeing it as a variant of vicarious baptism, but since his argument here is entirely theological as opposed to linguistic, responding to it is beyond the scope of this paper. Hull 2–3 takes a more modern and ecumenical approach to the Mormon practice.

21 Michael F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005) (hereafter Hull).

22 *The Newbery House Magazine* II, No. 1 (January 1890): 15–21 and II, No. 4 (June 1890): 396–403 (hereafter Horsley). An online scan of this source from Princeton University is available at <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000053566> and clicking the first link.

23 Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1242–49 (hereafter Thiselton).

how he makes it accord with the Greek, or the argument, *non liquet* [it is not clear].”²⁴

Third, different people will group or distinguish various theories in different ways. For instance, Horsley counts as four separate theories (1) those who are baptized in the name of the dead Christ, (2) those who are baptized in the name of the dead Christ and John the Baptist, (3) those who are baptized in the name of the dead Christ and the apostles, and (4) those who are baptized in the name of the dead Christ and all those who have died in him. Foschini for his part groups these into two theories only: (1) those who are baptized in the name of the dead Christ and (2) those who are baptized in the name of the dead Christ and others. Horsley, in his conclusion, wonders out loud whether perhaps these four theories shouldn't all be grouped together as a single theory. So does this constitute four theories, two theories, or one theory? Many of the theories set forth by Foschini and others have within them variations on the same basic idea; if those variations were counted as separate, stand-alone theories, the number of theories could be greatly increased, with no substantive difference in the catalog of theories as a whole.

In older literature the number 40 was often used as an approximation for how many theories there were, without any citation or explanation of where that number comes from. More recent scholarly literature on the subject tends to recite the number 200, either in addition to 40 (something like “there are at least 40 theories, and perhaps as many as 200”) or more recently as the lone estimate for the number of theories.²⁵ Although this figure is most commonly recited without any citation, in a few cases a citation is given, and in these cases the citation is always to the same source, an article by K.C. Thompson published in 1964.²⁶ It turns out that the source for the widely repeated 200 number is a (problematic) footnote in that article (footnote 2 on p. 647):

Their number has been variously computed. The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh 1911) put it at 36, absurdly low, for I myself have

24 Horsley, 396 and 400–01.

25 For instance, Paulsen and Mason, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity,” twice recite the 200 number: “Indeed, scholarly consideration of this verse has produced more than two hundred variant readings” (p. 26), and “Of the over two hundred interpretations, only a few remain as ‘legitimate possibilities’” (p. 30).

26 K. C. Thompson, “I Corinthians 15, 29 and Baptism for the Dead,” in *Studia Evangelica*, ed. F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1964), 2.1:647–59.

counted 39 types of solution, each with its sub-species. M. Raeder has recently added a 40th, espoused by J. Jeremias in his *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, London 1960, p. 36 footnote. Dr. Evans is nearer the mark in his recent edition of Tertullian's *De Resurrectione Carnis*, London 1960. He quotes 200.

First, it seems odd to characterize 36 as “absurdly low” when compared to 40, the number he himself had come up with. Second, since Thompson explicitly recites the number 40 as the number of theories at that time (39 he had counted plus the then recently articulated theory of Maria Raeder), this would appear to be the source for the widespread articulation that there are 40 theories. Most notably, Thompson states that Ernest Evans “quotes 200.” This statement represents the sole pillar on which rests the widespread scholarly repetition that there are 200 theories regarding the meaning of baptism for the dead.

In order to check Thompson's claim, I obtained Evans' edition of Tertullian's *De Resurrectione*. The passage to which Thompson clearly meant to refer is at line 48:41 of Tertullian's text which reads: *si autem et baptizantur quidam pro mortuis, videbimus an ratione* “And again, if some are baptized for the dead, we shall enquire whether this is with good reason.” Evans's comment on this passage is as follows:

There are said to be more than two hundred explanations of St. Paul's reference to baptism for the dead, most of them concerned to explain away the apparent superstition of the practice or to excuse the apostle's failure to rebuke it. Tertullian takes the passage to mean what it says, but by adding *hoc eos instituisse* [they had instituted that (custom)] hints that the Corinthians were doing this without apostolic authority.²⁷

Evans had also written a commentary on Paul's letters to the Corinthians, so I also checked that source in case he had more to say on the subject there. There he states simply that “the meaning here is no longer clear, and perhaps certainty is unattainable. The *many theories* in

27 Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise on the Resurrection* (London: SPCK, 1960), 138–39 for the Latin text, and 312 for the quoted commentary.

respect of it can be reduced to three,” after which he comments on three of the theories.²⁸

So the notion that there are 200 theories derives from common repetition in the literature, the proximate source for which is Thompson’s article, which turns Evans’s loose, passive voice, hearsay aside that “there are said to be more than two hundred explanations” into the more definitive “Evans quotes 200.” (Perhaps Thompson intended to convey that Evans “quoted” *the number* 200, not 200 actual theories, but if so his language was unfortunately susceptible to a much more definitive interpretation than Evans likely intended.) I am not aware of anyone attempting to catalog even as many as 100 theories, much less 200. Therefore, the commonly repeated notion that there are 200 theories is utterly without any foundation whatsoever, and that number should no longer be repeated in the scholarly literature.

The catalog I present here sets forth 54 theories, derived from the following secondary sources. As the foundation for the list I used Foschini. Whereas Foschini listed a total of 36 theories, my list only includes 34 from that source, because (i) he listed vicarious baptism as a theory (which he did not accept), and I am taking the position that that is the correct reading and only cataloguing the alternative theories, and (ii) I similarly omitted Mormon baptism for the dead, as I see that as a practical application of vicarious baptism and not a separate theory. To Foschini’s list I added 11 historical theories he had missed from Horsley and another three from Thiselton, and to the whole I added six post-Foschini theories (from the mid-20th century on) from Hull, for a total of 54. Adding back in vicarious baptism, the total number of theories becomes 55. Yet even this number is certainly conservative, as I have no confidence whatsoever that this list is truly exhaustive. One could round this number up to 60, with the understanding that many of these theories have variations and that even that number would remain conservative, or better yet one could simply say there are “scores” of theories, which gives an accurate sense of both the scope and indeterminacy of the actual number.

28 Ernest Evans, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930), 144 (emphasis added).

Summary of Alternate Theories

Based on how the verb *baptizō* is used, I have separated the various alternate theories²⁹ for convenience into five categories as follows:

- I. Metaphorical uses;
- II. Ritual ablutions other than Christian baptism;
- III. Secular uses;
- IV. Regular baptism (i.e., baptism for the benefit of the one being baptized); and
- V. Variations on vicarious baptism (i.e., baptism for the benefit of others).

I have attempted to describe these theories in neutral terms. In the following section, “A General Linguistic Critique of the Alternate Theories,” I will explore in general terms why these theories are problematic.

Metaphorical Uses

1. *Baptism as the Works of Penance for Relief of the Dead.* This position was one commonly held by the Jesuits, and strongly rejected by Protestants. Its chief patron, Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), a Jesuit and a Cardinal who would eventually be canonized as a saint in 1930, explained it this way: “It is therefore the true and genuine explanation that the Apostle speaks concerning the baptism of tears and penance which one receives by praying, fasting, and giving alms, etc. And the sense is ‘What will those who are baptized for the dead do if the dead do not rise?’ That is, what will they do who pray, fast, grieve and afflict themselves for the dead if the dead do not rise?”³⁰
2. *Baptism as Sadness over the Dead.* This was the view of the early 18th century Danish bishop Caspar Erasmus Brochmann. The idea was that the Apostle wrote the same thought to the Corinthians that he wrote to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:13):

29 The below are very succinct capsules of the basic idea underlying a given theory. For a more detailed explanation, including variants on the theory proposed by different scholars, see the sources cited in the notes.

30 Robertus Bellarminus, *De Purgatorio*, Chapter 6, in *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos*, vol. 2 (Neapoli, 1857), 366, as cited in Foschini, 7. Paulsen and Mason, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity,” 27, note that this too is a vicarious concept, just involving works of penance rather than baptism.

“We do not wish you to be sad as the others who have no hope.” He therefore paraphrases our verse as follows: “What shall we say to those who refuse all consolation over the death of dear ones, if the dead do not rise at all? How shall we give comfort to souls oppressed by sorrow if there is no happiness, if there is no resurrection after death?”³¹

3. *Baptism as Denoting the Labors and Dangers of the Apostolate.* Anna Maria Van Shurman, a 17th century German-born Dutch painter and scholar, took the verb “to be baptized” as referring to the labors and perils of the apostles, and the “dead” are the faithful themselves still living. So “to be baptized for the dead” meant to devote oneself to the apostolate “for the dead,” meaning the living faithful on earth, so that they may be saved.³² Others accepted her reading of the verb, but took the noun to refer to the unbelievers and persecutors themselves, who were still in need of conversion and so were in this sense as though they were “dead.”³³
4. *Baptism as Persecutions Endured in Order to Hasten the Parousia.* 1 Corinthians 15:30 reads “And [*kai*] why stand we in jeopardy [*kinduneuō*] every hour?” Because verse 30 begins with the conjunction *kai* “and,” Sytse Hoekstra, the 19th century Dutch theologian, argued that the verb *baptizō* had to be understood in a sense similar to *kinduneuō* “to be in danger, to be put in peril,” thus making the baptism of verse 29 the baptism of suffering. The suffering of the faithful was for the benefit of the dead, for, he claimed, it was believed that such sufferings hastened the Parousia.³⁴
5. *Baptism Identified with Martyrdom.* The 16th century Jesuit Joannes Maldonatus and others in a way similar to Hoekstra understood the verb of verse 29 as paralleling that of verse 30, but instead of understanding a baptism of suffering these exegetes understood a baptism of blood. Alexander Morus understood the verb the same way, but took “for the dead” as

31 As cited in Foschini, 8.

32 Anna Maria van Shurman, *Opuscula hebraica-graeca-latina-gallica. Epistola viro clarissimo Jac. Lydio* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1650), 101–02, as cited in Foschini, 9.

33 See Foschini, 9.

34 Sytse Hoekstra, “Proeve van verklaring van 1 Cor. XV: 29, 30,” *Theologisch Tydschrift*, 24 (1890): 135–42, as cited in Foschini, 9–10.

being equivalent to *huper tou nekrou Christou*, “for the dead Christ.”³⁵

6. *Baptism as To Be Overwhelmed with Miseries and Calamities.* Many 18th century commentators understood something like “of what avail is it to expose ourselves to so many dangers and calamities in the hope of the resurrection of the dead?”³⁶
7. *Baptism as To Be Immersed in Sufferings for Testifying of the Resurrection.* This was the view of the Westminster Assembly’s Annotations (Bible commentaries written in the 17th century). But instead of *huper tōn nekron* this theory would appear to require something like *huper tou dogmatos tēs anastaseōs* “for the teaching of the resurrection.”³⁷
8. *Baptism in Order to Convert those Dead in Sin.* This was the argument of Johannes Henricus Maius (18th century). The idea is that the passage refers to the metaphorical baptism of affliction and sufferings undergone for the value of the conversion of the unfaithful who are without the life of the soul.³⁸
9. *Baptism Identified as Those Who Are Being Destroyed.* Jerome Murphy-O’Connor takes the verse as a gibe by Paul against his opponents, with verse 29 being a general statement and the following verses on Paul’s apostolic labors a specific example. He concludes that one is forced to exclude a literal reading of the verb *baptizein*, even while quickly acknowledging that Paul nowhere else uses that verb in a metaphoric sense. He understands *baptizomenoi* as “those who are destroyed.” He understands the noun *nekros* in a spiritual sense, so when in the middle of the verse Paul means to speak of those who are actually physically dead, he construes the adverb *holōs* with the noun instead of the verb as most exegetes do. Paul is pointing out the incongruity of those Corinthians who deny the resurrection by means of a rhetorical question that has its origin in the spiritual elite’s (supposed) depreciation of his apostolic labors. To paraphrase: “Supposing that there

35 Joannes Maldonatus, *Opera varia theologica*, Vol. 1, *De baptismo*, qu. 6 pars 6, *An mortui baptizari possint* (Parisiis, 1677), 52–53, and Alexander Morus, *Ad quaedam loca Novi Testamenti notae* (Parisiis, 1668), 170–71, as cited in Foschini, 10–12.

36 Horsley, 16–17.

37 Ibid., 18.

38 Ibid., 20.

is no resurrection from the dead, will they continue to work, those who are being destroyed on account of an inferior class of believers who are dead to true Wisdom? If those who are really dead are not raised why indeed are they baptized on their account?”³⁹

Ritual Ablutions Other than Christian Baptism

10. *Baptism as Washing of the Dead.* Theodore Beza (1519–1605), a disciple of John Calvin, broke with his mentor on his understanding of this passage and rendered the key expression “baptized for the dead” into Latin as *ablutione utuntur super mortuis* “perform an ablution over the dead.”⁴⁰
11. *Baptism as Ritual Ablutions Made by the Jews before Their Sacrifices for the Dead.* Cornelius a Lapide (1567–1637), a Flemish Jesuit, wrote the following: “They are baptized (for the dead), that is, they are purified for the sacrifices they are about to offer for the dead. For among the Jews it was a custom to be baptized, that is, cleansed, before sacrifices, prayers and every religious service.”⁴¹ He seems to be thinking of the actions of Judas in sending 12,000 drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifices to be offered for the sins of the dead (see 2 Macc. 12:43–45).
12. *Baptism as Ritual Ablutions because of Contact with the Dead.* Gabrielis Vasquez wrote that “‘to be baptized for the dead’ is identical with ‘to be baptized by the dead,’ that is, by contact with the dead, or in order to wash away contact with the dead.”⁴² The argument is that, because of the ritual impurity it causes them, the Jews would not care for their dead but for their belief in a resurrection.
13. *Baptism as Vicarious Purification for Those Who Died in Impurity.* This is a vicarious concept, but rather than water

39 Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “‘Baptized for the Dead’ (I Cor., XV, 29): A Corinthian Slogan?” *Revue biblique* 88 (1981): 532–43, as discussed in Hull, 27–28.

40 Theodoro Beza, *D[omini] N[ostri] Jesu Christi Novum Testamentum cum interpretatione et adnotationibus* (1598), 173, as cited in Foschini, 21.

41 Cornelius a Lapide, *In omnes D[ivini] Pauli Epistolas* (Antuerpiae, 1692), 326, as cited in Foschini, 23.

42 Gabrielis Vasquez, *Commentarii ac disputationes in tertium partem Summae theologiae sancti Thomae Aquinatis Ad 1 Cor. 15:29; qu. 69, art. 10, dist. 156, c. 3* (Lugduni, 1631), 434, col. b, as cited in Foschini, 23.

baptism it reflects the legal ablution (Num. 19:11) required of one who touched a dead body. If someone touched a dead body and then died before the ablution was performed, the idea is that others would receive the ablution on their behalf.⁴³

14. *Ceremonies and Rites Analogous to Baptism*. Franciscus Cornelius Ceulemans wrote “perhaps...these Christians (*hoi baptizomenoi*)...received only the solemnities of Baptism and the ablution in the name of the dead catechumen, so that by this external symbol they might testify that the dead person had the desire of Baptism, and that he died in the faith of Christ, and that he had the hope of a blessed Resurrection.”⁴⁴ This theory is also grounded in a vicarious concept, but rather than one receiving water baptism vicariously for the dead, one receives only the ceremonies and rites of baptism.

Secular Uses

15. *Baptism as the Wetting of Those Who Washed the Dead*. Beza in theory number 6 above was aware of the weakness of taking the verb in an active rather than a passive voice. He therefore proposed as an attempt to save the basic idea: “*quid facient... qui abluuntur ablutione super mortuos?*” (“What will they do... who get wet from the ablution they perform over the dead?”) The idea would be that one performing such a rite would in the course thereof naturally get wet himself from the same water he was using in the ablution itself.⁴⁵
16. *Baptism as the Immersion of Divers after the Bodies of the Shipwrecked*. August Ludwig Christian Heydenreich, a 19th century pastor and advocate of a united Lutheran/Reformed church, quotes a certain Flaccius (perhaps the reformer Matthias Flaccius Illyricus [1520–1575]) as being of the opinion that those baptized for the dead referred to divers who went into the ocean to fish out the bodies of the shipwrecked who had been drowned in a storm at sea.⁴⁶

43 Franciscus Turrianus, *Adversus Magdeburgenses Centuriatores* (Florentiae, 1572), 416–17, cited in Foschini, 24.

44 Franciscus Cornelius Ceulemans, *Commentarius in 1 ad Cor.* (Mechliniae, 1926), 204, cited in Foschini, 24–25.

45 Foschini, 22.

46 August Ludwig Christian Heydenreich, *Commentarius in Priorem Divi Pauli ad Corinthios Epistolam*, vol. 2 (Marburgi, 1828), 537, cited in Foschini, 24.

Regular Baptism (i.e., baptism for the benefit of the one being baptized)

17. *Baptism for Dead Bodies.* Tertullian⁴⁷ and Chrysostom⁴⁸ somewhat similarly understood the “dead” as the initiate’s own dead body (because the body is mortal and will one day be dead). Thus baptism for the dead means baptism for the initiate’s own body, which is destined to die and rise again.⁴⁹ As the Greek and Latin Fathers rarely read each other, this confluence of opinion is unusual, and may point to influence of Tertullian on Chrysostom or perhaps influence upon both by a common, unknown source. Due to Chrysostom’s influence, this view has been widely held in the Greek Orthodox tradition.
18. *Baptism of Those Who Have Already Received the Holy Spirit.* Arias Montanus, a 16th century Spanish priest, understood the passage as referring to those who, as sometimes happened, were baptized *after* they had already received the Holy Spirit, such as Cornelius and his family. In such a circumstance the rite of baptism bore witness not to the resurrection in newness of life, but to the death of the body and the body’s future resurrection.⁵⁰
19. *Baptism as the Mortification of the Passions.* This view, which was first expressed by Julian, the fifth century bishop of Eclanum and a leader of the Pelagians, but subsequently was put forward by others as well, understands that those who are baptized for the dead are baptized for the purpose of mortifying themselves and beginning a new life, that to be baptized for the dead means to face mortification, tribulations and death itself as part of the Christian life.⁵¹
20. *Baptism of the Dying.* A number of important Christians, such as Bengel and Calvin, followed the opinion of Epiphanius, the fourth century bishop of Salamis, who proposed that our verse had reference to the baptism of those who were dying and on their death beds, those who “being near to death,...if they are

47 *Adversus Marcionem*, 5.10.

48 *Homiliae in 1 ad Corinthios*, 23.

49 Foschini, 64–65.

50 *Ibid.*, 67.

51 *Ibid.*, 67–68.

indeed catechumens relying on the hope (of the Resurrection), are purified by the sacred washing. And so they show both that the dead will rise again, and that consequently they need that pardon which is obtained through baptism.”⁵²

21. *Baptism Will be Useless after Death.* Philipp Bachmann, the early 20th century Lutheran theologian, was of the view that the statement was intended to express that baptism would be useless and could avail of nothing after death. For him, the meaning of the words was: “If there is no Resurrection of the dead, what will those who are now baptized do, what profit will they gain for the dead, that is, for the state and time when they shall be dead?” He reaches this interpretation by stressing the future *poiesousin* in contrast with the present *baptizontai* (taking that to mean that baptism received in the present time will be useless in the future) and also by partially cancelling the expression *huper autōn* at the end of the verse.⁵³ (His expression of his opinion is so convoluted that it is difficult to summarize it meaningfully.)
22. *Baptism by Which we Gain Nothing beyond What the Unbaptized Have.* Ernestus Richter in a booklet printed in 1803 interpreted *huper* as “beyond” and *tous nekrous* as those who died as godless and unbelievers in Judaism or in paganism. Further, the verb *poiein* expresses the notion of gaining profit or obtaining some utility. He would also delete the last two words of the verse. The result is: “what shall they who are baptized gain beyond the unbaptized unbeliever, if the dead do not rise at all?”
23. *Baptism by Which We Take the Place of the Christians Who Have Died.* The early 18th century scholar J. Cleric wrote that “If there is no Resurrection, what will they do, who every day, although they see Christians put to death for the sake of the Faith, eagerly come to receive Baptism in order to take the place of the dead in the Christian Church?”⁵⁴
24. *Baptism by Which the Names of Dead Christians are Received.* In contrast to Cleric in number 23 above, Daniel Heinsius, the 17th century Dutch Renaissance scholar, held that baptism for

52 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 2.28.6.4–5, as cited in Foschini, 69.

53 Foschini, 70–71.

54 *Ibid.*, 71–72.

the dead gave the baptized not the *place* of the dead, but the *name* of the dead. Baptism succeeds circumcision and retains certain of its rites, among which was the giving of a name. So Christians were accustomed to give the names of the dead “apostles, martyrs, holy fathers, deceased relatives...in order that these might seem still to live and exist; or to sleep for a short time now, but to rise soon after.”⁵⁵

25. *Baptism over the Sepulchers of the Martyrs.* This is the famous explanation of Luther, who took “the dead” as “the sepulchers of the martyrs” by metonymy, and also took the preposition in its original locative sense, “over,” thus rendering: “What do they otherwise do who have themselves baptized over the dead, if the dead do not rise again? Why do they have themselves baptized over the dead?”⁵⁶ To conform to this theory, in his revision of the Vulgate he substituted *super mortuis* [“over the dead”] in place of *pro mortuis* [“for the dead”].
26. *Baptism for Christ.* Others have also understood the dead as *martyrs* in the strict etymological sense of “witness.” So to be baptized for the dead refers to one who comes “to the font because of the dead one, namely Christ, or in view of that dead one whom death could not detain.” Since in one body the Church is many, it is fitting for Paul to use the plural form for “dead” with reference to Christ.⁵⁷
27. *Baptism for Christ and for the Other Dead.* Others thought it unlikely that the plural form of the word “dead” could refer to Christ alone, and so they posit that the dead refers to Christ and John the Baptist, or to Christ and the other apostles and doctors of the church, or to those who had been among the 500 witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, but were now dead.⁵⁸
28. *Baptism Received on Account of the Dead.* This theory supposes that a plague had raged through Corinth causing many deaths, and those who had delayed baptism, frightened by this specter of death, now hastened to receive it lest they die without baptism.⁵⁹

55 Daniel Heinsius, *Sacrarum exercitationum ad Novum Testamentum libri 20* (Cantabrigiae, 1640), 383, as cited in Foschini, 72.

56 As cited in Foschini, 72.

57 Foschini, 73–74.

58 Ibid., 74.

59 Ibid., 75.

29. *Baptism Received for Fanciful Reasons.* A certain Krausius construed the noun as a neuter rather than as a masculine, and thus took it as equivalent to *ta mē onta* “things which are not,” that is, “fancies, false opinions, a dead thing. What shall they do who receive Baptism because they are deceived and beguiled by idle dreams, thoughts of the dead?”⁶⁰
30. *Baptism Which Frees us from Fear of Death.* Johann Ernst Christian Schmidt, the early 19th century German scholar, also took the noun as a neuter and not a masculine, equating it conceptually to *ton thanaton*, or death itself. Thus the expression means to be “initiated into these sacred rites which put to flight the fear of death, to profess through Baptism a doctrine which fills the soul with contempt for death, or to be baptized for the purpose of being freed from the fear of death through that hope of immortality which the Christian religion instills into the soul.”⁶¹
31. *Baptism Received in Order to Obtain the Kingdom of the Blessed.* This interpretation construes the preposition *huper* in the final sense (“for the purpose of”) and sees the dead not as the state after death but as the Church triumphant. According to Bonnet, “It is known that in the most ancient times Baptism was often asked for only at death’s door... He who received Baptism in such circumstances was baptized not for the living, but for the dead, that is, he was admitted in the Church already glorified, rather than in the Church militant.”⁶²
32. *Baptism Merely to Be Numbered among the Dead?* Paul Dürselen, Bernard M. Foschini and K.C. Thompson, although differing in the particulars, all take a similar approach to the problem by emending the punctuation and creating a series of short, choppy, rhetorical questions. For Dürselen, “for the dead” modifies neither “what shall they do” nor “those who are baptized” but stands alone as a separate question. He then moves the final two words of the verse to become the beginning two words of verse 30: “Otherwise, what will they do who are being baptized? Do they do so for the dead? If the dead are not to rise, why are people baptized? For them we are in danger

60 As quoted in Foschini, 76.

61 Ibid.

62 L. Bonnet, *Epîtres de S. Paul* (Loussane, 1891), 241, as cited in Foschini, 76.

every hour.” Foschini similarly adds two question marks, although he keeps the last two words with verse 29: “Otherwise what shall they do who are baptized? For the dead? (that is, are they baptized to belong to, to be numbered among the dead, who are never to rise again)? Indeed, if the dead do not rise at all, why are people baptized? For them? (that is, are they baptized to be numbered among the dead who are never to rise again)?” Foschini equates *huper* with *eis* “to/for” and keeps the last two words of the verse, but otherwise is scarcely different from Dürselen. Thompson too sees the key to the verse as a change in punctuation, and came to his view independently of Ernest Evans, who had published it 30 years earlier: “Else what will they achieve who are baptized — merely for the benefit of their dead bodies, if dead bodies never rise again? And why do people get baptized merely for them?”⁶³

33. *Baptism into the Faith which the Dead Held*. This was the view of Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth, a 19th century English churchman and Bishop of Chichester, who paraphrases “Why are we baptized into that faith of a crucified and dead Redeemer to which our already departed brethren have clung as their last hope in death, if the dead rise not?”⁶⁴
34. *Baptism as Washing away their Dead Works and Sins*. This was the view of Sedulius Scottus (9th century) and Petrus Lomardus, the 12th century Bishop of Paris. But if the genitive *nekrōn* refers to sins, so must the nominative *nekroi*, as the passage would read “What shall they do who are baptized for their sins, if their sins rise not?”⁶⁵
35. *Baptism in which they Profess themselves as Dead to the World*. This was the view of Philipp van Limborch (1633–1712), the Dutch Remonstrant theologian: “Baptized for the dead are they who, when they are baptized, declare that they are ready to die to the world, to be in it as dead men.”⁶⁶
36. *Baptism in the Hope of Blessings to be Received after they are Numbered with the Dead*. This theory was defended by Bishop

63 P. Dürselen, “‘Die Taufe für die Toten’: I Kor. 15, 29,” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* [no volume] (1903): 291–308; Foschini, 91–98, and Thompson, 647–59, as discussed in Hull, 21–25.

64 Horsley, 19.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., 20.

George Berkeley, the 18th century Irish philosopher, in his *Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher* (first published in 1732).⁶⁷

37. *Baptism in the Belief of a Resurrection from the Dead.* This view was favored by many early Christian writers, such as Theophylact and Pelagius, who saw *huper tōn nekrōn* as shorthand for *huper tēs anastaseōs tōn nekrōn* “for the resurrection of the dead.” The idea may be paraphrased as follows: “What will they be doing (i.e., what advantage will they gain) who are baptized in the confident expectation of a resurrection of the dead?”⁶⁸
38. *Baptism to Renew the Promises which God Makes to Quick and Dead.* This was the view of Christopher Wordsworth, the 19th century English bishop (and nephew to the poet William Wordsworth). Those who are baptized for the dead are not baptized to aid them or in their stead, but to confirm the promises of the covenant made to them and still to be fulfilled. Wordsworth wrote “Every baptized person is an apologist for the dead, declaring by his profession before baptism that Christ is risen and that the dead will rise.”⁶⁹
39. *Baptism so as to Belong to a Mere Kingdom of the Dead.* The idea here may be paraphrased “Why should a person suffer himself to be baptized on account of the dead — i.e., to belong to them so as to form a kingdom of the dead.” This was suggested by Jacob Elsner, the 18th century German theologian, who read *huper* as equivalent to Latin *propter* (i.e., in a causal sense).⁷⁰
40. *Baptism though so Many Martyrs Have Died.* The proponents of this theory take *huper* as equal to Latin *ultra* [beyond], *praeter* [beyond], or *post* [behind, after].⁷¹
41. *Baptism for the Sake of Mortal Sins.* Thomas Aquinas and Nicholas de Lyra (1270–1349) take the dead as a metaphor for mortal sins, for the sake of which people are baptized.⁷²

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 21.

69 Ibid., 39.

70 Ibid., 400.

71 Ibid.

72 Thiselton, 1242.

42. *Baptism after Witnessing the Deaths of Martyrs.* John Edwards, the late 17th–early 18th century Reformed theologian, takes the verse as referring to those who were baptized after witnessing the deaths of martyrs, especially the confidence and courage that they displayed.⁷³
43. *Baptism by One Who Believes and Expects the Resurrection of the Dead.* Theophylact, Photius and Erasmus think the passage refers to the creed and the belief in baptism which it represents. They understand “the dead” as an ellipsis reflecting the baptismal creed in faith: *tou nekrou sōmatos anastasin pisteuōn*, i.e., one who recites the creed “believes and expects the resurrection of the dead.” The dead refers to “soon to be” dead bodies.⁷⁴
44. *Baptism for Their Dying Bodies.* J.C. O’Neill reads the verse as talking about baptism of those near death “for their dying bodies.” First, he accepts the variant reading of the Leicester codex 69, which has *autōn tōn nekron* “their dead [bodies]” as the ending of the first sentence. Then he reads *nekros* in two different senses. The first and third appearances governed by *huper* mean “for their dead bodies,” with the noun *sōmatōn* “bodies” implicitly understood. In the second appearance he argues the adverb *holōs* ought to be taken with the noun *nekroi* and not the verb, reading the expression as “the completely dead,” meaning those who are about to die. To paraphrase, “Otherwise what do those hope to achieve who are baptized for their dying bodies? If the completely dead are not raised, why then are they baptized for them?”⁷⁵
45. *Baptism by Example (with huper in the final sense).* Maria Raeder, Joachim Jeremias and J.K. Howard each favors a “baptism by example” reading by focusing in particular on the preposition *huper* and taking it in the final sense, “for the purpose of, with a view towards.” According to Raeder, the baptism involved was ordinary baptism, and the dead were deceased Christians who had already been baptized in life. The *baptizomenoi* were living, previously unbaptized friends and relatives of those deceased Christians who were baptized in a

73 Ibid., 1243.

74 Ibid.

75 J.C. O’Neill, “1 Corinthians 15:29,” *Expository Times* 91 (1979): 310–11, as described in Hull, 25–27.

desire to be joined in the resurrection with their dead loved ones (as opposed to being joined with Christ). This notion was the result of an excessive missiology at Corinth. Jeremias expands Raeder's reading by focusing on the *nekroi* and its use with and without the article. He believes the anarthrous use refers to the dead in general, while the articular use refers to the Christian dead. Howard suggests that what might have originated as a less than noble motive may have indeed brought the initiated to a true faith in Christ. According to this theory, the *baptizomenoi* were those who received baptism "with a view towards the dead [in the resurrection]."⁷⁶

46. *Baptism by Example (with huper in the causal sense)*. John D. Reaume has a theory similar to Maria Raeder's baptism by example, except he rejects the final use of *huper* and instead takes that preposition in its causal sense: "on account of, because of." He reads *nekros* literally and rejects any metaphorical or figurative usage here. Like Jeremias, he distinguishes the *anarthrous nekroi* as the dead in general from the articular *hoi nekroi* as a particular set of the dead, whom he similarly takes as deceased Christians (who were already baptized in life). Reaume acknowledges that the dominant usage of the preposition is either "on behalf of" (representation) or "instead of" (substitution), but he finds four causal uses in Acts 9:16 and 21:13; Romans 15:9; and Philippians 1:29 (attributing the Acts passages to Paul instead of Luke). Thus, he takes the passage as talking about people being baptized on account of the sway of deceased Christians. Joel R. White proposes a theory that is also grounded in a causative usage of *huper* and otherwise is similar to Reaume's, although he unfortunately seems not to have known of Reaume's theory and so does not interact with it at all. Somewhat like Murphy-O'Connor, White reads Paul's concerns as being with his apostolic sufferings. Unlike Reaume, who rejected a metaphoric usage of *nekroi* and takes that word literally, White argues for a metaphoric reading of "the dead" as "the apostles."

76 Maria Raeder, "Vikariatstaufe in 1 Cor 15:29," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 46 (1955): 258–60; Joachim Jeremias, "Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God," *New Testament Studies* 2 (1955–56): 151–59; and J.K. Howard, "Baptism for the Dead: A Study of 1 Corinthians 15:29," *Evangelical Quarterly* 37 (1965): 137–41; as discussed in Hull, 29–31.

Similarly to O'Neill, White understands the word *nekroi* in two different senses in the same verse, and takes the adverb *holōs* as attributively modifying *nekroi* rather than *egeirontai*. His reading of the verse is as follows: "Otherwise what will those do who are being baptized on account of the dead (that is, the dead, figuratively speaking; that is the apostles)? For if truly dead persons are not raised, why at all are people being baptized on account of them (that is, the apostles)?"⁷⁷

47. *Baptism on Account of the Dead (with huper in the causal sense)*. At the end of his lengthy study, Hull gives his own proposed rendering as "Otherwise what are they to do, who have themselves baptized on account of the dead? If the dead are not really raised, why are they baptized on account of them?"⁷⁸ Hull takes both the verb and the noun literally, and does not posit any change in punctuation from the standard critical editions; the only change he posits is to understand *huper* in the causal sense. Thus baptism is an act of faith in which the Corinthians profess a conviction in what Paul preached to them; namely, the resurrection. In other words, "Otherwise what are they to do, who have themselves baptized on account [of their faith in the resurrection] of the dead?"

Variations on Vicarious Baptism (i.e., baptism for the benefit of others)

48. *Vicarious Eschatological Baptism*. Herbert Preisker accepted the vicarious baptism reading, but argued that the impetus for it was eschatological and not sacramental, that the just dead needed to be baptized lest the end of the world be delayed too long.⁷⁹
49. *Baptism of the Dead Sought Vicariously*. According to this view, the dead bodies (corpses) themselves were baptized, provided the deceased's relatives asked for this.⁸⁰ Foschini classifies this

77 Reaume, "Another Look at 1 Corinthians 15:39," 457–75, and Joel R. White, "Baptized on Account of the Dead': The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 15:29 in Its Context," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1997): 487–99, as discussed in Hull, 31–36.

78 Hull, 230–31.

79 Herbert Preisker, "Die Vikariatstaufe I Cor 15:29 — ein eschatologischer, nicht sakramentaler Brauch," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 23 (1924): 298–304, as cited in Foschini, 39.

80 Foschini, 40.

as a form of vicarious baptism, since the deceased's relatives would have had to ask for it on the deceased's behalf, but since the deceased's own body was baptized, it could also be characterized as a form of regular baptism.

50. *Baptism as Suffrage for the Dead.* Fernand Prat, the 20th century theologian, accepted the vicarious baptism idea, but was careful to distinguish *huper* as used for the advantage of another from the sense of *anti*, a complete substitution in another's name, place and stead. Since Prat accepted the former but rejected the latter, Foschini denominates his view "baptism as suffrage for the dead."⁸¹
51. *Baptism as Hastening the Parousia and as an Aid for the Dead.* Hermann Olshausen, the early 19th century German theologian, much like Prat, sees *huper* in the sense of "in favor of, for the benefit of another" and not in the full substitutionist sense of *anti* "in the name and place of another." In his view, the dead had already been baptized, and the living now being baptized were acting in their interest so as to perfect that fullness (*pleroma*) of which Paul speaks in Romans 11:12–25, which must be achieved in order for the just to enjoy the glory and happiness of the resurrection.⁸²
52. *Baptism as the Defense of the Dead, and of Their Faith in the Resurrection.* Heinrich Müller proposed a view similar to that of Olshausen above, in which the dead have already been baptized in life. The preposition *huper* is then taken in a defensive sense: "Those persons are baptized for the dead, then, who by their Baptism defend the dead in their belief in a blessed resurrection, of which baptism is the seal." Those who are baptized for the dead are among the unfaithful who deny the resurrection. By being baptized they are defending a belief in the resurrection which they otherwise deny.⁸³
53. *Baptism as the Baptized Having Something to Do for the Dead.* Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann joins "for the dead" to the verb "what shall they (the ones being baptized) do" instead of the verb "baptized" and then joins *huper autōn* to

81 Ibid., 41–43.

82 Hermann Olshausen, *Die Briefe des Apostels Paulus an die Korinther* (Reutligen, 1836), 690–91, as cited in Foschini, 43.

83 Heinrich Müller, *Dissertatio de baptismo pro mortuis* (Rostocki, 1665), 48, as cited in Foschini, 44.

verse 30. He seems to focus on the present tense of the verb “baptized” and the future tense of the verb “do,” the idea being that those who are baptized (in the present) will at some later point do something for the dead (in the future). Thus, “If there is absolutely no Resurrection, what will the baptized do, that is, why will they act, in favor of the dead? For that matter, why are they themselves baptized? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour for those who are baptized?”⁸⁴

54. *Baptism as Pagan Syncretism*. James Dewey takes the vicarious reading as a given, but attempts to explain it within the historical context of Greco-Roman Corinth, seeing especially the strong influence of cosmic powers and local pagan funerary rites in the practice. This view stresses the cosmic power of baptism as a victory over death. Similarly, Richard D. DeMaris focuses on the treatment of the dead in Greco-Roman Corinth, including funerary rites, burial customs (Greek inhumation vs. Roman cremation), passage to the next world and assuring one’s needs are met in the next life.⁸⁵

A General Linguistic Critique of the Alternate Theories

A detailed linguistic critique of each of the above theories would be tedious indeed. Instead, in this section I shall provide a “big picture” overview of the types of linguistic strategies employed in these theories and why they are problematic.

If one wished to avoid a vicarious baptism reading of the verse, the easiest way to do that would be to construe the verb *baptizein* in some sense other than having reference to the Christian sacrament of water baptism, for in that case no matter what else one does with the verse it could not have reference to vicarious *baptism*. This is the approach taken in our first three categories of alternate theories: metaphorical uses, ritual ablutions other than Christian baptism, and secular uses. The overwhelming problem with this type of approach is lexical. In

84 Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Nerdlingen, 1874), 364, as cited in Foschini, 45–46.

85 James Dewey, “Textuality in an Oral Culture: A Survey of the Pauline Traditions,” *Semeia* 65 (1994): 37–65, and Richard E. DeMaris, “Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 661–82, as discussed in Hull, 17–20. For a review of DeMaris, see John W. Welch in *FARMS Review* 8, no. 2 (1996): 43–45. I agree with Welch’s comments.

the secure Pauline corpus the verb appears in nine verses (outside of 1 Corinthians 15:29 itself): Romans 6:3, 1 Corinthians 1:13, 1:14, 1:15, 1:16 (*bis*), 1:17, 10:2, 12:13, and Galatians 3:27. Most of these uses are in the same letter as our passage, 1 Corinthians. There is a figurative usage in 1 Corinthians 10:2, “And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,” but otherwise all of these occurrences are used in the literal sense of water baptism. Therefore, virtually all of the usage of this verb in the secure Pauline corpus falls under BDAG category 2.c, with the exception of the typological usage (BDAG category 3.a) of 1 Corinthians 10:2.

Our first category includes attempts to construe the verb metaphorically, where baptism is (i) penance, (ii) sadness, (iii) labors and dangers, (iv) persecutions, (v) martyrdom, (vi) being overwhelmed with miseries and calamities, (vii) being immersed in sufferings, (viii) a conversion of those dead in sin, or (ix) being destroyed. Even in the New Testament as a whole metaphoric uses of this verb are quite rare, and where they exist it is clear from the context that a metaphor was intended. One example is Mark 10:38: “But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” BDAG, 165 suggests rendering the stark metaphor of personal disaster as “are you prepared to be drowned the way I am going to be drowned?” Similarly is Luke 12:50, “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” These two passages are the rare exceptions in the straightforward usage of the verb in the New Testament as a whole. Accordingly, anyone positing a metaphorical use by Paul in our passage has the burden of establishing that such a use was intended, a burden that no one so far has managed to carry.

The second category construes the verb as relating to Jewish ritual ablutions other than Christian baptism. These include “baptism” as (i) washing the dead, (ii) ablutions preparatory to sacrifices for the dead, (iii) ablutions made on account of contact with the dead, (iv) vicarious purification for those who died in impurity, or (v) ceremonies and rites analogous to baptism (but not baptism itself). This approach is at least marginally stronger than the metaphoric approach and corresponds to BDAG category 1. The main illustration of this usage in the New Testament is Mark 7:1–8:

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat

bread with defiled [*koinais*], that is to say, with unwashen [*aniptois*], hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash [*nipsontai*] their hands oft, eat not, holding the traditions of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash [*baptisōntai*], they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing [*baptismous*] of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen [*koinais*] hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of man. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing [*baptismous*] of pots and cups; and many other such things ye do.

The other New Testament example of this usage is at Luke 11:38: “And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed [*ebaptisthē*] before dinner.”

There are specific problems with some of these theories. For instance, in Theory 10 Beza has taken the passive Greek verb in an active sense in his Latin rendering. In general, this usage is unattested in the secure Pauline corpus, and it is specialized and distinctive enough that it is readily apparent from context in contradistinction to Christian water baptism.

Inasmuch as the secular use of the verb is completely unattested in Koine Greek, attempts to construe the verb in secular fashion as a simple getting wet are quite rare. Theory 15 actually derives from a ritual ablution context and is simply an attempt to salvage Theory 10. Theory 16, to the effect that the verse refers to divers seeking to recover dead bodies from shipwrecks in the sea, is perhaps the most bizarre suggestion in the entire catalog.

Thus one is left with construing the verb in its literal, sacramental sense of referring to actual baptism. There remain two ways to construe the verb: it could be referring to regular baptism, where the rite is for the

benefit of the one being baptized, or it could refer to vicarious baptism, where the rite is for the benefit of someone other than the one being baptized. Since the dominant sense of the preposition is to require that the benefit of the action of the verb be for someone else, this requires either a creative reading of the noun, a minority usage of the preposition, or both in order to avoid the obvious sense of the passage as a reference to vicarious baptism.

My fifth category, variations on vicarious baptism, involves theories where one has concluded that a vicarious concept is inevitable and then tries to blunt the force of the concept in some way. Since my focus here is linguistic only, detailed commentary on this category is beyond the scope of this article, as these exegetes have already conceded the principal point that the verse has reference to a vicarious concept. If there is a way to avoid a vicarious baptism reading, it will be by taking the verb as referring to regular baptism, and this is why the fourth category dealing with regular baptism theories is by far the largest of our five categories.

By my count, the noun *nekros* occurs some 40 times in the secure Pauline corpus. In the vast majority of these cases the word is used literally for deceased human beings (BDAG category B.1), but Paul does occasionally use this word in a metaphoric sense. For instance, Romans 8:10 reads “And if Christ be in you, the body [of flesh and sin] is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (BDAG category A.2b). But Paul’s metaphoric usage of the word is very limited: either a person is “dead” because of sin, or “dead” to the law because of Christ, or something similar. Many of the theories in category 4 seek to metaphorize the noun in various ways or otherwise understand it in a creative fashion. So Theory 17 treats live bodies as “potentially” dead; Theory 19 treats the dead as a metaphor for mortification and tribulations; Theory 20 understands the dead as those dying and near death; Theory 25 treats the dead as a metonymy for the sepulchers of the martyrs; Theories 26 and 27 treat the dead as specific dead persons (the dead Christ, John the Baptist, dead apostles, those of the 500 witness to the resurrection who had died, etc.); Theories 28 and 29 understand the word as a neuter and not a masculine, thus taking the dead as more conceptually referring to “death”; Theory 34 understands the dead as a metaphor for dead works and sins; Theory 41 takes the dead as a metaphor for mortal sins; and Theory 43 equates the dead with the baptismal creed.

Here is where reading the entire chapter in context becomes important. A quarter of Paul’s 40 uses of this word appear in 1

Corinthians 15 (ten occurrences outside of verse 29). And all ten of those occurrences use the word to refer to the dead generally in a resurrection context, which is not surprising given the focus of that chapter on the subject of the resurrection of the dead. Given that context, the burden is on anyone claiming a non-literal meaning for “the dead” in verse 29, and again, in my judgment, no one has so far succeeded in carrying that burden.

That leaves us with the preposition. The dominant usage of *huper* + genitive is to apply the action of the verb to the benefit of another in some sense. This dominant usage points to a vicarious baptism concept in verse 29. If one wants to avoid that dominant usage, there would appear to be only three possibilities. One would be to take *huper* as a synonym for *peri* “about, concerning” (BDAG category A.3). But I have seen no one try that, as to be “baptized about the dead” would not make any sense. So that limits our alternative options to two. First, one could take *huper* in the final sense, “for the purpose of.” One problem here is that this usage generally takes a genitive of the thing (see BDAG category A.1b) as opposed to a genitive of the person as required by our passage. Second one could take *huper* in the causal sense, “on account of, because of” (BDAG category A.2). This usage is the least common, but it is at least attested in the secure Pauline corpus.

In a sense, presenting an extensive catalog of 54 alternative theories can be somewhat misleading, because it might suggest that all of those theories are meaningfully in play today. They are not. It is important to see such an extensive catalog to appreciate the scope and even desperation of the various attempts to avoid a vicarious baptism reading. But by the standards of contemporary biblical scholarship most of the theories on that list would now be considered obsolete.

Hull in his 327-page book, which is an excellent overview of the subject in general, does not even bother to refute the historical theories, but concentrates instead on the half-dozen or so deriving from modern biblical scholarship and dating since the time of Foschini in the mid-20th century (all of which he rejects before preferring his own). I concur with Hull in rejecting these theories. The theory of Jerome Murphy-O’Connor from 1981 (no. 9 on our list) I reject out of hand due to its reliance on metaphorizing the verb. The pagan syncretism theory of James Dewey and Richard D. DeMaris (1994 and 1995; Theory 54 on our list) is beyond the scope of this article since it acknowledges a vicarious baptism reading and simply argues for some Greco-Roman influence on the practice.

I reject Foschini's own theory (no. 32 on our list), partly for his misuse of *huper* as equivalent to *eis*, but mostly for the awkwardness of the choppy series of rhetorical questions he has created by emending the punctuation. Thompson, who independently came up with a very similar theory to Foschini's, tells the story of him as a young man fresh from Oxford in 1928 putting his theory to Henry Leighton Goudge, the then Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford and author of the Westminster Commentary on I Corinthians. Goudge rejected it out of hand as demanding a novel and strained interpretation of the Greek. I agree with Professor Goudge.⁸⁶

The theory of O'Neill (no. 44 on our list) is untenable for several reasons: his acceptance of the variant reading from Leicester Codex 69, his reading of the noun in two different senses in the same verse, one of which is "dying bodies," and his insistence that the adverb modifies the noun and not the verb. White's version of Theory 46 is untenable for the way he attempts to metaphorize the noun as referring to the living apostles.

There are two baptism by example theories: that of Maria Raeder (no. 45 on our list), who takes *huper* in the final sense, and that of Reaume (no. 46 on our list), who takes *huper* in the causal sense. But in the absence of a persecution or martyrdom context, which seems historically unlikely for Corinth at the time the letter was written, it is not at all clear how or why such presumably natural deaths should have so motivated people to get baptized. Such a theory "demands the insertion of too much that is left unexpressed."⁸⁷

That leaves us with the most recently expressed alternative theory, that of Hull himself (no. 47 on our list). The strength of Hull's theory is that he takes both the verb and the noun in their literal senses, he does not try to emend the punctuation as Foschini did, and he posits a causal use of the preposition, which though rare is indeed attested. The ultimate problem with Hull's theory is one that applies similarly in varying degrees to all of the scholarly theories from the last half-century. I call this the "ellipsis problem." Hull's own words vis-à-vis Foschini could be applied to all of these theories, and to a certain extent even to his own: such theories "demand a number of, at least implied, ellipses, without which these same readings would scarcely be sensible and for which

⁸⁶ Thompson, 647.

⁸⁷ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 186, as cited in Hull, 45.

there is no basis other than creative, albeit educated, guesswork.”⁸⁸ If one were to read the reconstructions of these scholars of the text without their parenthetical explanations, they would not be comprehensible.

Although Hull’s theory requires a single ellipse, rather than several as in the case of Foschini, the same basic problem is present. Without parenthetical elaboration, Hull’s reading is “Otherwise, what are they to do, who have themselves baptized on account of the dead?” Try reading this to someone and asking her what it is supposed to mean, and I suspect she will not be able to tell you. (For instance, those same words could be construed in the way theory no. 28 takes them.) It only becomes sensible when the ellipsis is supplied; in this case, at a minimum adding back in “the resurrection of” before “the dead.”

Both Horsley and Foschini have, in effect, rejected Hull’s proposal, as it were from the grave. Horsley in his concluding comments writes the following:

With regard to the word *nekrōn* we need only remark that as the word *nekroi* in the second clause of the verse plainly refers to those who are absolutely and literally dead, there is no shadow of a reason for taking *nekrōn* in the first clause as being an adjective with the substantives *sōmatōn* [bodies] or *ergōn* [works] omitted, *nor for making it equivalent to the condensation of such phrases as the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, or the abolishment of death, nor for taking the word as meaning those who are about to die, or metaphorically dead.*⁸⁹

Foschini’s comments with respect to Theory 5 also have relevance here:

If Paul had wished to use an elliptical form, he should have omitted “for the dead” and not the other words, because he was speaking directly of the resurrection; again, when he says “resurrection,” “of the dead” is implied, while when he mentioned the “dead,” “the “resurrection” is not necessarily implied; finally, the style of the discourse would

88 Hull, 43.

89 Horsley, 401, emphasis added.

have called for the suppression of the word “dead” rather than of the word “resurrection,” since in 15:29 *nekros* is used twice, but the word *anastasis* [resurrection] is not found at all.⁹⁰

54 is a lot of alternate theories, deriving from many times and many places. Substantial erudite creativity has been applied in crafting them. But none of them makes better sense of the Greek of 1 Corinthians 15:29 than the majority contemporary scholarly reading of the passage as referring to a practice of vicarious baptism.

Conclusion

I began this investigation by reviewing the structure of Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 15. I then undertook a detailed analysis of the Greek text of verse 29, followed by a lexical analysis of its three key terms in the expression “baptized for the dead,” showing that the most natural reading is that of vicarious baptism, which is indeed the majority contemporary scholarly reading. Next I examined why there is resistance to that reading. In an excursus, I explored the question of how many alternate theories there are. I then presented a catalog of 54 alternative theories, and followed that with a broad linguistic analysis of the types of strategies employed over the centuries to avoid the natural reading of the verse. I conclude that none of the proffered alternative explanations is superior to the vicarious baptism reading, and therefore that the Prophet Joseph Smith’s reading of the passage to refer to such a practice was indeed correct.

Kevin L. Barney is the managing partner of the Chicago office of Kutak Rock LLP, an Omaha-based law firm, where he practices public finance law.

Appendix A — Synopsis of Theories

This paper takes the position that the correct reading of 1 Corinthians 15:29 is one of vicarious baptism, which may be synopsized as follows:

What shall they do who are baptized...

that the benefit may be conveyed to a dead unbaptized person.

⁹⁰ Foschini, 18.

The 54 alternate theories summarized in this article are similarly synopsisized as a sort of index for the reader below, divided into the same five categories and with the same identifying numbers as given in the article proper:

Metaphorical Uses

What shall they do who...

1. perform the works of penance for relief of the dead.
2. experience sadness over the dead.
3. perform the labors and experience the dangers of the apostolate.
4. endure persecutions in order to hasten the parousia.
5. identify baptism with martyrdom.
6. are overwhelmed with miseries and calamities.
7. are immersed in sufferings for testifying of the resurrection.
8. in order to convert those dead in sin.
9. are being destroyed.

Ritual Ablutions Other than Baptism

What shall they do who...

10. wash the dead.
11. perform ritual ablutions before their sacrifices for the dead.
12. perform ritual ablutions because of contact with the dead.
13. perform vicarious purification for those who died in impurity.
14. perform ceremonies and rites analogous to baptism.

Secular Uses

What shall they do who...

15. get wet while washing the dead.
16. dive into the sea after the bodies of the shipwrecked.

Regular Baptism

(i.e., baptism for the benefit of the one being baptized)

What shall they do who are baptized...

17. for dead bodies.
18. having already received the Holy Spirit.
19. for the purpose of mortifying the passions.

20. on their deathbeds.
21. since baptism would otherwise be useless after death.
22. by which we gain nothing beyond what the unbaptized have.
23. by which we take the place of the Christians who have died.
24. by which the names of dead Christians are received.
25. over the sepulchers of the martyrs.
26. for Christ.
27. for Christ and the other dead.
28. on account of the dead.
29. for fanciful reasons.
30. to free us from the fear of death.
31. in order to obtain the kingdom of the blessed.
32. merely to be numbered among the dead?
33. into the faith which the dead held.
34. to wash away our dead works and sins.
35. to profess ourselves as dead to the world.
36. in the hope of blessings to be received after we are numbered with the dead.
37. in the belief of a resurrection of the dead.
38. to renew the promises which God makes to quick and dead.
39. so as to belong to a mere kingdom of the dead.
40. though so many martyrs have died.
41. for the sake of mortal sins.
42. after witnessing the deaths of the martyrs.
43. believing and expecting the resurrection of the dead.
44. for their dying bodies.
45. with a view to being joined to their dead loved ones.
46. on account of the sway of deceased Christians/living apostles.
47. on account of the [resurrection of the] dead.

**Variations on Vicarious Baptism
(i.e., baptism for the benefit of others)**

What shall they do who are baptized...

48. for the dead for eschatological (and not sacramental) reasons.

49. for the dead sought vicariously (i.e., baptism of corpses sought by the deceased's relatives).
50. on behalf of but not in substitution for the dead.
51. to hasten the Parousia and as an aid for the dead.
52. as the defense of the dead, and of their faith in the resurrection.
53. as the baptized having something to do for the dead.
54. as a pagan syncretism.

Appendix B – Survey of Translations

It is one thing to propose a creative theory about baptism for the dead and publish it in a journal article, a book, or a commentary. Actual translations, however, tend to be more conservative, since in theory they are meant to satisfy the test of time. How has this verse been rendered in modern English translations? Set forth below is the rendering of this verse from the 46 English translations found at the Bible Gateway (biblegateway.com). Although this is not an exhaustive collection of modern translations, it is an extensive one.

Of all these translations, only two go out of their way to avoid a vicarious baptism wording. The Geneva Bible has “Else what shall they do which are baptized for dead? if the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for dead?” In the first and third occurrences of “dead,” the Geneva Bible does not translate the article “the,” which is clearly present in the Greek. From the accompanying notes it is apparent that this is somehow meant to avoid a vicarious baptism reading of the verse, although the precise import of what this translation is supposed to be saying is simply unclear. The notes to the Geneva Bible generally reflected the strong influence of Calvinism and the Protestant Reformation generally.

The second example where the translation has been skewed to avoid a vicarious baptism reading is the Names of God Bible: “However, people are baptized because the dead will come back to life. What will they do? If the dead can’t come back to life, why do people get baptized as if they can come back to life?”

Note that the Expanded Bible gives a straightforward rendering of the verse, but then in a note says “It is unclear what this practice was or whether Paul approves or disapproves.” The Orthodox Jewish Bible uses some unfamiliar Hebrew terms: *tevilah* is proselyte baptism, and *mesim* is the dead, deceased ones, so with that understanding the translation is consistent with a vicarious baptism reading. The Revised Standard

Version Catholic Edition has the following explanatory note: “Apparently a custom of vicarious baptism for those who had died without it. Paul mentions it without approving it.” This is similar to the NET note quoted at note 18 of the main article.

Accordingly, only two out of 46 modern English translations (about 4.3%) skew the wording of the verse in some way so as to avoid a vicarious baptism reading.

Translation	Text of 1 Corinthians 15:29
21st Century King James Version	Else, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?
American Standard Version	Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?
Amplified Bible	Otherwise, what do people mean by being [themselves] baptized in behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?
Common English Bible	Otherwise, what are those who are getting baptized for the dead doing? If the dead aren't raised, then why are they being baptized for them?
Complete Jewish Bible	Were it otherwise, what would the people accomplish who are immersed on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not actually raised, why are people immersed for them?
Contemporary English Version	If the dead are not going to be raised to life, what will people do who are being baptized for them? Why are they being baptized for those dead people?
Darby Translation	Since what shall the baptised for the dead do if [those that are] dead rise not at all? why also are they baptised for them?
Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition	Otherwise what shall they do that are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not again at all? why are they then baptized for them?

Translation	Text of 1 Corinthians 15:29
Easy-To-Read Version	If no one will ever be raised from death, then what will the people do who are baptized for those who have died? If the dead are never raised, then why are people baptized for them?
English Standard Version	Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?
English Standard Version Anglicised	Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?
Expanded Bible	If the dead are never raised, what will people do who are being baptized for the dead [^c it is unclear what this practice was or whether Paul approves or disapproves]? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people being baptized for them?
1599 Geneva Bible	<p>²⁹ ^[a]Else what shall they do which are baptized ^[b]for dead? if the dead rise not at all, why are they then baptized for dead?</p> <p>Footnotes:</p> <p>1 Corinthians 15:29 The fifth argument taken of the end of Baptism, to wit, because that they which are baptized, are baptized for dead, that is to say, that they may have a remedy against death because that Baptism is a token of regeneration.</p> <p>1 Corinthians 15:29 They that are baptized, to this end and purpose, that death may be put out in them, or to rise again from the dead, whereof baptism is a seal.</p>
God's Word Translation	However, people are baptized because the dead will come back to life. What will they do? If the dead can't come back to life, why do people get baptized as if they can come back to life?
Good News Translation	Now, what about those people who are baptized for the dead? What do they hope to accomplish? If it is true, as some claim, that the dead are not raised to life, why are those people being baptized for the dead?

Translation	Text of 1 Corinthians 15:29
Holman Christian Standard Bible	Otherwise what will they do who are being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, then why are people baptized for them?
J.B. Phillips New Testament	Further, you should consider this, that if there is to be no resurrection what is the point of some of you being baptised for the dead by proxy? Why should you be baptised for dead bodies?
Jubilee Bible 2000	Else what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?
King James Version	Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?
Authorized (King James) Version UK	Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?
Lexham English Bible	Otherwise, why do they do <i>it</i> , those who are being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why indeed are they being baptized on behalf of them?
Living Bible	If the dead will not come back to life again, then what point is there in people being baptized for those who are gone? Why do it unless you believe that the dead will someday rise again?
The Message	Why do you think people offer themselves to be baptized for those already in the grave? If there's no chance of resurrection for a corpse, if God's power stops at the cemetery gates, why do we keep doing things that suggest he's going to clean the place out someday, pulling everyone up on their feet alive?
Mounce Reverse-Interlinear New Testament	Otherwise, what will they accomplish, those who are being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not actually raised, why then are they being baptized for them?

Translation	Text of 1 Corinthians 15:29
Names of God Bible	However, people are baptized because the dead will come back to life. What will they do? If the dead can't come back to life, why do people get baptized as if they can come back to life?
New American Standard Bible	Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?
New Century Version	If the dead are never raised, what will people do who are being baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people being baptized for them?
New English Translation	Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, then why are they baptized for them?
New International Reader's Version	Suppose no one rises from the dead. Then what will people do who are baptized for the dead? Suppose the dead are not raised at all. Then why are people baptized for them?
New International Version	Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?
New International Version – UK	Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptised for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptised for them?
New King James Version	Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?
New Life Version	What good will it do people if they are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised, why are people baptized for them?
New Living Translation	If the dead will not be raised, what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again?

Translation	Text of 1 Corinthians 15:29
New Revised Standard Version	Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?
New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised	Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?
New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised Catholic Edition	Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?
New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition	Otherwise, what will those people do who receive baptism on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Otherwise, what will they do, the ones being given tevilah on behalf of the dead? If the Mesim really are not raised, why indeed are they given tevilah on behalf of the Mesim?
Revised Standard Version	Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf?
Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition	Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? ^[a] Footnotes: 15:29 Apparently a custom of vicarious baptism for those who had died without it. Paul mentions it without approving it.
The Voice	<i>You have probably heard that</i> some people are undergoing ritual cleansings of baptism ^[a] for the dead. Why are they doing that? If the dead are not going to be raised, then why are people being baptized for them? Footnotes: 15:29 Literally, immersions, to show repentance

Translation	Text of 1 Corinthians 15:29
World English Bible	Or else what will they do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead aren't raised at all, why then are they baptized for the dead?
Worldwide English New Testament	Another thing, what good is it for people to be baptized for dead people? If dead people are not raised, why are some people baptized for them?
Wycliffe Bible	Else what shall they do, that be baptized for dead men, if in no wise dead men rise again [if in all manner dead men rise not again]? whereto [also] be they baptized for them?
Young's Literal Translation	Seeing what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? why also are they baptized for the dead?

**THEORIES AND ASSUMPTIONS:
A REVIEW OF WILLIAM L. DAVIS'S
VISIONS IN A SEER STONE**

Brian C. Hales

A review of William L. Davis, *Visions in a Seer Stone: Joseph Smith and the Making of the Book of Mormon*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2020, 264 pp. paperback \$29.95, hardcover \$90, e-book \$22.99, ISBN: 1469655675, 9781469655673.

Abstract: *Within the genre of Book of Mormon studies, William L. Davis's Visions in a Seer Stone presents readers with an innovative message that reports how Joseph Smith was able to produce the words of the Book of Mormon without supernatural assistance. Using oral performance skills that Smith ostensibly gained prior to 1829, his three-month "prodigious flow of verbal art and narrative creation" (7) became the Book of Mormon. Davis's theory describes a two-part literary pattern in the Book of Mormon where summary outlines (called "heads") in the text are consistently expanded in subsequent sections of the narrative. Termed "laying down heads," Davis insists that such literary devices are anachronistic to Book of Mormon era and constitute strong evidence that Joseph Smith contributed heavily, if not solely, to the publication. The primary weaknesses of the theory involve the type and quantity of assumptions routinely accepted throughout the book. The assumptions include beliefs that the historical record does not support or even contradicts (e.g. Smith's 1829 superior intelligence, advanced composition abilities, and exceptional memorization proficiency) and those that describe Smith using oral performance skills beyond those previously demonstrated as humanly possible (e.g. the ability to dictate thousands of first-draft phrases that are also refined final-draft sentences). Visions in a Seer Stone will be most useful to individuals who, like the author, are willing to accept these assumptions. To more skeptical readers, the theory*

presented regarding the origin of the Book of Mormon will be classified as incomplete or inadequate.

From the first moment in 1830 when Joseph Smith held the newly-printed Book of Mormon in his hands declaring that it came by “the gift and power of God,”¹ secularists have rejected all claims of divine assistance. Instead, they have searched for alternate explanations that employ natural forces and human abilities to generate all 269,320 words of the text.² Over the ensuing century, two theories dominated the explanatory landscape (see Figure 1). Starting in 1833, a conspiracy involving the Spaulding manuscript prevailed until the document was rediscovered in 1884.

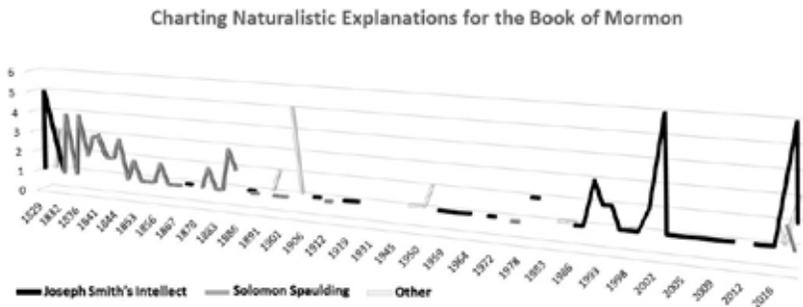


Figure 1. Charting the prevailing secular explanations for Joseph Smith’s writing of the Book of Mormon.

Since then, the most popular hypothesis has been that Joseph Smith’s *intellect* was sufficient to verbally compose all the verses, although details of how he did it have never been proposed.³ If asked, “What skills would be needed to dictate a book like the Book of Mormon?” The answer has

1. 1830 Book of Mormon Title page.

2. On February 18, 2019, Book of Mormon scholar Stanford Carmack wrote: “The 1830 first edition has 6,852 full stops in 269,318 words ... if we count the first instance of ‘me thought’ as two words (18, 41; the second is spelled as one word) and the second instance of ‘for/asmuch’ as two words (111, 32; no hyphen; the first is spelled as one word), then we get 269,320 words.” Stanford Carmack, February 18, 2019, comment on Brian C. Hales, “Curiously Unique: Joseph Smith as Author of the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 31 (2019): 151–90, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/curiously-unique-joseph-smith-as-author-of-the-book-of-mormon/>.

3. See Brian C. Hales, “Naturalistic Explanations of the Origin of the Book of Mormon: A Longitudinal Study,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2019): 105–48.

been, “The skills Joseph Smith possessed in 1829.” If asked, “What skills did Joseph Smith possess in 1829?” The answer has been, “All the skills needed to dictate the Book of Mormon.” Even without any details of the methodology Smith ostensibly employed, the circular logic of the intellect theory remains valid for many skeptics.

William L. Davis’s *Visions in a Seer Stone* (hereafter VSS) potentially changes this long-standing dynamic by describing, perhaps for the first time since 1829, how Joseph Smith was able to generate all the sentences of the Book of Mormon naturally. Davis never fully discards the possibility that inspiration played a role, but such influences are never requisite to complete the project.

A Survey of VSS’s Theory

Regardless of one’s position concerning the actual origin of the Book of Mormon, VSS is groundbreaking because of the level of detail it presents to support its specific thesis. These chapter synopses highlight these details.

Preface and Introduction

VSS begins by describing how “the Book of Mormon contains an enormous amount of nineteenth-century material that permeates both the content and structure of the work” (x). Since it purports to be a history of ancient Americans, the presence of nineteenth-century elements in the text might be unexpected. VSS carves out a couple of explanations for Latter-day Saints: “the nineteenth-century anachronisms in the Book of Mormon can then be framed as God’s alterations to the ancient record, which He transmitted to Smith via the seer stone” (x) or “for those who believe that Smith actively participated in a literal translation, the nineteenth-century elements can be understood as Smith’s personal contributions to the translation project” (x).

After allowing for these possibilities, VSS lays out a theory where supernatural influences are unnecessary: “I will often streamline the discussion by referring to the work as the result of Smith’s individual creative efforts” (xi). As the result, the 1830 Book of Mormon is described “as a script, or a transcript, of Smith’s performative process — the artifact of a grander, multifaceted oratorical effort” (2) and as “one of the longest recorded oral performances in the history of the United States” (2). In this performance, “Smith made use of several techniques that facilitated the process of oral composition, including such methods as

- the semi-extemporaneous amplification of skeletal narrative outlines,

- the use of formulaic language in biblical and pseudo-biblical registers,
- rhetorical devices common in oral traditions,
- and various forms of repetition (e.g. recycled narrative patterns),
- [and] other traditional compositional strategies” (3; bullets added).

Joseph Smith “absorbed these techniques from multiple avenues” (91) that were found in the “oratorical culture in early nineteenth-century America” (2) where he was raised to age twenty-three:

- daily family Bible reading (3, 40)
- domestic education (3, 31)
- Sunday schools (3, 54, 111, 217)
- church attendance (3, 58)
- introductory composition lessons in common schools (3, 16, 78)
- participation in a variety of voluntary societies for self-improvement, such as juvenile literary and debate societies (3, 193)
- household fireside storytelling practices (3, 166, 167, 193)
- public orations (3, 16, 21)
- classroom recitation exercises (3, 82, 138)
- visits to libraries and bookstores (57, 208)
- sermons in churches (3, 4, 16, 20)
- camp meeting revivals (3, 16, 36, 65, 112, 114)
- involvement as a Methodist “exhorter” (3, see below)

Prior to even beginning chapter one, VSS has set the stage for Joseph Smith as a type of thespian-narrator possessing all the human skills necessary to orally perform the Book of Mormon recitation.

Chapter One: “Seer Stones and Western Esotericism”

Chapter one provides additional historical context by discussing Joseph Smith’s involvement with seer stones and his treasure-seeking in the years prior to 1827. “The impulse to resist or embellish the dogmas and power structures of established religions encouraged eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Seekers to look outside the boundaries of traditional Christianity, where a panoply of philosophies and practices awaited the curiosity of those who sought alternative systems of belief among the

various traditions of Western esotericism” (9). “Smith’s use of a seer stone to produce the Book of Mormon ... offers a view into the mystical and financial economies of ritualism, religious experimentation, and spiritual seeking among early Americans” (13).

Chapter Two: “Laying Down Heads in Written and Oral Composition”

Chapter two introduces a discovery regarding Joseph Smith’s narrative techniques that becomes a bedrock theme throughout VSS. “Smith’s 1832 history begins with an opening paragraph that provides the reader with a sketch outline of the historical events that Smith wished to emphasize in his narrative” (14).⁴ VSS elaborates:

Smith’s method of using a preliminary outline, or, as more commonly termed, a “skeleton” of “heads” (an outline formed with key summarizing phrases) to organize and arrange his 1832 historical narrative, was a standard technique of composition in the early nineteenth century. The explicit use of the skeletal sketch in the opening of the history, marking each stage in the sequence of the narrative with a summarizing phrase, provides one of several expressions of the method commonly known as “laying down heads.” (16)

Technically, the term “laying down heads” refers to speakers or writers who present “formal partitions”⁵ in their presentations by declaring to their audiences “the heads or chief topics of discourse” that will be presented in the forthcoming material.⁶ “The heads of a sermon,” writes François Fénelon in his 1845 book, *The Preacher and Pastor*, “are great assistances to the memory and recollection of a hearer. They serve also to fix his attention. They enable him more easily to keep pace with the progress of the discourse; they give him pauses and resting-places, where he can reflect on what has been said, and look forward to what is to follow.”⁷

VSS further explains: “Laying down heads” involves “two basic steps: first, the speaker or author created a skeletal outline of his or her

4. See “History, circa Summer 1832,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832/1>.

5. François Fénelon et al., *The Preacher and Pastor* (Andover, NY: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell, 1845), 113n2.

6. George Campbell, *Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence* (London: John Bumpus, 1824), 275.

7. Fénelon et al., *The Preacher and Pastor*, 113n2.

intended composition by using a sequence of key phrases ('heads') that concisely summarized each of the main topics, issues, or divisions of an idea contained within the overall passage that followed. Second, using this skeletal outline as a reference guide, the speaker or author would then elaborate on each key phrase, expanding it into a fully developed passage of oral address or text" (16).

VSS mentions "laying down heads" over 100 times as it argues that Smith borrowed this technique and used it in his personal sermons and histories, as well as the Book of Mormon: "Smith dictated the majority of the opening skeletal outline to one of his scribes ... This same method, it should be observed, is consistent with Smith's production of the Book of Mormon" (21). "Smith's method of laying down heads for his historical narratives emerges as the most prominent and visible compositional feature of the Book of Mormon" (122).

Chapter Three: Revival Sermons in the Burned-Over District

The third chapter discusses how and where Joseph Smith would have learned about laying down heads. Within the "whirlwind of religious activity" in western New York, "Joseph Smith would experience a range of revivalist preaching unlike anything he had previously encountered" (33). The speaking techniques of those preachers involved a specific pattern. First, "the preparation of written skeletal outline of a sermon." Second, "the preparation of a written sermon skeleton." And third, "the preparation of a mental outline during study and meditation, which the preacher retained in his memory and used as a guide during performance, *without ever committing anything to paper*" (50–51; italics in original). "Smith inherited his oral techniques directly from this compositional and rhetorical milieu" (53).

Chapter Four: The King Follett Sermon

VSS offers Joseph Smith's April 7, 1844 King Follett sermon to further support that Joseph organized his sermons according to "laying down heads" (59–88). The claim is problematic because on that day Smith began at 3:00 pm (according to Wilford Woodruff) or 3:15 pm (according to Willard Richards) speaking about the recent death of Church member King Follett, ending at 5:30 pm (according to Thomas Bullock).⁸ This

8. See "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Willard Richards," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-willard-richards/1>; "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Wilford Woodruff," <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/1>

chapter in VSS is less useful because no verbatim text of the speech was recorded. Besides Bullock, Woodruff, and Richards, William Clayton also took notes, which were later amalgamated and printed in the Church's newspaper, *The Times and Seasons*.⁹ None of these five accounts includes more than 5000 words.

Average orators speak between 100 and 150 words per minute. Even if Joseph Smith spoke at a very slow pace, he would have articulated over twice as many words in more than two hours as found in any of the available accounts. It could be argued that since we do not possess an accurate transcript of Joseph Smith's address, verifying nuanced characteristics like the use of headings is impossible. He probably did use summary phrases to introduce new ideas, but available evidences do not allow a strict conclusion.¹⁰

Chapter Five: Sermon Culture in the Book of Mormon

Chapter five seeks to further convince the reader that "the text of the Book of Mormon reveals how the pervasive sermon culture of Smith's world had firmly imprinted itself on his imagination, influencing the style, organization, and content of his prophetic voice" (89).

Besides the twenty-one printed headings in the Book of Mormon, (fourteen for chapters and seven for individual books), VSS identifies numerous other "concealed heads" (100–03). "Rather than announcing explicit and discrete heads for this sermon, Smith, like many of his contemporary semi-extemporaneous preachers, abandoned the preliminary announcement of each and every main topic in the sermon and substituted a general introduction instead ... sermon construction and delivery thus reveals the presence of 'concealed heads,' or a 'concealed method,' rather than an overt, explicit style" (99–100). According to VSS,

www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-wilford-woodruff/1; and "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-thomas-bullock/1>.

9. Ibid.; "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by William Clayton [23]," *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-william-clayton/1>; "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by *Times and Seasons*," <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-7-april-1844-as-reported-by-times-and-seasons/1>.

10. VSS also discusses Smith's January 29, 1843 "sermon on the Prodigal Son" (p. 19; see also pp. 20, 21, 49, 57, 59, 63, 66, 78, 89, and 199), which suffers from the same weakness.

the Book of Mormon is built on headings and heads, some overt and some hidden.

Addressing the actual source of the headings found in the Book of Mormon, VSS posits Joseph Smith had prepared a “mental outline” prior to dictating: “Whenever a sermon required information specific to the development of the narrative, Smith could prepare such main points beforehand, meditate on the key issues and information that he wanted to address, and then follow (however loosely) his mental outline in performance — all the while allowing for extemporaneous diversions and expansions along the way ... Smith’s approach to oral composition thereby reveals how he was able to produce lengthy passages in rapid and highly effective ways” (116).

Chapter Six: Constructing Book of Mormon Historical Narratives

Chapter six further elaborates on the two-step process of laying down heads introduced in chapter two, promoting the skeletal outlines as “anchors” to his dictation: “The careful preparation of a story outline — the management of the sequence of events, the dates and locations where they occur, and the characters involved — would have been a critical and central anchor for the entire Book of Mormon” (122). The carefully prepared outline then guided the dictation of sermons and historical narratives: “Smith composed the story by following the same sequence established in the prefatory outline, using each of the opening phrases as a narrative guidepost to anchor his semi-extemporaneous performance of the storyline. This relationship between the prefatory outline and the main body of the text also provides important information about the characteristics of Smith’s oral style and the composition of the Book of Mormon” (137).

Chapter Seven: A Theory of Translation

Chapter seven begins by re-emphasizing a repeated theme regarding Joseph Smith’s motives: “Smith believed that his process of constructing the text did, in fact, involve divine inspiration and guidance” (160), “Smith sincerely believed, to one extent or another, that the Book of Mormon represented an authentic history of ancient civilizations in the Americas” (165). By ostensibly preserving his sincerity, VSS assures its readers that Joseph need not be seen as a fraud, even as he tried to pass off a work of fiction as divine scripture. Readers should not attribute “his years-long process of preparation to deceptive motives” (165).

As observed above, the bulk of VSS discusses the presence of skeletal outlines and laying down heads in the text of the Book of Mormon. Chapter seven describes a more comprehensive “theory of translation” that briefly acknowledges additional steps were required: “The preparatory work was extensive; the process involved time, meditation, careful attention, and a good memory” (161).

Composing the Story Content: VSS recognizes that prior to the dictation, “a preliminary process of careful preparation and narrative structuring for all the stories” in the Book of Mormon occurred (161). In the years prior to 1829, Joseph Smith engaged in the “early development of story content” (165), “story episodes” (161), and “narrative scenarios” (161).

Composing the Outlines: Simultaneous with creating story content, Joseph Smith “spent several years constructing and revising preliminary outlines (not fully written manuscripts) that framed the work before dictating the current text in 1829. These outlines would have included the organization of such story elements as the many chronologies within the work” (163–64).

Memorization: “Smith would also have had an extensive amount of time to rehearse and familiarize himself with the characters and narratives, thus only requiring, as the text often demonstrates, the promptings of brief sketch outlines, individual mnemonic cues, or nothing more than his memory to recall story episodes. In fact, the large number of brief outlines and mnemonic cues in the Book of Mormon suggests that Smith was deeply and extensively familiar with the narratives, long before expanding them in the moment of performance” (164).

Wordsmithing: “The actual composition of the stories generally involved the expansion and amplification of summarizing outlines and mnemonic cues by means of semi-extemporaneous oral production” (161–62) in the real time performance.

To summarize, the years before 1829 involved composing and memorizing hundreds of stories and outlines. Then during the dictation, Joseph Smith recited the outlines and amplified them extemporaneously into the thousands of sentences his scribes recorded.

Adding Assumptions

A potential weakness of VSS involves the types and quantity of supportive evidence that are cited. Historical documentation is seldom provided

and is limited. Instead, multiple assumptions are built into its primary theory. These include:

1. Assuming ancient historians did not use summary headings in their historical compilations.
2. Assuming that the text of the Book of Mormon can be used as evidence of Smith's natural intellectual abilities in 1829.
3. Assuming that between 1823 and 1829 as a first-time novelist, Smith composed and outlined the "story content" (165) for most of the Book of Mormon using his own creativity.
4. Assuming that by age twenty-three, Smith developed a memorization system that enabled him to encode the stories and outlines that he had composed into his memory.
5. Assuming that during the dictation, Smith remembered the outlines and story ideas and then wordsmithed a long series of first-draft oral sentences that was also a highly refined sequence of final-draft sentences.

The remainder of this article will address these assumptions.

Assuming Book of Mormon Historians Would Not Use Summary Headings

The 1830 printing of the Book of Mormon contains 114 chapters (1981 edition has 240) and 15 books. Of these, fourteen chapters and seven books have "heads" or "headings," which serve as brief introductory outlines, ranging from eight to 163 words in length. (Figure 2 illustrates a heading in the original Book of Mormon.)

Page Number of Heading in the 1830 Book of Mormon	Heading Length (Words)	Pages between Headings	Type of Heading
323	8	7	Chapter
330	8	2	Chapter
332	8	16	Chapter
583	9	5	Chapter
514	11	69	Book
282	15	41	Chapter
239	17	6	Chapter
202	22	19	Chapter

Page Number of Heading in the 1830 Book of Mormon	Heading Length (Words)	Pages between Headings	Type of Heading
232	26	7	Chapter
59	28	84	Book
173	28	30	Chapter
348	29	59	Chapter
123	31	49	Book
476	34	38	Chapter
269	42	13	Chapter
426	45	27	Chapter
245	48	24	Chapter
452	48	23	Book
221	68	11	Book
407	106	19	Book
5	163	54	Book
588	END		

For the vast majority of the Book of Mormon text that is not directly associate with these formal headings, VSS asserts “Smith also embeds these outlines in the middle of narratives, incorporating them into the development of the stories themselves” (128) as “concealed heads” (68; see also 99, 115). As discussed above, VSS considers virtually every line of the Book of Mormon to be a heading or an elaboration of a general heading.

Assuming Headings in the Book of Mormon are Anachronistic

A foundational observation for the general theory advanced in VSS is that the presence of headings in the Book of Mormon is anachronistic. That is, historians writing between 600 BCE and 400 CE would not have used such techniques so their presence in the Book of Mormon comes from a much later century:

“Because this contemporary technique was ubiquitous in the early nineteenth century, and because Smith himself used this same technique to structure his other compositions, the presence of this common introductory and organizational method points to Smith as the most likely source.” (189)

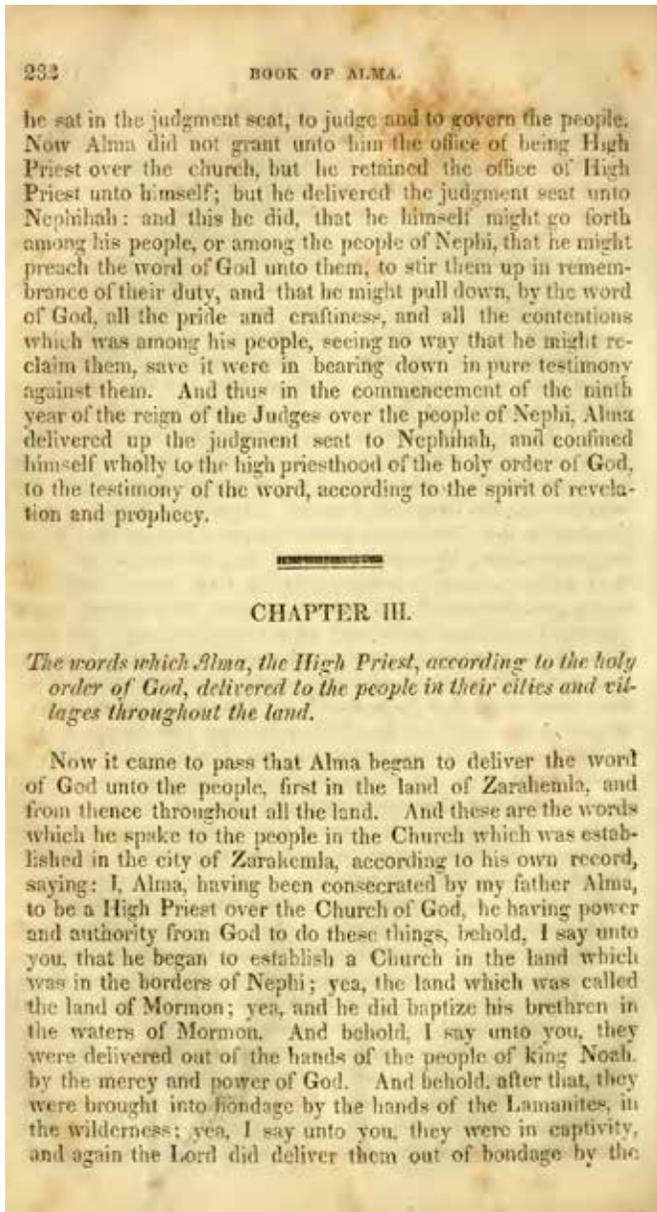


Figure 2. Page 232 from the 1830 Book of Mormon showing a heading for Alma chapter III (current chapter 5).

The “familiar sermon structure” in the Book of Mormon is a “glaring anachronism” (96) and the use of a “skeletal outline” is a “prominent anachronism.” (124)

Headings in the Book of Mormon “all reflect the specific style and focus of an early career evangelical preacher in nineteenth-century America.” (163)

Such “techniques emerged in a different place and time than the period in which the stories of the Book of Mormon occurred, signaling the authoritative presence of a modern hand.” (159)

Despite these repeated claims, VSS spends little time demonstrating how ancient historians consistently failed to include chapter headings in their compilations.

Ancient Historians Used Chapter Summaries

A brief documentary review shows that placing explanatory prologues or introductions to written sections has been implemented by writers for millennia. Authors and orators did not wait until the modern era to recognize that adding preliminary summaries to discourses (whether spoken or written) could enhance the audience’s comprehension.

Dating from the 4th century BCE, the philosopher Aristotle wrote: “In prologues, and in epic poetry, a foretaste of the theme is given, intended to inform the hearers of it in advance instead of keeping their minds in suspense.” Aristotle described the usefulness of “a summary statement of your subject, to put a sort of head on the main body of your speech.”¹¹

Available evidence also supports that Josephus writing his *Antiquities of the Jews* in the late first century routinely used chapter headings,¹² an example of which is shown in Figure 3. Similarly, both Eusebius of Caesarea (composing *Ecclesiastical History* in the early fourth century CE; see Figure 4) and Augustine of Hippo (authoring *The City of God* in the early 5th century CE) placed summaries called “argumenta” preceding their chapters.¹³

11. W. D. Ross, trans., *The Works of Aristotle, Volume XI, Rhetorica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 1415a-b.

12. Joseph Sievers, “The Ancient Lists of Contents of Josephus’*Antiquities*,” in *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism: Louis H. Feldman Jubilee Volume*, eds. Shaye J. D. Cohen and Joshua J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 278–79.

13. *Ibid.*, 275.

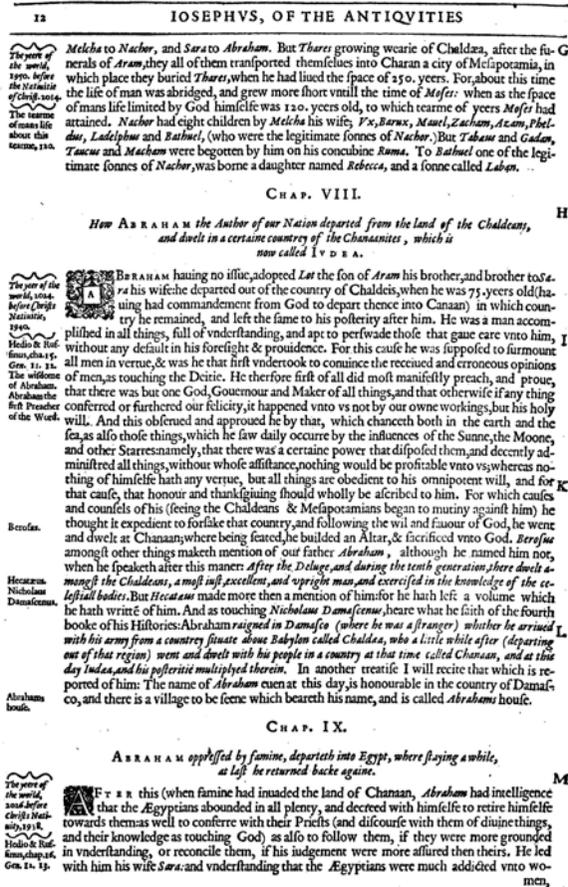


Figure 3. This page from *Famous and Memorable Workes of Josephus* shows chapter headings originally included by Josephus in the first century and marginalia summaries by the translator, Thomas Lodge.¹⁴

It could be argued any historians writing in any time and place would soon realize that giving an opening outline before elaborating could enhance the audience's understanding. This intuitive process is not particularly complex, but self-evident. Authors may not have called it "laying down heads" until the 19th century, but additional research shows it was employed thousands of years before Joseph Smith's birth; an example is shown in Figure 5.

14. Thomas Lodge, trans., *Famous and Memorable Workes of Josephus, a Man of Much Honor and Loearning Among the Jewes* (London: G. Bishop et al, 1602), 12.



Figure 4. A representative page from *The ancient ecclesiastical histories of the first six hundred years after Christ* shows two chapter headings, which are included throughout the entire work.¹⁵

This data seems to contradict the assumption that writers in 540 BCE (Nephi or Jacob) or 400 CE (Mormon or Moroni) would not have realized the value of summary headings and would not have inserted them in their writings. Proving the composition techniques that Nephtite writers would have employed is impossible, but multiple evidences show that reserving such methodologies to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries is unjustified.

15. Eusebius, Socrates, and Evagrius, *The ancient ecclesiastical histories of the first six hundred years after Christ, written in the Greek tongue by three learned historiographers* (London: Thomas Vautrou Hierdwelling, 1577), 3.

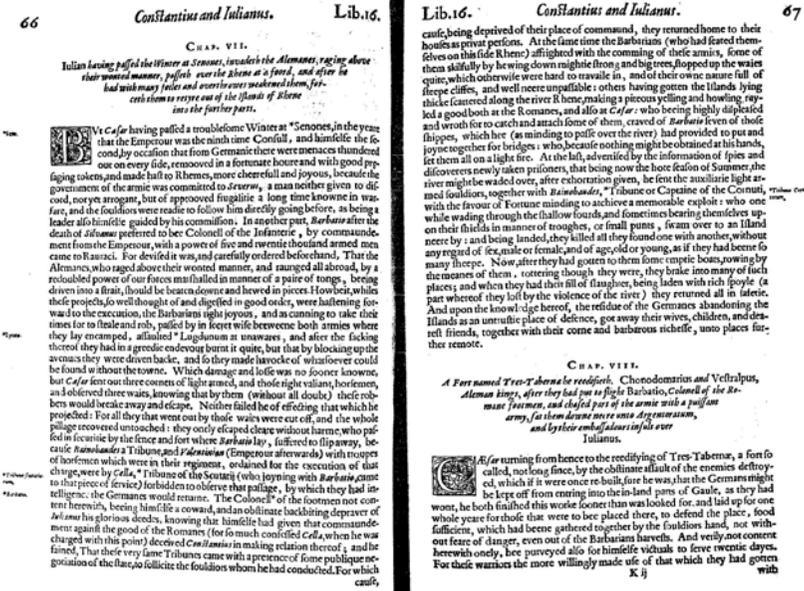


Figure 5. Philemon Holland, *The Roman Historie Containing Such Acts and Occurrents as Passed Under Constantius, Iulianus, Iovianus, Valentinianus, And Valens, Emperours*, (London: Printed by Adam Islip, An. 1609), 66–67.

Assuming that the Text of the Book of Mormon is Evidence of Joseph Smith's Natural Intellectual Abilities in 1829

In its opening pages, VSS declares perhaps its most important assumption, that Joseph Smith composed the Book of Mormon using his “individual creative efforts” in 1829 (xi). For VSS, the primary question is not, “Where did all the words come from?” but “What intellectual methods did Joseph Smith employ as he generated all the words?”

VSS notes: “The historical records addressing Smith’s habits of reading, study, meditation, and exhortation are spare and contested for his pre-Book of Mormon years” (58). Overcoming this lack of supportive historical evidence is facilitated by rejecting Smith’s claims that divine influences were ultimately responsible. In other words, by assuming he created the text using his natural abilities, the text can then be used as evidence of his natural abilities at the time of the Book of Mormon dictation. Contradictions and silences in the historical record can be countered by appeals to the content of the Book of Mormon narrative. This occurs throughout VSS with language like “the text reveals” (120,137,147, 161, 189, etc.) and “the text of the Book of Mormon provides important clues” (148).

Smith's method of composition reveals an advanced understanding of nineteenth-century compositional strategies and a fluency in their techniques. Such evidence undermines the hagiographical accounts of Smith as an ignorant farm boy and further uncovers the presence of a familiar (and constricting) trope: the humble and illiterate but righteous man, who, in spite of his lack of formal training and education, is chosen by God to reveal important truths to mankind and to confound the wise and cynical men of the world. (194)

Naturalists who already believe Joseph Smith created the Book of Mormon using his human skills will agree with this assumption as it is applied repeatedly throughout VSS. Indeed, they may argue no other approach should be considered. Skeptical observers may recognize that every time VSS references the text of the Book of Mormon to support its primary theory, it is appealing to evidence that is based upon an assumption. That assumption is unproven historically but vigorously accepted contemporaneously and is different from data derived from the historical record.

Assuming Joseph Smith Possessed Extraordinary Composition Skills in 1829

VSS assumes that “Smith began his work on the Book of Mormon long before he actually started to dictate the text ... the production of the work ... involves a scenario in which he announced the existence of the gold plates containing the narrative of the Book of Mormon in September 1823” (163). From that point, “Smith would have had a total of five and a half years from Moroni's first visit” (165).

During that time, Smith composed all the “narrative structure of his stories, [including] their placement within the overall plan of his epic work” (151). “The stories were carefully planned, with preliminary summaries and embedded outlines that revealed the shape of individual episodes, along with how those episodes fit within the larger scheme of the entire work” (158). Specifically, his time was spent “generating and developing ideas, choosing topics to address, establishing sequences of events, choosing names and places, and making any possible revisions along the way” (143). To summarize, Joseph spent those years producing “the sequence and contents of the narratives in the overall construction of the Book of Mormon” (147).

Concurrent with the composition of the content, VSS reports Smith was also “constructing and revising preliminary outlines (not fully written manuscripts) that framed the work” (163). These “outlines” are referred to hundreds of times in VSS, often with adjective descriptors such as “skeletal outlines” (16, 18, 20, 21, 22, etc.), “memorized outlines” (17, 22, 72, 87), “mental outlines” (17, 22, 31, 42, etc.), “preliminary outlines” (16, 18, 67, 116, etc.), and “opening outlines” (21, 22, 96, 127, etc.). According to VSS, these outlines were fully produced by 1829 and constituted “a master plan for the entire Book of Mormon” (144).

Lucy Mack Smith’s Recollection

In support of Joseph Smith’s 1823 compositional skills, VSS references Lucy Mack Smith’s recollection:¹⁶

During our evening conversations, Joseph would occasionally give us some of the most amusing recitals that could be imagined. He would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent, their dress, mode of travelling, and the animals upon which they rode;¹⁷ their cities, their buildings, with every particular; their mode of warfare; and also their religious worship. This he would do with as much ease, seemingly, as if he had spent his whole life with them.¹⁸

16. Proponents of the storyteller theory may quote an 1867 statement from Thomas Davies Burrall that declares that “Joe Smith” was “a wood-cutter on my farm” and that “at night, around a huge fire, he and his companions would gather, ten or a dozen at a time, to tell hard stories, and sing songs and drink cheap whisky, (two shillings per gallons), and although there were some hard cases among them, Joe could beat them all for tough stories and impracticable adventures” (*Louisville Daily Courier* 36, no. 81 [October 5, 1867]: 1). Dan Vogel describes chronological problems and concludes: “Burrall obviously employed a much older man named ‘Joe Smith’ and confused him with the Mormon prophet.” (Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2000], 3:363.)

17. Kevin Christensen points out that the Book of Mormon “has no descriptions of people riding animals in over 500 pages that include several major migrations and 100 distinct wars. It provides no notably detailed descriptions of clothing (other than armor) and no detailed descriptions of the structure of later buildings. The most detail we get involves descriptions of fortifications with palisaded walls and ditches” (“Playing to an Audience: A Review of Revelatory Events,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 28 [2018]: 75).

18. Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), 85. Lucy reports these activities occurred after September 22, 1823. See also Wandle Mace’s 1890 account (“Wandle Mace autobiography” [unpublished manuscript, 1890],

“Lucy’s account provides intriguing information that offers clues concerning the early stages of the creation of the Book of Mormon” (167). VSS portrays these recitals as the tip of an oratory iceberg of Joseph’s private Book of Mormon composition activities: “If Lucy’s reminiscence is accurate, then this collection of raw story materials suggests that young Joseph was in the earliest stages of his preparation during those evening storytelling adventures around the family hearth” (168).

Assuming Training in Composition

Basic to any author’s effort to compose a book is a rudimentary understanding of vocabulary, linguistics, grammar, and semantics. Equally important would be a fundamental knowledge of English composition and rhetoric. VSS asserts that Joseph Smith received “introductory composition lessons in common schools” (3). “Many of the oral techniques ... were integral components of introductory writing instruction in common schools, with lessons involving the composition of ‘themes,’ various imitation exercises, and a variety of short and expanded essays” (4).

In addition, VSS’s author, William L. Davis published a 2016 article, “Reassessing Joseph Smith Jr.’s Formal Education,” where he dismisses as “rhetorical effect,” Joseph’s recollection that he was “deprived of the benefit of an education ... [and] merely instructed in reading, writing and the ground rules of arithmetic.”¹⁹ Instead, Davis asserts that Joseph’s school curriculum would have been “more accurately depicted” if he had included: “reading, writing, arithmetic, basic rhetoric, *composition*, geography, and history” (emphasis added).²⁰

Unfortunately, Davis does not provide supportive evidence showing that Joseph Smith’s district school included composition training or that

44, <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=bdd8f2f5-fbd2-4e83-b4b3-cccc5fcc70d0>). Concerning Mace’s memory, the account is very late and Dan Vogel points out that “he was obviously influenced by the 1853 publication of Lucy’s History, which must be taken into account” (Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:451).

19. Joseph Smith, “History of Joseph Smith By Himself” (unpublished manuscript, 20 July-27 Nov, 1832), 1.

20. William Davis, “Reassessing Joseph Smith Jr.’s Formal Education,” *Dialogue* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 11–12. Two decades later when Orson Pratt advertised subjects to be taught at the “University of Nauvoo,” the list included reading, history, geography, grammar, arithmetic, philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, integral calculus and Newton’s *Principia*,” but not “composition” or “rhetoric.” (*The Wasp*, September 24, 1842.)

it existed anywhere in rural New York in the 1820s.²¹ “The great majority of the one-room elementary schools which sprang up over America in the early nineteenth century” wrote R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A Cremin in *A History of Education in American Culture*, “were simple institutions providing a simple educational fare ... Reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic constituted the principle elements in the offering.”²²

If Smith received training in composition, it is unclear what writing instruments he would have used or what writing surfaces he would have written upon. In the 1820s, paper for writing was expensive and could be difficult to obtain in rural America. The original copy of the Book of Mormon was penned on five different types of paper, indicating that finding paper may have been a challenge.²³ Joseph Knight, Sr. remembered bringing “a barrel of mackerel and some lined paper for writing,” to Joseph during the weeks of translation.²⁴ Assumptions that Smith had ready-access to paper sheets or “a common ‘blank book’” go beyond the evidence (164; see also 158, 184 and 190).

Joseph Smith as a First-Time Novelist

As Joseph Smith’s first book, the 269,320-word Book of Mormon stands out in several ways. Generally, a “short story” may be defined as containing up to 10,000 words, a “novelette” to 18,000, a “novella” to 40,000, and a novel as “a long work of fiction of 40,000 or more.”²⁵

21. In his PhD dissertation, Davis acknowledges: “When Joseph Smith received his education, school children did not yet have books specifically designed for composition.” William L. Davis, “Performing Revelation: Joseph Smith’s Oral Performance of *The Book of Mormon*” (PhD dissertation, UCLA, 2016), 136.

22. R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A Cremin, *A History of Education in American Culture* (New York: Henry Holt, 1953), 269–70. See also Clifton Johnson, *Old-Time Schools and School Books* (London: The MacMillan Company, 1904), 133; Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New-England and New-York* (London: William Baynes and Son, 1823), 4:461, 490.

23. Royal Skousen, *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001), 37.

24. Dean Jessee, “Joseph Knights Recollection of Early Mormon History,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 1 (1977): 36. Knight reported that months earlier he gave “Joseph a little money to Buoy paper to translate.” (Ibid., 35.)

25. H. Thomas Milhorn and Howard T. Milhorn, *Writing Genre Fiction: A Guide to the Craft* (Boca Raton, FL: Universal Publishers, 2006), 3.

The Book of Mormon’s verbosity may have made it the longest book—among all those classified as *fiction* — printed in 1830.²⁶

As a first-time book author, Smith’s education and age, accompanying the length and reading difficulty of the Book of Mormon, place him in a unique position when compared to other youthful authors. The Book of Mormon is longer, containing fifty percent more words than the next longest novel and has a higher reading grade level than any other book written by an author 24 years of age or younger.²⁷

Author	Education at Time of Publication	First Book Title	Age when Published	Word Count	Reading Grade Level ²⁸
Mary Shelley	Home tutoring	Frankenstein	21	51,460	4–5
F. Scott Fitzgerald	College	This Side Of Paradise	24	53,940	6–7
Amelia Atwater-Rhodes	High school	In the Forests of the Night	15	54,560	4–5
Gordon Korman	High school	I Want to Go Home!	18	57,040	n/a
Alexandra Adornetto	Secondary school	The Shadow Thief	14	64,480	6–7
S.E. Hinton	High school	The Outsiders	19	69,440	3–4
Taylor Caldwell	Public schools	The Romance of Atlantis	12	73,320	n/a
Zlata Filipović	Public schools	Zlata’s Diary	13	74,400	3–4
Nancy Yi Fan	Secondary school	Swordbird	14	79,360	3–4
Catherine Webb	Secondary school	Mirror Dreams	16	97,200	n/a

26. Multiple computer searches of books published in 1830 performed by the author have failed to identify any fictional works with over 269,000 words.

27. Modified from Hales, “Curiously Unique,” 159–61.

28. Modified from Lexile, “Typical Reader Measures by Grade,” <https://lexile.com/educators/measuring-growth-with-lexile/lexile-measures-grade-equivalents/>. The Lexile Framework for Reading, Publisher Report, containing the certified Lexile score for the text of the 1830 Book of Mormon was issued August 17, 2017, commissioned by Brian C. Hales for LDS Answers, Inc. Due to the lack of an ISBN number for the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, the Lexile score is not included in the Lexile score database at <https://fab.lexile.com/>.

Author	Education at Time of Publication	First Book Title	Age when Published	Word Count	Reading Grade Level ²⁸
Pamela Brown	High school	The Swish of the Curtain	17	99,200	n/a
Alex Harris	College	Do Hard Things	18	99,200	n/a
Percy Bysshe Shelley	Secondary school	Zastrozzi	18	101,600	n/a
Arthur Rimbaud	Secondary school	A Season in Hell	19	106,020	7–8
Eleanor Catton	Secondary school	The Rehearsal	23	106,160	n/a
Helen Oyeyemi	Secondary school	The Icarus Girl	21	109,120	n/a
Zoe Sugg	College	Girl Online	24	109,120	3–4
Malala Yousafzai	Private school	I Am Malala	16	114,080	5–6
Carson McCullers	College	The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter	23	114,080	3–4
Maureen Daly	High school	Seventeenth Summer	21	119,040	7–8
Georgette Heyer	High school	The Black Moth	19	120,900	n/a
Flavia Bujor	Secondary school	The Prophecy of the Stones	14	124,000	5–5
Matthew Gregory Lewis	College	The Monk	21	128,960	5–6
Isamu Fukui	High school	Truancy	15	133,920	5–6
Jessica Khoury	College	Origin	22	133,920	3–4
Esther Earl	High school	This Star Won't Go Out	20	138,800	5–6
Beth Reekles	Secondary school	The Kissing Booth	16	138,880	3–4
Christopher Paolini	High School	Eragon	19	163,680	3–4
Samantha Shannon	College	The Bone Season	22	173,600	n/a

Author	Education at Time of Publication	First Book Title	Age when Published	Word Count	Reading Grade Level ²⁸
Suresh Gupta	Secondary school	The Conspiracy of Calaspia	18	186,000	n/a
Joseph Smith	Frontier school	Book of Mormon	24	269,320	8–9

As Robert Rees points out, famous authors do not produce their masterful works as their first compositions. Each accomplished author demonstrates “a long gestation period during which he ‘tried out’ his ideas, metaphors, allusions, coloring (tone), points of view, personae, and rhetorical styles before tackling a larger, more complex, and more sophisticated form, whether as a collection of poems and essays (Emerson), an extended personal narrative (Thoreau), a novel (Hawthorne and Melville) or a major poem (Whitman). There are no parallel try works for Joseph Smith, nor any evidence of his apprenticeship as a writer. In fact, all evidence points in the opposite direction.”²⁹

An Unkind Historical Record

A concession secularists continually resist is the reality that the historical record is immovably unkind to assumptions that Smith possessed remarkable intellectual skills in 1829 that could be applied to authoring a book. Isaac Hale remembered in 1834: “I first became acquainted with Joseph Smith Jr. in November, 1825 ... His appearance at this time, was that of a careless young man — not very well educated.”³⁰ Prior to his baptism into the Church, W. W. Phelps wrote on January 15, 1831 affirming “Joseph Smith is a person of very limited abilities in common learning.”³¹

In 1881, John H. Gilbert, the Book of Mormon typesetter and non-Latter-day Saint, was asked: “How do you account for the production of the Book of Mormon, Mr. Gilbert, then, if Joseph Smith was so illiterate?”

29. Robert A. Rees, “Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance: An Update,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 19 (2016): 15, <https://journal.interpreterfoundation.org/joseph-smith-the-book-of-mormon-and-the-american-renaissance-an-update/>.

30. Isaac Hale quoted in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, for Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, OH: E. D. Howe, 1834), 262–63.

31. *Ibid.*, 273.

He answered: “Well, that is the difficult question. It must have been from the Spaulding romance — you have heard of that, I suppose. The parties here then never could have been the authors of it, certainly.”³²

An 1879 interview by William Blair of Joseph Smith’s brother-in-law Michael Morse (who married Emma’s sister Tryal) relates:

Mr. Morse is not, and has never been a believer in the prophetic mission of Joseph.

He states that he first knew Joseph when he came to Harmony, Pa., an awkward, unlearned youth of about nineteen years of age ...

Bro. [Edwin] Cadwell enquired as to whether Joseph was sufficiently intelligent and talented to compose and dictate of his own ability the matter written down by the scribes. To this Mr. Morse replied with decided emphasis, No. He said he [Morse] then was not at all learned, yet was confident he had more learning than Joseph then had.

Bro. Cadwell enquired how he (Morse) accounted for Joseph’s dictating the Book of Mormon in the manner he had described. To this he replied he did not know.³³

Multiple other accounts describe Joseph Smith as ignorant³⁴ or illiterate.³⁵ No account from those who knew him in 1829 portray Smith as intelligent enough to dictate the Book of Mormon.³⁶

32. William H. Kelley, “The Hill Cumorah, and the Book of Mormon,” *Saints’ Herald* 28 (1 June 1881): 165–66.

33. See Michael Morse quoted in William W. Blair to Editors, 22 May 1879, *Saints’ Herald* 26 (15 June 1879): 190–91.

34. See George Peck, ed., “Mormonism and the Mormons,” *Methodist Quarterly Review* 25 (1843): 112; Orlando Saunders, William Van Camp, and John H. Gilbert, quoted in “The Early Days of Mormonism,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* 26 (August 1880): 198; John W. Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collection of the State of New York* (New York: S. Tuttle, 1841), 580–81.

35. Jonathan Hadley, “Golden Bible,” *Palmyra Freeman*, August 11, 1829; Daniel Hendrix in “Origin of Mormonism. Joe Smith and His Early Habits. How He Found the Golden Plates. A Contemporary of the Prophet Relates Some Interesting Facts,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, (May 14, 1893), 12; William H. Kelley, “The Hill Cumorah, and the Book of Mormon,” *Saints’ Herald* 28 (1 June 1881): 166.

36. Like VSS, many observers have accepted the assumption that Joseph Smith authored the text of the Book of Mormon and then use it as evidence of his 1829 intellectual abilities. See, for example, Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*, 12. Direct references to Smith’s education and cognitive capabilities by age twenty-three fail

Assuming Joseph Smith Possessed an Extraordinary Memory in 1829

VSS assumes that prior to 1829, Joseph Smith mentally composed the majority of the content to be included in the Book of Mormon and simultaneously committed all that data to memory. That content included material for nearly a hundred separate sermons, plotlines involving 209 distinct individuals,³⁷ detailed discussions of olive tree husbandry and ancient Israelite law, over one hundred guerilla warfare encounters, and a geography with at least 125 different topographical locations, and stories involving over 425 specific geographical movements.³⁸ Any details that were not memorized would have needed to be spontaneously created in real time during the dictation.

VSS describes how during the 1823 to 1829 period Smith used the “act of rehearsal” to “enhance” his “memory” (168). He “spent a long time with his stories — meditating on them ... until he became sufficiently familiar with them for the stories to become entrenched in his mind. In doing so, such preparations and mental rehearsals would enhance his memory of the narratives” (143). “Smith would also have had an extensive amount of time to rehearse and familiarize himself with the characters and narratives” (164). The result, according to VSS, was Smith’s brain brimming with all the “advanced knowledge” (140), “advanced awareness” (157), “intimate knowledge” (158), and “familiarization with its stories” (178) needed for his oratory debut.

Committing the Book of Mormon Outlines and General Content to Memory

How much rehearsal would be necessary to prepare Joseph Smith for what VSS characterizes as his oral performance? Any reader can answer by simply reviewing the 1830 Book of Mormon and deciding how many hours of repetition would be required to memorize details that would not be easily generated extemporaneously. Assuming Joseph Smith committed this amount of time to memorize is hampered by a couple of

to attribute genius-level mental capacities or even exceptional intelligence (see Brian C. Hales, “Joseph Smith: Non-Author of the Book of Mormon,” forthcoming).

37. See Robert J. Matthews, *Who’s Who in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Book of Mormon Names,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:186.

38. See John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo, UT: FARMS), 217- 326.

observations.³⁹ First, while he was reportedly creating and committing all the mental outlines and stories to memory, he was also engaged in other activities (according to VSS):

- Attending up to seven years of district schooling (3, 4, 22).
- Working with his family clearing land and in other enterprises (5).
- Directing groups of treasure seekers with his seer stone (11–12, 171).
- Visiting bookstores and libraries to learn specific details about Biblical law, olive tree husbandry, warfare, and other subjects (76, 57).
- Examining maps of Middle Eastern geography to determine migration routes (vii, 171).
- Memorizing parts of the Bible (180).
- Listening to preachers at multiple camp gatherings, Sunday school meetings, and revivals (3, 16, 36).

A second concern involves the human limitations inherent in the memorization of such a large quantity of data by using rote repetition. Walter Ong, author of *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* argues that some kind of formulaic, patterned, or mnemonic memory system might be needed: “In an oral culture, to think through something in nonformulaic, non-patterned, non-mnemonic terms, even if it were possible, would be a waste of time, for such thought, once worked through, could never be recovered with any effectiveness, as it could be with the aid of writing. It would not be abiding knowledge but simply a passing thought, however complex.”⁴⁰ VSS addresses this by asserting that the outlines Joseph Smith memorized were filled with “mnemonic cues” (71, 76, 79, 96 etc.), that could help him recollect the stories and sermon core elements. VSS does not address how Smith was able to embed so many oratory elements in his memory so that a “mnemonic cue” in a remembered outline could reliably trigger the other memorized story elements. Instead, VSS assumes that it could and did happen.

39. A topic not discussed in VSS involves Smith’s assumed motives. If he sought power or money as an eighteen-year-old farmer in upstate New York, it is less intuitive to suppose that he would decide to spend five years mentally composing and rehearsing a manuscript like the Book of Mormon and then expecting that an oral dictation and publication would be successful.

40. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 35.

VSS allows the possibility that Joseph Smith may have used a written manuscript. “Smith could have easily written the entire plan of the Book of Mormon on roughly a dozen sheets of paper” (158). “If Emma had stumbled across any possible notes, they would likely have consisted of truncated outlines and cryptic mnemonic cues. And given that her experience as a scribe pertained to the beginning of the translation process, she arguably would not have known if any such notes had anything to do with the work” (184). As discussed above, assumptions that Joseph Smith penned outlines or any other form of notes are based upon speculation.

Testing Joseph Smith’s Memory

In 1836, Church leaders hired Joshua Seixas to teach Hebrew to forty students over the course of seven weeks beginning on January 26. Assessing Joseph Smith’s ability to memorize is facilitated by reviewing his performance as he worked to learn Hebrew. Professors Elvira V. Masoura and Susan E. Gathercole observe: “Research has revealed a close link between language acquisition and the capacity of the verbal component of working memory.”⁴¹

Historian Brent M. Rogers *et al* summarize Smith’s participation:

By all accounts, JS [Joseph Smith] was a diligent student of Hebrew. After Oliver Cowdery returned to Kirtland with “a quantity of Hebrew books” on 20 November 1835, JS commenced an earnest study of the language. Though he participated in the formal classes taught by Seixas, he also devoted considerable time to studying the language on his own. Between 23 November 1835 and 29 March 1836, JS’s journal mentions his studying of Hebrew — whether in class, with colleagues, or by himself — no fewer than seventy times.⁴²

Matthew Grey also observes: “In addition to attending his regular classes, Joseph asked Seixas for private study sessions, worked ahead on translation assignments, reviewed lessons on Sundays, and studied when

41. Elvira V. Masoura and Susan E. Gathercole, “Phonological Short-term Memory and Foreign Language Learning,” *International Journal of Psychology* 34, no. 5–6 (1999): 383.

42. Brent Rogers *et al.*, *the Joseph Smith Papers: Documents Volume 5: October 1835–January 1838* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2017), 216.

he was sick.⁴³ After completing the class on March 30, Seixas issued Joseph Smith a certificate:

Mr Joseph Smith Junr has attended a full course of Hebrew lessons under my tuition; & has been indefatigable in acquiring the principles of the sacred language of the Old Testament Scriptures in their original tongue. He has so far accomplished a knowledge of it, that he is able to translate to my entire satisfaction; & by prosecuting the study he will be able to become a proficient in Hebrew.⁴⁴

Here Seixas certified that after attending his class and studying Hebrew on at least seventy occasions, Joseph Smith could translate to his “entire satisfaction,” but that he was not yet “proficient in Hebrew.”

The twenty-four-year-old Orson Pratt also attended the sessions and was apparently the only other student to receive a certificate: “During the winter I attended the Heb. School about 8 weeks in which time I made greater progress than what I could have expected in so short a period. I obtained a certificate from J. Seixas, our instructor, certifying to my capability of teaching that language.”⁴⁵ By comparison, Joseph Smith learned to translate without becoming proficient, but Orson Pratt comprehended enough to be certified as a teacher.

Linguist Noam Chomsky stresses the existence of “limitations on performance imposed by organization of memory.”⁴⁶ These restrictions create performance boundaries for human cognitive function in any field requiring intellectual processing. Joseph Smith’s well-documented episode learning Hebrew in 1836 identifies an apparent upward limit to his memory abilities seven years after dictating the Book of Mormon. At that time, his cognitive capacity to learn Hebrew was less than Orson Pratt’s, six years his junior. By several standards, Pratt was intellectually

43. Matthew J. Grey, “‘The Word of the Lord in the Original’: Joseph Smith’s Study of Hebrew in Kirtland,” in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, eds. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: Religious Study Center, 2015), 271.

44. “Certificate from Joshua Seixas, 30 March 1836,” *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/certificate-from-joshua-seixas-30-march-1836/1>

45. Elden J. Watson, comp., *The Orson Pratt Journals* (Salt Lake City: Elden Jay Watson, 1975), 75. See also “History of Orson Pratt,” *LDS Millennial Star* 27 (Feb 11, 1865): 87.

46. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1965), 10.

gifted, but not superior to other geniuses in history and incapable of duplicating Smith's dictation of a near 270,000-word book from memory.

Assuming Joseph Smith Could Wordsmith an Oral First-Draft that is also a Refined Final-Draft in Real Time

As discussed above, VSS assumes that by April 7, 1829, Smith had mentally warehoused hundreds of thoughts, outlines, facts, and other linguistic data. These oratory elements would have been almost useless unless he could package them into polished phrases and paragraphs. As Linda Flowers and John Hayes, authors of "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," observe: "Having good ideas doesn't automatically produce good prose."⁴⁷

VSS describes how Joseph Smith used his "semi-extemporaneous" performance skills (3, 4, 22, etc.) to dictate a protracted series of first-draft phrases that were also refined final draft sentences. In the interest of transparency and full disclosure, the intrinsic difficulties associated with this assumed activity must be comprehended by those willing to accept VSS's overall theory.

A Naturalistic Description of Joseph Smith's Most Difficult Accomplishment

Helpful context might be found by answering the question, "What was the most difficult thing Joseph Smith ever accomplished?" from a naturalistic perspective. Possible responses include:

- Organizing a new church
- Creating a new theology that embraced and rejected aspects of predominant Christianity
- Leading a small army over hundreds of miles of terrain
- Rallying followers to build a temple, one of the largest structures in Ohio at the time
- Enduring over six months of incarceration under dreadful conditions
- Secretly introducing a plurality of wives and convincing women to marry him polygamously
- Acting as mayor for the largest city in Illinois in the 1840s
- Running for president of the United States

47. Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," *College Composition and Communication* 32, no. 4 (December 1981): 367.

While each of these achievements required Joseph Smith to meet and overcome challenges, arguably the most difficult feat was the real-time process of dictating nearly 7000 very long sentences — averaging almost 40 words each — that were so precisely-constructed that they needed no re-sequencing.⁴⁸ Figure 6 illustrates the enormity of this feat by comparing the Book of Mormon with other major literary works.

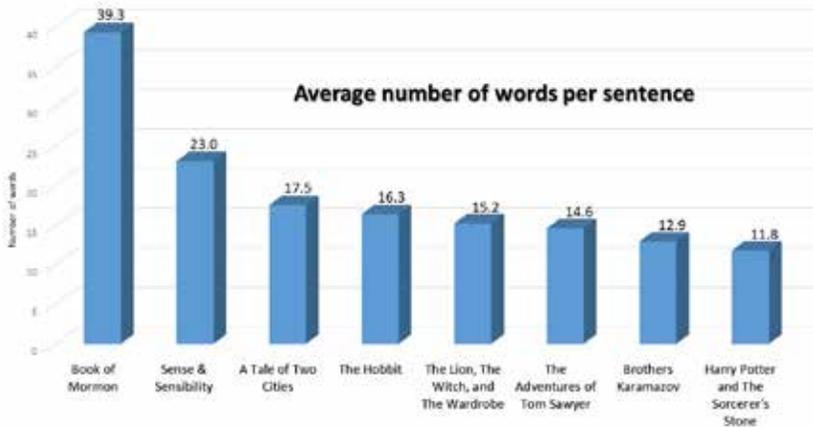


Figure 6. Comparing the sentence length of the Book of Mormon to other literary works.

The Difficulty of Mentally Converting First-Draft Phrases into Final-Draft Sentences

The primary challenge of what VSS describes as Joseph Smith’s semi-extemporaneous “oral performance” of the Book of Mormon involved the mental processing of all the data required to produce a continuous stream of final-draft sentences. Traditionally, book authors move from first-draft to final-draft through multiple written revisions. In her college textbook, *Steps to Writing Well*, Jean Wyrick emphasizes the importance of revising the initial drafts:

The absolute necessity of revision cannot be overemphasized. All good writers rethink, rearrange, and rewrite large portions of their prose ... Revision is a *thinking process* that occurs any time you are working on a writing project. It means looking

48. Joseph Smith’s dictation as recorded on the Original Manuscript contains no punctuation. Before printing, Book of Mormon typesetter John H. Gilbert added over 24,000 commas, nearly 6000 semicolons, and almost 7000 periods. See Roger Terry, “The Book of Mormon Translation Puzzle,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 23 (2014): 183.

at your writing with a “fresh eye” — that is, reseeing your writing in ways that will enable you to make more effective choices throughout your essay ... Revision means making important decisions about the best ways to focus, organize, develop, clarify, and emphasize your ideas ... Virtually all writers revise after ‘reseeing’ a draft in its entirety.⁴⁹

Other authors agree:

- Louis Brandeis, who served as an associate justice on the Supreme Court of the United States from 1916 to 1939, coined a common maxim for authors: “There is no good writing; there is only good rewriting.”⁵⁰
- Popular novelist and essayist Robert Louis Stevenson explicates: “When I say writing, O, believe me, it is rewriting that I have chiefly in mind.”⁵¹
- Bernard Malamud, one of the best known American Jewish authors of the 20th century agrees: “First drafts are for learning what your novel or story is about. Revision is working with that knowledge to enlarge and enhance an idea, to re-form it.”⁵²
- “I usually write about ten more or less complete drafts” confides Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy Kidder, “Each one usually though not always closer to the final thing.”⁵³
- Lynn Quitman Troyka writing in the *Simon & Shuster: Handbook for Writers* explains: “Writing takes time. Ideas do not leap onto paper in final, polished form. Not only do writers need to go through the various activities of the writing process, but they also need time to get distance from a draft so that they can revise with fresh eyes.”⁵⁴

49. Jean Wyrick, *Steps to Writing Well*, 12th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2014), 91–92; emphasis in original.

50. Louis Brandeis, quoted in George W. Pierce, “The Legal Profession,” *The Torch* vol. XXX, no. 2 (April 1957): 8.

51. Robert Louis Stevenson, quoted in Carl Hoefler, *Creative Preaching and Oral Writing* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 1978), 152

52. Lawrence Lasher, ed., *Conversations with Bernard Malamud* (Jackson, MS: U. of Mississippi Press, 1991), 58–59.

53. Tracy Kidder and Richard Todd, *Good Prose: The Art of Nonfiction* (New York: Random House, 2013), 147.

54. Lynn Quitman Troyka, *Simon & Shuster: Handbook for Writers* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1987), 44.

- Anne Lamott, author of *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, declares: “I know some very great writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money, and not *one* of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. Not one of them writes elegant first drafts.”⁵⁵
- Betty Mattix Dietsch, author of *Reasoning & Writing Well*, concurs: “Some inexperienced writers seem to think they have hit the jackpot on their first draft. They evade the fact that every exploratory draft needs more work.”⁵⁶

Dozens, if not hundreds, of similar statements can be found in publications dealing with creative writing. In contrast, an extensive search of the literature fails to identify even one advocate of a process where a dictated first-draft should also be the final-draft. Neither does it appear that any genius-level authors have ever produced a book of even 50,000 words using this technique.⁵⁷ “In all of literary history there is not a single example to match such an accomplishment,” observes Robert A. Rees. “If Joseph Smith composed the Book of Mormon out of his imagination and in the manner in which his scribes said he did (and we have no reason to disbelieve them), he is the only writer in human history to have accomplished such a feat.”⁵⁸

Human Mental Capacity and Real Time Editing

The reason why creative writers universally use written drafts to revise their manuscripts is undoubtedly due to the large number of literary variables that need to be manipulated to refine the text and finalize the

55. Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life* (New York: Random House, 1994), 21–22; emphasis in original.

56. Betty Mattix Dietsch, *Reasoning & Writing Well: A Rhetoric, Research Guide, Reader, and Handbook*, 4th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 62.

57. One possible exception is Bertrand Russell’s 71,613-word *Our Knowledge of the External World: As a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1914). He recalled that he dictated “the whole book without a moment’s hesitation” to his stenographer (Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory and other Essays* [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956], 212). Biographer Ray Monk shows he had in fact been working on the manuscript for over three months and that the statement is, in fact, a “mythologised account” (Ray Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The Spirit of Solitude 1872–1921* [New York: The Free Press, 1996], 336).

58. Robert A. Rees, “Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, and the American Renaissance,” *Dialogue* 35, no. 3 (2002): 102.

message. The process does not deal with single data chunks (individual words) alone, instead phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and even chapter-length word-strings are involved.

In a landmark 1956 article entitled “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on our Capacity for Processing Information,” George A. Miller, a Professor of Psychology at Harvard, described research data supporting that the human brain can process about seven “chunks” of data at a time. When the brain’s cerebral “channel capacity” exceeds that number, confusion and errors will result: “The span of absolute judgment and the span of immediate memory impose severe limitations on the amount of information that we are able to receive, process, and remember ... There seems to be some limitation built into us either by learning or by the design of our nervous systems, a limit that keeps our channel capacities in this general range” of five to nine data chunks.⁵⁹ While dozens of additional studies have examined Miller’s conclusions, his primary observation that the human mind has limited abilities to process information has been repeatedly corroborated.⁶⁰

As shown in Figure 7, developing characters, stories, sermons, summary headings, and skeletal outlines to be included in the Book of Mormon would have been intellectually challenging to Joseph Smith. Likewise, cerebrally composing the initial phraseology by processing multiple converging pre-language data-streams from memory and imagination would have consumed significant intellectual bandwidth. Those first-draft phrases would have included word-blocks that varied in length, syntax, semantics, nuance, and significance. Mentally revising such linguistic collections into finished final-draft sentences that retained coherency with the previous paragraphs and that anticipated the messages of the next dictation would seemingly be the most difficult cognitive process to complete.

Noam Chomsky observes: “A record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, and changes of plan in midcourse, and so on.”⁶¹ Practice would likely diminish such verbal miscues, but the Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon includes

59. George A. Miller, “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on our Capacity for Processing Information,” *Psychological Review* 63, no. 2 (Mar 1956): 86, 95. Sentence order reversed.

60. See Alan Baddeley, “The Magical Number Seven: Still Magic After All These Years?” *Psychological Review* 101, no. 2 (1994) 353–56; Koenraad Kuiper, “On the Linguistic Properties of Formulaic Speech,” *Oral Tradition* 15, no. 2 (2000): 281.

61. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1965), 4.

very few, if any.⁶² The first draft Joseph Smith dictated to his scribes went straight to the printer without any rewriting. For *Huffington Post* blogger Jack Kelly, the fact that Joseph Smith “did not revise a single word before its initial printing” was in his words, “jaw-dropping.”⁶³

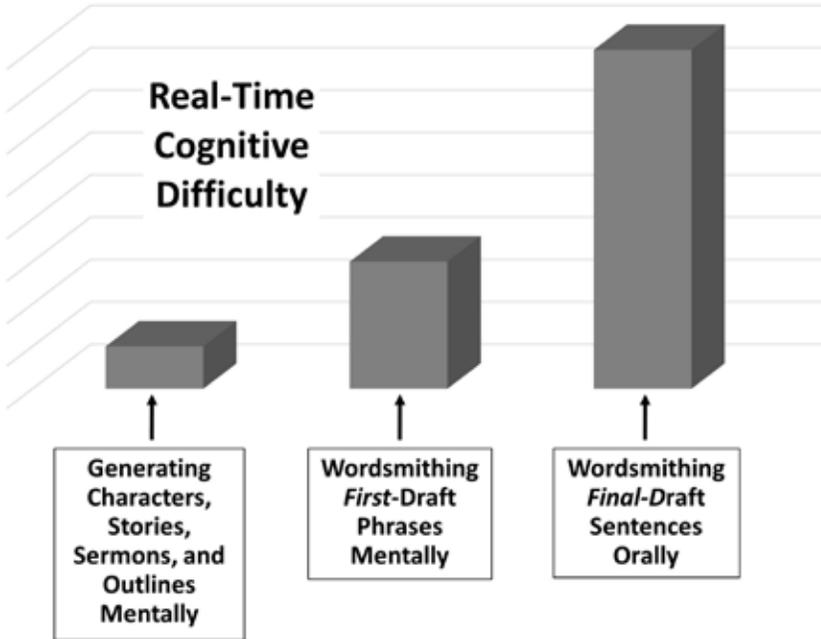


Figure 7. Comparing the relative difficulty of authorial tasks in real-time.

Joseph Smith made over a thousand edits in the wording in the 1837 and 1840 printings of the Book of Mormon.⁶⁴ Most were single- or double-word changes designed to update grammar and spelling. None involved restructuring or moving an entire sentence. Even accounting for all the subsequent textual alterations, the editorial clarity of the original dictation is remarkable.

Assuming Training as an Orator

According to VSS, Joseph Smith obtained the necessary rhetorical skills to dictate the Book of Mormon prior to age twenty three: “Whether at

62. See Skousen, *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*.

63. Jack Kelley, “Joseph Smith: Genius,” *Huffington Post* (website), July 7, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/thought-matters/joseph-smith-genius_b_10773964.html.

64. See Brian C. Hales, “Changing Critics’ Criticisms of Book of Mormon Changes,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 49–64.

home, school, church, work, or any number of other social and civic gatherings, cultural institutions in post-revolutionary America taught, developed, and encouraged oratorical skills at a level unparalleled in twenty-first-century American practices” (2). The ability to amplify and expand outlines into finalized narratives was, according to VSS, “a skill common enough among revivalist preachers and, indeed, students in common school classrooms” (139). The “semi-extemporaneous composition techniques” (164) he learned were presumably sufficient to “flesh out” (22) and even “pursue extemporaneous tangents” (101) during the recitation.

In 1851, Orsamus Turner reported that Joseph Smith “was a very passable exhorter” at Methodist meetings.⁶⁵ VSS refers to Smith’s training as an exhorter over twenty times (3, 33, 36–39, 42, 44, 47, 49, 58, 66, 78, 82, 105, 111, 114, 120).⁶⁶ “Smith’s attendance at Methodist class meetings and his efforts as an unlicensed exhorter would have exposed him to a religious environment dedicated to the principles of rigorous education and systematic self-improvement” (39). “His training as a lay Methodist exhorter would have further imprinted the patterns, language, and topics of exhortation” (111). VSS concludes: “Joseph’s participation was evidently sufficient for him to absorb a measure of Methodist preaching and exhortation techniques” (36).

However, VSS fails to inform readers that Joseph never formally joined the Methodists and his involvement with them lasted just a few months from the fall of 1824 to the winter of 1825.⁶⁷ Perhaps more problematic is that VSS does not mention that in the same book, Turner described Smith as “possessing less than ordinary intellect.”⁶⁸ When placed in a fuller historical framework, assuming Smith received training and excelled as a Methodist exhorter is unsupported.

65. Orsamus Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase, and Morris’ Reserve* (Rochester, N.Y.: Erastus Darrow, 1851), 214.

66. Davis also briefly refers to Orsamus Turner’s statement that Smith was involved with the “juvenile debating club” (VSS 3; see Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase, and Morris’ Reserve*, 213). In contrast, Davis’s 2016 dissertation calls Smith “an adept and capable member of the juvenile debate society,” (Davis, “Performing Revelation,” 122), subsequently referring to his debate experiences nearly 100 times in the dissertation.

67. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 5:396.

68. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase, and Morris’ Reserve*, 213.

Assuming Smith's Ability to Dictate Fluently and Semi-Extemporaneously

VSS repeatedly emphasizes Joseph Smith's ability to first dictate an outline and then create the refined sentences semi-extemporaneously. Smith "dictated a skeletal outline of summarizing heads to his scribe, after which he amplified (or planned to amplify) each of the heads into fully developed passages" (17–18):

The textual evidence clearly reveals that these structural tools, most obviously in the form of anticipatory narrative outlines, prompted and guided the semi-extemporaneous oral production of the work. These "prompts" allowed Smith the ability to move directly and fluently from carefully prepared mental "skeletons" and familiar mnemonic cues to the rapid dictation of the full text. Indeed, the process of combining these specific structuring devices with efficient oral performance techniques reflects the same compositional and semi-extemporaneous delivery methods in popular use among the evangelical preachers in Smith's own vibrant sermon culture. (190)

According to VSS, the actual talent that enabled Joseph Smith to create final-draft sentences in real time was one of advanced "improvisational techniques" (36): "The evidence also suggests that Smith's flexible semi-extemporaneous method left much of the actual language of the work — along with the amplification of narratives, sermons, tangential topics, and story elements — to improvisations in the moment of performance" (164).

In reality, asserting Joseph Smith could expertly improvise is more of a description than an explanation. It is like claiming the sun emits heat because it is hot, rather than describing how hydrogen atoms fuse to form helium in a process that radiates light and heat. It is true that some forms of behavior do not need detailed explanations, because they are so common. If I say, "John drove to town," I don't need to describe how he opened the door of his car, turned the ignition, pushed on the gas, and turned the steering wheel. Those events are so routine that listeners will assume they occurred without additional data.

Yet, assuming that Joseph Smith possessed the skills in 1829 to create nearly 7000 refined sentences as a continuous oral performance in fewer than three months is less justified because it is a process seemingly

unparalleled by intellectuals historically.⁶⁹ This assumption could represent a leap of logic that goes largely unrecognized by secularists due to a lack of proper scientific scrutiny or simply due to their confidence that since supernatural influences do not exist, a naturalistic explanation must exist, even if details are unavailable. “There is a relatively widespread conception that if individuals are innately talented,” explain K. A. Ericsson et al. in the article “The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance,” “they can easily and rapidly achieve an exceptional level of performance once they have acquired basic skills and knowledge.” Significantly Ericsson adds: “Biographical material disproves this notion.”⁷⁰

No other Recollections of Possible Composition Activities

VSS assumes Smith was involved in a comprehensive list of linguistic activities between 1823–1829 including story and outline development, Methodist exhorting, and practicing for his future “oratorical effort,” or “oral performance” (165, 2, 3 etc.). If so, others might have noticed, but little supportive evidence has been found beyond the recitals mentioned by his mother Lucy Mack Smith, which she dated to 1823.

For example, in 1834, Eber D. Howe printed the statements from twenty-two local inhabitants along with two “group statements” from the residents of Manchester and Palmyra.⁷¹ In July 1880 newspaperman Frederick G. Mather recorded detailed recollections from twelve residents of Susquehanna, Broome, and Chenango Counties, Pennsylvania.⁷² In

69. Skeptics may confuse automatic writing, which can produce lengthy manuscripts like the Book of Mormon, with the theory advanced in VSS. VSS describes Joseph Smith as superiorly intelligent and as using that cognitive ability to produce the words of the Book of Mormon. In contrast, automatic writers may or may not be overtly intelligent and never claim credit for the words they produce, instead attributing them to a supernatural source. The two are very distinct processes. (See Brian C. Hales, “Automatic Writing and the Book of Mormon: An Update,” *Dialogue* 53, no. 2 [Summer 2019]: 1–35.)

70. K. A. Ericsson, R. T. Krampe, and C. Tesch-Römer, “The Role of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance,” *Psychological Review* 100 (1993): 366

71. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled*. Statements were from Alva Hale, Abigail Harris, Barton Stafford, David Stafford, G. W. Stoddard, Henry Harris, Hezekiah Mckune, Isaac Hale, Joseph Capron, Joshua Mckune, Joshua Stafford, Levi Lewis, Lucy Harris, Nathaniel Lewis, Parley Chase, Peter Ingersoll, Roswell Nichols, Sophia Lewis, Willard Chase, and William Stafford.

72. See [Frederick G. Mather], “The Early Mormons. Joe Smith Operates at Susquehanna,” *Binghamton Republican*, 29 July 1880. Frederick G. Mather, “The

1888, Arthur Deming published statements from fourteen individuals in two volumes of *Naked Truths about Mormonism*.⁷³ Many of these individuals knew the Smith family and Joseph Smith Junior personally, but none describe him as an orator, writer, or scholar capable of authoring a lengthy complex book.

Richard Bushman reports that Joseph Smith “is not known to have preached a sermon before the Church is organized in 1830. He had no reputation as a preacher.”⁷⁴ If Joseph spent the thousands of hours composing a book and practicing for an oral performance as VSS describes, he must have been extremely secretive. Any such behavior would probably have been recalled by critics in the years immediately after the publication of the Book of Mormon as they sought to explain its *true* origin.

Conclusion

The limited number of well-developed ideas presented by William L. Davis in *Visions in a Seer Stone* are a very welcome addition to the body of Book of Mormon scholarship. Representing the most detailed secular explanation for the origin of the Book of Mormon published to date, it breaks new ground on a field of study that is surprisingly barren.

However, as a comprehensive explanation describing all cognitive processes Joseph Smith would necessarily have employed while dictating the Book of Mormon, the theory presented in VSS is rather anemic. Only the transfusion of a large number of major assumptions can resuscitate VSS’s theory to make it viable. Several of the assumptions are problematic like the idea that ancient historians would not use summary headings. Similarly, the claim that Joseph Smith possessed the intellectual gifts

Early Days of Mormonism,” *Lippincott’s Magazine* (Philadelphia) 26 (August 1880): 198–206, 211. Interviewees included Sally McKune, Mehetable Doolittle, Elizabeth Squires, Jacob I. Skinner, Samuel Brush, Orlando Saunders, William Van Camp, John H. Gilbert, George Collington, Smith Baker, Harriet Marsh, and Rebecca Nurse.

73. Arthur Deming, ed., *Naked Truths about Mormonism*, 2 vols. (Oakland, CA: Deming & Co., 1888). Statements were from Caroline Rockwell, Isaac Butts, Joseph Rogers, K. E. Bell, Lorenzo Saunders, Reuben P. Harmon, S. F. Anderick, Sylvia Walker, W. A. Lillie, William R. Hine, Christopher M. Stafford, Cornelius R. Stafford, G. J. Keen, and Henry A. Sayer.

74. “A Historian’s Perspective of Joseph Smith,” audio book, CD2, track 8 on Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith’s Relationship With God* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2007).

needed to produce the Book of Mormon naturally is contradicted by multiple reliable historical sources.

It appears that secularists still await the identification of a plausible hypothesis that explains how such a long complex book could be dictated in a single draft in fewer than three months by a poorly educated, twenty-three-year-old individual.

Brian C. Hales *is the author of six books dealing with polygamy, most recently the three-volume, Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology (Greg Kofford Books, 2013). His Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto received the "Best Book of 2007 Award" from the John Whitmer Historical Association. He has presented at numerous meetings and symposia and published articles in The Journal of Mormon History, Mormon Historical Studies, and Dialogue as well as contributing chapters to The Persistence of Polygamy series. Brian works as an anesthesiologist at the Davis Hospital and Medical Center in Layton, Utah, and has served as the President of the Utah Medical Association.*

ORAL CREATION AND THE DICTATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Brant A. Gardner

Review of William L. Davis, *Visions in a Seer Stone: Joseph Smith and the Making of the Book of Mormon* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020). 250 pages with index. \$90.00 (hardback), \$29.95 (paperback).

Abstract: *Visions in a Seer Stone: Joseph Smith and the Making of the Book of Mormon* introduces a new perspective in the examination of the construction of the Book of Mormon. With an important introduction to the elements of early American extemporaneous speaking, Davis applies some of those concepts to the Book of Mormon and suggests that there are elements of the organizational principles of extemporaneous preaching that can be seen in the Book of Mormon. This, therefore, suggests that the Book of Mormon was the result of extensive background work that was presented to the scribe as an extended oral performance.

William L. Davis has provided a new view of the way in which the Book of Mormon may have been created. He focuses on the well-known fact that the text was dictated to suggest that mechanisms behind oral performance should be used to understand the text. It is a completely logical premise.

Davis intends to place his examination in the neutral territory of an academic study. While his hypothesis does not require the divine intervention that anchors explanations from believers, he does not place his work as opposed to the text. In his introduction, he notes: “Readers hoping for a study that debunks Joseph Smith and attacks the Book of Mormon will be disappointed with this work. This is not to say, however, that I will not be challenging some of the *unofficial*, nondoctrinal traditions and theories surrounding the text” (ix).

Davis is equally clear that: “I would encourage believing scholars and readers to recognize that this study addresses a readership that extends beyond the religious boundaries of the various denominations within the Latter Day Saint movement to include those who do not embrace the Book of Mormon as an inspired or authentic ancient text”(xi). As a reviewer who declares himself a believer, it is perhaps inevitable that I would disagree with some of what Davis proposes. Nevertheless, I must respect his purposes and look at his work in the context in which it was intended.

The overall theme of the book is clearly stated in the very first sentence of the first chapter: “In 1829 Joseph Smith Jr., the future prophet and founder of the Latter Day Saint movement, produced the Book of Mormon in an extended oral performance” (7). The second sentence introduces a perhaps unfamiliar reader to the reason that such “an extended oral performance” should have generated enough controversy to require a book-length treatment: “His process of spoken composition, however, was anything but usual: taking a mystical ‘seer stones,’ an object in Western esotericism that functioned like a crystal ball (also described as ‘peep stones,’ ‘spectacles,’ ‘crystals,’ ‘glasses,’ and ‘show-stones,’ among other terms), Smith placed the stone into the bottom of his upturned hat, held the hat to his face to block out all light, and then proceeded to dictate the entire narrative to his attentive scribes” (7).

Extended oral performances are not entirely unexpected, but such performances being associated with the surprising use of a seer stone requires some explanation. Davis therefore begins with a historical summary that a reader should know to understand the seer stone aspect of the oral performance process.

The overview of the place of seer stones in Western culture provides the basic understanding that the use of such implements followed a long tradition, reaching back to England. However, Davis broadens his subject far beyond the contemporary use of seer stones and connects them to a broader search for the mystical: “The impulse to resist or embellish the dogmas and power structures of established religions encouraged eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Seekers to look outside the boundaries of traditional Christianity, where a panoply of philosophies and practices awaited the curiosity of those who sought alternative systems of belief among the various traditions of Western esotericism” (9).

That tenuous tie between folk magic and the Seeker movement is crucial to his thesis that the seer stones were involved in the process of the generation of a text that attempted to answer those questions. What is missing is any indication of how the concepts surrounding the use of

a seer stone would lead to such connections. Seer stones in Joseph Smith's time were instruments to discover hidden things, but those hidden things were objects, not philosophies. It is also certain that the use of a seer stone resulted in an oral performance, but the context was more perfunctory, and the oral presentation of information was not considered to be the important aspect of the consultation. It was the discovery of the location of that which was lost or hidden which was important, not the story that described the loss.¹ Thus, there is a disconnect between the method and the extended oral performance that is not addressed.

With the historical background on seer stones set, Davis moves to the historical background that forms the backbone of his argument for the way in which Joseph produced the extended oral performance. Davis provides an important look at the way early preachers prepared and delivered their sermons. Quite apart from the application of the information to the Book of Mormon, this is a solid contribution. For the Book of Mormon connection, the important aspect of that examination is that there were, during Joseph Smith's lifetime, a number of preachers who took pride in their ability to provide a sermon without a written text. There was not only a culture of extemporaneous performance, but one of instruction in how to prepare for the extemporaneous oral performance.

There are two general types of oral performance that do not involve reading a text or reciting one that was memorized. One is impromptu speech, and the second is extemporaneous speech. The distinction is important. Impromptu speech is given with little prior preparation, while extemporaneous speech allows for extensive preparation and planning, but the presentation itself is mostly created during the event. Davis is very clear that he is using the second model, and the understanding that the oral speech act is reliant upon preparation is crucial to his thesis of how the elements of an extemporaneous performance could undergird the oral creation of the Book of Mormon.

Davis argues convincingly that Joseph would have easily learned — perhaps by instruction, perhaps by absorption — the techniques used in

1. Several sources discuss the way in which seer stones were used. See Samuel D. Green, "Joseph Smith, the Mormon," *The Christian Cynosure* 10, no. 12, December 20, 1877, <http://www.sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/IL/mischig.htm#122077>; D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 39; William H. Kelley, "Benjamin Saunders Interview, Circa September 1884," in Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:139; "Lorenzo Saunders Interview, 12 November 1884," in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:154–55; Caroline Rockwell Smith Statement, 25 March 1885," in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:199.

extemporaneous speaking. “Any attempt to situate Smith’s style of oral composition within the context of his life and the religions traditions that he avidly explored in his youth results in multiple potential avenues of influence” (25).

The heart of Davis’s argument is laid out in Chapter 2. Davis opens the chapter by looking at the opening of Joseph Smith’s 1832 history. At the beginning of that text is a large section that lays out the topics that will be presented in the history. This outline is used to open the discussion of the technique of “laying down heads.” He notes: “The explicit use of the skeletal sketch in the opening of the history, marking each stage in the sequence of the narrative with a summarizing phrase, provides one of the several expressions of the method commonly known as ‘laying down heads.’ Both speakers and writers used this popular, widespread technique to designate and arrange the main topics of such compositions, sermons, public speeches, essays, narrations, and school lessons” (16).

The use of preview outlines was used not only in extemporaneous speech but was also a common feature of contemporary print culture. Davis places Joseph Smith’s use in the realm of extemporaneous because he suggests that Joseph’s usage was too verbose for an imitation of the print culture: “While juxtaposing Smith’s 1832 history with contemporary print conventions might help to explain what Smith was trying to achieve in terms of his textual apparatus, the comparison falls short of explaining the origin of Smith’s style. For example, several of Smith’s prefatory heads in his 1832 history are far too long and excessively wordy for the concise phraseology modeled and usually required by print conventions” (19).

That distinction is important because it allows Davis to situate this feature as an element of extemporaneous speech rather than an imitation of print culture. Given that Joseph Smith also imitated the King James Version style from print culture, it isn’t a conclusive separation, but it does provide an appropriate reason for examining the text of the Book of Mormon to see if such techniques are seen in the text.

Readers familiar with the Book of Mormon do not need more than this suggestion to see the parallels between the several chapter headings and the concept of laying down heads. As Davis points out, they often provide an outline of the major events to be discussed in the book which follows. That is precisely what laying down heads should do.

Additionally, understanding that Joseph would have been familiar with laying down heads provides the best explanation for an otherwise ambiguous sentence in the book of Jacob: “And if there were preaching which was sacred, or revelation which was great, or prophesying, that

I should **engraven the heads of them** upon these plates, and touch upon them as much as it were possible, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of our people" (Jacob 1:4). Davis understandably underscores this verse when examining the process of laying down heads in the Book of Mormon (91).

The process of laying down heads took two forms. The first is the explicit method, which produces outlines such as seen in the book headers in the Book of Mormon. The second is the concealed method, where the outline would have been created beforehand, but not explicitly provided during the oral performance (68).

Davis applies this understanding of how extemporaneous sermons might be created to Joseph Smith's famous King Follett Sermon. He finds:

Smith's introduction for the King Follett sermon suggests that he had some form of an outline in mind prior to delivery. "Before I enter fully into the investigation of the subject that is lying before us," Smith announced, "I wish to pave the way, make a few preliminaries, and bring up the subject from the beginning in order that you may understand the subject when I come to it." Thus, Smith did not approach the pulpit unprepared, trusting exclusively in the promptings of the Spirit to guide him. Rather, Smith followed a common strategy for "explanatory" sermons by providing a simple introduction before moving into more advanced issues. (66)

Thus, the thrust of Davis's argument is that examining sermons outside of the Book of Mormon confirms the probability that Joseph Smith used the techniques of preparing an outline before speaking. Davis thus posits that it becomes a reasonable assumption that those techniques were employed in the creation of the Book of Mormon.

There is historical interest in showing that Joseph Smith's preaching reflected techniques of the time, but that study would stir little controversy and would be unlikely to be an innovative examination of an aspect of early Mormonism. The most important part of the investigation is the work Davis does to show that such techniques can be seen in the text of the Book of Mormon and therefore they can tell a story about how the extended oral performance that became the Book of Mormon was created.

The hypothesis is important and provides a new and interesting way to approach the question of the creation of the Book of Mormon. Some of my own work leads me to agree that there are aspects of oral creation that can be discerned in the text. I see the application of the understanding of oral presentations and performances to be an important avenue in the study of the text of the Book of Mormon. However, Davis is not studying

the text of the Book of Mormon as much as he is suggesting a method by which the content of the text was created. That is a different question. The question for Davis's proposal is how well it works to explain the overall text of the Book of Mormon rather than specifics of the language.

Davis begins with the strongest evidence that the book header is an example of laying down heads: the header for 1 Nephi. That header very clearly describes what is going to happen in the chapter. The header clearly lays out the historical bones of the story to be told. While Davis makes that point clear (and is correct in that reading), Davis does not spend any time on the contents of 1 Nephi that are not predicted by the outline. There are multiple places where there are some asides, and the ending to 1 Nephi is not only not predicted in the heading outline, but the contents of the last chapters appear to be an unintentional deviation from the outline.²

The difference between the historical outline and the actual text of 1 Nephi does not necessarily contradict Davis's understanding of laying down heads. The variations away from the outline could be ascribed to the extemporaneous process, where the speech act itself can lead to elements that were not in the outline.

The problem with this difference between laying down heads and the actual content is that it becomes more divergent after 1 Nephi. The book outline for 2 Nephi repeats the same kind of historical backbone that we see in the header for 1 Nephi. However, the 2 Nephi outline stops with the events of the current LDS version's chapter 5. The remainder of the content of the book, comprising the modern chapters 6 through 33, are not represented in the book header. If the purpose of the explicit outline were to help Joseph Smith remember what he was to develop orally, the vast majority of 2 Nephi is set adrift from that possibility.

Davis examines concealed outlines, and it is possible to see a concealed outline in 2 Nephi 11:8: "And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men." That could be seen as a concealed head, but it is not a very important one, since it leads, not to an extemporaneous performance of new material, but to the inclusion of multiple chapters of Isaiah. It also highlights the lack of any kind of head that explains the rough transition between 2 Nephi chapters 5 and 6, a division that is sufficiently stark that some LDS scholars have suggested that it really

2. This is an extended argument. See Brant A. Gardner, *Labor Diligently to Write: The Ancient Making of a Modern Scripture, Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 35 (2020): 221–32.

ought to have been the division point between the two books of Nephi rather than the one that was dictated and printed.³

This should give us pause if the second book on the Book of Mormon raises issues for the usability of the explicit heads as an explanation. The complication is that the entire concept of the extemporaneous production was prior planning and mnemonic devices to help understand the text. So much of the book of 2 Nephi is not represented in the book outline, or head, that the hypothesis must come up with a different explanation for that content. Davis does not address the issue.

The disjunction between explicit heads and the text of the book continues in the outline for the book of Alma. That outline reads: “The account of Alma, who was the son of Alma, the first and chief judge over the people of Nephi, and also the high priest over the Church. An account of the reign of the judges, and the wars and contentions among the people. And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites, according to the record of Alma, the first and chief judge.”

The historical backbone is certainly there. The book does speak of Alma and the chief judge and the high priest. It spends a lot of time on the wars and contentions. The explicit head can account for Alma chapters 1–4 and 43–64. However, the book of Alma also spends a lot of time with an Alma who renounces his position as chief judge and embarks on a series of visits to cities which occasion long sermons. There are important chapters where Alma address his sons. Thirty-nine chapters of important content cannot have been recalled by having memorized the explicit head.

If the book outlines were to have been mnemonic devices to generate the content of the book, they fail to do so. This conflict between prediction and actual use of the technique in the text is highlighted by the sermons.

Davis has a chapter on sermon culture in the Book of Mormon. He suggests:

Significantly, as the text repeatedly demonstrates, Smith avoided the explicit announcement of comprehensive sermon outlines in the introductions to his orations, opting to limit any preliminary notifications to brief and often generalized heads. This approach, however, should not be confused with purely extempore performances. Smith’s overt references to impending subjects and changes in topic, particularly when he lays down explicit and progressive heads to do so,

3. Frederick W. Axelgard, “1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole,” *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (1986): 53–65; Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology*, (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 34–35.

demonstrate his use of the common “concealed” method of preaching ...

By removing the constraints imposed by explicitly stated preliminary sermon outlines, Smith allowed himself the freedom to address any subject that sprang to mind, in any order and for any duration, without unsettling his reader by diverging too far from any explicitly stated heads in the opening of orations. (115)

Davis is suggesting two different types of preparation, one that created the history and a second concealed method that generated the sermons. That is consistent with contemporary sermon practice. It is, however, difficult to place into the framework of an extemporaneous creation of the text of the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon has explicit outlines which outline history, but they never mention sermons. Thus, right at the point where we would expect the greatest crossover in techniques from preaching culture, we find a major disconnect. The explicit heads completely ignore the sermons, and therefore do not provide the mnemonic structure that would allow Joseph Smith to create them in an appropriate context. Just as the majority of 2 Nephi cannot be explained by laying down heads, the presence of the sermons cannot be explained by laying down heads.

Furthermore, Davis suggests that Joseph allowed himself great latitude in his sermons without explicit heads, which was not “unsettling his reader by diverging too far from any explicitly stated heads” (115). I stopped that quotation intentionally, because while Davis applied it only to sermons, it must be applied to any use of the laid down heads. If it was unsettling to have a sermon that did not follow the explicit head, how can we explain the explicit heads that don’t describe major content? That is a contradiction in his hypothesis that Davis does not see, and therefore does not address.

Davis develops the concept of organization into smaller units that would help an oral performer create a larger description from a small outline hint. He explains that concept with the seven words in the book header of 2 Nephi: “An account of the death of Lehi.”

One of the reasons Smith could encapsulate an entire scene with a seven-word phrase pertains to the nature of the narrative circumstances. Rather than encompassing a complex sequence of actions, the scene contains a single trope: a variant of the deathbed scene, in which relatives and friends gather to hear

the last words of a prominent dying family member. Given the ubiquity of this conventional trope and the array of narrative elements associated with it, Smith could have easily expanded the phrase “an account of the death of Lehi” into an extended passage by simply envisioning the circle of friends and relatives round Lehi, and then offering semi-extemporaneous exhortations and blessings to each of the recipients. As such, the amplification of the seven-word phrase into a lengthy text would not be remarkable, nor would the dictation of such a moment require elaborate premeditation. (139)

The obvious counter to “Smith could have easily expanded the phrase ...” would be that Smith could easily have “translated the text.” Both statements over-simplify the problem. Extracting the bones of the outline does not explain the text but leaves us with only an unevidenced possibility.

Unquestionably, while Lehi’s scene could be easily imagined, the nature of the complexity of that scene suggests much more planning, forethought, and preparation than Davis appears to suggest. The weakness of Davis’s suggestions is precisely in the nature of the content. The process of organizing information prior to presentation is the same for extemporaneous presentations as it is for written texts.⁴ The difference is that a written text can be corrected before it sees the light of day, and the extemporaneous text is generated live, with all of the humanity of its production on full display. That difference covers over the important and critical similarity. Both written and extemporaneous productions require preparation.

Davis absolutely understands the problem of preparation. He notes:

The brevity of many mnemonic cues in the Book of Mormon indicates that Smith was familiar with the stories that his cues evoked. That such bare-minimum phrases could cue Smith’s memory suggests that he spent a long time with his stories — meditating on them, generating and developing ideas, choosing topics to address, establishing sequences of events, choosing names and places, and making any possible revisions along the way — until he became sufficiently familiar with them for the stories to become entrenched in his mind. In doing so, such preparations and mental rehearsals would enhance his memory of the narratives. A single summarizing phrase for

4. Denis Alamargot and Lucile Chanquoy, *Through the Models of Writing* (Berlin: Springer-Science+Business Media, B.V., 2001): 3–5.

such premeditated and familiar tales would be all that Smith needed to evoke the content and structure of his creations. (141)

Note the similarity between what Davis suggests and the process of creating a written text: “Writing a text is a complex task that needs a coordinated implementation of a large set of mental activities. Writers have to clearly delimitate the nature, the goal and the communicative function of the text. They also have to establish a precise representation about readers’ characteristics and expectations, in order to anticipate systematically what must, or can, be written.”⁵ In other words, Joseph Smith had to do what any author would do. He “wrote” his text, but perhaps to memory. Davis allows that he may have written down at least notes, if not the precise words.

With respect to the content, it is clear there was a planned text. Only at this point is there any significant difference between a proposal for a translated text and an extensive outline. Both require a text that clearly shows it was planned. Davis uses times when the Book of Mormon speaks of events in the future as demonstrations of laying down heads. That is a reasonable definition in his context, but both the use of laying down heads and the presence of foreshadowing in a written text are precisely the same. Davis understands and makes that prerequisite explicit: “When reviewing the entire text of the Book of Mormon, we find repeated evidence of Smith’s forethought and preparations, which militate against the theory that Smith produced the work in spontaneous, unpremeditated outbursts of creativity” (158). Those who support a translated text would agree with Davis. There is a text behind the orally dictated text.

Davis presents evidence for his hypothesis of construction within the text, but his evidence for the prior creation is based on the assumption that it must have happened, since if it had not, the extended oral performance could not have occurred. The concept of an oral presentation is useful to explain aspects of the text, but it cannot explain the elements of the text that were neither a spontaneous nor extemporaneous production. The locus of the explanation is on the performance, and the nature of the preparation is only assumed.

The laying down of explicit heads cannot provide sufficient mnemonic help to generate the contents of each of the books of the Book of Mormon, although it could be argued sufficient for 1 Nephi. Any hypothesis that covers only one case of many is not that strong. The

5. Alamargot, and Chanquoy, *Models of Writing*, 1.

concealed heads are suggested as reasons why Joseph could ignore some of those heads, and not need them in the creation of sermons. Davis's strongest recommendation for concealed heads is that Joseph Smith did not need to use them. That is not a strong indication that they formed much of a mnemonic clue to create the text.

There is nothing in the mnemonic use of any type of extemporaneous methodology that explains the nature of the Isaiah texts in the Book of Mormon. It might be used to suggest their presence but not the specifics. In particular, David Wright looked at many of those changes and found a concentration of changes around italicized words in the King James Version of the Bible, the obvious source for the majority of the Isaiah texts.⁶ That evidence cannot be explained by extemporaneous theory. Even assuming an excellent memory, the changes that were made and specifically those triggered by the presence of an italicized word preclude extemporaneous production.

The book of Ether resists much of the use of extemporaneous methods. There is no book outline, so that is of no assistance. There is an explicit case of laying down heads in the text, if we read the long genealogy in Ether 1:6–32 as laying down heads. That genealogy is used, in reverse, to structure the historical narrative.

That certainly seems like the use of heads, but it requires a prodigious amount of memorization, particularly since the list itself has duplicated names that have to appear correctly in the reversed narrative. Complicating that further is that the list in Ether 1 is a genealogy, and not a list of rulers. The historical narrative that develops from the genealogy presents numerous shifts in the rulers, including multiple names that are not included in the genealogy. The divergence in political succession between Nephite and Jaredite cultures needs some explanation, since the Jaredite practice of ultimogeniture can be discerned from the text, and is unexpected and implicit. The primogeniture among the Nephites, on the other hand, is both expected and explicit.

The book of Ether follows an entirely different logic from the rest of the Book of Mormon. Its stories are told tersely and with little sermonizing. Significantly, the textual reason of the inclusion of that book (its discussion of secret combinations), is not mentioned in any of the localized heads. The textual emphasis on secret combinations was foreshadowed in “heads” from much earlier in the text. While that does

6. David P. Wright, “Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe and Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234.

suggest pre-planning, the time distance between laying down the textual concealed head and the time that it is made explicit covers months of time and significant intervening text.

The book of Ether provides another interesting example that complicates the question of Joseph as author. In the original edition, Ether 4:1, speaking of the translation of the book of Ether, read: “and for this cause did king Benjamin keep them.” Later editions understood that this is a difficult reading, and it was Benjamin’s son Mosiah who translated the records.” The story is clear that it should have been Mosiah. However, this very error of speaking of Benjamin rather than his son occurs at the first introduction of the story of the plates in Mosiah 21:28. The correct story occurs after Mosiah 21:28, yet this “mistake” in Ether echoes a similar issue at the beginning of the story of the record of Ether. There have been a few explanations for this interesting issue in the text, but Davis’s hypothesis would suggest that the exacting preparation for an extemporaneous production would have avoided that mistake in every other case save for this one that has an interesting textual connection that, in the process of the oral presentation, would have been months apart. Positing Joseph as an author makes the mention of Benjamin doubly anomalous, since Joseph would also have been the author of the texts that Mosiah translated, which refer to Mosiah as translator, and which are more recent in memory than this interesting mention of Benjamin. Regardless of how one interprets that name in Ether, its presence argues against Davis’s theory that meticulous preparation would have led to the oral presentation.

Another indication of the need for an existing text is a particular type of repetitive resumption in the Book of Mormon. I find I am the source for misleading Davis’s use of that concept in his discussion of extemporaneous performances.⁷ I continue to believe it is a technique that may have begun in an oral culture, but I have discovered occasions where the Book of Mormon use of the technique appears to require a written text, or at least a heavily memorized pre-existing text.

Repetitive resumption is a technique in which a set of words or sometimes only the concept which marks the last part of the planned text is

7. Davis quotes Brant A. Gardner, “Literacy and Orality in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter* 9 (2014): 29–85, and notes that I suggested that it was a technique that developed in an oral culture, and which can be used in oral presentations to return to a theme after an interruption. He quotes me correctly, but I have learned a lot about larger examples which, while the technique may have originated as an oral technique, appear to require a written text as an explanation.

repeated after an intervening intrusive text. Thus, the repetition allows the author to pick up where they had departed, or to resume to narrative flow.

Repetitive resumption can be used to describe returning to a sentence that has become overly complex. Royal Skousen uses it in that way.⁸ In the examination of the creation of texts, it can be used to describe a technique that brackets an intrusive, inserted text.⁹ That function also appears in the Book of Mormon. At times, it allows the author to return after a short aside. Those cases would easily fit into an extemporaneous performance. However, the longer the intrusive insertion, the greater mental distance from the phrases of the departure and the return, the less likely that memory provides the ability to recapture the point of departure.

To present the basic idea, the following is a short example that could rely upon memory:

So that when he had finished his work at Melek he departed thence, and traveled three days' journey on the north of the land of Melek; **and he came to a city which was called Ammonihah.**

Now it was the custom of the people of Nephi to call their lands, and their cities, and their villages, yea, even all their small villages, after the name of him who first possessed them; and thus it was with the land of Ammonihah.

And it came to pass that **when Alma had come to the city of Ammonihah** he began to preach the word of God unto them.
(Alma 8:6–8)

There is another case where an intrusive text was inserted in Mosiah 28:11–20 where the number of intervening verses is not only longer, but they are also interrupted by a chapter break in the original 1830 edition. The complexity of remembering the specific sentences over that number of verses as well as the conceptual chapter boundary make this less amenable to an extemporaneous insertion. It could be explained as a written text or a memorized text but not an extemporaneous text.

My final issue with the extemporaneous hypothesis is personal. I spent time in high school and college in competitive speech tournaments where I was directly involved with events that were explicitly extemporaneous, or which employed those techniques. I can

8. Royal Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation*, (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2016): 2:808–53.

9. I. Tzvi Abusch, “Maqlû III 1–30: Internal Analysis and Manuscript Evidence for the Revision of an Incantation,” *Studia Orientalia*, 106. (2009): 307.

appreciate the need for information to draw upon in the extemporaneous presentation. I can appreciate drawing upon extensive study. However, I cannot easily reconcile my experience with extemporaneous speaking with the descriptions of the Joseph Smith's oral performance.

When speaking extemporaneously, the flow of the words and ideas is important. Combinations occur which are new and relevant but come as part of the performance. I contrast that with my experience helping my wife prepare talks early in our marriage. I would suggest something to her, and she would say that she really liked what I said, and that I should therefore repeat it. That was difficult to do. Invariably, I could not recall what I had said and had to reconceive it. Break that process down to the dictation of the entire text of the Book of Mormon at a rate of about twenty words per minute. That constant interruption of thought would make it difficult to produce anything close to what I might do in a strictly oral performance. When that problem is combined with the statements from witnesses that Joseph Smith always picked up where he left off, without any hint of where he was, then that production process would be beyond anything I have experienced.

The greater the need for memorization, the less presence of extemporaneous production we find. The best use of Davis's hypothesis is to suggest that there was a pre-existing text (perhaps unwritten, but therefore requiring massive memorization), and that the actual sentences themselves, and perhaps a few of the asides, were extemporaneous. There is evidence for extemporaneity at that level in the text. Nevertheless, Davis suggests that the presence of any of these outline devices must point to a more modern creation of the text:

When Nephi commanded his brother Jacob to “engraven the heads” of sermons, revelations, and prophecies onto the gold plates and to “touch upon them as much as it were possible” (Jacob 2:4), both Nephi and Jacob and many of the author-prophets who followed did not limit the technique of laying down heads to oratorical performances. They also used the technique to organize their historical narratives, providing the structural architectonics for the entire Book of Mormon. Crucial to understanding Smith's process of narrative product however, is the recognition that these methods and techniques emerged in a different place and time than the period in which the stories of the Book of Mormon occurred, signaling the authoritative presence of a modern hand — whether as a translator or author — in the construction of the work. (159)

Note the contradiction Davis provides that significantly weakens this hypothesis: “While the technique of laying down heads was common in the eighteenth century (and much earlier), pedagogical approaches guiding students in a stop-wise fashion from beginning compositional skills to advanced techniques were not yet prevalent” (17, emphasis added). The obvious conclusion is that the concept of organizing a text is quite ancient. The question about organization using concealed heads cannot be placed into any dating scheme, as most texts exhibit some form of organization, even if they don’t use the vocabulary of the nineteenth century texts to explain them.

The “laying down of heads” is a time-specific vocabulary that describes organizational elements. It is difficult to find a way to discern the use of concealed heads as a nineteenth century element because they do not reflect any kind of internal organization, which could easily be extracted from most documents. The strongest evidence for the laying down of heads are the explicit heads, but they don’t actually help explain the majority of the text of the Book of Mormon.

Davis’s hypothesis continues to be based on an assumed pre-existing text that is only hypothesized:

Whether one chooses to believe that the Book of Mormon emerged exclusively from Smith’s mind and creative powers or as the translation of an authentic historical record, an examination of the textual and historical evidence suggests that Smith engaged in advance preparation for the work. The text reveals a process of careful and thoughtful planning, and the specific structuring that underpins the composition of the entire work centers on the introductory technique of laying down heads to create sketch outlines and mnemonic cues. (190)

Davis is correct that there must have been a pre-existing text, whether written or simply mentally conceived and stored. The data go further to require extensive memorization of massive details that are foreshadowed in the text, but which are not present in the “sketch outlines and other mnemonic cues.” The support for Davis’s thesis is the careful selection of only the evidence that supports the hypothesis, while ignoring the vast majority of the Book of Mormon that cannot be explained by those “sketch outlines.”

I do believe that initiating an interest in the oral aspects of the text will be very productive for understanding the text itself. I am not convinced that it can tell us anything useful about the creation of the text.

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

FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY: THE “THREE PRINCIPAL ROUNDS” OF THE LADDER OF HEAVENLY ASCENT¹

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Abstract: *This chapter argues that “the scriptural triad of faith, hope, and charity should be understood as something more than a general set of personal attributes that must be developed in order for disciples to become like Christ. Instead, as part of the ‘guarded tradition of the Apostle’ [Paul] that is transmitted to readers in 1 Corinthians and elsewhere in scripture, these terms have been used to describe a distinct progression of ‘stages in a Christian’s earthly experience.’ The three stages that correlate to faith, hope, and charity were described by Joseph Smith as the ‘three principal rounds’ of a ladder of heavenly ascent. Each round marks a chief juncture in priesthood ordinances and on the pathway to eternal life.”*

[Editor’s Note: Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, and movement of figures for pagination purposes may have altered some footnote numbering. Otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.

See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Faith, Hope, and Charity: The ‘Three Principal Rounds’ of the Ladder of Heavenly Ascent,” 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), 59–112. Further information at [https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/to-seek-the-law-of-the-lord-essays-in-honor-of-john-w-welch-2/.](https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/to-seek-the-law-of-the-lord-essays-in-honor-of-john-w-welch-2/)]

¹ For more on this and related subjects, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Keys and Symbols of the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, forthcoming).

Within the prodigious scriptural writings of John W. Welch can be found delightful explorations of the wondrous ways in which Joseph Smith's literary legacy serves as a bridge between the ancient and modern religious worlds. The prophetic recovery of key doctrines and ordinances, cherished in ancient times but unknown to most contemporary believers, remains one of the most stunning — and still underappreciated — facets of the latter-day “marvelous work and a wonder”² that unfolds with increasing momentum every hour since the beginning of the Restoration. Each of us who has been mentored by Jack — both directly and through his writings — has been awakened by the generosity of his spirit and the keenness of his intellect to see extraordinary reflections of the Restored Gospel in places that we “never had supposed.”³

In this chapter, I will argue, in the spirit of Jack's example, that the scriptural triad of faith, hope, and charity should be understood as something more than a general set of personal attributes that must be developed in order for disciples to become like Christ.⁴ Instead, as part of the “guarded tradition of the Apostle”⁵ that is transmitted to readers in 1 Corinthians⁶ and elsewhere in scripture,⁷ these terms have been

2 2 Ne. 27:26. Cf. Isa. 29:14.

3 Moses 1:10.

4. See *Preach My Gospel* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 115–118, where faith, hope, charity, and love (see D&C 4:5) are presented as part of an unbroken sequence with the ten attributes listed in D&C 4:6. See also the similar approach presented in H. Dean Garrett. “Light in Our Vessels: Faith, Hope, and Charity.” In *Fourth Nephi through Moroni: From Zion to Destruction*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1995), 81–93. While agreeing that faith, hope, charity, and love, as enumerated in D&C 4:5, belong in the company of the ten essential personal attributes listed in D&C 4:6, I argue here and elsewhere that they are of a different and higher order than the others. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “‘He That Thrusteth in His Sickle with His Might’: Doctrine and Covenants Section 4 and the Reward of Consecrated Service,” in *D&C 4: A Lifetime of Study in Discipleship*, ed. Nick Galieti (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2016), 161–278.

5. Archibald M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1961), 22–23.

6. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 7:10; 11:23–25; 15:3ff. See also *ibid.*, pp. 118–120.

7. See Rom. 5:1–5; Gal. 5:5–6; Eph. 4:2–5; Col. 1:4–5, 23; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; Titus 2:2; Heb. 6:10–15; 10:19–26. See also 1 Pet. 1:2–8, 21–23; 2 Ne. 31; Jacob 4:6, 11; Alma 7:24; 13:29; 22:16; 25:16; 32:21; 58:11; Ether 12:3–37; Moro. 7:1–48; 8:14; 10:20–21; D&C 4:5–6; 6:19; 12:8; 18:19; 84:33–48; Articles of Faith 1:13. See, e.g., Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. The Anchor Bible 37 C*, ed. William F. Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York City: Doubleday, 1993), 154–55 for a discussion of the Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian background of such chains of virtues and their varied appearance and sequence in biblical passages.

used to describe a distinct progression of “stages in a Christian’s earthly experience.”⁸ The three stages that correlate to faith, hope, and charity were described by Joseph Smith as the “three principal rounds”⁹ of a ladder of heavenly ascent. Each round marks a chief juncture in priesthood ordinances and on the pathway to eternal life.

The arguments in the present chapter are structured somewhat like a jigsaw puzzle: three group of pieces will be described separately before they are assembled into a whole. First, I will introduce the idea of the ladder of heavenly ascent as it appeared anciently in various religious traditions. Second, I will discuss descriptions of similar ladders in the revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith, including his characterization of faith, hope, and charity as rungs corresponding to the three kingdoms of glory. Third, I will survey scripture references that relate faith, hope, charity, and “the doctrine of Christ.” Finally, I will show how an understanding of faith, hope, and charity as stages in a disciple’s experience can illuminate the layout and ordinances of the temple. In the magnificent word pictures of faith, hope, and charity painted in the prophetic corpus of Joseph Smith, we recover the lost essence of potent doctrines and symbols once found at the heart of Judaism and early Christianity.¹⁰

8. Writes Joseph A. Fitzmyer: “Others maintain that Paul is thinking rather of two stages in a Christian’s earthly experience. In 2:6–3:4 Paul has already spoken of these stages, using the vocabulary, *nēpios* and *teleios*, of an “immature” and “mature” Christian, or referring to the “fleshy” and “spiritual” aspects of the earthly Christian life. Now he has contrasted *ek merous* and *to teleion* in vv. 10 and 12, and *the arti* and *the tote* in v. 12 would refer to these two stages of such earthly life.” *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 501. Below, I will cite other scriptural passages where faith, hope, and charity are associated with *three* stages in the progression of the Christian toward eternal life.

9. Joseph Smith, Jr. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 21 May 1843, 305.

10 For a discussion of the challenges of mining the many relatively untapped veins of inspiration in the teachings of Joseph Smith, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Now That We Have the Words of Joseph Smith, How Shall We Begin to *Understand* Them? A Modest Example of the Challenges Within the Prophet’s 21 May 1843 Discourse on 2 Peter 1,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 47–150.

So far as I am aware, the meaning of faith, hope, and charity in relation to the ladder of heavenly ascent and the thirteenth Article of Faith has not been explored previously by LDS scholars. For example, James E. Talmage entitles a chapter on the thirteenth Article of Faith “Practical Religion” and emphasizes the wholesome and generous practices of LDS in everyday life. *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 389–412. Neither the explicit use of the language of 1 Cor. 13:7 nor the implicit allusion to faith, hope, and charity is mentioned. In a similar approach to this article of faith,

The Ladder of Heavenly Ascent in Ancient Tradition

Already a religious symbol in Egypt¹¹ and Babylon,¹² the biblical ladder of heavenly ascent first appears in the story of Jacob, who beheld “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”¹³

The story is later referenced in the Gospel of John. Alluding to the multiple deceits practiced in the story of Jacob/Israel and Laban, Jesus praised the approaching Nathanael at their first meeting, saying, “Behold an Israelite [i.e., a descendant of Jacob]...in whom [unlike Jacob himself] is no guile!”¹⁴ Then, referring to the ladder in Jacob’s dream on which angels had ascended and descended, He solemnly asserted His preeminence over the revered patriarch, declaring that *He* was the ladder of heavenly ascent personified: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”¹⁵

Bruce R. McConkie entitles his chapter “Pure Religion and Undefined” and briefly discusses the commitment of the Saints to moral principles that is “a natural outgrowth of believing the eternal truths that save.” *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 701. For more on this topic, see the discussion of the thirteenth Article of Faith at the end of this chapter.

11 See, for example, James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, (Atlanta: SBL, 2005), 50: “Stand up, you two uprights, and descend, you crossbars, that Unis may go up on the ladder that his father the Sun has made for him.”

12 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel. In God’s Image and Likeness 2*. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 382–84 for an overview of the structure and function of Mesopotamian ziggurats. Nicolas Wyatt, among others, argues that Jacob’s “dream looks suspiciously like a description of a Babylonian ziggurat, in all probability the temple tower in Babylon. This had an external, monumental stairway leading to the top story, which represented heaven, the dwelling-place of the gods.” Nicolas Wyatt, *Myths of Power* (Münster, Germany: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 74.

13 Gen. 28:12. For a good summary of Jewish traditions relating to this event, see *Bereishis/Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*, ed. Meir Zlotowitz and Nosson Scherman (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1986), 2:1216–49.

14 John 1:47. As an example of Jacob’s “guile,” see Genesis 30:37–43.

15 John 1:51, emphasis added. According to Samuel Zinner, Jesus’ mention of the Son of Man in this verse refers not only to Jesus but also to others, such as Enoch (see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The LDS Book of Enoch as the Culminating Story of a Temple Text.” *BYU Studies* 53, no. 1 [2014]: 39–73, in particular 65–71), who had also ascended to heaven (Zinner, pers. comm., 9 February 2016). For further discussion of Jesus as Jacob’s ladder and other ancient precedents for this idea, see Margaret Barker, *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 185–87; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:488–91; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According*



Figure 1. *Jacob's Ladder*, Bath Abbey, England, 1520.
Photograph by Stephen T. Whitlock (1951-), 9 October 2004.

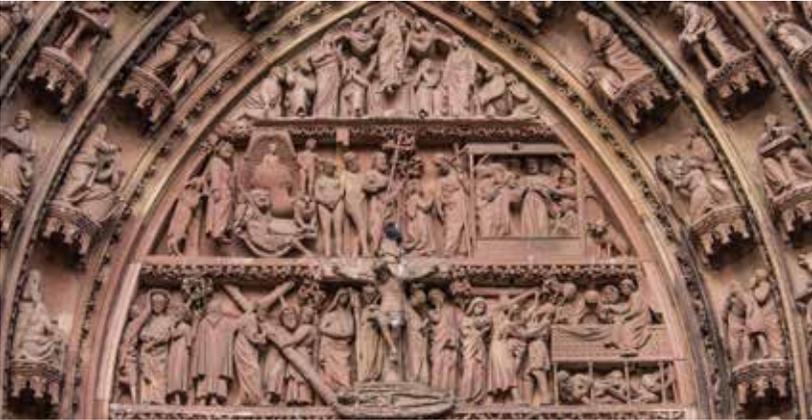


Figure 2. *The Ladder of the Cross*. Notre Dame Cathedral, Strasbourg, France, 1276–1439.¹⁶

to John: A Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 92–95; 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): 189–192.

¹⁶ Photograph by Annie B. Schaeffer, 21 February 2016. With kind permission.

Later, John records a similar declaration: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”¹⁷



Figure 3. *The Ladder of Virtues of St. John Climacus*, north façade, Sucevita Monastery, Romania, 1602–1604.¹⁸ Note the sequence of virtues that label each rung of the ladder.

In the tympanum above the central portal of the Strasbourg Cathedral, we see the “ladder” of the Savior’s cross, first as overcoming death and then as opening the way to life eternal. The composition shows three levels: 1. The body of Adam lying in hell with the crucified Christ poised on earth directly above him. The wooden cross, corresponding to a branch of the Tree of Knowledge that (in tradition) was planted in Adam’s grave and became an oil-bearing Tree of Mercy,¹⁹ is the axis that links the worlds of the dead and the living; 2. The cross fleury borne by the victorious Jesus, near a flourishing tree and Adam and Eve clasping

17 John 14:6, emphasis mine. D. A. Carson notes that in this verse, “way gains a little emphasis over *truth* and *life*.” *The Gospel According to John*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), Kindle Ed., 103110. The phrase “but by me” further specifies the meaning of the initial assertion, making it clear that He is the only One “that gives access to the Father” (Ridderbos, *John*, Kindle ed., 12147). Cf. 2 Ne. 9:41.

18 Public Domain. With thanks to Everett Potter, <http://www.everettpotter.com/tag/sucevita/>

19. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve. God’s Image and Likeness 1* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 166–167, 340, 462, 595, 614, 615, 640–641, 749.

hands, provides access to heaven; 3. Jesus ascended, the forerunner of those who are “lifted up” by His cross.²⁰

I will not take space here to trace the trajectory of Jacob’s ladder in Christian tradition,²¹ including the well-known elaborations on the subject by theologians such as John Climacus (i.e., John “of the ladder”), Saint Augustine, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, and Saint Thomas Aquinas. Suffice it to say that faith, hope, and charity — the “three theological virtues” — became important symbols of the process of spiritual progression and were identified frequently with the three principal rungs on this ladder. As Christians made their climb, some, sadly, as in Lehi’s vision of the Tree of Life, “after they had tasted of the fruit...fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”²²

The Ladder of Heavenly Ascent in Joseph Smith’s Teachings

In this section I will explore three instances of Joseph Smith’s teachings about the ladder of heavenly ascent. These instances demonstrate how his prophetic gifts allowed him to reach back beyond the religious speculations of the immediately preceding centuries to conceptions that are in harmony with more pristine religious traditions and the Bible. More specifically, Joseph Smith’s teachings, translations, and revelations about the ladder of exaltation are not close cousins of late elaborations that had replaced descriptions of literal and ritual heavenly ascent with abstruse metaphors and allegories. Instead, like the expression of supernal reality contained in the ten “building blocks”²³ of the *sefirot* in mystic Judaism, the Prophet’s explanations of the principles that govern the eternal worlds (and the temple ordinances that reflect them) embody truths that are “quite far from the world of divine ‘attributes’ of which the medieval philosophers wrote with such caution and precision, and

20 Elaborated from Michel Bouttier, *Cathédrales : Leur Symbolique*. Vol. 2 (Le Mans, France: Centre du Patrimoine, Association Création et Recherche, 1990), 8.

21 For an overview, see René Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 336–39. Cf. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 7 April 1844, 346–48, 354; M. Catherine Thomas, “The Brother of Jared at the veil,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 388–98; M. Catherine Thomas, “Hebrews: To Ascend the Holy Mount,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 479–91; Nahum M. Sarna, “The mists of time,” in *Genesis: World of Myths and Patriarchs*, ed. Ada Feyerick (New York City: New York University Press, 1996), 82.

22 1 Ne. 8:28. Thanks to Steve Whitlock for this suggestion.

23. Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 35.



Figure 4. Herrad of Hohenbourg: *The Ladder of Virtues*, late 12th century CE. The figure of Charity, representing those who have had their election “made sure,” is depicted as having reached the summit of the ladder. Her hand is extended toward the hand of the Lord, shown emerging from a cloud and holding the Crown of Life. Other personages below Charity fall short as they are attracted by one thing or another. The hermit is too busy cultivating his garden and neglects his prayers; the recluse monk longs for sleep; the alms-seeking monk falls for a large basket filled with pieces of silver — what his heart treasures most; the priest’s attention is not occupied by his church but rather by friends, good food and drink, lusts of the flesh, and simony (i.e., the selling of ecclesiastical privileges for money); and the nun chatting with the priest is seduced by the pleasures of the world and by family wealth. Meanwhile, the lay woman (attracted to jewels and beautiful lodgings) and the soldier (tempted by horses, arms, and other soldiers to command) have hardly begun the climb. At the bottom of the ladder, the Devil, whose temptations have ensnared all except Charity herself, appears in the form of a dragon, while his minions take steady aim at their victims with bow and arrow. The caption on the ladder bears a message of encouragement, proclaiming that all those who have fallen will have the opportunity, through sincere penitence, to begin their climb anew. Elaboration of Rosalie Green, Michael Evans, Christine Bischoff, and Michael Curschmann, eds. *The Hortus Deliciarum of Herrad of Hohenbourg* (London: Warburg Institute, 1979), 2:352-353.

with which later apologists sought to identify them.”²⁴ Indeed, it might be said that Joseph Smith’s teachings about the ladder of heavenly ascent, “gave his believing [followers] a sense of what was experientially real, not merely philosophically true.”²⁵

Step-By-Step Ascent on the Ladder of Exaltation

Within the King Follett discourse, arguably the greatest doctrinal sermon given by the Prophet, Joseph Smith used the general imagery of a ladder to describe the process of learning the principles of exaltation step by step:

*Original Notes Recorded from a Sermon Delivered on 7 April 1844 in Thomas Bullock Report:*²⁶ you thus learn the first prin of the Gospel when you climb a ladder you must begin at the bottom run[g] until you learn the last prin of the gospel for it is a great thing to learn Saln. Beyond the grave & it is not all to be com in this world.

*Expanded Version from Joseph Smith’s History:*²⁷ Here, then, is eternal life — to know the only wise and true God;²⁸ and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God,²⁹ the same as all Gods have done before you, namely by going from one small degree³⁰ to another, and from a small capacity to a great one,³¹ from grace to grace,³² from exaltation to exaltation,³³ until you attain to the resurrection of the dead,³⁴ and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings,³⁵ and

24 Green, *Guide*, 33.

25 Kathleen Flake, “Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith’s Narrative Canon,” *Journal of Religion* 87, no. 4 (October 2007): 525.

26 Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. A. F. Ehat and L. W. Cook (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), Thomas Bullock Report, 7 April 1844, 350.

27 Smith, *Teachings*, 7 April 1844, 346–47, 348. For a summary of the challenges that early church historians faced in reconstructing Joseph Smith’s teachings for the published *History of the Church* from fragmentary sources, see Bradshaw, “Now That We Have,” 53–55.

28 John 17:3; cf. D&C 132:24.

29 Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; D&C 76:56–57.

30 D&C 131:1–3.

31 2 Cor. 3:18.

32 D&C 93:13.

33 D&C 132:19, 22–23.

34 Phil. 3:11. Cf. Jacob 4:12, my emphasis: “attain to a perfect knowledge of him [i.e., Christ], as to attain to the *knowledge of a* resurrection and the world to come.”

35 Isa. 33:14.

to sit in glory,³⁶ as do those who sit enthroned³⁷ in everlasting power.³⁸...

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel — you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil³⁹ before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.⁴⁰

As Joseph Smith linked ladder imagery with the principles of eternal life and exaltation, his words incorporated the terminology of temple ordinances and the model they provide for the life beyond.

Faith, Hope, and Charity Within Peter’s Verbal Ladder

In his 21 May 1843 discourse on the doctrine of election,⁴¹ Joseph Smith expounded on the first chapter of 2 Peter. In verses 5–7, faith, hope, and charity form the backbone of a verbal ladder that is consistent with the Prophet’s other teachings about the process of exaltation:

*Original Notes from Joseph Smith’s Journal:*⁴² like precious faith with us... — add to your faith virtue & c...another point after having all these qualifictins [qualifications] he lays this injutin [injunction]. — but rather make your calling & election sure — after adding all. this. virtue knowledge &. make your cal[l]ing & Sure. — what is the secret, the starting point. according as his divine power which hath given unto all things that pertain to life & godliness. [p. [214]]

36 Mark 10:37.

37 D&C 132:29.

38 Alma 36:29.

39 Heb. 10:20.

40 Italics in original. Cf. Brigham Young, “Remarks by President Brigham Young, made in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, Sunday p.m., 31 July 1859.” In *Journal of Discourses*, Reprint Ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 6:349.

41 For a full analysis of this sermon, see Bradshaw, “Now That We Have,” 55–80.

42 *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2015), 21 May 1843, 21.

how did he obtain all things? — th[r]ough the knowledge of him who hath call'd him. — there could not any be given pertain[in]g to life & knowledge & godliness without knowledge

wo wo wo to the Ch[r]istendom. — the divine & priests; &c — if this be true.

*Original Notes in Martha Jane Knowlton Coray Notebook.*⁴³ The Apostle says, unto them who have obtained like precious faith with us the apostles through the righteousness of God & our Savior Jesus Christ, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory & virtue add faith virtue &c. &c. to godliness brotherly kindness — Charity — ye shall neither be barren or unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He that lacketh these things is blind — wherefore the rather brethren after all this give diligence to make your calling & Election Sure Knowledge is necessary to life and Godliness. wo unto you priests & divines, who preach that knowledge is not necessary unto life & Salvation. Take away Apostles &c. take away knowledge and you will find yourselves worthy of the damnation of hell. Knowledge is Revelation hear all ye brethren, this grand Key; Knowledge is the power of God unto Salvation.

The list of personal qualities from 2 Peter 1:3–11 discussed by the Prophet have long been suspected by scholars such as Käsemann to be a “clear example of Hellenistic, non-Christian thought insidiously working its way into the New Testament.”⁴⁴ Now, however, this passage of scripture is generally accepted as “fundamentally Pauline”⁴⁵ and, hence, thoroughly consonant with ideas found among the earliest Christians. The emphasis of these verses is on the finishing and refining process of *sanctification*, not the initiatory process of *justification*.⁴⁶

43 Smith, *Words*, 21 May 1843, Martha Jane Knowlton Coray Notebook, 206–7.

44 James Starr, “Does 2 Peter 1:4 Speak of Deification?” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 81.

45 Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*. *Oxford Early Christian Studies*, ed. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004), 151.

46 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 21–23. See also Bruce C. Hafen and Marie K. Hafen, *The Contrite Spirit*:

2 Peter 1:4 sounds the keynote of the biblical list of the personal qualities of the perfected disciple, reminding readers of the “exceeding great and precious promises” that allow them to become “partakers [= Greek *koinonos*, ‘sharer, partaker’] of the divine nature.” The *New English Bible* captures the literal sense of these words: that the Saints may “come to share in the very being of God.”⁴⁷ To those in whom the qualities of divine nature “abound,” there comes the fulfillment of a specific “promise”: namely, that “they shall not be unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord.”⁴⁸ In other words, according to Joseph Smith’s exposition of the logic of Peter, the additional “knowledge of the Lord” disciples will receive once they have qualified themselves through the cultivation of all these virtues and enter into God’s presence will be sufficient to make their “calling and election sure” in order that they may “obtain all things.”

Importantly, these qualities, to which Christian disciples are exhorted to give “all diligence,”⁴⁹ are not presented in 2 Peter 1 as a randomly assembled laundry list but rather as part of an ordered progression leading to a culminating point.⁵⁰ In Hellenistic, Jewish, and Christian literature this rhetorical form is called *sortes*, *climax*, or *gradatio*.⁵¹ Harold Attridge explains the ladder-like property of the

How the Temple Helps Us Apply Christ’s Atonement (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 222–23.

47 Samuel M. Jack Suggs Sandmel and Arnold J. Tkaclck, eds., *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha, Oxford Study Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 2 Pet. 1:4. See also Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 159–60.

48 D&C 107:31; cf. 2 Pet. 1:8.

49 2 Pet. 1:5.

50 Elder Bruce R. McConkie also concluded that there is “an additive order to the attaining of these attributes.” Cited in in *Revelations of the Restoration: A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants and Other Modern Revelations*, ed. Joseph F. McConkie and Craig J. Ostler (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 68.

51 Henry A. Fischel, “The Uses of *Sortes* (*Climax*, *Gradatio*) in the Tannaitic Period.” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973): 119–51.

An earlier, Israelite form of *sortes* was used, e.g., in Joel 1:3; Gen. 36:31–43; 1 Chron. 1 and 2. Matt. 1:1–17 and Moshe Lieber, *The Pirkei Avos Treasury: The Sages Guide to Living with an Anthologized Commentary and Anecdotes* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1995) 1:1, pp. 6–11 are famous examples of the classic form of *sortes* in use during the Hellenistic period as applied to lists of genealogy and transmission of authority.

As to the use of ethical or ethico-metaphysical *sortes* similar to Rom. 5:3–5 and 2 Pet. 1:5–7 in Jewish and Roman literature, see Herbert Marks, Gerald Hammond, and Austin Busch, *The English Bible: King James Version, A Norton Critical Edition* (New York City: W. W. Norton, 2012), Wisdom 6:17–20, p. 2:739; *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, ed. Jacob Neusner (London: Yale University Press, 1988), Sotah,

personal qualities given in such lists: “In this ‘ladder’ of virtues, each virtue is the means of producing the next (this sense of the Greek is lost in translation). All the virtues grow out of *faith*, and all culminate in *love*.”⁵²

Joseph Neyrey further observes that the Christian triad of faith, hope, and charity in 2 Peter 1:5–7 “forms the determining framework in which other virtues are inserted” in such lists.⁵³ The table below summarizes key words in scriptural passages from Romans 5, 2 Peter 1, and D&C 4 that illustrate this idea:

Romans 5:1–5	2 Peter 1:5–7	D&C 4:6
<i>faith</i>	<i>faith</i>	<i>faith</i>
	virtue	virtue
peace	knowledge	knowledge
	temperance	temperance
<i>hope</i> [patience/experience] ⁵⁴	<i>patience</i>	<i>patience</i>
	godliness	

9:15:III:MM, 466; Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 5 BCE – 65 CE), *Ad Lucilium, Epistulae Morales* 2, trans. Richard M. Gummere (London: William Heinemann, 1962), 85:2, pp. 286–87; Cicero, “De Legibus,” in *On the Republic; On the Laws*, trans. Clinton W. Keyes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 1:7:22–23, pp. 320–23. For an example of *sorites* in modern revelation, see D&C 84:6–17.

Sorites arguments have been studied extensively by philosophers since the late nineteenth century because of logical paradoxes that can arise in some formulations. See Dominic Hyde, “*Sorites* Paradox,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/sorites-paradox/>. (accessed 3 June 2017).

52 Harold W. Attridge, Wayne A. Meeks, Jouette M. Bassler, Werner Lemke, Susan Niditch, and Eileen M. Schuller, eds. *The HarperCollins Study Bible, Fully Revised and Updated* (New York City: HarperOne, 2006), 2068 n. 1:5–7.

53 Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 155. I have substituted the kjv terms for these virtues where they differ from Neyrey’s list. I have also corrected the ordering of these lists where it differed from scripture.

54 The relationship between hope and patience is complex and multivalent. See 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:4; 2 Tim. 3:10; Titus 2:2; Heb. 6:12; 2 Pet. 1:6; Rev. 2:19; Alma 7:23; D&C 4:6; 6:19; 107:30 where patience either complements hope or replaces it. Rom. 5:3–4 defines hope as the *result* of “patience/endurance” (= steadfastness; Greek *hupomene*) and “experience” (= character, proof, testing; Greek *dokime*), developed in tribulation (see D&C 122:7). Bailey writes the following about *hupomene*:

Paul uses a compound word. In this case the term he chooses is *hupo-meno*. *Hupo* has to do with “under” and *meno* means “to remain.” As a compound, this word describes “The affliction under which one remains steadfast.” If *makrothumia* [longsuffering] is the patience of the powerful, *hupomene* is the *patience of the weak* who unflinchingly endure suffering...Jesus...is the supreme example of [this] virtue. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2011), 368.

Romans 5:1–5*love***2 Peter 1:5–7**

brotherly kindness

*charity***D&C 4:6**

brotherly kindness

godliness

charity

humility

diligence

Though the secondary virtues within the three lists differ,⁵⁵ the reward for disciples who cultivate faith, hope, and charity is essentially the same. In 2 Peter 1:4, 8, 10, they are promised that they will become “partakers of the divine nature” and that ultimately they will be fruitful “in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” — thus, in Joseph Smith’s reading, making their “calling and election sure.” Likewise, in Romans 5:2 they are told that they will “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” This means they can look forward with glad confidence, knowing they “will be able to share in the revelation of God — in other words, that [they] will come to know Him as He is.”⁵⁶ Finally, in D&C 4:7 the promise given to

Matthew Bowen observes that the Hebrew word for “hope” (*tiqvah*), often equated with “patience” in the New Testament, comes from a root that means to “wait” (Bowen, pers. comm., 7 March 2016; cf. footnote 214 below). He suggests that this may reflect the process of preparation and trial as one approaches the veil (cf. D&C 136:31). Note that to “endure to the end” means to complete the path that leads to eternal life or, in other words, to come to the point where the personal oath of the Father, the sure promise of calling and election, is received. See 2 Ne. 31:15, 20; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Ne. 13:37; 22:31; 2 Ne. 9:24; 33:4; 3 Ne. 15:9; Mormon 9:29; Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford, 2007), 2:445–446; Hafén and Hafén, *Contrace Spirit*, 57–58.

In the New Testament and modern scripture, the quality of “longsuffering” (Greek *makrothymia*) is often mentioned, typically in conjunction with patience. Cf. Eph. 4:2; 1 Cor. 13:4; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 2 Tim. 3:10; Alma 7:23; 13:28; 17:11; 38:3; Moro. 7:45; D&C 107:30; 118:3; 121:41.

55 Neyrey points out that 2 Pet. 1:5–7, unlike Rom. 5:1–5, supplements the group-specific qualities of faith, hope, and charity with more properly Greco-Roman virtues. He compares the combination of vertically and horizontally oriented virtues within the list to the division in the Ten Commandments between the laws that govern relationship with God and fellow man. Moreover, citing Philo, “On the Special Laws,” in *Philo*, ed. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 2:211–213, pp. 438–41, he sees the numerical count of eight virtues as “suggesting a certain wholeness or completeness....All of the specifically Christian virtues are joined with the more popular ones to suggest a completeness of moral response....Wholeness, moreover, is found in attention to virtues in regard to body (self-control) and spirit, as well as thought and action. In this wholeness, then, holiness is urged, a completeness of moral excellence to all.” Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 154–55.

56 James E. Faulconer, *Life of Holiness: Notes and Reflections on Romans 1, 5–8* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2012), 209. Cf. 1 John 3:2; D&C 38:8; 50:45; 76:94; 93:1. Faulconer continues: “Since the word ‘glory’ can also be taken to mean ‘perfection,’ as

faithful Saints evokes the words of the Savior: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”⁵⁷ — a threefold promise that Matthew L. Bowen correlates to faith, hope, and charity. He also notes that “‘ask’ and ‘seek’ correspond to the Hebrew verbs *sh’l* and *bqsh*, which were used to describe ‘asking for’ or ‘seeking’ a divine revelation, often in a temple setting.”⁵⁸ Jack Welch has argued

in Rom. 3:23, Jesus Christ has brought us into a place where we can rejoice in a hope that we will see the perfection of the Father in its brightness and majesty. We will see the Father in the Son, and we will see Him by being in His presence.”

57 Matt. 7:7. Just as the verse in the 1833 *Book of Commandments* corresponding to D&C 4:6 originally contained a truncated version of the list of virtues from 2 Pet. 1:5–7 (*The Joseph Smith Papers: Revelations and Translations, Volume 2: Published Revelations*, ed. Robin Scott Jensen, Richard E. Turley, Jr., and Riley M. Lorimer [Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2011], 3:2, p. 21 [p. 9]), so D&C 4:7 contains a truncated version of Matt. 7:7 (cf. Luke 11:9; 3 Ne. 14:7; 3 Ne. 27:29).

58 Matthew L. Bowen, “‘Thy Will Be Done’: The Savior’s Use of the Divine Passive,” in *The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture*, ed. Gaye Strathearn, Thomas A. Wayment, and Daniel L. Belnap (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 230–48. Bowen (“Thy Will Be Done,” 243) comments:

The Greek verbs meaning “ask” and “seek” correspond to the Hebrew verbs *sh’l* and *bqsh*, which were used to describe “asking for” or “seeking” a divine revelation, often in a temple setting. [Tvedtnes] detects a further temple echo in “knock” (John A. Tvedtnes, “Temple Prayer in Ancient Times,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks [Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999], 90), which should resonate with Latter-day Saints. The two divine passive reward clauses “it shall be given you” and “it shall be opened to you” also may suggest a temple situation with Jesus as “keeper of the gate” (2 Ne. 9:41–42). See John Gee, “The Keeper of the Gate,” In *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, 233–73.

These suppositions are supported by Nephi’s assertion, “If ye cannot understand...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 Ne. 32:4). A person’s being “brought into” a place seems to imply the presence of a keeper-of-the-gate figure or *paralempstor*, as when Jesus promised the disciples, “I will come and receive [*paralempsomai*] you to myself” (John 14:3). The “light” would then be that part of the temple where God’s full presence shines as represented by the Holy of Holies...Granted, there are additional senses in which one might understand this reward clause. However, if the temple is the locus par excellence of inquiring, asking, and seeking revelation from the Lord (see Psalm 27:4), then the divine passive to be “brought into the light” probably connotes being brought into the light of the Lord’s countenance (see Num. 6:24–27), a full reception of the blessings of the Atonement or the royal “adoption” (Rom. 8:15–23), the greatest possible “revelation.”

Regarding revelation, Bowen (*ibid.*, 248 n. 41) continues:

The word “revelation” from Latin *revelatio* originally connoted “a taking away of the veil” (compare Greek *apokalyptein*, “uncover”). This idea is depicted in



Figure 5. A new bishop knocks three times with a mallet on the door of the Cathedral as part of a Roman Catholic entrance ritual.

likewise that the symbolism of knocking is best understood “in a ceremonial context.”⁵⁹ However, it should be remembered that the temple ordinances foreshadow actual events in the life of faithful disciples who endure to the end.⁶⁰

The expansion of 2 Peter’s list of virtues in D&C 4 warrants further discussion. In that revelation, the “three principal rounds” of faith, hope, and charity/love are specifically highlighted in verse 5 and then repeated as part of the longer list of virtues given in verse 6. Intriguingly, the list of eight qualities found in 2 Peter 1 is expanded in D&C 4 to ten in number.⁶¹ Jack Welch has shown how the number ten in Jewish tradition — which conveys the idea of perfection, especially divine completion — relates to human ascension into the holy of holies or highest degree of heaven:⁶²

2 Cor. 3:14–18, where Paul connects “liberty” (Greek *eleutheria*; Greek *aphesis*, “release”) to revelation and beholding the Lord’s glory with “open face” and being transformed into His glory (see 2 Cor. 3:15–19). We note again Paul’s declaration that creation anxiously awaits the “revelation [*apokalypsin*] of the sons of God” and being “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty [*eleutherian*] of the children of God” (Rom. 8:19, 21).

⁵⁹ John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 72. Figure 5 depicts Bishop Brian Joseph Dunn on 25 January 2010, when he was installed as the Ordinary of the Antigonish, Nova Scotia diocese. Matthew B. Brown, “Cube, Gate, and Measuring Tools: A Biblical Pattern.” In *Ancient Temple Worship*, ed. M. B. Brown, J. M. Bradshaw, S. D. Ricks and J. S. Thompson (Orem and Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014), 6 writes: “He knocks three times and recites part of Psalm 24 — which is an ancient Israelite temple entrance text. This triple knocking and Psalm citation ceremony can be traced back among normative Christians to a very early period [see *ibid.*, 16–17]. For example, if Luke 13:22–30 is compared with chapters 21 and 22 of the book of Revelation a clear set of parallels materializes [see *ibid.*, 14–16].” Cf. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2011), 230–232.

⁶⁰ See 1 Cor. 13:12; D&C 93:1. Cf. John A. Widtsoe, “Work for the Dead.” *The Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* 6 (1915): 33. Also cited in Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 307–08.

⁶¹ See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “He That Thrusteth in His Sickle,” 190–91.

⁶² John W. Welch, “Counting to Ten,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 57.

“The rabbinic classification of the ten degrees of holiness, which begins with Palestine, the land holier than all other lands, and culminates in the most holy place, the Holy of Holies, was essentially known in the days of High Priest Simon the Just, that is, around 200 BCE.”⁶³ Echoing these ten degrees on earth were ten degrees in heaven. In the book of *2 Enoch*, Enoch has a vision in which he progresses from the first heaven into the tenth heaven, where God resides and Enoch sees the face of the Lord, is anointed, given clothes of glory, and is told “all the things of heaven and earth”⁶⁴...

Kabbalah, a late form of Jewish mysticism, teaches that the ten Sefirot were emanations and attributes of God, part of the unfolding of creation, and that one must pass through them to ascend to God’s presence.⁶⁵

Though the verbal ladders of Romans, 2 Peter, and D&C 4 make no explicit mention of rites inculcating the divine pathway of virtues, a lecture based on these teachings would be a fitting summary of the process of progression embodied in Latter-day Saint temple ordinances.⁶⁶

The Three Degrees of Glory as the Main Rungs of the Ladder

An additional reference to the ladder of heavenly ascent appears in the reconstructed version of Joseph Smith’s 21 May 1843 discourse on election that was published in the *History of the Church*. There the Prophet is remembered as saying that Paul “ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder — the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms.”⁶⁷ The three kingdoms of glory, of course, naturally correlate

63 Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 134. Cf. Donald W. Parry, “Demarcation between Sacred Space and Profane Space: The Temple of Herod Model,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 413–14.

64 F. I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:140.

65 In an unpublished manuscript, “The Kabbalistic *Sefirot*: Overlooked Prototypes in First- and Second-Century Christian Literature,” Samuel Zinner has shown that in several ancient Christian writings, what later surfaced as the Jewish Sefirot appear as Christian virtues.

66. With regard to D&C 4, see Bradshaw, “He That Thrusteth in His Sickle.”

67 Smith, *Teachings*, 21 May 1843, 305. Because early Church historians later expanded the relevant allusion in the original notes of the discourse into a full paragraph of polished prose, modern scholars raise the legitimate question as to whether these

to symbolic representations of these three differing glories within the temple.⁶⁸ Already in 1832, Joseph Smith had equated the “mysteries of godliness”⁶⁹ to Jacob’s ladder.

Assuming the gist of Joseph Smith’s statement correlating the “three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder” to the three kingdoms of glory is reported accurately, it would be, along with the “rough stone rolling”⁷⁰ anecdote, a second wordplay in the discourse that might have been recognized by the Prophet’s fellow Freemasons. Significantly, within the first degree of Masonry, the ladder is said to have “three principal rounds, representing Faith, Hope, and Charity,” which “present us with the means of advancing from earth to heaven, from death to life — from the mortal to immortality.”⁷¹ Like the reconstructed statement of Joseph Smith, Masonic sources correlate these three “principal rounds” with three different worlds or states of existence, beginning with the physical world and ending with the Heavens. All these culminate in a fourth level, associated with “Divinity.”⁷² Putting this ancient imagery

individuals correctly intuited the gist of the Prophet words in this context. Elsewhere, I argue that this statement was not made up from whole cloth (Bradshaw, “Now That We Have,” 61–66). I adduce evidence from a source not available to the compilers of Joseph Smith’s manuscript history that something like this statement was mistakenly transposed from its original place near the end of the discourse and then erroneously conflated with an earlier reference to a ladder.

68 James L. Carroll, “The Reconciliation of Adam and Israelite Temples.” *Studia Antiqua* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 83–101, in particular, 95 n. 18.

69 Smith, *Teachings*, August 1832, 12–13: “They are they who saw the mysteries of godliness...they saw angels ascending and descending upon a ladder that reached from earth to heaven.” Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16; D&C 19:10; 84:19–21. Speaking of Jacob’s dream of the heavenly ladder in Gen. 28, Marion G. Romney, said: “Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings — blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord.” Marion G. Romney, “Temples — the gates to heaven,” in *Look to God and Live* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 239–40. See also Hugh W. Nibley, “On the Sacred and the Symbolic,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 579–81.

70 In the same sermon, Joseph Smith characterized himself as a “rough stone rolling down hill.” Smith, *Journals*, Vol. 3, 21 May 1843, 20. The comparison of the polishing of a rough stone to the moral education of the Prophet would not have been unfamiliar to fellow Freemasons in his audience since it related to the imagery of the “rough ashlar” that was to be made perfect. See, e.g., W. Kirk MacNulty, *Freemasonry: Symbols, Secrets, Significance* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 160.

71 Albert G. Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences* (New York City: The Masonic History Co., 1913) s.v., Jacob’s Ladder, 361.

72 MacNulty, *Freemasonry*, 160 gives the following description:

In both the Macrocosm and the Microcosm there are four levels. The lowest of these is the physical world, symbolized in the Macrocosm by the Chequered

in Masonic terms already familiar to many of the Nauvoo Saints might have served a pragmatic purpose, favoring acceptance and understanding of the scriptural ladder of exaltation better than if a new and foreign vocabulary had been used.⁷³

Of course, it must be understood that Freemasonry is not a religion and, in contrast to Latter-day Saint temple ordinances, does not assert divine sanction for its rites.⁷⁴ Unlike the allegories of Masonic ritual, which include beautiful moral truths while eschewing salvific claims, LDS temple doctrines and ordinances purport a power in the priesthood that imparts sanctity to their simple forms, making earthly symbols holy by connecting them to the divinely delegated authority of the living God.⁷⁵ Thus, when Joseph Smith taught the Saints about charity, he was not merely speaking in general, philosophical terms about the desirability

Pavement and in the Microcosm by the theological virtue Faith. The second level up is that of the psyche which is represented in Macrocosm by the central area of the board with most of the symbols, and in the Microcosm by the theological virtue Hope. The third level up is the Spirit, represented by the Heavens and by the theological virtue Charity. The fourth level is Divinity. It is represented in the Heavens by the Star that contains the “All-Seeing Eye” of the Deity; and It, the Source of all things, is the fourth level and the Source of both the Macrocosm and the Microcosm.

73 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Freemasonry and the Origins of Modern Temple Ordinances,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 181. <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/freemasonry-and-the-origins-of-modern-temple-ordinances/> (accessed May 20, 2016). As Jason Lindquist puts it:

[Joseph] Smith regularly found ways to make productive and pedagogic use of the Saints’ “traditions” by harnessing words and concepts already available to his listeners and then gradually modifying them in an effort to better explain complex and original — even radical — doctrines. If the Prophet was correct in the Saints’ tendency to “fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions” (Smith, *Teachings*, 20 January 1844, 331), then introducing the endowment ceremony in wholly unfamiliar terms would have been extremely difficult. [For example, t]he deployment of “key” [in discussing] the temple was one strategy that allowed the Saints to understand the endowment as both an extrapolation of already familiar doctrines and the expression of new truths in a new way. “Keywords: Joseph Smith, Language Change, and Theological Innovation,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 36.

74 Hugh W. Nibley, “What Is a Temple?” In *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, ed. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 369. On the topic of Freemasonry and the origins of modern temple ordinances, see, more generally, Bradshaw, “Freemasonry,” 159–237.

75. For a discussion of the significance of apostolic succession in the Restored Church, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “‘There’s the Boy I Can Trust’: Dennison Lott Harris’ Account,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 21 (2016): 47–51.

of renouncing sinful habits and acquiring a Christlike character. Rather, he believed that charity was a literal perfecting and protecting attribute of divine power that became fully operative only in connection with the sealing blessings of earthly and heavenly priesthood ordinances. In 1831, the Prophet taught:

Until we have perfect love we are liable to fall, and when we have a testimony that our names are sealed in the Lamb's Book of Life we have perfect love, and then it is impossible for false Christs to deceive us.⁷⁶

A Survey of Scripture References to Faith, Hope, Charity, and the Doctrine of Christ

With Joseph Smith's teachings about the ladder of heavenly ascent as background, I will now survey scripture references to faith, hope, charity, and the general sequence of ordinances and blessings known as "the doctrine of Christ."⁷⁷ Then I will examine four exemplary passages of scripture in more detail. Two of these passages weave faith, hope, and charity directly into discussions of the doctrine of Christ, thus joining two seemingly disparate terminologies into a single, rich description of the ladder of heavenly ascent.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

Although the biblical triad of faith, hope, and charity is, strictly speaking, a New Testament construct, David Calabro has suggested that in the context of ancient covenants, faith was understood "as faithfulness (an expression of loyalty), hope as expectation for deliverance by the protecting suzerain, and charity as the stipulation of love for the suzerain (like a son to a father) as required in ancient vassal treaties."⁷⁸

76 Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 23; Smith, *Teachings*, 25 October 1831, 9; 2 Pet. 1:5–11, Moro. 8:25–26.

77 Heb. 6:1; 2 John 1:9; 2 Ne. 31:2; 32:6; Jacob 7:2, 6; 3 Ne. 2:2

78 David Calabro, pers. comm., 9 March 2016. Regarding love in such treaties, which encompasses the commandment to "love God" in Deut. 6:5, see Moshe Weinfeld, "The Common Heritage of Covenantal Traditions in the Ancient World," in *I Trattati nel Mondo Antico Forma Ideologia Funzione*, ed. Luciano Canfora, Mario Liverani, and Carlo Zaccagnini (Rome: "L'ERMA" di Bretschneider and the Istituto Gramsci, Seminario di Antichistica, 1990), 81–82.

Calabro⁷⁹ also compares Proverbs 8 — with its preexistent and coeval personification of Wisdom, by whose power God created the world — to the mention of the framing of the world by *faith* in Hebrews 11:3, to the reification of *hope* as a representation of the glorified Christ in Hebrews 6:18–20, and to the personified description of eternally enduring *charity* in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 and Moroni 7:44–46.⁸⁰ The significance of this comparison with Proverbs 8 is enhanced in remembering that Wisdom — like faith, hope, and charity (as argued in the present chapter) — was associated anciently with knowledge of the mysteries received in the temple.⁸¹

In addition, Joseph Neyrey has observed that in the Hebrew Bible, “love” and “faith” were already linked “in terms of *hesed* and ‘*emet*, that is, ‘steadfast kindness’ in a covenant relationship.”⁸² One might also note in this connection the biblical symbolism of the three divine throne attributes of truth (*‘emet*), righteousness (*tsedaqah*), and uprightness (*yashar*) that enabled individuals to pass through veiled gates to stand in the Lord’s presence within His temple throne room.⁸³

Psalms 15 lists ten qualifications — including, significantly, the three previously mentioned divine attributes of truth, righteousness, and uprightness — for those who would “abide in [the] tabernacle.”⁸⁴ Similar lists of commandments were displayed outside ancient temples.⁸⁵ Second-temple Judaism, like later Christianity, produced long lists of

79 David Calabro, 9 March 2016.

80 On the eternal nature of charity, see 1 Cor. 13:8 and Moro. 7:47. Cf. the personified description of Alma 42:24: “mercy claimeth all which is her own.”

81 Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, 516–18.

82 Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 155.

83 Brown, “Cube, Gate, and Measuring Tools, 3–14. Cf. 1 Kings 3:6; Ps. 15:1–2; Rev. 21:27. See also Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Standing in the Holy Place: Ancient and Modern Reverberations of an Enigmatic New Testament Prophecy,” in *Ancient Temple Worship*, ed. Matthew B. Brown, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Stephen D. Ricks and John S. Thompson (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 75–78, 81 and Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Keys and Symbols of the Priesthood*.

84 Ps. 15:1. Thanks to David Larsen for this suggestion.

85 Moshe Weinfeld, “Instructions for Temple Visitors in the Bible and in Ancient Egypt,” *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 28 (1982):224–50; Moshe Weinfeld, “The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel’s Tradition,” in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss and John W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 11–12, 17, 24–25, 34–36; John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 82. Thanks to Jack Welch for this suggestion.

virtues and vices that are related to a greater or lesser extent with temple themes and the idea of heavenly ascent.⁸⁶



Figure 6. Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and William Morris (1835-1896): *Spes, Caritas, and Fides* (*Hope, Charity, and Faith*), Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, England. These three martyred saints, whose common mother was named Sophia (Wisdom) in some accounts, were said to have lived during the reign of the Roman Emperor Hadrian (2nd century CE).⁸⁷

Within the New Testament, faith, hope/patience,⁸⁸ and charity/love⁸⁹ are mentioned together in fifteen passages, but appear only four times in

86 E.g., Marks, *English Bible*, Wisdom 6:17–20, 2:739; Neusner, *Mishnah*, 9:15:III:MM, 4p. 66. Philo, *On the Giants*, 19–39, pp. 107–23 gives detailed portraits of the opposites of Virtue and Pleasure, which include among the descriptions long lists of adjectives describing one (see pp. 110–13) or the other (see pp. 116–19).

87. Copyrighted photograph by Jules Meredith. Used with kind permission.

88 See footnote 54 above.

89 See footnote 285 below.

that order.⁹⁰ Twelve of these instances are within writings traditionally attributed to Paul, two are found in 1 and 2 Peter, and one is within the book of Revelation. Within the Book of Mormon, faith, hope, and charity are mentioned together by Nephi, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni in eight places, and in the Doctrine and Covenants they are referenced six additional times.⁹¹ Significantly, within modern scripture the themes of faith, hope, and charity are discussed in the same specific order for every instance but one.⁹²

The Doctrine of Christ

The term “doctrine of Christ” is mentioned explicitly in two places in the New Testament: Hebrews 6:1 and 2 John 1:9. In the Book of Mormon, it is mentioned three times in 2 Nephi 31–32,⁹³ twice in Jacob 7,⁹⁴ and once in 3 Nephi 2:2.

So far as I have been able to determine, Joseph Smith’s sermons never directly addressed the relationship among faith, hope, and charity as they appear in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, except within the 21 May 1843 discourse on

90 Rom. 5:1–5; 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:5–6; Eph. 4:2–5; Col. 1:4–5, 23; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; 2 Thess. 1:3–4; 2 Tim. 3:10; Titus 2:2; Heb. 6:10–12; 10:22–24; 1 Pet. 1:21–22; 2 Pet. 1:5–8; Rev. 2:19. The virtues are mentioned in the order of faith, hope, and charity in these verses or passages: Rom. 5:1–5; 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Pet. 1:21–22; and 2 Pet. 1:5–8. In addition the following verses mention faith and charity only: 1 Thess. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2:15. The following verses mention charity only: 1 Cor. 8:1; 14:1; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 4:8; 5:14; 3 John 1:6; Jude 1:12.

91 2 Ne. 31:19–20; 33:7–9; Alma 7:24; 13:29; Ether 12:3ff. (esp. v. 28); Moro. 7:1ff; 8:25–26; 10:20ff; D&C 4:5, 6; 6:19; 12:8; 18:19; 107:30. In addition the following verses mention faith and hope only: Jacob 4:6, 11; Alma 22:16; 25:16; 32:21; 58:11. See also Articles of Faith 1:13; 1 Cor. 13:7.

Responding to critics of the Book of Mormon who see its passages on faith, hope, and charity as having been lifted directly from 1 Cor. 13:13, Nibley notes Paul’s fondness for “quoting from old Jewish and Greek sources.” Hugh W. Nibley, “Howlers in the Book of Mormon,” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 254; cf. Archibald M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961); Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 112, 455–56 nn. 2–4. Nibley gives an example of “a much older and unknown source” that demonstrates the possibility that both the Book of Mormon and the New Testament were drawing on common antecedents. Nibley, “Howlers,” 254, 257 n. 23.

92 I.e., 2 Ne. 33:7–9.

93 2 Ne. 31:2, 21; 32:6.

94 Jacob 7:2, 6. It is also mentioned in the preface to the book of Jacob.

the first chapter of 2 Peter that was discussed previously.⁹⁵ Moreover, his only references to the “doctrine of Christ” occurred when he directly quoted Hebrews 6:1–2 without elaboration. The absence of commentary by Joseph Smith on relevant passages from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants is consistent with his general propensity to draw almost exclusively from the Bible and biblical language in his teachings. In light of the Prophet’s silence on the teachings of modern scripture in this regard, it would seem difficult to sustain arguments that would require Book of Mormon passages that describe sophisticated relationships among faith, hope, charity, and the doctrine of Christ to have originated in the mind of Joseph Smith himself.

Connecting Faith, Hope, Charity, and the Doctrine of Christ

Scriptural teachings that relate faith, hope, and charity to the doctrine of Christ can be summarized in two paragraphs:

- All who are determined to become followers of Christ must first begin by *repenting* and exercising *faith* in Him, which brings about a justificatory⁹⁶ remission of their sins through *baptism*⁹⁷ — a preparatory ordinance of the Aaronic Priesthood. Baptism prepares disciples for the work of *hope*. The work of *hope* is to receive and keep all the additional ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood, beginning with the the bestowal of the right, through worthiness, to receive and enjoy *the gift of the Holy Ghost*.
- Keeping the covenants associated with ordinances endows disciples of Christ with the increased knowledge and strength

95 Apart from the Prophet’s discussions of 2 Pet. 1, his increasingly frequent teachings on “charity” in Nauvoo were based on a conventional understanding of its importance as an essential personal quality, without explicit reference to how it relates to faith, hope, the doctrine of Christ, the temple, or the process of exaltation. See Smith, *Words*, 3 October 1841, 78; 7 November 1841, 80; 1 May 1842, 119–120, 9 June 1842, 12 May 1844, 371; “Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book,” in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*, ed. Jill M. Derr, Carol C. Madsen, Kate Holbrook and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2016), 17 March 1842, 104; 28 April 1842, 117–119; 17 March 1842, 31; 28 April 1842, 57–59; 9 June 1842, 78–79; 28 April 1842, 119; 123–124; Smith, *Journals*, Vol. 2, 28 April 1842, 52.

96 Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 166; David A. Bednar, “Clean Hands and a Pure Heart,” *Ensign*, November 2007, 80–83; Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *D&C Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 104; D. Todd Christofferson, “Justification and Sanctification,” *Ensign*, June 2001, 18–25; Bradshaw and Bowen, “By the Blood,” 164–72; Rom. 5:1; D&C 20:30.

97 2 Ne. 31:9, 17–18.

they need to remain patient and steadfast through the testing process of sanctification.⁹⁸ As they continue to “press forward”⁹⁹ with “*unshaken faith*”¹⁰⁰ on this path, they develop “*a perfect brightness of hope*,”¹⁰¹ and a *love of God and of all men*¹⁰² that enables them to consecrate their all to the building up of the kingdom of God.¹⁰³ Then, if they continue to “*endure to the end*, in following the example of the Son of the living God,”¹⁰⁴ having been “chastened and tried, even as Abraham,”¹⁰⁵ and being “filled”¹⁰⁶ with *charity*, “*the pure love of Christ*,”¹⁰⁷ they will be prepared to hear the Father’s sure oath: “Ye shall have eternal life.”¹⁰⁸

Although most scripture references to faith, hope, and charity or the doctrine of Christ consist only of brief allusions to the wider picture just described, in a few instances these concepts are explained in greater detail. I will now examine four such instances more closely.

Four Exemplary Scriptural Passages on Faith, Hope, Charity, and the Doctrine of Christ

Of the four instances examined below, two center on faith, hope, and charity (Ether 12 and Moroni 7) and the other two explicitly describe the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6 and 2 Nephi 31–32). Notably, both of the chapters that contain detailed discussions of the doctrine of Christ (Hebrews 6, 2 Nephi 31–32) artfully and deliberately weave faith, hope, and charity into their instruction.

Significantly, the three exemplars chosen from the Book of Mormon are not random or obscure selections; each plays a prominent role in

98 Smith, *D&C Commentary*, 104; Hel. 3:35; D&C 20:31; Bradshaw and Bowen, “By the Blood,” 172–183.

99 2 Ne. 31:20.

100 2 Ne. 31:19, emphasis added.

101 Cf. Heb. 6:11: “And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the *full assurance of hope* unto the end” (emphasis added); Ether 12:32: “thou hast prepared a house for man, yea, even among the mansions of thy Father, in which man might have a *more excellent hope*; wherefore man must hope, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which thou hast prepared” (emphasis added).

102 2 Ne. 31:20, emphasis added.

103 See Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 213–15.

104 2 Ne. 31:16.

105 D&C 101:4.

106 Moro. 7:48.

107 *Ibid.*, 7:47, emphasis added. See also v. 48. Compare 1 Pet. 1:22; Jacob 3:2.

108 2 Ne. 31:20.

the overall teaching scheme of its author (Nephi, Mormon, Moroni). Likewise, Hebrews 5:11–6:20 is not a simple digression in the doctrinal arguments of its author but rather a key to the interpretation of the entire epistle.

Finally, in anticipation of the final section of this chapter, we note that these four passages might be seen as excerpts from larger “temple texts,” standing alongside other temple texts that have been brilliantly described by Margaret Barker, Jack Welch, and others.¹⁰⁹

- *Hebrews 6*. The chapter begins by distinguishing between “the [first] principles of the *doctrine of Christ*”¹¹⁰ and the higher way of “perfection”¹¹¹ that has been opened by Jesus Christ, the “sure and stedfast” object of our hope¹¹² and, in the role of “an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec,”¹¹³ our “forerunner”¹¹⁴ “within the veil.”¹¹⁵

According to one Bible scholar, Hebrews 6:1–8 “may be the most difficult passage to interpret in the entire epistle.”¹¹⁶ Happily, Joseph Smith returned to these verses often in his teachings, relying on the summary of the first principles of the Gospel

109. According to Welch, a text can be seen as a “temple text” if it “contains the most sacred teachings of the plan of salvation that are not to be shared indiscriminately, and that ordains or otherwise conveys divine powers through ceremonial or symbolic means, together with commandments received by sacred oaths that allow the recipient to stand ritually in the presence of God.” John W. Welch, “The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 300–01.

110 Heb. 6:1, emphasis added.

111. Heb. 6:1.

112 Heb. 6:19.

113 Heb. 6:20.

114 Ibid.

115 Heb. 6:19.

116 David L. Allen, *Hebrews. The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2010), 339.

given in verses 1–2¹¹⁷ and on the description of specific aspects of the doctrine of election in verses 4–8.¹¹⁸

Significantly, the transition between the first and last part of chapter 6 introduces faith, hope/patience, and charity into the discussion in reverse order. Elsewhere, such reversals portray these three qualities as the *fruits* of divine knowledge gained through experience:¹¹⁹ “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of *love*.... And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of *hope*

117 For example, speaking of errors in the Bible, Joseph Smith specifically contrasted his understanding of the first principles of the Gospel (i.e., “faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, with the promise of the Holy Ghost”; cf. Articles of Faith 1:4) with a misreading of Heb. 6:1 that would understand “leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ” as meaning “abandoning the principles of the doctrine of Christ.” Then he said, “I will render it... — “Therefore *not* leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ...” (Smith, *Teachings*, 15 October 1843, 328, emphasis added; cf. Smith, *Words*, 15 October 1843, 256. See also JST Heb. 6:1–2; Smith, *Teachings*, 1 September 1835, 82–83; *ibid.*, December 1835, 99). Joseph Smith’s reading is consistent with modern scholarship (e.g., Allen, *Hebrews*, 339–40).

118 See Smith, *Words*, 10 March 1844, 330, 335; *ibid.*, 7 April 1844, 361.

119 According to Guénon: “Sometimes the symbol of a double ladder is found. This suggests the idea that the climb should be followed by a descent. Thus, one goes up one side by the steps that represent increasing ‘knowledge’ — in other words, degrees of understanding corresponding to the realization of some number of states — and one descends on the other side by steps that are ‘virtues’ — that is, the ‘fruits’ of these same degrees of knowledge applied to their respective levels” (Guénon, *Symboles*, 339, my translation). A clear example of the descending degrees of “fruits” can be found in Gal. 5:22 — note the listing of the theological virtues of faith, hope/longsuffering, and charity in reverse order: “But the fruit of the Spirit is *love*, joy, peace, *longsuffering*, gentleness, goodness, *faith*.” Cf. Heb. 6:10–12. The idea of the double ladder of ascent and descent finds a parallel in Gen. 28:12, where Jacob’s ladder is said to have had “the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”

A visual example of the concepts of heavenly ascent followed by descent in the traditions of Second Temple Judaism can be found in the Dura Europos Mural of Ezekiel. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos: A tangible witness of Philo’s Jewish mysteries?” *BYU Studies* 49, no. 1 (2010): 4–49. See also account of descent followed by ascent described in chapter 1 of the book of Moses. See Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 23–50. Eliot Wolfson has perceptively observed that the result of this ascent-descent pattern “renders what is above within and what is within above.... From this perspective heavenly ascent and incarnational presence may be viewed as two ways of considering the selfsame phenomenon.” “Seven mysteries of knowledge: Qumran e/sotericism recovered,” in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 213.

unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through *faith* and *patience* inherit the promises.”¹²⁰

Chapter six concludes with a description of the sure promise of eternal life vouchsafed anciently by God to Abraham and the equally “sure and stedfast” “anchor to the soul”¹²¹ that is made available to all the Saints by the Savior, the object of their hope, who entered “within the veil” as a “forerunner...for us.”¹²² The Prophet Joseph Smith explicitly associated the imagery of these verses in Hebrews with the “more sure word of prophecy” described in 2 Peter 1:19.¹²³

- 2 Nephi 31–32. In these chapters, presumably authored near the end of his ministry, Nephi has chosen to write, “according to the plainness of [his] prophesying,” “a few words...concerning the *doctrine of Christ*”¹²⁴ “that he has selected out of a lifetime of vivid events and important theological concepts.”¹²⁵

Nephi exhorts his readers to “follow the Son, with full purpose of heart”¹²⁶ and enter the gate of “repentance and baptism by water” [cf. the altar of sacrifice and the laver that sit in the courtyard, outside the temple door] in order to receive “a remission of... sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.”¹²⁷

Then, he weaves the one and only mention of faith, hope, and charity in chapters 31 and 32¹²⁸ into a beautiful description of the culminating sequence of the pathway to eternal life: “And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far [i.e., through the gate]

120 Heb. 6:10–12.

121 Cf. Ether 12:4: “whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast.”

122 Heb. 6:19–20.

123 Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 26 September 1833, 323; Smith, *Words*, 14 May 1843, 201; Smith, *Teachings*, 14 May 1843, 298–99.

124 2 Ne. 31:2, emphasis added. Cf. 2 Ne. 31:21; 32:6.

125 Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 2:432.

126 2 Ne. 31:13.

127 2 Ne. 31:17.

128 In Nephi’s closing words, he uses the terms faith, hope, and charity for the second and final time in his writings (2 Ne. 33:7–9).

save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken *faith* in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore, ye must press forward [i.e., along the high priestly way of the temple] with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of *hope* [cf. the lamp in the Holy Place], and a *love* of God and of all men [cf. consecration at the altar of incense that stood just in front of the veil]. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ [cf. the temple shewbread¹²⁹], and *endure to the end* [cf. the veil that conceals the Holy of Holies], behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life”¹³⁰ [cf. the personal oath of the Father].

In 2 Nephi 33:9, having just expressed the *charity* he has for all people, Nephi reiterates that there is no other way besides the one he has just outlined: “But behold, for none of these can I *hope* except they shall be reconciled unto Christ, and enter into the narrow gate [through the *faith* that has led them to repent and be baptized], and walk in the strait path [of *hope*] which leads to life [i.e., eternal life, conferred at the veil], and continue in the path *until the end* of the day of probation [cf. the requirement to endure to the end].”

- *Ether 12*. Ether 12 is a significant excursus by Moroni that was inspired by Ether’s historical record.¹³¹ It provides much in the way of instruction and examples of faith,¹³² while also mentioning hope in five places¹³³ and enjoining charity six times.¹³⁴

Following his initial focus on faith in the first part of the chapter, Moroni acknowledges his “weakness in writing”¹³⁵ and expresses his “fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at [his] words.”¹³⁶ (Note that Moroni expresses this concern immediately after describing the awe-inspiring experience of the brother of Jared at the veil — which took place on a mountain called Shelem

129. For more on the significance of the temple shewbread in connection with the sacrament, the law of consecration, and the eschatological heavenly feast, see Bradshaw and Bowen, “By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified,” 183–92.

130. 2 Ne. 31:19–20.

131. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 6:287–88.

132. Ether 12:6–22.

133. Ether 12:4, 8, 9, 28, 32.

134. Ether 12:28, 34 (twice), 35, 36, 37.

135. Ether 12:23.

136. Ether 12:25.

“because of its exceeding height”¹³⁷ and perhaps also because the name relates to the Semitic root for “ladder.”¹³⁸) The Lord replied comfortingly to Moroni’s concern by making it clear that His “grace is sufficient for the meek”¹³⁹ and that in order for “weak things [to] become strong”¹⁴⁰ the Gentiles must be shown that it is “*faith, hope and charity* [that] *bringeth unto me* — the fountain of all righteousness.”¹⁴¹ “Bringeth unto me,” of course, may be interpreted both ritually and literally.

In the verses that follow, Moroni expands upon the topics of *faith*,¹⁴² *hope*,¹⁴³ and *charity*,¹⁴⁴ in that specific order, before closing the chapter with moving words of farewell.¹⁴⁵

- *Moroni 7*. Following a summary of liturgical information in chapters 1–6, Moroni records his father Mormon’s sermon “concerning *faith, hope, and charity*”¹⁴⁶ as a prime example of the preaching and exhorting that took place in the Nephite Church at that time.¹⁴⁷

Mormon begins by reminding his hearers that it is not merely their actions but also the sincerity of their hearts that matters to God¹⁴⁸ — in other words, unless they “do that which is good...with real intent it profiteth...nothing.”¹⁴⁹ Then he shows them how they can “know good from evil”¹⁵⁰ “with a perfect knowledge”¹⁵¹ through diligent search “in the light of Christ.”¹⁵²

137 Ether 3:1.

138 Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 196.

139 Ether 12:26.

140 Ether 12:27.

141 Ether 12:28. See Ether 8:26, where “the fountain of all righteousness” also appears to refer to Christ. cf. 1 Ne. 2:9, which “could be a metaphorical reference to Christ.” Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004–2009), 6:3831.

142 Ether 12:29–31.

143 Ether 12:32.

144 Ether 12:33–37.

145 Ether 12:38–41.

146 Moro. 7:1.

147 Gardner, *Second Witness*, 6:366.

148 Moro. 7:5–13.

149 Moro. 7:6.

150 Moro. 7:15, emphasis added.

151 Moro. 7:16.

152 Moro. 7:19.

But *knowing* what is good is not enough — Mormon also asks: “how is it possible that [the members of the Church] can *lay hold upon* every good thing?”¹⁵³ The answer is: through *faith*,¹⁵⁴ *hope*,¹⁵⁵ and *charity*.¹⁵⁶ Mormon defines charity, “which is the greatest of all,”¹⁵⁷ as “the pure love of Christ.”¹⁵⁸ He further explains that this gift is the key to divine sonship, being “bestowed upon all who are true followers of [God’s] Son, Jesus Christ; that [we] may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him.”¹⁵⁹

A beautiful instance of *gradatio* in Moroni 8:25–26 directly links faith, hope, and love/charity to the successive areas of the ancient temple that bring individuals step-by-step to the point where they can “dwell with God”.¹⁶⁰ “And the first fruits of repentance is baptism [cf. the altar of sacrifice and laver]; and baptism cometh by *faith* unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost [cf. the lamp], which Comforter filleth with *hope* and *perfect love*, which love *endureth* by diligence unto prayer [cf. the altar of incense near the veil], until the end shall come [cf. the veil itself], when all the saints shall dwell with God [cf. the Holy of Holies].”

Significant passages that link instruction on faith, hope, and charity with the doctrine of Christ sometimes seem to have been directed specifically toward those who had already received the higher ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood. In Moroni 7, Mormon’s hearers are specifically said to be “the peaceable followers of Christ” who already had “*obtained a sufficient hope by which [they could] enter into the rest of*

153 Moro. 7:20.

154 Moro. 7:21–39.

155 Moro. 7:40–42.

156 Moro. 7:43–48.

157 Moro. 7:46.

158 Moro. 7:47.

159 Moro. 7:48.

160 Thanks to Matthew L. Bowen and John S. Thompson for this suggestion (pers. comm., 7 March 2016). David Richins posits a ladder-like structure for the entire chapter in “The Hidden Message in Moroni 7,” *The Lunch is Free*, 27 and 31 August 2016, <https://thelunchisfree.wordpress.com/2016/08/27/the-hidden-message-in-moroni-7/> comment-page-1/#comment-64 (accessed 31 September 2016).

the Lord, from this time henceforth until [they would] rest with him in heaven.”¹⁶¹ Similarly, the disciples addressed by Paul¹⁶² in Hebrews were not novices in need of “milk” but such as had been prepared and should have been ready to feast on “*strong meat*.”¹⁶³ Moreover, just as Paul chided his readers because he had to teach them again about the “first principles of the oracles of God”¹⁶⁴ when he expected them to be qualified already as teachers themselves,¹⁶⁵ so Alma, prior to his brief exhortation about faith, hope, and charity,¹⁶⁶ sought to awaken his hearers to a sense of their “duty to God”¹⁶⁷ so they could “walk after the holy order of God, after which [they had *already*] *been received*.”¹⁶⁸

Faith, Hope, and Charity and the Journey through the Temple and Its Ordinances

In this section, I relate faith, hope, and charity to a journey through the temple. The succession of three primary sacred spaces of increasing holiness found in Israelite temples is usually followed in the physical layout of modern LDS temples.

Preparing to Leave the Telestial World: Faith and the First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel

The journey of the high priest through the Israelite temple began in the temple courtyard. This courtyard can be compared with the “World Room” in the Salt Lake Temple, a representation of humankind’s fallen state of existence in a place of telestial glory.¹⁶⁹ In the courtyard of the

161 Moro. 7:3, emphasis added.

162 See Terrence L. Szink, “Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *How the New Testament Came to Be*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Frank F. Judd, Jr. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 243–59 for an LDS perspective on the question of the authorship of the book of Hebrews. While some of the Joseph Smith’s statements about the book of Hebrews indicate his belief that it was authored by Paul, Szink nevertheless is sympathetic to the likelihood that, based on a range of other evidences, the book was written by a disciple of Paul rather than by Paul himself (ibid., 253. See also Kevin L. Barney, ed. *Footnotes to the New Testament for Latter-Day Saints*, 2007 <http://feastupontheword.org/Site:NTFootnotes>, 3:53–55).

163 Heb. 5:12, 14.

164 Heb. 5:12.

165 Heb. 5:12. See Allen, *Hebrews*, 333, 334.

166 Alma 7:24.

167 Alma 7:22.

168 Ibid., emphasis added.

169 James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1912), 187–88.

Israelite temple were located the altar of sacrifice¹⁷⁰ and the laver of water used by priests for purification before they entered the temple proper.¹⁷¹ David Calabro has compared the function of the temple altar of sacrifice to the description in Moses 5 of the obedience of Adam and Eve and their attentiveness to the ordinance of sacrifice after they were driven from the Garden of Eden. Likewise, he has linked the function of the laver to the account of Adam's baptism that is given in Moses 6.¹⁷² John S. Thompson observes: "As one ascends to the Holy of Holies, there appears to be an expectation of participating in preparatory rites and laws of an Aaronic order associated with the courtyard that give one access to the temple, wherein further rites and laws of a higher order will be manifest, allowing one to enter into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies."¹⁷³

Consistent with such a picture, Hebrews 11, Ether 12, and Moroni 7 emphasize the undergirding quality of *faith*, not as mere belief in the truth or falsity of some proposition¹⁷⁴ but as "the moving cause of all action."¹⁷⁵ As such, faith necessarily accompanies every righteous striving to follow the Savior, Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 6:1–2, Paul describes "the [first] principles of the doctrine of Christ," which include "repentance from dead works,...faith toward God,...baptisms, and...laying on of hands."¹⁷⁶ Throughout 2 Nephi 31, Nephi also emphasizes the specific

170 Lev. 1:2; 2:1, 13; 23:13.

171 Exod. 30:17–21.

172 David 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: Eborn Books, 2016), 163–79, in particular 171–72. Calabro elaborates:

While there is no evidence that the temple laver was used as a baptismal font, it was definitely large enough to suggest such a use, and Joseph Smith's specifications for a baptismal font modeled after the Solomonic laver for the Nauvoo Temple show that he understood it in this connection. *Ibid.*, 172.

See also Bradshaw, "LDS Book of Enoch," 57–58; Bradshaw and Bowen, "By the Blood," 144.

173 John S. Thompson, "How John's Gospel Portrays Jesus as the Way of the Temple," in *The Temple: Ancient and Restored*, 312.

174 See Wilfred C. Smith, *Belief and History* (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1977); Weinfeld, "Common Heritage." Thanks to David Calabro.

175 Smith, *Published Revelations*, Lectures on Faith 1:10, 316.

176 The list in Heb. 6:2 also includes "resurrection of the dead" and "eternal judgment." On 27 June 1839, Joseph Smith taught: "The doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead & eternal Judgment are necessary to preach among the first principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Smith, *Words*, 27 June 1839, 4). Ehat and Cook note that the Prophet "repeatedly referred to and amplified this theme in discourses during the Nauvoo period. See also D&C 19:4, 8–9, 21–22 (1–24)" (see Smith, *Words*, 15 October 1843, 256; Smith, *Teachings*, 16 May 1841, 72–73; 10 March 1844, 330; 7 April 1844, 343). Although the Prophet appears not to have considered these doctrines

ordinances that accompany faith. More pointedly, it might be said that “faith *produces* ordinances.”¹⁷⁷ Joseph Fielding McConkie notes that “in establishing these principles [of the doctrines of salvation] relative to baptism, Nephi established principles that apply with equal force to all ordinances of salvation. Salvation [in the celestial kingdom of God]...is Nephi’s subject — baptism is but the illustration.”¹⁷⁸

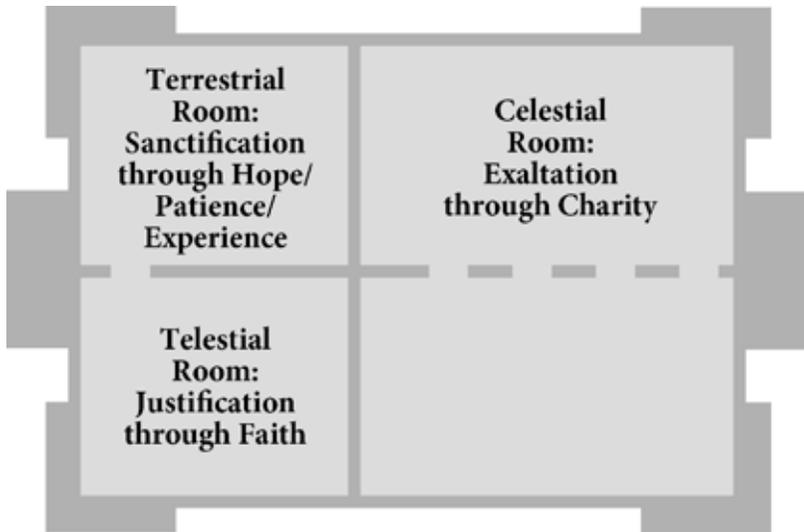


Figure 7. The Ladder of Heavenly Ascent Superposed on the Layout of Ordinance Rooms on the Second Floor of the Salt Lake Temple ¹⁷⁹

Visualizing a movement from the temple courtyard to the temple proper makes Nephi’s words about repentance and baptism (corresponding

as an actual *part* of the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4; Smith, *Words*, 15 October 1843, 256), in light of scriptural passages such as D&C 19:1–24, an understanding of the doctrines of the resurrection and judgment can be seen as useful adjunct to the missionaries’ call to repentance, highlighting the urgency of their message.

177 Monte S. Nyman, “Hope, Faith, and Charity (Moro. 7–8),” in *Alma 30 to Moroni*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1988), 296–97, emphasis added.

178 Joseph F. McConkie, “The Promise of Eternal Life,” in *1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 163.

179. Ordinance room layout adapted by Samuel H. Bradshaw (1990–) from a photograph of the original plans in C. Mark Hamilton, *The Salt Lake Temple: A Monument to a People* (Salt Lake City, UT: University Services Corporation, 1983), 78. See different but related figures and explanations in Bradshaw and Bowen, “By the Blood,” 167–168 and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2014), 106–09.

to the temple altar and laver) as “the gate”¹⁸⁰ (corresponding to the temple door) that is entered “with unshaken faith”¹⁸¹ in Christ more vivid and meaningful.¹⁸²

17 Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. *For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost* [i.e., justification].

18 And then are ye in this strait and narrow path [of sanctification] which leads to eternal life [i.e., exaltation]; yea, *ye have entered in by the gate*; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

19 And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far [i.e., through the gate] save it were by the word of Christ with *unshaken faith* in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

Moroni 7 provides an excellent summary of the way faith provides a basis for the entire process of salvation from beginning to end. Mormon opens by exhorting listeners to exercise the discerning power of the “light of Christ”¹⁸³ to judge “with a perfect knowledge”¹⁸⁴ “every thing which inviteth to do good”¹⁸⁵ and which “is of God”¹⁸⁶ from “whatsoever persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God”¹⁸⁷ — which things are “of the devil.”¹⁸⁸ He emphasizes

180 On this theme, see Gardner, *Second Witness*, 2:439.

181 2 Ne. 31:19.

182 2 Ne. 31:17–19.

183 Moro. 7:19.

184 Moro. 7:15.

185 Moro. 7:16.

186 Moro. 7:16.

187 Moro. 7:17.

188 Moro. 7:17.

that it is through *faith* that the children of men are called to *repentance*¹⁸⁹ in “divers ways”¹⁹⁰ by God’s messengers — for example, both through “angels”¹⁹¹ and through “prophets.”¹⁹² By this means “men began to *exercise faith* in Christ”¹⁹³ and, by virtue of keys restored to the earth by divine messengers and exercised by mortal priesthood holders, they may be *baptized*.¹⁹⁴ Thus each disciple may be enabled to “lay hold upon every good thing”¹⁹⁵ up to and including the ability to “become the sons of God,”¹⁹⁶ being “saved by *faith in his name*.”¹⁹⁷

Transitioning through the Terrestrial World: Hope and the Ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood

The journey into the Israelite temple proper commenced as the high priest left the courtyard to “draw near” to God in the Holy Place with “full assurance of faith,” having been cleansed through both the outward ordinances of sacrifice and washing and the inner transformations of repentance and spiritual cleansing from sin.¹⁹⁸ The Holy Place can be compared to the “Terrestrial Room” in modern LDS temples,¹⁹⁹ a representation of the greater glory that Adam and Eve experienced as they began the process by which “all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy [i.e., Melchizedek Priesthood] ordinance.”²⁰⁰ It is a place where disciples are meant to “wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts.”²⁰¹ In that ritual and actual state of existence, they participate in further covenant-making and testing connected with the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood to see whether they will “hold fast the profession of [their] faith [= Greek *elpis*, literally *hope*] without

189 Moro. 7:31.

190 Moro. 7:24.

191 Moro. 7:22.

192 Moro. 7:23. Cf. Moro. 7:31–32.

193 Moro. 7:25.

194 Note that baptism is the central subject of chapters 6 and 8 of Moroni. See also 2 Ne. 31:4–13.

195 Moro. 7:19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28. Cf. Moro. 10:30: “every good gift.”

196 Moro. 7:26.

197 Moro. 7:26

198 Heb. 10:22. For more on the symbolism of spiritual rebirth by repentance and baptism, see Bradshaw and Bowen, “By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified,” 138–64.

199 Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 188–89.

200 Moses 5:59.

201 Hel. 3:35.

wavering.”²⁰² For those who continue to the end of the high priestly way, the Terrestrial Room provides a transition to the Celestial Room. This transition, symbolizing the resurrection, takes place through the Veil of the Temple,²⁰³ “that is to say, [the] flesh [of the Jesus Christ, the Redeemer].”²⁰⁴

The *hope* experienced in the Terrestrial state of existence is not a “natural hope” for “bodily and worldly matters — the hope that our job will be rewarding, that our children will do well in school, that we will get a raise. Christian hope is the hope for salvation.”²⁰⁵ Moreover, Christian hope is a palpable divine gift, not simply a vague and wistful longing. Those who have proven faithful are chosen or elected to inherit the kingdom “according to a preparatory redemption”²⁰⁶ and obtain an initial *hope* of attaining it when God grants them the “earnest of the Spirit in [their] hearts.”²⁰⁷ By receiving and keeping all the laws and ordinances of the Gospel, this first, dim hope will be replaced by a “*perfect brightness of hope*”²⁰⁸ (as described by Nephi), “*a more excellent hope*”²⁰⁹ (as described by Mormon), or “*the full assurance of hope*”²¹⁰ (as described by Paul). Thus, step by step, disciples are brought “unto the *end*,”²¹¹ at which point, according to Moroni, they “receive an inheritance in the place which [the Lord has] prepared.”²¹²

Moroni 7:41 explains that the ultimate hope of receiving an inheritance in the presence of God is manifested in the resurrection, as also it is symbolized in the temple endowment: “And what is it that ye shall *hope* for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have *hope* through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, *to be raised unto life eternal*.”²¹³ With startling specificity, Hebrews 6:18-20 associates sacred ordinances

202 Heb. 10:23.

203 Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 189.

204 Heb. 10:20.

205 Faulconer, *Life of Holiness*, 207.

206 Alma 13:3. For more on the meaning of Alma 13:3, see Bradshaw and Bowen, “By the Blood Ye Are Sanctified,” 158–59, 172–73, 268–69 n. 260.

207 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5. Cf. Eph. 1:14. Just as a purchaser pledges eventual full payment by the initial deposit of an earnest money, God gives a first installment of hope to believers through the confirmation of His Spirit, promising that He will provide their full inheritance as sons and daughters of God if they endure to the end.

208 2 Ne. 31:20, emphasis added.

209 Ether 12:32, emphasis added.

210 Heb. 6:11, emphasis added.

211 Heb. 6:11.

212 Ether 12:32.

213 Moro. 7:41.

with the quality of *hope* in great detail. Paul addresses as his audience all those of us who “have claimed his protection by grasping the *hope* set before us.”²¹⁴ Continuing the description, he writes: “That *hope* we hold. It is like an anchor for our lives, an anchor safe and sure.”²¹⁵ It enters in through the veil, whose Jesus has entered on our behalf as a forerunner, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.²¹⁶

Alluding to the blessings of the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood,²¹⁷ Paul wanted to assure the Saints of the firmness and unchangeableness of God’s promises symbolized in “grasp[ing] the hope set before [them].”²¹⁸ The “two irrevocable acts” that provide that firm assurance to disciples are “God’s promise and the oath by which He guarantees that promise.”²¹⁹ By these verses, we are meant to understand that so long as the we hold fast to the Redeemer, who has entered “through the veil on our behalf...as a forerunner,” we will remain firmly anchored to our heavenly home, and the eventual realization of the promise “that where I am, there ye may be also.”²²⁰

214 Sandmel and Tkaclk, *New English Bible*, Heb. 6:18, emphasis added. Matthew Bowen observes that there is a pun on Hebrew *tiqvah* (“hope”) in the word for “cord” (*tiqvah*) hung from the window in Josh. 2:15, which was the “true token” between Rahab and the Israelite spies (Bowen, pers. comm., 7 March 2016. Cf fn. 54 above). One is also reminded of the iron rod in the vision of the Tree of Life recorded by Lehi and Nephi (1 Ne. 8:19–20, 24, 30; 11:25; 15:23) and its ancient analogues that were used in the ascent of holy mountains (see Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, 143, 473). Further afield, Bowen also notes that late Jewish traditions describe how a rope or gold chain was tied to the ankle of the high priest in case he died in the Holy of Holies (e.g., from an eruption of the glory of God) so that his body could be pulled out: see *Midrash Rabbah*, ed Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncion Press, 1983). Eccles. 9:10:1–2, 8:240–241; *The Zohar: An English Translation*, ed. Harry Sperling Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff (London: The Soncino Press, 1984). However, the plausibility of this tradition has been strongly disputed (e.g., Ari Zivotofsky, “What’s the Truth About...the Kohen Gadol’s Rope?” in *Jewish Action: The Magazine of the Orthodox Union*, 12 August 2009, https://www.ou.org/jewish_action/08/2009/whats_the_truth_about_-_the_kohen_gadols_rope/). See also *The Zohar*, ed. Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 7:444–45 n. 266; 8:52–54 nn. 279, 280.

215 Cf. Ether 12:4 (emphasis added): “which *hope* cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast.” Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 155 reads “steadfastness” as “hope” in 1 Thess. 1:3 and Titus 2:1.

216 Sandmel and Tkacik, *New English Bible*, Heb. 6:18–20.

217 D&C 84:33–48. See also Marion G. Romney, “The oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood,” *Conference Report*, April 1962, 17 and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*.

218 Sandmel and Tkacik, *New English Bible*, Heb. 6:18.

219 Barney, *NT Footnotes*, 3:82; See also Romney, *Oath*, 17.

220 John 14:3. See also Heb. 4:14; Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 118–19.



Figures 8a, 8b, 8c. *a: Greek Orthodox Icon Depicting the Ladder of Virtues*, Thessaloniki, Macedonia;²²¹ *b: The Woman at the Tomb and the Ascension*, ca. CE 400;²²² *c: Anastasis*, Daphni Monastery, near Athens, Greece, CE 1080–1100.²²³ In many depictions of the ladder of virtues, Christ is positioned at the top of the ladder taking the ascending disciple by the wrist (*a*). A similar gesture is shown in *b*, where Christ Himself is welcomed to heaven after His ascension. In *c*, Nicoletta Isar brilliantly concludes that the gesture of the hand of Christ grasping the wrist of Adam, “an anchor...sure and steadfast”²²⁴ that binds them together in unbreakable fashion, represents not only the “meeting ground of both life and death,” but also serves as a “visual metaphor of the...nuptial bond,”²²⁵ an equally indissoluble union, “the conjugal harness by which both parts are yoked together.”²²⁶ This metaphor is visually highlighted by the stigma on the hand of the Savior that is carefully positioned at the exact center of the image to overlay precisely both the cross of Christ and the wrist of Adam.²²⁷

According to Margaret Barker, there is also undoubtedly the sense that “Jesus, the high priest, [stands] behind the veil in the Holy of Holies to assist those who [pass] through.”²²⁸ According to Harold Attridge: “The anchor would thus constitute the link that ‘extends’ or ‘reaches’ to the safe harbor of the divine realms...providing a means of access by

221 Licensed from Alamy.com. Image ID: BM2KC6.

222 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reidersche_Tafel_c_400_AD.jpg

223 Nicoletta Isar, *Choros, The Dance of Adam: The Making of Byzantine Chorography* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Alexandros Press, 2011), plate 65.

224 Heb. 6:19., see vv. 18–20.

225 Isar, *Choros*, 73.

226 *Ibid.*, 73. Cf. “Like the arm of the groom over the bride/So is my yoke over those who know me” (J. H. Charlesworth, “Odes of Solomon,” 42:8, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:725–71).

227 Cf. Isar, *Choros*, 52.

228 Margaret Barker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John’s Gospel* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2014), 42–43. See also Gregory Nazianzen. ca. CE 350–363. “Oration 39: Oration on the Holy Lights,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004) vol. 7, 358; Origen. ca. CE 234–240. *Homilies on Luke: Fragments on Luke*, trans. Joseph T. Lienhard (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 103; 1 Cor. 3:13.

its entry into God's presence."²²⁹ David Moffitt argues that just as Jesus was "exalted...above the entire created order — to the heavenly throne at God's right hand," so "humanity will be elevated to the pinnacle of the created order."²³⁰ And just as the Son received "all the glory of Adam,"²³¹ so "His followers will also inherit this promise if they endure...testing."²³²

In comments relating to these verses, the Prophet Joseph Smith equated the hope described in Hebrews 6:18–20 — a "sealing"²³³ that is promised and anticipated within the endowment — with the "more sure word of prophecy"²³⁴ as described by Peter and discussed earlier in this chapter.²³⁵ Significantly, the following passage from a letter that Joseph

229 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 184; cf. 185, 222–24. See also Luke T. Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 172–73. Comparing the symbol of the anchor to an image in Virgil, Ben Witherington, III concludes that he was "thinking no doubt of an iron anchor with two wings rather than an ancient stone anchor." *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 225. The shape of the anchor with two wings would recall God's two assurances: i.e., the covenant and the oath by which it is "made sure" (2 Pet. 1:10).

230 David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 300–1.

231 This phrase, applied by Moffitt to Jesus Christ and His followers, originated with the Jews in Qumran. See Rule of the Community (1QS), 4:22–26 in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, ed. Geza Vermes, (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 103. For a more detailed study of the meaning of this concept in the context of the theology of the Qumran Community and of early Christians, see Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2002).

232 Moffitt, *Atonement*, 301.

233 See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 48.

234 2 Pet. 1:19.

235 On at least one occasion, the Prophet explicitly cited relevant passages from 2 Peter and Hebrews together (Smith, *Teachings*, 14 May 1843, 298–299; cf. Smith, *Words*, 14 May 1843, 201):

Though [the Saints addressed by Peter (2 Pet. 1:21)] might hear the voice of God and know that Jesus was the Son of God, this would be no evidence that their election and calling was made sure (2 Pet. 1:10), that they had part with Christ, and were joint heirs with Him. Then they would want that more sure word of prophecy (2 Pet. 1:19), that they were sealed in the heavens and had the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God.

Then, having this promise sealed unto [us is] an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:19). Though the thunders might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble, and tribulation. Then knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven...

Smith wrote in his own hand to his uncle, Silas Smith, on 26 September 1833, demonstrates the Prophet's comprehension of these matters long before the temple ordinances were given to the Saints in Nauvoo.²³⁶

Paul wrote to his Hebrew brethren that God being more abundantly willing to show unto the heirs of his promises the immutability of his council "confirmed it by an oath."²³⁷ He also exhorts them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.²³⁸

"Notwithstanding we (said Paul) have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."²³⁹ Yet he was careful to press upon them the necessity of continuing on until they as well as those who inherited the promises might have the assurance of their salvation confirmed to them by an oath from the mouth of Him who could not lie, for that seemed to be the example anciently and Paul holds it out to his brethren as an object attainable in his day. And why not? I admit that, by reading the scriptures of truth, saints in the days of Paul could learn beyond the power of contradiction that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had the promise of eternal life confirmed to them by an oath of the Lord, but that promise or oath was no assurance to them of *their* salvation. But they could, by walking in the footsteps and continuing in the faith of their fathers, obtain for themselves an oath for confirmation that they were meet to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light.

Moroni provides a concise encapsulation of how the qualities of faith and hope associated with earthly temples prepare disciples to enter the presence of God in the heavenly temple: "Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety *hope* for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which *hope* cometh of *faith*, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast,

Then I would exhort you to go on and continue to call upon God until you make your calling and election sure for yourselves, by obtaining this more sure word of prophecy, and wait patiently for the promise until you obtain it.

236 Smith, *Writings*, 323, spelling and punctuation modernized, emphasis added.

237 Heb. 6:17.

238 Heb. 6:12.

239 See Heb. 6:18–19.

always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.”²⁴⁰ It must be understood, of course, that priesthood ordinances received in earthly temples provide only an initial, anticipatory “*hope* for a better world,” and not a firm guarantee of entrance into it.²⁴¹

Words of Warning to the Elect

Before continuing with their descriptions of the culminating events by which one’s calling and election are made sure, both Hebrews 6:4–8 and 2 Nephi 31:14²⁴² deliver words of warning to the elect, reminding them of the peril they face if they break their covenants and deny what they will sooner or later come to know with absolute certainty.²⁴³ This is consistent with an idea reportedly expressed by Hyrum Smith that terrestrial glory is a transitory state culminating either in progress or regress:²⁴⁴

Hiram [Smith] said Aug 1st [18]43 Those of the Terrestrial Glory either advance to the Celestial or recede to the Telestial [or] else the moon could not be a type [i.e., a symbol of that kingdom]. [for] it [the moon] “waxes & wanes.”

240 Ether 12:4, emphasis added.

241 Emphasizing the anticipatory nature of temple ordinances, Brigham Young explained that “a person may be anointed king and priest long before he receives his kingdom.” In Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 6 August 1843, 5:527.

242 There is also a hint of such a warning in Ether 12. After Moroni describes the brother of Jared’s experience in passing through the heavenly veil (Ether 3), he expresses his concern to the Lord that the “the gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing” (Ether 12:23). In response, the Lord warned: “Fools mock, but they shall mourn” (Ether 12:26). Similarly, Moroni 7:14 warns against judging “that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil,” and then repeats in v. 18: “see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged.”

243 See also Heb. 10:26–31; D&C 84:40–42. Compare 23 June 1843, *William Clayton’s Nauvoo Diaries and Personal Writings*, ed. Robert C. Fillerup, <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/clayton-diaries>.

244 Franklin D. Richards, entry dated 1 August 1843, “Scriptural Items, Words of the Prophet,” 24. Church Historian’s Office call number in 1975, Ms/d/4409. This statement was discovered by Andrew F. Ehat among the Wilford Woodruff Papers, in the first diary of Franklin D. Richards (A. F. Ehat, pers. comm., 31 October 2012). In light of the fact that some Church authorities have spoken against the idea of progression (and, implicitly, regression) among kingdoms after the resurrection (e.g., Bruce R. McConkie, “The Seven Deadly Heresies,” 1 June 1980. in *BYU Speeches*. https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/bruce-r-mcconkie_seven-deadly-heresies/), Hyrum Smith’s statement might be understood as applying to those who have not yet completed their probation and are merely “quickened by a *portion*” of one of the three glories prior to the resurrection (see D&C 88:29–31, emphasis mine).

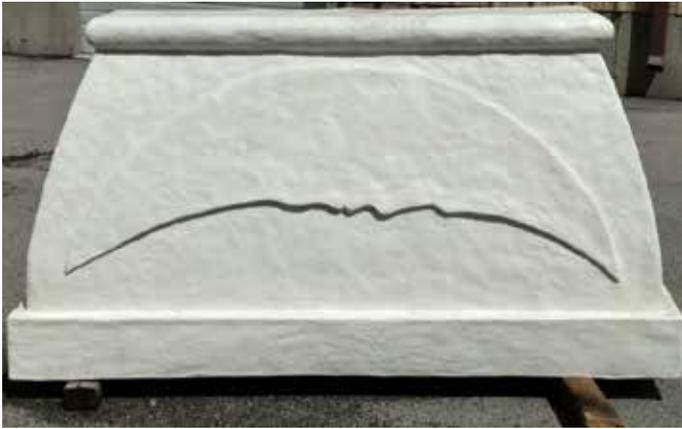


Figure 9. Facsimile of a Moonstone from the Nauvoo Temple. Each crescent featured a carved face in profile, perhaps meant to represent those of the Terrestrial glory²⁴⁵ who, according to a statement attributed to Hyrum Smith, must either wax or wane.

Of the “very elect”²⁴⁶ who suffer irreparable regression, the Prophet said: “awful is the consequence.”²⁴⁷ On two known occasions, he used language from Hebrews 6:6 to explain that such individuals “can’t [be] renew[ed] to repentance”²⁴⁸ and to describe why their sin (i.e., “crucifying the Son of God afresh & putting him to an open shame”²⁴⁹) could not be forgiven. The Prophet taught that no power in earth or heaven can protect an individual against committing the unpardonable sin.²⁵⁰ Indeed, he taught that to have the “heavens... opened” (i.e., to experience, in the words of Ehat and Cook, “a direct

245. See Lisle G. Brown, *Nauvoo Temple Exterior Symbolism*, 1999. <http://users.marshall.edu/~brown/nauvoo/symbols.html>. (accessed 31 August 2014). Photo: https://www.locateauctions.com/uploaded_files4/ade4d6eb797b489f878fb71f23204bda.jpg (accessed 1 June 2017). Public Domain.

246. Matthew 24:24; JS — Matthew 1:22.

247. Smith, *Words*, 7 April 1844, 361; cf. Heb. 10:31: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

248. *Ibid.*, William Clayton Report, 7 April 1844, 361. See also Heb. 10:26. This is the same situation described in D&C 84:41, when it says that “whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.” The published version of the relevant passage can be found in Smith, *Teachings*, 7 April 1844, 358. The original notes from have been published in Smith, *Journals*, Vol. 3, 7 April 1844, 17–18, 221 and 221 nn. 971, 974; Smith, *Words*, 342, 346–47, 353, 361.

249. Smith, *Words*, Franklin D. Richards “Scriptural Items,” 10 March 1844, 335. Cf. *ibid.*, Wilford Woodruff Journal, 10 March 1844, 330.

250. See Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 63–64. D&C 132:26 is sometimes interpreted to mean that the blessings of the marriage sealing ordinance are unconditional. However, it is clear in the context of D&C 88:3–4

heavenly vision on the order of the blessings attending the visitation of the Second Comforter”²⁵¹) and then to “deny Jesus Christ”²⁵² is precisely what it means to become one of the “sons of perdition.”²⁵³



Figure 10. John Bunyan (1628-1688), *The Pilgrim's Progress*: “There [is] a way to hell, even from the gate of heaven”²⁵⁴ Artist unknown.

Before proceeding to his final summation of the doctrine of Christ and his description of the end of the path of eternal life, Nephi writes the following by way of similar solemn warning.²⁵⁵

But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the *tongue of angels*, and *after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me.*

On the surface, Nephi’s reference to the “tongue of angels” looks like a parallel to the statement in 1 Corinthians 13:1 that mentions the

that this verse is meant to apply, not to those who merely have been sealed in marriage, but only to those whose calling and election has been made sure.

251 Ehat and Cook, in Smith, *Words*, 396 n. 52.

252 See Smith, *Words*, Thomas Bullock Report, 7 April 1844, 353.

253 See *ibid.*, Wilford Woodruff Journal, 7 April 1844, 347. See John 17:12; 2 Thess. 2:3; Heb. 10:39; 2 Pet. 3:7; Rev. 17:8, 11; 3 Ne. 27:32; 29:7; D&C 76:26, 32, 43; Moses 5:24.

254. John Bunyan, 1678, in *The Annotated Pilgrim's Progress*, ed. Warren W. Wiersbe (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980), 181.

255 2 Ne. 31:14, emphasis added.

“tongues of men and of angels.” The phrase as used in 1 Corinthians clearly alludes to the gift of tongues discussed in chapter 12 that was seen as “nothing” when compared with charity. However, there is a better interpretive possibility that suggests itself for the similar phrase in 2 Nephi.

In this connection, it should be noted first that the pointed warnings to the elect in Hebrews 6:4–8 and 2 Nephi 31:14 both precede by a few verses a description of the “more sure word of prophecy”²⁵⁶ experienced at the heavenly veil — the equivalent of the symbolic veil of temple ritual — an event described as “the end” by both authors.²⁵⁷

With this context in mind, Nephi’s reference to speaking “with the tongue of angels”²⁵⁸ evokes Jewish accounts of Abraham and Moses, who were portrayed as reciting angelic words (described as a “song,” recalling Alma’s “song of redeeming love”²⁵⁹) as they ascended and entered within the heavenly veil.²⁶⁰ The words of Abraham’s song were said to have been taught him by the angel who accompanied him during his heavenly ascent.²⁶¹ The text relates that while he “was still reciting the song,” he heard a voice “like the roaring of the sea”²⁶² and was brought through the veil into the presence of the fiery seraphim surrounding the heavenly throne.²⁶³ Similarly, an account by Philo describes the great and final song of thanksgiving²⁶⁴ that Moses sang “in the ears of both mankind

256 2 Pet. 1:19.

257 Heb. 6:11; 2 Ne. 31:20.

258 2 Ne. 31:14.

259 Alma 5:26. David Richins relates Alma’s song of redemption (Hebrew *Shir HaGeulah*) to biblical songs of redemption and the eschatological “new song” in Isaiah 42:10, Revelation 5:8–10, and D&C 84:98–102. “The Song of Redeeming Love,” *The Lunch Is Free*, 4, 6 August 2016, <https://thelunchisfree.wordpress.com/2016/08/04/the-song-of-redeeming-love/> (accessed 3 September 2016).

260. Neal Rappleye reached the same conclusion from complementary lines of evidence. See “With the Tongue of Angels: Angelic Speech as a Form of Deification,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 21 (2016): 303–23.

261 R. Rubinkiewicz, “Apocalypse of Abraham,” 17:4, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:696.

262 Cf. “voice of many waters” (*ibid.*, 17:1, 696). See also Ezek. 43:2; Rev. 1:15; 14:2; 19:6; D&C 133:22; Moses 1:25.

263 *Ibid.*, 18:1–14, 698. For a more complete description of this event, along with parallels to Moses 1, see Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Book of Moses*, 44.

264 Cf. 2 Ne. 31:13: “and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.”

and ministering angels”²⁶⁵ as part of his heavenly ascent.²⁶⁶ As illustrated in a mural from Dura Europos, Moses is shown standing on the earth with the sun, moon, and seven stars (i.e., planets) above his head. Erwin Goodenough took special note of the striking representation of the sun with its depiction of laddered rays, recalling the ubiquitous symbolism of the “divine ladder that connects man to God.”²⁶⁷



Figure 11. Heavenly Ascent of Moses (detail), Showing Laddered Sun with Moon and Stars.²⁶⁸

Entering the Celestial World: Charity and Consecration

The Holy of Holies in the Israelite temple can be compared to the area associated with celestial glory in the Salt Lake Temple, including the apartments bordering the Celestial Room proper where additional ordinances are performed.²⁶⁹ It represents the highest kingdom of glory where those who, in likeness of their Savior, have “overcome all things”²⁷⁰ and are heirs of eternal life and exaltation may dwell forever and ever. All this, however, is dry recital without an understanding of the eternal, enduring²⁷¹ flame that provides light, life, warmth, and glory to this place of supernal joy: *charity*.

265 Philo, “On the Virtues (*De Virtutibus*),” in *Philo*, ed. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), 8:207.

266 Erwin R. Goodenough, *Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue* (New York City: Pantheon Books, 1964), 9:116. For a more complete description of this and other murals in the synagogue of Dura Europos in the context of early forms of mystical Judaism, see Bradshaw, “Ezekiel Mural,” 17–19.

267 Goodenough, *Dura Synagogue*, 9:115.

268 Fig. 61 in Carl H. Kraeling C. C. Torrey, C. B. Welles, and B. Geiger, *The Synagogue. The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: Final Report VIII, Part I*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 236.

269 Talmage, *House of the Lord*, 189–94. See also Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 106–09.

270 D&C 50:35; 75:16, 22; 76:60.

271 Moro. 7:47: “charity...endureth forever”; 1 Cor. 13:8: “Charity never faileth.”



Figure 12. *Relief Society Seal.* In 1913, Relief Society President Emmeline B. Wells adopted a phrase from 1 Corinthians 13:8 and Moroni 7:46 as a motto for the organization. On 27 April 1842, Joseph Smith had read from 1 Corinthians 13 to the founding sisters.

The scriptures clearly assert the supremacy of charity over its two companion virtues. Although Moroni affirms that the joint effects of “faith, hope and charity bringeth unto”²⁷² Christ, charity alone is described as “the bond of perfectness”²⁷³ and therefore “the greatest of these”²⁷⁴ three. Indeed, Mormon calls charity “the greatest of *all*,”²⁷⁵ without which one is “nothing.”²⁷⁶ Specifically, he teaches that “except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which [Christ has] prepared in the mansions of [His] Father.”²⁷⁷

Further elaborating, Moroni affirms that “ye receive no witness” — meaning the sure witness that came when Christ personally “showed himself unto our fathers”²⁷⁸ — “until after the trial of your faith.”²⁷⁹ “And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong...who could not be kept from within the [heavenly] veil,²⁸⁰ but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld [previously] with an eye of faith, and they were glad.”²⁸¹ It is in serving God and their fellow man “at all hazards,”²⁸² having obtained a “fulness of the priesthood of God...in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it...by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of God,”²⁸³ and having reached

272 Ether 12:28. cf. Alma 13:29: “Having *faith* on the Lord; having a *hope* that ye shall receive eternal life; having the *love of God* always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day and enter into his rest.”

273 Col. 3:14.

274 1 Cor.13:13.

275 Moro. 7:46, emphasis added.

276 Moro. 7:44.

277 Ether 12:34.

278 Ether 12:7.

279 Ether 12:7. cf. 1 Pet. 3:7.

280 Cf. Ether 3:19.

281 Ether 12:19. See also vv. 20–21.

282 Smith, *Teachings*, 27 June 1839, 150.

283 *Ibid.*, 11 June 1843, 308.

the point where their “bowels [are] full of charity,”²⁸⁴ the “pure love²⁸⁵ of Christ,”²⁸⁶ that His disciples are prepared to have their calling and election made sure. Whether in this life or the next, they will be sealed up to eternal life and exaltation — if they remain faithful.²⁸⁷ According to Nephi, “a love of God and of all men” is the final requirement of all those who “endure to the end”²⁸⁸ and eventually qualify to receive “all that [the] Father hath.”²⁸⁹

According to Hugh Nibley, charity is the “essence of the law of consecration, . . . without which, as Paul and Moroni tell us, all the other laws and observances become null and void.”²⁹⁰ President Ezra Taft Benson described the law of consecration as being “that we consecrate our time, talents, strength, property, and money for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God on this earth and the establishment of Zion.”²⁹¹ He notes that all the covenants made up to this point are preparatory, explaining that: “Until one abides by the laws of obedience, sacrifice, the gospel, and chastity, he cannot abide the law of consecration, which is the law pertaining to the celestial kingdom.”²⁹² Nibley likewise affirmed that the

284 D&C 121:45.

285 Note that “charity” and “love” are equated four times in the Book of Mormon (2 Ne. 26:30; Ether 12:34; Moro. 7:47; 8:17). On the other hand, D&C 4:5 specifically adds “love” to the triad of “faith, hope, and charity.” However, despite the temptation to read a difference between “charity” and “love” in that verse it seems wisest to understand the two terms as synonyms. The purpose of the change may be primarily stylistic, allowing the foursome of “faith, hope, charity and love” to stand alongside “heart, might, mind and strength” (D&C 4:2) as a rhetorical parallel.

Elsewhere in the published words of Joseph Smith, “charity” and “love” are specifically equated: “charity (or love)” (Smith, *Teachings*, 4 January 1833, 16; J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Documents*, July 1831-January 1833, 4 January 1833, 354). “Charity, which is love” (Smith, *Teachings*, 23 July 1843, 316). Note that “Charity, which is love” is missing from the official record of the 23 July 1843 discourse. J. Smith, Jr. et al., *Journals*, Vol. 3, 23 July 1843, 66. It was added retrospectively by Church historians. The original notes include the words “love” and “friendship,” but not “charity.” However, there may be an allusion to 1 Pet. 4:8 (“charity shall cover the multitude of sins”) in Elder Richards’ record (“covered all the faults among you”).

286 Moro. 7:47.

287 Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood*, 59–65.

288 See 2 Ne. 31:20.

289 D&C 84:38.

290 See 1 Cor. 13:1–3; Moro. 7:44.

291 Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 121. Cf. Gordon B. Hinckley, *The Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1997), 147; Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 318.

292 Benson, *Teachings*, 121; D&C 78:7.

law of consecration is “the consummation of the laws of obedience and sacrifice, is the threshold of the celestial kingdom, the last and hardest requirement made of men in this life”²⁹³ and “can only be faced against sore temptation.”²⁹⁴ Similarly, Jack Welch has argued that consecration is the step that precedes perfection.²⁹⁵

In compensation for the supreme effort in life to acquire the “pearl of great price,”²⁹⁶ President Harold B. Lee avers that to the “individual who thus is willing to consecrate himself, [will come] the greatest joy that can come to the human soul.”²⁹⁷ Indeed, it is through consecration that we come to know God.²⁹⁸ And knowing God and Jesus Christ is eternal life.²⁹⁹

In our strivings to be “filled with charity”³⁰⁰ to the point where we are able to fully live the law of consecration, Jesus Christ provides a peerless, perfect prototype. The law of consecration is not foremost an economic law, but one in which we first give ourselves, our time, and our toil³⁰¹ — our will, like the Savior’s, “being swallowed up in the will of the Father.”³⁰² “Wherefore, my beloved brethren,” Mormon concluded in his sermon on faith, hope, and charity, “pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this *love*, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him,³⁰³ for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this *hope*; that we may be purified even as he is pure.”³⁰⁴

293 Hugh W. Nibley, “How Firm a Foundation! What Makes It So,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. D. E. Norton (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989), 168.

294 Nibley, *Sacred and Symbolic*, 34.

295 Welch, *Sermon*, 60–61.

296 Matt. 13:46.

297 Lee, *Teachings*, 318.

298 See D&C 122:1–8; O. Hyde, *Journal of Discourses*, 6 October 1853, 1:125; Chad M. Orton “Francis Webster,” *BYU Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 140.

299 Cf. D&C 132:23–24. The Prophet Joseph Smith further explained: “No one can truly say he knows God until he has handled something, and this can only be in the holiest of holies.” J. Smith Jr., *History of the Church*, 1 May 1842, 4:608.

300 Moro. 8:17.

301 “Giving money is only one way of showing charity; to give time [and] toil is far better and (for most of us) harder.” C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007), 18 Feb. 1954, 429.

302 Mosiah 15:7.

303 In order to be *with* Him, one must be *like* Him. See Hafen and Hafen, *Contrite Spirit*, 27; Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, 35 fig. 1–4.

304 Moro. 7:48; cf. 1 John 3:1–3.

The supreme manifestation of charity and consecration was in the Savior's offering of Himself for our sake: "And again, I remember that thou hast said that thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world."³⁰⁵ In the agonies of His Atonement, Jesus Christ trod "the wine-press alone,...and none were with [Him]."³⁰⁶ Yet He was with *us* — *fully* with us in that moment — turning outward in charity to relieve us from our suffering in the midst of the unspeakable depths of His own distress.³⁰⁷ He pressed forward on our behalf in the torments that accompanied His exercise of complete compassion, not permitting Himself in the slightest degree to become "weary in well-doing!"³⁰⁸

For the Savior to accomplish His "infinite and eternal"³⁰⁹ sacrifice, His consecration of self had to be whole and complete. Had there been but one particle of selfishness in His soul, it would have been sufficient to undermine the purity of integrity and the totality of commitment needed to sustain the completion of His mission to save us through His suffering. Someday, if we are to follow the Son back to the presence of the Father, each of us must likewise extinguish the last crumb of selfishness from *our* souls, being willing to submit to the Father in *all* things He may require of us,³¹⁰ "yea, *every* sacrifice which...the Lord, shall command,"³¹¹ even if it be a sacrifice like that of Abraham.³¹²

305 Ether 12:33. Cf. John 15:13.

306 See Eugene England, *The Quality of Mercy* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 52–53.

307 See Isa. 53:4–5; Mosiah 3:7; Alma 7:11–13. See David A. Bednar, *Act in Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 10.

308 D&C 64:33. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, "Be Not Weary in Well-Doing," *Meridian Magazine* (3 October 2016). <http://ldsomag.com/be-not-weary-in-well-doing/>. (accessed June 10, 2017).

309 Alma 34:10, 14.

310 See Mosiah 3:19.

311 D&C 97:8.

312 See D&C 101:4–5; Bradshaw and Bowen, "By the Blood," 183–85. The case of Abraham highlights the reciprocal nature of knowledge and faith: the exercise of faith leads to increased knowledge (Alma 32:34–35) and the confirming knowledge that comes from the exercise of faith increases faith itself (Alma 32:29–30). While such incremental increases in faith do not yet amount to a "perfect knowledge" (Alma 32:21, 26, 29, 34, 35), the experience of the brother of Jared at the veil demonstrates that individuals of "exceeding faith" (Ether 3:9) may reach the point where they cannot "be kept from beholding within the veil," having "faith no longer," having instead a "perfect knowledge of God," "nothing doubting" (Ether 3:19–20). Such knowledge, coupled with the assurance, attained through "the sacrifice of all things" (*The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, ed. Larry E. Dahl and Charles D. Tate [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU 1990], 6:7, p. 92) "that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God" (*ibid.*, 6:3, p. 91), "will enable them to exercise that

Although Abraham previously had received the blessings of patriarchal marriage and then had been made a king and a priest under the hands of Melchizedek,³¹³ Abraham's "election sure" came only afterward, when he demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac.³¹⁴ In Hebrews 11:19, the evidence of Abraham's absolute consecration in the sacrifice of his son and the form of the blessing he received are described respectively using the language of death and resurrection. In trying to make sense of this idea, we might remember that in some Jewish³¹⁵ and early Christian³¹⁶ creedal formulations bearing on accounts of Abraham's sacrifice, one finds the idea that Isaac actually died, ascended to heaven, and was resurrected — though it should be remembered that these eschatological ideas fit equally well in a ritual context.³¹⁷ Harold Attridge concluded that "Isaac's rescue from virtual death³¹⁸ on the sacrificial pyre is symbolic of the deliverance that all the faithful can expect."³¹⁹ Likewise, Abraham's recovery of what he had once thought lost is emblematic of the reward of eternal life that comes through whole-souled consecration.

confidence in Him necessary for them to overcome the world and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God" (ibid., 6:4, p. 92).

313 Gen. 14:17–24 and JST Gen. 14:25–40.

314 See Ehat and Cook in Smith, *Words*, 305 n. 29.

315 See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 335, n. 25; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 363.

316 See Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, 362.

317 See Bradshaw, "Ezekiel Mural," 11–12.

318 Pamela M. Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998). Eisenbaum observes that the motif of a "near-death experience" of the hero appears more than once in Heb. 11 (ibid., 162). In the case of Isaac: "What is stressed is that from one who was almost never born, and who after being born was almost killed, the descendants of Abraham, the descendants of God's faithful ones, are born." Ibid., 163.

319 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 335. Cf. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 295, explaining the Greek behind the phrase stating that Abraham receive Isaac "in a figure" (i.e., "figuratively speaking"). John Dunnill states: "The phrase *en parabole* points in two directions. Abraham received Isaac 'back' literally, when God stopped the sacrifice and Isaac was able to accompany his father home...As in the use of the same phrase in 9:9, however, the author may also imply another symbolic dimension, namely the resurrection from the dead that occurred in Christ and is anticipated by believers." *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 178. On the connection between Heb. 11 and Rom. 4, see L. D. Hurst, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 121.

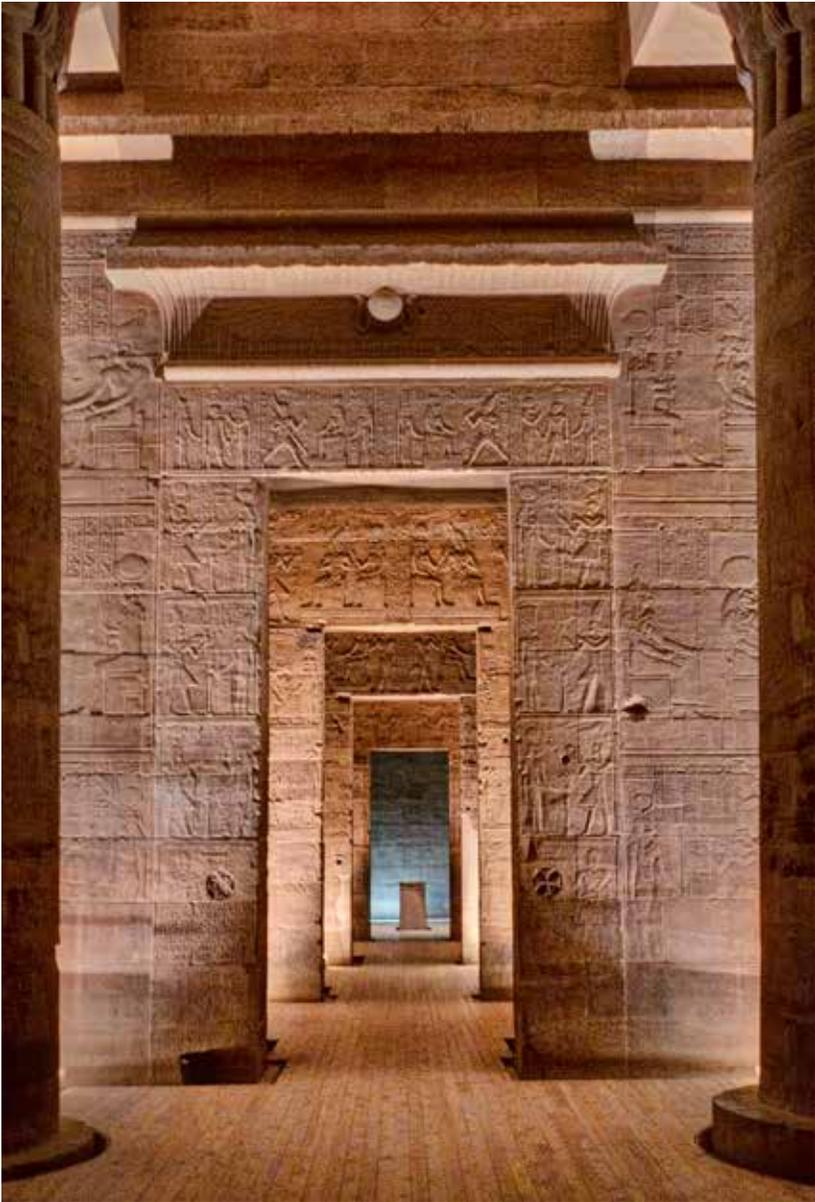


Figure 13. *Temple of Isis, Philae, Egypt, 380–362 BCE.* Photograph by Stephen T. Whitlock (1951-), 2015. Passage through an ascending sequence of spaces of increasing holiness by means of a series of narrow doors or gateways is a near-universal feature of ancient temples. The degree of sacredness and the difficulty of access increases as one approaches either the innermost or topmost space.

In his careful paraphrase of Paul's description of faith, hope, and charity³²⁰ within the thirteenth Article of Faith,³²¹ Joseph Smith pointedly distinguished between the early Saints' previous attainments with respect to the first ladder rungs of faith ("We believe *all things*") and hope ("we hope *all things*"), and their unfulfilled aspirations as they climbed toward the last, hardest rung of charity:³²² "we have endured *many things, and hope to be able to endure all things.*"³²³

In this regard, Jack Welch observed that the Nauvoo Saints' yearning for perfection was expressed in "the highest ambitions of the building of the City Beautiful, with the construction of the splendid Nauvoo Temple already underway."³²⁴ However, just as they had suffered a period of trial, apostasy, and eventual abandonment of Kirtland after the dedication of the earlier temple, so Joseph Smith "prophetically looked forward to yet further trials and trails of tears moving westward." With happy anticipation, the last Article of Faith looks forward to the brighter day when the Saints will be able to endure *all things* — to complete the climb of the ladder of heavenly ascent "by the patience of hope and the labor of love."³²⁵

320 See 1 Cor. 13:7; cf. Moro. 7:45–47. Note that Conzelmann argues for a correlation between the admonition of Paul in 1 Cor. 13:7 and the mention of faith, hope, and charity in 1 Cor. 13:13: "Verse 7 is formally speaking a conclusion, but in content a verbal description of the triad of v. 13." Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 224.

321 Articles of Faith 1:13.

322 Although it is not known whether Joseph Smith was involved in directing or reviewing the punctuation of the original 1844 publication of the thirteenth Article of Faith in I. Daniel Rupp, *An Original History of the Religious Denominations at Present Existing in the United States* (Philadelphia: J. Y. Humphreys, 1844), 410 the placement of the quotation marks (even though the contents of the quote are not a word-for-word parallel) highlights the contrast between Joseph Smith's view of the Saints' limited capacity to endure and the exact parallel in the descriptions of the three qualities as they are listed in 1 Cor. 13:7 (i.e., "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"):

... indeed we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul; "we believe all things: we hope all things;" we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things.

323 Emphasis added. The godlike capacity to "endure *all things*" is the result of charity, not mere grit. See, e.g., Ether 12:33. Note that in 1 Corinthians, it is *charity* that bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things, whereas in the thirteenth Article of Faith, the "we" makes the Latter-day Saints the subject of the phrase.

324 John W. Welch, "The Articles of Faith and the Life of Joseph Smith," *Ensign*, 2013, 75.

325 "Come, Let Us Anew," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 217: stanza 1. See 1 Thess. 1:3.

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (PhD, Cognitive Science, University of Washington) is a Senior Research Scientist at the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) in Pensacola, Florida (www.ihmc.us/groups/jbradshaw, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeffrey_M._Bradshaw). His professional writings have explored a wide range of topics in human and machine intelligence (www.jeffreymbradshaw.net). Jeff serves as a vice president for The Interpreter Foundation and is on the Advisory Board for the Academy for Temple Studies. He has been a presenter at BYU Campus Education Week and the BYU Sperry Symposium. He has lectured for FairMormon in the US, Germany, and France, and is a co-founder of the Interpreter Science and Mormonism Symposium Series. Jeff has an abiding interest in Genesis, temples, the ancient Near East, and the life and teachings of Joseph Smith, and has published extensively on these topics (www.templethemes.net). He owes an immeasurable debt to Jack Welch for his encouragement, example, and insights over a period of many years. Jeff was a missionary in France and Belgium from 1975 to 1977. He has served twice as a bishop and twice as a counselor in the stake presidency of the Pensacola Florida Stake. He and his wife, Kathleen, are the parents of four children and eleven grandchildren. In July 2016, they began two years of service in the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission.

“THAT WHICH THEY MOST DESIRED”: THE WATERS OF MORMON, BAPTISM, THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE BITTER FOUNTAIN

Matthew L. Bowen

ABSTRACT: *Paronomasia in the Hebrew text of Exodus creates narrative links between the name Miriam (Mary) and the “waters” (mayim) of the Re[e]d Sea from which Israel is “pulled” and the nearby “bitter” waters of Marah. Nephi sees Mary (Mariam), the mother of Jesus, associated with the “love of God,” and thus to both “the tree of life” and “the fountain of living waters” (1 Nephi 11:25) vis-à-vis “the fountain of filthy water” (1 Nephi 12:16). Mormon was named after “the land of Mormon” (3 Nephi 5:12). He associates his given name with “waters,” which he describes as a “fountain of pure water” (Mosiah 18:5), and with the good “desires” and “love” that Alma the Elder’s converts manifest at the time of their baptism (Mosiah 18:8, 10–11, 21, 28). Mormon’s accounts of the baptisms of Alma the Elder’s people, Limhi’s people, the people at Sidom (Alma 15:13), and a few repentant Nephites at Zarahemla who responded to Samuel the Lamanite’s preaching (Helaman 16:1), anticipate Jesus’s eventual reestablishment of the church originally founded by Alma, the baptism of his disciples, and their reception of the Holy Ghost — “that which they most desired” (see 3 Nephi 19:9–14, 24). Desire serves as a key term that links all of these baptismal scenes. Mormon’s analogy of “the bitter fountain” and its “bitter water” vis-à-vis the “the good fount” and its “good water” — which helps set up his discussion of “the pure love of Christ,” which “endureth forever” (Moroni 7:47–48) — should be understood against the backdrop of Lehi’s dream as Nephite “cultural narrative” and the history of Alma the Elder’s people at the waters of Mormon. As Mormon’s people lose the “love [which] endureth by faith unto prayer” (Moroni 8:26; see also Moroni 8:14–17; 9:5) they become like the “bitter fountain” (Moroni 7:11) and do not endure to the end in faith, hope, and charity on the covenant path (cf. 2 Nephi 31:20; Moroni 7:40–88; 8:24–26). The name Mormon*

(“desire is enduring” or “love is enduring”), as borne by the prophet-editor of the Book of Mormon, embraces the whole cloud of these associations.

A previous study¹ examined the names *Miriam/Mary* and *Mormon* as derivations from the common Egyptian lexeme and onomastic element *mr(i)*, “love, wish, desire.”² As such, *Mary* (Hebrew *miryām* [*mr̥ym*] < Egyptian *mry.t*) most plausibly denotes “beloved [of a deity].”³ The name *Mormon* also appears to derive from *mr(i)* and *mn*,⁴ denoting or connoting “love is enduring” or “(divine) love remains.” Here I acknowledge that the ultimate origin of the name *Mormon* (before its mention in *Mosiah* 18:4 and association with the fountain/waters in vv. 5, 8-11) and its entry into the Nephite onomasticon remain obscure. I also acknowledge that the precise rules for Nephite nomenclature and the incorporation of names at any stage of the Nephite language remain unknown at present. Nevertheless, I proceed under those cautions. The Egyptian onomastic elements *mr(i)* (“love”) and *mn* (“remain,” “endure”) are both common Egyptian onomastic elements⁵ and at present are more promising than any Semitic or other explanation.⁶

If the above analyses are correct, divine “love” constitutes an important thread binding the names *Miriam/Mary* and *Mormon*

1. Matthew L. Bowen, “‘Most Desirable above All Things’: Onomastic Play on *Mary* and *Mormon* in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015): 27-61. The author would like to especially thank Ryan L. Combs for his encouragement in examining the relationship between the “bitter fountain” in *Moroni* 7:11 and the waters of *Mormon* in *Mosiah* 18.

2. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford, UK: Griffith Institute/Ashmolean Museum, 1999), 111. Hereafter cited as CDME.

3. See recently, e.g., James K. Hoffmeier (*Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 225), who notes regarding *Mary/Miriam*, “Although there are different linguistic explanations for the second *mem* [i.e., the final “m”], there is agreement that *mary* is the writing of the root *mry*, meaning ‘love’ or ‘beloved.’”

4. Benjamin Urrutia, “The Name Connection,” *New Era* (June 1983): 40; see also Paul Y. Hoskisson, “What’s in a Name? Mormon — Part 2,” *Insights* 32, no. 3 (2012): 3.

5. Hermann Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen* (Glückstadt, DEU: Augustin, 1935), 1:149-50; 155-63. Cf. the name *mr-mn-nfr* (p. 156).

6. Beyond Semitic or Egyptian explanations, there exists, of course, the possibility that “Mormon” originated with another people with whom the Nephites came into contact at some point. However, even here it possible for such names to have been regarded later as Egyptian by a people whose lexical resources included Egyptian throughout the entire stage of its existence (see *Moroni* 9:32-33).

together in terms of how Book of Mormon writers incorporated them. Nephi, whose education included Egyptian,⁷ understood that God “loveth his children” (1 Nephi 11:17). However, when he saw Mary in vision, “the mother of God after the manner of the flesh” (1 Nephi 11:18, original text),⁸ he also came to recognize that the tree of life represented “*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” (1 Nephi 11:22).⁹ Mormon appears to reference his own name when he states that “charity is the pure *love* of Christ, and it *endureth* forever. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, *that ye may be filled with this love...*” (Moroni 7:48). He appears to do so again in a letter to his son Moroni: “And *I am filled with charity*, which is *everlasting love*, ... wherefore, I *love* little children with a *perfect love*” (Moroni 8:17); “which Comforter filleth with hope and *perfect love*, which *love endureth* by diligence unto prayer” (Moroni 18:26).

In addition to divine “love,” another thread binds the names Mary/Miriam and Mormon to the “waters” and “fountains” with which the names Miriam/Mary and Mormon are associated in ancient Israelite and Nephite literature and tradition. Evidence from the Hebrew Bible suggests the paronomastic association of the phoneme *mr-* (including names with this phonemic element) and *māqôr* (“fountain”) or *mayim* (“waters”) — e.g., the re-motivation of the Egyptian name Merneptah in Zechariah 13:1 (see p. 278).

In this article, I discuss how wordplay in the Hebrew Bible associates the name Mary or Miriam with the “waters” (*mayim*) of the Re[e]d Sea through which Israel is redeemed and the nearby “bitter” waters of Marah, which the Lord made “sweet.” Moreover, in Nephi’s vision of the

7. See especially 1 Nephi 1:2.

8. The Book of Mormon citations here will generally follow Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

9. The language of additional passages connects Mary with the tree of life: “And behold, he shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10); “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” (1 Nephi 11:9); “Wherefore the wicked are separated from the righteous and also from that tree of life, whose fruit is most precious and most desirable of all other fruits; yea, and it is the greatest of all the gifts of God. And thus I spake unto my brethren. Amen” (1 Nephi 15:36). See also Alma 32:42.

tree of life, he sees Mary associated with the “love of God” and thus also to “the fountain of living waters” (1 Nephi 11:25), opposite the fountain of filthy water (1 Nephi 12:16; cf. the “tree of life” opposite “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”).¹⁰ Mormon states that he was named after “the land of Mormon” (3 Nephi 5:12), first mentioned in Mosiah 18, with its “waters,” which are initially described as a “fountain” (“Now there was in Mormon a fountain of pure water,” Mosiah 18:5).¹¹ The “desires” and “love” of Alma’s converts as manifest at and after the time of their baptism in the waters of Mormon not only provide a basis for Mormon’s “re-motivation” of this name, but have important implications for the baptismal scene in 3 Nephi 19. I will further attempt to show how Mormon’s depiction of the baptismal scene in 3 Nephi 19 deliberately recalls the baptismal scene in Mosiah 18 and later baptismal scenes pertaining to the church founded by Alma the Elder.

Moreover, I argue that Mormon’s fountain analogy (“For behold, a bitter fountain cannot bring forth good water, neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water,” Moroni 7:11) should be understood in the context of the foregoing. Mormon points out that the love of God proceeds from the “good fountain” — i.e., “every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good and to *love God* and to serve him is inspired of God” (Moroni 7:13). This is necessary to understanding Mormon’s discussion of charity, wherein he plays on his own name multiple times. The Nephites perish as a people and as a society because they become like the “bitter” fountain, of which Mormon spoke.

10. Cf. 2 Nephi 2:15: “It must needs be that there was an opposition, even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life, the one being sweet and the other bitter.”

11. Cf. the echoes of the scene in Mosiah 18 when Mormon describes the “very beautiful and pleasant land, a land of pure water” in which Alma the Elder settled his people after being forced to flee from the land of Mormon (Mosiah 23:4). There may be further echoes of the name “Mormon” and the “waters of Mormon” when he later writes, regarding Alma, “And the people were *desirous* that Alma should be their king, for he was *beloved* by his people” (Mosiah 23:6). In response, Alma recounts their having been “oppressed by king Noah” and their “bondage to him” and his priests, including the bondage of “iniquity” — “the bonds of iniquity” — bitter experiences in the Egypt-like bondage of sin (Mosiah 23:7-14). He then reminds them that “every man should *love* his neighbor as himself, that there should be no contention among them” (Mosiah 23:15), just as “their hearts [had been] knit together in unity and in *love* one towards another” at the waters of Mormon (Mosiah 18:21).

The Phoneme *mr-* in Hebrew and Egyptian

In Egyptian and Hebrew, the phoneme *mr-* had a variety of connotations and associations, some of them interrelated. Some of them related to how Nephi and his successors understood *mr*-names and waters and fountains they associated with the salvation history of Israel in general and those associated with baptism in particular.

In Hebrew, as in Semitic languages generally,¹² the phoneme *mr-* in the verbal roots *mry/mrh* and *mrr* acquired pejorative associations, emerging from the idea of "bitter" or "bitterness." For example, *mōrâ/mōrat*, "bitterness, sorrow,"¹³ *mārâ*, "to rebel" or "to be recalcitrant, rebellious."¹⁴ Ugaritic attests a *mrr* root "to strengthen," "to bless."¹⁵ However, whether this root ultimately derives from the Semitic root **mrr*, "bitter," or represents an originally independent root **mrr*, "to be strong," remains a matter of debate.¹⁶

Gábor Takács notes that "Eg[yp]tian] *mr* has been compared (often together with Sem[itic] **mr̥* or Ar[abic] *mrh*) [and] also with Semitic **mrr* 'to be bitter,' ... e.g., Hebrew *mrr qal* '1. to be bitter, 2. desperate, bewildered,' *hifil* 'to cause bitterness, grief, embitter.'"¹⁷ But, he notes, "the semantic connection of 'ill' and 'bitter' is not evident"¹⁸ from a comparison of root attestations and uses. Murtonen, too, suggests that "Eg /*mr*/ *be ill*; *painful* (*etc.*) does not seem to contain a connotation of bitterness."¹⁹ Nevertheless, as Dennis Pardee suggests, "From a Hamito-Semitic perspective, a root possibly related to Semitic *mr(r)* 'bitter' came to be the general term in Egyptian for 'pain' and 'illness.'"²⁰ Perhaps, too, it is significant that the early Egyptians drew a cognitive association between the lexeme *mr-* and the "hoe" or "harrow" (see

12. See A. Murtonen, *Hebrew in Its West Semitic Setting, Part One: A Comparative Lexicon* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 1989), 264.

13. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2001), 633. Hereafter cited as HALOT. See, e.g., Genesis 26:35.

14. HALOT, 632-33; see, e.g., Numbers 20:10; 1 Samuel 12:15; Isaiah 1:20; 50:5; 63:10.

15. Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition, Part L-Z*. 3rd rev. ed, trans. and ed. Wilfred G.E. Watson (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2015), 569-70.

16. Gábor Takács, *Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian*, Volume 3: M- (Leiden, NDL: Brill, 2008), 365.

17. *Ibid.*, 3:364.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Murtonen, *Hebrew in Its West Semitic Setting*, 1:264.

20. Dennis Pardee, "Mārīm in Numbers V," *Vetus Testamentum* 35, no. 1 (1985): 112.

further below). None of this precludes the possibility of interlingual wordplay involving Semitic *mr*- and Egyptian *mr*- (“love”; “sick,” “painful”) and the Hebrew homonym *mr(r)*, “bitter.”

Antonio Loprieno observes that in Egyptian “a most frequent pun in love poetry revolves ... around the concept of ‘love.’”²¹ As noted above, this idea is most frequently expressed in the verbal root *mr(i)*. Loprieno further notes that “the same sequence of consonants *mr(j)* is common to a variety of words that often appear, especially in love poetry, in paronomastic association with the concept of ‘love’: the ‘sickness’ (*mr*) caused by love.”²² Egyptian *mr(i)* (“love,” “desire”) and its derivations were written with a “hoe” hieroglyph. In Akkadian, the lexeme *marru* denoted a “shovel, spade” (cf. a “hoe”) as well as “bitter.”²³ Similarly, morphologically identical verb forms of *marāru(m)* denoted “to be(come) bitter”; “be heavy, bitter; prevail” and “to break up (by digging)”²⁴ — i.e., “harrow up.” Egyptian **mr* thus appears to derive somehow from Proto-Semitic **marr-*, though how it comes into Egyptian remains a matter of debate.²⁵ Though the evidence remains far from conclusive, it is interesting to consider the apparent cognitive link between the “hoe”²⁶ (cf. “harrow”) — which as a determinative emphasized the idea of “cultivate, hack up” in the verbs ‘*d*, “hack up” and *ḥbs* “cultivate,” “hoe”²⁷ — and the phoneme *mr* in some Egyptian *mr*-terms.

Alma links the idea of “harrowing” and “desire” or “wish” (cf. Egyptian verb *mr[i]*,²⁸ noun *mrw.t*)²⁹ in his famous lament:

21. Antonio Loprieno, “Puns and Word Play in Ancient Egyptian” in *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Scott B. Noegel (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2000), 17.

22. Ibid.

23. Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicolas Postgate, *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* (Wiesbaden, DEU: Harrassowitz, 2000), 198.

24. Ibid.

25. See Takács, *Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian*, 3:377.

26. Alan Gardiner, “List of Hieroglyphic Signs,” in *Egyptian Grammar*, 3rd rev. ed. (Oxford, UK: Griffith Institute, 1957), 516, U6.

27. Ibid.

28. See, e.g., Friedrich Junge (*Late Egyptian Grammar: An Introduction*, tr. David Wharburton [Oxford, UK: Griffith Institute, 2005], 335), who glosses *mr(i)* as “to love, cherish, adore, covet, demand someone or something; to wish or want something; to wish, want, desire something for one’s self (with proposition n and reflexive pronouns); desire, choose.”

29. Junge (ibid.) glosses *mrw.t* as “love, ... wish, desire; choice, selection [in the sense of loving hierarchically from ‘above’], Late Egyptian *t3 mrw.t*.”

O that I were an angel and could have *the wish* of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance unto every people! Yea, I would declare unto every soul as with the voice of thunder repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might be no more sorrow upon all the face of the earth. But behold, I am a man and do sin in *my wish*, for I had ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me. *I had ought not to harrow up in my desires* the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to *their desires*, whether it be unto death or unto life. Yea, I know that he allotteth unto men, yea, decreeth unto them decrees which are unalterable according to their wills, whether it be unto salvation or unto destruction. Yea, and I know that good and evil hath come before all men [cf. the tree of life vis-à-vis the tree of knowledge of good and evil] — or he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless — but he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his *desires*, whether *he desireth* good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience. Now seeing that I know these things, *why should I desire* more than to perform the work to which I have been called? *Why should I desire* that I was an angel that I could speak unto all the ends of the earth? (Alma 29:1-7)

In describing the process of his spiritual rebirth, Alma the Younger repeatedly describes himself as having been “harrowed up” by his sins (Alma 36:12, 17, 19) and “in the gall of bitterness” (Alma 36:18), and he avers that “there can be nothing so exquisite and so *bitter* as was *my pains*” (Alma 36:21); “And it came to pass that I was three days and three nights in the *most bitter pain* and anguish of soul. And never until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy did I receive a remission of my sins” (Alma 38:8). Thus, Alma the Younger connects the “harrowing” of the soul with “desires”/“wishes,” “pain,” and “bitterness” that encompasses the prevalent sense of *mr-* in both Egyptian and Hebrew, languages of which Alma evidently had a working knowledge in the tradition of sacred Nephite record-keeping.³⁰

30. Cf., e.g., Moroni 9:32-33.

Mormon, Miriam, and Songs of Redeeming Love

Donald W. Parry cites Mormon's description of the land, waters, and forest of Mormon as an example of deliberate epistrophe, or "like sentence endings."³¹ This structural repetition contributes to the hymnodic quality of this verse:

And now it came to pass that all this was done in *Mormon*,
yea, by the waters of *Mormon*,
in the forest that was near the waters of *Mormon*;

yea, the place of *Mormon*,
the waters of *Mormon*,
the forest of *Mormon*.³²

How beautiful are they to the eyes of them
who there *came to the knowledge of their Redeemer!*
yea, and how blessed are they,
for they shall *sing to his praise forever*. (Mosiah 18:30)³³

At no other point in the Book of Mormon is a toponym given so much immediate, direct, and poetic emphasis. A key point in the last part of this text is that the converts at the waters of Mormon "shall sing to [the] praise" of "their Redeemer." The future tense of the verb "they shall sing" strongly suggests that this text may not originate with Mormon at all, but perhaps with Alma the Elder or his converts.

In fact, the image of Alma the Elder's converts "sing[ing] to [the] praise" of "their Redeemer" at the waters of "Mormon" appears to constitute the basis for Alma the Younger's later use of an expression rendered: "sing redeeming love" or "sing the song of redeeming love": "And again I ask: Was the bands of death broken? And the chains of hell which encircled them about, were they loosed? I say unto you, Yea, they were loosed. And their souls did expand, and *they did sing redeeming love*. And I say unto you that they are saved" (Alma 5:9); "And now behold, I say unto you my brethren: If ye have experienced a change of heart and if ye have felt to *sing the song of redeeming love*, I would ask: Can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26). The name "Mormon" ("love")/"desire

31. Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2007), 198. See also his explanation of *epistrophe* on p. xl.

32. I have altered Parry's formatting slightly with the additional indentation of three lines.

33. The second half follows the formatting of Skousen (*Earliest Text*, 243).

is enduring") and Alma the Elder's people's experiences at the waters of Mormon are echoed in the word translated "love."

In this speech to the people of Zarahemla, Alma the Younger had immediate reference to the respective captivity and redemption stories³⁴ of Alma the Elder's people (see Alma 5:6)³⁵ and Limhi's people, although he probably had broader reference to earlier acts of divine deliverance in Israelite³⁶ and Lehite history. Some of the people in Zarahemla had belonged to Alma the Elder's and Limhi's former peoples, including perhaps Alma the Younger himself when he was very young. These redemption stories are rife with imagery from Israel's exodus from Egypt. For example, Mormon records that Amulon "exercised authority over them and put tasks upon them and put *taskmasters* over them. And now it came to pass that so great were *their afflictions* that they began to *cry mightily to God*" (Mosiah 24:9-10; cf. 21:14). Mormon's use of a term rendered "taskmasters" recalls the "taskmasters" of Exodus 1:11 (*šārē missîm*); 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13-14 (*nōgěšîm*).³⁷ Mormon's allusion to Exodus 3:7 is particularly relevant, given that both narrators mention the "cry" that came to God because of the "taskmasters": "I have surely seen *the affliction* [*'onî*] of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their *cry* by reason of their *taskmasters*; for I know their sorrows" (Exodus 3:7).³⁸

The exodus narrative emphasizes the "bitterness" of life in bondage. "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: and *they made their lives bitter* [*waymārěrû*] with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour" (Exodus 1:13-14). The Egyptians' "making [the Israelites'] lives bitter" becomes the basis for the consumption of bitter herbs in the perennial commemoration of the Passover: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs [*měrōrîm*] they shall eat it" (Exodus 12:8; cf. Numbers 9:11). What the "bitter herbs" represented in terms of the Israelites' "bitter" lives in physical bondage at the hands of the Egyptians (the antetype of the bondage that some Nephites experienced

34. Mormon tells the captivity and redemption story of Limhi's people in Mosiah 19-22 and that of Alma the Elder's people in Mosiah 23-24.

35. See also, e.g., Mosiah 27:16; Alma 36:2.

36. See especially Alma 36:28-29; see also 1 Nephi 4:2.

37. Cf. Matthew L. Bowen, "'This Son Shall Comfort Us': An Onomastic Tale of Two Noahs," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 23 (2017): 292.

38. See also Exodus 2:23: "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage" (Exodus 2:23).

at the hands of Amulon and the Lamanites), Alma the Younger tasted or experienced in terms of “harrowing” and “bitter” spiritual bondage (Alma 36:12, 17-19, 21; 38:8).

Isaiah 63:9 offers a poetic and prophetic reflection on Israel’s bondage and Yahweh’s redeeming them therefrom: “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his *love* and in his pity he *redeemed them* [*gě’ālām*].” When Alma the Younger uses collocations translated “sing redeeming love” (Alma 5:9; cf. also Ammon’s use of it in 26:13) and “the song of redeeming love” (Alma 5:26), he expresses the same truth that Isaiah 63:9 conveys.

The exodus narrative contains two “song[s] of redeeming love,” the Song of the Sea (Exodus 15:1–19) and the Song of Miriam (Exodus 15:20–22). The Song of the Sea preserves Moses’s declaration “I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider *hath he thrown* [*rāmâ*] into the sea [*bayyām*]” (Exodus 15:1). Later in the song, the phrase alluded to in Isaiah 63 (“in his love and in his pity he redeemed them”) occurs: “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which *thou hast redeemed* [*gā’altā*]: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.” Within the arrangement of the text, the verb *rāmâ* (“throw,” “cast”) and the prepositional phrase *bayyām* (“into the sea”) anticipate the name Miriam (Mariam > Mary) and the wordplay on that name in the subsequent Song of Miriam:

And *Miriam* [*miryām*] the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels, and with dances. And *Miriam* [*miryām*] answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider *hath he thrown* [*rāmâ*] *into the sea* [*bayyām*]. So Moses brought Israel *from the Re[e]d Sea* [*miyyam sūp*]. (Exodus 15:20-22)

The exodus narrative earlier associates Miriam, Moses’s sister, with the scene in which Moses’s name is etiologically tied to his being “drawn” from the water by Pharaoh’s daughter (Exodus 2:10), after his mother placed him amidst “the reeds” (*hassūp*) where Pharaoh’s daughter found him (Exodus 2:3, 5). In Exodus 15:20–22 the narrator ties the name Miriam (*miryām*) to the “Reed Sea” (*bayyām/miyyam*) from which Moses brings Israel as the Lord’s “drawer” or “puller”: “Then they remembered the ancient days, Him, who pulled [*mōšeh*] His people out [of the water]: “Where is He who brought them up from the Sea” (Isaiah 63:11, NJPS). The apostle Paul recognized how the exodus event correlates with the symbolism of baptism: “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should

be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

The Marah Etiology: The Bitter and the Sweet Water

As Moshe Garsiel notes,³⁹ the wordplay on Miriam continues in the subsequent verses with a paronomastic etiology for Marah, which "set[s] up an associative link"⁴⁰ between this text and the foregoing songs:

So Moses brought Israel *from the Red sea* [*miyyam sûp*], and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water [*mayim*]. And when they came to *Marah* [*mārâtâ*], they could not drink of *the waters* [*mayim*] of [from] *Marah* [*mimmārâ*], for they were *bitter* [*mārîm hēm*] therefore the name of it was called *Marah* [*mārâ*]. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into *the waters* [*hammayim*], *the waters* [*hammayim*] were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them. (Exodus 15:22–25)

Regarding the wordplay evident in this passage, Garsiel writes: "In the first unit we hear the [midrashic name derivation] of *mrym/rmh b-ym* . . . and in the second unit, *mrth/mym m-mrh/mrym hm*. The sound resemblance binds the two units together and tightens the continuity of the text."⁴¹

Phillip D. King writes, "The adjective [*mārîm*] describing Marah's undrinkable water suggests a more general taste evaluation as bad."⁴² This passage, together with the example of the bitter water ordeal in Numbers 5:18–19, 23–27, "suggest[s] that Hebrew has a general system that merges taste and evaluation, so the word for something tasting 'bitter' also describes substances that are 'bad' or 'harmful.'"⁴³ This has important implications for the nature of the "bitter fountain" described by Mormon

39. Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan, ISR: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 230–31.

40. *Ibid.*, 230.

41. *Ibid.*, 231.

42. Phillip D. King, *Surrounded by Bitterness: Image Schemas and Metaphors for Conceptualizing Distress in Classical Hebrew* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 328.

43. *Ibid.* Cf. Revelation 8:11.

in Moroni 7:11 and its conceptual relationship to “the fountain of filthy water” described by Nephi’s angelic guide in 1 Nephi 12:16.

The idea of “bitterness” in opposition to the “sweet” finds expression here in Exodus 15 as well as in Naomi’s self-renaming in Ruth 1:8: “Call me not Naomi [pleasant, sweet; cognate with Egyptian *nḏm*], call me *Mara* [*mārā*] for the Almighty *hath dealt very bitterly* [*hēmar*] with me.” Lehi will describe the “tree of life” in opposition to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “the one being sweet and the other bitter” (2 Nephi 2:15).

“The Fountain of All Righteousness”: The “Fountain of Living Waters” as “the Love of God”

Nephi beholds that that both the “tree of life” and the “fountain of living waters” constitute representations of the “love of God”:

And it came to pass that I beheld that the *rod of iron* which my father had seen was the *word of God*, which 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*. (1 Nephi 11:25)

As I have suggested elsewhere,⁴⁴ the “rod” as a “word” constitutes a wordplay that turns on the polysemy of the Egyptian lexeme *mdw* (“staff, rod”⁴⁵; “word”; “speak”⁴⁶), which is homophonous with Hebrew *maṭṭeh* (“rod”). As for the collocation, “fountain of living waters,” Nephi appears to have borrowed it from the early prophecies of Jeremiah that he possessed on the plates of brass.⁴⁷

Jeremiah’s prophecies use the “fountain of living waters” collocation twice. In the first, the Lord metaphorically identifies himself as the *mēqôr mayim ḥayyîm*: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the *fountain of living waters* [*mēqôr mayim ḥayyîm*], and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water [*hammāyîm*]” (Jeremiah 2:13). Jeremiah describes Israel-Judah’s apostasy and abandonment of Yahweh as the substitution of a sure

44. Matthew L. Bowen, “What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?” *Insights* 25, no. 2 (2005): 2-3.

45. Raymond O. Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford, UK: Griffith Institute/Ashmolean Museum, 1999), 122.

46. *Ibid.* All *mdw*-derived Egyptian words were originally written with the “walking stick”/“staff” (i.e., “rod”) hieroglyph (see Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 510). Thus “word” in its earliest Egyptian conception was literally identified with a “rod.”

47. See especially 1 Nephi 5:13; Helaman 8:20. Nephi quotes or paraphrases Jeremiah 17:5 in 2 Nephi 4:34; 28:31.

source of good water, *mēqôr mayim ḥayyîm*, for a useless source: broken *bō`rôt* or *bō`rôt* (“cisterns,” “wells”). The second instance appears to be Jeremiah’s reflection upon the earlier oracle: “O Lord, *the hope of Israel* [*miqwê yîsrā`ēl*] all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken *the fountain of living waters* [*mēqôr mayim-ḥayyîm*]” (Jeremiah 17:13). Jeremiah’s use of *miqwê* in this context constitutes a double entendre and a play on the title “fountain of living waters”: *miqwê* (“hope,” or literally, an “awaiting”)⁴⁸ can also denote a “pool” or collection/awaiting of waters used in ablutions including ritual immersions (cf. also Hebrew *miqwâ*).⁴⁹

Similar images recur elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible in reference to Yahweh or his law: “For with thee is *the fountain of life* [*mēqôr ḥayyîm*]: in thy light shall we see light” (Psalms 36:9); “The law of the wise is a *fountain of life* [*mēqôr ḥayyîm*], to depart from the snares of death” (Proverbs 13:14); “The fear of the Lord is a *fountain of life* [*mēqôr ḥayyîm*], to depart from the snares of death” (Proverbs 14:27).⁵⁰

Against this scriptural and cultural backdrop, we consider Lehi’s prophetic use of a fountain as a metaphor for Yahweh in the earliest pages of the Book of Mormon. Nephi records that Lehi used the first major perennial water source (i.e., an *’êtân* [source of the name Ethan]) that the family encountered on their journey along the Arabian coastline as a metaphor for the Lord and being faithful to the Lord: “And when my father saw that *the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea*, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that thou mightest be like unto this river, *continually running into the fountain of all righteousness*” (1 Nephi 2:9; cf. Amos 5:24: “But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream [*naḥal ’êtân*, i.e., a continual stream or perennial stream]”).⁵¹

This further helps our understanding of Lehi’s description of the “fountain” within his tree-of-life dream: “And I also beheld a strait and

48. See also, e.g., Genesis 1:10; Exodus 7:19; Leviticus 11:36.

49. Cf. Matthew L. Bowen, “Not Leaving and Going On to Perfection” (*A Review of Samuel M. Brown’s First Principles and Ordinances: The Fourth Article of Faith in Light of the Temple* [Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2014]) *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 16 (2015): 135–36.

50. Cf. the poet’s lover or “bride” in the Song of Songs being described as: “A fountain [spring, *ma’yan*] of gardens, a well of living waters [*bē’ēr mayim ḥayyîm*], and streams from Lebanon” (Song 4:15).

51. 1 Kings 8:2 describes the “seventh month” as the month of Ethanîm (*hā`ētānîm*), the month through which the perennial streams continue to run rather than dry up.

narrow path which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood. And *it also led by the head of the fountain* unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world” (1 Nephi 8:20). Regarding this fountain and its head, David Calabro has noted additional details from Nephi’s vision:

It seems as if there are two fountains in Nephi’s vision, not just one. Nephi describes one of the fountains as if it were either very near the tree or perhaps even emanating from it, for he writes that the rod of iron led to this fountain, “or,” he says, “to the tree of life.” This fountain Nephi calls “the fountain of living waters, . . . which waters are a representation of the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). The second fountain is mentioned later by Nephi’s angelic guide: “Behold the fountain of filthy water which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell” (1 Nephi 12:16).⁵²

It seems probable, then, that the “head of the fountain [perhaps Hebrew *rōš hammāqôr]” mentioned by Lehi in 1 Nephi 8:20 is to be identified with the “the fountain of living waters [mēqôr mayim hayyîm]” mentioned by Nephi in 1 Nephi 11:25, the description of Yahweh that Nephi borrowed from Jeremiah (Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13), as noted above. In fact, Nephi appears to subtly allude to Jeremiah’s wordplay on *miqwê* and *mēqôr* — “hope of Israel”/“(ritual) pool of Israel” (*miqwê yiśrā’ēl*)⁵³ and “fountain of living waters” (*mēqôr mayim-hayyîm*) — when he urges: “Wherefore ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of *hope* [*miqwê* or *tiqwâ*] and a *love of God* [= “the fountain of living waters,” 1 Nephi 11:25; cf. 1 Nephi 11:22] and of all men; wherefore if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, ye shall have *eternal life* [*hayyê ‘ôlām*]⁵⁴” (2 Nephi 31:20; cf. *wāhay lē’ôlām* in Genesis 3:22). Adding to the force of the Nephi’s allusion to *miqwê* and *māqôr* from Jeremiah 17:13, as noted above, is the polysemy of *miqwê* as both “hope” and a “gathering together” of waters — i.e., perhaps not just a “collecting” but an “awaiting” or “accumulation” of waters

52. David Calabro, “Lehi’s Dream and the Garden of Eden,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 26 (2017): 270.

53. Jeremiah also uses the epithet “hope of Israel” in Jeremiah 14:8. Its attributed use by Paul in Acts 28:10 constitutes an allusion to its use in Jeremiah 14:8 and 17:13.

54. Daniel 12:2.

(assuming one *qwy/qwh* Hebrew root, rather than two).⁵⁵ Potential for similar wordplay exists here in Nephi's imagery too, given the evident connection between "press[ing] forward," the "word of Christ" and the "word of God"/"rod of iron" from Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision.⁵⁶

In the context of Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision, the promise of the Father of eternal life ("thus saith the Father: ye shall have eternal life") belongs to those who come to "the fountain of living waters" and remain "at the tree of life" while *continuing* to partake of the fruit (see 1 Nephi 8:33). The symbolic value of "the fountain of living waters" as a "representation of the love of God" and ultimately of Yahweh himself is perhaps best articulated by Jesus to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's "well" or "fountain" (*pēgē tou Iakōb*)⁵⁷ in Sychar: "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

The foregoing prepares us to appreciate two statements that Moroni makes in his abridged book of Ether. The first constitutes a statement of purpose for this abridgment: "Wherefore I Moroni am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto *the fountain of all righteousness* and be saved" (Ether 8:26). The second is even more lucid, and almost constitutes a reiteration of 2 Nephi 31:20: "Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness. And I will show unto them that faith, hope, and charity bringeth unto me, the fountain of all righteousness" (Ether 12:28).

55. HALOT (p. 1082) suggests that *qwy/qwh* as attested in Genesis 1:9 "probably represents a different root from" the *qwy/qwh* root rendered "await, hope," "wait." The evidence for this, however, remains scant. As a separate *qwy/qwh* (II) root, it would only be attested in the Niphal stem (and only in Genesis 1:9 and Jeremiah 3:17, while the *qwy/qwh* (I) root is otherwise missing a Niphal stem.

56. On the evident connections between Nephi's teaching of the doctrine of Christ, Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision, and 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), ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2011), 161–78.

57. John 4:5–6.

“Behold the Fountain of Filthy Water”!

As noted above, Lehi explained, regarding the two trees in the Garden of Eden, “it must needs be that there was an opposition, even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life, the one being *sweet* and the other *bitter*” (2 Nephi 2:15). Just as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil functioned “in opposition” to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, the second fountain — “the fountain of filthy water” — functioned “in opposition” to the “fountain of living waters.” Notably, the sweet/bitter binary that Lehi applies to the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil works for describing fountains, as we saw regarding the waters of Marah in Exodus 15:23-25.

The angelic guide in Nephi’s vision explains the symbolism of the “fountain of filthy water” to him thus: “And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold *the fountain* [Hebrew *mēqôr*] *of filthy water* which thy father saw, yea, even *the river* of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell” (1 Nephi 12:16; see further below).⁵⁸ The “fountain of filthy water” constitutes a representation of the devil and his “awful misery”⁵⁹ as evident in experiences such as Moses’s temptation: “And it came to pass that Moses began to fear exceedingly; and as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell” (Moses 1:20; cf. Psalms 18:4-5: “The sorrows [cords] of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows [cords] of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented [confronted] me”). Being subjected to temptation in mortality, human beings learn to distinguish good and evil by their own experience: “they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good” (Moses 6:55).

58. The only other scriptural attestation of the phrase “depths of hell” occurs in Proverbs 9:18 (“in the depths of hell” [*bē’imqê šē’ôl*]). Nephi’s use of that expression appears to represent a similar collocation.

59. 2 Nephi 9:46. Jacob there alludes to his own father Lehi’s descriptions of Satan’s misery. Stated Lehi, “And because that he had fallen from heaven and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind; wherefore he saith unto Eve — yea, even that old serpent who is the devil, which is the father of all lies — wherefore he saith: Partake of the forbidden fruit and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil” (2 Nephi 2:18); “Wherefore men are free according to the flesh, and all things are given them which is expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death according to the captivity and power of the devil, for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). Cf. also Mormon 9:4.

Latter-day Saint scholars have made numerous comparisons between Lehi's family's journey through the wilderness and crossing of the "great deep" to ancient Israel's exodus through the Re(e)d Sea and subsequent journey in the wilderness. Lehi's family would have encountered good freshwater sources, as when they found the river Laman (see Nephi 2:8-9), but also bitter, brackish, or less-than-fresh water sources resembling the waters of Marah (as described in Exodus 15) or "the fountain of filthy water" in Lehi's and Nephi's visions. These may have included "large pools of standing water, which remain for months after rare rainfall" in the Arabian wilderness.⁶⁰

"A Fountain Opened": The Evidence of *Merneptah*

The Hebrew Bible offers us the evidence of an Egyptian *mr-* name attached to a "fountain" in the context of ritual purification and the natural literary treatment or exploitation of that name. This evidence, then, has potential implications for the name Mormon as attached to the "fountain" where Alma the Elder performed ritual purifications — i.e., baptized his people — and how that name is understood and treated by Mormon himself (see Mosiah 18 and below).

The pharaonic Egyptian name Merneptah ("beloved of Ptah") came to be associated with a water source northwest of Jerusalem. Moshe Garsiel notes that "this is usually identified as the Lifta spring, and some scholars think that the name was originally Egyptian, *my nptwh* being Merneptah (מרנפתח), the name of a Pharaoh."⁶¹ This water source may be the same as the "Wells of Merneptah" mentioned in Papyrus Anastasi III.⁶²

The book of Joshua mentions this water source twice: "And the border was drawn from the top of the hill unto *the fountain* [spring or well, *ma'yan*] of the *water* [*mê*, consonantal *my*] of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of mount Ephron; and the border was drawn to Baalah, which is Kirjath-jearim" (Joshua 15:9); "And the south quarter was from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to *the well* [*ma'yan*] of waters [*mê*, consonantal *my*] of Nephtoah" (Joshua 18:15). The writer of the Joshua texts clearly calques the Egyptian term *mr* ("beloved") as the Hebrew term *mê* ("waters"), which sounded similar.

60. Warren P. Aston, "Across Arabia with Lehi and Sariah: 'Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth,'" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006): 13.

61. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 150.

62. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with supplement (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 258.

Garsiel further points out that the post-exilic prophet Zechariah alludes directly to this name in one of his oracles: “In that day *there shall be a fountain [māqôr] opened [niptah]* to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1). Perhaps most significantly, Zechariah prophesied that that this fountain (*māqôr*) — like the waters of Mormon — would be used as the site of ritual purifications. Garsiel notes evident interlingual wordplay on *mr(i)/māqôr* and *n-ptḥ* (“of Ptah”)/*niptah* (“opened”): “In referring to the ‘fountain’ to be opened’ up for ritual purification in Jerusalem as a *mqwr nptḥ*, the prophet [Zechariah] seems to be alluding to the *my nptwh* spring. Moreover, the [midrashic name derivation] comes close in sound to the presumed Egyptian original (compare מקור נפתח, with מרנפתח).”⁶³ The interlingual wordplay on the divine name Ptah in terms of opened is striking. Perhaps more significantly, however, the Hebrew word *māqôr* (“fountain”) plays on the Egyptian word *mr*, “love.” Although after Lehi and Nephi’s time, Zechariah’s interlingual paronomasia helps us see why Nephi, who knew both Hebrew and Egyptian, saw the “fountain of living waters” as a “representation of the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:25). It also helps us understand in part why the “fountain of pure water” in the land of Mormon became such an emotive symbol for the Nephites during Alma the Elder’s time until the final years of their society.

“Now There Was in Mormon a Fountain of Pure Water”: Righteous “Desires” and the “Love” of God

The name Mormon enters the Book of Mormon text thus: “And it came to pass that as many as did believe [Alma] did go forth to a place which was called Mormon, having received its name from the king, being in the borders of the land, having been infested by times or at seasons by wild beasts” (Mosiah 18:4). Pending any substantive additional evidence, we must conclude that the king who named this place was king Noah. Mormon then notes that the place “Mormon” was particularly connected with a “fountain”: “Now there was in *Mormon* a fountain [Hebrew construct *mēqôr*] of pure water; and Alma resorted thither, there being near the water a thicket of small trees where he did hide himself in the daytime from the searches of the king” (Mosiah 18:5).

Beginning here, Mormon repeatedly describes Alma the Elder and his community as using this “fountain” and its waters for ritual purification. Mormon uses Alma’s baptismal covenant speech to

63. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 150.

connect "the waters of Mormon" with the righteous "desires" of those who entered into a covenant with God in those waters:

And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here is *the waters of Mormon*, for thus were they called. And now as ye are *desirous* to come into the fold of God and to be called his people and are *willing* to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light, yea, and are *willing* to mourn with those that mourn, yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, *that ye may have eternal life* — now I say unto you, if this be *the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord*, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, *that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?* And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy and exclaimed: *This is the desire of our hearts!* (Mosiah 18:8-11)

Mormon's inclusion of this speech functionally sets a correspondence between "the waters of Mormon" as a "fountain [cf. *mēqôr*] of pure water" and "the pure love of Christ ... [that] endureth forever" (Moroni 7:47). Together with the cultural memory of the waters in Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision of the tree of life, the historical memory of the "waters of Mormon" as a "fountain of pure water" provides the conceptual backdrop to Moroni 7:11: "For behold, a bitter fountain [cf. Hebrew **māqôr mar*] cannot bring forth good water; neither can a good fountain bring forth bitter water" (see further below).

In his later description of Alma the Elder's church and community in the land of Mormon, Mormon (the editor) offers two statements that show how the "desires" of those baptized into the community in the "fountain of pure water" or "waters of Mormon" were reflected in communal life. Both appear to reflect the meaning of the name Mormon — "love/desire is enduring": "And [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*" (Mosiah 18:21); "And thus they should impart of their substance *of their own free will and good desires towards God* to those priests that stood in need, yea, and to every needy, naked soul" (Mosiah 18:28). In other words, the community's mutual

“love” and “good desires toward God” gave full expression to the idea latent in the name Mormon as applied to the “fountain of pure water” in which they were baptized, and the land in which they lived.

Mormon also uses “desire”/“desirous” as a leitmotif that plays on the name Mormon in the narratives that chronicle what befell Limhi’s people who were not at the waters of Mormon to enter the baptismal covenant at the time when Alma’s people entered that covenant:

And now since the coming of Ammon, king Limhi had also entered into a covenant with God, and also many of his people, to serve him and keep his commandments. And it came to pass that king Limhi and many of his people *were desirous to be baptized*, but there was none in the land that had authority from God. And Ammon declined doing this thing, considering himself an unworthy servant. Therefore they did not at that time form themselves into a church, waiting upon the Spirit of the Lord. Now *they were desirous to become even as Alma and his brethren*, which had fled into the wilderness. *They were desirous to be baptized* as a witness and a testimony that they were *willing* to serve God with all their hearts. Nevertheless they did prolong the time; and an account of their baptism shall be given hereafter. (Mosiah 21:32-35)

Mormon’s threefold use of the term *desirous* here in connection with the ordinance of baptism deliberately harks back to the covenant that Alma’s people had made at the waters of Mormon, where the term “desirous”/“desire” (cf. Egyptian *mr[i]*) also occurs three times (Mosiah 18:8-11). Moreover, it establishes “desire” in connection with baptism as an important leitmotif within this cycle of narratives. This recurrent repetition of “desirous”/“desire” is in the same spirit as Mormon’s hymnodic, six-fold repetition of his namesake in Mosiah 18:30: “all this was done in Mormon, yea, by the waters of Mormon, in the forest that was near the waters of Mormon, yea, the place of Mormon, the waters of Mormon, the forest of Mormon.”

Limhi’s and his people’s righteous “desire” but lack of baptism and covenant bonds (“they did not at that time form themselves into a church”) emphasize the importance of Alma’s divine authority⁶⁴ and the covenant that he and his people had entered into in the waters of Mormon. Their being “desirous to become even as Alma and his brethren” recalls the opening words of Alma’s covenant speech:

64. See also Mosiah 18:18; 23:16.

"Here are the waters of Mormon. ... And now as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God..." (Mosiah 18:8). When Mormon says that Limhi's people "were *desirous to be baptized as a witness* and a testimony that they *were willing* to serve God with all their hearts" (Mosiah 21:35) he resorts to the language of Alma's covenant speech: "[as ye] *are willing* to mourn with those that mourn, yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as *witnesses of God* at all times and in all things and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, ... now I say unto you if this be *the desire of your hearts*, what have you against being *baptized* in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will *serve him* and keep his commandments" (Mosiah 18:9-10). Mormon's immediate authorial and editorial aim is to highlight similarities between Alma's and Limhi's groups in spite of the lack divine authority among the latter. But Mormon also has in view the more distant horizon of Jesus's reestablishment of the church at Bountiful (see below).

In due course, Mormon delivers on his promise to give an account of the baptism of Limhi's people. In so doing, he reiterates the "desirous"/Mormon motif anew:

And it came to pass that after Alma had taught the people many things and had made an end of speaking to them that king *Limhi was desirous that he might be baptized*. And all his people were *desirous that they might be baptized also*. Therefore *Alma did go forth into the water and did baptize them; yea, he did baptize them after the manner he did his brethren in the waters of Mormon*. Yea, and as many as he did baptize did belong to the church of God — and this because of their belief on the words of Alma. And it came to pass that king Mosiah granted unto Alma that he might establish churches throughout all the land of Zarahemla; and gave him power to ordain priests and teachers over every church. (Mosiah 25:17-19)

Their previous "desires" (or "desirous[ness]") to be baptized and to become like Alma the Elder's people came to fruition. Their "desires" (or "desirous[ness]") continued to match that of Alma's people when they first entered the covenant and formed a church in the land of Mormon. Even though they did not receive baptism at the waters of Mormon, Mormon as editor invokes this name as a paronomastic symbol linking the experiences of Alma the Elder's and Limhi's peoples and the redeeming "love" that

rescued both groups, and the initial establishment of the church to which both groups and eventually many of the Nephites came to belong.

Mormon describes Alma the Younger's further establishment or reestablishment of the church a generation after his father's establishment of that church at the waters of Mormon. His description again echoes those events and the name Mormon: "And Alma established a church in the land of Sidom and consecrated priests and teachers in the land, to baptize unto the Lord whosoever were *desirous to be baptized*. And it came to pass that they were many, for they did flock in from all the region round about Sidom and were baptized" (Alma 15:13-14). Similarly, Mormon's allusive wordplay as a linking motif constitutes yet another testament of the important legacy of the name Mormon as a place name and the covenant-making events associated with the "fountain" there.

At the end of the abridged book of Helaman, Mormon makes another statement that recalls or echoes events associated with the waters of Mormon and their aftermath. Following Samuel the Lamanite's epic sermon to the recalcitrant Nephites of Zarahemla in which he called them to repentance and to live the doctrine of Christ, Mormon records: "And now it came to pass that there were many who heard the words of Samuel the Lamanite which he spake upon the walls of the city. And as many as believed on his word went forth and sought for Nephi. And when they had come forth and found him they confessed unto him their sins and denied not, *desiring that they might be baptized unto the Lord*" (Helaman 16:1). Notably, Mormon only describes the most believing, repentant, and responsive Nephites as "desiring" baptism.

"That Which They Most Desired":

The Waters of Baptism at the Temple in Bountiful

All of the foregoing prepares us to apprehend the significance of the baptismal scene in 3 Nephi 19 in which Mormon describes the baptism of the disciples that Jesus chose from among the Nephites and Lamanites at the temple in Bountiful. At that time, Jesus reorganized a church that Mormon indicates had nearly gone defunct in the years previous to the cataclysms that attended Jesus's death ("in the thirtieth year the church was broken up in all the land save it were among a few of the Lamanites which were converted unto the true faith; and they would not depart from it," 3 Nephi 6:14). At his appearance at the temple in Bountiful, Jesus began by adumbrating his doctrine (i.e., "the doctrine of Christ," see 3 Nephi 11:21-41). This post-resurrectional teaching included a sermon like the Sermon on the Mount as preserved in Matthew 5-7

(3 Nephi 12–14), and additional teaching that culminated in Jesus healing all the infirmities of the people then present (3 Nephi 17) as well as the first administration of the sacrament among them (3 Nephi 18). Mormon records that the next day, after ministering to an even larger assemblage of people, Jesus's disciples knelt in prayer to God the Father:

*And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them. And when they had thus prayed, they went down unto the water's edge, and the multitude followed them. And it came to pass that *Nephi* went down into the water and was baptized. And he came up out of the water and began to baptize, and he baptized all they whom Jesus had chosen. And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. And behold, they were encircled about as if it were fire; and it came down from heaven. And the multitude did witness it and do bear record. And angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them. (3 Nephi 19:9–14)*

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold, they did still continue without ceasing, to pray unto him. And they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray, and *they were filled with desire*. (3 Nephi 19:24)

Mormon's use of the phrases "that which they most desired" and "they desired that they Holy Ghost should be given unto them" distinctly recalls Nephi's language from his vision of the tree of life. Nephi there describes "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*" as represented by "the tree of life" and "the fountain of living waters" (1 Nephi 11:22, 25; cf. Romans 5:5), in direct connection with the baptism of the Son of God himself (see 1 Nephi 11:26–27).

Moreover, in the context of baptism, Mormon's language distinctly echoes that of Alma the Elder's baptismal speech: "Behold, *here are the waters of Mormon*. ... And now as *ye are desirous* to come into the fold of God and to be called his people, ... *if this be the desire of your hearts*, what have you against being *baptized in the name of the Lord*, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, *that he may pour out his Spirit*

more abundantly upon you?” (Mosiah 18:8-10). It also echoes the people’s response, “This is *the desire* of our hearts” (Mosiah 18:11).

The Holy Ghost, being “that which [the disciples] most desired” at the time that Jesus reorganized the remnants of the church first established by Alma, had important long-term practical effects for Lamanite and Nephite society for generations afterward. Mormon records, “And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land because of *the love of God* which did dwell in the hearts of the people” (4 Nephi 1:15; cf. again 1 Nephi 11:22, 25).⁶⁵

Mormon’s additional statement that as the twelve disciples prayed to Jesus when he was then present with them “they were filled with desire” affirms the link between “the love of God,” righteous “desire,” and the Holy Ghost. In particular, this statement recalls Mormon’s earlier description of Alma’s covenant community at the waters of Mormon as “filled with the grace of God” (Mosiah 18:16) and matches similar phraseology that he uses elsewhere — e.g., disciples being “filled with this love” (i.e., the pure love of Christ, Moroni 7:48) and he himself being “filled with charity” (Moroni 8:17).⁶⁶ It also corresponds to the disciples being “filled with the Holy Ghost” as mentioned in 3 Nephi 19:13 (cf. 3 Nephi 12:6; 26:17; 30:2).

“Bitter” Versus “the Love of God”: The “Bitter Fountain” Versus the “Good Fountain”

Unfortunately, “the love of God” does not continue to “dwell in the hearts of the people” as described in 4 Nephi 1:15-16. Old ethnoreligious distinctions emerge, including the traditional tribal divisions (see 4 Nephi 1:20, 36-38). These included the broad distinctions Nephites and Lamanites. The latter did not only “dwindle in unbelief and wickedness” (4 Nephi 1:34, 38) — a play on the term “Lamanites”⁶⁷ — but “did willfully

65. Cf. also the “tree whose fruit was desirable to make one happy” (1 Nephi 8:10; cf. Proverbs 3:13-18) and “the meaning of the tree” symbolizing “the love of God which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men” which is “the most desirable above all things” and “the most joyous to the soul” (1 Nephi 11:21-23) with Mormon’s description of the people in 4 Nephi 1:16: “and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people which had been created by the hand of God.” On the wordplay involving “happy” (*ašrê*) in 1 Nephi 8:10 and 1:21-23, see Daniel C. Peterson, “Nephi and his Asherah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 24.

66. Cf. also “filled with the love of God” or “filled with love” (Mosiah 4:12; Alma 38:12; cf. 2 Nephi 4:21).

67. Matthew L. Bowen, “Not Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw*: 240-63;

rebel against the gospel of Christ" (4 Nephi 1:38) and "were taught to hate the children of God, even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the beginning" (4 Nephi 1:39).

In the waning days of Nephite society in the 4th century CE, Mormon addressed those Nephites whom he described as "the peaceable followers of Christ" (thus called because of their "peaceable walk" with all "the children of men," Moroni 7:3-4). In other words, Mormon was addressing those who had not yet fully succumbed to traditional ethnoreligious enmity and hatred, but for whom the temptation to do so must have been a daily struggle. To these, Mormon issued a warning using familiar imagery: "For behold, a *bitter fountain* [cf. Hebrew *māqôr mār*] cannot bring forth *good water*, neither can a *good fountain* bring forth *bitter water*. Wherefore a man being a servant of the devil cannot follow Christ, and if he follow Christ he cannot be a servant of the devil" (Moroni 7:11).

Mormon's fountain analogy would have recalled for his Nephite audience the very familiar "fountain of pure water" in the land of Mormon, for which he was named and where Alma the Elder's church was first established. Elsewhere, he informs us: "I am called Mormon, being called after the land of Mormon, the land in which Alma did establish the church among this people, yea, the first church which was established among them after their transgression" (3 Nephi 5:12). The term *bitter* (Hebrew adj. *mār*, plural *mārîm*) recalls the bitter waters at Marah in Exodus 15. The "bitter fountain" vis-à-vis the "good fountain" would have further recalled the "fountain of living waters" in opposition to the "fountain of filthy" water familiar to them from Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision as one of their most important cultural narratives.⁶⁸ Mormon's use of "bitter" here appears to play on his own name in an antonymic, interlingual way involving the idea of "love" (e.g., *mr[i]*).

The Nephites at this stage of their history were becoming — or had already become — like the "bitter fountain" producing "bitter water" rather than producing "good" water like a "good fountain" — e.g., the "fountain of pure water" or the waters of Mormon, and Jesus Christ as the

Matthew L. Bowen, "The Faithfulness of Ammon," *Religious Educator* 15, no. 2 (2014): 65–89. See further Matthew L. 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>.

68. On Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision as a dominant cultural Nephite cultural narrative, see Daniel L. Belnap, "Even as Our Father Lehi Saw: Lehi's Dream as Nephite Cultural Narrative," in *The Things Which My Father Saw*: 214–39.

“fountain of living waters.” True “Nephites” were supposed to be “good.”⁶⁹ Collectively speaking, the Nephites were failing to do the “good” implied in the name Nephi⁷⁰ and its gentilec derivative Nephites and the “good” in what Nephi described as “the doctrine of Christ” (see 2 Nephi 33:4, 10, 14 in the context of 2 Nephi 31–32). Thus, Mormon seems to have calculated his use of the term “good fountain” as a play on or an allusion to the traditional Nephite self-perception that they were the “good” or “fair ones.”⁷¹

Mormon’s point was similar to that of James in the New Testament — the Nephites could not have it both ways: “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” (James 3:11). A fountain can do so no more than a “corrupt tree” can “bring forth good fruit” (Matthew 17:18; 3 Nephi 14:18). The Nephites had seen themselves as “that part of the tree [i.e., the olive tree of Israel] which brought forth good fruit” (Jacob 5:40, cf. v. 45), but seemingly forgot the fate of that branch, namely that “the branch had withered away and died” (Jacob 5:40, cf. v. 45). The Nephites themselves fulfilled that prophecy during Mormon’s time as they tried but failed to “take happiness in sin” (Mormon 2:13), an impossibility.⁷²

69. Matthew L. Bowen, “O Ye Fair Ones’: An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name Nephi,” *Insights* 23, no. 6 (2003): 2–3; Bowen: “O Ye Fair Ones’ — Revisited,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 20 (2016): 315–44.

70. Matthew L. Bowen, “Internal Textual Evidence for the Egyptian Origin of Nephi’s Name,” *Insights* 22, no. 11 (2002): 2; Matthew L. Bowen, “Nephi’s Good Inclusion,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 17 (2016): 181–95.

71. Bowen, “O Ye Fair Ones’ — Revisited,” 339–43.

72. In Mormon 2:13 (“because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin”), Mormon paraphrases Samuel the Lamanite, whose words hint at the Nephites’ ultimate fate: “But behold, your days of probation is past. Ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late and your destruction is made sure. Yea, for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain. And ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head” (Helaman 13:38). Indeed, the prophetic nature of Samuel’s statement appears to constitute one of the reasons Mormon quotes it, since Mormon takes a keen interest in demonstrating how Samuel the Lamanite’s prophecies come to fulfillment (see 3 Nephi 1:5–6, 9; 8:3; 23:9; Mormon 1:19; 2:10). Samuel the Lamanite, in turn, appears to quote or paraphrase Alma the Younger’s paraenesis to his third son, Corianton: “Do not suppose because that it has been spoken concerning restoration that ye shall be restored from sin to happiness. Behold, I say unto you: Wickedness never was happiness. And now, my son, all men that are in a state of nature — or I would say, in a carnal state — are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. They are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God. Therefore they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:10–11).

Mormon knew that resuscitating “the love of God” among his people was key to their temporal and spiritual survival. They were quickly “los[ing] their love, one towards another” (see especially Moroni 9:5 and below). Mormon reminded these Nephites how they remain “Nephite” in the only sense that really mattered, namely, doing “good” and remaining within the covenant: “But behold, *that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually. Wherefore, every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good and to love God and to serve him is inspired of God.*” (Moroni 7:13). In other words, the product of the Nephites collectively and individually as a “good fountain” should have been “good” deeds and a “love of God and all [humankind]” (2 Nephi 31:20). Perhaps it is appropriate that at this point in Mormon’s speech the meanings of the names Nephi and Mormon come together in the context of a fountain metaphor that takes us back to Nephi’s tree of life vision.

**“Charity Is the Pure Love of Christ and It Endureth Forever”:
Enduring to the End in Love**

Nephi’s identification of both “the tree of life” and “the fountain of living waters” as “the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:21-23, 25) has profound implications for his own discussion of “charity” near the end of his writings (2 Nephi 26). In his midrash of Isaiah 55:1-3, including the invitation “come ye to the waters,” Nephi describes the Lord as always acting on behalf of the human family out of love: “He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world, *for he loveth the world*, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him; wherefore he commandeth none that they shall not partake of his salvation. Behold, doth he cry unto any, saying: Depart from me! Behold, I say unto you: Nay. But he saith: *Come unto me* all ye ends of the earth; buy milk and honey without money and without price” (2 Nephi 26:24-25). Alma interprets the same Isaiah text in terms of Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s vision when he states: “Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall eat and drink of the bread and *the waters of life freely*” (Alma 5:34; cf. Alma 47:27).

Nephi’s statement and its connection to the “waters” in Isaiah 55:1-3 also find a strong echo in Moroni’s conversation with the Lord as recorded in Ether 12:33-34: “And again I remember that thou hast said that *thou hast loved the world, even unto the laying down of thy life for the world*, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the children of men. And now I know that *this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity*. Wherefore except men shall have charity,

they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father.” It is in this same conversation that the Lord explains, “I will shew unto [the gentiles] that faith, hope and *charity bringeth unto me, the fountain of all righteousness*” (Ether 12:28).

Nephi follows up the foregoing statement with what seems to constitute an expansion of Isaiah’s invitation “Come ye to the waters” (*lĕkû lammayim*, Isaiah 55:1) in the phrase “Come unto me all ye ends of the earth”⁷³ This expansion notably equates the Lord with the “waters” of which Isaiah speaks — i.e., the “fountain of living waters” of 1 Nephi 11. He then proceeds to quote more of Isaiah 55:1 (i.e., “buy milk and honey, without money and without price”).

After stating the Lord’s commandment against priestcrafts, Nephi declares: “wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is *love*. And except they should have charity they were nothing. (2 Nephi 26:30). Although undoubtedly Mormon’s quotation of the Hymn to Charity resembles Paul’s use of this text (both may reflect an older, earlier “hymn”),⁷⁴ it also depends on Nephi’s earlier description of charity as “love.”

And *charity* suffereth long and is kind and envieth not and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, *endureth* all things. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing; for charity never faileth. Wherefore cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all. For all things must fail; but charity is the *pure love of Christ*, and *it endureth forever*. And whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them. Wherefore, my beloved

73. Cf. S. Michael Wilcox, “Nephi’s Message to the ‘Gentiles,’” in *Second Nephi, The Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 280.

74. See, e.g., Hugh W. Nibley, *Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 214–18. The footnote to Nibley’s statement points the reader back to the previous volume in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, see Nibley, *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 455–56n4; Richard Reitzenstein, *Nachrichten von der königlich Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Gottingen* (1916): 362, 416 and (1917 Heft 1: 130–151, and “Die Entstehung der formel ‘Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung,’” *Historische zeitschrift* 116 (1916): 189–208; Nils W. Lund, “The Literary Structure of Paul’s Hymn to Love,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1931): 266–76; cf. Alfred Resch, *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu*, in TU 12 (Leipzig, DEU: Hinrich, 1904), 415–19.

brethren, *pray* unto the Father with all the energy of heart that ye may be filled with this *love* which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son Jesus Christ, that ye may become the sons of God, that when he shall appear we shall be like him — for we shall see him as he is — that we may have this hope, that we may be purified even as he is pure. (Moroni 7:45-48)

In the context of Mormon's previous discussion of the "bitter fountain" in opposition to the "good fountain," his use of hope revives Nephi's use of Jeremiah's wordplay on *māqôr* ("fountain") and *miqwê* ("hope," "awaiting"/"collection" of waters, Jeremiah 17:13; 2 Nephi 31:20). Mormon's equation of charity with the "pure love of Christ" that "endureth forever" not only echoes Mormon's own name ("love"/"desire is enduring"), but also Mormon's earlier description of his namesake as a "fountain [cf. Hebrew *māqôr*] of pure water." This latter fountain inevitably recalls both "the fountain of filthy water ... and the depths thereof are the depths of hell" (1 Nephi 12:16; cf. 1 Nephi 15:27-29) as well as "the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25; cf. the Savior's baptism in 11:26-27). The "fountain of living waters" is Jesus Christ himself and all of the "love" that he embodies.⁷⁵

The description "this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son," asserts a general truth, of course: true disciples of Jesus Christ receive this "pure" and "endur[ing] love" because they "pray" that they may be "filled" with it. Nevertheless, Mormon also appears to allude to the events described in 3 Nephi 19 when Jesus's newly called disciples "did pray for that which they *most desired*; and they *desired* that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them" (3 Nephi 19:9). After these disciples had been baptized, "they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (3 Nephi 19:13). Mormon further observes that when the disciples prayed to Jesus who was present with them "it was given unto them what they should pray, and they were filled *with desire*" (3 Nephi 19:24). All of this recalls the "love"/"desire" baptism leitmotif from Mosiah (Mosiah 18:8, 10-11, 21, 28; 21:33-35; 25:17-18, 23; see also Alma 15:13-14), including the "love" and good "desires" that characterized Alma the Elder's community formed at the waters of Mormon. Mormon called upon his audience of Nephite faithful to attain to — or re-attain to — the charity or "love" and good "desires" achieved

75. See especially John 3:16 and D&C 34:3.

by Alma's community and the Lamanites and Nephites to whom Jesus ministered as described in 3 Nephi 11–27.

“The Gall of Bitterness” vs. “Everlasting Love”/“Perfect Love”: The Doctrine of Christ

Mormon's first epistle to his son Moroni (as preserved by the latter) reflects a situation in which charity or “love” clearly began to fail among the Nephites. With Nephite society on the verge of ruin, many Nephites seemingly were anxious to have their little children, even those who were not yet accountable before God, receive all the ordinances of salvation. This, Mormon declared, did not reflect faith, but amounted to “solemn mockery before God” and “putting trust in dead works” (Moroni 8:25).⁷⁶ For him, this practice did not emerge from charity or “pure love”: “Behold, I say unto *you that he that supposeth that little children needeth baptism is in the gall of bitterness* and in the bonds of iniquity, for he hath neither faith, hope, nor *charity*. Wherefore should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell” (Moroni 8:14). In stating that Nephites who were baptizing little children “ha[d] neither faith, hope, nor, charity” he intimated that they were not “press[ing] forward” on the covenant path and “endur[ing] to the end” as described by Nephi (2 Nephi 31:20). The Nephites, at this stage, were rapidly becoming all that the “bitter fountain” portended in Mormon's sermon. Moroni's inclusion of the phrase “gall of bitterness” in connection with paedobaptism seems intended to show one specific way in which even the heretofore faithful were becoming “the bitter fountain.” Mormon saw the irony: baptism itself symbolizes overcoming the filthy waters of death and the bitterness of hell in which the Nephites had willfully immersed themselves (see below). “Bitterness,” then, constitutes one of the unifying concepts between Mormon's sermon (Moroni 7) and Mormon's first letter to Moroni (Moroni 8).

An even stronger unifying lexical basis for Moroni's adjoining his father's letter to his sermon on faith, hope, and charity is his descriptions of “perfect love,” “charity,” and “everlasting love,” which play on the name Mormon and the latent meaning “love is enduring”:

Woe be unto him that shall pervert the ways of the Lord after this manner, for they shall perish except they repent. Behold, I speak with boldness, having authority from God. And I fear not what

76. Improper baptism, including paedobaptism as mentioned by Mormon and baptism without authority as mentioned in D&C 22:1–4 “availeth ... nothing.”

man can do, for *perfect love* casteth out all fear. And *I am filled with charity, which is everlasting love*. Wherefore all children are alike unto me; wherefore, *I love little children with a perfect love*, and they are all alike and partakers of salvation. (Moroni 8:16-17)

Mormon's description of divine "love" in his letter to Moroni closely resembles his description of divine love in his sermon (see Mormon 7:45-49). In fact, it appears to constitute a main reason for Moroni's inclusion of both texts. Mormon's description of this love as charity here further echoes Nephi's earlier midrash of Isaiah 55:1-3 in 2 Nephi 26:24-30, 33 and especially v. 30: "the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love." It is hard to escape the notion that the Nephites viewed Isaiah's invitation "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1; 2 Nephi 9:50) as not only an invitation to come to the "waters of life" as a symbol of the "love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25), but also, relatedly, to come into the waters of baptism as a symbol of the Lord's power over Death, Hell, and the devil⁷⁷ (cf. the Lord's power over Mot, Sheol, and that old serpent \cong the Lord's power over Rahab [Egypt], Yamm [the Sea], and Tannin [the serpent], Isaiah 51:9-10/2 Nephi 8:9-10).⁷⁸ The "way" through the waters of death made or "prepared" by the Lord (Isaiah 51:10/2 Nephi 8:10; 2 Nephi 9:10) is the covenant "path which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree, ... and it also led by the head of the fountain" (1 Nephi 8:20) — i.e., the fountain that becomes the fountain of "filthy" (cf. bitter) water (1 Nephi 12:16; 15:26-36; see also 1 Nephi 8:32). The "rod" or "word"⁷⁹ that "led to the tree"⁸⁰ also "leads" the Moses-like⁸¹ "man [or woman] of Christ" through the Re[e]d Sea-like bitter waters that constitute the "gulf of misery, which is prepared to engulf the wicked" (Helaman 3:29-30).

77. Daniel Belnap, "I Will Contend with Them That Contendeth with Thee": The Divine Warrior in Jacob's Speech of 2 Nephi 6-10," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, no. 1-2 (2008): 20-39.

78. See further Matthew L. Bowen, "Messengers of the Covenant: Mormon's Doctrinal Use of Malachi 3:1 in Moroni 7:29-32," *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 31 (2019): 125-27.

79. Bowen, "What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?" 2-3.

80. 1 Nephi 8:19, 22; 15:23-24.

81. The image of the "man of Christ" with the "rod"/"word of God" (Egyptian *mdw-ntr*) recalls the biblical image Moses with the "rod of God" (*matteh-[hā] 'ēlohīm*, Exodus 4:20; 17:9). See also 1 Nephi 17:26, 29.

Mormon has this covenant path or “way” in mind when he mentions baptism later in the same letter, using what Donald W. Parry calls a “gradational parallelism” or “gradation”:⁸²

*And the first fruits of repentance is baptism.
 And baptism cometh by faith
 unto the fulfilling the commandments;
 and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth
 remission of sins;
 and the remission of sins
 bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart.
 And because of meekness and lowliness of heart
 cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost,
 which Comforter
 filleth with hope and perfect love,
 which love endureth by diligence unto prayer,
 until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with
 God. (Moroni 8:25-26; modified formatting mine)*

Mormon’s use of a “gradation” structure here depicts the doctrine of Christ not only as a covenant path but as a “way” with upward steps — an ascent.⁸³ At the top of that ascent and in the place where we anticipate “charity,” stands a repetition of “love” in the collocations “perfect love” and “love endureth.” The last instance is particularly striking given the Egyptian phonemes evident in Mormon’s name: *mr(i)* “love” and *mn* “is enduring.” The “tree of life” and “waters of life” that represent the “love of God” mark the “end” of the covenant path “when” (and where) “all the saints ... dwell with God” — in other words, salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of God, the final principle of the doctrine of Christ. Viewing the name Mormon in this context helps us appreciate just what this name meant to the Nephites, whose church Alma the Elder initially founded at the waters of Mormon, and what it meant to the men who afterward bore “Mormon” as a personal name (see 3 Nephi 5:12–13; Mormon 1:5).

82. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms*, xxvii, 559. Mormon’s son Moroni does something similar in Mormon 9:12–13 and Moroni 10:20–22.

83. *Ibid.*, xxvii. Parry writes: “Many gradation parallelisms have an ascension of expression, from a beginning point to a climatic situation.”

That Mormon has the "cultural narrative"⁸⁴ of Lehi's dream and Nephi's vision of that dream in view in all of this finds additional confirmation in his statement: "The pride of this nation, or the people of the Nephites, hath proven their destruction except they should repent" (Moroni 8:27). In the end, the Nephites found themselves, not at "tree of life" or the "waters of life," but "fallen" like the great and spacious building and its denizens or "drowned in in the depths of the fountain" of "filthy," bitter waters (1 Nephi 8:32) from which baptism is the symbolic rescue.

"They Have Lost Their Love": *Becoming the Bitter Fountain*

The clear *raison d'être* for Mormon's faith, hope, and charity sermon (Moroni 7) was diminishing faith, hope, and charity among the Nephites during the time period in which Mormon gave it. Mormon himself states that he had "loved [his people] according to *the love of God* which was in me with all my heart" (Mormon 3:12). Nevertheless, the Nephites were leaving the covenant path *en masse* in contravention of what Nephi taught about the need to endure to the end in faith, hope, and charity in 2 Nephi 31:20. Moroni had included this sermon and the epistle of his father on the futility of paedobaptism and its incompatibility with faith, hope, and charity (Moroni 8) to help his latter-day audience grasp the conditions of apostasy that prevailed in a society and religious community in their death throes. The "love of God" — as embodied in Jesus Christ himself — of which the tree of life and "fountain of living waters" (1 Nephi 11:25) constituted representations in Nephi's vision, had virtually vanished among the Nephites, as it had existed in 4 Nephi 1:15-17.⁸⁵ Mormon's onomastic wordplays on his own name and "love" in Mormon 7:45-48; 8:16-17; 26 (25-26) echo the language of Nephi's vision.

Moroni's stated purpose in writing in his abridged Book of Ether applies equally to his inclusion of Mormon's sermon (Moroni 7) and epistles (Moroni 8-9): "Wherefore I Moroni am commanded to write these things, that evil may be done away and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but

84. On Lehi's dream as cultural narrative, see again Belnap, "Even as Our Father Lehi Saw," 214-39.

85. 4 Nephi 1:15-17: "And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God. There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God."

that they may be persuaded to do good continually, *that they may come unto the fountain [mëqôr] of all righteousness and be saved*” (Ether 8:26). Moroni’s use of “fountain of righteousness” recalls several scenes from 1 Nephi, including Nephi’s vision of the tree of life and the two fountains. Mormon and Moroni had witnessed in real-time what Nephi had seen centuries earlier in vision. Where Nephi had earlier equated “the fountain of living waters” with “the love of God,” and Jesus Christ himself — whose baptism is described there (1 Nephi 11:21-27) — as the supreme manifestation of that “love,” he directly associates “the fountain of filthy water” with the eventual, violent destruction of his people:

And it came to pass that I looked and beheld the people of my seed gathered together in multitudes against the seed of my brethren; and they were gathered together to battle. And the angel spake unto me, saying: Behold *the fountain of filthy water* which thy father saw; yea, even the river of which he spake; and the depths thereof are the depths of hell. And *the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil*, which blindeth the eyes and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men and leadeth them away into broad roads that they perish and are lost. And the large and spacious building which thy father saw is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men. And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God and Jesus Christ, which is the Lamb of God, of whom the Holy Ghost beareth record from the beginning of the world until this time and from this time henceforth and forever. *And while the angel spake these words, I beheld and saw that the seed of my brethren did contend against my seed, according to the word of the angel. And because of the pride of my seed and the temptations of the devil, I beheld that the seed of my brethren did overpower the people of my seed.* And it came to pass that I beheld and saw the people of the seed of my brethren, that they had overcome my seed. And they went forth in multitudes upon the face of the land. (1 Nephi 12:15-20)

Moroni includes Mormon’s sermon and the latter’s use of the analogy of the “bitter fountain” vis-à-vis the “good fountain” at least partly with the bitter end of Nephite society in view. Mormon’s final preserved letter to Moroni describes Nephite mores at the end of their society as the worst of what humanity has to offer: “For so exceedingly do they anger that it seemeth me that they have no fear of death. *And they have lost*

their love one towards another; and they thirst after blood and revenge continually" (Moroni 9:5). In sum, they had lost everything that had made them "Nephite": "they delight in everything save that which is *good*" (Moroni 9:19). They had abandoned the "love one towards another" that had characterized Alma's church (Mosiah 18:21) and "the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people" long after Christ's post-resurrectional ministry (4 Nephi 1:15). They had "forsaken" Christ, the "fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; 1 Nephi 11:25), the embodiment of "the love of God."⁸⁶ They had ceased to be — or partake of — that "good fountain" (Moroni 7:11) at all. They had come to embody Zenos's description of the "branches whose fruit is most bitter" (Jacob 5:52, 57) and ultimately fulfilled his prophecy regarding the "that part of the tree which brought forth *good* fruit [cf. Nephites and *nfr*=good], even the branch [that] had withered away and died" (Jacob 5:40).

It is fitting, then, that some of the last words in the Book of Mormon by Moroni pertain specifically to "lov[ing] God" with all of one's faculties:

Yea, *come unto Christ* and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness. And if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and *love God with all your might, mind and strength*, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ. And if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:32-33)

Here, of course, Moroni directly quotes Deuteronomy 6:5: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Moroni's language also recalls Nephi's paraphrase of Deuteronomy 6:5 in 2 Nephi 25:29: "And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not. And Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul. And if ye do this, ye shall in nowise be cast out" (2 Nephi 25:29).⁸⁷

86. 1 Nephi 1:22, 25; 1 John 4:9; Romans 5:5; 8:39; Titus 3:4; cf. John 5:42; 1 John 2:5; 5:3; Mosiah 4:2; Alma 13:29; 4 Nephi 1:15.

87. Nephi first uses the collocation "might, mind, and strength" in 2 Nephi 25:29. King Benjamin later uses it in his sermon in Mosiah 2:11, and Moroni will use

This last exhortation from Moroni, like his inclusion of texts from his father Mormon that emphasize the nature and importance of the “love of God,” recommends the “love of God” as the individual and collective solution to becoming “the bitter fountain” and “bring[ing] forth bitter water” (see again Moroni 7:11).

Conclusion

Mormon, Moroni, and their predecessors evidence an awareness of the paronomastic narrative links in the Hebrew text of Exodus between the name Miriam (Mary) and the “waters” (*mayim*) of the Re[e]d Sea from which Israel is “pulled” and the nearby “bitter” waters of Marah. Nephi sees and recognizes the connection between Mary (Mariam), the mother of Jesus and the “love of God” which “is the most desirable above all things,” and thus to both “the tree of life” and “the fountain of living waters” and the baptism of the Savior (1 Nephi 11:21-27) vis-à-vis “the fountain of filthy water” (1 Nephi 12:16).

Mormon, named for his father, also bore the name of “the land of Mormon” (3 Nephi 5:12). Mormon himself associates his given name with “waters,” first characterized as a “fountain of pure water” (Mosiah 18:5) as well as with the good “desires” and “love” that Alma the Elder’s converts manifest at the time of their baptism (Mosiah 18:8, 10-11, 21, 28). Mormon’s accounts of the baptisms of Alma the Elder’s people, Limhi’s people, the people at Sidom, and those who heard and believed the preaching of Samuel the Lamanite anticipate the Book of Mormon’s climactic baptismal scene in 3 Nephi 19 and reflect back on Nephi’s vision (1 Nephi 11:21-27). When Jesus reorganized or reestablished the church originally founded by Alma, Mormon characterizes their baptism and reception of the Holy Ghost as “that which they most desired” (3 Nephi 19:9-14, 24).

Mormon thus links several baptismal scenes together, beginning at the waters of Mormon, with the term “desire”/“love.” When Jesus’s newly chosen disciples “pray for that which they most *desired*” they not only ask for Holy Ghost as a gift, but for that which “filleteth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer” (Moroni 8:26; cf. especially 3 Nephi 19:24). This scene dramatically recalls the baptismal scene at the waters of Mormon and the righteous “desires” of the people. They recall the “fountain of living waters” who is Jesus Christ himself (Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; 1 Nephi 11:25-27).

it as part of his quotation or paraphrase of Deuteronomy 6:5, which Nephi also paraphrases. This combination also occurs in D&C 4:2; 11:20; 20:31; 33:7; 59:5; 98:7.

Mormon's analogy of "the bitter fountain" and its "bitter water" vis-à-vis "the good fountain" and its "good water" helps set up his discussion of "the pure love of Christ," which "endureth forever" (Moroni 7:47-48). This discussion should be understood against the backdrop of Lehi's dream as Nephite "cultural narrative" and the history of Alma the Elder's people at the waters of Mormon. As Mormon's people lose the "love [which] endureth by faith unto prayer" (Moroni 8:26; see also Moroni 8:14-17; 9:5) they become like the "bitter fountain" (Moroni 7:11) and do not endure to the end in faith, hope, and charity on the covenant path (cf. 2 Nephi 31:20; Moroni 7:40-48; 8:24-26). The name Mormon ("desire is enduring" or "love is enduring"), as borne by the prophet-editor of the Book of Mormon, embraces the whole cloud of these associations.

In light of all of the foregoing, we can better appreciate Alma's words to Corianton that "it is also requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works. And if their works were *good* in this life and *the desires of their hearts were good*, that they should also at the last day *be restored unto that which is good*, ... the one restored to happiness according to his *desires* of happiness — *or to good according to his desires of good* — and the other to evil according to his desires of evil" (Alma 41:3, 5). This is the ultimate reality to which Mormon's "good fountain" and "bitter fountain" point (Moroni 7:11).

[This article is dedicated to the memory of Edmund Michael and to his family. The author would like to thank Suzy Bowen, Victor Worth, Allen Wyatt, Jeff Lindsay, Don Norton, Tanya Spackman, Daniel C. Peterson, Steve Densley, Mark Johnson, Ryan L. Combs, Ryan Dahle, and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw.]

Matthew L. Bowen was raised in Orem, Utah, and graduated from Brigham Young University. He holds a PhD in Biblical Studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and is currently an associate professor in religious education at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. He is also the author of *Name as Key-Word: Collected Essays on Onomastic Wordplay and the Temple in Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2018). He and his wife (the former Suzanne Blattberg) are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.

THE TRANSCENDENCE OF FLESH, DIVINE AND HUMAN

James E. Faulconer

Abstract: *In this essay, James E Faulconer confronts an age-old issue that seems to divide Latter-day Saint Christians from other Christians, namely, “what it means to say that God is transcendent and embodied.” Early Christians also believed that God is embodied and transcendent, but with important differences in how that seemingly paradoxical combination of assertions can be explained. In his brilliant analysis, Faulconer shows how God “transcends us because He is embodied.”*

[**Editor’s Note:** Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.]

See James E. Faulconer, “The Transcendence of Flesh, Divine and Human,” 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), 113–34. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/to-seek-the-law-of-the-lord-essays-in-honor-of-john-w-welch-2/>.]

Talk of transcendence is common in theology. In traditional theologies God transcends this world: as the Creator of all that is, he is not part of his creation; the Creator is radically other than Creation, sufficiently so that for traditional theologies it is a question whether the term *existence* can properly be applied to him. According to some

contemporary thinkers it may not make sense to say that God exists.¹ This does not mean individuals who subscribe to traditional theologies doubt whether there is a God, but that they wonder, given God's transcendence, how well the language that applies to created beings can be applied to their Creator, if at all. If we say that created beings exist, then whatever we say of God, it seems odd, they suggest, to apply the same term, *exists*, to the Creator of those beings. Of course few Latter-day Saints believe in a God who transcends the world in that way. Believing in an embodied God makes it difficult, if not impossible, to believe that God is metaphysically distinct from the physical and temporal world. God cannot be as absolutely other-than-the-world for Latter-day Saints as he is for most other believers.²

As a result, one of the common accusations against Latter-day Saints by other Christians is that we are engaged in a kind of idolatry by worshipping something that is less than God, something created rather than the Creator himself. That charge carries more weight than Latter-day Saints are wont to think. It is not enough simply to assert that we cannot conceive of an unembodied entity; that begs the question and could be explained by lack of imagination. More is needed by way of argument. David Paulsen has done much of the heavy lifting to get our response started; especially by showing that belief in an embodied God was not foreign to first-century Christianity.³

I will add to that conversation by considering what it might mean to say that God is transcendent and embodied. Latter-day Saints sometimes say that God is transcendent, but we don't mean that he is metaphysically transcendent, so it is not clear what we mean. I have elsewhere argued that Latter-day Saints can ascribe a kind of transcendence to God, using the term transascendence to distinguish our belief from that of the tradition.⁴ Transascendence isn't merely superlative being, with God

1 See, for example, Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), 41–47 in particular.

2 Of course, this does not mean that there are not significant differences between human and divine being; differences that raise important questions for understanding. See James E. Faulconer, "Divine Embodiment and Transcendence: Propaedeutic Thoughts and Questions," *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1–14.

3 David L. Paulsen, "Early Christian Beliefs in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses," *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 105–16, with "Reply to Kim Paffenroth's Comment," *Harvard Theological Review* 86 (1993): 235–39. See also "Must God Be Incorporeal?" *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989): 76–87.

4 James E. Faulconer, "Transascendence: Transcendence in Mormon Thought," in *Mormonism at the Crossroads of Philosophy and Theology: Essays in Honor of David L.*

being the most of whatever category properly describes him. Rather, I argue, we can understand divine transcendence as like the transcendence of other persons who are other than ourselves and to whom we have moral and ethical obligations (as “higher” than ourselves), yet we can avoid reducing God to just another, though superior, human person by recognizing that the analogy of human and divine otherness does not necessarily mean that human being and divine being are identical. That God is our Creator makes his being qualitatively different than ours even if it is in important respects also the same as ours. Like early Christians, we assert that God is both embodied and transcendent in some sense, though our theological explanations of that combination of assertions is different than early believers.

The earliest Christian theologies emerged in the tensions between Christianity and Greek metaphysics. At the beginning of Christianity in Europe, Western philosophy was marked by the idea of a radical separation between the sensible and the intelligible, an inheritance from Greek thought. Though early Christian thinkers often found philosophy useful for reflecting on their beliefs, Christianity denied that radical separation. The early Church Fathers insisted that Jesus Christ was a living, breathing human being, not only divine but also mortally incarnate; the Church Fathers fought against the philosophical interpretation of Jesus according to which his being is incompatible with incarnation. In spite of the tensions with Greek ontology, they insisted that “the Word became human.”⁵ Yet because of that tension theology and philosophy have long interpreted materiality poorly; in particular they have often (though not always) misconstrued human bodily existence. The result has generally been the postulation of the metaphysical world over against which this world stands or, more lately, the claim that everything is reducible to the movements of material particles. (These are two sides of the same, mistaken assumptions.) But that philosophico-theological story, the one so trenchantly criticized by Nietzsche, obscures the parallel Christian story in which we learn that flesh is the revelation of the Word and that salvation comes *in the flesh* (resurrection). The philosophical and scientific story obscures the Jewish and Christian story that has run along beside it for millennia, namely

Paulsen, ed. Jacob Baker (Salt Lake City: Gregg Kofford, 2012), 235–54. I take the word *transcendence* from Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alfonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1969), 35. Levinas gets the word from Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel.

5 Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une Philosophie de la Chair* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 18.

the outrageous claim of John 1:14: “The Word became flesh.”⁶ But it has not effaced that other story.

The Judeo-Christian story has not been effaced by the philosophical tradition because we do not hear or tell the two kinds of story in the same way. When John announces that Jesus is the Word, obviously he is not telling us that there is some propositional content to which Jesus corresponds. But neither is this merely metaphor (if anything could be merely metaphor). Jesus himself is the Event of Revelation. In his person, being who he is in the way that he is, *he* is what God has to say. John surely has the Hebraic-Aramaic understanding of *word* in mind when he writes, and in Hebrew *db̄r* (דבר), the word to which the Greek most likely corresponds, “indicates primarily the activity of speaking, the production of words and phrases.”⁷ Similarly, the Greek *logos* (λόγος) refers primarily to spoken expression rather than its content. The philosophical story is a story about content. In contrast, the Jewish and Christian stories are about events, and the Christian story is about the Event, namely the announcement of the Messiah by his appearance amongst us. This is why Michel Henry argues that the truth of Christianity is not revealed philosophically, because that truth is not a truth in the order of narrowly conceived rational thought.⁸

Philosophy has obscured the Jewish and Christian stories, but it need not do so. To understand better how the philosophical story can be told in a way that highlights, in particular, the Christian one, consider the philosophical one again. The first clue comes from Aristotle who points out that there is neither pure form nor pure material. There is no form that is not the form of something or other, something material. Likewise no material thing appears without form. Both material and form are useful mental constructs for thinking about things, but we must not forget that they are fictive. They are terms we have created to help us think about things rather than things themselves. Further, to speak of material is not only to speak of particles or wave patterns through points in space. As the work of Martin Heidegger argued almost 100 years ago, materiality and flesh are both more than just matter; they both entail relationship and context.⁹ As a result, much contemporary philosophy

6 Henry, *Incarnation*, 25.

7 Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), s.v. דְּבַר

8 Henry, *Incarnation*, 16.

9 I have in mind primarily his first major work, *Being and Time* (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh and Dennis J. Schmidt [Albany: SUNY, 2010]). There his understanding of human being in terms of location, as *Dasein* understood

is concerned with how to understand excess, that is, how to think about what exceeds mere material when material is viewed only as particles or waves in space-time. The question is how we can think about or conceive of that which exceeds what we can call “bare materiality.” How do we do that without invoking the metaphysical transcendence that devalues our incarnate existence in favor of some ultimately unknowable realm? How do we avoid the Nietzschean criticism of Christianity?

Philosophical responses to that question, the question of excess, are not uncommon in philosophy today, especially outside of the Anglo-American world. And in an age of Levinas, Derrida, and Marion it is easy to forget that the thought of transcendence as excess rather than metaphysical transcendence has been part of the contemporary philosophical tradition since at least the beginning of the twentieth century. We see it in Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*, and Stanley Cavell sees it in Wittgenstein. Purportedly, the mostly French contemporary thinkers who address the question using the term *excess* show us the limits of knowledge, namely, that we are inextricably trapped within language. Few lines of twentieth-century philosophy have been so often quoted (or so much misunderstood) as Jacques Derrida’s “There is nothing outside the text,” which seems to imply not only skepticism, but linguistic nihilism.

As Emmanuel Levinas has recognized, there is some warrant to the conclusion that the end of the chain of thought from Heidegger through late twentieth-century French thinkers is skepticism: “Philosophy is not separable from skepticism, which follows it like a shadow that it chases by refuting it only to find itself once again in skepticism’s footsteps. . . . Skepticism is *refutable*, but it returns.”¹⁰ Philosophical thought takes us inexorably to skepticism and then resolves it. But skepticism always comes back. Using the language of Derrida, we could say that skepticism deconstructs philosophy, reason’s project to have certainty. But as too many who propounded deconstruction in the United States forgot, a deconstruction is not an utter destruction. Reason doesn’t go away, nor does skepticism cease to haunt it.

However, as Ewa Ziarek has astutely pointed out, thinkers like Levinas, Cavell, and Derrida neither advance a new skepticism nor

literally, “being there,” is important. His later works show the relational being of things as well as persons.

10 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alfonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 168. Translation revised.

refute classical skepticism.¹¹ They are no longer concerned with showing either that the subject is the center of meaning or that she cannot be. They see something very important in the inescapability of skepticism, but what they see is not the completion of an epistemological search — not even that of discovering there is no end to the search. In fact the aporias to which skepticism takes us force us to cease thinking that epistemology is the foundation of all philosophy. Skepticism takes us beyond epistemology, for it is the warrant for turning thought to alterity, to what exceeds our conceptual grasp in the experiences of language, art, and human relationships. (It is this interest in alterity that explains the oft-noted resemblance between Derrida's thought and negative theology.) For Levinas, what is crucial about skepticism is that it contests the possibility of philosophical (read "epistemological") truth, and that contest points beyond philosophical truth to the possibility of some other form of truth. For Levinas that other form of truth is personal: ethics.

Ethical truth is not the truth of moral standards. It is the truth of the relationships with others that come prior to any conceptual understanding of the world, the relationships that make conceptual understanding possible, indeed the relationships that make moral standards possible. Ethical truth is the truth of transcendence, the transcendence of the other person. Levinas and others have explored the question of what that transcendence means. My question is how to think that transcendence theologically. As has already been suggested, my answer will be that transcendence is in living flesh, using the term *flesh* for a sensate thing in the world that is affected by other things in the world and by itself. I am flesh because things affect me and I respond, and I am flesh because I am aware of myself.

Self-awareness doesn't mean that I always — or ever — have full-blown self-consciousness. It doesn't mean that there is nothing about me that remains inaccessible to my conscious ego. But it does mean that self-consciousness — knowing-that as well as knowing — is an aspect of human flesh. As Marion tells us, fleshly existence in the here and now is a mode of thought: "I think myself in feeling myself ... in an immediacy that abolishes the separation that is proper to representation."¹² This is

11 Ewa Płonowska Ziarek, *The Rhetoric of Failure: Deconstruction of Skepticism, Reinvention of Modernism* (Albany: SUNY, 1996), 7.

12 Jean-Luc Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2007), 39.

thought, but not yet rational thought, for it is singular: this here, this now.

But I am ahead of myself. Eventually the question will be how a Levinasian philosophy thinks what is transcendent and what that might say about how philosophy can talk about divine transcendence. Begin with something more mundane, the phenomenon. In spite of efforts to avoid idealism, I think it is fair to say that every philosophical explanation of how we experience phenomena eventually comes down to one kind of idealism or another precisely because we cannot avoid skepticism. In other words, explanations of how we experience things comes down to the idea that what I really experience are my ideas and not the things themselves. Those on both sides of the great divide between Kant and Hume believe that we have access only to our ideas of things, not to things themselves. They disagree mightily about what that means, but they agree that we do not have access to things themselves. Some are willing to add context to my ideas — there must be not only an ego experiencing the phenomena, but also a context in which those phenomena occur — but that changes the point very little: I know only my ideas and not things themselves. I don't know my children or my wife, only my ideas of them. I don't know God, only my idea of him. In truth, I think that few thinkers actually believe that everything amounts to my ideas and my context. Nevertheless, it is hard to figure out a philosophical way around the problem of skepticism about the world and, therefore, a way around the problem of idealism.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, an alternative arose that gives us a way of thinking about our perceptions of objects and eventually a way of thinking about persons that accounts for our connection to the world itself and not just to our ideas. The first thinker to consider in that alternative is Edmund Husserl. Husserl argues that the categorial (thinking that involves syntax and not just reference¹³) goes beyond sense data but nevertheless cannot be reduced to a mental phenomenon. Tasting my ice cream cone, I say "This is vanilla." I recognize not only that I have tasted the flavor of vanilla, but that it belongs to the ice cream. I can name many characteristics of the ice cream, its temperature and texture and color, for example. In addition to anything on the list, there is the belonging-together of those things on the list. I experience that belonging-together in experiencing the various predicates that I can apply to the ice cream cone rather than

13 Robert Sokolowski, "Husserl's Concept of Categorial Intuition," *Phenomenology and the Human Sciences* (1981): 127–49, cf. 128.

in addition to them.¹⁴ Thus the belonging-together of the predicates is not an additional predicate. It transcends each of the properties of intuition as well as any collection of them. Remember, however, that intuition doesn't mean here what we mean in ordinary conversation.

To be clear: for philosophers, an intuition is something that gives a person an experience. Intuition is the immediate apprehension of something. An intuition doesn't necessarily cause someone to have a thought, but it does give them an experience. If I hit my finger with a hammer, I have an intuition, a sensible intuition, not because it makes any sense at all to hit my finger with a hammer, but because I am given an experience of sensation by the hammer.

Whatever developments the last hundred years plus have brought, Husserl's insight about the categorial character of intuition continues to be decisive. We continue to find ourselves re-writing one of his fundamental observations: to see an object is to see more than merely the raw sense data of that object; it is for the object to appear excessively; it is for it to appear as a thing that transcends our mere perceptions of it. Perception is always of something more. That transcendence is not given in a separate intuition, and that is the decisive point: *all intuition is, in itself, an intuition of "something more."*¹⁵

This something more is not something metaphysically beyond. The metaphysical beyond is reason's attempt to bring the excess under the rule of thought by creating a fictive realm of origin for our experience, a presumed world behind appearances. We invent the metaphysical to explain the transcendence in our experience. Things (and persons) transcend us; experience is always experience of the transcendent, so we experience the transcendent in any experience. But transcendence need not be understood metaphysically, as another realm of being, for example.

With Husserl, we recognize that transcendence is part of the constitution of any appearance. The excess is *already* in the appearance rather than something we come to see in addition to the thing. To use Marion's phrase, the excess appears as "being given,"¹⁶ the givenness of things already there. But is the being-together of the intuited properties

14 The example is Sokolowski's: Sokolowski, "Husserl's Concept" cf. 129. I highly recommend Sokolowski's piece for any who wish to delve into this further.

15 Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *La croisée du visible* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), 100.

16 Of course, the word *appears* must be understood here "under erasure," to use Derrida's term: this appearing is also a non-appearing.

of the thing sufficient to account for that givenness? That question takes us to the next step in this abbreviated history.

In his *Being and Time* Heidegger accepts Husserl's analysis, but goes beyond it. He argues that the excess of appearance is found not only in the experience of the thing before me, but in the horizon of the meaningful material totality within which the thing appears and to which it implicitly refers. The excessive character of my ice cream cone is to be found not only in the being-together of its properties, but in its situation within the physical horizon — for example, the shop in which I buy the cone — as well as the horizon of historical and cultural practices that give my purchase of the cone and my consumption of it the meanings that it has. The excess of experience is in the world and not just in the thing. It has a social and historical component as much as physical and sensate ones.

An example: suppose I am looking at something, perhaps the lamp on my desk. There are three things involved: me, the thing in question, and the context. Without any one of those, there is no phenomenon of the lamp. When no one is in the room, there is something here, but it isn't a phenomenon; for the lamp isn't appearing to anyone. If there's nothing on my desk that could shed light, I may imagine that I see a lamp, but I mistake one phenomenon (too many unidentified mushrooms for dinner) for another (a lamp on my desk). And if there's no context, no lamp can appear either.

The necessity and scope of context is a little more difficult to show, but not terribly difficult: in order for a lamp really to appear before me, I have to be part of a culture that has lamps. If I'm not, then something appears before me on the desk, but it isn't a lamp. Perhaps it is merely a "something-I-know-not-what," but I cannot experience it as a lamp. Context includes the history and practices of our culture as well as the obvious things we think of as context, like the room in which both the lamp and I exist, etc. Context includes all of the background information and the physical setting that make it possible for me to have the experience of the lamp.

It seems, then, that we can say that there is a phenomenon when three things come together: a perceiver, a thing to be perceived, and a context or horizon that makes possible and gives meaning to the perception of the thing. The problem is that the more I think about those three, the less the thing itself becomes important and the more the perceiver and the horizon (especially the cultural, linguistic, and historical context) become important. In other words, the more I think about what is going

on when I experience a phenomenon, the more it seems to be a matter of only my ideas and horizon. Once again I seem forced in the direction of skepticism regarding anything but my ideas.

Whatever one makes of Levinas's thinking overall, he makes an important contribution to this philosophy when he argues that we are taking up the question in the wrong way: if we start from the ego and its constructions of the world, then there is no lasting escape from skepticism. From that beginning, with its goal of certainty, there is no accounting for relation to what is outside of oneself. The ego cannot lift itself by the bootstraps to get out of itself. The mistake, Levinas argues, is in thinking that signification begins with the ego. Instead, it is ultimately found in transcendence itself. Signification begins from outside of me, from what transcends me. Only by starting from the relation of another, can we give an account of a non-solipsistic world, of an existence in which genuine relation to another is possible rather than relation merely to my understandings of others.¹⁷ In answer to the question "How do I get outside myself, beyond my representations of the world and other persons in the word?" Levinas replies, I don't. I cannot. But relation to another is possible because that relation does not begin with me, but with the other person. In fact, he argues, relation with another makes my representations of the world possible: the Good (relation to another person) is prior to being, or as he also puts it, ethics is prior to ontology.¹⁸ According to *Totality and Infinity*, the relationship with another person, transcendence, is first marked out by the passivity of human flesh, by passion in its root sense as well as its ordinary sense: our passive being and the phenomenological priority of that passivity in our experience demonstrate that there is transcendence.

For Levinas and his heirs, particularly for Jean-Luc Marion, this investigation of transcendence remains at the heart of philosophy.¹⁹ Following Descartes, Levinas names that which transcends *God*.²⁰ However the term is misleading. Doesn't the capital "a" in *l'Autrui* ("the Others") suggest that we are referring to what theology has called "the

17 See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, *in toto* for the argument.

18 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 201.

19 That is how, for example, to understand not only works like Marion's *Being Given* and *In Excess* (Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud [New York: Fordham University Press, 2002]), but also his and Derrida's interest in the possibility of the gift. They ask the question, "Can there be an event that goes beyond the economy of exchange?" A crucial question for any believer in Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

20 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 48–50.

wholly Other,” to the divine being, God? I think not. For one thing, Levinas is not entirely consistent about capitalizing that “a.” More significantly, important readers of Levinas’s philosophical work, understand the other person and God as indistinguishable. The French term *l’autri* means “the other persons,” and in the important strain of Levinasian thought typified by thinkers such as Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, the other person is the only god there is. Thus, whatever the merits of Levinas’s criticism of Heidegger,²¹ at best it leaves us confused about theological transcendence. At worst it makes it indistinguishable from human transcendence — assuming for now that is bad.

Marion responds to that muddle by going back to Brentano’s insight that the senses of transcendence or excess are manifold.²² In the post-Husserlian tradition of Heidegger, Henry, and Levinas, Marion argues that in knowing sense objects we know more than we take account of in any epistemology. Along with what we usually recognize as knowledge, knowledge of primary and secondary qualities for instance, we also know — are acquainted with, in relation with — something more than sense, but also more than the belonging-together of Husserl’s categorial intuition, and more than the temporal-ecstatic horizon of Heidegger. In some phenomena, Marion argues, the excess of the more-than is itself revealed. Those are phenomena in which the intuition of the object exceeds the phenomenon, “saturated phenomena” as opposed to “impoverished phenomena.”²³

Comparison to Kant may help. In Kant, a phenomenon must be understood within a horizon and according to an I. Without both the ego and the horizon of understanding provided by the categories of understanding (such as the fact that what I see is necessarily either one or multiple), there is no phenomenon. As a result, Kant would say, it is impossible for there to be an unconditioned phenomenon, a pure experience of transcendence; every experience is conditioned by the categories of understanding. Kant argues that to the degree that we deal with conditioned phenomena we do not deal with what is transcendent, and it is not possible to deal with unconditioned phenomena. So, it is not possible to deal with anything transcendent itself. The

21 I think his criticism is ultimately mistaken, though it shows us a way to read Heidegger more fruitfully by giving us a phenomenology of the Other.

22 See Franz Brentano, *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle*, trans. Rolf George (Berkeley: University of California, 1975).

23 Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “The Event, the Phenomenon, and the Revealed,” in *Transcendence in Philosophy and Religion* trans. Beata Starwaska, ed. James E. Faulconer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 87–105, cf. 104.

thing-in-itself remains out of our grasp. Marion's project is to show that an unconditioned phenomenon is possible: we do experience that which is transcendent. His strategy is to argue for "saturated phenomena" rather than the "impoverished phenomena" of Kant, which Marion says are impoverished because they are constituted as phenomena by their horizon and subject, with little or nothing given by intuition. Marion's objection to Kant's first Critique, the book in which he makes his argument against unconditioned phenomena, is that it slights intuition; he tries to show what happens when we give sufficient attention to intuition.

Given the strength of Kant's argument, it is tempting simply to reject Marion's position out of hand. However, Marion points out that his suggestion that unconditioned phenomena are possible is not as wild as it may seem at first glance. After all, we find something like the same idea in Kant's aesthetic, where the aesthetic idea is an intuition for which no adequate concept can be formed.²⁴ In Kant's aesthetic, the concept is impoverished, not the intuition, for the intuition gives too much to think. Kant says that this excessiveness of intuition is "inexposable"; Marion uses, instead, the word "invisible." The invisible phenomenon is "invisible, not by lack of light, but by excess of light."²⁵ We don't have to think what exceeds intuition in terms of enormity. All that is necessary is that it be impossible to apply a successive synthesis to the phenomenon so that one can see the sum of its parts. The invisible is excessive of understanding because no *successive* synthesis is possible, not no synthesis at all.

In spite of the impossibility of performing a successive synthesis and, thereby, coming to a knowledge of the whole, it is possible to have an instantaneous synthesis of the saturated phenomenon. Amazement and bedazzlement are examples of such instantaneous syntheses. When I find something amazing, I don't do so after careful consideration. Neither can the experience be analyzed into a synthesis of component experiences. What is amazing becomes amazing all at once in an irreducible experience: "Wow! I've never seen that before" I may say even though I'm looking at something I've seen a hundred times. I'm amazed. And what is amazing about amazement is that there is no way to account

24 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*.

25 Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon," in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate* Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and Paul Ricoeur trans. by Bernard G. Prusak and Jeffrey L. Klosky (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 176–215, cf. 197.

for it only in terms of my ideas and the context. In fact, something is amazing precisely because it doesn't fit my ideas of it or the context. I didn't expect it and, given what my knowledge and context was before the moment that I am amazed, I couldn't have. I may now look back and say, "I should have seen it all along," but I am only amazed because, under the same circumstances and with the same ideas, I wouldn't have seen it.

If amazement is possible, then it is possible for there to be phenomena that are not completely determined by my context and my ideas. Such phenomena, Marion says, are saturated rather than impoverished. In other words, most phenomena are reducible to our ideas and contexts and, so, impoverished. But phenomena like amazement and bedazzlement and some aesthetic experience are phenomena in which we are overcome by intuition in excess of our ideas. They are saturated. Thus, what I see in the vision of the saturated phenomenon is not darkness, but something so bright that it blurs my vision, something I *cannot* see clearly. Marion says: "Because the saturated phenomenon, due to the excess of intuition in it, cannot be borne by any gaze that would measure up to it ('objectively'), it is perceived ('subjectively') by the gaze only in the negative mode of an impossible perception, the mode of bedazzlement."²⁶ The language of subjectivity and objectivity is inadequate to the experience of the saturated phenomenon.

An aside is important here: ultimately Marion's argument leads to the conclusion that in principle *all* phenomena are saturated. They become objects, though, to the degree that they fall within the horizon of being and are subject to categorial intuitions. They withdraw behind ordinary — in other words, ordered — or objective phenomena and allow us to get about our practical concerns, but those ordinary and objective phenomena have their origin in the actuality of saturated phenomena. Amazement and bedazzlement are not only to be found in the exceptional case. With Heidegger, Marion believes that such experiences are the fundamental modes of our experience of the world and, so, determinative of phenomena.

Amazement and bedazzlement cannot be the constant way in which we encounter the world or they would not be either amazement or bedazzlement. If they were constant, we would never be able to get on. I live most of my life as "one" lives life, shopping as one shops, for example.

26 Marion, "Saturated Phenomenon," 201. The words *objectively* and *subjectively* are between quotation marks because bedazzlement is exactly not an object of a subject, in other words something constituted by the subject.

I do not look for some unique, authentic way for me to shop, perhaps refusing to use the check out counter as one does and, instead, taking my eggs with me out the back door of the store. Inauthenticity is not a moral category and it is certainly not something that I should always avoid. Heidegger's term for inauthenticity, *Uneigentlichkeit*, should be understood quite literally: not-one's-ownness. Most of the time I proceed in a way that is not mine, a way that I have been given by my history, culture, and context, and the covering-over of bedazzling appearances that happens in inauthenticity is necessary to my existence as a person among other persons going about mundane tasks.²⁷ Nevertheless, the covering-over that constitutes ordinary life and experience is possible only on the basis of an existentially prior encounter with things in which amazement and bedazzlement are essential.

Marion's argument is not anti-Kantian. Rather his rhetorical question is "Must every phenomenon...respect the unity of experience?"²⁸ and the answer is no. Thus, he does not argue against the claim that something like Kantian categories are fundamental to our experience of phenomena, but for the claim that the saturated phenomenon goes beyond them. In the experience of the saturated phenomenon there are the categories of experience and there is a horizon. Indeed, the saturation of the phenomenon can only be understood because there are categories and the horizon. But the saturated phenomenon is what it is by the fact that it exceeds them.

For Marion, saturated phenomena fall into four categories:

- The event, namely the historical event²⁹
- The idol, of which the most frequent example is the painting³⁰
- Flesh, in other words affectivity³¹

27 See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §27.

28 Jean-Luc Marion, "Sketch of the Saturated Phenomenon," in *Jean-Luc Marion: The Essential Writings*, ed. Kevin Hart (New York: Fordham University Press, 201), 108–34; cf. 114. Perspectives in Continental Philosophy.

29 Marion sees the work of Paul Ricoeur as explicating this kind of saturated phenomenon in *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984). See Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey Kosky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 366, n. 84.

30 See Marion, *In Excess*, especially chapters 3 and 5. See also Marion's *Being Given*, 366, n. 85. Derrida, he says, has explicated this kind of saturated phenomenon.

31 Here the connection between Marion and Michel Henry is explicit (Marion, *Being Given*, 366, n. 85).

- The icon, that which regards me rather than is regarded; the look of the other person.³²

Note that, of these four categories of saturated phenomena, two are of flesh, my flesh (affectivity) and that of the other person whom I encounter (the icon). Note also that things (including events) appear and persons appear, and one cannot fully attend to appearance of either without paying attention to both their material or fleshly character and the fact that they appear to *me*. I am in relation with them because I am affected by them. Any constitution by the ego follows from that being-affected.

To these four, with which few have argued, Marion adds a more problematic fifth: revelation, which “concentrates in itself the first four senses of the saturated phenomenon.”³³ Almost certainly with Dominique Janicaud’s criticism of him in mind,³⁴ Marion insists that this fifth category is a philosophical possibility rather than a claim that requires Christian faith.³⁵ Perhaps this fifth category could be filled only by the historical and living Jesus, but Marion is not arguing that the category has a member.

Brock Mason has argued cogently that Marion’s fifth kind of saturated phenomenon falls back into his fourth: “Nothing separates [the icon and the revelation] as a phenomenon except, perhaps, who in particular appears as the icon (whether it is God or some human other).”³⁶ What was held out only as a possibility is not even a distinctly different possibility. Whatever the difference between the divine and the human, either each transcends the person in the same modality or we have yet to have an account of divine transcendence. Marion has strong dogmatic reasons for distinguishing between, on the one hand, the phenomenon of the

32 Marion, *Being Given*, 228–34. See also Marion, “Saturated Phenomenon” 215. Notice that Marion uses the word *event* to describe the first kind of saturated phenomenon, though he also understands each of these categories to be categories of events, happenings rather than atemporal things. As the name of the first category, the word *event* has its more ordinary signification, “that about which we can give a narrative.”

33 Marion, *Being Given*, 237. For the full discussion of the five kinds of saturated phenomena see 234–241.

34 See Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn in French Phenomenology,” in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate*. See also, Dominique Janicaud, *Phénoménologie éclatée* (Paris: Eclat, 1998). Janicaud’s criticism is that Marion has turned from philosophy to theology.

35 Marion, *Being Given*, 234–35.

36 Brock Mason, unpublished Honors thesis, Brigham Young University, April 2013, 17. A shorter version of the thesis has been published at http://aporia.byu.edu/pdfs/mason-saturated_phenomena.pdf.

icon, of the other person, and, on the other hand, that of the revelation, the experience of Christ. But he hasn't given convincing philosophical reasons for doing so.

Indeed, if one takes a point of view on these matters that is consistent with that of the thinkers to whom I have been pointing, we understand that revelation is not the revelation of something beyond human knowledge, but the basic form of human knowledge. Revelation is neither (as the tradition has assumed) an exception to our experience of phenomena nor (as in Marion) an additional mode of revealing. Instead, it is the most radical or fundamental case of *any* intuition. Revelation is the first way of experiencing the world — revelation and amazement and bedazzlement — even though in or workaday lives we have strategies for no longer being amazed and bedazzled. Most language and systematic thought is a strategy for allowing us not to be amazed by things so that we can get on about our business, but that fact seduces us into forgetting that revelation is the basic category of experience.

There are lots of things we can say about revelation (and, so, also about other experiences that revelation helps us understand). For one, no matter what set of historical or cultural paradigms we try to use to understand it, we will not be completely successful. That isn't because there is something wrong with revelation. It isn't because it is irrational or subjective, nor is it because it refers to something in another metaphysical sphere. Rather, it is because what is revealed always exceeds or overflows any cultural or historical paradigm. We can talk about an event of revelation in one way. We can talk about it in another. But any revelation, including that of supposedly ordinary things, is sufficiently rich that, *in principle*, there is not just one way of talking about it. No thought or system of thought will make it fully comprehensible. If we could make a revelation fully comprehensible, then we would have a context and a set of ideas that included all possibilities. That is in principle impossible. A context that included all possibilities wouldn't be a context.

We can also say that revelation demonstrates our finitude. If the world were really made of only our ideas and culture, for all practical purposes we would be infinite beings. We wouldn't be able to do just anything that popped into our imaginations, but we would be the ones who create the world we live in. The only limits would be our limits, not the limits of things on us. That is one definition of an infinite being. But if things amaze us, then we are not pure actuality. We are not the creators of the universe. To be enspirited flesh means passivity: to be is to be affected; I am *me* more fundamentally than I am *I*. To use Levinas's

language, our existence is in the accusative.³⁷ We are passive as well as active; our being is inextricably a matter of possibility. There are things that we do not constitute and that, in fact, constitute us and impinge on us.

Recognizing the failure of Marion's argument for a special category of divine revelation, these insights nevertheless put philosophical meat on the bones of the LDS teaching that God is embodied. For Greeks and Jews alike, the skandalon (σκάνδαλον) of Christianity was Jesus' incarnation: his existence before and after his resurrection as incarnate God. The refusal of most first-century Jews and Greeks to consider the possibility of the resurrection eventually turned to violence and dualism. The Christian insistence on that resurrection testifies of the faith of early Christians. We see that faith in the early church councils' insistence on keeping faith with the earliest Christians by maintaining the teaching of Christ's Incarnation.³⁸ Mormonism also keeps that faith: the revelation of God, of divine transcendence, happens in the world in a being. The insistence on divine embodiment is an insistence that transcendence is to be found only in immanence, not as merely an entry into immanence of something otherwise outside, but as essential to immanence.

If we reject idolatry, namely the idea that God appears to us in a nonpersonal material thing, then the alternative is for divine transcendence to reveal itself in a person of flesh. As a result, contrary to the way the problem of transcendence is usually understood, the question for philosophy and theology is not *what* exceeds the last horizon of perception and how we know it. The theological question is how God appears in the flesh.

One thing to note is that if Christianity insists on God's embodiment — that he, too, is in the accusative — then it also insists on *temporal* life, even for God. Temporality and being affected are logically inseparable. What that means is not easy to say. It involves a variety of theological quandaries.³⁹ But the temporality and passivity of God suggest a profoundly different understanding of how we ought to think about the divine: not only must we add an additional proposition to our theological understanding: God is all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful — and embodied. Indeed, we must add that, but it isn't the most important

37 Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 11, 43, etc. See also Henry, *Incarnation*, 173.

38 Henry, *Incarnation*, 14–15.

39 For discussion of some of these quandaries, see James E. Faulconer "Divine Embodiment and Transcendence: Propaedeutic Thoughts and Questions." *Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 1, no. 1 (2005): 1–14.

implication for theological reflection. More important is that if we are to be true to the revelation of God as embodied we must take up theology in a different way. Our understanding of what it means to do theology will be different.

For millennia philosophy and theology have proceeded based on what I call “the professors’ view of the world,” the hidden assumption that mental activities are superior to other activities, so whatever the highest things are, they are the kinds of things best understood by the mind. That assumption is crudely and usually secretly built on the ancient assumption that contemplative, disembodied being — pure actuality — is superior to incarnate being. But running alongside the professors’ story has been the other, usually overlooked, way of seeing the world, that of scripture. There Jesus tells us “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). He, not a set of rules that we can learn and analyze, is the way to God. He, rather than a collection of logically related propositions that we can either hold or deny, is the truth of the Father. His is the life to be lived. Jesus adds, “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”⁴⁰ Clearly he is speaking of how we receive salvation: it comes only through him. But what he says applies also to how we understand the Father: we do so only through Jesus Messiah, a being of flesh. We know the Father and the Son as we know other persons, *in* and through relationships of ethical import.

Of course we can reflect on flesh and speak of it. I am doing that here. It can be useful to do so. Philosophy and theology can play an important part in our religious lives. But they are, strictly speaking, not necessary, and by itself reflecting on flesh cannot give us an understanding of it. Contrary to what most theologies claim, that appears to be true even for God since his existence is also enfleshed, in the accusative and not merely in the nominative. The New Testament letter to the Hebrews is relevant here: “Although he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things that he endured.”⁴¹ Being the Son of God means being passable, experiencing things other than himself, being affected by them. Alma’s great sermon on the gospel includes a meaningful and beautiful expansion of the teaching in Hebrews:

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

40 John 14:6

41 Heb. 5:8; my translation.

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 7:12)

According to Alma, even God, in order to fully be God and to help his people, must know as flesh knows rather than only as hypothetical pure minds might. Using Aristotle's terms, he must be possibility and not only actuality. Knowing according to the flesh means suffering, having experience that is in some degree passive. God cannot hear and answer prayer if he cannot be affected, but if he can be affected, then he cannot avoid suffering. Being affected by others and the possibility of suffering is not a consequence of our fallen state. It is concomitant with being flesh, and so also with the flesh of God.

Contrary to most theological traditions, for Latter-day Saints, because he is enfleshed, God cannot be impassable. Joseph Smith is reported to have said "The first principle of truth and of the Gospel is to know for a certainty the character of God, and that we may converse with Him the same as one man with another, and that He once was a man like one of us."⁴² That has been the message of Christianity from the beginning, and not just the Restoration. Whatever has been made of metaphysical speculation about that message, the Word is revealed in flesh more than in propositions or reflection. To be revealed in flesh is not to be revealed in mere atoms and particles, but in the particular events of pleasure and suffering, hunger and thirst, desire and fatigue, force and delight that are integral to the lives of persons.⁴³

But, more importantly, that God is embodied means that the Word is revealed in the accusative and, therefore, in multiplicity rather than metaphysical simplicity, in relationship and the necessity of response. Jesus' healings were not merely a sign of his messiahship. They showed his passability, that the others could affect him. As expressions of his existence in the flesh they were constitutive of the life in which he made that messiahship known. It follows that being like God includes our passability and our response to others. As Paul tells us, if we wish to be co-heirs with Jesus Christ, glorified as he is, then we too must suffer — endure — as he suffers and endures.⁴⁴ But we cannot suffer as he suffered

42 Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 8. (<http://www.ldslearning.org/lds-king-follett-discourse-a-newly-amalgamated-text-byu.pdf>).

43 Henry, *Incarnation*, 25.

44 Rom. 8:17.

without responding to what affects one as he would. Compassion is a way of being affected and enduring, rather than of being removed from passivity. Knowing that takes away the stigma of our own suffering. We do not suffer because we are defective, but because we are like God.

Reflection is an important fleshly activity, but hardly the only one. Nor is there any reason to believe that it is superior to all other fleshly activities when it comes to understanding rather than merely different from them. Whatever reflection can teach us, ultimately we understand flesh by being flesh as much as or more than by reflecting on it. That says at least two things. First, if life in the flesh is the basis of Christian understanding, then a reflection that does not begin with that life, that has recourse to the abstract either too quickly or as if the abstract were the fulfillment of understanding, is not sufficiently Christian, whatever its claim or its content. The ground of theological reflection must be the incarnate Christ, who was born, lived a human life, was executed, and was resurrected to sit at the right hand of the Father.

Second, from that ground must grow a Christian life that embodies the truth that Jesus is: the way, the truth, and the life. That coming together of his way of life, the truth of his life, and the living of it is the basis of any Christian understanding. Theological reflection cannot usurp Christian life as the locus for Christian self-understanding, as it tends to do. Whatever its uses, ultimately theology is beside the point. We are not better Christians because we understand Christianity. We are only real Christians if we live Christianity. Its truth can only be entered by entering into the flesh and life of Jesus Christ, his way of experiencing the world. Only in Christian life can Christianity be fully understood; only Christian life can tell the Christian story fully. In that case what remains to theology is less the rational sketching out of how beliefs hang together (though that can have an important place in Christian service) than it is the possibility of a hermeneutic of religious texts and practices (for example, liturgy) that serve to help the believer understand how to *be* a Christian and serve as witness to the unbeliever.

According to the *Lectures on Faith*, we know of God through tradition or we know of him through revelation.⁴⁵ If the analyses of contemporary thinkers are not incorrect (though if nothing else the history of philosophy teaches us not to forget that they well may be), to know of him by revelation is to know him in a way akin to the way that we know other persons. God's incarnate self-revelation is idiosyncratic because it cannot be seen with the natural eyes. But it is nevertheless

45 *Lectures on Faith* 2.53.

the experience of another, incarnate person. As can be the being of any other person, God's being can be attested by those who have seen him, and that attestation can serve as a vehicle for his further self-revelation.

However, even without direct experience of God as a being, we know him, as opposed to only knowing *of* him, by being in relationship with him. We know him by living the way, truth, and life that he is. That too is revelation. We know him in prayer and worship, more revelation. Like Abraham, we find ourselves called by God and we must respond "Here I am" (Gen. 22:1), announcing our readiness to be commanded by him. We covenant to be ready. We make an oath to continue in that relationship in imitation of the oath God has already sworn to us as his children. And we imitate him by repeating that oath in our relationships with other persons. But whether spoken to God or another human being, "Here I am" is empty if it is not a performative statement, if I do not in fact put myself at the disposal of the other person in saying it. The oath and covenant of relationship with God comes only in my being in his presence at his disposal, which means equally being with and at the disposal of other persons.

Christ's incarnation was not only something believed by the early Church. As I noted earlier, in spite of the complicated history of Christian theology, the incarnation has been insisted on by Christian scripture and Christians for millennia, offering a 2,000 year-old, on-going alternative to much of the theological tradition that has made God metaphysically other than Creation. (That is one reason we can continue to go to other Christian thinkers as partners in thinking about what it means to be Christian.) What, then, does the incarnate character of God's existence imply theologically? Perhaps more important than anything else, it tells us that he is a God of possibility. He is a being whom we can know as a person and to whom we can meaningfully pray. And as scriptures have taught for thousands of years, he suffers. Things affect him. Like us, God can have relationships with other persons and be in covenant with them only if he can be affected by them, only if suffering is possible.

That God is a being of flesh implies as well that he can be known. In some sense he appears in the world as other beings appear, as an enfleshed person whom we can see and to whom we can be related. But even without that kind of knowledge he can be known by testimony and by performance. Those who know him directly testify of him. We can hear and read their testimonies. We can know him through prayer because we speak to him as we speak to another person, and he answers. Most importantly, anyone can know him by living the life he lives, which

includes not only the performance of religious rites, but the performance of our obligations to other persons. Our life with God in the flesh, in the accusative rather than the nominative, requires that of us.

Of course God is transcendent. His goodness and mercy are transcendent, for example. But his being is as well. His embodied being, like all embodied being, transcends ours. Indeed, he transcends us *because* he is embodied. Were he not, his transcendence would not make the relational demand on us that it makes. He would not call to us and require our response, “Here I am.”

James E. Faulconer (*Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University*) is a professor of philosophy at Brigham Young University, where, from 2008 to 2013, he also served as Richard L. Evans Professor of Religious Understanding. At BYU, he has chaired the Department of Philosophy and served as the dean of undergraduate studies. In addition, he has been a visiting professor at the Institute of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Leuven (“Louvain”) in Belgium, and spent a year on research leave at the Bibliothèque d’École Normale Supérieure, in Paris.

THE EXPANSE OF JOSEPH SMITH'S TRANSLATION VISION

Brant A. Gardner

Review of Samuel Morris Brown, *Joseph Smith's Translation: The Words and Worlds of Early Mormonism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). 314 pages. \$34.95 (hardback).

Abstract: *Samuel M. Brown opens up a new and expansive view of Joseph Smith as a religious thinker. Written for an academic audience, Brown is intentionally dealing with what can be seen and understood about Joseph Smith's various translations, a term that Brown uses not only for texts, but for concepts of bringing the world of the divine into contact with the human domain. This is a history of the interaction of a person and the world of his thought, from the first text (the Book of Mormon) to the last, which Brown considers to be the temple rites.*

Some will read the main title of Samuel Brown's book without continuing to the subtitle. That will lead to an unfortunate misunderstanding of Brown's sympathetic investigation into early Latter-day Saint thought. This book never intends to venture into the questions of how or whether Joseph Smith translated a text from one human language to another. His use of the word *translation* is a more expansive concept; thus, the subtitle: *The Words and Worlds of Early Mormonism*.

Easily overlooked also would be the last two words: *early Mormonism*. Those are essential because an important distinction in Brown's work transcends the common notion that *early Mormonism* simply means its historical beginnings. In Brown's description of the *Words and Worlds of Early Mormonism*, it is a qualitative rather than a temporal difference.

In 1994, Armand L. Mauss published *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*. Mauss selected two symbols

to represent the tensions he felt the young Church developed. For the maturing Latter-day Saint church, the beehive symbolized “all aspects of Mormon involvement with the world, cultural as well as economic.”¹ The angel (specifically the angel Moroni on the temple) signified “the charismatic element in Mormonism.”² That tension between early charisma and later assimilation is part of the developmental process that moves an early sect into a recognized church.³

That division between charismatic beginnings and eventual assimilation is important when approaching Brown’s book because it was written in the assimilation phase, and it will be read either by an audience that has no Latter-day Saint history or by those whose Church history consists of perceptions developed as part of the assimilation phase. Samuel Brown is pushing his description into the past and discussing the early charisma with reverence, understanding, and a view to present the impact of that charisma to an audience increasingly distant from the intellectual world in which the early Latter-day Saint converts lived. Brown is as close to an insider’s view as we can get while still presenting the overarching perspective of a longer history that allows a vision of how the puzzle pieces finally fit together.

Brown is painting a picture of the development of ideas and therefore begins not with a typical history of Latter-day Saint origins but with one of swirling concepts that will eventually coalesce into an impression of Joseph’s mental world that so enthralled his early converts. It is a verbal painting more akin to Van Gogh’s *Starry Night* than to the more photorealistic paintings of, say, Norman Rockwell. That is not to say it is inaccurate or only impressionistic. It is always difficult to capture the metaphysical in the mundane.

The first chapter deals with “The Quest for Pure Language.” Brown places the Church experience inside the general mood of the times. It wasn’t a unique Latter-day Saint task, but it would be developed in uniquely Latter-day Saint ways.

The second chapter deals with “The Nature of Time,” an examination of the relationship of humanity within divine time.

The third chapter is “Human and Divine Selves,” which looks at the human relationship to divinity.

1. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 3.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 6.

Only after this three-chapter introduction to Joseph's thought-world does Brown finally begin to discuss Joseph's translated texts. Brown deals with the Book of Mormon as a new Bible, the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible as a continuation of the revisioning of the Bible, and the book of Abraham as "The Egyptian Bible and the Cosmic Order." Perhaps in these chapters some believing Latter-day Saints may wish for an indication that something like the modern concept of translation was taking place. Brown does not provide that; it isn't the question he is answering.

This is a book written for an academic audience, and Brown's examinations of those texts deal with Joseph's involvement with them as well as his developing understanding as each was produced. One aspect of his discussion that will have some relevance to the other discussions of translation method is that he does speak of how Joseph understood and interacted with those texts. For those who do believe they were divinely transmitted, Brown's discussion points to the active participation of Joseph Smith's mind during that mysterious process.

Highlighting Brown's expansive take on the texts of the early Church is his final chapter on the temple rites. These are not typically seen as translations; however, they fit into the reconceptualization of translation that informs Brown's examination of the words and worlds of the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through most of his text, Brown allows the concept of translation to hover with implied meaning over the specifics he discusses. He does, however, eventually solidify his meaning. The first sentence of his conclusion finally links all the pieces together: "In the temple liturgy he completed in Nauvoo, Smith brought to an idiosyncratic fruition his twin projects of metaphysical translation: the transformation of texts and humans" (269).

This, then, is Brown's vision of translation. There is nothing of the mundane presentation of words from one language to another. It is a transformation of a divine understanding to create an available tapestry of understanding of one's place in the divine. It is the full charismatic and metaphysical vision that excited the early converts, long before the process of becoming a church that was assimilated into (and mostly accepted by) the larger society, had begun. It is a picture of the excitement of an unassimilated, dramatically dissimilated early Mormonism.

Brant A. Gardner (*MA, State University of New York Albany*) is the author of *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on*

the Book of Mormon *and* *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon*, both published through Greg Kofford Books. He has contributed articles to *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl* *and* *Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community*. He has presented papers at the *FairMormon* conference as well as at *Sunstone*.

JESUS'S COURTROOM IN JOHN

John Gee

Abstract: *John Gee gives us a sketch of the divine judgment as presented in the gospel of John. “In John’s gospel, the individual is the defendant; Jesus is the judge; the devil is the prosecuting attorney; and the Holy Ghost is the defense attorney.” Somewhat surprisingly, this model “fits more closely the Roman model of judgment than the Jewish one.” He concludes with a lesson for the reader: “Since all will have to stand before the judgment bar, all of us will need to heed the counsel of our defense attorney.”*

[**Editor’s Note:** Part of our book chapter reprint series, this article is reprinted here as a service to the LDS community. Original pagination and page numbers have necessarily changed, otherwise the reprint has the same content as the original.]

See John Gee, “Jesus’s Courtroom in John,” 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), 135–50. Further information at <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/to-seek-the-law-of-the-lord-essays-in-honor-of-john-w-welch-2/>.]

Given Jack Welch’s propensities, I would expect any topic that I might write for him would trigger in him a desire to produce a forty page treatise on the subject that would far outdo anything I might do. So I thought that I would provide a sketch of a legal subject that he could fill in with greater detail and more expertise at another time.

While the final judgment is mentioned in each of the standard works,¹ the picture of what it is like has some subtle differences across the various texts.² Some of these differences reflect the difference in legal procedures of the various writers and their various audiences.

The situation of the judgment in the Gospels provides an interesting picture reflecting ancient society. I will concentrate on the gospel of John. Scholars have noted that “differences emerge in John’s view of eternal life and judgment” by comparison with the synoptic gospels,³ though similarities exist as well.⁴ Because we believe the Bible as far as it is translated correctly (Article of Faith 8), I will provide my own translations of all relevant texts. As I presume that the original language versions of biblical texts will be readily available, I will quote the texts in the original only for non-biblical sources.

Judgment under Roman Law

Roman law, like most legal systems, had specific procedures dealing with legal cases. These differed between civil and criminal procedures. In civil procedures, “the bringing of an action began with an extra-judicial summons, *in jus vocation*, by which the plaintiff personally summoned the defendant to follow him before the magistrate.”⁵ The meeting before the magistrate was for the *in iure* portion of the trial, which “was devoted to defining the issue” and ended with a *litis contestatio*, a list of the points

1 Deut. 32:36; Judg. 11:27; 1 Sam. 2:10; 24:12, 15; 1 Chron. 16:33; 2 Chron. 20:12; Job 9:15; 21:22; Ps. 7:8, 11; 9:4, 8, 19; 10:18; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1; 50:4, 6; 51:4; 54:1; 58:11; 67:4; 68:5; 72:2, 4; 75:7; 82:1–2, 8; 94:2; 96:10, 13; 98:9; 110:6; 135:14; Eccles. 3:17; Isa. 3:13; 33:22; 51:5; Jer. 11:20; Lam. 3:59; Ezek. 7:2–3, 8, 27; 11:10–11; 16:38; 18:30; 21:30; 34:17, 20, 22; 35:11; 36:19; Matt. 7:2; Luke 6:37; John 5:22; 12:48; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 3:5–6; 1 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Heb. 10:30; 12:23; 13:4; 1 Pet. 1:17; 4:5–6; Rev. 6:10; 11:18; 18:8; 19:2, 11; 20:12–15; 1 Ne. 12:9–10; 15:32–33; 2 Ne. 2:10; 8:5; 9:15, 44; 13:13; 25:18, 22; 28:23; 29:11; 30:9; W of M 1:11; Mosiah 2:27; 3:10, 18, 24; 16:10; 27:31; Alma 10:20; 11:41, 44; 12:8, 12; 24:15; 33:22; 36:14–15; 40:21; 41:3; 42:23; 3 Ne. 26:4; 27:14–16, 25–27; Morm. 3:18–20; 6:21; Ether 5:6; Moro. 10:34; D&C 19:3; 20:13; 29:12; 64:11; 76:68, 73, 111; 77:12; 88:99–100; 128:6–8; 137:9; 138:10, 34; Moses 6:57.

2 e.g., in Matt. 19:28, the twelve apostles will judge the world; in 1 Cor. 6:2, it is the saints.

3 Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 197.

4 Blomberg, *Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, 200–01.

5 Barry Nicholas, “Law and Procedure, Roman, 2. Civil Procedure,” in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 403.

at issue in the suit.⁶ The magistrate would issue a *condemnatio* (ὑπόμνημα) “by which the judge was directed to condemn the defendant if he found after hearing the evidence and the arguments that the plaintiff’s case was good, otherwise to acquit him.”⁷ At this point the parties were required to make “a formal wager between the parties as to the validity of their claims, each party depositing as his state a fixed sum of money (*sacramentum*).”⁸ From there, the suit was assigned by the magistrate to a particular *iudex*, a judge who would preside “in the second stage (*apud iudicem*) when the case was heard and argued. He was a private person empowered by the magistrate’s order to give judgement, but he was more than a mere private arbitrator, because that judgement was recognized by the state and gave rise to execution proceedings, though in the last resort it was the successful plaintiff who had to put these into effect.”⁹ The magistrate could also assign hearing of the case to himself.¹⁰ Originally Roman criminal procedure did not differ from civil procedure,¹¹ the state merely became the plaintiff, and magistrates were invested with the authority to try the cases themselves.¹²

In the Roman judicial system, lawyers appear not to have been routinely used by either parties. There were lawyers. “They gave opinions to people who consulted them (*respondere*), helped them to draft documents (*cavere*), and advised on litigation and its proper forms (*agere*). They were consulted by magistrates such as the urban *praetor* on the formulations of his edict and by lay judges (*iudices*) on the law they should apply in the cases before them.”¹³ They seem to have functioned more as experts advising judges than as litigants: “Advocacy was not in the republic and early empire a normal part of a lawyer’s career, rhetoric being a separate discipline, but was not ruled out.”¹⁴ Advocacy was discouraged by not allowing payment. “In principle their services were free. ...Unlike other professionals such as surveyors and doctors there

6 Ibid., 404.

7 Ibid., 402; Raphael Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*, 2nd ed. (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1955), 498–502.

8 Nicholas, “Civil Procedure,” 402.

9 Ibid., 401–02.

10 Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*, 500.

11 Adolf Berger, Barry Nicholas, and Andrew William Lintott, “Law and Procedure, Roman, 3. Criminal Law and Procedure,” in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, 405.

12 Ibid., 408.

13 Tony Honoré, “Lawyers, Roman,” in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, 410.

14 Ibid.

was even in the empire no procedure by which they could sue for a fee (*honorarium*).¹⁵ Yet, advocacy was practiced anyway. “The appointment of representatives was a matter of private agreement between the parties.¹⁶

If the final judgment were based on Roman notions of law — which would have been the model for all the Gentiles in Jesus’s day — the final judgment would be arraigned before a magistrate, assigned out to a judge, who would render his verdict after an informal hearing without lawyers.

Judgment under Jewish Law

Under Jewish law, most civil cases, and some criminal cases, were decided by a panel of three judges,¹⁷ with capital cases requiring twenty-three judges,¹⁸ and certain rare cases by seventy-one judges.¹⁹ In the three judge panel, each litigant was entitled to choose one of the judges,²⁰ but certain nepotistic relations were prohibited from serving as a judge.²¹ Each party brought forth witnesses who were examined.²² The verdict went with the majority of the judges.²³ The litigants were brought in and the judges proclaimed one of the parties guilty.²⁴ Either party could ask for a rehearing if new evidence or witnesses came to light.²⁵

Thus the courtroom procedure differs under Jewish and Roman law. If the final judgment were according to Jewish law then a panel of judges would be convened and they would examine the witnesses themselves and conduct the case. These two legal systems form a background that readers of John’s gospel would have been familiar with.

The Defendant

Jesus announced that there would be a judgment:

Do not marvel at this because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those that have done good (οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες) in the

15 Ibid.

16 Taubenschlag, *The Law of Greco-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*, 506.

17 mSanhedrin 1:1, 3:1,

18 mSanhedrin 1:1, 4.

19 mSanhedrin 1:5–6.

20 mSanhedrin 3:1.

21 mSanhedrin 3:4–5; cf. mBekhoroth 4:10, 5:4.

22 mSanhedrin 3:6.

23 mSanhedrin 3:6.

24 mSanhedrin 3:7.

25 mSanhedrin 3:8.

resurrection of life (εις ἀνάστασιν ζωῆς), and those who have done evil (οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες) in the resurrection of judgment (εις ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως). (John 5:28–29)

The basic situation is that every mortal, each individual, whatever role they played in this life, will have to face a judgment to account for their deeds in this life. The individual is the defendant.

The judgment has the following basis:

For God loved the world in this way: he gave his only begotten Son so that all who trust in him would not be lost (μὴ ἀπόληται) but would have eternal life. For God did not send his Son to the world in order to condemn the world (ἵνα κρίνη τὸν κόσμον) but that the world might be saved (ἵνα σωθῆ ὁ κόσμος) through him. He who trusts in him is not condemned (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται), but he who does not trust is already condemned (ὁ δὲ μὴ πιστεύων ἤδη κέκριται), because he has not trusted (ὅτι μὴ πεπίστευκεν) in the name of the only begotten son of God. This is the judgment (ἡ κρίσις), that the light came to the world and men preferred the darkness to the light because their works were wicked (ἦν γὰρ αὐτῶν πονηρὰ τὰ ἔργα). For everyone who does evil (πᾶς γὰρ ὁ φαῦλα πράσσων) hates the light and does not come to the light so that his works might not be examined (ἵνα μὴ ἐλεγχθῆ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ), but he who does the truth comes to the light so that his works might be manifest that they were done for God. (John 3:16–21)

The criteria listed here are mainly doing good versus doing evil.

The judgment is also discussed in the following passage:

He who sets me aside (ὁ ἀθετῶν ἐμὲ) and does not receive my sayings has the thing that will condemn him (ἔχει τὸν κρίνοντα αὐτόν); that account that I spake will judge (κρινεῖ) him in the last day. (John 12:48)

Each individual will therefore be judged on whether he or she trusted God, received his sayings, and refrained from doing evil, or set God aside, did not receive his sayings, and did evil.

Jesus's criteria for the judgments differ somewhat from the Jewish standards of the Mishnah:

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא

All of Israel has a portion in the world to come.²⁶

The exceptions are the following:

ואלו שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא--האומר אין תחיית המתים מן התורה,
ואין תורה מן השמיים, ואפיקורוס

These are those who do not have a portion in the world to come: Whosoever says that there is no resurrection of the dead in the Torah, or that the Torah is not from heaven, or an Epicurean.²⁷

In Aramaic, Epicureans referred to those who were “irreverent of authority or religion,” were sceptics, or hedonists “without restraint.”²⁸ It did not necessarily refer to followers of the philosophical school of Epicurus.

So in John’s gospel, unlike the Mishnah, all humans will eventually stand to be judged according to their works.

The Judge

Each individual faces this judgment and faces a judge or judges at that tribunal. At various times in its history, Israel had had different tribunals ranging from individual judges to multiple judges forming a council.²⁹ Although the gospel of John does not use the word for judge at all, it does talk about judgment. Jesus says:

For the Father does not judge anyone (κρίνει οὐδένα) but all judgment (τὴν κρίσιν πᾶσαν) he has given to his Son so that all might honor the Son as they honor the Father. One who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (John 5:22–23)

So, according to the gospel of John, Jesus is the judge. Gentile readers of John’s gospel would think of the Father as the magistrate assigning Jesus to be the judge in the case. In the gospel of John, the final judgment

26 mSanhedrin 10:1.

27 mSanhedrin 10:1, cf. 10:1–6.

28 Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1903), 104; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 42–43.

29 For an overview, see Ze’ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times*, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2001), 47–50.

set forth by Jesus resembles more the courts of the Romans than it does those of the Jews. Jesus is the only judge mentioned.

The Prosecutor

Since no judge is assigned if no complaint is filed, a final judgment presumes a complaint. The complaint is the διαβολή, and the person filing it is the διάβολος.³⁰ In the modern American legal system, the prosecutor is an attorney, but in the Roman system it is simply someone who has a complaint against someone else. A letter from the third century BC, for example, says:

γίνωσκε δὲ καὶ
παρὰ τοῖς κεραμεῦσιν
διαβολὴν ἔχοντά με· φασὶ
γὰρ πρὸς σὲ γράφειμ με ἀεί-
τι καθ' αὐτῶν ἄλυσιτε-
λές.

You should know that the potters have lodged a complaint (διαβολήν) against me, for they say that they wrote to you alleging against me prejudice against them.³¹

A guild ordinance from Tebtunis about the time of Christ stipulates:

ἐάν τις τοῦ ἑτέρου κατη-
γορήσῃ ἢ διαβολὴν ποιήσῃται, ζῆμι(ούσθω) (δραχμὰς) ἡ
If anyone condemns or files a complaint (διαβολήν) against
another, he shall be liable for eight drachmas.³²

This ordinance is to provide a disincentive for guild members to take each other to court. This sort of provision has its antecedent in earlier Demotic guild ordinances; for example:

[p3 rmt̄ n-im=n] nt iw=f gm rmt̄ n-im=n hn mlh n3 sw.w nt hry
mtw=f iy r bwl hr dr.t=f mtw=f chc r-r=f iw=f rh chc mtw=s
chc r rd.wy r-r=f p3y=f qns hq qt 4

30 Foerster, "διαβαλλω, διαβολος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), 2:72.

31 PSI IV 441 lines 17–22.

32 P. Mich. 5 243 lines 7–8.

[The man among us] who will find a man among us in a lawsuit during the above mentioned time and he leaves without assisting and he testifies against him when he can testify, and it is proved against him, his penalty is 4 kite of silver.³³

The gospel of John does not use the term διαβολή, but it does use the term διάβολος twice. In one case, Jesus says:

“Have I not chose you twelve even though one of you is an accuser (διάβολός)?” He was talking about Judas Simon Iscariot, for he, who was one of the twelve, intended to betray him (ἐμελλεν αὐτόν παραδιδόναι). (John 6:70–71)³⁴

In the other case, an altercation in the temple at Jerusalem, Jesus tells his interlocutors:

You are from your father, the devil (accuser, τοῦ διαβόλου), and you wish to do the desires (τὰς ἐπιθυμίας) of your father. He was a murderer (ἀνθρωποκτόνος) from the beginning, and has never stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever one tells a lie, he speaks from himself, because he is a liar as is his father. But I, because I tell you the truth, you do not believe (οὐ πιστεύετε) me. (John 8:44–45)

So in Jesus’s courtroom, the devil plays the role of the prosecutor or plaintiff. While Jesus refers to Judas as an accuser, in the eighth chapter the reference is clearly back to the supernatural accuser from the first chapter of Job using the vocabulary of the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament:

καὶ ὡς ἐγένετο ἡ ἡμέρα αὕτη καὶ ἰδοὺ ἦλθον οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ παραστήναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ὁ διάβολος ἦλθεν μετ’ αὐτῶν. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ διαβόλῳ πόθεν παραγέγονας καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ διάβολος τῷ κυρίῳ εἶπεν περιελθὼν τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσας τὴν ὑπ’ οὐρανὸν παρέριμι.

And as it dawned that day, and behold, the angels of God assembled before the Lord and the accuser (διάβολος) came

33 P. Lille 29 15, in Françoise de Cenival, *Les associations religieuses en Égypte d’après les documents démotiques* (Caire: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1972), 6–7, planche I–II.

34 For the manuscript variants here I am following p⁶⁶ and x rather than p⁷⁵ and B.

among them. And the Lord said to the accuser: Where have you come from? And the accuser said to the Lord: I am one who goes about the earth, walking around that part under heaven. (Job 1:6–7, LXX)

The Hebrew text has the children of God (*b^enê-’elohîm*) rather than angels. The idea of a supernatural being playing the role of a prosecutor is attested at least as early as the eighth century BC when a number of deities are attested as prosecutors in a fragmentary Luwian inscription erected by Runtiyawari found at Tuleil in modern Lebanon:

á-pa-ti-pa-wa (DEUS) *ku+AVIS* (DEUS) *LUNA-sa hara-na-wa-ni-i-sa*[(URBS)] *LIS-li-sa á-sà-tu*

And let Kubaba and the moon-god of Haran be the prosecutor there.³⁵

The idea of a divine prosecutor, in turn, derives from covenant texts where various gods serve as witnesses of the covenant. “The gods served as witnesses and appeared under the guise of the patron of the treaty. Moreover, the gods were invoked not only as guarantors but also as potential litigants (*bēl dîni*) in case of breach of contract. The gods will call the violator to account for his perjury.”³⁶ Those who violate the covenant will have various gods serve as witnesses against them,³⁷ and act against them:

nu ma-a-an ki-iš-ša-an ut-tar i-e-[ši] nu-ut-ta ki-e NI-IŠ
DINGIR^{MEŠ} le-e da-li-ia-an-zi nu-ut-[ta] a-pu-u-un-na an-tu-
uḫ-ša-an le-e da-li-an-[zi] zi-ik ku-e-da-ni EGIR-an ti-ia-ši
nu a-pu-u-un-na ḫar-ni-in-ká[n-du] nu-uš-ma-aš ki-i ut-tar
NI-IŠ DINGIR^{MEŠ} EGIR-an le-e tar-na-an-zi nu-uš-ma-at-ša
le-e a-a-ra i-en-zi nu-uš-ma-aš ták-ša-an ḫar-ni-in-kán-du

35 TULEIL 2 šd, in John D. Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), I.2:382–83.

36 Bustenay Oded, *War, Peace and Empire: Justifications for War in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1992), 12.

37 For examples, see Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. N. Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 1:192–93, 212–13, 218–19, 222, 224, 226–27, 236–41, 348–49, 358–59, 376–79, 394–97, 414–17, 424–25, 436–37, 442–43, 462–63, 478–81, 488–91, 502–03 524–25, 534–37, 544–45, 560–63, 588–91, 604–07, 624–27, 636–39, 918–19, 946–47, 964–65, 1010–11, 1014–15, 1022–23, 1039–40, 1047, 1075; Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 14, 28–29, 36, 40, 46–48, 51–54, 57–58, 63–64, 68–69, 73, 81–82, 85–86, 91–93, 111–13, 121–22.

If you do things as follows, these oath-gods will not leave you alone, nor on your account will they leave alone that man with whom you stand. Let them destroy him. These oath-gods will not forgive you for these things; they will not make them right for you. Let them completely destroy you.³⁸

Divine witnesses appear first in the early second millennium BC in the Old Assyrian period and the Old Babylonian period.³⁹ These witness deities in treaties and covenants parallel the witnesses in legal documents. These human witnesses can serve to convict or exonerate the accused.⁴⁰ In Old Babylonian times, for example,

the records of court proceedings make it clear that evidence was sought and carefully examined. It could be oral or written. Oral testimony was usually taken from the two contestants in a dispute, backed up by the oral statements of witnesses on either side. These statements may have been generally that they know something to be true (e.g. that A was a slave, or that Y was chaste), or more specifically that they saw something happen, whether this was a transaction between two individuals, or the perpetration of a crime. If the facts are unclear, the judges will take steps to seek clarification. They may write to the local authorities, to have witnesses sent, or they may request that the matter be further investigated locally. [Texts show] the judges summoning before them the original witnesses to a house sale, as listed in the deed, and a long-running lawsuit at Nippur saw the witnesses to one court case recalled to reaffirm the evidence they had given seventeen years earlier in a case of disputed paternity, and to bear witness to oral testimony given then by the grandmother, now deceased.⁴¹

38 Treaty between Suppiluliuma of Hatti and Huqana of Hayasa (*CTH 42*), in Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 1:444–45; Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 29.

39 Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 1:193; 3:247.

40 Codex Hammurapi 7, 9–11, in E. Bergmann, *Codex Hammurabi* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1953), 4–5; Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 82–84; Kitchen and Lawrence, *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*, 1:116–19.

41 J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (London: Routledge, 1992), 279.

Earlier, in Neo-Sumerian times, witnesses (and even women and slaves could act as witnesses) swore oaths,⁴² but the oaths were in the name of the king,⁴³ as well as by various deities or their symbols.⁴⁴ By Old Babylonian times this had changed; “when taking the oath it was usual to swear on the symbol of a god — like the dog of Gula, or the weapon of Marduk.”⁴⁵

A supernatural prosecutor is thus an ancient idea and not some sort of Christian innovation.⁴⁶

The Defense Attorney

So there they stand, the prosecutor and the defendant before the judge. Fortunately, there is the possibility of summoning a defense attorney, a παράκλητος. Demosthenes illustrates this usage well:

δεήσομαι δὲ πάντων ὑμῶν, ἃ καὶ τοῖς μὴ δεηθεῖσι δίκαιόν ἐστιν ὑπάρχειν, μηδεμίαν μῆτε χάριν μῆτ' ἄνδρα ποιῆσθαι περὶ πλείονος ἢ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸν ὄρκον ὃν εἰσελήλυθεν ὑμῶν ἕκαστος ὁμωμοκῶς, ἐνθυμουμένους ὅτι ταῦτα μὲν ἐσθ' ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν καὶ ὅλης τῆς πόλεως, αἱ δὲ τῶν παρακλήτων αὐταὶ δεήσεις καὶ σπουδαὶ τῶν ἰδίων πλεονεξιῶν εἵνεκα γίνονται, ἅς ἵνα κωλύηθ' οἱ νόμοι συνήγαγον ὑμᾶς, οὐχ ἵνα κυρίας τοῖς ἀδικοῦσι ποιῆτε.

I ask all of you that — which is just to be granted even to those who do not ask it — that nothing be done (neither for favor, nor personal influence) more than justice and the oath which each of you who entered here swore, considering that justice and the oath are on your own behalf and on behalf of the whole city, while the requests and advocacy of the attorneys (τῶν παρακλήτων) are on behalf of their own special interests — which the law urges you to thwart, not to enact for the advantage of the unjust.⁴⁷

42 Adam Falkenstein, *Die neusumerischen Gerichtsurkunden* (München: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1956–57), 1:68–69.

43 Ibid., 1:63–64.

44 Ibid., 1:65.

45 Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, 280.

46 I think that treatments like Miguel A. De La Torre and Albert Hernández, *The Quest for the Historical Satan* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011) miss some key points by not knowing the ancient Near East better.

47 Demosthenes, *On the False Embassy*, 1.

Jesus mentions this defense attorney three times in the course of John's gospel:

If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father and he will give you another defense attorney (ἄλλον παράκλητον) so that he may be with you forever: the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because they neither see nor know it. But you will recognize it, because it will remain with you and be among you. (John 14:15–17)

So the same thing that will cause one to avoid condemnation will summon legal counsel to one's aid. That legal aid is identified as the spirit of truth.

When the defense attorney (ὁ παράκλητος) comes, whom I will send you from the Father, the spirit of truth which comes forth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me (ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ) and then you too will bear witness (ὕμεις δὲ μαρτυρεῖτε) that it was with me from the beginning. (John 15:26–27)

Jesus here picks up the legal metaphor and expands on it. Both the defense attorney and the individual will bear witness in the legal proceedings. The spirit of truth which comes from the Father is the defense attorney.

Now then, I will go to him who sent me, and none of you should ask me, "Where are you going?" but because I said this to you, sadness has filled your hearts. But I tell you the truth that it is necessary for you that I leave. For if I do not leave, the defense attorney (ὁ παράκλητος) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will cross-examine (ἐλέγξει) the world concerning sin, and justice, and judgment (περὶ ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ περὶ κρίσεως): concerning sin, because they did not have faith in me (οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ); concerning justice, because I go to the Father and you shall no longer see me; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned (κέκριται). (John 16:5–11)

According to the metaphor expounded here, the attorney provided will also cross-examine the witnesses arrayed against the defendant. It will be shown that the defendant blessed with a defense attorney will have had trust in the Son of God, while the world will not. The ruler of this world, who is the prosecutor, will be condemned rather than the accused.

The idea of a divine defense attorney was not limited to Christians. A pagan example comes from Lydia in AD 235/236:

ἔτους τκ', μη(νός) Πανήμου βί'
κατὰ τὸ ἐφρενωθεὶς ὑπὸ τῶν
θεῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ
Διὸς κὲ τοῦ <Μηνός> μεγάλου Ἀρτεμι-
δώρου· ἐκολασόμην τὰ ὄματα τὸν
Θεόδωρον κατὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας, ἃς
ἐπύησεν· συνεγενόμην τῇ πε-
δίσχη τ<οῦ> Ἀπλοκόμα, τῇ Τροφίμῃ, τῇ γυ-
ναικὶ τῇ Εὐτύχηδος εἰς τὸ πλετώ-
ριν· ἀπαίρι τὴν πρώτην ἀμαρτίαν προβά-
τφ[[ν]], πέρδεικι, ἀσφάλακι· δευτέρα
ἀμαρτία· ἀλλὰ δοῦλος ὢν τῶν θεῶν τῶν
ἐν Νονου συνεγενόμην τῇ Ἀριάγνῃ τῇ
μοναθλίᾳ· ἴπαίρι χύρω, θείνω ἐχθύει· τῇ
τρίτῃ ἀμαρτία συνεγενόμην Ἀρεθούση
μοναυλίᾳ· ἴπαίρι ὄρνειθει, στρουθῶ, περισ-
τερᾶ, κύ(πρω) κρειθοπύρων, πρό(χω) οἴνου· κύ(προν) πυρῶν
καθαρός τοῖς εἰεροῖς, πρό(χον) α' ἔσχα παράκλητον
τὸν Δεῖαν· εἶδαι, κατὰ τὰ πυήματα πεπηρώκιν,
νῦν δὲ εἰλαζομένου αὐτοῦ τοὺς θεοὺς κὲ στη-
λογραφοῦντος ἀνερύσετον τὰς ἀμαρτίας”·
ἠρωτημαίνος {ἠρωτημένος} ὑπὸ τῆς συνκλήτου· “εἴλεος εἶ-
μαι ἀναστανομένης τῆς στήλῃν μου,
ἧ ἡμέρα ὠρίσα· ἀνύξαις τὴν φυλακὴν, ἐξαφίω
τὸν κατάδικον διὰ ἐνιαυτοῦ κὲ μηνῶν ἰ περι-
πατούντων”

Year 320, month of Panemos, day 12, as instructed by the gods, and by Zeus, and by the great wrath of Artemidoros. I, Theodore, was punished in my eyes because of the sins

that I committed (τὰς ἀμαρτίας, ἃς ἐπύησεν).⁴⁸ I slept with Trophime — the slave of Aplokoma, and wife of Eutyches — in the priestly council chamber. I got rid of my first sin (ἀπαίρι⁴⁹ τὴν πρώτην ἀμαρτίαν) with a sheep, a partridge, and a blind rat. The second sin: another time when I was the servant of the gods in Nonus, I slept with Ariagne, who was unmarried. I got rid of it (παίρι) by sacrificing a sacred pig. The third sin: I slept with Arethouse, who was unmarried. I got rid of it (παίρι) by a chicken, a sparrow, a dove, a measure of wheat and barley, an ewer of wine, a measure of wheat, 1 ewer winnowed grain for the priests. I had Zeus for a lawyer (ἔσχα παράκλητον τὸν Δεῖαν): “Behold, he has been maimed because of his deeds. But now, if he atones to the gods (εἰλαζομένου⁵⁰ αὐτοῦ τοὺς θεοὺς) and writes a stele, he will be saved from his sins (ἀνερύσετον τὰς ἀμαρτίας).” When asked by the council. “I am atoning (εἴλεος⁵¹ εἶμαι) by setting up my stele on the appointed day. Open the prison, I have discharged the injustice (ἐξαφίω τὸν κατάδικον) I have walked around in for 25 years and 10 months.”⁵²

Here Theodore has been blinded because of his immoral conduct, but follows the instructions of his divine lawyer to atone for his sins. Theodore’s talk of sin and atonement as well as divine legal aid sounds in many ways as though it were Christian. This is because when Christianity moved into a Greek speaking world and became Greek speaking, it borrowed the common religious vocabulary used by many religions in the Greco-Roman world to address similar concepts. When the early Christians translated the gospel, and probably the words of Jesus, into Greek, they would have needed to use vocabulary that was comprehensible to their audience much the same as that God told Joseph Smith that “these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:24).

48 The normal Greek form of the word is ἐποίησεν. The form used in the inscription illustrates a common sound shift well underway in the third century.

49 The normal Greek spelling would be ἀπαίρει.

50 The standard Greek spelling would be ἰλαζομένου.

51 The standard Greek spelling would be ἴλεος.

52 SEG XXXVIII 1237.

The concepts of the divine legal aid in the gospel of John thus used similar vocabulary and concepts that would have been understood by John's Greek speaking readers.

Conclusions

This is a mere sketch of the situation at the divine judgment and looks only at the situation in the gospel of John. In John's gospel, the individual is the defendant; Jesus is the judge; the devil is the prosecuting attorney; and the Holy Ghost is the defense attorney.

This is a very simple arrangement and differs from the situation encountered in other texts. It fits more closely the Roman model of judgment than the Jewish one. There are a few reasons why this is so. The Jewish model comes from the Mishnah which is a second century text rather than a first century one, but the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin shows that something like the prescriptions in the Mishnah was in use in Jesus's day. More importantly, the civil courtrooms of Jesus's day were Roman even in Judea,⁵³ hence the operative model to use is the Roman one, which is why Jesus would use it, and would have been understood whether John's audience were Jewish or Gentile.

Since all will have to stand before the judgment bar, all of us will need to heed the counsel of our defense attorney. Jack, with his background as an attorney, will appreciate the thought.

John Gee is the William (Bill) Gay Research Chair and a Senior Research Fellow at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University.

53 John 18:28–31.

